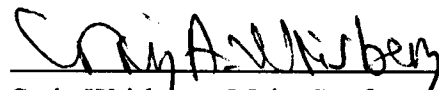


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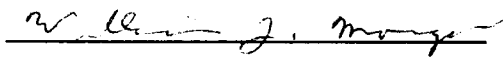
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Lori Ann Napier entitled "Homophobia in Sport: Perceptions of Sport Psychologists and Frequency of Consulting Opportunities." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Human Performance and Sport Studies.



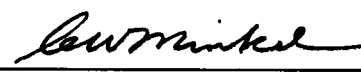
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Associate Vice Chancellor and
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HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT: PERCEPTIONS OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGISTS AND
FREQUENCY OF CONSULTING OPPORTUNITIES

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Lori Ann Napier
May 1998

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents,

who taught me how to dream

and who wholeheartedly

supported me when I did.

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First of all, I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee. I thank Dr. Joy DeSensi for supporting me and encouraging me to undergo the study of such a controversial topic. I also thank Dr. Bill Morgan for teaching me to investigate all sides of an issue before making a judgement on it. Finally, I am very grateful to my advisor, Dr. Craig Wrisberg, for answering my endless array of questions and guiding me through this graduate program.

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Lastly, I want to thank my parents, Bill and Linda Napier, for providing for me financially, morally, and emotionally.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the concepts of homosexuality and homophobia in relation to the perceptions and experiences of sport psychologists. Due to the nature of their work, sport psychologists may be in an opportune position to help individuals deal with the personal or performance problems of athletes which may be associated with issues of homophobia and questions of sexual orientation. In this study an attempt was made to determine how often sport psychologists deal with such issues in a counseling setting and whether the gender or occupational position of the sport psychologist played a role in such counseling. One hundred thirteen sport psychologists, certified through either the United States Olympic Committee or the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology, were sent a "Homophobia in Sport" questionnaire. Data gathered from the 87 respondents indicated that they spent little of their time (less than 1%) dealing with issues related to homophobia or homosexuality. The results also revealed no significant impact of gender or occupational emphasis of the consultant on the amount of time spent on such issues.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sport psychologists deal with a variety of issues ranging from implementing psychological skills training programs with teams to dealing with the very private and personal concerns of individual athletes. Ideally, the gender of the sport psychologist should not play a role in any issue that may arise in the course of working with athletes and teams. A sport psychologist's merit should be judged on the basis of his or her ethical standards, knowledge, credibility, and effectiveness; however, in a less than perfect society that includes the stereotyping of people on almost every imaginable characteristic (e.g. race, age, body-type, gender, ability, etc.) this sometimes proves to be a difficult task.

Yambor and Connelly (1991) stated that there are definite differences in the way male and female sport psychologists are treated and viewed by individuals. These differences can manifest themselves in the way that clients and co-workers view the sport psychologist's ability to perform as a successful practitioner. It is also possible that the gender of the sport psychologist may affect the nature of his or her relationships with clients.

One issue which athletes may address depending on the gender of the consultant is homosexuality (i.e. same-sex sexual attraction). Homosexuality is an especially stigmatized concept in our society (Griffin, 1992). This stigmatization manifests itself in the form of homophobia, the irrational fear of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals (Weinberg, 1972, Pronger, 1990). As a result, many people, athletes included, may feel uncomfortable discussing the topic openly and honestly. In the case of athletes, the issue of homophobia can have important implications within the sporting arena affecting an individual athlete's performance, team cohesion, and working relations within the athletic administration. It is possible that issues dealing with sexual orientation may be dealt with

in the sport psychology setting. Some researchers (Rotella & Murray, 1991) have noted that homosexuality and the homophobia surrounding it have been issues of concern in sports for decades, yet because of the stigmatization associated with these concepts, little information has been gathered to determine the extent to which they have been dealt with, specifically in the sport psychology setting.

A review of the relevant literature suggests that there is a stigma and silence surrounding the issue of homosexuality (Griffin, 1992; Harry, 1995; Herek, 1984; Lenskyj, 1991). This leads to the hypothesis that such issues will rarely be discussed, even in a confidential setting. Other research suggests that, in general, men are more homophobic than women (Eskilson, 1995) and that clients perceive female therapists as more compassionate than male therapists in general (Petrie, Cogan, Van Raalte, & Brewer, 1996; Nelson, 1993). These findings, along with the fact that sport is a male-dominated institution, suggest that personal and private topics, such as homosexuality, are more likely to be discussed with female sport psychologists rather than with male consultants.

One other factor which may play a significant role in the frequency with which issues of homophobia and homosexuality are discussed in a sport psychology setting concerns the primary occupational position of the sport psychologist. While some sport psychologists focus primarily on dealing with performance enhancement issues (relaxation, concentration, visualization), others are more concerned with counseling issues (relationship problems, eating disorders, drug abuse, or sexual orientation). Due to the differing nature of these two positions, it might be predicted that a counseling sport psychologist will deal with homosexuality and homophobia in a counseling session than will a sport psychologist primarily concerned with performance enhancing issues.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the concepts of homosexuality and homophobia in relation to the perceptions and experiences of sport psychologists.

Questions this study will attempt to answer include:

1. How frequently do sport psychologists deal with issues regarding homosexuality and homophobia when consulting with athletes or athletic staff?
2. Does the gender of the sport psychologist play a factor in how often such issues are dealt with (i.e. are female consultants more likely to deal with such issues more often than male consultants)?
3. Does the primary occupational position of the sport psychologist (i.e., counseling vs. performance enhancement) play a factor in how often such issues are dealt with?
4. Do sport psychologists feel that homophobia in sport is an issue which they need to address?
5. How comfortable are sport psychologists in addressing such issues?

Hypotheses

In light of the currently available knowledge, the following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. Although issues dealing with homosexuality pose potential performance problems in the athletic realm, due to the stigma and silence surrounding these issues there will be a low frequency of such consultations reported by sport psychologists.
2. When such issues are broached, both male and female athletes, coaches, and staff alike are more likely to discuss them with a female rather than a male sport psychologist.
3. A counseling sport psychologist will deal with issues regarding homophobia and homosexuality more often than will a performance enhancement sport psychologist.

Definitions of Terms

Along with theoretical definitions, the following terms have been operationally defined for the purposes of the current study and to provide the reader with a better understanding of the research topic.

1. Client

Theoretical Def. - a person or group that uses the professional advice or services of a lawyer, accountant, architect, psychologist, etc. (Random House, 1995)

Operational Def. - any person who seeks the services of a sport psychologist for the purposes of improving athletic or job performance or to deal with other personal concerns.

2. Heterosexuality

Theoretical and Operational Def. - opposite-sex sexual attraction (Random House, 1995)

3. Homophobia

Theoretical and Operational Def. - Weinberg (1972) described four major aspects in which homophobia can manifest itself: (a) the fear and hatred of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, (b) the fear of being perceived as gay, (c) the fear of one's own sexual or physical attraction for others of the same sex, (d) the fear of actually being gay.

4. Homosexuality

Theoretical and Operational Def. - same-sex sexual attraction (Random House, 1995)

5. Sexism

Theoretical and Operational Def. - prejudice or discrimination based on gender (Random House, 1995)

6. Sport Psychologist

Theoretical Def. - It is difficult to theoretically define the term "Sport Psychologist" due to the fact that use of the term *psychologist* is restricted by laws in each state. Many individuals who provide mental training services and who are referred to as sport psychologists are not actually licensed psychologists. The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) differentiates between three different types of sport psychologists:

(a) Counseling sport psychologists who concentrate on performance enhancement techniques, (b) Research sport psychologists who concentrate on conducting research in the field of sport psychology, and (c) Clinical sport psychologists who deal with more severe issues such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, etc. (United States Olympic Committee, 1988).

Operational Def. - a professional, certified either through the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology or the USOC to work with athletes, coaches, and other athletic staff with performance enhancement and counseling issues. For the purposes of this study, counseling sport psychologists primarily deal with more severe issues such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, ect. and performance enhancing sport psychologists concentrate on performance enhancement techniques.

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were made in this study:

1. Sport is a male-dominated institution.
2. Homophobia exists in sport.
3. Sexism exists in sport.
4. There is a silence and stigma associated with homosexuality.
5. There are male and female homosexual athletes competing in sports.
6. The survey used in this study is a valid and reliable means of obtaining information to answer the questions posed in regard to the purpose of this study.
7. The participants in this study understood and responded to the survey in an open and honest manner.

Scope of the Study

The study was limited to sport psychology consultants who are certified either through the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) or the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP) who actively work with athletes

and athletic support staff.

Significance of the Study

This study is important due to the dearth of information on homophobia within the realm of sport psychology. Most of the information used in the review of literature for this study was obtained either from the fields of sport sociology or counseling psychology. If, as assumed in this study, there are homosexual athletes and athletic staff who are participating in sports, the fact that homophobia exists will inevitably affect both gay and straight people alike. Sport psychology consultants may be in an opportune position to deal with such issues. As confidentiality is an essential part of the sport psychologist's role, he or she can serve as a "safe-haven" for clients to talk out their feelings about private, personal issues. If sport psychologists are not properly prepared to deal with homosexual or homophobic athletes and staff, their ability to provide support, encouragement, and empathy will be seriously hindered. Such a state of affairs would only perpetuate the silence surrounding the issue of homosexuality and add to the problems caused by homophobia.

Another purpose of this study was to examine the possible role gender plays in determining whether or not clients are likely to discuss issues of homosexuality and homophobia with a sport psychology consultant. Nelson (1993) found that past research on counselor gender effects has been lacking due to three main factors: (a) simple gender effects are modest effects, (b) gender differences are influenced by multiple person and environmental variables, and (c) persons and their relationships are socially embedded in a context that influences or biases their interactions. Due to these factors, Nelson (1993) emphasized the need for researchers to focus on particular contexts. Nelson stated that a "context would be defined as the homogeneous group within which the investigator is examining particular phenomena," (Nelson, 1993, p. 206). This context might refer to a community, a region, a discipline, or even a department within a discipline, such as

clinical versus counseling psychology. The emphasis on context should allow a greater understanding of the particular phenomena under investigation and a lesser degree of distortion than that which accompanies most generalizations. It is the intent of this research to do just that through specific study of sport psychologists (homogeneous group) and examining the "particular phenomena" of homophobia.

Finally, if the results of this study reveal that gender preference is a significant factor in clients' decisions to discuss issues regarding homosexuality and homophobia, it should lead consultants to question the possible influence their gender plays in shaping the relationships they have with their clients. It should also lead consultants to an increased awareness of the potential nature of their interactions with their clients, including an awareness of their own biases and the clients' biases which may be based on gender or the nature of the subject being discussed.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following review of literature the following topics are examined (a) how the traditionally male-dominated domain of sport views and accepts females, (b) the history of the lesbian stigma in women's sport, (c) the effect of the homosexual label on athletes, and (d) the role gender plays in patient/counselor relationships. The intent is to provide a theoretical background on these issues which should cover the many factors contributing to the prevalence of homophobia in sports, the psychological and performance problems which may occur because of it, and the silence surrounding it.

Sport as a Male Dominated Institution

Throughout history, sport has been dominated by men, male attitudes, and male characteristics. If one was successful in sports, he was deemed strong, aggressive, and powerful, and in such labels, his manhood was affirmed. Men ruled the sporting domain and they were comfortable with it. As more and more female athletes appeared on the sporting scene, however, society's notion of athletics as an all-encompassing male domain began to change. Many people argued that women were also making their mark in the athletic realm. At the present time, there are more females participating in sports than ever before, more people watching women's sports, and acceptance is growing. Are women finally achieving parity on the athletic field?

Wright (1996) defined hegemony as, "the domination of society with society's consent. It doesn't just mean domination. What is in the best interest of the ruling class is also in the best interest of the working class." Hargreaves (1982) defined hegemony as the notion that the domination of one group by another is not viewed as oppression. Understanding the process of hegemony is important in understanding the role of women's athletics in society.

Kane and Snyder (1989) have suggested the notion that sport is a social institution that

systematically reproduces and maintains an ideology (and social reality) of male domination and female subordination. This idea is hidden behind many statistics and reports of women receiving greater representation and equality in sports. Although these reports are facts, women have made significant gains, there remains the matter of hegemony in sport. Because the media consistently portrays these statistical realities, many people think that the “‘problem’ of women in sport, the historical exclusion from sport for most women, and the negative stereotypes that accompanied those who did participate, are a thing of the past” (Kane & Snyder, 1989).

In Kane and Snyder’s study, they attempted to show that although it is now becoming more socially accepted for women to participate in sports, the type of sports and the level of importance given to these sports by society (in comparison to men’s sports), serves as a subtle means of oppression. In this study, “masculine” and “feminine” sports were contrasted in terms of gender appropriateness. Respondents were 145 college-age students attending a middle-sized Midwestern university. Fifty-one percent were female and 49 percent were male. The respondents were given a semantic differential scale where 13 sets of bi-polar adjectives (weak/strong) were used to describe women’s basketball and women’s gymnastics. These two sports were used because they represent the two different categories of sex-appropriate versus sex-inappropriate sports proposed by Metheny (1965).

Results revealed that both male and female students held more traditional, stereotypic views associated with women’s sports. For example, gymnasts were rated as more attractive, graceful, and more positive than basketball players. The study revealed a high significance between gender of the respondent and sport typing on each physicality dimension (weaker/stronger, harder/softer). When the male students rated basketball, they rated it in “lesser than” terms as opposed to when the females rated basketball. However, both men and women rated gymnastics similarly. This difference may have

occurred because, although respondents were instructed to compare women's basketball with women's gymnastics, males were likely comparing women's basketball to men's basketball. Therefore, males may have viewed women's basketball as a counterfeit, scaled down version of "real" basketball. This comparison was not made in gymnastics possibly because until recently basketball was an exclusively male sport while this is not so with gymnastics. Overall, the researchers concluded that women are encouraged to participate in "feminine", or sex-appropriate sports, but are socially and physically stigmatized if they attempt to enter into "male" sports (Kane & Snyder, 1989).

"A female can't be an ideal woman and an ideal athlete because the characteristics that constitute a good athlete are inconsistent with the characteristics that constitute a good woman" (Martin & Martin, 1995, p. 290). Statements such as this seem to represent an overriding theme in the review of literature pertaining to sex roles and the female athlete. Whereas a man can smoothly fit into the role of athlete and at the same time reaffirm and enhance his manhood, a female athlete, on the other hand, by definition, is considered "deviant" (Watson, 1987). In fact, in World War I and II in an attempt to assure that the military was free of homosexuals, men were asked about their involvement in sports. If they were active in sports, they were assumed to be heterosexual. On the other hand, if they had little or no sport involvement, their sexual orientation became suspect. A similar relationship is apparent for women's sports, only in the reverse. If the woman is highly involved in sports, her sexuality is questioned (Oglesby, 1997)

Martin and Martin (1995) tested for distinct athlete and gender schemas, and compared the perceived sex role orientation of the ideal male and female athlete with the ideal male and female person. A total of 141 (61 males) introductory psychology students from a small private Midwestern university were assigned to one of six conditions (ideal male athlete, ideal female athlete, ideal male person, ideal female person, ideal athlete, or ideal person) and asked to list characteristics describing their target

person. Each subject then completed a Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) on their perception of their target person. The results revealed that ideal athletes were perceived as more masculine than ideal persons. Ideal males were perceived as equally masculine as ideal male athletes. Ideal females were seen as much less masculine than ideal males and ideal female athletes were seen as equally masculine to ideal male athletes. The results seemed to indicate that when people evaluate female athletes, they invoke an athletic schema comprised of highly masculine characteristics. The double standard here is obvious whereas the profiles of the ideal male and the ideal male athlete were similar, the ideal females and ideal female athlete were in stark contrast.

In another study, Kane (1989) investigated the post-Title IX female athlete and examined the amount and types of messages and images that the media portrayed the female athlete with. Kane found that two important themes arose in the study: (a) female athletes were grossly under represented and reported in not only sports magazines, but also women's magazines, (b) when they were reported, they were often presented in traditionally stereotypic ways.

Kane's study examined *Sports Illustrated's* coverage of female athletes before, during, and after Title IX. She found that the more feminine women's sports such as tennis and golf received significantly more coverage and that less emphasis was put on women's athletic ability and more was put on dieting, beauty, and the health benefits of sport. Regarding the emphasis of media coverage given to women's tennis and golf, Kane pointed out that fewer women actually participated in those sports than they did in sports such as basketball and softball. Logically, the media should be catering to the larger audience, but this apparently was not the case.

The results of many of these studies can be supplemented by the use of popular media which shapes an individual's views of society. As Boutilier and San-Giovanni (1987) put it, "regardless of what is actually happening to the relationship between women and

sport, it is the media's treatment and evaluation of that relationship that will shape its direction and content" (p. 184). With this in mind, it was interesting to observe the coverage of women's sports during the 1996 Summer Olympics. The media touted these games as the year of the female athlete, however; this was not evident in the media's coverage of female athletes. What was evident was how coverage of the Olympics fell in line with the results of Kane's study (1989) mentioned earlier. The author of one article in the *New York Times*, (1996) complained that while NBC showed 10 straight minutes on synchronized swimming and 19 minutes of taped rhythmic gymnastic semifinals, although those are tough sports, "neither is making the public geiger-counter crackle as women's soccer and softball are" (Sandomir, 1996, p. C7)).

The same night that the U.S. women's team became Olympic softball champions, NBC aired a short, taped highlight package but extensively covered a meaningless (non-competitive) gymnastics gala "featuring the American pixies writhing to 'YMCA'" (p. C7). The network also showed only the final minute of injury time of the U.S. women's gold medal winning soccer game, slipping it in after spending 17 minutes on the men's basketball team. Sandomir said NBC's coverage was "not just unfair, but insulting and contradicting to NBC's philosophy to rope female viewers. Has NBC secretly discovered that women draw the line at their gender playing sweaty team sports that were once male preserves?" (Sandomir, 1996, p. C7).

It is also important to be aware of another aspect of male hegemony at work in the women's athletics. Whorf (1956) stated that our system of sex and gender classification is embedded in our language. Given this assumption, it is interesting to note how the use of sex-specific modifiers fits into the notion of male hegemony in sport. Watson (1987) said that the use of sex-specific modifiers in front of other identifying terms would seem to imply that the sex identity of the described person is normatively unexpected. If this is true, then the use of sex-specific modifiers indicates "exceptions to the rule" or deviant

cases. Watson uses the examples of doctors and lady doctors; nurses and male nurses; and athletes and female athletes. Therefore, if this is true, by definition, female athletes are considered deviants in much of society and have not yet achieved parity.

Overall, the maintenance of male power and privilege, to a degree, depends on the ensurance that sex differences are carefully constructed and institutionalized in social structures, beliefs and practices. Most sports are tests of physical strength and endurance rather than tests of kinesthetic ability, flexibility, coordination or other physical attributes which females may excel in. Although there is some overlap between males and females regarding the performances of these skills, generally, men, on average, outperform women on the former skills. By defining the nature of sports and what makes a person athletic relative to those sports, the illusion of male athletic superiority can be maintained. As a result of naming what is athletic and what is not (essentially athlete = masculine), sport provides an appropriate site for instruction in masculinity and femininity (Lenskj, 1991).

History of the "Mannish" and Lesbian Stigma of Women in Sport

With athletics being the historical bastion of male dominance, it is no wonder that when the female athlete stepped onto the scene in the early 1900's it created a stir. At the turn of the century, women started to rebel against the socially accepted Victorian attitudes which prevailed in society (Cahn, 1993). They wanted to be included in more of the traditionally male-dominated areas, including athletics.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, a "new woman" began to emerge. This new athletic girl was seen as "hip". Popular women's magazines at the time, *Harper's Bazaar* (April, 1910) and *Good Housekeeping* (August, 1912), noted that the "tomboy" had come to symbolize "a new type of American girl, not only physically, but mentally and morally" (p. 344). However, two main arguments were held against female athletes: (a) athletics would harm women's reproductive organs, and (b) athletics would make

women "mannish" (Cahn, 1993). Although the first argument has never been medically proven, the second argument of mannishness (female masculinity) has stuck throughout the years. In the 1920's however, in combination with an antifeminist backlash and the fact that homosexuality was medically diagnosed as a form of sexual "deviance", mannishness became linked to homosexuality. This led to a reform of women's athletics in physical education curricula and to marketing strategies promoting the mannish athlete as a "relic of the past, supplanted by lovely, feminine, charming girls where fitness, suppleness, and grace merely made them more beautiful on the dance floor that evening" (Cahn, 1993, p. 360).

After World War II, there was widespread "homosexual panic". There was a call to reconcile the natural gender order of things in the wake of wartime disruption, and an extreme emphasis on "traditional" family values and roles. The female athlete was visibly in direct contrast with these values and was attacked. The lesbian attitude associated with women's athletics placed pressure on the female athlete to prove her femininity and heterosexuality (Cahn, 1993). Further research indicates that this pressure has remained through the years and affects not only society's attitudes toward female athletes, but has made female athletes more cognizant of the stigma placed on them by the mere fact they are females participating in a male-dominated domain.

The Effect of the Homosexual Label on Athletics

Strongly ingrained in patriarchal beliefs is the notion of compulsive heterosexuality. Just as masculinity and femininity in sport are not valued equally, neither are heterosexuality and homosexuality. The concept of heterosexuality as the "normal" and accepted sexual orientation has been traditionally enforced by the mental health systems (Gelso, Fassinger, Gomez, & Latts, 1995; Herek, 1984; Kitzinger, 1996; Nelson, 1982), by state-condoned systematic discrimination, and by physical violence. This shows that the transmission of masculine identity "is a complex enterprise aimed at maintaining male

heterosexual hegemony," (Lenskj, 1991, p. 62).

While conformity to established gender norms contributes to the sustenance of male dominance and heterosexual privilege, women's violation of traditional gender role norms represents a serious threat to patriarchal and heterosexual society because this "deviant" behavior resists women's traditionally subordinate status (Blinde & Taub, 1992). Even more threatening to male heterosexual hegemony are lesbians, "because they reject their 'natural' gender role, and resist economic, emotional, and sexual dependence on men" (Blinde & Taub, 1992, p. 152). Because of this threat, and owing to the stigmatization associated with being labeled gay or lesbian, homophobia is a powerful political weapon of sexism (Griffin, 1992; Pharr, 1988). As a result, women in sport are especially sensitive and susceptible to the use of the lesbian label as a form of intimidation.

In a study of sport ideology and its relationship with sexist and anti-homosexual attitudes, Harry (1995) tested the attitudes and moral beliefs that students at a Midwestern university had toward men and women in sport. To do this, he administered a questionnaire to 304 respondents, 63 percent of whom were women with a mean age of 20. The hypothesis was that subjects high in support for sports ideology would also be anti-homosexual. The results showed that sports ideology was significantly related to patriarchal beliefs, anti-lesbian views, and anti-gay views among men but not among women. The study revealed that, regardless of gender, subjects subscribed to the concept of athletic ideology. Among men and women, this sport ideology was positively associated with patriarchal beliefs and anti-lesbian attitudes. Although male subjects in this study were anti-gay and anti-lesbian, females were neither. The results also suggested that men associated sports with a larger set of cultural attitudes related to gender, whereby sports are a way in which to "express one's manliness". Females, on the other hand, didn't show the same tendency to associate sports with gender. For females, gender roles were not an important factor in sports participation (Harry, 1995).

The lesbian label affects both gay and straight individual, be they athletes, coaches or administrators. For example, female athletes, whether gay or straight, may be overly conscious of their appearance and go out of their way to look feminine so as not to be stereotyped as a lesbian. "Women in sport have a tradition of assuring ourselves and others that sport participation is consistent with traditional notions of femininity and that women are not masculinized by sport experiences" (Griffin, 1992, p. 254). In addition to the internal strife experienced by female athletes, lesbianism affects interpersonal relationships among team members and is counterproductive to team cohesion. The lesbian label can cause rifts in team unity by causing teammates to take sides and form cliques.

The lesbian label is sometimes used to intimidate prospective student athletes against attending certain schools by suggesting that either the coach or members of a team are lesbians. Some women may be deterred from pursuing careers in traditionally male-dominated institutions, such as sports, for fear of being labeled a lesbian, and even if they do choose to enter such fields, it is not beyond belief that administrators in a position to hire such candidates may make assumptions about the candidates' sexual orientation (Lopiano, 1996).

Blinde, Taub, and Han (1994) conducted telephone interviews with 24 female athletes representing three Division I schools (two Midwest and one South). The purpose of the study was to see if sport provided a site for women's group and societal empowerment. During the interviews, many themes arose. Regarding the role of sport in enhancing the status of women in society, there were many positive aspects expressed. The two negative themes were the difficulty of women in attempting to succeed in an activity traditionally viewed as male dominated, and that the lesbian label detracted from their accomplishments. Furthermore, the athletes did not believe sports helped them to develop an understanding of feminist issues and they did not consider themselves

feminists or women's rights advocates.

Strike (1984) studied the socialization of females into athletics. Telephone interviews with 10 female NCAA Division I college basketball players revealed that these athletes perceived female college basketball coaches as being associated with negative characteristics. Coaches were criticized from two perspectives: (a) their perceived incompetence, and (b) their apparent "masculine" characteristics. When positive comments were made about female coaches, it was usually based on how well they presented themselves physically. Did they look feminine?

Blinde and Taub (1992) conducted phone interviews with 24 female college athletes regarding their perceptions of women's sport and stereotypes associated with being a female athlete. Results of the interviews indicated two major themes: (a) a silence surrounding the issue of lesbianism in women's sport, and (b) the fact that the athletes internalized societal stereotypes concerning lesbians and female athletes. The study revealed that many of the female athletes had a difficult time discussing the topic of lesbianism. When they did discuss it, many viewed it as a private and personal issue and stated that it was inappropriate to discuss a person's sexual orientation. The majority of the subjects also reported that at one time or another, they felt the need to hide the fact that they were athletes and accentuate certain activities that made them appear to be more feminine, such as having a boyfriend or becoming sexually promiscuous. Additional findings indicated that not only did the issue of lesbianism affect individual athletes, but it also affected team unity and interpersonal relationships. The author observed that, "the lesbian issue sometimes split teams into factions or served as the basis for clique formation" (Blinde & Taub, 1992, p. 161).

It is obvious that the lesbian label and perceived mannishness of female athletes affects not only how female athletes view themselves, but also how society looks at them. When a female decides to join a sport, she has to deal with these stigmas or make an attempt to

prove her femininity or heterosexuality, something she would not have to do for most non-athletic endeavors.

Overall, because homosexuality is such a stigmatized topic, it is no wonder that the subject is surrounded by such a prevailing silence. Homophobia causes cognitive dissonance in athletes which can potentially affect their performance (Del Rey, 1977). Additional performance decrements may occur as a result of the strain on team unity caused by homophobia.

Counselor Gender Preference

Are female athletes more likely to disclose issues of homosexuality or homophobia to a female sport psychologist or a male sport psychologist? What about male athletes? Do athletes feel more comfortable talking about homosexuality with a member of the same gender, or would both male and female athletes rather talk to a female sport psychologist, who (by definition of her professional position) doesn't subscribe to the patriarchal norm in athletics? Although there is little literature dealing with gender preference for sport psychologists specifically, there is pertaining to the gender preference of clients in traditional psychological counseling settings.

Preference for counselor gender has been a major theme in counseling research (Snell, Hampton, & McManus, 1992; DeHeer, Wampold, & Freund, 1992; Nelson, 1993; Gelso, Fassinger, Gomez, & Latts, 1995; Petrie, Cogan, Van Raalte, & Brewer, 1996). The literature on counselor gender preference has yet to yield a definitive statement on whether clients prefer to be paired with a same-sex counselor, a male counselor, or a female counselor. Studies conducted by Kirshner, Genack, and Hauser (1978) revealed that both male and female clients responded better to female therapists. However, Luborsky, Auerbach, Chandler, Cohen, and Bachrach (1971), Persons et. al (1974), and Jones and Zoppel (1982) indicated that clients had more positive experiences with same-gender therapists, while still other studies found that clients may benefit more from

opposite-gender pairings (Nelson, 1993). Generally, there has been a trend in the literature for clients to express greater degrees of comfort, satisfaction, and improvement with female therapists than with male therapists (Nelson, 1993; Petri et. al. 1996; & DeHeer et. al. 1992).

Regardless of the inconsistent results yielded by this research, many researchers agree that counseling processes associated with gender are often affected by the types of personal problems discussed between clients and counselors (Snell et. al. 1992). In order to test the hypotheses that females would be more willing than males to discuss relational topics with counselors, and that participants would be more likely to reveal private, personal information to female rather than to male counselors, Snell et. al. (1992) conducted a study in which the subjects consisted of 434 undergraduate students at a Midwestern University who volunteered to participate. Subjects completed the Relationship Disclosure Scale (RDS), the Relationship Awareness Scale (RAS), and the Relationship Assessment Questionnaire (RAQ). Results revealed that women clients were more likely to disclose in a counseling situation than were men, and that both men and women were more likely to disclose personal information about their intimate relationships to female rather than to male counselors. The researchers concluded that this may be due to the perception of clients that female counselors are more nurturing, sensitive, and reassuring than men. If so, both men and women would be more likely to discuss such personal topics as love, closeness, and sexual behaviors with female counselors rather than with male counselors.

One study in the sport psychology literature suggests that individuals may have a slight preference for female sport psychologists rather than for male sport psychologists (Petrie et. al. 1996). In this study, the participants (members of AAASP) were sent a cover letter, a profile of a fictitious university football player, and a vita and summary of professional activities of a hypothetical sport psychology consultant. The subjects were

to rate the competency of the fictitious consultant and his or her ability to deal with the football player's performance problem. The consultant's vita was designed to give the appearance of an adequate but not outstanding Ph.D.-level sport psychology consultant. The gender of the consultant served as the independent variable with half of the subjects rating a female consultant and the other half rating a male consultant. Subjects used the 12-item Counselor Rating Form Short to rate the fictitious consultant. The results showed that overall, the male and female fictitious consultants were ranked similarly on competence and each made equally strong hypothetical referral recommendations. The only differences favored the female consultant, who received higher ratings on trustworthiness, attractiveness, and general good counselor dimensions (Petrie et. al., 1996).

Although further research in the area of client preference for sport psychologists is needed, results indicated that both male and female clients may show a preference for female therapists when it comes to counseling for personal issues. Thus, it might be hypothesized that both female and males would be more likely to discuss issues of homosexuality with a female sport psychologist. However, it should be pointed out that studies have shown that heterosexuals tend to have more negative attitudes toward homosexuals of their own sex than of the opposite sex;, with more negative attitudes manifested by males than by females (Herek, 1984; & Gelso, Fassinger, Gomez, & Latts, 1995). This may indicate a cross-gender preference when discussing such issues.

The evidence seems to show that males tend to be more homophobic than females. Eskilson (1995) collected longitudinal data tracking the correlation of gender attitudes with attitudes toward gay men and lesbians during 1987, 1990, and 1993. The results revealed that women were far less likely to express either homophobic or gender-conservative attitudes than were men. She also found that while women were less homophobic in successive years, men's gender conservatism and level of homophobia

were higher in 1993 than in 1990, suggesting a backlash.

When considering gender differences in counseling settings, it is important not only to study differences in clients' reactions to therapists based on gender and the nature of the counseling issue, but also to study therapists' reactions to clients. Howard, Orlinsky, and Hill (1969) studied differences in male and female therapists' self-reported countertransference reactions with a female client population. Male therapists reported greater personal discomfort in sessions than did females while female therapists indicated greater degrees of confidence and sympathy. "Female therapists indicated greater responsiveness to client painful self-exploration, whereas male therapists reported greater degrees of uneasy intimacy" (Nelson, 1993, p. 202). An interesting example of the differences in countertransference between men and women therapists can be noticed by comparing the perspectives taken by authors in two articles which appeared in a 1991 issue of *The Sport Psychologist*.

In the first article, two female sport psychologists (Yambor & Connelly, 1991) detailed their personal experiences of working with male student-athletes. In this article, the two consultants noted that part of their philosophy was "to create an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance, caring and support for each athlete, an atmosphere conducive to trust and respect" (Yambor & Connelly, 1991, p. 305). They noted confidentiality as their primary ethical concern with professionalism stated as their second major concern. They also noted an awareness of the possibility of being placed in the role of mother, girlfriend, or sister and the importance of maintaining a friendly, yet professional relationship. The authors stated that women may bring certain characteristics or talents to the counseling situation that may enhance the athlete/counselor relationship, citing a study by Bergin and Garfield (1971) which revealed that counselor effectiveness was attributed to warmth, unconditional positive regard, interest, and acceptance of the client. Yambor and Connelly stated the belief that, because of their gender, they have been

perceived by athletes as being more sensitive, understanding, and better listeners. "A number of male athletes reported feeling as if men are always competing with each other on some level and, therefore, are not as supportive or caring as women" (Yambor & Connelly, 1991, p. 309).

The second article voiced the concerns of a male sport psychologist working with female athletes (Henschen, 1991). In this article, Henschen noted that his primary concern when working with female athletes is maintaining a professional relationship. Interestingly enough, Yambor and Connelly (1991) spent two paragraphs noting the necessity of professionalism and spent most of the rest of the article explaining how they have to "prove" their competence to male athletes as a major concern. Henschen, on the other hand, seemed to be preoccupied with his personal relationship with female athletes noting that they are "young and impressionable" (p. 314). The following is a list of excerpts from the article:

I strive for privacy, but not total privacy (p. 315).

No 'touchy feely'. . . Do not get the idea that I am cold or unenthusiastic, but my job is *not* to provide love and affection (p. 315).

I like to meet with my female athletes in groups of two or three when the actual intervention skills are being taught. I believe there is security in numbers for both the athletes and the consultant (p. 315).

Far too many compromising situations can occur when traveling with young female athletes (p. 315).

Young female athletes can be beautiful, emotionally immature and affectionate, but psychologically naive. They can tug at the emotional heartstrings of a mature male if he is not vigilant about his professional responsibilities (p. 316).

Sometimes I have not been sufficiently compassionate, or listened intently enough, or been sensitive to the real problems the young lady was trying to express. Once in a while my masculinity interferes and I get in my own way (Henschen, 1991, p. 320).

A comparison of the two articles suggests at least two conclusions. The first is based on Harry's (1995) study which noted that women in athletics are less aware of the sexual dynamics in sport, and are less affected by it than are men. The second conclusion as suggested by Howard, Orlinsky, and Hill (1969), would be that male therapists

experience greater degrees of personal discomfort and uneasy intimacy in sessions than do female therapists.

Summary

Overall, themes which arose from this literature review supported the notion that sport is a male-dominated arena and women have yet to achieve parity. The literature review also indicated that while previous studies produced conflicting results regarding a client's general preference for a counselor based on the counselor's gender, studies have shown that there seems to be a slight preference for clients to discuss personal issues with female rather than male counselors. Another theme which arose was that homophobia can deter athletes from reaching their potential both in sport and beyond sport as a coach or administrator, and it can also create tension within athletic departments where gay and straight people alike work together but refuse to engage in open dialogue about the issue, thereby putting a strain on their professional relationships.

Finally, due to the stigma attached to homosexuality; gay, lesbian, and bisexual athletes are likely to experience a great deal of mental trauma when trying to deal with their sexuality alone and may need someone who is able to nonjudgementally listen to them. All of these are potential issues which could be dealt with by a sport psychologist (Rotella & Murray, 1991).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature and frequency of experiences of sport psychology consultants with the topics of homosexuality and homophobia during consulting sessions with athletes. In addition, an attempt was made to determine whether the gender or occupational position of the sport psychologist played a factor in the amount of time spend dealing with these issues in a counseling setting. Finally, an effort was made to obtain sport psychologist's views on the effects of homophobia in sport.

Participants

Participants in the study consisted of certified applied sport psychology consultants employed either by a college or university, in private practice, or employed by an organization that allows them to work with athletes at various levels of competition. A list of certified applied sport psychologists was acquired from the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP). While many people purport to be sport psychologists, certification from either the USOC or AAASP can only be obtained by possessing appropriate educational standards and professional experience. Sport psychologists certified by these organizations were sent a letter explaining the purpose of the study (Appendix A), the survey questionnaire (Appendix B), and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Receipt of the returned questionnaire served as the respondent's consent to participate in the study. Confidentiality was insured due to the fact that no personal, institutional, or geographical names accompanied the returned questionnaire. In addition, all completed questionnaires were stored in a locked file cabinet to which only the primary investigator had access.

Instrumentation

The "Homophobia in Sport Questionnaire" was developed by the researcher and thesis committee members in order to answer the pre stated research questions. The content validity and design of the tool were determined with input from members of the researcher's thesis committee. Changes were made as necessary in wording and content of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions that varied in format. The first three questions provided demographic data, consultant gender, occupation, and field of study. The next two major questions were intended to provide information on the general nature of the sport psychologist's work in counseling athletes and athletic staff. These questions specifically addressed the question of the amount of time spent dealing with issues regarding homosexuality and homophobia.

Questions 3 - 7 were intended to give a *general* idea on the respondent's attitudes about homosexuality and homophobia with regards to the role and scope of a sport psychologist's duties. Questions 3 and 4 were "yes/no" questions. Question 3 asked whether the respondent believed there are homosexual athletes, coaches, and staff currently participating in intercollegiate sports at his or her institution, while Question 4 asked the respondent whether he or she felt that homosexuals participating in athletics are discriminated against in any way.

Responses to Questions 5-7 were made on a five-point Likert scale. The scale values for Question 5 ranged from 1 (extremely important) to 5 (extremely unimportant) with regard to the issue of homophobia in athletics. Question 6 asked the respondent to indicate the degree to which he or she is comfortable in dealing with issues of homosexuality and homophobia in a counseling setting. The responses ranged from 1 (very comfortable) to 5 (very uncomfortable). Values of response to the final question ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) regarding the extent to which the

respondent felt that issues regarding homophobia and homosexuality in athletics should be dealt with by a sport psychologist.

Data Analysis Procedures

Upon receipt of the completed questionnaires, demographic information was tabulated and frequencies of participants' responses to each of the questions were calculated. Percentages were calculated as a function of the gender of the sport psychologist and the primary position of the sport psychologist (whether he or she was primarily concerned with performance enhancement or counseling issues). Chi square analyses were performed to determine whether significant differences in response frequencies existed as a function of gender or occupational position.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Description of the Sample of Respondents

One hundred thirteen questionnaires were mailed out and 87 were returned; a 77% response rate. Of the 87 questionnaires returned, three respondents were not actively counseling at the present time, therefore, they did not answer Questions 1 and 2. In addition, of the 113 questionnaires, 75 were mailed to men and 42 to women. Men showed a response rate of 78% ($n = 59$) and females showed a response rate of 68% ($n = 28$). Respondents who checked clinical or counseling psychologists were placed in the category of counseling sport psychologists and all others were placed in the performance enhancement sport psychologist category. Of the total number of respondents, 26 males were counseling sport psychologists, 33 males were performance enhancement sport psychologists, 10 females were counseling sport psychologists, and 18 females were performance enhancement sport psychologists.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1

The first research question addressed the frequency with which sport psychologists deal with issues regarding homosexuality and homophobia when consulting with athletes or athletic staff. Data from all the responses to Question 2 were summed then divided by the total number of respondents ($n = 84$). The total average of time all the respondents dealt with counseling issues was 29%. Of this percentage, 3.7% of the time was spent on issues of homophobia and homosexuality (Question 2a). The two percentages were multiplied together yielding a result of 1%. Therefore, less than 1% of the respondents' total time dealing with clients dealt with homophobia and homosexuality.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 addressed the role of consultant gender on the frequency with

which sport psychologists deal with issues of homophobia and homosexuality in sessions with athletes. The 27 female respondents indicated that they dealt with homophobia and homosexuality an average of 3% of the time, while the 57 male respondents indicated that less than 1% of their time was spent on such issues. The results of the chi-square test of proportions indicated no significant difference based on gender ($z = .8, p = .42$). Thus, the hypothesis that female consultants would report a greater proportion of time spent on issues of homosexuality and homophobia than would male consultants was rejected.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 explored the possible contribution of the consultant's primary occupational position (either performance enhancement or counseling) on the frequency with which he or she dealt with issues of homophobia and homosexuality in counseling with athletes. The results indicated that the 50 male and female performance enhancement sport psychologists dealt with issues of homophobia and homosexuality an average of .6% of their total time while the 34 counseling sport psychologists dealt with such issues 6.4% of the time. However, the chi-squared test revealed no significant difference in proportions based on occupational position ($z = 1.45, p = .15$).

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 sought to determine whether respondents felt that homophobia is an issue sport psychologists needed to address. The answer to this question can be inferred by calculating frequency of responses to Questions 5 and 7. Question 5 asked, "To what extent do you think homophobia is an important issue in athletics?" Out of a sample of 87, 40% answered that it was either extremely important or important, 22% believed it was unimportant or extremely unimportant, and the remaining 38% indicated no preference. Question 7 asked, "To what extent do you agree that issues regarding homophobia and homosexuality in athletics should be dealt with by a sport psychologist?" Out of the 87 respondents, 68% strongly agreed or agreed although many

added the stipulation that to do this, the sport psychologist must be knowledgeable, competent, and open. Eleven percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, while eight percent indicated that the consultants decision should be dependent on the reason the client sought assistance in the first place. These respondents felt that the sport psychologist should only deal with performance aspects of the issue. If these were not important, then the respondents felt a referral should be made.

Research Question 5

The last research question asked how comfortable sport psychologists were in dealing with issues regarding homophobia and homosexuality. The answer to this research can be inferred by analyzing the data from Question 6. Out of the 87 respondents, 71% answered that they were either very comfortable or comfortable in dealing with such issues and 16% answered that they were either uncomfortable or very uncomfortable.

Additional Questions

Question 3 asked whether the respondent believed there are homosexual athletes, coaches, and staff (both male and female) currently participating at his or her institution. Using a frequency count, 64.4% of the 87 respondents answered yes, 27.6% answered no, and the remaining 8% either didn't answer or answered that they didn't know.

Question 4 asked whether the respondent believed homosexuals participating in athletics, either at his or her institution or in general, are discriminated against in any way based on their sexual orientation. The results indicated that 58.6% of the respondents answered "yes" while 21.8% answered "no" and 19.5% indicated they were unsure.

Question 2b inquired about how much of the total time the sport psychologist spends dealing with issues of homophobia and homosexuality is spent with female versus male clients. The results of Question 2b revealed that of the total time spent dealing with such issues, sport psychologists dealt with males an average of 46% of the time and with females the remaining 54%. A chi square analysis ($z = 2.51, p = .01$) indicated a

significant difference in these proportions.

Finally, Question 2c asked the respondents to list which sports the clients who came to them with issues regarding homophobia and homosexuality participated in. As indicated earlier, there presently exists stereotypes regarding the sex-appropriateness of sports (Kane & Snyder, 1989). One respondent summed up the results to this question best when he wrote, "I have not found it (homosexuality) to be a sport-specific issue." The results suggested support for this statement in that 18 different sports were listed for women and 19 different sports were listed for men. These findings suggest that the issues of homosexuality and homophobia for both male and female athletes are not linked to the notions of sex-appropriate and sex-inappropriate sports.

Summary

The first hypothesis which stated that issues regarding homosexuality and homophobia would be dealt with infrequently by sport psychologists was supported by the responses of the sport psychologists surveyed in this study who indicated that less than 1% of total time they spend in a counseling setting has dealt with such issues. Similarly the results failed to support the next two hypotheses which stated that female sport psychologists were more likely to deal with the issues of homosexuality and homophobia than male sport psychologists, and that counseling sport psychologists were more likely to deal with such issues than were performance enhancement sport psychologists.

Results pertaining to the remaining research questions indicated that, overall, there wasn't a strong feeling that the issues of homophobia and homosexuality were important issues in athletics. Sixty percent of the respondents were either indifferent or felt that it was unimportant or extremely unimportant. The majority of the respondents (71%) reported that they felt comfortable in dealing with issues regarding homophobia and homosexuality and that if such issues did arise in an athletic environment, a large

percentage (68%) agreed that they should be dealt with by a competent sport psychologist.

The majority of the respondents (64%) believed that there are homosexuals currently involved with athletics at their institution and 58% felt that such individuals are discriminated against based on their sexual orientation. In addition, when the sport psychologists in this study dealt with the issues of homophobia and homosexuality, the greater percentage of the time the client was likely to be a female. Finally, respondents indicated that these issues were not tied to participation in any particular grouping of sports.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the concepts of homosexuality and homophobia in relation to the perceptions and experiences of sport psychologists. The first hypothesis posed was that, due to the silence and stigmatization caused by homophobia, such issues would be discussed infrequently by sport psychologists. The results indicated support for this hypothesis in that on average, the respondents dealt with such issues less than 1% of the time. This is an important statistic and can be explained in either one of two ways: (a) homophobia and homosexuality are not issues in the athletic environment, or (b) athletes and athletic personnel do not feel comfortable, or deem it necessary, to discuss such issues in a sport psychology setting. Based on previous research, it is clear that homosexuality and homophobia are issues in the athletic environment and can cause problems with individuals, teams, and athletic departments. Why athletes and athletic personnel do not feel comfortable or deem it necessary to discuss such issues in a sport psychology setting remains unclear.

The results of this study indicate that the majority (71%) of the sport psychologists polled (71%) reportedly felt comfortable in dealing with such issues and 68% agreed that they should be dealt with by a competent sport psychologist. However, the important statistic here may lie in the participants' response to the question: "To what extent do you think homophobia is an important issue in athletics?". Whereas 40% answered that it was either extremely important or important, 22% believed it was unimportant or extremely unimportant, and the remaining 38% didn't feel strongly about it either way. Overall, it is interesting to note the variety of viewpoints expressed by different sport psychologists regarding this question. One would not be hard-pressed to find sport psychologists who think even asking if homophobia is a problem is a dumb question

because to them, it so obviously is. Those individuals might be surprised, however, to discover that some of their colleagues do not agree with them. To illustrate, the following comments were made by the respondents regarding this study in particular and homophobia and homosexuality in general:

I have not found it to be a competitive issue with athletes or coaches. It is a personal issue usually concerned with individuals or groups outside of the competitive arena.

With women athletes in basketball and golf, there was concern among heterosexual athletes that they were discriminated against.

Unclear how these very general, almost obvious questions will provide any new information. We know that homophobia is a huge problem at all levels.

I don't really see this as an issue, particularly the higher the level of athlete, e.g. Pro, Olympic.

Generally sexual orientation has been a non-issue on this campus, even though some athletes are openly gay.

I believe this was a larger issue 10 years ago.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your study. Your topic is important.

Female athletes are far more accepting (less homophobic). Male coaches are still the more homophobic.

I think this is an extremely important issue that is usually not addressed at all. The talk is that of acceptance or support but behind the back I think there is covert discrimination. I think coaches, administrators, and professors are more vulnerable to homophobia and discrimination than are student athletes.

Like the really hard anti-racism work needs to be done by and among whites; this really hard anti-homophobia work needs to be done by and among heterosexual professionals.

There is no such thing as homophobia in the DSM IV. This term has so much surplus meaning that any results will add to the confusion.

The last comment clearly differs from the rest and is not overly surprising, particularly in light of the fact that homosexuality was considered a mental disorder until 1973 when trustees of the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove it from the list of officially recognized mental disorders (Carson & Butcher, 1992). In fact, homosexuality is still listed in some current abnormal psychology textbooks under variant sexual behaviors. In one particular textbook used for undergraduate students at a major university, variant sexual behavior is defined as, "behavior patterns of arousal and sexual

consummation in which sexual development or an affected individual has for some reason deviated from the standard, adult heterosexual course," (p. 351, Carson & Butcher, 1992).

Other contributing factors toward variant sexual behavior included in this text are:

a) the absence of a normal level of arousal to adults of the opposite sex; b) significant deficits in the social skills normally needed for initiating successful adult heterosexual relationships; and c) failure to establish a firm psychological gender identity, which in males often manifests in concerns about dominance and power (p. 351, Carson & Butcher, 1992).

If such teaching is representative, it should come as no surprise that student-athletes are hesitant to seek out the services of any counselor, even a sport psychologist, to discuss the issues of homosexuality and homophobia.

Notwithstanding, it is apparent that many sport psychologists think these are important issues which need to be addressed and are doing so in a knowledgeable, caring, and open manner. In fact, the lack of time spent dealing with homosexuality and homophobia by consultants in the present study may have little to do with a client's perception of the sport psychologist and more to do with a socially precipitated fear of discussing the subject with anyone. Regardless, it is important for sports psychologists who do feel that these are important issues and do feel comfortable in dealing with them in a counseling setting to somehow impart that knowledge to athletes and athletic staff.

The second hypothesis stated that when issues related to homosexuality and homophobia are brought up in a sport psychology setting, female sport psychologists would be more likely to be sought out by athletes than would male sport psychologists. Although on average, female sport psychologists were likely to deal with those issues more so than male sport psychologists, the data (females = 3%, males = .6%) were not significantly different ($z = .8$, $p = .42$). Due to the fact that there were over twice as many male sport psychologists (59) as female sport psychologists who responded to the questionnaire (28), it is possible that this result was influenced to some extent by a violation of the equal sample size assumption.

The same held true for the third hypothesis which stated that counseling sport

psychologists would deal with these issues more often than would performance enhancing sport psychologists. The lack of significant difference may have been due in part to the overlap of services provided by the two categories of sport psychologists. Support for this notion is suggested from the following comments offered by respondents:

I deal with both performance enhancement issues as well as counseling issues. I feel it is important to address this issue as it relates to both performance and personal issues.

In a couple of team building consultant experiences, player relationships resulting from homosexual relationships within the team have been an issue. I addressed these issues as I would with any conflict resolution problem related to team building.

There are a lot of counseling issues that are not as clinically oriented as the ones you have defined! I think this is a very important issue. Sport Psychology Consultants should not be simply technicians who "teach" psychological skills.

I tell the athlete that I am trained in educating about the psychological skills which may enhance performance.

It is impossible to completely separate out issues in a real counseling setting. You work with the whole person, or if an issue keeps reappearing and is outside of your training and competency, you make a referral.

The previous comments illustrate the point that there are different types of sport psychologists who hold different levels of competency and outlooks on various areas of sport and performance enhancement. As one respondent wrote, "It's not this black and white. You are objectifying issues that are very subjective and situationally specific." Indeed, she was correct, but not researching subjects like this at all because they are too hard to study would only contribute to the prevailing ignorance and silence which already surrounds the topics of homosexuality and homophobia.

Finally, it is important to note that results of this study indicated that female clients were more likely to discuss issues related to homophobia and homosexuality than were male clients. This finding could possibly suggest that female athletes are dealing with such issues more often than are male athletes, or it could suggest, as found in a study by Eskilson (1995), that females are just more open to discussing such issues.

The intent of this study was not to tell sport psychologists how to deal with homophobia or homosexuality in sport psychology, but merely to let them know those

are issues in athletics which can cause problems. Although sport psychologists are in an opportune position to counsel on those subjects in a confidential environment, results indicated that those issues have not been dealt with very often. It leads this researcher to wonder just how often homophobia is confronted in an athletic setting and how effectively the recipients of that homophobia cope with it.

If the data revealed that there were gender and occupational effects, it might have encouraged sport psychologists to be aware of such factors when dealing with homophobia and homosexuality in a counseling setting. As such though, those factors did not prove to be statistically significant. However, it is not beyond belief that such factors may play a part in certain client's interactions with a sport psychologist.

Overall, what may prove to be the most significant factors in the sport psychologist's relationship with his or her clients and the type of subjects they discuss, are the personality of the sport psychologist and the rapport he or she builds with the clients. As with anyone, people are more likely to open up and discuss personal issues and put their trust in someone they deem competent, caring, and open-minded. If sport psychologists display those characteristics in a counseling setting, it is easy to see why factors such as gender and occupational position become insignificant.

Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions are offered:

1. For the sport psychologists in this study, issues of homophobia and homosexuality are discussed extremely infrequently (less than 1% of the time).
2. When the sport psychologists in this study deal with issues of homophobia and homosexuality, the client is more often a female than a male.
3. Athletes seeking assistance regarding issues of homophobia and homosexuality come from many different sports.
4. The frequency with which female and male sport psychologists deal with issues

regarding homophobia and homosexuality is approximately the same.

5. The frequency with which counseling and performance enhancement sport psychologists deal with issues regarding homophobia and homosexuality is approximately the same.

6. Although the majority of the respondents (64%) believed that there are homosexuals currently involved with athletics at their institution and there are individuals which are discriminated against based on their sexual orientation, the respondents did not feel that homophobia and homosexuality were overly important issues in athletics.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations regarding future research are made:

1. In the future, issues regarding homophobia and homosexuality should be more clearly defined and separated. Homophobia and homosexuality are not the same thing and should not be confused as such.

2. Although members of AAASP and the USOC ensure confidentiality to their clients, future research may want to investigate how athletes view sport psychologists with regard to confidentiality. It is possible that athletes fear that anything said in the counseling setting may be relayed to an outside source, such as the coach.

3. At many institutions, there are either no currently employed trained sport psychologists, or just one trained sport psychologist. This may indicate that athletes at such institutions have little choice with respect to support staff available to them. Future researchers should attempt to determine how open athletes would be in discussing issues of homophobia and homosexuality when given a choice of consultants to work with.

4. One of the questions in this study asked respondents how comfortable they felt with dealing with issues of homophobia and homosexuality. A more informative question might be to ask, "How prepared are you to deal with issues of homophobia and

homosexuality?”

5. Qualitative methods might be used by future researchers to yield more in-depth information from sport psychologists regarding their experiences of working with counseling athletes about issues of homophobia and homosexuality.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Jan. 15, 1998

Address:

Dear Dr. ----:

For my master's thesis I am conducting a study to determine the extent to which sport psychology consultants deal with the topic of homosexuality or homophobia in their work with athletes. In addition I am interested in consultants' perceptions of the prevalence of homophobia in sport and whether they feel that the role of the sport psychologist should include the counseling of athletes on issues dealing with homosexuality or homophobia.

I am mailing the enclosed questionnaire to individuals who are certified as sport psychology consultants by the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology or whose names are listed in the registry of the United States Olympic Committee. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Should you agree to participate, please complete the questionnaire and return it to me in the stamped envelope I have provided. Should you decide not to participate, just mail back the blank questionnaire.

Your responses will be kept confidential. Only group data will be presented in published papers resulting from the study. The original questionnaires will be destroyed once the data are recorded. The data will then be stored in a locked file cabinet in the office of my major professor, Dr. Craig Wrisberg.

Your completion and return of the questionnaire will serve as your informed consent to participate in the study and would be very much appreciated.

Thanks for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Lori Napier
19718 N. Hatch
Colbert, WA 99005
(509) 777-3789
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Craig A. Wrisberg
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University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Knoxville, TN 37917
(423) 974-1283 /wrisberg@utk.edu

HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

INFORMATION SECTION

Sex: ___ Male
 ___ Female

What is your position as a sport psychologist?
(Check all that apply.)

___ Professor
___ Researcher
___ Counseling Psychologist
___ Clinical Psychologist
___ Other _____

(Please Specify)

What was your degree program in?
___ Sport Psychology/Kinesiology
___ Clinical Psychology
___ Counseling Psychology
___ Other _____
(Please Specify)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

For the purposes of this questionnaire, a "client" is anyone who seeks your services as a sport psychology consultant, whether they be athletes, coaches, or other staff members.

1. Roughly, what percentage of the clients you work with are male? _____
 What percent are female? _____

For the purposes of this questionnaire, "performance enhancement issues" are those which strictly deal with the client's concern with his or her athletic performance. Such issues can include concentration, relaxation, visualization, and goal setting skills. "Counseling issues" are of a more personal nature and are dealt with as such, although they can affect athletic performance. Such issues can include eating disorders, drug abuse, sexual orientation, and relationship problems.

2. As a sport psychologist, approximately what percentage of your consulting time do you spend dealing with performance enhancing issues? _____
 What percent do you spend with counseling issues? _____
- a. Of the total percentage of time you spend dealing with counseling issues (if greater than zero), what percentage of that time do you spend dealing with issues regarding homophobia and homosexuality? _____
- b. Of that percentage (if greater than zero) how many times was your client a female? _____ a male? _____
- c. Based on your answers from 2b (if greater than zero), please indicate the specific sports that the female clients participated in _____.
Please indicate the specific sports that the male clients participated in _____.

PERSONAL ATTITUDE QUESTIONS

3. Do you believe that there are homosexual athletes, coaches, and staff (both male and female) currently participating in athletics at your institution? _____yes _____no

- Thank you for your time.** Please feel free to include any comments you might have on the nature of this study or your views on homophobia and homosexuality and the sport psychologists' role in dealing with such issues.

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VITA

Lori Ann Napier was born in Dover, Delaware in 1973. She grew up in a military family and moved from Delaware to Maryland and finally to the state of Washington which she now calls her home. As a young girl heavily involved in sports, Lori was typically referred to (as were most athletic girls) as a tomboy. However, this did not deter her from further pursuing a career in sports.

After a successful high school athletic career, Lori earned a basketball scholarship to Eastern Washington University where she studied psychology. Upon graduating from Eastern Washington University, she spent a year working in Utah at the Big Sky Athletic Conference as a sports information intern. Following that year, Lori enrolled in the University of Tennessee where she subsequently earned her master's degree in sport psychology. Lori is currently the assistant women's basketball coach at Whitworth College in Spokane, Wash.