"It Starts with Having a Conversation":

Lesbian Student-Athletes' Experience of U.S. NCAA Division I Sport

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all lesbian student-athletes. May you feel comfortable being who you are on your team, and may the sport environment continue to change to where acceptance of individual differences is the norm. This thesis is also dedicated to the ones I hold close to my heart; thank you for your love and support. You know who you are.

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ABSTRACT

According to Griffin (1998), the U.S. NCAA Division I sport environment is not very welcoming for lesbian student-athletes because of existing negative myths and stereotypes. In addition, the experiences of both current and former lesbian collegiate athletes is an underrepresented research topic. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of 10 former U.S. NCAA Division I lesbian student-athletes using a semi-structured personal identity interview guide (Fisher, 1997) and Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). Five domains, 19 categories, and related core ideas were found in the transcribed interviews. In Domain I: *Stereotypes and perceptions of female athletes,* participants described how U.S. society projects that female athletes are "lesser than" male athletes. In Domain II: *Stereotypes and perceptions of lesbians and lesbian athletes*, participants reported that stereotypes about lesbians and lesbian athletes were appearance-driven and sport-dependent. In Domain III: *Climate for LGBT* athletes,* participants stated that while feeling accepted on their former team, their athletic departments remained fairly silent on LGBT issues and had a kind of "don't ask, don't tell" policy. In Domain IV: *Negotiating* i*dentities,* participants described the ways in which they negotiated their identities. Specifically, they emphasized the fact that there was more to their personhood than being gay, and that they revealed or concealed certain aspects of their identity depending on the context in they were in. Many practical recommendations for college campuses (Domain V) also came out of the interviews that have the potential to make the sport environment friendlier for lesbian and other sexual minority athletes. These recommendations are useful for applied sport psychology consultants, coaches, and administrators, all of whom play an important part in athletes' collegiate sport experience.

*LGB, LGBT, LGBTQ, etc. will be used in the document depending upon an author's use of it.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss a personal story from a friend of mine, as well as provide a brief literature review and a list of key terms with their definitions. I also discuss the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and both limitations and delimitations of the study.

A Personal Story

A good friend of mine struggled with her sexual identity for awhile. She repressed so many thoughts for a number of years; the fact that she might be gay was very anxiety-provoking for her. She had never known anyone who was gay, and, she had only heard about stereotypes from the media; she did not think that she fit the stereotypes, which added to her confusion. Late into her undergraduate career, she could not repress these thoughts and feelings anymore. Deep down, she knew she was gay and she knew it was time to accept it. However, she was too scared to tell anyone. Then, she met other people who were gay; when she came out to them, everything changed. She finally started feeling at ease with who she really was. She gained confidence and decided to come out to her really close friends. She was terrified of what their reactions might be. However, they accepted her and told her they would love her no matter what. She was both happy and relieved. She also started to notice that she was less anxious; it felt good to be able to truly be herself around the people she cared about. She eventually started entering the dating scene, and, for the first time in her life, everything just felt right.

However, as with many LGBT individuals, life can sometimes be pretty tough due to one's sexual orientation. She had not planned on telling her parents at the time when they found out she was gay; one day, she was confronted about her sexual orientation and dragged out of the closet by her mother. Her mother was extremely upset, and, she made that very clear with the pretty hateful things that were said. Religious and social reasons were given as to why it was not

okay to be gay. For the first time, my friend had truly experienced the pain that way too many LGBT individuals go through with their families. At that moment, she knew true fear of what could happen if she came out-that those around her would not love her anymore and that they would reject her for who she is.

Surprisingly, before she went off to graduate school, her mom made a vow that she would try to better understand her situation. So, when my friend started grad school, she felt at ease because she could live her life and be true to herself in new surroundings. She told new friends that she was gay, and, they were perfectly okay with that. During one class, given the content that was going to be presented that day, she decided to come out to all of her classmates. She was extremely nervous, but when she did it, it felt as though a huge weight was lifted off her shoulders. Classmates thanked her for trusting them, and she felt great. To her, it was a pretty incredible moment.

Currently, she is very happy with her girlfriend who she has been dating for awhile. Even though her mother is still not very comfortable with everything, there is more open communication between the two of them. My friend is content with being out to her friends and other select individuals, but otherwise, she wants to keep her sexual orientation private. She knows all too well the negative consequences that could happen as a result of her being out publicly; some people still look down upon LGBT individuals and do not hesitate to make that known. Plus, she sees in the media that people are still being fired for being gay and that sport is still not fully okay with gay athletes.

I believe that it is not fair that LGBT individuals are still treated as less than equal and that they often have to live their lives in fear and with caution. I also do not understand why people think it is okay to discriminate against them and/or harass them. It makes me angry that

people have to go through so much pain just for being who they are. Also, as someone who is in a sport-related field, it is disheartening that so many gay athletes have to live in the closet in order to avoid being harassed, discriminated against, or bullied. Even though there have been improvements in the climate of sport for LGBT athletes, I would like to see a lot more progress take place very soon.

Brief Literature Review and Key Terms

The American Psychological Association (APA)(2011) has defined sexual orientation as falling on a spectrum or continuum from "exclusive homosexuality" to "exclusive heterosexuality" (e.g., the LGBT spectrum). Sexual orientation is, in fact, thought to be more fluid than most people think. Part of the full spectrum, for example, includes LGBTQQIAAP (queer@umich.com Editors, 2014):

Lesbian: A woman who is primarily sexually and romantically attracted to women;

Gay: A person who is primarily sexually and romantically attracted to persons of the same gender;

Bisexual: A person who is primarily sexually and romantically attracted to persons of the same gender, other genders, or regardless of gender;

Transgender: A person whose gender identity differs from the societally-defined gender the person was assigned at birth;

Queer: A gender-neutral term used as an umbrella term for the whole spectrum;

Questioning: A person who is unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity;

Intersex: A person who is born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system that is not exclusively male or female;

Asexual: A person who is not sexually attracted to anybody;

Ally: Someone who is supportive and advocates for members of communities outside of their self-identified community;

Pansexual: A person who is attracted to all persons and whose sexual orientation is often fluid. (queer@umich.com Editors, 2014)

Recent LGBTQ history. In 1892, the word "heterosexual" was used for the first time, marking the beginning of a time when anyone who was not heterosexual was viewed as the "other" (Eaklor, 2008). It would not be until the late 1960s and the 1970s when the fight for gay rights would take off (TIME Staff, 2013). The beating of gay men at The Stonewall Inn in 1969 prompted strong reactions from the LGBT community. The 1970s saw the rise and death of gay rights activist Harvey Milk and homosexuality no longer being declared a mental disorder (Eaklor, 2008). The fight against AIDS was at the forefront of the gay rights movement in the 1980s and 1990s, and the murder of Matthew Shepard sent shockwaves through the nation. The year 2000 was a turning point in the gay rights movement with Vermont legalizing civil unions for same-sex couples; in 2004, Massachusetts became the first state to allow same-sex marriage. In 2013, the Defense of Marriage Act was declared unconstitutional, recognizing federal rights and benefits for same-sex couples. Today, seventeen states and the District of Columbia allow same-sex marriage (Freedom to Marry, Inc., 2013).

LGBTQ harassment. The LGBTQ community is vulnerable to harassment due to its marginalized status, and individuals who identify as LGBTQ can begin to experience harassment as early as middle school or high school. Williams, Connolly, Pepler, and Craig (2005) found that students who identified as LBGTQ were harassed more frequently than their heterosexual counterparts. Verbal insults were often cited as the most frequent form of harassment (Hershberger & D'Augelli, 1995). As LGBTQ youth get older, they are still vulnerable to

harassment. Research suggests that individuals whose appearance and mannerisms are consistent with homosexual stereotypes tend to be harassed more frequently. Levitt, Puckett, Ippolito, and Horne (2012) found that sexual minority women who identified as "butch" reported more instances of sexual harassment than women who identified as "femme." Butch-identified women tend to take on an appearance and some mannerisms that would be typically viewed as "masculine" by society while femme-identified women have the appearance of what would be viewed as "feminine" in the eyes of society.

Queer theory. One way to look at women's experiences in sport is through queer theory. Queer theorists emphasize resistance (Abes & Kasch, 2007) and are concerned with denaturalizing and dismantling the structuring of heterosexuality and homosexuality as opposites in favor of a continuum of identity (Eng, 2006; Greene, 1996). Plus, they prefer to look at identity as constantly changing throughout one's life. Their aim is to create awareness of the privileging of heterosexuals (Krane, 2001a). Sport is such an institution that places heterosexuals on pedestals; thus, it is a place where lesbian athletes can be disadvantaged and vulnerable to discrimination and harassment.

Intersectionality. Intersectionality is "the idea that various forms of oppression interact with one another in multiple complex ways" (Garry, 2011, p. 826). Theorists using this idea of intersectionality critically analyze how oppression and privilege occur both between groups and within groups (Battle & Ashley, 2008). Using Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) work, Fisher, Anders, & DeVita (in review) explored how *intersectionality*-discrimination based on several identity categories versus only just one- could be used in sport psychology theorizing Intersectionality theorists also take a critical look at how individuals decide to reveal certain aspects of their identity depending on the context of the situation (Fisher & Anders, 2010).

"Passing." An individual's various identities can affect how s/he comes to term with sexual orientation and how s/he goes about interacting with others and coming out. Religious faith and other identities and factors are influential in the decision of an individual to reveal or hide his/her identity in a certain situation or around a particular group of people. The choice to conceal one's sexual orientation and thus allow others to think one is heterosexual is referred to as "passing" (Shippee, 2011). For example, gay men and lesbians might purposely pass as heterosexual around religious conservatives and very masculine and heterosexual men (Shippee, 2011). A component of this "passing" may include avoiding carrying oneself and dressing in a manner that is consistent with stereotypes of gays and lesbians (Sykes, 2009). By "passing," gay men and lesbians can avoid experiencing the negative consequences that are associated with the stigmatizing characteristic of being gay or lesbian (Shippee, 2011).

"Coming out." "Coming out" is defined as the disclosure of one's sexual minority identity (Heatherington & Lavner, 2008). The decision to come out often requires a lot of reflection and consideration of the reactions and consequences that may result. Many factors including race, religion, family cohesion, and quality of the parent-child relationship can be influential in the choice to come out and how the family reacts to the individual's coming out. Coming out can be verbal or nonverbal in nature, both of which are effective in letting others know about one's sexual orientation and fostering tolerant and accepting environments (Iannotta & Kane, 2002). However, if one does not talk about LGBTQQIAAP issues and hides her/his sexual orientation, s/he is engaging in "silence" (Krane & Barber, 2005).

Attitudes toward those of a sexual minority. There is some evidence that society's attitudes towards the LGBT community might be becoming more progressive. It has been shown that heterosexual students have neutral associations and positive attitudes toward gay people

(Breen & Karpinski, 2013). Relevant to athletics, most athletic trainers appear to have relatively positive attitudes toward gay athletes (Ensign, Yiamouyiannis, White, & Ridpath, 2011). In addition, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I (DI) coaches were surveyed about their attitudes toward LGB people, and results indicated that, overall, they have positive attitudes toward that community.

Lesbians in sport. The stereotype that female athletes are lesbians has been around for a long time (Griffin, 1998). While this is not true of all female athletes, some are lesbian. According to Griffin (1998), there are stereotyped associations between lesbians and sport. For example, some people believe that certain sports have a higher proportion of lesbian athletes compared to other sports and that sport actually turns girls into lesbians. Griffin also said that lesbian athletes are sometimes subject to hostile environments; many will not come out to their team out of fear of repercussions.

Statement of Problem

Homophobia still exists in sport today. LGBTQ athletes are often subjected to unfriendly sport environments where they feel uncomfortable being who they are (Ensign et al., 2011). Certain athletes may feel it is necessary to hide their sexual identity in order to avoid any negative repercussions of coming out, which could range from rejection from teammates to the loss of a scholarship. However, there are signs that may indicate that the social atmosphere of sport is changing for the better (Ensign et al., 2011; Oswalt & Vargas, 2013).

More professional athletes are starting to come out, and with positive change happening in society as a whole, the effects could potentially funnel down into NCAA DI sport. Therefore, gaining an understanding of the experiences of lesbian athletes from their points of view would be valuable in more ways than one. For example, one could ask: What was the atmosphere like

for LGBT students and athletes at your former university? For sport psychology consultants, it is important to gain a better understanding of the issues that lesbian athletes face. Increased understanding may lead to more well-rounded professionals who will have the knowledge to more effectively serve the needs of their athletes. In addition, gaining some insight into how sport can be a more welcoming environment for LGBT athletes can provide universities and university athletic departments with beneficial information that they can use to implement a variety of different programs and resources.

Purpose of the Study

Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the U.S. NCAA DI sport experience of lesbian student-athletes.[1] Included in this purpose was the desire to find out about the atmosphere for LGBT students and athletes at participants' former universities, their perception of their various identities, and society's views on female athletes and lesbians.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was generalizability. It could not be assumed that participant experiences and views are similar to those of other lesbian athletes. The experiences of a lesbian athlete at one university might be very different from the experiences of a lesbian athlete at another university based on a variety of factors. Plus, the participants who agreed to be interviewed might be different in terms of characteristics or experiences than those who did not agree to be interviewed.

[1] The original intent was to gain the experiences of lesbian collegiate athletes who had been sexually harassed during their time as a collegiate athlete. However, no participants were able to be recruited, and the sexual harassment piece was dropped.

Delimitations

There were several delimitations of this study, specifically related to the sample. First, participants were all female and identified as lesbian. They were also all former U.S. NCAA DI student-athletes. The focus was on DI student-athletes for several reasons. First, DI student-athletes are often high-profile athletes who are widely known around campus. Plus, they are consistently under a lot of pressure to perform at an elite level. Watt and Moore III (2001) talk about student-athletes' college experience versus other students' college experience:

> Division I student athletes might have fewer opportunities to be a part of the traditional college experience because of the demands of athletic participation at that level, including the high benefits and costs (both immediate and long term) of win-loss records, and of media attention and scrutiny. (p. 12)

Additionally, student-athletes have been found to experience more stress with "conflicts with a boyfriend's or girlfriend's family", "having a lot of responsibilities", "not getting enough time for sleep", and "having heavy demands from extracurricular activities than other college students" (Wilson & Pritchard, 2005, p. 4).

Additional Key Definitions

Bisexual- a term used to describe an individual who is "attracted to both sexes" (APA, 2008, p. 1).

Feminine- possessing traits traditionally considered to be associated with females, such as being "emotional, passive, dependent, maternal, compassionate, and gentle" (Krane, 2001b, p. 117).

Gay- a term used to describe a man who is "attracted to men" (APA, 2008, p. 1); may also refer to a homosexual woman (i.e. "gay woman") (American Psychiatric Association, 2014).

Gender- "the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for boys and men or girls and women" (APA, 2011, p. 1).

Heteropatriarchy- organizations and institutions that are set-up in such a way that heterosexuals and heterosexual ideals are privileged or deemed more acceptable than anything that deviates from these norms; heterosexual males are viewed as superior to others (Krane, 2001a).

Heterosexism- occurs when an institution, an organization, or people oppress individuals of non-heterosexual orientation (Symons, 2007).

Homophobia- "the fear or hatred of homosexuality" (Griffin, 1993, p. 194).

Intersectionality- "minimally the idea that various forms of oppression interact with one another in multiple complex ways" (Garry, 2011, p. 826).

Lesbian- a term used to describe a woman who is "attracted to women" (APA, 2008, p. 1).

LGBTQ- acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (Symons, 2007).

Masculine- possessing traits traditionally considered to be associated with males, such as "strength, competitiveness, assertiveness, confidence, and independence" (Krane, 2001b, p. 117).

Minority group- "any recognizable racial, religious, ethnic, or social group that suffers from some disadvantage resulting from the action of a dominant group with higher social status and greater privileges" (Persell, 1996, p.11).

Queer – aka- "gender queer;" "a term that some people use who identify their gender as falling outside the binary constructs of 'male' and 'female.'" (APA, 2011, p. 2).

Queer theory- a theory that "critically analyzes the meaning of identity, focusing on intersections of identities and resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender" (Abes & Kasch, 2007, p. 620).

Sex- "assigned at birth, refers to one's biological status as either male or female, and is associated primarily with physical attributes such as chromosomes, hormone prevalence, and external and internal anatomy" (APA, 2011, p. 1).

Sexual harassment- "unwanted and unwelcome sexual behavior which interferes with your life" (Hill & Silva, 2005, p. 6).

Sexual orientation- "an individual's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to another person" (APA, 2011, p. 2).

Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972- a law that prohibited any form of discrimination based on sex in all areas of education, including sport (Wolohan & Mathes, 1996).

Transgender- "persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behavior does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth" (APA, 2011, p. 1).

In the next chapter, I provide a literature review of lesbians and lesbians in sport. I discuss a brief history of the Gay Rights Movement and a social and historical timeline of LGBT issues in addition to queer theory, intersectionality, sexual minority identity, and the struggles of lesbian athletes.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I provide a literature review of lesbians and lesbians in sport. In particular, I discuss a brief history of the Gay Rights Movement and a social and historical timeline of LGBT issues in addition to queer theory, intersectionality, sexual minority identity, and the struggles of lesbian athletes.

Recent LGBTQ History

The first known use of the term "heterosexual" in the U.S. occurred in 1892 (Eaklor, 2008). This label would come to symbolize privilege and what is considered "normal" in society. "Homosexual" would become its opposite and would come to symbolize a deviation from the "norm" Eaklor, 2008). From then on, gays, lesbians, and individuals of other sexual minorities would fight for equality to no longer be viewed as "abnormal" and to receive the same rights as everyone else.

In the 1897 book *Sexual Inversion* by Havelock Ellis, one of the topics that he discussed is lesbian sexuality (Vicinus, 2012). According to Vicinus (2012), Ellis did not lay out a precise definition of the term. Instead, he focused on appearance and asserted that there were two kinds of lesbians. Specifically, a lesbian either appeared very feminine or very masculine. Further, Vicinus (2012) claimed that Ellis "frames lesbianism as an emotion, a sexual act, a general reversal, and [as] either situational or innate" (p. 566). Thus, while limited, Ellis's view of lesbianism was multifaceted and included both emotional and physical attraction. Plus, the degree of lesbian attraction varied; either a woman was only attracted to another woman in a particular context or a woman was attracted to women in general due to something in her genes. According to Vicinus (2012), it was around this time that homosexuality was declared abnormal, or a "nonnormative identity" (p. 569).

Aside from the development of the Society for Human Rights in 1924, there was some stagnation in the fight for gay rights until the 1970s (Eaklor, 2008; TIME Staff, 2013). Much of the impetus for the movement came from the riots at The Stonewall Inn in New York City in 1969 after gay men were beaten by cops (TIME Staff, 2013). The 1970s were a time when "coming out" stories became popular, and people started to sift through history for women they believed to be lesbians (Vicinus, 2012). Among significant events in the 1970s were: (a) the first gay pride parades in 1970; (b) homosexuality is no longer declared a disorder by the American Psychiatric Association in 1974; and (c) the rise and death of gay rights activist Harvey Milk (TIME Staff, 2013). Much of the 1980s and 1990s were focused on fighting AIDS. Also in the 1990s, Ellen DeGeneres came out, and the murder of Mathew Shepard provided a harsh insight into the progress that needed to be made in the gay rights movement.

However, the turn of the 21st century saw the beginning of many changes that would occur for the LGBT community. In 2000, Vermont became the first state to legalize civil unions for same-sex couples (Eaklor, 2008). It was not until 2004, however, that Massachusetts became the first state to allow same-sex marriage. It was legalized in Connecticut in 2008, and other states followed suit in later years (TIME Staff, 2013). In 2011, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed; the policy prohibited openly lesbian and gay military personnel. Two years later, a landmark decision was made when the Defense of Marriage Act was ruled unconstitutional, recognizing the federal rights of same-sex couples. As of this writing (2014), same-sex couples are allowed to get married in seventeen states (plus the District of Columbia). However, couples are challenging the rulings on same-sex marriage in other states, so that number may continue to grow.

Professional athletes. While professional athletes have been coming out for several decades, within the past few years, a few have garnered the greatest amount of attention. In 2013, Robbie Rogers became the first publicly gay soccer player in MLS (Breen, 2013). Also in 2013, Jason Collins became the first active NBA player to come out as gay; while he was not on a team at the time, he still made history by being the first active male athlete to come out as gay from either the NBA, NFL, MLB, or NHL. He added to that history when he became the first publicly gay NBA player to sign a 10-day contract with the Brooklyn Nets in 2014. The year 2014 was also a big year for Michael Sam, the SEC (Missouri) Co-Defensive Player of the Year in the 2013 college football season, who came out as gay (TIME Staff, 2013). Again, at the time of this writing (2014), it remains to be seen if Michael Sam will be selected by a team in the NFL draft. If this is the case, he will become the first publicly gay NFL player.

It is interesting that these male athletes were all over the news while female athletes also came out; however, they did not receive the same amount of attention. Megan Rapinoe of the U.S. women's soccer team came out in 2012, and Abby Wambach, also of the U.S. women's soccer team, married her partner in 2013, but there was no media frenzy surrounding their stories (OUT.com Editors, 2013; Washington Post Staff, 2014). Current WNBA player Brittney Griner also came out in 2013. Thus, this lack of exposure or even surprise to professional female athletes coming out might indicate that it is almost expected that some female athletes in certain sports are gay (Griffin, 1998). Male athletes, on the other hand, are not expected to be gay.

The LGBTQQIAAP Community and Harassment

It is yet to be determined if the above mentioned professional athletes will be the targets of harassment. It has been well-known, however, that the LGBTQ community has been targeted with various forms of discrimination, harassment, and violence over the years. Being an LGBTQ

student in middle and high school can be tough, as one's sexual orientation minority status can leave one vulnerable to bullying from other students, sometimes in the form of sexual harassment (Fineran, 2002). Plus, homophobic slurs are used to insult students who seem different and are picked on, even if those students are not LGBTQ. Thus, those slurs are used in derogatory ways and are meant to degrade individuals, as they are meant to make people feel "inferior" or "abnormal." Such conditions exist due to the normalization and admiration of heterosexuality in our culture as well at the fact that some people see otherwise sexually harassing behaviors or bullying behaviors as "typical" of kids and teenagers (Fineran, 2002). Further, according to Fineran (2002), a lot of the time, if it is same-sex harassment, it arises out of homophobia. A group of boys calling a gay student a "fag," a "faggot," or a "queer" is a kind of verbal same-sex sexual harassment that creates a hostile environment for that student. A similar circumstance for a lesbian would be a group of girls calling her a "dyke."

Harassment and LGBTQ youth. Research shows that students of a sexual minority may be more vulnerable to bullying and sexual harassment than their fellow students. Williams, Connolly, Pepler, and Craig (2005) surveyed both LGBQ and heterosexual students and found that students who identified as a sexual minority reported experiencing more incidences of both bullying and sexual harassment than heterosexual students. In addition, LGBQ students also reported low levels of social support compared to heterosexual students. Combining these two findings, it is possible that the bullying and harassment as well as the low levels of social support contributed to LGBQ students' high levels of depression. However, given that there were not a lot of students in the sample of LGBQ students, caution should be taken when trying to generalize these findings.

However, these findings were similar to those in a study from Hershberger and D'Augelli (1995). They also found that LGB students experienced high levels of bulling and harassment with verbal insults being the most frequently cited form. Twenty-two percent of the students reported being the victims of sexual assault. The mental health of the students in this study was negatively impacted as well but only for students who had low levels of self-acceptance. Again, the generalizability of the findings is limited due to low numbers of females in the sample as well as the fact that their level of being out to the students at school could have affected the amounts of bullying and harassment that they faced.

Pendragon (2010) interviewed a group of females between the ages of 18 and 23 years who identified as a sexual minority about their experiences in high school and their responses to those experiences. These women reported feeling isolated, lacking access to knowledge about sexuality, lacking role models, being unaccepted by peers and families, being harassed or the victim of violence, and being fearful about potential violence in the future. The harassment often came in the form of negative remarks, and the perpetrators of the harassment were not just fellow peers; they were also adults. These young women tried as best as they could to cope with these negative experiences by getting support from those who were closest to them, being resilient, and seeking out educational resources. However, some women also took no action about the situations. While these were the responses of the 15 women in this study, other individuals who did not participate in this study might have dealt with the same situations differently.

LGBTQ youth and Title IX. The substantial amount of harassment that LGBTQ youth experience in middle school and high school is unfortunate. These students are protected from harassment under Title IX (Stader & Graca, 2007). A suit can be brought against a school if its administration fails to take corrective action when one of its students is being harassed because

of his/her sexual orientation. This harassment can be verbal or physical. While one might think that schools would look out for all of their students' best interests regardless of who they are or what they identify as, this is sadly not the case. There are numerous instances where teachers and school staff did not take any action when presented with a case of a student being harassed because of his/her sexual orientation (Stader & Graca, 2007). Whatever their reason might have been, it is unfortunate that LGBTQ students have to endure this kind of harassment and that there are teachers and administrative staff who will not do anything about it. Every student deserves to be protected from harassment and feel safe while at school. On an interesting side note, despite the fact that LGBT students are protected under Title VII, LGBT individuals in the workplace are not protected from harassment and discrimination under Title VII (Berkley & Watt, 2006). Thus, more work has to be done to protect employees of all sexual orientations at all institutions.

Experiences of sexual harassment amongst sexual minority women. Research suggests that there may be differences between sexual minorities in how often they experience harassment and other negative events depending on their appearance and how they identify themselves. Levitt, Puckett, Ippolito, and Horne (2012) surveyed a group of women throughout the U.S. and Canada about their gender identities and gender expression in addition to their experiences with negative events. They found that women who identified as "butch" (e.g., those women who have an appearance viewed as typically "masculine" by society) reported a higher frequency of violence, threats of violence, discrimination, and victimization than women who identified as "femme" (e.g., those women who have an appearance viewed as typically "feminine" in the eyes of society). In fact, half (50.2%) of butch-identified women reported being insulted at some point in their lives. Since women who have a more "masculine" appearance and who exude "masculine" characteristics are associated with being lesbian, those

women who are, in fact, lesbian might be more vulnerable to harassment and other negative events.

Sexual minority women on college campuses are also not immune to negative experiences due to their sexual orientation. Evans and Broido (2002) interviewed ten lesbian and bisexual students and found that their experiences in college residence halls were often negative. Some of them did not feel comfortable letting other women on their floor know of their sexual identity as they felt that their floors were not very welcoming towards homosexuality. Some of them also stated that they were harassed because of their sexual identity, and that they heard or saw homophobic acts in the form of harassment or remarks. In addition, some women dealt with homophobic roommates who would say negative things to them about their sexuality. However, while still an important study, given its small sample size(e.g., 10 participants at one university), the generalizability of the findings is limited.

Sexual orientation and sexual harassment. When sexual harassment occurs, what kinds of effects, if any, does the sexual orientation of the individuals involved have on the perception of that harassment? College students from the U.S. and Brazil were asked about their perceptions of sexual harassment when prompted with imaginary scenarios of woman-to-woman sexual harassment that included women of various sexual orientations (DeSouza, Solberg, & Elder, 2007). In general, when the sexual harassment scenario included two heterosexual women, it was less likely to be labeled as harassment than the other scenarios. Specifically, for the U.S. students, they were most likely to label the behaviors as sexual harassment when the scenario included a heterosexual victim and a lesbian perpetrator. Yet, it should be noted that they were almost just as likely to perceive the occurrence of sexual harassment when the scenario included a lesbian victim and a heterosexual perpetrator.

In a similar study by Castillo, Muscarella, and Szuchman (2011), college students who held negative attitudes about homosexuality were more likely to say that sexual harassment occurred in a scenario between a perpetrator and victim who were of the same sex than those students who did not hold negative attitudes about homosexuality. The students rated the scenarios in such a manner even though the sexual orientations of the perpetrators and victims were not known. It is quite possible that these students assumed that the perpetrators were homosexual. Thus, it seems as though sexual orientation does matter in certain perceptions regarding sexual harassment, especially when those who are examining the sexual harassment hold negative attitudes about homosexuality.

Queer Theory

One can examine the experiences of women in sport via many different perspectives and theories, one such theory being queer theory. The main tenant of queer theory is resistance (Abes & Kasch, 2007). Queer theorists also question the definition of what is "normal" in society (Abes, 2007)and try to challenge the widely-held view that heterosexuality is what is "natural" (Eng, 2006). With heterosexuality considered to be "natural," its "opposite," homosexuality, is dubbed "unnatural" (Filax, 2006). What is natural is what is accepted, and if an individual goes against what is natural/accepted, then s/he is rejected by some people or institutions in society. According to Krane (2001a), "Queer theory questions traditional notions and expectations of heterosexuality, femininity, masculinity, and even sex and gender (p. 404).Further, Krane noted that queer theorists reject the idea of opposites in identity and prefer that sexual identity to be examined on a continuum. Identity is, therefore, viewed as something that constantly changes throughout one's life (Krane, 2001a).

Queer theorists also analyze how heterosexuals are privileged and non-heterosexuals are disadvantaged in society. In sport, heterosexual male athletes are the most privileged, which makes this institution a heteropatriarchy (e.g., an organization's structure privileges the values and ideals of heterosexual men) (Krane, 2001a). In women's sports, straight female athletes are often rewarded while lesbian athletes are disadvantaged. Congruently, the closer a female athlete is to portraying hegemonic femininity (e.g., carrying oneself in a manner that is considered to be traditionally "feminine"), the more accepted she is by society (Krane, 2001a). This is due to the fact that she is performing gender "correctly"-she is a female, so, she should be feminine and act in characteristically feminine ways (Krane, Waldron, Kaur, & Semerjian, 2010). Queer theorists would try to contest these so-called norms that have been established in sport.

However, not everyone agrees that examining certain phenomena via queer theory is beneficial. Edward and Jones (2009) contended that social categories and identities sometimes enable certain groups of people to promote their cause. They state, "Deconstructing the 'gay' and 'straight' categories threatens the political viability of gay and lesbian rights" (p. 335). This could cause some trouble for the gay rights moment to end homophobia in sports.

Applying queer theory to sport. According to Krane et al. (2010), queering sport psychology is "the process of destabilizing heteronormativity while recognizing the existence of LGBT identities in sport" (p. 153). It is also meant to "confront dominant practices that privilege heterosexuality and to establish alternative practices and structures that value all sexual and gender identities" (Krane et al., 2010, p. 154). Thus, the focus is on normalizing all sexual orientations in sport so that no identity is viewed as the "other." Further, all expressions of gender should be permitted and accepted.

Since heterosexuality is a dominant force and is one that is privileged, homophobia (e.g., the irrational fear of gay people) is widespread at all levels of sport (Symons, 2007). According to Eng (2006), "Homosexuality is characterized by rumours, myths, and taboos" (p. 58). Homophobia can lead to hostile environments which, in turn, can lead to harassment and discrimination. If an athlete of a sexual minority comes out, s/he risks being subjected to these issues as well as losing a scholarship or endorsements. In addition, for lesbian women in sport, the fact that they are neither heterosexual nor dependent on men is perceived very negatively; this can sometimes make sport an unfriendly atmosphere for lesbians.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality has been referred to as the "most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). Intersectionality is "the idea that various forms of oppression interact with one another in multiple complex ways" (Garry, 2011, p. 826). The ways in which theorists approach the aspect of multiple identities varies from using already established categories to disapproving of categories, or somewhere in-between (McCall, 2005). While intersectionality theorists mainly analyzes how oppression and privilege occur between two groups, they also analyze how oppression occurs within groups themselves (Battle & Ashley, 2008). Battle and Ashley (2008) related intersectionality to heteronormativity in the following way:

> Heteronormativity is more than the processes of patriarchy, heterosexism, and compulsory heterosexuality; it also contains elements of racial and class "othering." It maintains itself by oppressing and marginalizing certain bodies based on certain identity categories. (p. 5)

Intersectionality in sport. Using Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) work, Fisher, Anders, and DeVita (in review) explored how *intersectionality*—discrimination based on several identity categories versus only just one—could be used in sport psychology theorizing. Crenshaw (1991) argued that race and gender (among other identity categories) interact together to make an individual susceptible to multiple intersections of discrimination. Specifically, she critically examined how women of color were marginalized by both racism and sexism (Crenshaw, 1991). Reflecting on the legal cases that influenced intersectionality, Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) stated, "Black female claimants were unsuccessful…in their attempts to articulate a compound claim of discrimination (specifically, their having been excluded from the workforce both as women who are Black and as Blacks who are women)" (p. 790). Therefore, the courts actually denied women the ability to be compensated based on multiple intersections of discrimination, namely the compound effect of gender and racial discrimination.

Another piece of intersectionality involves the degree to which individuals emphasize certain aspects of their identities. This depends on the context of the situation- the people that the person is with as well as where they are (Fisher, Anders, & DeVita, in review). Everyone has multiple identities, and they all influence each other. According to Fisher, Roper, and Butryn (2009), the athlete identity is shaped by the other identities of a person:

> An athlete is not just an athlete but a gendered, raced, classed, sexually oriented, able-bodied human being. Such a poststructural theoretical orientation assumes that athletes' identities are multiple, fragmented, and dependent upon location rather than fixed or unchangeable. (p. 24)

There are many benefits of using intersectional identity theory. For example, it is inclusive of everyone, no matter race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.; it accounts for aspects of

identity that oppress and privilege an individual (Garry, 2011). It also suggests that marginalization should be a starting point for research. Further, it offers a perspective on how different forms of oppression and privilege work together, forcing those in power to examine how they are privileged in society.

However, intersectional identity theory is not without limitations. Garry (2011) suggested that it is not a type of methodology or a theory of identity formation or oppression, but rather, a framework. She also asserted that intersectional identity theory gives an idea of what can be analyzed but not how it can be analyzed. In addition, the degree to which several identities intersect in one situation will be different from how they intersect in other situations; it depends on the context. Other criticisms of intersectionality is that it mainly focuses on race and gender, does not account for the constant changes with identity, and that there is no more opportunity for it to progress (Carbado, 2013).

Sexual Minority Identity

Lesbians and other individuals of a sexual minority often have to negotiate between their various identities. For instance, they might have to work to negotiate their sexual orientation and their religious faith. African-Americans have been known to place faith as something at the center of their lives, and religious messages often conflict with homosexuality (Walker & Longmire-Avital, 2012). Black LGB[2] people might struggle with accepting their sexual orientation because of their exposure to these messages, and, thus, internalize negative thoughts and feelings about themselves. However, while the results of a survey by Walker and Longmire-Avital (2012) revealed that religious faith was positively correlated with negative thoughts about one's sexual orientation for African-American LGB young adults, they also showed that

[2] The authors used the descriptor "Black" instead of "African-American"; only lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals were surveyed.

religiosity was an important factor for resiliency. Thus, it seems that religious faith may help one be more resilient and cope with negative thoughts even though its messages might conflict with homosexuality. However, Walker and Longmire-Avital (2012) also warned that if Black LGB individuals seek out guidance from religious mentors and leaders about their sexuality, their negative thoughts might become exacerbated.

Religious faith is just one identity that can affect how one goes about dealing with his or her sexual orientation. In fact, an individual might choose to hide his or her sexual identity from other religious family, friends, and coworkers to avoid any kind of negativity that could result from his or her sexual identity being revealed. This is related to the idea of "passing," which Shippee (2011) defined as "the process whereby individuals conceal stigmatizing attributes" (p. 115). In this case, one's sexual orientation is the stigmatizing attribute, and by concealing this, one is engaging in "passing" as heterosexual. When discussing the physical education system, Griffin and Genasci (1990) claimed, "Because of the extreme negative stigma attached to homosexuality in our culture, many, perhaps most, gay and lesbian people live double lives and are invisible members of our schools and communities" (p. 212).

Gay men and lesbians may also not pass all the time, but choose to pass in certain situations (Shippee, 2011). Shippee (2011) found that gay men and lesbians exercised caution at times by choosing to pass in front of people whom they assumed possessed particular characteristics. Such people included conservatives, specifically religious conservatives, Republicans, and people from small towns in addition to males who they viewed as very heterosexual and masculine. Their concern appears to be valid as religiosity is often linked to intolerance and has shown to be a reason for not supporting the protection of sexual minority individuals in a diversity statement (Sartore & Cunningham, 2010). Further, in Shippee's study,

"the conservative department was characterized as more prejudicial and discriminatory toward nonheterosexuals than the progressive department" when comparing two health and kinesiology departments (Sartore & Cunningham, 2010, p. 492). Passing also occurred if individuals knew that their family members were against it, if they were not close with certain family members, or if they were unsure of what the reactions would be from people in a public setting (Shippee, 2011).

The participants in the Shippee (2011) study engaged in passing in a multitude of ways. Participants reported that they often did not reveal their identity because, in general conversation with people, sexuality is something that is not viewed as an appropriate topic of conversation, so they were not even asked about their relationship status. In addition, they just let other people assume they were straight. In other instances, they purposely chose not to disclose their sexual orientation or they gave ambiguous answers or used neutral and plural pronouns when talking about significant others.

Lesbians and other sexual minority individuals also have to decide the degree to which their sexual identity is revealed, and they engage in other strategies aside from passing to make their orientation less noticeable. For instance, they might be cautious about how they express their gender (Sykes, 2009). In response, they might not stray too far away from the "socially acceptable" appearance for males and females. Alternatively, they might first come out as bisexual or queer before they come out as gay or lesbian, as the former labels tend to be more comfortable labels for those individuals at that time (Sykes, 2009).

The lesbian stigma. According to Shippee (2011), "Stigma is a trait or identity that is socially defined as deviant, and that marginalizes and discredits an individual or group" (p. 116). "Stigma has the power to disrupt social interaction, situational order, and the lives of those who

experience it (Shippee, 2011, p. 115).” It is also “dependent upon cultural and situational contexts” (Shippee, 2011, p. 116). Thus, depending on one’s situation, he or she might try to hide an attribute that has a stigma attached to it in order to avoid any negative consequences. In the case of sexual orientation, the lesbian identity along with other sexual minority identities is stigmatized in society. Thus, one might try to hide one’s lesbian identity in certain contexts to avoid being stigmatized. Women are susceptible to stigmatization in general, but female athletes are subject to even harsher stigmatization because they violate gender norms by participating in a “masculine” domain such as sport (Blinde & Taub, 1992). Blinde and Taub (1992) further stated that, “Although athleticism represents the initial discrediting attribute, its linkage with lesbianism magnifies the devaluation and stigmatization associated with female athletes” (p. 522).

The lesbian stigma is prevalent in sport, as people believe that many female athletes are lesbians; or, they like to attribute the lesbian identity to female athletes “as a means to subvert women’s status, power, influence, and experiences” (Sartore & Cunningham, 2009, p. 289). Sartore and Cunningham (2009) developed a model about the lesbian stigma as it applies to sport. Essentially, because of sport norms and the way sport is organized, women are viewed as outsiders. Further, since sport is seen as a masculine domain, females who participate in it are susceptible to being called lesbians since masculinity is often associated with the lesbian identity. However, their susceptibility to the label is much lower if they participate in sports that are considered to be more “feminine” such as gymnastics. Due to this stigmatization, there is a potential for them to be stereotyped, be discriminated against, and lose their status. Griffin (1993) stated, “Because lesbian stereotypes are so severe (sick, evil, abnormal, predatory), most women loath to be associated with them” (p. 195). Female athletes become concerned that being associated with the lesbian identity will lead to negative consequences associated with

stigmatization; they feel like who they are is under attack (Sartore & Cunningham, 2009). Yet, the degree to which they focus on being stigmatized because of their identity will determine how much they feel devalued by their identity.

Coming Out

Coming out is the disclosure of one's sexual minority identity (Heatherington & Lavner, 2008). It is a decision that often requires a lot of reflection and consideration of potential consequences. As a result, young people often find it very difficult to come out to their families. A variety of factors, including race and religion, influence the likelihood and consequences of disclosure. For instance, those with minority racial status are less likely to disclose their sexual minority identity to their families than are those who are Caucasian, and those from a religious upbringing report more negative familial reactions to disclosure than those who did not have a highly religious upbringing (Heatherington & Lavner, 2008). Further, the type of relationship that the child and parent have is also influential. Heatherington and Lavner (2008) purported that, "In general, higher parent-child relationship quality before disclosure has been shown to be associated with greater likelihood of disclosure and more positive parental reactions to disclosure" (p. 334). In addition, along with the parent and child having a positive relationship, a high degree of family cohesion can increase the chances of positive reactions to disclosure as well as foster the child's well-being (Heatherington & Lavner, 2008).

However, Iannotta and Kane (2002) believed that "there are multiple ways individuals can come out and be out" (p. 349). These include both verbal and nonverbal strategies, such as using ambiguous pronouns and words when describing partners, the way one dresses and carries herself, etc. This means that even though a coach is not verbally out to her players, she can serve as a role model to her players about what it means to gay and how "normal" it is by inviting her

partner to functions, not removing pictures of her partner when her players come to the house, etc.

An alternative to verbally or non-verbally coming out is the idea of "silence." According to Krane and Barber (2005), silence includes "concealing lesbian identities, invisibility, and lack of open conversation regarding issues related to lesbians in sport" (p. 68). In essence, silence entails doing everything possible to avoid talking about LGBT issues in addition to ensuring that one cannot be identified as a sexual minority. The lesbian coaches in Krane and Barber's (2005) study remained "silent" about who they were because that was the expectation in their athletic departments; they recognized that making their lesbian identity verbal and obvious could have negative consequences on their jobs.

If a lesbian engages in silence, she does not verbally acknowledge her sexual orientation to others. This is often viewed as damaging to the LGBT community. Griffin (1998) suggested that silence creates oppressive and corrosive stereotypes and environments. Thus, if lesbians continue to hide their sexual orientation, progress will not be made. However, Iannotta and Kane (2002) asserted that "silence, as it pertains to a lack of specific, explicit speech acts about one's sexual orientation, does not necessarily mean invisibility" (p. 361). Therefore, as it was found in their study, lesbians can let others know about their sexual orientation in nonverbal ways in lieu of verbally declaring it, which is still an effective way of promoting openness, tolerance, and acceptance.

Attitudes toward Those of a Sexual Minority

Despite the stereotypes about lesbians and the stigma that goes along with the lesbian label, it appears as though society's attitudes towards the LGBT community might be becoming more progressive. Either society as a whole is becoming more tolerant and accepting, or people

do not want to appear to be intolerant (Breen & Karpinski, 2013). Breen and Karpinski (2013) measured the implicit and explicit attitudes of a group of heterosexual college students toward gays and lesbians, and results revealed that they had neutral associations with gay people and positive explicit attitudes toward gay people. In addition, straight men viewed gay men more favorably than lesbians, and straight women viewed lesbians more favorably than gay men. The former is especially interesting as it is not uncommon for straight men to hold negative attitudes toward gay men (Ensign et al., 2011). However, the results of this study cannot be generalized to other college students or the general population as it was conducted at one university, and the female participants far outnumbered the male participants.

It also seems as though, as a whole, those who work with athletes at the collegiate level hold favorable attitudes toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletes. One factor that might play a role in general attitudes held is exposure. Specifically, individuals who have a family member or friend who identifies as LGB or who work with athletes they know are LGB tend to hold more positive attitudes toward that group of people than those who are not exposed to someone who is LGB (Ensign et al., 2011). This idea is consistent with the participants in the Shippee (2011) study who revealed that they did not disclose their sexual orientation to people who were from small towns because those people tended not to have exposure to diverse people, specifically the LGBT community. Ensign et al. (2011) surveyed 964 athletic trainers at NCAA institutions and found that 86.4% of them held somewhat positive to positive attitudes about LGB athletes. In contrast to Breen and Karpinski (2013), gender differences were found with the Ensign et al. (2011) study in that female athletic trainers reported more favorable attitudes than male athletic trainers.

Another professional that is part of an athlete's "team" on a daily basis is the coach. The type of atmosphere that the coach fosters can greatly influence the well-being of his or her athletes; therefore, coaches should foster an atmosphere that is welcoming and accepting of sexual minority athletes (Oswalt & Vargas, 2013). The attitudes held by coaches have the potential to affect the type of team atmosphere that they foster. Oswalt and Vargas (2013) surveyed 289 NCAA DI coaches from Southern U.S. universities about their attitudes toward LGB people and found that, as a whole, coaches reported having relatively positive attitudes. These findings are consistent with those of Breen and Karpinski (2013) and Ensign et al. (2011). However, it must be noted that the majority of these participants coached female athletes, and the results cannot be generalized to coaches from universities in other regions of the United States. It is also possible that only those with positive attitudes toward LGB individuals took part in the study. Yet, despite these positive and hopeful findings, there are still universities whose atmosphere is not conducive to LGB and other sexual minority students (Oswalt & Vargas, 2013). Thus, steps need to be taken to ensure that all college campuses and athletic departments are welcoming to students of a sexual minority.

Lesbians in Sport

Lesbian athletes are sometimes subjected to unfriendly conditions in the sport environment (Griffin, 1998). This is often the result of homophobia, which is "the [irrational] fear or hatred of homosexuality" (Griffin, 1993, p. 194). Sometimes, lesbians cannot reveal their sexual identity out of fear that harassment and discrimination will occur (Griffin, 1998). Taking it a step further, they might purposely act as heterosexually as possible in order to lead their teammates and coaches to believe that they are straight. If a lesbian athlete does come out, she could experience resentment from her teammates, her coach, or even male athletes.

Advocates of women's sport also try to avoid the topic of lesbians in sport as much as possible in an effort to not promote the lesbian image of the female athlete (Griffin, 1998). They might keep silent about lesbians in sport and homophobia so as not to bring up the subject, or they might even deny claims that there are lesbians on certain teams or that certain athletes are lesbians. Also, the media focuses on athletes who are viewed as "feminine" and "heterosexual" by reporting on their personal lives; they play up the sex appeal of certain female athletes to draw the attention of men (Griffin, 1998) and sponsors. Other individuals will try to create teams and look for teams that consist of only heterosexuals or that have a very heterosexual image. Plus, discrimination against and harassment of lesbian athletes and coaches abound, with athletes being on the receiving end of verbal harassment and athletic departments choosing to hire male coaches so that they can avoided people perceiving their female coaches as lesbians (Griffin, 1998). In addition, some female athletes and coaches will try to do whatever they can to not associate themselves with fellow lesbian athletes and coaches, even while recognizing their presence.

Some of the misconceptions that people have are that lesbians are more drawn to certain sports than others, that playing sports will lead one to become a lesbian, that lesbian athletes and coaches will prey on the younger heterosexual athletes, and that lesbian athletes are not good role models for children (Griffin, 1998). In addition, there are misconceptions that lesbians in sport rally against heterosexual athletes, and, that because lesbians in sport are "masculine," they hold advantages over straight, feminine athletes. Rebutting these misconceptions, Krane (1996) has stated, "Lesbians in sport are not a problem; how lesbians are treated and discrimination toward all female athletes are problems" (p. 237).

Lesbian athlete identity. Iannotta and Kane (2002) discussed Riemer's (1997) model of the development of a lesbian identity. According to this model, individuals move from internalizing homophobic beliefs to accepting one's sexual orientation. This occurs in four stages. Iannotta and Kane (2002) explained the model as the following:

> In the first stage of identity formation, an individual realizes that stereotypes about lesbians are false and begins to formulate a new set of beliefs about lesbianism; in the second stage, the individual realizes she is a lesbian; in the third stage or level she comes out to herself; in the final stage she begins to come out to others. (p. 351)

Krane (1996) developed a framework about the lesbian identity and the experiences of lesbian athletes that is similar to the model provided by Riemer (1997). There is a focus on the idea of homonegativism which is the "purposeful, not irrational, negative attitudes and behaviors toward nonheterosexuals" as well as heterosexism which is the devaluation of sexual orientations other than heterosexuality (Krane, 1996, p. 238). Basically, Krane (1996) contends that there is homonegativism and heterosexism in both society and in sport. People who identify as heterosexual are privileged, and either no portrayals or negative portrayals are shown in the media. Then, lesbians in sport have certain personal reactions to this homonegativism and heterosexism depending on their experiences. Specifically, they could internalize all of this negativity which, in turn, affects their self-esteem and can increase stress. In addition, it might lead them to cover up that aspect of their identity around their team, similarly to how the Shippee (2011) participants engaged in "passing" in certain situations. However, if they have social support and positive role models to help them cope with homonegativism, they can develop a positive lesbian identity (Krane, 1996). This positive identity includes living one's life in accordance with who they truly are instead of pretending to be heterosexual.

Sport is an example of a context in which a lesbian might either hide her identity or reveal it. If she feels like revealing her identity might jeopardize the relationships with her teammates, her position on the team, or any benefits that she receives, then she might choose to hide her identity or engage in "passing." This fear of negative consequences from disclosure is also highlighted in pop culture. Specifically, Dana Fairbanks, who is a fictional character in Showtime's former series, *The L Word*, is a professional tennis player who also identifies as a lesbian. According to Chawansky and Francombe (2013), "Fairbanks lives a guarded life in the beginning of Season One, constantly worrying that her lesbian subjectivity will hurt her ability to gain important corporate sponsorships that would assist her professional tennis career" (p. 140). However, Dana ends up being endorsed and marketed as a gay tennis player. While this is a fictional TV show, Chawansky and Francombe (2013) suggested that she is readily accepted for who she is because she is femme and pretty, which defies the masculine stereotype of lesbian athletes (Griffin, 1998).

However, in other instances, a lesbian athlete might choose to reveal her identity. Stoelting (2011) found that former lesbian college athletes revealed their identity to their team because they wanted to be honest with their teammates and not hide any true aspect of themselves. Specifically, "many of the lesbian athletes believed that being dishonest about their identities was more detrimental to their well-being than the potential negative consequences of disclosing their identities to others" (Stoelting, 2011, p. 1195).

Coaches and faculty. Lesbian coaches have also expressed that they felt like they were being dishonest with themselves and others because they did not disclose their identity to them (Krane & Barber, 2005). Further, they believed that disclosing their lesbian identity would aid in self-acceptance and would help normalize their sexual minority identity. Krane and Barber

(2005) interviewed 13 lesbian college coaches and found that "each woman struggled to negotiate her lesbian identity within this atmosphere, and all but one coach felt compelled to conceal her lesbian identity to some degree" (p. 71). When they felt that their teams or athletic departments were especially unaccepting of nonheterosexuals, they had to negotiate their identities of being a coach and being a lesbian; they would often go out of their way to ensure that they did not say or do anything that would associate them with the lesbian identity. Many coaches felt like they had to conceal their identity so that their jobs would not be compromised. However, the coaches who did not fully reveal their identity emphasized being respectful of diversity and did not hesitate addressing any negative things they heard about homosexuality.

Lesbian athletes and coaches are not the only individuals in the world of sport who must decide whether to hide or disclose their identity. For instance, lesbian faculty members in health and kinesiology departments at two universities reported that, depending on the audience, they were selective when disclosing their identity (Sartore & Cunningham, 2010).

In conclusion, while a lot of progress has been made in society and sport with improved conditions for and greater acceptance of the LGBT community in recent years, things are nowhere close to being equal. Aside from going through personal struggles with coming out and having to be careful about the contexts in which they reveal their sexual orientation, the LGBT community and LGBT individual have to deal with the fear of discrimination, harassment, and not being accepted or welcomed. Even though there should not be a stigma attached to being a lesbian, it still exists and is affecting all female athletes in sport. Therefore, action needs to be taken to help eradicate the lesbian stigma and to help make the sport environment more welcoming for lesbian and other sexual minority athletes. In the next chapter, I discuss the

methodology used for the current study, specifically my positionality and epistemology, procedures, data collection, and data analysis.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I begin by discussing who I am, specifically my background, values, and beliefs. Then, I talk about the tenants of three frameworks- post-positivism, interpretivism, and feminism- which make up my epistemology. Following, I describe how I went about conducting the study as well as the characteristics of the participants. Finally, I end this chapter by discussing the methods of data collection and data analysis that I used for this study.

Positionality

Sport is something I have always been passionate about. From a very young age, I was exposed to athletics because my older brothers played sports. At the age of four, I started my first year of tee-ball; from then on through my senior year of high school, I participated in softball, basketball, track-and-field, and cross country. I also really enjoyed watching football along with other sports and I still do to this day. My love of sports coupled with my deep interest in psychology is what partially drove me to pursue sport psychology.

Through my first year of my sport psychology program, I have learned a lot about myself, the field, as well as techniques that are used by sport psychology consultants. I have also gained a deeper understanding of the experiences of women and other minorities in the world of sport. I took a class on Women, Sport, and Culture which allowed me to look more critically into sport and to see how it was and is influenced by the world around us. While women have had to push for equality in society and politics as a whole, they have also had to push for equality in sport (Symons, 2007). Unfortunately, as is often viewed in society at large, females in sport are considered inferior to male athletes (Griffin, 1998). Sport is seen as a masculine domain where female athletes cannot compete at the standards of male athletes (Griffin, 1998). In high school

athletics, I saw firsthand how much more attention male sports and male athletes received in relation to female sports and female athletes.

If you are a female, being an athlete can sometimes be counted against you because female athletes are often viewed as inferior to male athletes; in addition, some people think sports are masculine. Sport is also thought of as a heterosexual domain (Symons, 2007). If you identify as a sexual minority, such as a lesbian, then that can be another strike against you. A lesbian can experience discrimination, harassment, etc., in society as a whole but also in sport if her sexual orientation is assumed or known to be LGBT. Discrimination and harassment against anyone is not acceptable, and it is also not acceptable for lesbian athletes to be discriminated against or harassed because of their sexual orientation. It is also not right that lesbian athletes have to live in the closet or put on a show to make their team think that they are heterosexual out of fear that they will be kicked off the team or lose their scholarship (Symons, 2007).

I am a strong advocate for LGBT rights. I believe that the LGBT community deserves and is entitled to the same rights as everyone else. I read and keep up on LGBT news in the United States and around the world; while there have been victories for the LGBT community in recent years, this community is still frequently viewed and treated as inferior individuals. Aside from seeing heterosexual privilege in our culture on a daily basis, LGBT individuals are often victims of discrimination, harassment, and violence; hate crimes occur, and people get fired because of their sexual orientation (Morris & Balsam, 2003). As a result, many LGBT individuals live in the closet and are careful to hide details of their personal life out of fear of negative social and job-related consequences (Krane & Barber, 2005). All of these issues that LGBT individuals have to deal with on a daily basis are present in every area of life, including sport (Griffin, 1993; Kirby, Demers, & Parent, 2008; Symons, 2007).

My interest in LGBT rights and sport psychology coupled with my desire to work with athletes in the future led me to pursue research with lesbians who were collegiate athletes at the NCAA DI level. I am interested in their definitions of "female athlete" and "lesbian" as well as their perceptions of how society feels about female athletes and lesbians (see Fisher, 1997). I also want to gain an understanding of their unique experiences. Of specific interest is how female athletes were received at their former university, what the atmosphere was like for LGBT students and athletes, and the effects of their sexual minority identity on their sport performance. In addition, I am curious to see which identities are significant to them and how those identities have changed since their time as collegiate athletes. Their input on how sport environments at the collegiate level can be more welcoming to LGBT athletes can provide valuable insight for practitioners and those involved in campus athletics.

Who I am and what I do has the potential to affect all aspects of the research process from the topics in which I am interested to how I interpret data (Glesne, 2011). I am a Caucasian female grad student from a middle-class family who is a former high school athlete. I was raised Catholic and still consider myself to be a Christian. However, as I have grown in age and as a person, I have been able critically analyze certain aspects of the Catholic/Christian faith and have developed a sense of what I do and do not agree with. Specifically, I do not agree with the Roman Catholic Church's stance on homosexuality and same-sex marriage; I do not believe homosexuality is a sin, and I think that same-sex couples should be able to get married. Also, I think the church's stance on contraception is archaic; contraception is a necessity in today's society. I also consider myself to be liberal; I support same-sex marriage and women's rights in addition to the separation of church and state. While I consider myself to be a person of faith, I

do not think that religion should play a role in government policies; one can find people of various religions here in the U.S. as well as individuals who do not hold any religious beliefs.

I can be very open about my societal views and beliefs. However, like my friend mentioned in Chapter 1, I am also private about certain aspects of my personal life; I am selective about who I let see all aspects of my identity. I also believe in equal rights for all people, regardless of sex, race, sexual orientation, etc. As mentioned previously, certain graduate classes that I have taken have led me to look at society and the structure of various organizations in a different way. Specifically, I have been able to look at societal institutions in a more critical light to see how their structure is organized in such a way as to discriminate and oppress certain groups of individuals.

Being a grad student studying sport psychology as well as a former high school athlete, I have developed an interest in various kinds of research with athletes. I am also interested in research with minority groups such as the LGBTQ community. These combined interests intersect to form this current research study. I also recognize that there might be some commonalities between myself and the participants in this study. Like the participants, I am a female and a student. Plus, I might be the same age or just a year or two older than some of the participants. As previously mentioned, I am also a strong advocate for LGBTQ rights and equality. While I might be able to relate to some of the participants, I cannot assume that my experiences and views are the same as their experiences or views. Therefore, care needs to be taken throughout the research process that none of my biases or who I am affects the data collection and the data analysis.

Epistemology

I have a background in psychology. I also find that I gravitate towards certain aspects of postpositivism. This paradigm is experimental in nature and suggests that while not everything in this world is objective, some near objective facts can be concluded about certain social phenomena (Glesne, 2011). In addition to finding value in the scientific method, I also think that research, when done correctly, can yield helpful and accurate results that can then be used to predict how social phenomena are carried out and can help us make well-informed generalizations about such phenomena. Even though the current study will not be experimental in nature, the commonalities amongst the participants' experiences might provide insight into the current climate for LGBT athletes, specifically lesbian athletes, at the collegiate NCAA DI level.

While this position is not very congruent with a postpositivist stance, I also tend to think of myself as an interpretivist (Smith & Sparks, 2010). The interpretivist paradigm suggests that "reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing" (Glesne, 2011, p. 8). I believe that each person has a different reality or a different way of seeing the world. This is affected by many things, including their thoughts, feelings, culture, identity, etc. The participants in this study are women who identify as lesbian, but they come from different backgrounds and each have their own unique experiences. In other words, while there might be commonalities among the participants' experiences with being former lesbian U.S. NCAA DI student-athletes, each of them will have their own distinct experience that could have been affected by the factors mentioned above as well as other factors. Thus, I tried to gain an understanding of each woman's experiences, keeping all of these things in mind.

Feminism is something that I have come to come to better understand within the past year, and I find myself also aligning with feminist methodology. This methodology is concerned with advocacy and changing the imbalance of power within organizations and institutions (Glesne, 2011). I used to believe that feminism was solely about the desire for women to be equal with men and to have the same rights in society. However, I have learned that it is much greater than that; it is about advocating for the rights of not only women but also other oppressed groups in society. Feminism is concerned with increasing awareness of the fact that certain groups of people in society are more powerful than other groups and that organizations and institutions are structured in such a way that favors those who have all the power. Within the current study, I tried to gain an understanding of the experiences of individuals who are marginalized not only as women but also as women of a sexual minority.

Procedures

Bracketing interview. Once IRB approval was received from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Tennessee and before any interviews were conducted, I underwent a bracketing interview (Tufford & Newman, 2010) with my thesis advisor in the Fall of 2013 (see Appendix A). My advisor, Dr. Leslee A. Fisher, conducted the interview and used the same interview guide to interview me as I did, then, to interview the participants in this study (see Appendix A). Through this interview, I was able to explore any biases that I had that could have affected the interview process. From the interview, it became clear that I had the following bias: I believe that as more people come out, acceptance for those of a sexual minority will increase due to exposure.

Pilot interview. I also conducted a pilot interview prior to the main interviews to test out the interview guide. The participant for the pilot study was a doctorate student who was a former

lesbian collegiate athlete at the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) DI level. She was 27 years old and identified as Caucasian and Christian. In addition, I determined that the interview guide was almost finalized but that it needed a few slight changes. As a result, I changed the order of the items in the background information section and also added a question to the interview guide pertaining to how the sport environment could be made friendlier for lesbian and other sexual minority athletes.

Main study participants. For the main study, nine Caucasian and one Black[3] lesbian former U.S. NCAA DI student-athletes agreed to participate (see Table 1).

Demographic information revealed that their average age was 23.9 years old. In addition, participants' families were highly influential in getting them involved in sport. Sport was a "family thing", and many siblings and parents had been athletes. Interestingly, the parents of four participants were collegiate athletes themselves, and one of them even played sport professionally. Demographic information also revealed that all but three participants had some kind of religious affiliation and that eight of the participants had been out of their collegiate sport for anywhere between 2.5 and 4 years.

Data Collection

Participants were recruited through the process of snowball sampling (Glesne, 2011). In other words, one participant was able to lead me to other potential participants via word of mouth. The sampling was purposeful in that they must have met the criteria mentioned above in order to participate in the study (Glesne, 2011). Participants were asked to participate in a qualitative study about the experiences of lesbian collegiate athletes (see Appendix A). Those who agreed to participate were interviewed via Skype video-messaging. The interview guide was semi-structured in nature. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Data was

[3] Black is the term that the participant used to describe her race.

collected until saturation was reached in the interviews. Saturation is defined as "the point in data collection when no new or relevant information emerges with respect to the newly constructed theory" (Saumure & Given, 2008, p. 1). In other words, particular to this study, interviews ceased once it was determined that the data being received was no longer different than what was previously heard. This started to occur around the 9th interview. Analysis of the data began shortly after that. Participants were also sent their transcripts via email and were asked if they wanted to make any additions, corrections, etc.; as of right now, five participants have responded. Four participants did not have any changes or additions to make, and one participant had minimal changes that did not affect the research process.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from the interviews was transcribed by me and then analyzed via the method of Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) proposed by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) and updated by Hill et al. (2005). It is an inductive approach to analyzing data that is conducted by a research team which usually has at least four members. Four members of the research team (myself, two doctoral students, and Dr. Fisher) and an external auditor analyzed the data. The doctoral students, one male and one female, were in the Sport Psychology and Motor Behavior program at the University of Tennessee. Dr. Fisher and the external auditor, both females, were professors in the Sport Psychology and Motor Behavior program as well. The research team and external auditor signed a confidentiality statement prior to analyzing the data. Also prior to the analysis, the research team's values, assumptions, and biases were identified and discussed. For example, one member of the research team believed that as more people come out, the more accepted and normalized it will become. Other biases from members of the research team included a Christian-affiliation, being a former collegiate athlete, and identifying

as gay. These assumptions and biases were openly discussed and monitored throughout the process as an attempt to stay grounded in the data.

After being trained in the method – and following the steps outlined by Hill et al. (2005) the research team first independently coded the transcripts to form domains (e.g., major themes), categories (e.g., subthemes), and core ideas. Then, the research team met to discuss their independently coded domains and categories to come to consensus about them; they then fleshed out the core ideas which represent participants' own words that illustrate the major domains and categories (e.g., raw data). The consensus domains, categories, and core ideas capturing the essence of participants' experiences of the phenomenon were then placed in a table (see Table 2).

Afterward, the coded transcripts and the table were given to an external auditor who reviewed them and offered feedback. An external auditor was utilized for the purposes of checking for biases and of receiving an alternative perspective. The research team then met again to discuss the suggestions of the external auditor and to incorporate them into the finalized table (see Table 3).

Next, Dr. Fisher and I conducted a cross-analysis to validate the domains and identify the frequency of the categories listed in the finalized table. The frequencies that were used in this CQR analysis were *General* (all or all but one of the cases), *Typical* (more than half the cases), and *Variant* (half the cases or less). After all of this was accomplished, the analysis was completed when the frequencies were added to the table (see Table 4). In the next chapter, I discuss the results of the study and provide examples from the participants in their own words.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

In this chapter, I discuss the results from the CQR analysis. Five domains and 19 categories arose from the analysis. The five domains included: (a) Perceptions of Female Athletes; (b) Stereotypes of Lesbians and Lesbian Athletes; (c) Climate for LGBT Athletes; (d) Negotiating Identities; and (e) Recommendations for Practitioners. Domains, categories, and core ideas are presented along with direct quotes from the participants.

Domain I: Stereotypes and Perceptions of Female Athletes

The first domain included what the participants believed to be society's stereotypes and views of female athletes. This domain was comprised of three categories: (a) *Lesser than male athletes*; (b) *Getting better over time*; and (c) *Stereotypes*.

Category a: Lesser than male athletes. When asked about what society thinks of female athletes, one common theme seemed to be that female athletes were seen as lesser than male athletes. Specifically, they were not taken very seriously, were objectified, were not viewed as very interesting, and were not as competitive as male athletes. This theme was highlighted by several quotes from the participants. As Cece stated, "I've actually met a good amount of people who believe that a lot of female athletes don't deserve their scholarship because of Title IX." Yolanda further emphasized this theme:

> I still think they are lesser than men. The men kind of dominate the athlete world just because they're seen in the media and all over the place, not that females aren't…but I still think there's definitely…it's kind of a one-sided thing. It's definitely nowhere close to being equal. It's better, but it's not equal.

Category b: Getting better over time. Even though it was believed that female athletes were seen as lesser than male athletes, several participants suggested that it is getting better and that society's perception of female athletes has come a long way. Batman claimed, "Since Title IX especially there's been quite a bit of change. I mean we see that all of advertisements and with the way things are publicized within university settings…they've really tried to build things up for women." Several participants mentioned *CrossFit* and how it is changing and expanding the definition of "female athlete." Z explained:

> You're seeing more of an emergence of the fit woman predominating in media. You know, you have like *CrossFit*. You have the *CrossFit* Games and these amazing female athletes….they're like flipping tires and you're like, 'Wow that's so cool'! At least in that area, you don't really hear those kinds of demeaning things being thrown around as much.

Category c: Stereotypes. Stereotypes of female athletes that the participants noted appeared centered around sexuality and stereotypes of females in general. For example, participants claimed that female athletes' sexuality comes into question, especially if they play a sport that is inconsistent with femininity. As Stacy put it:

> It depends on the sport, like if you play tennis or golf or anything, like they think that's a more lady-like sport versus basketball or softball or any sports that you get down and dirty in…If you're playing a masculine sport, then you're gay. And if you're playing a feminine sport then you're just more of a female than the other ones.

In addition, it was noted that female athletes are usually thought of as very "masculine" and that they are hooking up with each other. Conflicting stereotypes also emerged with female athletes,

on one hand, being thought of as strong, and, on the other hand, as "sissies" who do not want contact.

Domain II: Stereotypes and Perceptions of Lesbians and Lesbian Athletes

Similar to the first domain, this second domain represented what the participants believed to be stereotypes and perceptions, but of lesbians and lesbian athletes. There were four categories that arose from this domain: (a) *Sport-dependent*; (b) *Appearance-driven*; (c) *Just a "phase"*; and (d) *Generational differences.*

Category a: Sport-dependent. It was interesting that there was some overlap between stereotypes of female athletes and of lesbians and lesbian athletes. One such stereotype was the association of certain sports (e.g., softball and basketball) with being gay. Specifically, participants stated that the stereotype was if a female athlete played softball or basketball, she would be identified as a lesbian athlete. These two sports were considered sports with the highest number of lesbian players. As Superman jokingly discussed:

> When Britney Griner came out that she was gay, someone made a joke. I think it was the Onion or something that made the joke that it would actually be more shocking if a basketball player came out that they were straight…or a women's basketball player that came out as straight.

Category b: Appearance-driven. In addition to being involved in particular sports, lesbians were also stereotyped as having a particular appearance. For example, participants claimed that people believed that lesbians are "masculine", have short hair, dress like a guy, wear baggy clothes, and do not wear makeup. The word "butch" was mentioned several times, and unhealthy habits and characteristics such as drinking, smoking, and being overweight were also associated with lesbians. Q described the stereotypical lesbian athlete:

> They're super muscular. Maybe shorter haircuts…and appearance, not only their clothes but the way they walk, the way they carry their body, their posture…don't wear makeup or as much makeup as their straight teammates.

Category c: Just a "phase." Participants also expressed that people think that lesbian relationships are not legitimate. They mentioned that people have a very narrow view of what lesbians can do intimately or that they go as far as saying that two girls cannot have sex. Yolanda captured many stereotypes and false beliefs about lesbians. According to her, people surmise that lesbians are "confused or going through a stage or a phase" or that they "haven't met the right guy yet," "can't get a guy," "hate guys," or "had a bad experience with guys." Superman described an interaction with her mother:

> I thought in high school and middle school I was like, 'Well Mom, I might be gay'. And she's like, 'No, no you're not. You just haven't found the right guy yet. You haven't met the right guy.

Category d: Generational differences. Many participants also talked about generational differences in the stereotypes and perceptions about lesbians. They believed that their generation was much more accepting of the LGBT community than the previous generations; they specifically mentioned their parents' and grandparents' generations and the decades of the 1950s and the 1960s as being narrow-minded. The older generations were described as "hardheaded" and "not very accepting." Participants also claimed that not as many people were out back then as they are now. In addition, it was suggested that the older generations were just not raised to be very accepting. This idea is highlighted by a statement from Batman:

> I think the older generations are where there's the least acceptance because they weren't brought up to accept it. And in my generation and the generations under me are brought

> to accept and understand and not judge or try not to judge. People are still going to have their beliefs but…yeah, I think it's come a long ways but I think until the older generations kind of figure it out, it's not going to take a big turn.

V discussed this as well:

> I think like especially our generation is a lot more okay with it than the older generations just because of how they grew up and everything…most people our age probably don't care because they know someone who is gay or lesbian so it's not as big of a deal anymore. So I think it's true as society changes, then it will be easier for everybody, whether they're an athlete or not.

Domain III: Climate for LGBT Athletes

The third domain addressed was focused on what the climate was like for LGBT athletes at participants' former universities. When speaking about their experiences at their former universities, participants talked about what the climate was like for LGBT athletes on their team, in their athletic department, and on campus. There were four categories that emerged from this domain: (a) *Team atmosphere*; (b) *Athletic department ethos*; (c) *Athletic "bubble*"; and (d) *Campus resources*.

Category a: Team atmosphere. While a few expressed that the topic was "hush-hush" on their teams, other participants claimed that their team embraced who they were. Some emphasized the fact that nothing changed between them and their teammates when they came out. As V said, "They were cool with it." Further, Q described her team as a "safe haven" that allowed her to "feel comfortable in a small group of people."

Category b: Athletic department ethos. While the team was generally described as a very friendly environment, the athletic department was described as not so welcoming for LGBT

individuals. Several participants stated that it was a "don't ask, don't tell" kind of thing; no one asked about someone's sexual orientation, and no one talked about their sexual orientation. Stacy described it as the "elephant in the room." She also emphasized the perceived lack of support by stating, "As far as support from staff or the athletic department, I would say there was zero support." Yolanda told a story about an issue that arose with the athletic department:

> This huge thing happened and it came back to my coaches finding out that we were at the [gay bar]…We had a huge team meeting…so we had all of our coaches, male and female coaches mind you, and [head coach] obviously, and now our athletic director [name] in one room all knowing we were at that place. Basically, to shorten this 2-hour, hour and a half long meeting that we had, 'Do not go to the [gay bar] ever again.' And it's like, 'You have never said that to my other teammates that have gone to [straight bar]. I know you know they've gone'….But with this particular situation, they were like, 'If we see you guys in there, you can basically throw your scholarship away'.

Category c: Athletic "bubble." At times, the participants did not really know how to describe the campus climate for LGBT students and athletes; they could only say with a little bit of confidence that their campus was relatively tolerant and accepting. This was the result of a perceived disconnect between athletics and campus as a whole. Participants revealed that they did not really associate with people outside of athletics, and they were not very involved in other campus activities. Superman disclosed, "I'm pretty reserved so I didn't really go to outside the athletic bubble and meet other lesbians or gay men." X also touched on the disconnection between LGBT athletes and non-athlete LGBT students. She stated, "I guess there wasn't as much crossover with the lesbian athletes and the actual lesbian community on campus."

Category d: Campus resources. Most of the participants mentioned that there was some kind of LGBT resource center or club on campus. With the exception of one participant being a vice-president of the Gay-Straight Alliance at her former university, the participants did not seem to be too involved with the resource center or club on their campus. Therefore, they did not seek those outside resources or look to participate in any events. When talking about the LGBT resource center at her former university, Yolanda claimed:

> We have LGBT programs but it's not like they're really out there and finding students that are like that. It's more like hey, it's here, but only because it's publicly a law that we have to have this on our campus. So we're going to put this in this closet right here, and if you ever want, you can come here.

Domain IV: Negotiating Identities

The fourth domain includes how participants negotiated their identities depending on the context. Arising out of this domain were four categories: (a) *Performance vs. personal*; (b) *Playing with heterosexual femininity*; (c) *Gay isn't all of who I am*; and (d) "*Gay" vs. "lesbian."*

Category a: Performance vs. personal. Several participants talked about their process of revealing or concealing certain identities depending on the context in which they were in. X revealed that who she was with mattered:

> I was also really involved with Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Athletes in Action, in college as well. None of my friends there, even though they were athletes, knew about that side of me in college. But my teammates and other athlete friends knew more about what was going on. And then when I have my non-athlete friends, that's a whole other thing that you're dealing with as well. So I think I was negotiating the representation I was putting out there of myself in each community.

Yolanda discussed her transformation from being private to being very open about who she is. She recalled, "Where I grew up…if that's who you are, you hide it. And that just kind of carried over into college. And you have pretty much people suggesting to keep your personal life separate." Her girlfriend helped her realize that she did not have to hide who she was, and she was a lot more open with who she was both in her personal and performance life during her senior year. She also had to deal with negotiating her identities when she took a coaching job at a religious university. However, she decided to reveal her sexual orientation to her fellow coaches and players. She reasoned, "I was just like, I don't care. I hid who I was for so long. I'm not doing it anymore." Q also talked about her transition from college to the workplace where she was initially open with her sexual orientation. However, when she took a different position in her place of employment, things changed. She stated, "When I moved to the more administrative position, I had to be much more careful about what I was saying."

Unexpectedly, it was fairly unanimous that participants' status as a sexual minority did not affect their sport performance. Participants were confident in their ability to keep their personal lives separate from their performance. Cece discussed how she focused on her sport performance:

> I was pretty good at setting my personal life and my athletics separate. When I set foot in the boathouse or on the lake…there would be times that I would be thinking about stuff going on but I would try to set that aside. Just adhere to the task at hand and then take care of the personal stuff and not worry about the stress on the water.

Similarly, X stated, "I'm the kind of person who really just segments different parts of their life." While Superman's performance during games was not affected, it did affect her at one point during her training. She divulged, "Did it affect my ability to play statistically? No. But it did

during my spring training season, and my spring training season that year probably wasn't the best." She went into further detail about a particular situation during that season:

> No one knew I was gay at that point, so I was secretly dating my teammate. I was having a hard time trying to let people in…one time I cried during a running workout. I was like best in shape on my team so I should have killed these running workouts. But when you put so much stress into figuring something else out, and so much emotion into trying to figure something else out, my body wasn't working.

Even though performance might not have been affected for the most part, a few participants claimed that one's identity as a lesbian did and could potentially affect team dynamics. Specifically, the idea of intra-team relationships was mentioned several times. Jenn claimed that the "only way it would possibly weigh upon someone's experience is when girls date their teammates." Similarly, another participant who had regrets about dating one of her teammates for a period of time, stated that her and her teammates believed that it "could totally mess up the team dynamic." Q expressed similar views about previously dating a teammate. She believed that it was "stupid" and "uncomfortable." Also, while Seceded not date any of her teammates, she dated a girl outside of her team who had history with two of her teammates, which, in her words, "answered a lot of questions as to why *name* and *name* were not great friends of mine on the team."

Category b: Playing with heterosexual femininity. One thing that some of the participants mentioned is how their identities had changed since their time as a collegiate athlete. Several stated that they had actually gotten more "feminine" since that time; they did not even truly realize it until they reflected upon it. Participants associated being feminine with traditional ideas of femininity (e.g., being "girly", wearing dresses and makeup, etc.). Q emphasized this

point by stating, “I look for excuses to put on a new dress.” However, Jenn was the only one to point out that she had gotten more feminine to counteract being a little bit masculine. She declared, “If I’m gunna dress a little manlier, I gotta be a little more feminine to balance it out…if I’m gunna be gay, I gotta at least be feminine. I gotta make my mom happy somehow.” Therefore, she stated that she not only became more feminine for herself, but she also dressed more feminine to please her mother.

Category c: “Gay” isn’t all of who I am. Participants highlighted the fact that while being gay was a part of their personhood, it was not the only characteristic that defined who they were. They mentioned that there is a lot more to them as a person than being gay. Q asserted, “But being gay, I don’t like that to be a big part of who I am because I have a lot of other qualities that people would want to know about me, like I’m a good friend and I like to cook. I feel like that’s a good thing to know about me.” Superman similarly emphasized, “I wouldn’t classify myself as lesbian as one of my key characteristics…I’m just a person.” Batman also discussed her feelings about defining herself:

> With being gay, I don’t really pay attention to it…that aspect of my life only matters between me and my girlfriend…it is something that gives me a label but I don’t see it as something that defines me. I’d rather see myself as characteristics of something, you know, being strong, being creative, you know, characteristics of myself instead of, ‘Wow, you’re a lesbian’.

Category d: Sexual orientation fluidity. When comparing the term “lesbian” to the term “gay”, participants identified more with the term “gay” and suggested that “gay” allows for flexibility in sexual orientation. As X claimed, “The word gay kind of gives a little more

fluidity…it aligns you with a wider group." Further, when discussing sexuality, Yolanda explained:

> I think that there's like a sliding scale…a range of it. You could be 5% gay, or you can be really gay, 100% gay, or you can be 50% gay…I think saying lesbian just kind of makes it more pinpoint.

In addition, several participants reported that they just felt more comfortable with using "gay" instead of "lesbian'. The fluidity of identity can also be seen in the various ways in which the participants identified themselves, with "queer", "lesbian", "gay", "bisexual", and "closer to lesbian" being among the identifiers. Z discussed her feelings about sexuality:

> I used to be like oh I'm not gay, I'm bi because I've dated guys before…I really stuck to that. But over time, I've just been like, you know, who cares?...All people need to know is that sometimes I've been with guys, and I've been with girls, but for the most part, I'm with girls, and I have one now, and everything's great. The end.

Domain V: Recommendations for College Campuses

The fifth and final domain includes recommendations for college campuses to make their sport environments friendlier for LGBT athletes. Three categories came out of this domain: (a) *Team relatedness*; (b) *Athletic department*; and (c) *Campus organizations*.

Category a: Team relatedness. While several participants stated that nothing can be done to make sport environments more welcoming for LGBT athletes -because people cannot be forced to be more tolerant- many offered practical suggestions that might be beneficial to implement. For teams, participants recommended safe zone training and having small group discussions about diversity. V suggested that LGBT athletes should get to know their teammates

before they come out to them; the idea is that once friendships are formed, someone's sexual orientation should not affect that friendship. Z discussed safe zone training for teams:

> Yeah, even safe zone workshops for teams. I think that would be appropriate. I think the guys would definitely benefit from that because we know all about homophobia that goes on there. But the girls are definitely not as addressed and it's very, very ignored.

Category b: Athletic department. Participants also gave suggestions that could be applied to the athletic department as a whole. Diversity classes, the presence of older LGBT athlete as mentors, and having a sport psychology consultant available to athletes were amongst the suggestions. There was also a focus on having a more open environment. Stacy offered several recommendations that would help create a more open athletic department environment including having a "gay/lesbian program within [the] athletic department" and bringing a "student affairs mindset to the environment." Expanding more on the latter recommendation, Stacy stated, "Student affairs is very like, 'Be yourself, it's okay, we love you, you're accepted, you have friends'. [Then], you have athletics, and it's, 'You're representing our university, don't do this…don't say anything bad, don't say anything we don't like'."

Category c: Campus organizations. As discussed earlier, several participants revealed that they really did not go outside of athletics for friends and support. A few suggestions were offered that would help to dissolve this disconnect between athletics and the rest of campus. X believed it would be beneficial if there was a "committee that was able to bridge the gap between the campus LGBT committee and the athlete LGBT community, just to make it clearer that there is a wider community and ready resources available." Similarly, Z stated that it "would be cool if there was like an addition to like an LGBT resource center on campus for students if they have a special extension for student-athletes who might be a sexual minority." Batman highlighted the

importance of visual acceptance. She disclosed, "It could be something as simple as putting a rainbow flag on your window to say that 'We are accepting here'…you know, it only makes you feel better, makes you feel more comfortable knowing that you're walking into a judge-free zone where you don't have to question whether they are going to accept you or not."

Category d: Exposure leads to normalization. Some participants alluded to the idea that the more exposed people are to individuals who identify as LGBT, the more normalized sexual minority identity will become. They believed that professional athletes coming out helps a lot with exposure and acceptance and that since there are already supposedly a lot of lesbians in sports, female athletes are used to it. Further, several participants mentioned that they themselves want to break down negative stereotypes of lesbians so that they can help change people's perceptions, even if it is in the smallest of ways. Superman stated that she likes people to get to know her first before she tells them about her sexual orientation:

> I think to an extent it helps, people who are stuck in their ways, it helps if they respect and know somebody…Like if they come to respect somebody before they know, and then you say 'I'm gay,' and they have a bad version of gay people, it changes their… '*name*, she's a great kid.' And they identify me as lesbian or gay, and like 'Wow, she's a great kid, and I never would have guessed that'- because it broke your stereotype. There shouldn't be stereotypes.

Participants suggested that college campuses should encourage students and faculty to be who they are and that they should broadcast that they are institutions where the LGBT community will be accepted. People coming out will lead to more exposure which will lead to a normalization of sexual minority identities.

In conclusion, five domains with nineteen categories and related core ideas arose from the analysis and were described in this chapter. The five domains included: (a) Stereotypes and Perceptions of Female Athletes; (b) Stereotypes and Perceptions of Lesbians and Lesbian Athletes; (c) Climate for LGBT Athletes; (d) Negotiating Identities; and (e) Recommendations for Practitioners. Domains, categories, and core ideas (e.g., direct quotes from participants) were presented. In the next chapter, I discuss how the results of the current study connect to existing literature as well as new findings and recommendations for sport psychology practitioners.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS, AND CONCLUSIONS

As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the U.S. NCAA sport experience of lesbian student-athletes. Included in this purpose was the desire to find out about the atmosphere for LGBT students and athletes at participants' former universities, their perception of their various identities, and society's views on female athletes and lesbians. Guiding research questions included: (a) Currently, what is the university environment like for female athletes and LGBT students and athletes?; (b) Does sexual minority status have any effect on sport performance?; and (c) How can the sport environment be made more welcoming for lesbian and other sexual minority athletes?.

Five domains with nineteen categories and related core ideas arose from the analysis: (a) Stereotypes and Perceptions of Female Athletes; (b) Stereotypes and Perceptions of Lesbians and Lesbian Athletes; (c) Climate for LGBT Athletes; (d) Negotiating Identities; and (e) Recommendations for Practitioners. In this chapter, results from the study are highlighted in connection with existing literature. In addition, new findings and recommendations from the participants as well as for sport psychology practitioners are also given.

Discussion: Connections to Existing Literature

Domain I: Stereotypes and perceptions of female athletes: The "balancing act."

Participants suggested that female athletes are still not seen in the same light as male athletes even though it has gotten better over the years. In their words, female athletes are "objectified", and people only like to watch female athletes who are "hot." In this sense, "hot" would translate to being attractive in a "heterosexy" way. According to Krane (2001b), "Feminine sportswomen are not taken seriously, they are seen as objects to be gawked at (i.e., sexualized) or made fun of (i.e., trivialized)" (p. 122). Thus, their status as an athlete is not seen as legitimate. On the other

hand, “hot” female athletes or “feminine” female athletes may benefit from receiving endorsements and being on magazine covers (Krane, 2001b). More “masculine” female athletes or lesbian athletes are also vulnerable to negative treatment for “acting like a man.” Therefore, female athletes often must find a delicate balance between being feminine and athletic or strong in order to avoid less than ideal treatment from either end of the spectrum (Krane, 2001b).

Since sport is a domain that very much privileges those who are heterosexual, those who identify as a sexual minority might find it difficult to fully benefit from their athletic experience, even if they are fortunate enough to overcome others’ opposition to their sexual orientation to have a place on a team (Johnson & Kivel, 2007). Thus, for females who identify as lesbian, sometimes the only way for them to survive in their sport environment is to engage in identity management strategies (e.g., acting and behaving in accordance with those who are heterosexual) (Johnson & Kivel, 2007). As long as they act in accordance with what is considered to be traditional heterosexuality and femininity, they will “reap the rewards accrued when one performs gender correctly” (Krane et al., 2010, p. 155). In this case, the rewards would be the assumption from others that they are heterosexual, and, thus, “normal.”

In addition, the fact that a lot of people like to stereotype female athletes as lesbian perpetuates the derogatory use of the term and also pressures straight athletes to make their heterosexuality known (Symons, 2007). For some researchers, this is how straight female athletes “apologize” to society for engaging in such a masculine thing like sport (Broad, 2001; Felshin, 1974). Therefore, those female athletes who are not acting in traditionally “feminine” ways or who do not exude heterosexuality actually challenge existing compulsory heterosexuality in sport.

Domain II: Stereotypes and perceptions of lesbians and lesbian athletes. While there is this commonly held stereotype that most female athletes are lesbians, this is not the case. However, there are some lesbian athletes and, unfortunately, they as well as straight athletes have to deal with negative stereotypes and associations (Griffin, 1998). As Griffin (1998) stated, "The lesbian bogeywoman is cast as a threat not only to 'normal' women in sport, but to the image and acceptance of women's sport altogether" (p. 54). The participants gave a variety of stereotypes of lesbians and lesbian athletes that included being involved in certain sports and having a more masculine appearance. It is interesting to note that the participants' stereotypes for lesbians and lesbian athletes were similar to their stereotypes for female athletes. Specifically, the stereotypes of strength and masculinity were mentioned. They suggested that if a female athlete possesses these qualities, then her sexuality comes into question.

Appearance and one's association with sports seem to be two factors in being ascribed the lesbian label (Sartore & Cunningham, 2009). According to Blinde and Taub (1992), "participants in team sports such as softball, basketball, and field hockey are more often recipients of the lesbian label" because "such activities require more athleticism and strength, involve more physical contact, and are more commonly viewed as sports played by men" (p. 529). Also, when faculty members from health and kinesiology departments at two universities were interviewed about the lesbian label, they "made an association between women in the health and kinesiology field and assumptions of lesbianism" (Sartore & Cunningham, 2010, p. 486). This association is not uncommon, as "women in physical education and athletics are often stereotyped as lesbians" (Griffin & Genasci, 1990, p. 213). Not only were the faculty members aware of this, but the students also assumed it (Sartore & Cunningham, 2010). The association was even stronger if a female faculty member was in good shape and had short hair.

Female athletes are also aware of the association between having a "masculine" appearance and the lesbian identity, and many go out of their way to prove they are heterosexual by feminizing their appearance (Griffin, 1998). This association also leads people to believe that "all lesbians look or act in ways that lead others to believe that they want to be like men" (Griffin, 1993, p. 198).

Domain III: Climate for LBGT athletes. Participants, for the most part, stated that they were close to their teammates and felt comfortable enough on the team to disclose their sexual orientation. In a study by Stoelting (2011), closeness with teammates seemed to be a factor, as participants disclosed their lesbian identity because they were close or had the potential to be close with their teammates. Stoelting (2011) suggested, "The respondents desired closer relationships with those to whom they were disclosing, and believed that the way to achieve such relationships was to be honest about their sexual identities" (p. 1199). In addition, participants in the present study revealed their lesbian identity because they viewed the team as a safe place. Q described her team as a "safe haven."

However, they described their athletic department as having a "don't ask, don't tell" where it was a possibility that if they made their sexual orientation widely known, negative consequences could occur. This is highlighted by Yolanda's story about her athletic department's reaction to players going to a gay club that included threats of losing scholarships. Lesbian athletes often fear these negative repercussions of coming out (Griffin, 1998).

Sartore and Cunningham (2009) proposed that "as a result of stigmatization and social identity threat, women in sport may experience minority stress" (p. 296) as they deal with the prejudice from being a sexual minority in the sport context. However, female athletes might also engage in identity management strategies as a means to cope; they will often hide their identity

or make their heterosexuality apparent. If they are not able to cope effectively, negative mental, emotional, and behavioral consequences may result. All of this, in turn, can affect performance. While the participants claimed that their performance was not affected, Superman at one point did experience these consequences when she was coming to terms with her sexuality which then caused her to underperform in Spring workouts.

Domain IV: Negotiating identities. Participants in the current study also talked about their preference for using "gay" instead of "lesbian." Many of them discussed the disdain they had for the word and also concluded that "gay" was just easier to say. Several even liked the fluidity of the term "gay." One participant described how you can be on a continuum of gayness. While many in this study felt that the term "lesbian" is not a popular term amongst this generation of gay women, the term "lesbian" is still very much used in politics and the media. Further, the acronym LGBT, in which the L stands for lesbian, is widely known.

However, despite the popularity or unpopularity of the term "lesbian," it could still be a relevant term in research and society. As Vicinus (2012) expressed her opinion on the term "lesbian":

> I think the word "lesbian" still has an important place in our vocabulary for the study of sexual behaviors among women, though I agree…that it may be useful to see "lesbian" as a historical artifact created at a particular period and used only intermittently as a self-defining noun. (p. 567)

Therefore, the term "lesbian" has been used or not be used based on the historical context. Vicinus (2012) also asserts that using the term "lesbian" can be beneficial in that "it asserts the fact of sex and it provides boundaries to a subject that at times seems in danger of disappearing

into such overbroad categories as “queer” or “nonnormative”” (p. 567). Thus, the use of this term also provides specificity to the topic of sexual minorities.

Domain V: Recommendations for college campuses are discussed further along in the chapter.

Discussion: New Findings

Domain I: Stereotypes and perceptions of female athletes: The *CrossFit* body.

Despite the negative attention that strong and muscular female athletes receive, several participants mentioned that, in recent years, the image of the strong female athlete has been expanded and even embraced. Specifically, they discussed *CrossFit* and how it has changed the way female athletes’ bodies are viewed. CrossFit, Inc. (2014) defines *CrossFit* as “that which optimizes fitness (constantly varied functional movements performed at relatively high intensity).”

Therefore, at least in some respects, female athletes are starting to gravitate towards an expanded and more muscular image of strength and are also encouraged to be proud of the way their bodies look; some are no longer worried about looking too muscular out of fear that they will not be considered “feminine.” Krane (2001b) made a similar statement summing up where the image of female athletes and female bodies is currently heading:

> As women engage in and enjoy sport and physical activity, they will develop muscles and strength; they will even marvel at the newfound strength that ultimately will empower them outside of the sport environment. However, this only will occur if women redefine how they respect and value the female body. (p. 129)

It could very well be that society is moving from the notion that female athletes and women in general should be skinny to the notion that they should be strong; this has the potential to change

what it means to be "feminine." However, several participants also mentioned that they had gotten more "feminine" since their time as a college athlete. Here, they associated femininity with wearing make-up, dresses, etc., all of which are components of traditional femininity.

Domain III: Climate for LGBT athletes: Disconnect between athletics and the rest of campus. Some participants suggested that athletics was pretty much the only world that they lived in (e.g., the "athletic bubble") and that they did not venture outside of athletics for resources or friendships. They did not feel connected to the rest of campus; in fact, while they knew that there were campus resources available to LGBT people, they did not take advantage of them. Regarding the apparent isolation of student-athletes from the rest of campus, Watt and Moore III (2001) explained that aside from their studies, student-athletes have obligations to their team and coaches, which requires time. In addition, they are with their teammates most of the time and taking classes at the same time as other student-athletes (Watt & Moore III, 2001). Therefore, student-athletes might not have the time, or at least perceive they do not have the time, to expand their social circle and get involved in other activities and organizations on campus.

Domain IV: Negotiating identities: Sexual identity continuum. Several participants alluded to the idea that sexuality is not something that is black or white. There is a lot of grey area in sexuality. Yolanda claimed that a person can be 100% gay or even 50% or 5% gay. Further, X considered herself to be "closer to lesbian." Similarly, Z expressed that she does not like labels and that one shouldn't have to "put a hat on something", allowing some room for flexibility and fluidity in sexual identity.

This mode of thinking is in line with queer theory. According to Greene (1996), queer theory encourages one to see not just, for example, gay or straight, but all of the identities that

can lie in-between them, suggesting the presence of an identity continuum. In addition, it seems that people are identifying themselves in a manner that is inconsistent with the heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy. In a recent study in which participants were recruited via Facebook, it was found that 9% of the male participants and 20% of the female participants reported that they were "mostly heterosexual", while 2% of male participants and 1% of female participants reported that they were "mostly gay/lesbian" (Vrangalova & Savin-Williams, 2012). Therefore, people are describing themselves in other ways beside heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual.

Unaffected sport performance. In addition, there was an overall consensus that the participants' sport performance was not affected by their experiences as a sexual minority. Thus, any stress resulting from one's sexual minority status did not hinder their performance. Plus, the participants mentioned that they were able to effectively separate their personal lives from competition. It could be possible that a relatively positive sport environment contributed to their uninhibited sport performance. According to Krane (1996), a sport environment that has a high presence of homonegativism can affect a lesbian athlete's self-esteem and consequently her sport performance. Therefore, a lack of homonegativity on the participants' teams allowed them to feel comfortable on their team which only could have helped their self-esteem and, thus, their sport performance. However, it is just as likely that athletes have become "good at" compartmentalizing their lives, including their social selves from their sporting/performance selves.

Discussion: Future Research Ideas

Domain II: Stereotypes and perceptions of lesbians and lesbian athletes: Lesbian physical and mental health. One participant also mentioned the stereotype of lesbians being

overweight and more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and drinking. Interestingly, the widely held assumption that lesbians have more health issues than heterosexual women has been supported by research. After analyzing data from the 2006 National College Health Assessment, Struble, Lindley, Montgomery, Hardin, and Brucin (2010) found that there were higher obesity and overweight rates among lesbians than heterosexual women with a 12.4% difference between the two groups. However, there actually seems to be a tolerance for lesbians and other sexual minority women to be overweight; the type of feedback that Sykes (2009) received from her participants revealed that while it is usually viewed in a very negative light for gay men to be overweight, lesbian women are given a little more leeway with their weight.

Aside from obesity, lesbians seem to be facing other health issues. One issue appears to be smoking. After analyzing the 2003-2010 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, Cochran, Bandiera, and Mays (2013) found that cigarette smoking was more prevalent amongst lesbians than heterosexual women. Another health issue deals with mental health. According to Kerr, Santurri, and Peters (2013):

> The college student population of lesbian and bisexual undergraduate women may be at a greater risk for mental health problems than other college women, as in addition to undergoing many stressors of adjusting to college life, they may be having difficulties with identity development, and experiencing negative attitudes and harassment on campus. (p. 186)

After analyzing data from the National College Health Assessment II from the years 2008 and 2009, Kerr, Santurri, and Peters (2013) found that lesbians did, in fact, report more mental health issues than heterosexual women. These issues included intense feelings of anxiety, anger, hopelessness, loneliness, sadness, and depression. In addition, in Kerr et al.'s study as well as in

the study from Cochran et al. (2013), bisexual women reported the highest rates of cigarette smoking and mental health issues out of all three groups of women.

Recommendations from Participants

Domain V: Recommendations for college campuses: Team relatedness. Most of the participants came out to someone on their team or to their entire team during their first or second year of college with a few of them not coming out until their last year. Several of them described what the coming out process was like for them in terms of how they were able to gain self-acceptance. Krane's (1996) framework for lesbian identity formation places great emphasis on the positive lesbian identity and how one is able to achieve this positive identity. Regarding Krane's model, Iannotta and Kane (2002) stated that "a positive lesbian identity can be reached, however, if an individual participates in an environment in which social support and role models (i.e., out and open lesbians) are available" (p. 351). One of the participants credited her team for allowing her to feel safe and comfortable enough for her to come out which helped to create, for her, a positive lesbian identity.

The ways in which another participant talked about her journey to self-acceptance and coming out can be told through Riemer's (1997) framework of identity formation. This particular participant had strong ties to religion that influenced her view of homosexuality. However, through having group discussions (e.g., with other athletes in FCA) and doing her own research of the Bible, her views started to shift. She started recognizing the strength of her same-sex attraction and then decided to be honest with herself about who she was. This eventually led to a same-sex relationship and to her coming out.

Some participants suggested that as more people come out, the more accepted and normalized homosexuality will become. And, they can come out by action versus words alone.

Their beliefs seem to be congruent with the beliefs of other people, including researchers. Iannotta and Kane (2002) made a claim about past research and coming out:

> Previous research has routinely privileged coming and being out linguistically-by that we mean an overt, public acknowledgment of one's sexual identity-as the most (if not the only) effective way to create inclusive and tolerant climates, while simultaneously marginalizing other, more subtle forms of identity performance. (p. 349)

However, some researchers believe that verbally coming out also has personal benefits. Iannotta and Kane (2002) asserted that "Krane's theoretical approach also privileged being 'out' because for her, a positive lesbian identity is synonymous with being open and visible about one's sexual orientation" (p. 351). However, as Iannotta and Kane (2002) discovered from their research, being explicitly out is not the only way to create an open and tolerant environment; implicit forms of revealing one's identity can also help to create positive team environments.

While all participants in the current study eventually ended up verbally coming out to at least one of their teammates, some also engaged in behaviors prior to coming out that led people to suspect that they were gay. For example, one participant was fairly certain that her teammates knew she was gay before she came out; another one was approached by a teammate who was also gay and needed someone to talk to, but the participant was puzzled by the fact that her teammate knew she was gay. Thus, whether they knew it or not, these participants acted in such a manner that created space for their teammates to come out.

Athletic departments: Compartmentalization. The silence about LGBT topics often found in athletic departments and sport in general sometimes spills over into sport-related fields. Like one participant from Sartore and Cunningham's (2010) study described, the health and kinesiology department that she belonged to- like the athletic departments that the current study

participants belonged to - had a “don’t ask, don’t tell” atmosphere (p. 489); in fact, several participants in the current study described their experiences using that exact phrase.
In these climates, individuals do not reveal their sexual minority orientation, and no one talks about other individuals’ sexual orientation; this is the expectation. It is understood that it would be frowned upon if someone comes out.

In addition, in Krane and Barber’s study (2005), participants negotiated their identities as a lesbian and as a coach. In the realm of college sport, these two identities appeared to work against one another. The coaches negotiated their identities by compartmentalizing and rationalizing, but they also felt conflicted at times. Like these coaches, the lesbian former student-athletes in the current study negotiated their identities via the same techniques. Regarding compartmentalizing, participants revealed that they were able to separate their personal lives from their performance quite well. While their teammates might have known about their sexual orientation, when it came time for practice or competition, they were an “athlete”, not a “lesbian.” Also, pertaining to rationalizing, Stacy claimed that she felt responsible as a student-athlete to reflect positively upon her university, so she did not want to risk tarnishing her university’s image by publicly acknowledging her sexual orientation. In addition, Yolanda reported feeling conflicted because she did not want to hide who she was but felt as though she needed to because that is what was expected. However, she overcame her personal conflict and decided not to hide who she was when she arrived her senior year.

While negative repercussions may occur for a person who decides to come out, participants suggested that simply being exposed to LGBT individuals can lead to the normalization and acceptance of sexual minority identities. The importance of exposure to LGBT individuals has also been highlighted in research. When talking about the participants in

their study, Blinde and Taub (1992) reported that "some athletes claimed exposure to the issue of homosexuality makes them less judgmental and more accepting/respectful of dissimilar others" (p. 531). There are even assumptions made about exposure to homosexuality and certain geographical locations. As one participant from the Shippee (2011) study indicated, "people from small towns have a hard time with it, just because they're not exposed to it" (p 139). Therefore, the higher the number of people that come out, the more people will be exposed to those of a sexual minority and the more "normal" homosexuality and other sexualities will appear. As a result, it is hoped that those who identify as a sexual minority will no longer be seen as "others."

College campuses. Another recommendation that came from participants in the current study was to have more of a connection between LGBT athletes and other LGBT students on campus, as well as having special services for LGBT athletes on campus. Further, campuses should ensure that LGBT athletes are a protected group of individuals (under a campus nondiscrimination policy) who would not suffer negative consequences due to the revelation of their sexual orientation. The policies surrounding such protection would have to be strict and carried out effectively. In addition, the people behind these policies would need to be genuinely concerned about the well-being of LGBT individuals involved in Athletics. Sartore and Cunningham (2010) claimed, "Organizations possessing nondiscrimination or diversity statements that have been forcibly imposed, fraught with litigious debate, and/or half-heartedly enforced by administration, fail to be seen as legitimate protectors of sexual minority persons and their rights" (p. 489). In institutions such as schools that have a high number of young people, similar policies need to be in place that focus on the harassment and teasing of LGBT students or any behavior that is homophobic in nature (Griffin & Genasci, 1990).

Exposure leads to normalization. Participants in the current study echo Griffin and Genasci's (1990) claim that "inaction signals acceptance" (p. 214). "When we remain silent, the legacy of misinformation and homophobia is passed on to the next generation" (Griffin & Genasci, 1990, p. 212). In other words, if physical educators and athletes in general do not take a stand and combat homophobia, progress will not take place and intolerance of the LGBT community will remain the status quo. However, before anyone challenges other people's negative stereotypes and perceptions of the LGBT community or educates others, they must first focus on themselves. It is important that they are enlightened about how they themselves need to adjust their attitudes and behavior, including putting an end to viewing heterosexuality as the norm as well as being well-informed about the marginalization of various groups of people and how those group identities interact with each other (Griffin & Genasci, 1990).

The Role of Sport Psychology Consultants

Krane et al. (2010) believe that practitioners should not limit their work with athletes to mental skills training. They assert that "teaching athletes to be open-minded and appreciative of diversity is as important as teaching mental skills for peak performance" (p. 158). The authors believe that teammates should engage in frank discussions about diversity including LGBT athletes, which is what one participant discussed. Batman believes that "creating small groups and getting people to talk about it is a huge step because it's one of those things where people get so uncomfortable and don't want to talk about it"; this is where sport psychology consultants can help.

With respect to promoting teammate acceptance, Krane et al. (2010) proposed, "In a critical pedagogy approach, the role of the sport psychologist is to provide alternative perspectives to the stereotypes and challenge athletes to consider how greater acceptance of

LGBTs can make sport a better place" (p. 160). Griffin and Genasci (1990) offered a similar suggestion for individuals to "identify stereotypical assumptions made about gay men, lesbians, or people thought to 'look' gay or lesbian" (p. 215). To Krane et al. (2010), it was also important to encourage a sense of community amongst team members and to instill a sense of appreciation for what each member contributes to the team. Finally, while participants expressed that their sport performance during competition was not hindered by their experiences as a sexual minority, it is important for sport psychology consultants to recognize that there is a potential for this to happen; for example, Superman's terrible Spring workout was a result of trying to cope with the major life issue of trying to figure out her sexual identity.

Limitations

Since the participants in this study had to fit very specific criteria, one must be cautious when trying to generalize the results of this study to similar populations. Specifically, as these participants were former DI collegiate athletes, it cannot be assumed that lesbian athletes at DII or DIII schools have similar experiences. Further, the findings cannot be generalized to other DI lesbian athletes because each person will have her own unique experiences. Also, the participants in the current student were former collegiate athletes, some of whom had been out of their sport for several years at the time of the interviews. Due to the rapid changes we have seen in society and sport over the past few years regarding LGBT rights, it cannot be said if current collegiate athletes are having similar experiences as the former athletes who were interviewed.

Conclusions

Valuable information was gained through this current research study that is a beneficial addition to what little research there is about lesbian collegiate athletes. Results suggested that while the sport environment for lesbian athletes might be improving, there is still work that needs

to be done for the climate for LGBT athletes in general. Also, while their sport performance was not affected overall by their experiences as a lesbian athlete, with the exception of one participant's spring training workout, they mentioned that it did affect the team dynamics at times. To foster a more welcoming environment for LGBT athletes, per recommendations from the participants, teams could take part in discussions and safe zone training, and campus LGBT resources could have components that are geared toward LGBT student-athletes.

In addition, as the participants indicated, things have gotten better for female athletes, but they are still seen as lesser than male athletes. It can only be hoped that progress will march on and that sport will provide equal playing fields for all athletes regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or any other personal characteristic.

In terms of recommendations, group discussions, nondiscrimination policies, and being an advocate have the potential to be effective in making sport environments friendlier for LGBT athletes and athletic staff. Encouraging teams to embrace differences and to work through diversity issues through group discussions can go a long way. Further, if practitioners have some influence in the happenings on college campuses, finding ways to connect the LGBT student-athlete population with the campus LGBT population might be beneficial; student-athletes might then feel as though resources are readily accessible and that they can seek support from individuals not involved in Athletics. Also, diversity training and safe zone training would not only educate staff about diversity issues but would also make them more culturally competent; this would enable them to work more effectively with people who are different from them. LGBT athletes could then feel more at ease knowing that their coaches and staff took part in the safe zone training.

However, before we try to help others, we must look inside ourselves and examine our own biases and anything else that might prevent us from working effectively with certain individuals. From there, our personal awareness will increase, and we will be able to lead by example.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FORM B APPLICATION

All applicants are encouraged to read the Form B guidelines. If you have any questions as you develop your Form B, contact your Departmental Review Committee (DRC) or Research Compliance Services at the Office of Research.

FORM B

IRB # _____

Date Received in OR _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. **Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator:**
   Jamie Fynes
   144 HPER Bldg., UTK
   865-974-8768
   jfynes@utk.edu

   Dr. Leslee A. Fisher
   336 HPER Bldg., UTK
   865-974-9973
   lfisher2@utk.edu

   Department: Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies

2. **Project Classification:** Thesis

3. **Title of Project:** Lesbian Collegiate Athletes' Experiences with Harassment

4. **Starting Date:** Upon IRB Approval

5. **Estimated Completion Date:** May 2014

6. **External Funding** *(if any):*

- **Grant/Contract Submission Deadline:** N/A
- **Funding Agency:**
- **Sponsor ID Number *(if known)*:**
- **UT Proposal Number *(if known):***

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the experiences of lesbian collegiate athletes who were harassed while they were athletes. Included in this purpose is the desire to find out about the kinds of harassment that these athletes were subjected to as well as the perceived degree to which they think that their sexual orientation and other identities played a role in the harassment.

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The student-investigator will recruit 8-12 participants who are female and retired student-athletes at the Division I collegiate level from a NCAA institution. They must identify with the lesbian sexual orientation. In addition, they must have been harassed during their time as a college athlete. The type of harassment they experienced as well as who they were harassed by will vary. The student-investigator will recruit participants via snowball sampling and word of mouth. She hopes that one participant will be able to lead her to other participants. This sampling is purposeful in that they must meet certain criteria in order to participate in the study. Participants will be asked to participate in a qualitative study about college athletes and sexual harassment.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Participants will be recruited via word of mouth. The student-researcher will use several connections to see if they know anyone who meet the criteria for the study. Her connections will talk to the potential participants who they know to see if they would be willing to participate in this study. They will also be given the student-researcher's contact information. They can email the student-researcher to further inquire about the study; or, they can choose to have the student-researcher contact them. Once the student-researcher has 8-12 participants, she will begin to set-up interviews with the participants at their convenience. If face-to-face interviews are possible, the student-researcher will travel to the locations of the participants. If certain participants are not able to meet in person for any reason, a video-message session will be set-up in lieu of a face-to-face interview. Prior to the start of the interview process, the participants will be asked to read and sign the informed consent forms (see Appendix A). Then, the student-research will proceed with conducting the interviews which will be recorded for transcription purposes, and, participants will be assigned pseudonyms to protect their name and other personal information. Before any interviews are conducted, the student-researcher will undergo a bracketing interview with a trained doctoral student. This is so that she can explore any biases that she may have that could affect the interview process.

The interviews will last approximately between 30 minutes and an hour, and, the interview guide will be semi-structured in nature (see Appendix A). The student-researcher will begin by asking demographic questions; she will then follow with questions about the participants' identity and their experiences with being sexually harassed. Once data collection is complete, the student-researcher along with the rest of the research team will code the transcripts. The research team, which consists of the student-investigator, the faculty-investigator, and several graduate students, will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement (see Appendix A). Then, the transcripts will be sent to an external auditor who will review them and offer feedback. The transcripts will then be sent to the participants to obtain their feedback.

Participant interviews will be stored in an encrypted computer file that is password protected. Once the interviews are transcribed, the printed transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet in The UT Sport Psychology Lab, HPER 119. All notes written by the investigator during the interviews and demographic information recorded on the interview sheet will also be stored in HPER 119; only the student researcher and faculty advisor will have access to the data. All copies of the audio computer file will be deleted after the interviews are transcribed. The identity of the participants will remain confidential in all presentations and publications that result from the collected data.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

The student-investigator recognizes that harassment can be a sensitive issue to discuss. There is the possibility that certain participants might become distressed while reliving their harassment. If a participant becomes too distressed, she can choose to opt out of the interview. In addition, the student-investigator will assist the participant in finding a counseling center if it is desired by the participant.

Through informed consent, the student-researcher will make the participant aware of their rights as well as the research process. Participants will be notified that their engagement in the study is voluntary and that they can opt out at any time. They will also be told that the interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes, and, the research group will be the only ones examining the transcripts for themes. In addition, if desired, participants can contact the student-investigator to receive a copy of the interview transcript.

The student-researcher will take great care to ensure that participants' information is kept confidential. Transcripts will only be seen by the investigators and the research group. Also, any sensitive, personal information, such as names, will be substituted with pseudonyms; background information of the participants will not be included on the interview transcripts. In addition, to gain only the most accurate and representative information as possible, interview transcripts will be sent to the participants to obtain their feedback. Should a participant choose to opt out of the study, her data will be destroyed.

VI. BENEFITS

It is hoped that the information that is obtained through these interviews will be a beneficial addition to the literature on this topic. Further, gaining an understanding of the circumstances

surrounding the participants' harassment could potentially provide some insight into how such harassment can be prevented. Also, there is potential for sport psychology consultants and other professionals to use this information to gain a better understanding of a specific population of athletes. In addition, there is a possibility that the interviews might be somewhat therapeutic for the participants as they will be able to discuss the harassment with an outside individual.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS

A written consent form will be given to the participants to sign. It will provide an explanation of their rights as a participant, including that their involvement in this study is completely voluntary; they can choose to opt out of the study at any time. A copy of their signed consent form will be provided for them. In addition to written consent, their rights will be explained verbally, and, the student-researcher will ask for verbal consent.
Signed informed consent forms will be kept in a secure cabinet in HPER 119 for three years following completion of the study.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The student-investigator is currently a 2nd year Master's student in the UT Sport Psychology and Motor Behavior program. She has a B.A. in Psychology. Between her brief time in a Master's in Counseling program and her current program, she has taken both several counseling and research classes. In the Spring of 2013, she took a qualitative research class. The faculty-investigator is experienced in qualitative research and is currently an Associate Professor in Sport Psychology. She is also a Certified Sport Psychology Consultant through the Association for Applied Sport Psychology.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH

The student-researcher's laptop will be used to record the interviews. The location of the interviews will depend on where the participants are living. The interviews will take place on a time and day that is convenient for both parties. In the case that a face-to-face meeting will not work out, or, the student-researcher cannot travel to the participant's location, a video-message session will be created.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)

The following information must be entered verbatim into this section:

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

1. **Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.**

2. **Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.**

3. **An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.**

4. **Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.**

XI. SIGNATURES

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE ORIGINAL. The Principal Investigator should keep the original copy of the Form B and submit a copy with original signatures for review. Type the name of each individual above the appropriate signature line. Add signature lines for all Co-Principal Investigators, collaborating and student investigators, faculty advisor(s), department head of the Principal Investigator, and the Chair of the Departmental Review Committee. The following information should be typed verbatim, with added categories where needed:

Principal Investigator: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Co-Principal Investigator: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Advisor (if any): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:

[ ] Expedited Review -- Category(s): _____

OR

[ ] Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Department Head: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services for final approval on (Date) : _____

Approved:
Research Compliance Services
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue

Signature: _____ Date: _____

For additional information on Form B, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer or by phone at (865) 974-3466.

Informed Consent Statement

Project Title: Lesbian Athlete Experiences of Division I Sport

Investigators: Jamie M. Fynes and Leslee A. Fisher, Ph.D.

What is the purpose of this research study?
You are being recruited to participate in a study and interview about the experiences of lesbian collegiate athletes at the Division I level. *This study has been approved by the institutional review board of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.*

How many people will take part in this study?
It is projected that 8-12 people will participate in this study. They must be retired from college athletics and identify as lesbian.

How long will your part in this study last?
Interviews will last approximately 30 minutes to an hour. However, you can opt out of the interview and study at any time.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
An interview will be scheduled at a time and date most convenient to you. The researcher, Jamie Fynes, will travel to your location for a face-to-face interview. However, if a face-to face interview is not feasible, a video-message session will be used to conduct the interview. You will be interviewed about your identities as well as your experiences as a lesbian collegiate athlete. The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. If desired, you can have a copy of the transcript, and, the research will ask for your feedback to ensure accuracy.

What are the possible risks from being in this study?
It is possible that you might become distressed during the interview while talking about your experiences. If this is the case, you can choose to opt out of the interview and the study. Also, if you, at any time, feel that you would like to seek out a counselor or mental health professional, the researcher will assist you with your search.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
It is hoped that you will find it therapeutic and relieving to talk about your experiences. Also, by talking about your experiences, you could potentially provide information that could help make sport environments friendlier for lesbian athletes. In addition, sport psychology consultants and other professionals will benefit by gaining a better understanding of your experiences.

Initials_____

How will your privacy be protected?

Protecting your privacy is of the utmost importance to the research. All information and transcripts will be kept confidential; your real name will not be used in the interview transcripts. Only those investigators involved in the study will have access to the recorded interviews. The recordings from the interviews will be erased once they are transcribed. Also, your informed consent forms will be kept in a secure location. If you wish to opt out from the study, your data and information will be destroyed.

Contact Information

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact the researcher Jamie Fynes, 144 HPER Building, UTK, 865-974-8768 or Dr. Leslee Fisher, 336 HPER Building, UTK, 865-974-9973. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

Participant's Agreement:

I have read all of the information provided above, and I have asked any questions that I may have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study, and I am aware that I may withdraw at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I have received a copy of this form.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____

Investigator Signature Date

Interview Guide

Informed Consent- Verbal and Written- Confidentiality

Pseudonym:

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

Background Information:

How did you get involved in sport?:

College Sport:

Number of Years Played:

Number of Years Out of College Sport:

Gender:

Age:

Race:

Sexual Orientation:

In a Committed Relationship? If so, how long?:

Religious Affiliation (If Any):

Questions

1. How would you define *female athlete*?

2. How would you say that people feel about *female athletes* in general? What stereotypes do they have?

3. How would you define *lesbian*?

4. How would you say that people feel about *lesbians* in general? What stereotypes do they have?

5. How would you say that people feel about *lesbian athletes* in general? What stereotypes do they have?

6. *Compare/contrast the answers to #1-#5* (e.g., feel about/stereotypes about lesbians vs. lesbian athletes)– similar? Different? Why?

7. How would you say that people felt about *female athletes at your former university* (e.g., were you respected by your former coaches, fellow male athletes, athletic department, and university, etc.)?

8. What was the atmosphere like for *LGBT students* at your former university?

9. What was the atmosphere like for *lesbian athletes* at your former university? How comfortable did you feel with being a lesbian on your former team, in your athletic department, and at your school? Describe the difficulty/ease you had with being a lesbian athlete at your institution.

10. Are all three of these aspects of your identity *significant to you* (e.g., being a female, being an athlete, being a lesbian)? *How do these identities interact with each other*? In other words, how important is being a female, being an athlete, being a lesbian, being a lesbian athlete, etc., to your identity?

11. Do you think that your experiences as an athlete who identified as lesbian had an impact on your sport performance? In what ways?

12. What suggestions do you have to make sport environments at the college level more friendly for lesbian athletes and LGBT athletes in general?

13. Is there anything else you want to tell me about this experience that might be helpful for me to understand?

(modified from Fisher, 1997)

Confidentiality Statement: Research Group

As a member of the Thematizing Group, by signing below, I agree to keep any information discussed regarding interview transcripts from the study ***Lesbian College Athletes' Experiences of Division I Sport*** by Jamie M. Fynes, confidential.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____



CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION
IRB/HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

This is to certify that

Jamie Fynes

has completed the requirements of the IRB/Human Subjects Research Online Training Program

May 8, 2013
DATE

Lesli Rowan
LESLI ROWAN
TRAINING COORDINATOR



CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION
IRB/HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

This is to certify that

Leslee Fisher

has completed the requirements of the IRB/Human Subjects Research Online Training Program

September 5, 2012
DATE

Lesli Rowan
LESLI ROWAN
TRAINING COORDINATOR

APPENDIX B

Table 1: Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race	Sexual Orientation	Came Out to Teammate(s)	Committed Relationship and Length	Religious Affiliation	College Sport	Number of Years Played	Length Out of College Sport
Z	Female	24	White	Gay/Queer*	Exact year not known	Yes; 4 years	None	Track and Field	3	3 years
Cece	Female	25	White	Gay	Sophomore year	Yes; 3 months	Catholic	Rowing	4	2.5 years
V	Female	23	White	Lesbian	Sophomore year	Yes; 3.5 years	Christian	Volleyball	4	2.5 years
Q	Female	25	White	Gay/Lesbian	Freshman year	Yes; 3.5 years	Catholic	Softball	4	2.5 years
Batman, "B"	Female	23	White	Bisexual**	Freshman year	Yes; 3 years	None	Track and Field	4	4 months
Superman, "S"	Female	22	White; ¼ Hawaiian	Gay/Lesbian	Sophomore year	Yes; 3 years	None	Basketball	4	7 months
Stacy	Female	26	White	Lesbian	Senior year	No	Baptist	Basketball	4	4 years
Jenn	Female	23	White	Gay/Lesbian	1st year w/2nd team	Yes; 1 month +	Russian Orthodox	Soccer	4	2 years
Yolanda	Female	23	White	Lesbian	Freshman year	Yes; 2 years	Christian/Non-denominational	Basketball	4	2 years
X	Female	25	Black	Bisexual; closer to lesbian***	5th year/grad school	No	Christian	Soccer	4	3 years

*Does not like the word lesbian

**When asked this question, she mentioned that she doesn't really care between genders, but she's only ever been with girls. Referred to herself as gay in other parts of the interview. Stated she was a lesbian during initial communication.

***Stated she wouldn't disagree if someone referred to as a lesbian

Table 2: Initial Domains, Categories, and Core Ideas

Domains/Categories	Illustrative Core Idea
Domain 1: Socialization into Sport	
a) Sports as family thing/lifestyle	Entire family was athletic, mom was a dancer growing up, dad coached basketball, a family thing, dad was big sports guy, mom played volleyball in high school, dad enjoyed sports, everyone in my family is an athlete, lifestyle as a family, family has an athletic background, family has an athletic background, mom suggested I get involved in another sport, parents were like you know you should do something to stay active, just a family thing I guess
b) Older siblings/Cousin	Brother did football, sister did basketball, soccer & swimming; idolized my brother, learn from siblings that are older than you, older cousin played and I just wanted to do whatever she did, 2 sisters did ballet
c) Parents were college/professional athletes	Mom rowed in college, mom played tennis in college, dad played football in college, father was professional athlete
Domain 2: Perceptions of female athletes	
a) Lesser than male athletes	Not really viewed as athletes, don't deserve their scholarship, it's a lot easier, objectifying perspective, aren't comparable to male athletes, can't compete at an elite level, don't get televised as much, aren't as tough, slower, less interesting, men dominate the athlete world, aren't seen in the same light, a separate thing, objectified and not really looked at who they are as people, good for a girl
b) Getting better	How women are viewed has come a long way, it's changed a lot, better but not equal
c) Stereotypes	Masculine, not sexual, hooking up with each other, strong, sexuality comes into question, softball players are gay, racial stereotypes that if you're black you run track or play basketball, lesbians, caring, nurturing, sissies, don't want contact, if you play a masculine sport then you're gay
Domain 3: Stereotypes of Lesbians and Lesbian Athletes	
a) Sport-dependent	If you're a female basketball player then you're gay, softball players and basketball players automatically get stereotyped as lesbians, the better they are the more likely it is that they're gay
b) Appearance-driven	Masculine, short hair, dresses like a male, no hair, look like a dude, no lipstick lesbians in sport, manly, buzz cut, wear men's shorts, butch, overweight, baggy shorts or baggy pants, super muscular, don't wear make-up, way they walk and carry their body, want to be a guy, butch, deeper voice, athletic
c) Not legitimate	Confused, a stage or phase, scissoring, girls can't have sex, don't value that girls can have legitimate relationships, haven't met the right guy, can't get a guy, had a bad experience with a guy
Domain 4: Climate for LGBT Athletes	
a) Team	Hush-hush, didn't really trust them, no dating teammates policy, safe haven, comforting, hush-hush, it boils down to the fact that this is my teammate, amongst my teammates it was okay, a good place for me, no one ever looked at it any different, everyone was okay with it, my team doesn't care, they loved me regardless

Table 2. Continued.

b) Athletic Department	Zero support, don't ask don't tell, elephant in the room, athletic family was so close, I wouldn't say pressured but we were highly advised
c) Campus	Disconnect, didn't really associate myself with anyone other than athletes, almost like you're in a separate bubble, didn't really go too outside the athletic bubble, really didn't participate in any events, there wasn't as much crossover with the lesbian athletes and the actual lesbian community on campus
Domain 5: Negotiating Identities	
a) Athlete to Feminine	Gotten more feminine, wearing dresses/makeup, if I'm gunna be gay I gotta at least be feminine, balance it out, a lot more girly, look for an excuse to put on a new dress
b) Gay Isn't All of Who I Am	Don't want it to be erased, they feel a very strong need to put a hat on it, wouldn't classify lesbian as one of my key characteristics, just a person, other qualities people would want to know, don't think that it necessarily needs to define me, gives me a label but doesn't define me
c) Dependent Upon Location	Negotiating different communities that I'm in, none of my friends there knew about that side of me, I hid who I was for so long I'm not doing it anymore, moved to an administrative position and had to be more careful about what I said
d) Gay vs. Lesbian	Hate the word lesbian, sounds like alien, gay gives a little more fluidity, [lesbian] brings on more negative stereotypes, lesbian makes you seem like a man-hating feminist, more comfortable saying gay, lesbian has so much negative connotation behind it, easier to say I'm gay, lesbian makes it more pinpoint, lesbian just sounds really scary, just say gay because I feel like that's universal, an ugly word, never use lesbian, not super official
Domain 6: Recommendations for Practitioners	
a) Team	Be aware of how other people feel, safe zone training, small group discussions, more people coming out, get to know your team
b) Athletic Department	Bring more of the student affairs mindset to the environment, gay/lesbian program within the athletic department, ally they can talk to, sport psychologist, older mentors, creating an open environment, creating small groups, starts with having a conversation, diversity class
c) Campus	Rainbow flag on your window, committee that was able to bridge the gap between the campus LGBT committee and the athlete LGBT community, special extension for student-athletes who might be a sexual minority
d) Performance-related Concerns	I don't feel like it did [affect performance], performance no but team dynamics absolutely, killed the dynamics, it had nothing to do with my sexuality, in regards to my athletic performance it was never an issue, struggled through workouts that I never struggled through, body wasn't working, only way it would possibly weigh upon someone's experience is when girls date their teammates, leave your personal life out of the gym, segments different parts of their life, on trips as a team sometimes it would cause me some anxiety

Table 3: Final Domains, Categories, and Core Ideas

Domains/Categories	Illustrative Core Idea
Domain I: Stereotypes and Perceptions of Female Athletes	
a) Lesser than male athletes	They aren't really viewed as athletes and aren't comparable to male athletes. They are also objectified.
b) Getting better over time	How women are viewed has come a long way. It's changed a lot, and it's better, but not equal.
c) Stereotypes	They are masculine and strong. Their sexuality comes into question depending on the sport.
Domain II: Stereotypes and Perceptions of Lesbians and Lesbian Athletes	
a) Sport-dependent	Softball and basketball are associated with lesbians.
b) Appearance-driven	They are masculine and look and act like a man.
c) Just a "phase"	They are not seen as legitimate relationships. They are only with a woman because they can't get a guy.
d) Generational differences	The current generation is a lot more accepting than the older generation, partially because more people are "out."
Domain III: Climate for LGBT Athletes	
a) Team atmosphere	The team was a place of comfort. Teammates were okay with their sexual orientation. Nothing changed.
b) Athletic department ethos	It was like "don't ask, don't tell."
c) Athletic "bubble"	They didn't venture very far out of athletics for friends, events, or activities. There was a disconnect between athletics and the rest of campus.
d) Campus resources	There were LGBT resources, organizations, and events available, but they did not get involved.
Domain IV: Negotiating Identities	
a) Performance vs personal	They choose where and to whom they revealed their sexual orientation. Overall performance was not affected, and they kept the personal separated from performance.
b) Playing with heterosexual femininity	They have gotten more feminine and embrace wearing dresses and makeup.
c) "Gay" isn't all of who I am	It does not define them. They just want to be seen as a person and noticed for other characteristics.
d) Sexual orientation fluidity	Gay allows for more fluidity and lesbian makes it more pinpoint. You can be a little gay or fully gay.
Domain V: Recommendations for College Campuses	
a) Team relatedness	Safe zone training, small group discussions, and getting to know your teammates are all beneficial.
b) Athletic department	The department should have a gay/lesbian program in it. It should offer safe zone training and a sport psychologist.
c) Campus organizations	Find a way to connect the LGBT athletes with the campus LGBT population. The LGBT resource center should have a subsection for athletes.
d) Exposure leads to normalization	The more people come out, the more normalized it will get.

Table 4: Final Results Table

	WHICH PARTICIPANTS SAID THIS? (check each box if they did)										Final Participant Tally #	Notes
Domain/Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Domain #1: Stereotypes and Perceptions of Female Athletes												
a) Lesser Than Male Athletes	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	8	Typical
b) Getting Better Over Time				x	x				x		3	Variant
c) Stereotypes	x				x	x	x	x	x	x	7	Typical
Domain #2: Stereotypes and Perceptions of Lesbians and Lesbian Athletes												
a) Sport-Dependent	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		8	Typical
b) Appearance-Driven	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10	General
c) Just a "Phase"						x	x	x	x		4	Variant
d) Generational Differences		x	x	x	x	x		x			6	Typical
Domain #3: Climate for LGBT Athletes												
a) Team Atmosphere	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10	General
b) Athletic Department Ethos	x					x	x		x		4	Variant
c) Athletic "Bubble"		x				x	x	x		x	5	Typical
d) Campus Resources	x	x	x		x	x			x	x	7	Typical
Domain #4: Negotiating Identities												
a) Performance vs. Personal	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10	General
b) Playing with Heterosexual Femininity				x	x		x	x			4	Variant

Table 4. Continued.

c) "Gay" Isn't All of Who I Am	x			x	x	x					4	Variant
d) Sexual Orientation Fluidity	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10	General
Domain #5: Recommendations for College Campuses												
a) Team Relatedness	x		x	x							3	Variant
b) Athletic Department	x	x			x		x		x		5	Typical
c) Campus Organizations	x				x					x	3	Variant
d) Exposure Leads to Normalization			x	x	x	x		x			5	Typical

VITA

Jamie Fynes was born in Youngstown, OH, to the parents of Jim and Jo Ann Fynes. She attended Roosevelt Elementary and continued to McDonald High School, in McDonald, Ohio. After graduating from high school in June 2007, she attended Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio where she received her B.A. in Psychology-Community/Clinical. In May 2011, she graduated Summa Cum Laude and received the Outstanding Senior in Psychology-Community/Clinical award. Following program attendance in a M.A. program in Counseling, she decided to pursue a degree in Sport Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She eventually received a graduate assistantship in the Physical Education and Activity Program where she taught Stress Management and Yoga & Relaxation. Jamie graduated with a Master of Science degree in Kinesiology with a concentration in Sport Psychology and Motor Behavior in May 2014.