

The impact of openly LGBTQIA individuals on the perception of team cohesion in
Division I women's college athletics.

By:

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Leisure and Sport Management

Middle Tennessee State University

May 2017

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I dedicate this research to my mother. I love you, Mama.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my family for their unwavering love and support. I would also like to thank Dr. Joey Gray for her friendship and guidance throughout undergrad and graduate school. Without you, this would not have been possible. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Steve Estes, the late Dr. Brian Ragan, and all my professors through the years at Middle Tennessee State University. It has been an incredible journey. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

This study explored the aspects of team cohesion among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual (LGBTQIA) and straight female athletes in the world of Division I college athletics at a southeastern university. In doing so, the researchers sought to form a better understanding of the relationships and experiences between the LGBTQIA and heterosexual athletes. The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) was combined with specific demographic questions to assess the athlete's team cohesion as it relates to their sexual orientation.

Past studies involving the GEQ have researched multiple variables, but few have researched the effect of an athlete's sexual orientation on team cohesion. Results from this study indicated no statistically significant difference in the perception of team cohesion for LGBTQIA athletes and their heterosexual teammate.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The perception of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) community has become a hot topic in American culture; especially in athletics. With the repeal of Section Three in the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 2013 and the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) recent ruling of *Obergefell v. Hodges* there has been an increase of support for the LGBTQIA community. However, with support comes criticism such as that from 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, when Russian President Vladimir Putin proclaimed that “homosexual propaganda” would not be permitted. It was understood by many that his comment referred to any actions perceived to promote homosexuality and pedophilia would warrant arrest.

Historically sport, certainly in the United States, is understood to be populated with many athletes who can be described as heteronormative, and sometimes homophobic. Yet even with negative stigmas of the LGBTQIA community in the sport industry, many elite athletes continue to “come out of the closet.” The most notable are National Football League (NFL) prospect Michael Sam, Olympian and member of the US Women’s Soccer team Abby Wambach, or Olympian Caitlyn (formerly known as Bruce) Jenner.

With these predominant athletes “coming out,” the LGBTQIA community has received a lot of national attention. Many allies of the LGBTQIA community, specifically teammates of LGBTQIA athletes, expressed words of encouragement through a variety of social media outlets after the SCOTUS (2015) ruling. This open support from teammates is surprising considering athletics has historically been a heteronormative

domain. Specifically, where sport was justified as “masculinizing” and “character building” for young men. In turn, the inclusion of women in sport would have made women masculine and in turn would have been seen as a disservice to women. And the thought of gay men, who are traditionally seen as feminine, contributing to the world of sport would be absurd. Heteronormative ideologies are rooted in social constructs of homophobia and homophobia, but are these ideologies found consistently within athletic teams?

With the increased attention on the LGBTQIA community negative attitudes toward homosexuality have decreased by 14.7% in racial and ethnic subgroups in America (Glick, Cleary, & Golden, 2015). Historic events such as: The Orlando massacre on June 12, 2016, that left 49 dead and 53 injured; and the end of a ban of transgender soldiers on July 1, 2016, have created a rise in open dialogue about homosexuality in American culture. Events like the Orlando shooting and lifting of the ban on transgender soldiers may not seem to have an impact on this study. However, for the world of sports, these events fuel a pride in American athletes.

For example, the United States Men’s National Soccer Team (USMNT) Captain, Michael Bradley, wore a rainbow armband in support of those victims in Orlando. The unique armband and Bradley’s jersey were auctioned off in an online charity event to raise money for OneOrlandoFund and EqualityFlorida (U.S. Soccer, 2016). In that same game, spectators joined The American Outlaws (AO) in singing “You Are my Sunshine” in the 62nd-minute of play in honor of those lives lost in the massacre. This was fitting considering Orlando, Florida is the 62 chapter of the American Outlaws, a fan base for

USMNT and USWNT (Usry, 2016). This is just one example of how sport and fans, alike, have made great strides to becoming more inclusive to a wide range of sexual orientations and gender identities.

The purpose of this study is to explore the unbiased heterosexual and LGBTQIA perceptions of team cohesion in Division I female collegiate athletics. This study will collect data from LGBTQIA and non-LGBTQIA (N-LGBTQIA) Division I collegiate female athletes to examine these perceptions. A handful of qualitative studies have been performed using openly LGBTQIA member's experiences as a collegiate athlete (Anderson, 2002 & 2011; Coad, 2008) but very few using the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) to compare perceptions of team cohesion (Alman, Estes, & Tittle, 2006; Carron, Bray, & Eys, 2002). For this study, understanding perspective will be accomplished by exploring the perceived cohesiveness of teammates by using GEQ (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985).

Scope of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to form a better understanding of team cohesion among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual (LGBTQIA) and straight female athletes in the world of Division I college athletics at a south eastern university. As such, this study will focus on: 1) how an athlete's identification of being LGBTQIA or heterosexual affects their perception of team cohesion; and 2) whether female athletes would rather be called a "whore" or "dyke". This data will be collected at the beginning of the Fall academic year when fall sports are at the beginning of their athletic season.

Research Questions

1. Will the perception of team cohesion change based on whether an athlete self-identifies as LGBTQIA or heterosexual?
2. Will a heterosexual athlete's perception of team cohesion change based on whether there are non-self-identified LGBTQIA members on a team?
3. Would female athletes prefer to be called a dyke or whore?

Hypotheses

H¹: There will be a difference in the Group Environmental Questionnaire (GEQ) scores between individuals who are self-identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, or Asexual (LGBTQIA) and individuals who identify as heterosexual on a team.

H²: An athlete's perception of the existence of non-self-identified LGBTQIA members on their team will affect the team's cohesion, as measured by the Group Environmental Questionnaire.

H³: Female athletes will prefer to be called a whore rather than a dyke.

Limitations

This study is limited by:

1. The willingness of participants to disclose personal information.
2. The complexities of sexual orientation and gender identity (e.g. transgender is not sexual orientation, rather a gender identity).
3. Only one university will be used to solicit student athlete participation.
4. Only female student athletes will be questioned in research.

Definition of Terms

1. Asexual: the lack of sexual attraction; low or absence interest in or desire for sexual activity.
2. Biological Sex: our anatomy as female, male, or intersex.
3. Bisexual: sexually attracted to both men and women.
4. DOMA: an abbreviation for Defense of Marriage Act of 2013.
5. Dyke: a slang term for lesbian, often used to be degrading or offensive.
6. Effeminate: having or showing feminine qualities untypical of a man: not manly in appearance or manner.
7. Gay: sexually attracted to someone who is the same sex.
8. Gender Identity: a person's internal sense of being male, female, some combination of male and female, or neither male or female.

9. Genderqueer: catch-all category for gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine.
10. Heteronormative: the attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality.
11. Heterosexual: sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex.
12. Homoeroticism: marked by, revealing, or portraying homosexual desire.
13. Homophobia: the fear of being thought homosexual because of behavior that is considered gender atypical.
14. Homophobia: the fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals.
15. Homonegativism: negative attitude towards homosexuality
16. Hypermasculinity: exaggeration of male stereotypical behavior, such as an emphasis on physical strength, aggression, and sexuality.
17. Institutionalized Homophobia: homophobia acquired through religious attitudes and state-sponsored homophobia.
18. Internalized Homophobia: refers to negative stereotypes, beliefs, stigma, and prejudice about homosexuality and LGBTQIA people that a person with same-sex attraction turns inward on themselves, whether or not they identify as LGBTQIA.
19. Intersex: the condition of either having both male and female gonadal tissue in one individual or of having the gonads of one sex and external genitalia that is of the other sex or is ambiguous.

20. Lesbian: a woman who is sexually attracted to other women: a female homosexual.
21. LGBTQIA: an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual.
22. NCAA: an abbreviation for National Collegiate Athletic Association.
23. Queer: differing in a way from what is usual or normal: related to homosexuality.
24. Sexual Orientation: a person's sexual preference.
25. Social Homophobia: the fear of being identified as gay or lesbian.
26. Transgender: being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that differs from the one which corresponds to the person's sex at birth.
27. Whore: a woman who engages in sexual acts for money; also: a promiscuous or immoral woman.

Significance of the Study

The increased openness of LGBTQIA members is becoming more prevalent in society. This is seen throughout media, particularly, in sports news outlets such as the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) *The Magazine*. For example, United States national duathlon team member Chris Mosier will be the first transgender athlete to pose nude in the "Body Issue" of ESPN's *The Magazine* (Kahr, 2016). This open dialogue has created an opportunity to explore the world of sports for LGBTQIA and N-LGBTQIA athletes, alike. Despite these new advances, there is a long history of turmoil within athletics for LGBTQIA athletes.

The findings from the present investigation will, not only, benefit the community of female collegiate athletes and their coaches who participate but society, as whole. Forming a better understanding of an athlete's perception of team cohesion will ultimately help the athletic programs. The results of the study could pave the way for more inclusive programming and coaching styles in female Division I athletics.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In an effort to better understand the complexity of sexual orientation and team cohesion it is important to first discuss a brief history and current views of sport and sexuality. Specifically, this study seeks to examine attitudes, stereotypes, and how governing bodies see Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) athletes. There are many characteristics that lead people to stereotype other individuals as LGBTQIA: physical appearance, speech patterns, and mannerisms. These stereotypes are broken down into feminine and masculine traits associated with gender and an individual's biological sex. A modern overlap in sport allows men and women to compete in similar competitions; and with this integration, the lines of gender norms are becoming blurred in the historically hypermasculine world of sport. Females in sport, for example, would generally be considered masculine and would be associated with members of the LGBTQIA community (Waldron, 2015). A section of this study will explore whether female athletes would rather be called a "dyke" or "whore" after being associated with homosexuals and genderqueer individuals.

Hypermasculinity and sport have a long history of coexisting. This relationship can be seen around the world throughout a variety of competitions, and dates back to Ancient Greece, where Athenians created *gymniko agon*, or "nude competitions" (Miller, 2004). These nude competitions were a way for Athenians showcase their bodies and gain admiration from other athletes (Scanlon, 2002; Miller 2004).

Athenians also placed an importance on tradition; however, there have been many improvements since the first modern Olympiad in 1896. For example, governing bodies now have a say in almost every aspect of the game, including rules and regulations (e.g.

sports can be cut if viewer ratings are low or the sport is not making enough money). The easiest example of progression comes surprisingly quick after the first Olympiad, in 1896, when competitions were only open to male athletes. The world of sport changed during the 1900 Paris Olympics when 22 women competed in five different sports; these women had made their international debut and in doing so, set a precedent for all female athletes to come (Olympic, 2016).

This is proof that sport can be adaptive. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) permitted women to compete as elite athletes in a time that would have otherwise rejected this notion. Even with the passage of Title IX in 1972, the opposition sought to remove athletics from the legislation (Braddock & Milner, 2016). Equality of the sexes would be tolerated in education, but not on the playing field. Fortunately, the oppositions stance was not accepted and Title IX was passed and is used in athletics. Legally, men and women alike entitled to equivalent treatment in any educational institution that receives federal funding, and this includes high school and college athletics. However, there are many who disagree with this legislation and continuously push against Title IX, especially when sexual orientation is involved.

Sexuality and the very nature of sport is at the core of this study. Historically, sport has been used as a mechanism to promote masculinity (Nelson, 2001). It has a sense of comradery and aligns attitudes and beliefs by having a common goal; to be successful. While some believe sexuality will limit a team's success by drawing attention away from the game and bringing focus to an individual's sexuality and gender identity, others do not. To an outsider, a successful team is measured by scores and statistics. However, some believe being a successful team is more than touchdowns and 3-pointers and who

can run the fastest. Instead, true success is more often than not attributed to the cohesiveness of a team (Carron, Brye, & Eys, 2002). There are many factors that go into having a cohesive team, but is sexual orientation one of those factors?

Attitudes Toward the LGBTQIA Community

Homophobia comprises of a wide range of negative attitudes and/or feelings toward homosexuality or individuals who are recognized or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersexual, or asexual (LGBTQIA) (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007). The classification of homophobia can then be categorized into three subsections: institutionalized homophobia, internalized homophobia, and social homophobia. A better understanding of homophobia is needed to explore the heterosexual and LGBTQIA perception of team cohesion. All three subsections are significant in understanding the culture of homophobia and will be beneficial in understanding the content of this study.

Institutionalized homophobia.

Institutionalized homophobia refers to homophobia acquired through religious attitudes and state-sponsored homophobia (i.e. hate speech from government figures and penalization of homosexuals) (Bruce-Jones & Itaborahy, 2011). According to a 2014 poll by the Pew Research Center, 70.6% of total Americans polled identified as Christians, making Christianity the largest institutionalized religious category in the United States (Cooperman, Gecewicz, Sciupac, & Smith, 2015). Christianity, like many religions, typically teaches against LGBTQIA lifestyles. With the United States being a predominantly Christian nation this American cohort has created many obstacles for

members of the LGBTQIA community. An example of a religiously created institutional obstacle would be the recent anti-discrimination protection laws passed in the United States regarding marriage and those who identify as LGBTQIA.

For example, in 2015, Kim Davis, a county clerk from Kentucky, became the modern face of institutionalized homophobia by using her religious beliefs and political position to discriminate against same-sex couples by denying a marriage license to those couples despite the Supreme Court of the United States ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (Bromberger, 2015). This action by Davis was used as the cornerstone of many religious anti-gay activists to justify discrimination based on the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America. Davis and her supporters continuously argued that “freedom of religion” protected her from legal repercussion. Unfortunately for Davis, she was not so lucky; as an elected official her religious views are put to the side while upholding the laws of the Supreme Court. Davis was jailed and shortly released with the understanding that she would follow the law set in place by SCOTUS (CBS, 2015).

Internalized homophobia.

With institutionalized homophobia at the very core of American culture it has allowed internalized homophobia and social homophobia to take root. Internalized homophobia most commonly refers to negative stereotypes, beliefs, stigmas, and prejudice that are possessed by an individual about homosexuality and LGBTQIA persons to the point where an individual with same-sex attraction applies those negative stigmas to themselves; regardless of if they actually identify with that sexual orientation or not (Herek, Cogan, Gillis, & Glunt, 1998). Unlike institutionalized homophobia,

internalized homophobia is much more difficult to label. Since these emotions are internalized, only the individual truly knows what is behind those emotions. For example, an individual may have very strong convictions about homosexuality, but later may discover that he or she is a member of the LGBTQIA community. Or one might be in a same-sex relationship, but refuse to acknowledge that relationship outside of one's home. There are many different scenarios for internalized homophobia, but this concept is particularly interesting when discussing cultural expectations of heteronormativity in sport.

Heteronormativity is the belief that individual's fall into distinct binary genders. A heteronormative view aligns biological sex, gender roles, sexual orientation, and gender identity into two separate categories allowing no overlap. This belief can make sport a particularly hostile environment the LGBTQIA community (Rankin, 2003). Take transgender athletes, for example, with a heteronormative view there would be no place for these individuals in sport. Alienating individuals based on differences places a "target" on the identified individual's back.

Recently, the issue of locker rooms and transgendered bathrooms has been the focal point of state legislation and LGBTQIA activists. Specifically, at the writing of this manuscript laws from the states of North Carolina and Tennessee have come under criticism. North Carolina's House Bill 2 (HB2) requires individuals to use the restroom that corresponds to the sex listed on one's birth certificate. This is particularly troublesome for transgender individuals who have undergone sexual reassignment surgery. These individuals would still be required to use the restroom corresponding with

their sex at birth. Members of the LGBTQIA community in Tennessee were fortunate that a similar bill to HB2 was pulled due to time constraints in the Tennessee House of Representatives.

Social homophobia.

With the concept of internalized homophobia growing into a phenomenon known as social homophobia. Social homophobia is the fear of being identified as gay or lesbian. Traditionally, social homophobia (also known as homophobia) has been more of an issue among women in sport because a gay man in sport would be absurd (Anderson, 2005). However, there has been a recent decline in homophobia from female athletes that now focuses on their male counterparts (Anderson & Bullingham, 2013). Traditional homophobia in women's athletics led to the discovery that female athletes have more of a fear of being called dykes rather than whores (Blinde & Taub, 1992). Given the progression and acceptance of LGBTQIA women in sport and society, the findings of Blinde and Taub may no longer hold. However, this does not change that heteronormativity in sport has led to homophobia in female athletes through myths of sport masculinizing women. These myths strengthening the stigma that all women who play sport must be a lesbian (Griffin, 1998; Veri, 1999; Caudwell, 2003; Glick & Rudman, 2008).

For example, heterosexual athletes are counteracting the "all women who play sports must be a lesbian" myth by taking their perceived sexuality into their own hands. At this time there is no official data on this topic, however a new tradition has been observed among high school and collegiate softball players. If an athlete identifies as heterosexual she will wear bow, or ribbon, tied in their hair. On the other hand, if an

athlete identifies as a member of the LGBTQIA community she will not have a bow or ribbon tied in her hair. Like the findings of Blinde and Taub (1992), this trend implies that stigma still exists as some players feel the need to purposely identify as heterosexual. But, what about those who knowingly choose to not wear a bow or ribbon and quintessentially announcing their LGBTQIA status? This is indeed a sign of the current social movement of more acceptance of the LGBTQIA community. Though clearly, homophobia still exists in female sport (Veri 1999; Caudwell, 2003; Glick & Rudman, 2008) the notion of this impact could be investigated. How might the presence of openly LGBTQIA athletes impact team cohesion?

When combining all three concepts of homophobia (institutionalized, internalized, and social) it is arguable that there exists a culture of homonegativism in sport. Homonegativism is the systematic oppression of those who challenge the idea of heteronormativity and, more often than not, identify as members of the LGBTQIA community (Krane, 1997). Instances of homonegativism include coaches being discriminated against in employment (Lenskyi, 1990), “negative recruiting” strategies (or persuading athletes away from certain programs by spreading rumors of lesbian athletes or coaches) (Young, 1995), and the most obvious example of homonegativism being allegations of discrimination, in 2007, against lesbian players leading to the retirement of coach Rene Portland of Penn State’s women’s basketball team after a 27-year tenure (Lederman, 1991; Young, 1995).

Actions like these are what led Massachusetts Representative Barney Frank to resubmit the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) to the United States House of Representatives (HOR) in 2009 to include gender identity to the established

legislation. ENDA has been rewritten many times over the past 22 years, and this legislation is becoming more inclusive with each re-introduction and passing of the House of Representatives and United State Senate. Currently, ENDA protects from employee discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. With that being said, religious organization, the military and companies with fewer than 15 employees are exempt from ENDA protection (S. 815, 2013).

The cultural conception of homophobia leads to homonegativism in sport for members of the LGBTQIA community. Male and female athletes, alike, are hiding their sexual orientations for fear of persecution. When the repercussions of being an LGBTQIA athlete are negative it will negatively affect the social aspects of team cohesion (Altman, Estes, & Tittle, 2006). These negative stigmas can be broken down even further into stereotypes of gay men and lesbian women.

Stereotypes of the LGBTQIA Community

Stereotyping is the “process of imposing characteristics on individuals based on their perceived group membership” (Harrison, 2001). Additionally, Harrison states that stereotypes become ingrained into our subconscious after multiple interactions with individuals who fall under specific stereotypes, regardless of our own prejudices or not (2001). To better illustrate this theory, using the stereotype of “softball players are lesbians” is one of the more obvious examples. Lesbianism is a common stereotype when discussing the softball community (Riemer, 1996; Queen 2005). While a number of softball players may find themselves members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) community it would

be inaccurate to classify the entire softball community as lesbians. Harrison would argue that even members of the LGBTQIA community would find truth in this stereotype of softball players, even though they hold no prejudice of the LGBTQIA community.

The idea of heteronormativity is divided in the world of sport for athletes depending on their sexual orientation. Men and women, alike, face struggles regarding sexuality in sport. However, the experiences differ for athletes when heteronormativity places internal pressure on individuals, regardless of gender and regardless of who identify as LGBTQIA members.

In the world of sport, the idea of heterogeneity is dominant. The hyper-masculine world of sport associates women who play sports to be perceived as masculine because traits of power, strength, and aggression that are seen as inherent to the play (Waldron, 2015). Comparatively, men who play sport are considered masculine, and in being masculine perceived as heterosexual (Anderson, 2005). This could be very troublesome for males who are masculine in traits associated with sport, but whose sexual orientation does not fit the stereotypical masculine male.

With masculinity being a core ideology of sport a further rift in stereotypes of LGBTQIA athletes has been created. Gay men are typically seen as effeminate, meaning they are associated with being feminine by nature (Bergling, 2001). Using *effeminate* as a stereotype of gay men is not only demeaning to gay men but to women, regardless of sexual orientation, as well. With this logic, gay men and women (heterosexual or homosexual) are perceived as being lesser individuals because they do not fit the criteria of masculinity.

In defying the cultural norms of heteronormativity gay men are often perceived “largely as deviant and dangerous participants on the sporting turf” (Clarke, 1998; Anderson, 2005). Again, this idea that gay men are anymore deviant and dangerous than their heterosexual counterparts is a reflection of the history of homophobia in sport caused by institutionalized homophobia in modern culture. In fact, this is not to say that sport has always rejected homosexuals. It is on the basis of masculinity, that sport rejects homosexual individuals (Griffin, 1998; Zeigler, 2016). In doing so, this reinforces Rankin’s (2003) belief that modern sport creates a hostile environment for LGBTQIA athletes. The most common opposition to gay men in sport comes from the fear of “being looked at” in the locker room (Zeigler, 2016). Most notably, National Football League (NFL) standout, Adrian Peterson, said he would not mind a gay teammate, however, “simple things, as far as showers and things like that, you know, of course, anyone would be uncomfortable” (Kersey, 2013).

Ironically enough, there is a history of homoeroticism in athletics dating back to Ancient Greece (Miller, 2004) where nudity and homosexuality was a common practice in ancient *gymnasion*; or what we now call a gymnasium (Scanlon, 2002). Scanlon predicted this practice of homosexuality was an act of admiration and respect toward competing athletes. However, this perception of homosexuality has evolved into a homophobic state resulting in negative stereotypes of LGBTQIA athletes.

These theories of effeminate men and masculine women have historically plagued sport. However, as generational perceptions of masculinity become more progressive it has allowed the acceptance of a more metrosexual culture in sport. According to the Collins Unabridged English Dictionary, “metrosexual” refers to any individual who is

takes particular care of personal grooming, hygiene, and appearance when it comes to attire. In popular culture, the prevalence of metrosexuality has softened the negative images of gay men by showcasing heterosexual men (e.g. David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo) taking interest in their fashion and appearance (Coad, 2008).

It is important to note that the term *metrosexual* is misleading in name; it is not associated with sexual orientation. How one dresses has no correlation to their sexual orientation but merely social gender norms formed throughout the years. This is not to say that gay men do not dress in a metrosexual fashion, it is only to state that an individual may be metrosexual regardless of sexual orientation. The same can be true when discussing lesbian women. Not all lesbians are predominately masculine. After all, femininity and masculinity are traits of an individual without taking sexual orientation into account. Consequently, many of the popular understandings of dress, “metrosexuality,” and the behavior of athletes with respect to these issues are fluid.

With the perceptions and stereotypes of LGBTQIA community become softer with each growing generation, the negative stereotypes and stigmas seem to be slowly fading. Athletic governing bodies such as, The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), have worked in recent years to promote the inclusiveness of all members of the LGBTQIA community. In doing so, the NCAA has also helped break down barriers and stereotypes of LGBTQIA athletes by providing coaches and athletic programs with a reference point of best practices and basic accommodations for those LGBTQIA athletes (NCAA, 2013). These handbooks are available online and cover an array of potential “problem areas” for LGBTQIA athletes (e.g. coming out, positive recruiting, and transgender athletes).

Athletic Governing Bodies and LGBTQIA Athletes

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the largest governing body for inter-collegiate athletics in the United States with 482,533 participants recorded during the 2014-15 season (NCAA Database). In April of 2010, the NCAA broadened their definition of inclusiveness by voting to include “sexual orientation” into their inclusion policy. The adoption of this policy was a win for athletes and coaches who may be members of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) community.

In the past, the NCAA has been under scrutiny for not providing a safe, inclusive environment for LGBTQIA athletes and for not protecting LGBTQIA athletes from the coach’s discrimination (e.g. Penn State’s Rene Portland) (Lederman, 1991). Portland had a 27-year tenure prior to her resignation in 2007 of being the head coach of women’s basketball at Penn State. Portland’s resignation came as no surprise after former athlete, Jen Harris, filed a lawsuit of discrimination against the university. These claims were not unwarranted as Portland had previously bragged about her “no lesbian policy” to the *Chicago Sun-Times* in 1986, “I will not have it (lesbianism) in my program. I bring it up, and the kids are so relieved, and the parents are so relieved.” Portland’s attitude towards the LGBTQIA community and the negative publicity surrounding Portland’s actions led the NCAA to conclude that not acting would cause greater problems than disavowing Portland’s actions. The NCAA had to take a stand denouncing this behavior and discrimination toward the LGBTQIA community.

However, spectators have seemingly been more upset with the NCAA stance on inclusion of transgender athletes. Some concern is rooted in the belief that transgender athletes, particularly those transitioning from male to female (MTF), have a biological advantage over other female athletes regardless of testosterone suppressors, and that this change will create an unfair competitive advantage over their (female, or XX, or some appropriate language) in athletic competitions. However, more research is needed to prove or disprove this notion. Transgender is a term applied to those who identify as the opposite gender of their biological sex (GLAAD, 2010). Since the term transgender deals with biological sex and gender identity, it is important to remember that a transgendered individual's sexual orientation is not a factor in their classification as transgender. Individuals, who identify as transgender, may or may not choose to transition from their biological sex to their gender identity. For purposes of this study, transgender will refer to individuals who have undergone gender reassignment surgery and are currently undergoing hormone therapy.

The acceptance of transgender athletes in sport has been and continues to be an ongoing process. In 2004, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) settled the issue of transgender athletes by releasing three rules of competition: 1) athletes must have had sexual reassignment surgery, 2) athletes must have legal recognition of their assigned gender, and 3) athletes must have undergone at least two years of hormone therapy. These guidelines for transgender athletes (2004) were altered in November of 2015: transgender athletes no longer have to go through sexual reassignment surgery. Those male-to-female (MTF) athletes must only ensure that: 1) one's gender identity has been declared female for at least four years, 2) testosterone levels must remain below 10

nmol/L for the 12 months prior to first competition, and 3) an athlete's total testosterone levels must remain below 10 nmol/L throughout the duration of the competition (IOC, 2015).

The process for transgender athletes will remain a battle for years to come in other institutional settings. The NCAA took a similar stance to the IOC in 2011; transgender athletes must comply with specific rules for those who transitioned from male-to-female (MTF) and female-to-male (FTM). An athlete transitioning from MTF must be on hormones to suppress testosterone for a year to be eligible to compete. Those athletes transitioning from FTM may compete on a men's team if they have a medical exception for testosterone hormone therapy; however, FTM athletes are no longer eligible to compete on a women's team without changing the team status to mixed (NCAA, 2011).

The progressive acceptance of the LGBTQIA community in sport does not go unnoticed, and there is the consequent criticism from those who disagree with the NCAA's position. The most obvious opposition to the LGBTQIA community in sport comes from the 2014 Olympic Games held in Sochi, Russia. Concerns for the LGBTQIA community arose in March 2012 when a Russian judge banned the distribution of "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships" (Gold, 2012). The passing of this ban was associated with an increase in violence against members of the LGBTQIA community according to many local news stations based out of Russia (Luhn, 2013), and many argued that the consequent hostile climate made the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics a platform of reform for members and allies of the LGBTQIA community.

Discrimination in Russia did not stop heterosexual teammates across the globe from stepping forward to show support for their LGBTQIA teammates (e.g. Canadian hockey player Sidney Crosby; American snowboarder Shaun White; and Swiss snowboarder Simona Meiler). Contrary to popular belief, the complexities of sexual orientation and gender identification do not typically affect group dynamics and team cohesion between and among athletes (Altman, Estes, & Tittle, 2006). However, this does not mean heterosexual athletes and LGBTQIA athletes have similar experiences during their tenure as collegiate athletes. Prejudice and negative stigmas still affect the individual athlete's perception of cohesiveness because these stigmas become internalized and may cause social disputes off the field (Altman, Estes, & Tittle, 2006).

Team Cohesion

In athletics, team cohesion often refers to shared values among the group, usually combining group goals and maintaining positive relationships (Yukelson, Weinberg & Jackson, 1984). Cohesion in sport is a natural expectation from coaches, players, and spectators alike. Considerable time and effort is put into teams to improve the overall social culture and cohesion of team dynamics (Altman, Estes, & Tittle, 2006). Furthermore, team cohesion is especially important in athletics where athletes are often depending on their teammates to “do their jobs.”

Collegiate athlete experiences are often heightened due to “near-total institution;” meaning they train together, live together, travel together, and often party together (Anderson, 2009). This type of tightknit group makes the perfect candidate to measure the two components of cohesion: social relations and task relations. According to Altman,

Estes, & Tittle (2006) task cohesion deals with achieving group goals; social cohesion concerns satisfying the social and emotional needs of the athletes.

Both social and task relations are crucial to game play. Past research has found that is not necessary for teammates to socialize with each other off the field (Mullen & Copper, 1994). Recent studies, however, express the importance of teammates to have a genuine bond within and outside the sporting context (Cotterill, 2013). Close knit teams, just like families, are typically able to endure more tension among members. Nothing is guaranteed in life or athletics so having a team that is “has each others backs” is a huge advantage when the road gets tough. Like families, teams often have a set of beliefs and behaviors that are unique to their group. But what happens when an individual’s behavior questions the social structure and goes generally agreed upon social standards such as gender identity?

Adding the complexity of sexual orientation to a team could change the cohesiveness of that team. By looking at the perceptions of cohesion from both heterosexual athletes and LGBTQIA athletes it is possible to come to a more comprehensive understanding of just how the athletes interact and perceive one another. To explore this question, data will be collected and assessed through the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) developed by Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron (1985). The GEQ has been used in a variety of studies assessing the cohesiveness of athletic teams.

The GEQ allows researchers to obtain valid and reliable information of team cohesion through the questionnaire. The GEQ has been used to look at a variety of variables including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Halbrook, Blom, Hurley, Bell, &

Holden, 2012), relationships between leadership qualities and social media (Loughead, Fransen, Van Puyenbroeck, Hoffmann, De Cuyper, Vanbeselaere, & Boen, 2016), and cliques in intercollegiate athletics (Martin, Wilson, Evans, & Spink, 2015). With the consistent and current use of the GEQ the original findings of validity and reliability are maintained.

The GEQ authors accounted for different samples in their research by continually refining the instrument. Originally the GEQ-1 contained 53 items from a larger pool of 354 items. GEQ-1 was administered to 212 athletes from 20 different teams. After measuring and re-measuring internal consistency the GEQ-2 was further reduced to 24 items. GEQ-2 was then distributed to 247 athletes across 26 different teams for analysis. Internal consistency values were again reevaluated and the questionnaire was again reduced to 18 items. After the internal consistency values of GEQ-2 (ATG-T alpha .65, ATG-S alpha .64, GI-T alpha .71, and GI-S alpha .72) were found to be very similar to the first study it was concluded that the GEQ was both valid and reliable (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985). Finally, GEQ-3 was constructed with the 18 current items and finalized coefficients of ATG-T, $r = .75$; ATG-S, $r = .64$; GI-T, $r = .70$; and GI-S, $r = .76$ (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985). Those 18 items will be used to conduct this study.

Previous Research

The aim of the Altman, Estes, Tittle (2006) study was to examine the effects of an athlete's sexual orientation on the cohesiveness of a team and determine whether or not cohesion is affected. The researchers used the GEQ to explore team cohesion and lesbianism of three different Division II female collegiate basketball teams from three

universities. Upon completion of data collection researchers used the descriptive statistics function in SPSS to analyze the data. When entering the data, values for negatively worded questions within the GEQ were not flipped as suggested by Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron (1985). The researchers took that approach that, when analyzing the data, a high mean value for positively worded questions represented a more cohesive team. Conversely, negatively worded questions demonstrated team cohesion with a lower mean value (Altman, Estes, & Tittle, 2006).

The data revealed that while team tasks were not affected by sexual orientation, sexual orientation did have an impact on social structure (Altman, Estes, & Tittle, 2006). Group Integration-Task (GI-T) had the highest mean score of 30.91, falling into the 35th percentile on the normative table for females in team sports (Table 1). While GI-T had the highest score, Group Integration-Social (GI-S) had the lowest mean score with a value of 21.18, falling into the 50th percentile on the normative table for females in team sports (Table 1). This was interpreted to mean that sexual orientation did indeed have an effect on personal relationships within the team.

Independent T-tests were used to break the GEQ down into the specific questions exploring an athlete's sexual orientation and its effect on team cohesion. For example, the positively worded question "[f]or me this team is one of the most important social groups to which I belong" had a mean score of 6.91 for non-lesbians and a lower mean score of 4.85 for lesbians. Remember, positively worded questions indicate more team cohesion with a higher mean score, while negatively worded questions will show more team cohesion with a lower mean score. With a mean score of 6.91, non-lesbians feel this team

is incredibly important to their social structure while their lesbian teammates, with a score of 4.85, do not identify as strongly with their team.

Negatively worded questions were similarly revealing. When given the statement, “I do not enjoy being a part of the social activities of this team” lesbian athletes had a mean score of 4.46, while non-lesbian athletes had a mean score of 2.41. The questions “I enjoy other parties more than team parties” and “[m]embers of our team would rather go out on their own than get together as a team” produced mean scores of 5.69 and 5.54, respectively for lesbians; and 4.38 and 3.90 for non-lesbians indicate that the team is split by sexual orientation when it comes to partying. Even more so, the mean score 4.15 for lesbians and 2.92 for non-lesbians is more telling to the question, “I am not going to miss the members of this team when the season ends”. These scores support Altman, Estes, and Tittle’s (2006) findings that sexual orientation has an effect on social relationships within a team.

The results of Altman, Estes and Tittle (2006) study were the foundation for the present investigation. Consequently, this study will utilize the GEQ and widen the parameters to include LGBTQIA female athletes from multiple Division I sport teams, rather than only basketball.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

In an effort to better understand the complexities of sexual orientation and team cohesion in a collegiate setting, research will be conducted using the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) developed by Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron (1985). Sexual orientation is a very complex social phenomenon, and many individuals view sexual preference as a private matter. Consequently data are difficult to gather. When conducting this research, it is vital to maintain trust with the collegiate athletes selected by ensuring confidentiality. Personal information will be viewed only by the researchers and will incorporate pseudonyms and codes for participant protection. The behaviors of the athletes, as well as their sexual orientation, will not be evaluated or judged during the conduct of this research. Rather, this study will only observe athletes' sexual orientation to determine whether or not cohesion is affected.

Design and Setting

For the basis of this research, data will be collected using the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) at one single point in time and not across time; so the design will be a cross-sectional, observational study. The GEQ will be administered to four different Division I female collegiate athletic teams in the southeastern United States. Four sections of the GEQ have been produced to measure the perceived cohesiveness of athletic teams. These sections are made up the 18 total items, or questions, included in the GEQ. The sections can be broken down as follows: Individual Attraction to Group-Task (ATG-T), Individual Attraction to Group-Social (ATG-S), Group Integration-Task (GI-T), and Group Integration-Social (GI-S). Each section has a specific number of questions to address that section (see Table 1). For example, ATG-T is made up of four questions;

while, ATG-S is made up of five questions. This is reversed in Group Integration sections with five questions being dedicated to GI-T and only four questions to GI-S.

Table 1. Number of Questions Per Section of GEQ

Section	Number of Questions
Attraction to Group— Task (ATG-T)	4
Attraction to Group— Social (ATG-S)	5
Group Integration— Task (GI-T)	5
Group Integration— Social (GI-S)	4

Scoring

Every item in the GEQ is assessed by a 9-point Likert scale, with scores ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The value of ‘1’ represents “strongly disagree” and a value of ‘9’ represents “strongly agree.” Throughout, items are alternated to assess cohesion. For example, the first nine questions alternate between ATG-S and ATG-T. The remaining nine items alternate from GI-S to GI-T. Positive and negative

questions vary throughout the questionnaire. As shown below, items with an asterisk are negatively worded questions and will be reverse scored during data analysis. After items and scores are compiled into score sheets (Table 2) the sums of each individual section will be factored and then the mean of every section and the mean of the team as a whole.

Table 2. GEQ Score Sheet

Individual Attractions to the Group— Social (ATG-S)		Individual Attractions to the Group— Task (ATG-T)	
<u>Item Number (#)</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Item Number (#)</u>	<u>Score</u>
1*		2*	
3*		4*	
5		6*	
7*		8*	
9			
SUM =		SUM =	
MEAN =		MEAN =	
Group Integration—Social (GI-S)		Group Integration—Task (GI-T)	
<u>Item Number (#)</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Item Number (#)</u>	<u>Score</u>
11*		10	
13*		12	
15		14*	
17*		16	
		18*	
SUM =		SUM =	
MEAN =		MEAN =	

(* Items are reverse scored.

(Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 2002)

Demographic Questions

These 18-items will assess the perception of team cohesion by the female athletes.

To address the variable of sexual orientation being studied a section separate from the GEQ, with modified demographics questions from the Altman, Estes, and Tittles (2006) study, will be distributed (see Appendix A). It is important to note that certain questions have also been modified for clarity due to distribution of this questionnaire in the beginning of the Fall academic year (e.g. How many full academic years have you been on this team?). The demographic questions will assess academic level, sexual orientation, gender identity, and perception of other teammates.

Upon completion of data collection tables will be organized based on sexual orientation and classification in school (e.g. freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior). Sexual orientation has been expanded from only lesbianism to encompass a more comprehensive spectrum of sexual orientations including: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning/queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA). Encompassing a wider range of sexual orientations will help to not limit data based on social labels.

To those unfamiliar with LGBTQIA issues the terms, the terms *gay* and *lesbian* may be synonymous, but that is not necessarily accurate. Individuals who identify as transgender may not necessarily identify as lesbian or gay. Being transgender deals with the biological sex of an individual, not their sexual orientation. So, an athlete may be transgender, but she may also be heterosexual. For example, Chris Mosier, a transgender male on the United States Olympic triathlon team, has recently finished his female-to-male (FTM) transition with his wife by his side (Shapiro, 2015). Mosier's gender identity is male, however, his sexuality is heterosexual. For purposes of this study, the athlete

would still need identify herself as transgender. If the athlete is both transgender and/or LGBTQIA then she would need to identify all those that applied.

Data Set

It is noted in the literature that finding athletes to participate in a study with a focus on sexual orientation can be difficult. Participant selection is vital to a successful study. Widening the selection process from a singular team to multiple teams will allow more athletes to participate without any particular team being placed under a microscope. Furthermore, a wider range of teams will allow the researcher to gain a greater rate of responses for analysis. The idea behind opening up the study to all Division I female collegiate athletes is to improve the gathering of data from a larger sample so as to ensure that the sample is representative of the population, and to cut down on the potential biases based on the acknowledgement of group participation.

Participants

With 105 Division I female athletes at the selected Southeastern university, the minimum number of participants accepted for this study will be a response rate of 25% which is equivalent to 27 athletes. Ideally, the more participants the more accurate the results. However, since athletes are not required to partake in this study, researchers have set a goal to have at least 25% of the population participate to better increase accuracy.

Participants were told that data will not be sport specific, and will be classified based on whether or not the sport is a “team sport” or “individual sport.” Team sport will be defined as the direct success or failure of team performance is based on team member performance (e.g. soccer, basketball, softball, volleyball). An individual sport will be those sports that allow for success or failure without the help or consideration of another

teammate (e.g. golf, swimming, tennis, track and field). Relay teams and doubles partners in tennis will be taken into consideration during data analysis.

Once a viable pool of participants is identified the participants will be chosen based on three qualifications:

- 1) Must be an athlete on a current Division 1 collegiate team
- 2) Must identify as female
- 3) Must be 18 years or older

Procedures

First and foremost, the university and teams will be selected to take part in this research. Letters (see Appendix B) will be sent to coaches of Division I female athletes to gain permission to distribute the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) and demographic questions to the team. Individual consent (see Appendix C) will be obtained with signed statements. After both coaches and players have consented, dates will be set up with each team to administer the GEQ. To ensure consistency the GEQ will be administered 20 minutes before each team practices (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985). It is important that the athlete is in a neutral mindset when taking the GEQ and this will lower the chance of biases that may arise during practice.

When administering the GEQ, participants will be briefed with complete instructions. Only then will the GEQ and demographic questions will be passed out. At this time, researchers will reassure confidentiality. After completion of the GEQ participants will place their GEQ and demographic questions into a manila folder. The manila folder will be used so the researcher will not be able to place a face with which athlete each survey belongs.

After the data has been collected it will be organized in tables for viewing and manipulation. Participant names and athletic team will then be coded into combined letters and numerals so as not to have any identifying information. After entering the information into a password protected excel spreadsheet the paper copies of surveys will be stored in a safe place so that personal information is confidential. Data tables will be constructed and organized by grade classification in school and by identified sexual orientation answered in the demographic questions. Once data tables have been organized it will simplify analyzing the data.

Data Analysis

The research from this study will be testing the following hypotheses:

H¹: There will be a difference in the Group Environmental Questionnaire (GEQ) scores between individuals who are self-identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, or Asexual (LGBTQIA) and individuals who identify as heterosexual on a team.

H²: An athlete's perception of the existence of non-self-identified LGBTQIA members on their team will affect the team's cohesion, as measured by the Group Environmental Questionnaire.

H³: Female athletes will prefer to be called a whore rather than a dyke.

Data analysis for H¹ and H² will use the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). By organizing the data in Excel first it will be easier to upload into SPSS. Descriptive statistics will be used at this point to analyze the data. More specifically, an independent t-test will be used to test H¹ and H². Analysis of variance

(ANOVA) will also be used when comparing the means between teams and athletes answers on their choice of derogatory term. As an added measure, Welch's Test will be used during ANOVA to ensure that the significance can be more accurately measured since the number of participants in each group is likely to differ. The p -value scores from the independent t-test will then be compared between self-identified members of the LGBTQIA community and those non-identified members to assess whether to reject or accept the null hypothesis. An alpha level of .05 will be used to assess the null hypothesis.

The analysis of H^3 will be completed by comparing ratios. The sum of all female athletes preferring to be called a *dyke* will be compared to those female athletes who would prefer to be called a *whore*. The sums will be compared and the null hypothesis will be accepted or rejected based on the values calculated.

The Group Environment Questionnaire normative table for females will also be assessed to compare current participants with a broader female population. The GEQ normative table breaks down the scores of cohesion into the various aspects of cohesion (e.g. ATG-T, ATG-S, GI-T, and GI-S). For example, if the group was a female soccer team that had a GI-T mean of 36, the researcher would look at team sport percentiles for GI-T in Table 3. From here the user would notice that a mean of 36 was at the percentile rank of 70. Meaning, 70% of the female athletes in team sports scored lower than 36 on the GI-T scale. This would also indicate that a score of 36 was at an above-average level for the normal group of female, team sport athletes (Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 1985). The tables below represent the percentile ranks of both individual and team female sports for the GEQ developed by Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron (1985).

Table 3. GEQ Normative Table for Females in Team Sports

<u>ATG-T</u>		<u>ATG-S</u>		<u>GI-T</u>		<u>GI-S</u>	
<u>Scale Total</u>	<u>Percentile</u>						
35	95	43	95	42	95	31	95
34	90	40	90	41	90	30	90
33	85	38	85	39	85	28	85
33	80	37	80	39	80	27	80
32	75	36	75	37	75	25	75
31	70	35	70	36	70	25	70
30	65	34	65	35	65	24	65
29	60	33	60	34	60	23	60
28	55	32	55	34	55	22	55
27	50	31	50	33	50	21	50
26	45	30	45	32	45	20	45
26	40	29	40	31	40	19	40
25	35	28	35	30	35	18	35
24	30	27	30	28	30	18	30
23	25	26	25	27	25	17	25
21	20	25	20	26	20	15	20
19	15	24	15	24	15	14	15
18	10	23	10	22	10	13	10
13	5	21	5	20	5	10	5

*(Widmeyer, Brawley & Carron, 2002)

Table 4. GEQ Normative Table for Females in Individual Sports

<u>ATG-T</u>		<u>ATG-S</u>		<u>GI-T</u>		<u>GI-S</u>	
<u>Scale Total</u>	<u>Percentile</u>						
36	95	43	95	43	95	35	95
36	90	41	90	40	90	33	90
36	85	41	85	38	85	32	85
36	80	40	80	36	80	31	80
35	75	39	75	35	75	29	75
35	70	38	70	34	70	29	70
34	65	37	65	32	65	28	65
34	60	36	60	31	60	28	60
33	55	35	55	31	55	27	55
33	50	33	50	30	50	26	50
32	45	32	45	29	45	25	45
32	40	29	40	28	40	23	40
30	35	28	35	27	35	22	35
30	30	27	30	26	30	20	30
28	25	26	25	25	25	20	25
27	20	24	20	24	20	17	20
24	15	22	15	22	15	14	15
23	10	21	10	21	10	13	10
20	5	20	5	17	5	12	5

*(Widmeyer, Brawley & Carron, 2002)

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This study focused on the perception of team cohesion among Division I female collegiate athletes at a southeastern university based on their sexual orientation. The following data will assist researchers in further investigation of the relationship between sexual orientation and team cohesion.

Description of Sample

From the selected southeastern university, 29 of the 105 female athletes participated in this study, giving the research a response rate of 27.62%. The 29 participants came from four different athletic teams: golf (2 out of 7), softball (5 out of 22), volleyball (8 out of 13), and soccer (14 out of 25). Of those 29 participants the following demographics obtained can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Description of Sample

Year in school	N	%
Freshman	13	44.83%
Sophomore	5	17.24%
Junior	6	20.69%
Senior	5	17.24%
Total	29	100%
Full years on team		
0-2	24	82.76%
3-4	5	17.24%
Total	29	100%

When analyzing the breakdown of school classification, it is important to note that Freshman account for 44.83% of the collected data with 13 participants. Juniors follow suit with six participants (20.69%) and the Sophomore and Senior classes are tied with a total of five participants (17.24%) each. With 82.76% of the athletes surveyed having spent less than two full years on the team; from this observation it can be concluded that the participant pool was young; with 17.24% of the athletes being seasoned members with 3+ full years on their respective team.

For this study, the description of the sample includes the athlete's sexual orientation. Table 6 provides a breakdown of sexual orientation related questions athletes were asked. Of the participants, three (10.34%) identify as a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) community; the remaining 26 participants (89.66%) identified themselves as heterosexual. When asked, "[a]re there self-identified LGBTQIA members on the team?" 10 participants (34.48%) responded "yes" and 19 participants (65.52) responded "no". Athletes were then asked, "[a]re there any individuals on your team you believe are LGBTQIA, but do not identify themselves". Of the 29 participants, 17 athletes (58.62%) believe there are non-self-identified members of the LGBTQIA community on their team.

Within those responses the data can be further broken down into the amount of self-identified and non-self-identified LGBTQIA members reside on the athlete's team. The highest frequency of self-identified LGBTQIA members come from the teams having two members of the LGBTQIA community; six participants (20.69%) indicated this information. Teams with one or three LGBTQIA members are tied with two participants (6.89%) apiece. The athlete's perception of LGBTQIA individuals on their

team indicates that they believe more LGBTQIA individuals are on the team than who identify as LGBTQIA. Data shows eight participants (27.59%) believe there are two non-self-identified members of the LGBTQIA community on the team; 11 participants (37.93%) believe there are zero non self-identified LGBTQIA, followed by 6 participants (20.69%) indicating three non-self-identified LGBTQIA members. See Table 6 for the remaining sexual orientation data.

Table 6. Sexual Orientation

Demographic Question	N	%
Do you consider yourself a member of the LGBTQIA community?		
Yes	3	10.34%
No	26	89.66%
Total	29	100%
Are there self-identified LGBTQIA members on the team?		
Yes	10	34.48%
No	19	65.52%
Total	29	100%
How many self-identified LGBTQIA members are on the team?		
0	19	65.52%
1	2	6.89%
2	6	20.69%
3	2	6.89%
Total	29	100%
Are there individuals on the team you believe to be LGBTQIA, but do not identify as LGBTQIA?		
Yes	17	58.62%
No	12	41.38%
Total	29	100%
How many non-self-identified LGBTQIA individuals are on the team?		
0	11	37.93%
1	3	10.34%
2	8	27.59%
3	6	20.69%
Total	29	100%

The last two demographic questions address whether the athletes know members of the LGBTQIA community and if they support LGBTQIA rights. Data shows that 27 athletes (93.1%) know members of the LGBTQIA community. This is not surprising since 34.48% of the athletes indicated there were LGBTQIA athletes on their team and 58.62% of the participants believe there are non-self-identified LGBTQIA members on their team. However, what is surprising is that 11 participants (37.93%) identified family members as members of the LGBTQIA community. Of those 11 participants, one indicated they are not in favor of LGBTQIA rights, and one other wrote in “iffy” as her response. This has been recorded as a “maybe” for data analysis purposes.

Group Environment Questionnaire

After having a better understanding of the demographic of participants the data collected through the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) developed by Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron (1985) can now be analyzed. The questionnaire consists of two different sections; the first nine questions assess the athlete’s personal involvement and the remaining nine assess perceptions of their team as a whole. Within those 18 questions, there are four different subsections (ATG-T, ATG-S, GI-T, and GI-S) used to assess team cohesion. The following section will discuss GEQ questions, scores, normative tables and analysis of the data.

Questions and Scoring

The GEQ is comprised of positively and negatively worded questions. With a total of 18 questions, certain questions assess different aspects of the team. Within these questions there are a six positively worded questions and 12 negatively worded questions. For example, “[f]or me this team is one of the most important social groups to which I

belong” is classified as a positively worded question while, “I do not enjoy being a part of the social activities of this team” is a negatively worded question. The negatively worded questions were reverse scored and both questions can now be analyzed on the same scale. A higher mean score (mean > 6.0) indicates a stronger team cohesion; while a lower mean score (mean < 5.0) indicates weaker team cohesion.

Overall, the data showed athletes indicating medium to high team cohesion throughout the questionnaire. Of the 18 questions, seven questions had a high mean score ($X = > 6.0$); four questions fell into the lower range with mean scores < 5.0; and the remaining seven questions hitting the sweet spot with a medium score of $X = 5.0-6.0$. Specific results for all athletes combined regardless of sexual orientation can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7. GEQ Results by Positively and Negatively Worded Questions

<u>Questions Worded in the Positive</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>
Some of my best friends are on this team.	29	6.97	1.86
For me this team is one of the most important social groups to which I belong.	29	6.72	2.25
Our team is united in trying to reach its goals for performance.	29	5.03	2.57
We all take responsibility for any loss or poor performance by our team.	29	4.72	2.58
Our team would like to spend time together in the off-season.	29	5.90	2.29
If members of our team have problems in practice, everyone wants to help them so we can get back together again.	29	5.41	2.11
<u>Questions Worded in the Negative</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>
I do not enjoy being a part of the social activities of this team.	29	7.55	1.88
I'm not happy with the amount of playing time I get.	29	5.72	2.97
I am not going to miss the members of this team when the season ends.	29	7.28	1.98
I'm unhappy with my team's level of desire to win.	29	4.66	2.33
This team does not give me enough opportunities to improve my personal performance.	29	6.03	2.16
I enjoy other parties more than team parties.	29	5.17	2.27
I do not like the style of play on this team.	29	5.79	1.86
Members of our team would rather go out on their own than get together as a team.	29	4.59	2.23
Our team members rarely party together.	29	7.03	1.55
Our team members have conflicting aspirations for the team's performance.	29	5.24	2.15
Members of our team do not stick together outside of practices and games.	29	6.17	2.07
Our team members do not communicate freely about each athlete's responsibilities during competition or practice.	29	4.90	2.51

As shown above, the sample had strong cohesion scores for the following questions: “I do not enjoy being a part of the social activities of this team” ($X = 7.55, s = 1.88$); “I am not going to miss the members of this team when the season ends” ($X = 7.28, s = 1.98$); and “[o]ur members rarely party together” ($X = 7.03, s = 1.55$). Two of the three questions fall into the Individual Attractions to Group- Social (ATG-S) scale and the third belongs to Group Integration- Social (GI-S). Higher mean values on the social scale indicate that athletes feel stronger about the social aspects of their teams rather than the task orientated aspects explored in ATG-T and GI-T.

Lower GEQ scores were found in Group-Integration- Task (GI-T) and Individual Attraction to Group-Task (ATG-T). The questions “[w]e all take responsibility for any loss or poor performance by our team” ($X = 4.72, s = 2.58$) and “[o]ur team members do not communicate freely about each athlete’s responsibilities during competition or practice” ($X = 4.90, s = 2.51$) belong to Group Integration- Task (GI-T). With a mean score of 4.66 ($s = 2.33$) for the question “I am unhappy with my team’s level of desire to win” Individual Attraction to Group- Task (ATG-T) earns the second lowest score. Indicating, overall, a majority of the athletes are unsatisfied with their teammates desire to win. It is important to note that the lowest mean score ($X = 4.59, s = 2.23$) comes from Group Integration- Social. However, looking at the raw data it seems that the athletes were unsure of how to answer the question, “[m]embers of our team would rather go out on their own than get together as a team” with a majority of the responses scoring a “5” on the Likert scale. A value of five remains completely neutral in a 1 to 9 rank Likert scale; further demonstrating that athletes might have been unsure of how to answer that specific question.

The results were further broken down sexual orientation to explore the relationship between LGBTQIA and non-LGBTQIA (N-LGBTQIA) athletes. Positively and negatively worded questions were placed in separate tables for an easier understanding of the data. Shown below, Table 8 represents positively worded questions and Table 9 represents those negatively worded questions.

Table 8. Breakdown of GEQ Results for Questions Worded in the Positive

Question	LGTBQIA			N-LGBTQIA		
	<u>N</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>
Some of my best friends are on this team.	3	6.33	2.08	26	7.04	1.87
For me this team is one of the most important social groups to which I belong.	3	6.00	1.73	26	6.81	2.32
Our team is united in trying to reach its goals for performance.	3	5.00	2.65	26	5.04	2.62
We all take responsibility for any loss or poor performance by our team.	3	4.00	1.73	26	4.81	2.67
Our team would like to spend time together in the off-season.	3	5.33	0.58	26	5.96	2.41
If members of our team have problems in practice, everyone wants to help them so we can get back together again.	3	4.33	1.58	26	5.54	2.16

Table 9. Breakdown of GEQ Results for Questions Worded in the Negative

Question	LGBTQIA			N-LGBTQIA		
	<u>N</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>
I do not enjoy being a part of the social activities of this team.	3	6.67	2.31	26	7.65	1.85
I'm not happy with the amount of playing time I get.	3	4.33	3.51	26	5.88	2.94
I am not going to miss the members of this team when the season ends.	3	7.00	1.73	26	7.31	2.04
I'm unhappy with my team's level of desire to win.	3	3.33	1.53	26	4.81	2.38
This team does not give me enough opportunities to improve my personal performance.	3	5.00	0.00	26	6.15	2.26
I enjoy other parties more than team parties.	3	3.00	1.00	26	5.42	2.25
I do not like the style of play on this team.	3	5.00	1.00	26	5.88	1.93
Members of our team would rather go out on their own than get together as a team.	3	3.33	0.58	26	4.73	2.31
Our team members rarely party together.	3	6.67	1.15	26	7.08	1.60
Our team members have conflicting aspirations for the team's performance.	3	4.00	1.00	26	5.38	2.21
Members of our team do not stick together outside of practices and games.	3	6.00	2.00	26	6.19	2.12
Our team members do not communicate freely about each athlete's responsibilities during competition or practice.	3	5.33	2.31	26	4.85	2.57

Mean scores from Table 8 and Table 9 indicate that N-LGBTQIA members have all-around higher scores than those scores of LGBTQIA members. Only one question ([o]ur team members do not communicate freely about each athlete's responsibilities during competition or practice) scored lower for N-LGBTQIA, with a score of $X = 4.85$, $s = 2.57$. Every other question indicates N-LGBTQIA athletes having a stronger sense of team cohesion. The largest difference in mean scores comes from the Individual Attraction to Group- Social (ATG-S) scale question, "I enjoy other parties more than team parties"; where LGBTQIA ($X = 3.00$, $s = 1.00$) and N-LGBTQIA ($X = 5.42$, $s = 2.25$) had a difference of 2.42. A difference of this magnitude indicates a strong rift between which parties LGBTQIA and N-LGBTQIA members of the team would rather attend.

Scoring Subscales

The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) assesses team cohesion after being broken down into four sections and scored accordingly: Individual Attraction to Group-Task (ATG-T), Individual Attraction to Group-Social (ATG-S), Group Integration-Task (GI-T), and Group Integration-Social (GI-S). Each section assesses a different set of questions within the GEQ (see Table 1) and illustrates a different motivation for that particular athlete. Remember, the values of each questions cannot be added together at once to address team cohesion; each section will be assessed individually (i.e. ATG-S, ATG-T, GI-T, and GI-S will each have its own score). After this analysis the individual scores will be compared across athletes, teams, and sexual orientation.

The results of the GEQ are represented in separate tables; Table 10 (below) represent the four different scales of the GEQ. All athletes scores, regardless of team, were used to find a total GEQ score for the designated sections (i.e. ATG-T, ATG-S, GI-T, and GI-S) to find the total GEQ score for the university. Remember, these scores cannot be compared to the normative tables.

Table 10. Total GEQ Scores for the University

Scales of GEQ	N	X	SD
Individual Attraction to Group- Task	29	22.21	6.68
Individual Attraction to Group- Social	29	33.69	6.64
Group Integration- Task	29	25.31	9.63
Group Integration- Social	29	23.69	5.96

To compare mean scores to the female normative tables the individual sports must be scored individually. After which, the GEQ mean score per sport was compared to normative tables for females in team sports (see Table 3) or females in individual sports (see Table 4). The normative tables are used to compare specific team's mean scores and rank the team within the female population. This study looked at 29 participants from four different teams at the selected university. The GEQ scores for individual teams can be found in Table 11.

Table 11. GEQ Scores per Sport

<u>Scale of GEQ</u>	<u>Team</u>							
	<u>Golf</u>		<u>Softball</u>		<u>Volleyball</u>		<u>Soccer</u>	
	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>SD</u>
ATG-T	28	5.66	28.6	9.32	20.88	6.01	19.86	4.42
ATG-S	35.5	3.54	33	10.93	34.25	6.14	33.36	6.01
GI-T	32	12.73	34.2	6.8	22.25	9.30	22.93	8.79
GI-S	26.5	3.54	26.2	5.26	21.63	7.39	23.57	5.60

The individual scores of the GEQ above indicate which teams fall in a higher percentile on the normative scale. Golf will be ranked against the normative table for female in individual sports; while softball, volleyball, and soccer will be ranked against females in team sports on the normative table. At first glance, golf has the highest GEQ scores in ATG-S ($X = 35.5, s = 3.54$) and GI-S ($X = 26.5, s = 3.54$) ranking them above the other three sports represented. However, when comparing scores in the normative tables, volleyball ranks higher with a score of $X = 34.25, s = 6.14$ (ATG-S) and softball ($X = 26.2, s = 5.26$) in Group Integration- Social (GI-S).

Volleyball ranks within the top 35% for ATG-S; followed close behind by soccer ($X = 33.36, s = 6.01$) and softball ($X = 33.00, s = 10.93$) both falling the 60 percentile rank. Individual Attraction to Group- Task (ATG-T) indicates that softball ranks within the top 45% with a score of $X = 28.6, s = 9.32$. Both volleyball ($X = 20.88, s = 6.01$) and soccer ($X = 19.86, s = 4.42$) fall much lower, ranking in the bottom 15% of the female

population. Golf with a mean score of $X = 28.00$ ($s = 5.66$) might seem as if it would rank higher; however, on the normative tables for individual sports, golf scores in the bottom 25%. Softball out ranks each of the other sports in Group Integration- Social (GI-S) with a score $X=26.2$, $s = 5.26$ (GI-S); softball falls in the top 25% for GI-S. Followed by soccer ($X = 23.57$, $s = 5.60$) in the top 40%. Golf ($X = 32$, $s = 12.73$) takes the lead in Group Integration- Task (GI-T) landing in the top 35% of the female population.

Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. More specifically, both independent t-test's and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to compare means across hypotheses. The Welch's Test was used during ANOVA to more accurately analyze the data; utilizing Welch's Test is essential when analyzing groups that do not have an equal number of participants (i.e. eight volleyball players and 14 soccer players). An alpha level of .05 will be used to assess the null hypothesis. If significance level is $p = <.05$ then that relationship will be considered significant. The research from this study tested the following hypotheses:

H^1 : There will be a difference in the Group Environmental Questionnaire (GEQ) scores between individuals who are self-identified Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, or Asexual (LGBTQIA) and individuals who identify as heterosexual on a team.

H²: An athlete's perception of the existence of non-self-identified LGBTQIA members on their team will affect the team's cohesion, as measured by the Group Environmental Questionnaire.

H³: Heterosexual athletes will prefer to be called a whore rather than a dyke.

An independent t-test was run through SPSS to determine if there was a significant difference in the data to accept or reject H¹ and H². The athlete's information was entered into the computer as one unit, the university. The following information is based on all athletes who participated; not as individual teams.

There was not a significant difference in scores between LGBTQIA and N-LGBTQIA athletes in either section of the GEQ; Individual Attraction to Group-Task (ATG-T) had a *p*-value of .646; Individual Attraction to Group-Social (ATG-S) *p* = .505; Group Integration-Task (GI-T) *p* = .166; and Group Integration-Social (GI-S) had a score of *p* = .142. With all *p*-values scoring above a .05 we fail to reject the null hypothesis. The results indicate that there is no difference in perception of team cohesion on the basis of sexual orientation.

A similar independent t-test was run to explore H²; this time the data was coded either "1" for believing there were no non-self-identified LGBTQIA members and "2" for participants who believed there are non-self-identified members of the LGBTQIA community on their team. Results show that *p*-values indicate no major significance; Individual Attraction to Group-Task (ATG-T) *p* = .757; Individual Attraction to Group-Social (ATG-S) *p* = .516; Group Integration-Task (GI-T) *p* = .870; and finally, Group Integration-Social (GI-S) had a score of *p* = .137. With *p*-values remaining above the .05

threshold we fail to reject the null hypothesis. An athlete's perception of the existence of non-self-identified LGBTQIA members on their team will not affect the team's cohesion, as measured by the Group Environmental Questionnaire.

This research also investigated Blinde and Taub's (1992) argument that female athletes would prefer to be called a *whore* rather than *dyke* because it made them seem more desirable to the opposite sex. The final hypothesis (H³) explored this question by comparing ratios as well as using ANOVA to determine a significant difference between the athletes age and their preference on being called either a *whore* or *dyke*. To further investigate this question, athletes were asked the following, "[o]f the following derogatory terms; would you prefer to be called a *dyke* or *whore* by a member of the opposite sex?" Athletes were then asked to explain their answer.

As found in 1992, female athletes indicated a preference of being called *whore* over *dyke*. With 14 participants (48.28%) answering *whore*, while 10 participants (34.48%) selected *dyke*; the remaining 5 athletes (17.24%) wrote in "neither". Of those responses, all three LGBTQIA athletes indicated they would prefer to be called a *whore* rather than a *dyke*. Statistically, age played a factor in this decision. With a *p*-value of .064 in ANOVA researchers fail to reject the null hypothesis; however, Welch's test was run as a secondary measure to take into account uneven groups. This secondary test found a significance level of .031; indicating that the null hypothesis is rejected and female athletes would prefer to be called a *whore* rather than *dyke*. Further explanation behind the athlete's responses will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This chapter will interpret and discuss the findings of this study and their significance as it pertains to Division I female college athletics for the selected southeastern university. Data was collected through the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) developed by Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron (1985) and a separate set of demographic questions compiled by researchers specifically for this study. Results from both the GEQ and demographic questions will be used in interpreting the data; the GEQ results will be broken down into their respective scales for an easier understanding of the data. This section will also contain limitations faced during research and recommendations for future studies and coaches.

Group Environment Questionnaire

Overall, the data collected through the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) did not show a significant difference between athletes that identified as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) community and those participants who did not identify as LGBTQIA (N-LGBTQIA). However, certain aspects of the GEQ indicated that there was a difference between Attraction to Group and Group Integration scales. Fortunately, the GEQ was chosen to pinpoint where an athlete's perception of team cohesion differs from other athletes on the same team; and in doing so, researchers must take into account both team scores and individual scores of the GEQ to come to stronger conclusions about the data.

Individual Attraction to Group- Task and Social

The scales Individual Attraction to Group- Task (ATG-T) and Individual Attraction to Group-Social (ATG-S) were designed to assess the athlete's feelings about their own personal involvement in their team. Questions one through nine in the GEQ assess both task and social components of individual group attraction. A sample of the questions in this section include: "I'm not happy with the amount of playing time I get" (LGBTQIA, $X = 4.33$, $s = 3.51$; N-LGBTQIA, $X = 5.88$, $s = 2.94$) "[s]ome of my best friends are on this team" (LGBTQIA, $X = 6.33$, $s = 2.08$; N-LGBTQIA, $X = 7.04$, $s = 1.87$), "[t]his team does not give me enough opportunities to improve my personal performance" (LGBTQIA, $X = 5.00$, $s = 0.00$; N-LGBTQIA, $X = 6.15$, $s = 2.26$), and "[f]or me, this team is one of the most important social groups to which I belong" (LGBTQIA, $X = 6.00$, $s = 1.73$; N-LGBTQIA, $X = 6.81$, $s = 2.32$). The values following the questions are mean scores denoted by sexual orientation.

The four questions listed above take a part in assessing the team cohesion on the Individual Attraction to Group (ATG-T and ATG-S) scales. After assessing the p -values in Individual Attraction to Group- Task (ATG-T) and Individual Attraction to Group-Social (ATG-S) both scales scored well above the alpha level of .05; $p = .646$ (ATG-T) and $p = .505$ (ATG-S) when considering the athlete's sexual orientation and $p = .757$ (ATG-T) and $p = .516$ (ATG-S) when considering the perception of non-self-identified members of the LGBTQIA community on their team. Indicating that, statistically, there is no significant difference in the perception of team cohesion as it relates to an athlete's personal involvement with the team on the basis of sexual orientation or the perception of non-self-identified LGBTQIA members.

However, the breakdown of GEQ results for questions worded in the positive (Table 8) and questions worded in the negative (Table 9) both indicate that N-LGBTQIA members show a higher sense of team cohesion on every item in Individual Attraction to Group- Task (ATG-T) and Individual Attraction to Group- Social (ATG-S). Statistically, the p -values may not be significant, but with N-LGBTQIA athletes indicating higher levels of team cohesion across the board this data cannot be dismissed. Higher team cohesion scores for the N-LGBTQIA athletes in the Individual Attraction to Group scale compared to the LGBTQIA athletes suggests a divide in how athletes, of different sexual orientations, view their experiences. Further exploration into the GEQ through the Group Integration (GI) scales and demographic questions are needed to come to a well-rounded conclusion.

Group Integration- Task and Social

The second page of the GEQ (questions 10 through 18) is dedicated to the Group Integration- Task (GI-T) and Group Integration- Social (GI-S) scales. These two scales were developed to assess the athlete's perception of their team as a whole. Group Integration- Task (GI-T) and Group Integration- Social (GI-S) proved to be more significant than Individual Attraction to Group- Task (ATG-T) and Individual Attraction to Group- Social (ATG-S). However, statistically, the significance level failed to fall below an alpha level of .05; there is no significant difference in the perception of team cohesion based on sexual orientation (GI-T, $p = 1.66$; GI-S, $p = .142$) or team cohesion based on the perception of non-self-identified LGBTQIA members (GI-T, $p = .870$; GI-S, $p = .137$) as it relates to the team as a whole.

Questions from items 10 through 18 included: “[o]ur team is united in trying to reach its goals for performance” (LGTBQIA, $X = 5.00$, $s = 2.65$; N-LGBTQIA, $X = 5.04$, $s = 2.62$), “[i]f members of our team have problems in practice, everyone wants to help them so we can get back together again” (LGTBQIA, $X = 4.33$, $s = 1.58$; N-LGBTQIA, $X = 5.54$, $s = 2.16$), “[m]embers of our team do not stick together outside of practices and games” (LGTBQIA, $X = 6.00$, $s = 2.00$; N-LGBTQIA, $X = 6.19$, $s = 2.12$), and “[o]ur team members rarely party together” (LGTBQIA, $X = 6.67$, $s = 1.15$; N-LGBTQIA, $X = 7.08$, $s = 1.60$).

Though the values are not statistically significant, N-LGBTQIA athletes have outscored LGBTQIA athletes in their perception of team cohesion. In only one question did LGBTQIA athletes have a higher perception of team cohesion: “[o]ur team members do not communicate freely about each athlete’s responsibilities during competition or practice” (LGTBQIA, $X = 5.33$, $s = 2.31$; N-LGBTQIA, $X = 4.85$, $s = 2.57$). With 96.55% of the data showing N-LGBTQIA members indicate a stronger team cohesion results reflect negatively on the LGBTQIA experience. Statistically, with the calculated p -values researchers fail to reject the null hypothesis (Ho1) that there is not a significant difference in the perception of team cohesion on the basis of sexual orientation and fail to reject the null hypothesis (Ho2) that an athlete’s perception of the existence of non-self-identified LGBTQIA members on the team does not affect team cohesion. This data suggests sexual orientation, or the perception of LGBTQIA athletes, will have no effect on N-LGBTQIA athletes or the cohesiveness of their team.

The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) is a useful tool for collecting quantitative data to return to the coaches. However, other aspects of this research must be considered before a final conclusion can be made. The GEQ was one part of this research. The demographic questions will help researchers better understand why the GEQ failed to reject both null hypotheses.

Demographic Questions

A sample of demographic questions were made to gain a better understanding of each individual athlete; in turn, demographic questions allowed researchers to better assess why the athletes may have had certain answers to the GEQ. These demographic questions assessed age, years on the team, sexual orientation, perception of non-self-identified members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Question/Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) community on their team, derogatory term preference, and personal beliefs as it relates to LGBTQIA rights.

In analyzing the demographic data, certain limitations are important to consider: 1) location, 2) participant age, and 3) if the athlete knows members of the LGBTQIA community. Each of these variables may inadvertently effect the data. For example, it is important to know that the selected southeastern university is located in the informal region known as “The Bible Belt”. Consequently, some answers to the demographic questions were reflections of the strong religious views that resonate within this region. This limitation alone deterred athletes from discussing personal details about their sexual orientation or their views of homosexuality.

Age, for example, may indicate that athletes have not spent enough time immersed into university culture. With 24 participants (82.76%) having spent two or less years on their respective team, this could have a positive or negative affect on their views of LGBTQIA athletes; as well as, skewing scores on the GEQ depending on the culture of their team. Finally, if an athlete knows a member of the LGBTQIA community this may sway their decisions in supporting or not supporting LGBTQIA rights. The demographic questions are discussed further as it relates to either LGBTQIA athletes or non-LGBTQIA (N-LGBTQIA) athletes.

LGBTQIA Athletes

Of the 29 athletes, only three (10.34%) identified as LGBTQIA; one “bisexual”, one “questioning” and the third as “bisexual and lesbian”. Unfortunately, the scores from these three participants did not have a statistically significant effect on the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) data. More data from LGBTQIA athletes would allow future studies and researchers to gain a better understanding of the experiences these LGBTQIA athletes undergo at their university.

Interestingly enough, all three LGBTQIA athletes came from separate teams and separate grades classifications at the university (i.e. one freshman, one sophomore, and one senior). Regardless of this fact, all three athletes indicated very similar responses on GEQ and within the demographic questions. Each indicated that they know members of the LGBTQIA community, each hold the perception of non-self-identified LGBTQIA members on their respective teams, and two of the three athletes have indicated they are in favor of LGBTQIA rights.

When asked who these athletes know from the LGBTQIA community the athletes indicated the same three responses: “family”, “friend”, and “teammate”. During data collection, athletes may have unintentionally indicated both “friend” and “teammate” for the same individual. Taking this into account, researchers counted the value as one when listed together (i.e. circling both “friend” and “teammate”); while maintaining separate values if not listed together (i.e. circling “friend” or “teammate”). The answer to this question is important when compared to answers on if the athlete is “in favor of LGBTQIA rights”.

As stated above, two of the three LGBTQIA athletes indicated that they are in favor of LGBTQIA rights; while the third athlete wrote in “iffy” (which was recorded as “maybe”). All three athletes identified as LGBTQIA and know members of the LGBTQIA, yet one is unsure of their stance on LGBTQIA rights. More qualitative research into this question as it pertains to this individual is needed to come to better understanding where that athlete is coming from. Quantitative evidence tells us that she is a freshman who falls under the “questioning/queer” category in LGBTQIA. This suggests that the athlete is unsure of her own sexual orientation and where she stands on LGBTQIA rights as a whole.

N-LGBTQIA Athletes

With 89.66% of the data coming from N-LGBTQIA individuals it is easier to form conclusions about the culture of Division I female athletes at this southeastern university and how the culture affects N-LGBTQIA athletes. The N-LGBTQIA athletes range from freshman in college to graduating seniors giving researchers a decent look at

their beliefs by age and also by team. There are N-LGBTQIA members on each of the four teams; providing a more well-rounded look into the dynamics of the group.

Overall, the data suggests much of the same demographic results. Of the remaining 26 participants, 14 athletes (53.85%) recognize the existence of non-self-identified members of the LGBTQIA community on their team, 24 athletes (93.31%) confirm knowing members of the LGBTQIA community, and 21 (80.77%) of the 26 N-LGBTQIA athletes support LGBTQIA rights.

Of the total 29 athletes only four have stated they do not support LGBTQIA rights; all four of those athletes identify as heterosexual (i.e. N-LGBTQIA). Two of the four these athletes indicated knowing LGBTQIA individuals; while the other two made no indication of knowing LGBTQIA athletes or having any intuition that there may be non-self-identified athletes on their team. Of those athletes, one participant made a statement in defense of her answer:

“I do not believe in gay/lesbian. However, I have friends that are and I do not judge them for it because it is not my place. I'm Christian and it's against my religion but only God can judge. I don't believe he hates gays and lesbians. I respect them as long as they respect me.”

As stated earlier, the location of this southeastern university could affect participant's answers based on their religious views. The other three participants opposing LGBTQIA rights did not provide a reason, so there is no way of making a further inference with the data provided.

Whore or Dyke

The third hypothesis tested in this research was an extension of a study previously done by Blinde and Taub (1992). Researchers found that female athletes would prefer to be called a *whore* rather than a *dyke* because they thought being called a “whore” made them more desirable to the opposite sex (Blinde & Taub, 1992). This study wanted to pursue that notion 20+ years later.

As found in 1992, data suggests that female athletes prefer being called a *whore* over being called a *dyke*. With 14 participants (48.28%) answering *whore*, while 10 participants (34.48%) selected *dyke*; the remaining 5 athletes (17.24%) wrote in “neither”. Given the options, it is no surprise that 17.24% of the athletes wrote in their own answer of “neither”. But what is more surprising is why athletes chose the derogatory terms they chose.

Of the athletes that chose *whore*, 42.86% of athletes stated that they feel as if the term *whore* is “less derogatory” or “less degrading” than *dyke*. One athlete specifically states choosing “[w]hore because at least it would be because I would be with guys”; another explains that, “[i]f I had to choose I would choose whore because, as sad as it is, men sexually shame women like that constantly so it's nothing new”; and finally, “[w]hen I think of dykes I think of a very manly woman. I don't want to be known or called that”. These are only a few responses, but each response points out three very different views on the relationship between men and women in modern society.

The first athlete confirms Blinde and Taub’s (1992) theory that woman want to seem more desirable to men. The second athlete states an understanding of sex shaming in today’s society, but disregards its existence as “nothing new”. Finally, the third athlete

states that she wishes to not be associated with “very manly woman”. This could be interpreted as wishing to be more appealing to the opposite sex or she genuinely does not want to be seen as masculine.

In regards to masculinity, that is the reason a few female athletes preferred the term *dyke* over *whore*. One athlete states, “[d]yke because guys always judge girls who play sports already for being too masculine so I'm used to it”; another says, “[i]t is a stereotype for softball so that doesn't really bother me as much as "whore" would”; and lastly, “[w]hore seems to be more associated with a female and her womanhood. It is degrading and suggests that one may sleep around. Dyke to me refers more to my style of clothing and how athletic I may be.” These athletes that chose the term *dyke* over the term *whore* recognize that being a woman in sport raises your chances of being seen as masculine (Waldron, 2015). These female athletes recognize this association between being a woman in the hyper-masculine world of sport.

There were a couple athletes that recognize both sides of the argument: 1) I would rather be called a whore because dyke is more offensive. The reason I say this is because you are using a derogatory term and singling out a specific group of females by using dyke. Whore is more general for females, whereas dyke isn't”, 2) “[a]lthough being a "whore" in my opinion is worse than being "dyke", I think the term "dyke" is seem as more offensive than "whore" in today's society”, and 3) “I chose whore because to me, personally, that is just less offensive. If I were a lesbian or bisexual, I believe that dyke would make me way more mad”. Even though all three athletes indicated they would prefer to be called a *whore* rather than a *dyke* they recognized why women, particularly LGBTQIA women, would take offense to being called a *dyke*.

Final Thoughts

The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) and every question in the set of demographic questions were vital in understanding the athletes as individuals; and the student athlete culture at this southeastern university as a whole. Overall, there is no statistical significance in the data to suggest a difference in experiences for Division I LGBTQIA and N-LGBTQIA athletes in the present study. Could these results have occurred because social attitudes may have changed since Blinde and Taub (1992) and Altman, Estes, and Tittle (2006)? Possibly. It is imperative to keep the door of research on LGBTQIA individuals in athletics open. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and researchers must continue to work together to educate student athletes and the public on LGBTQIA issues. Future studies should explore how sexual orientation has an effect on the social structure within an athletic team; and more importantly, focus on finding a common ground among LGBTQIA and N-LGBTQIA athletes outside of sports.

After all, the NCAA core values acknowledge: 1) “[t]he supporting role that intercollegiate athletics plays in the higher education mission and in enhancing the sense of community and strengthening the identity of member institutions”; and 2) “[a]n inclusive culture that fosters equitable participation for student-athletes and career opportunities for coaches and administrators from diverse backgrounds” (2010). By adding “sexual orientation” to the inclusion statement the NCAA (2011) added LGBTQIA athletes and coaches to the strong community the NCAA wants to foster. Proving, further research in this field of study is imperative. With educational programs, both female and male, student athletes will gain a better understanding of their LGBTQIA teammates and how to create a welcoming university culture.

Future Studies

Future studies should take the following into consideration when perusing further exploration on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) athletes. First and foremost, it would be credibly beneficial to open up the research to both male and female athletes. This would provide researchers with a higher population to gather data from and, in turn, gain a better understanding of the culture of all Division I student athletes as it pertains to sexual orientation. With that being said, further LGBTQIA research is needed on Division II and Division III athletes.

The Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ) developed by Widmeyer, Brawley, and Carron (1985) should be used along with a specific set of demographic questions for multiple studies. This will allow researchers to compare both the GEQ scores and demographic questions across universities and populations. Included in those questions should be a section addressing where an athlete originates from and if they practice a certain religion. University is an educational melting pot. Many students, especially student athletes, are originally from somewhere other than where their university is located. Knowing where an athlete grew up and if he, or she, grew up religious would help researchers understand why or why not an athlete supports LGBTQIA rights.

Lastly, if the NCAA or the university of interest has an educational workshop on inclusion, it would be the optimal time to collect data. A majority, if not all, student athletes would be required by their coaches to be in attendance. From here researchers could express the importance of LGBTQIA research without further disruption of the

season by taking up additional time of the athletes or coaches. In doing so, maybe more athletes would choose to participate than would if researches came to a practice or after a game.

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[4_04ilgareport_/4_04ilgareport_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/droi/dv/4_04ilgareport_/4_04ilgareport_en.pdf).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Demographic Questions for GEQ

1.) What year are you in school? (Circle One)

Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

2.) How many full years have you been on this team? (Do not include this year)

0 1 2 3 4 (Circle One)

3.) How did you join your collegiate team?

- a. Recruited from a high school team
- b. Recruited through a select/club team
- c. Walk on
- d. Other

4.) Do you consider yourself to be a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersexual, or Asexual (LGBTQIA) community?

Circle **Yes** or **No** **AND** Check all those that apply to your sexuality

<input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/> Gay	<input type="checkbox"/> Asexual
<input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/> Transgender	<input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual
<input type="checkbox"/> Questioning/Queer	<input type="checkbox"/> Intersexual	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

5.) Are there any self-identified members of the LGBTQIA community on the team?

Circle **Yes** or **No**

If yes, how many self-identified members of the LGBTQIA are on the team? ____

6.) Are there any individuals on your team who you believe are LGBTQIA, but do not identify themselves?

Circle **Yes** or **No**

If yes, how many non-self identified members of the LGBTQIA are on the team?

7.) Of the following derogatory terms; would you prefer to be called a *dyke* or *whore* by a member of the opposite sex?

Circle **Dyke** or **Whore**

AND

Please Explain

8.) Do you know anyone that is LGBTQIA?

Circle **Yes** or **No**

What is your relationship to that person?

Teammate

Friend

Family Member

Other

9.) Are you in favor of LGBTQIA rights?

Circle **Yes** or **No**

APPENDIX B: Letter to Coaches

Dear Coach,

As you may know, since the passing of Title IV in 1972, women in athletics have made tremendous strides to compete at the highest level of competition. Division I college athletics being at the top of the list for many female athletes to continue their careers. Providing these top tier athletes with a competitive and inclusive atmosphere has an enormous impact on success; not only for the team, but for the individual athlete, as well.

Further research is needed to explore the cohesiveness of women in sport. I am conducting research on team cohesion in Division I women's college athletics. Past research has explored the affect of a variety of variables on team cohesion. More purposes of this research, I will be looking at individual athlete's perception of team cohesion based on their sexuality. The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual community have made great strides over the recent years in professional sport (e.g. Michael Sam, Abby Wambach, and Caitlyn Jenner).

With that being said, sexuality is very personal and I understand you may have reservations. However, this research is only to explore the perceived cohesiveness through the Group Environment Questionnaire. All personal information will remain confidential and the name of your University will be left out of the research. Results, of course, will be shared with you; this may assist with improving cohesiveness among your team leading to greater success throughout the season.

The data will be collected through the Group Environment Questionnaire and a separate sheet of demographic questions. Data collection should take no longer than 15 minutes. I will contact you to schedule a date and time at which to administer the questionnaire if you choose to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me, Samantha Stolze by phone at (615) 499-0375 or by email at srs5j@mtmail.mtsu.edu. Thank you for your contribution in making Division I college athletics a continued success.

Sincerely,

Samantha Stolze

APPENDIX C: Individual Consent Form

**Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Document for Research**

Principal Investigator: Samantha R. Stolze

**Study Title: The impact of openly LGBTQIA individuals on the perception of team cohesion in
Division I women's college athletics.**

Institution: Middle Tennessee State University

Name of participant: _____

Age: _____

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You are also free to withdraw from this study at any time. In the event new information becomes available that may affect the risks or benefits associated with this research study or your willingness to participate in it, you will be notified so that you can make an informed decision whether or not to continue your participation in this study.

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918.

1. Purpose of the study:

You are being asked to participate in a research study because there is limited research on the complexities of sexual orientation and team cohesion. Further research is needed to improve programming and provided an inclusive space for all female athletes.

2. Description of procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:

Participants will be asked to complete an 18-question Likert scale survey and answer seven demographic questions. These questions should take no longer than 15 minutes to answer.

3. Expected costs:

\$0.00

4. Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study:

None

5. Compensation in case of study-related injury:

\$0.00

6. Anticipated benefits from this study:

- a) The potential benefits to science and humankind that may result from this study are gaining a greater knowledge on heterosexual and LGBTQIA perceptions on team cohesion in female Division I college athletics.
- b) The potential benefits to you from this study are a better understanding of your teammates leading to a more successful team in the future.

7. Alternative treatments available:

N/A

8. Compensation for participation:

\$0.00

9. Circumstances under which the Principal Investigator may withdraw you from study participation:

Participant does not meet the three qualifications to be admitted into research: 1) must be a current athlete on a Division I collegiate team, 2) must be female, and 3) must be 18 years or old.

10. What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation:

Participants Group Environment Questionnaire and demographic questions will not be admitted into research.

11. Contact Information. If you should have any questions about this research study or possible injury, please feel free to contact **Samantha R. Stolze** at **(615) 499-0375** or my Faculty Advisor, **Dr. Joey Gray** at **(615) 898-2811**.

12. Confidentiality. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with MTSU or the government, such as the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

13. STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. I understand each part of the document, all my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this study.

Date

Signature of patient/volunteer

Consent obtained by:

Date

Signature

Printed Name and Title

APPENDIX D: Group Environment Questionnaire

APPENDIX E: Group Environment Questionnaire Score Sheet

Individual Attractions to the Group— Social (ATG-S)		Individual Attractions to the Group— Task (ATG-T)	
<u>Item Number (#)</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Item Number (#)</u>	<u>Score</u>
1*		2*	
3*		4*	
5		6*	
7*		8*	
9			
SUM =		SUM =	
MEAN =		MEAN =	
Group Integration—Social (GI-S)		Group Integration—Task (GI-T)	
<u>Item Number (#)</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Item Number (#)</u>	<u>Score</u>
11*		10	
13*		12	
15		14*	
17*		16	
		18*	
SUM =		SUM =	
MEAN =		MEAN =	

(Widmeyer, Brawley, & Carron, 2002)

APPENDIX F: Permission to use Instrument

Copyrighted Material

The widely acclaimed Group Environment Questionnaire, a test that assesses group cohesion in sport, measures the task and social aspects of an athlete's perceptions of and attraction to the group. The GEQ contains 18 items and has four scales: Individual Attraction to Group-Task; Individual Attraction to Group-Social; Group Integration-Task; and Group Integration-Social.

The Group Environment Questionnaire Test Manual provides the test user with extensive detail about the GEQ. The manual is organized into the following chapters:

- Chapter 1: An Introduction to Group Cohesion in Sport
- Chapter 2: Development and Description of the GEQ
- Chapter 3: Psychometric Properties of the GEQ
- Chapter 4: Normative Data for the GEQ

The Group Environment Questionnaire Test Manual also contains the GEQ and scoring key. Purchase of the manual entitles the user to reproduce multiple copies of the GEQ for test projects.

An electronic version of the GEQ and manual are also available at www.fitinfotech.com. By purchasing a license to the GEQ, the user can provide test participants with password access to complete the GEQ online. Scale scores for each participant are calculated automatically and can be easily accessed by the test user. We can also provide the test user with the raw data of their participants in a database format. The test user has the option of downloading hard copies of the GEQ when test participants do not have Internet access. The electronic version of the manual contains convenient hyperlinks for easy access to each chapter.



Copyrighted Material

APPENDIX G: Institutional Review Form

IRB
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
 Office of Research Compliance,
 010A Sam Ingram Building,
 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
 Murfreesboro, TN 37129



IRBN007 – EXEMPTION DETERMINATION NOTICE

Wednesday, September 28, 2016

Investigator(s): Samantha Stolze; Dr. Joey Gray
 Investigator(s) Email(s): srs5j@mtmail.mtsu.edu; Joey.Gray@mtsu.edu
 Department: Health and Human Performance

Study Title: The impact of openly LGBTQIA individuals on the perception of team cohesion in Division I college athletics.
 Protocol ID: **17-1013**

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the **EXEMPT** review mechanism under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) within the research category (2) *Educational Tests*. A summary of the IRB action and other particulars in regard to this protocol application is tabulated as shown below:

IRB Action	EXEMPT from further IRB review***	
Date of expiration	NOT APPLICABLE	
Participant Size	24	
Participant Pool	Female athletes age 18+ enrolled at Middle Tennessee State University	
Mandatory Restrictions	Data will not be collected from vulnerable populations including minors <18	
Additional Restrictions	Data may only be collected from MTSU athletes OR universities from which you have an approved permission letter on file with the compliance office.	
Comments		
Amendments	Date	Post-Approval Amendments

***This exemption determination only allows above defined protocol from further IRB review such as continuing review. However, the following post-approval requirements still apply:

- Addition/removal of subject population should not be implemented without IRB approval
- Change in investigators must be notified and approved
- Modifications to procedures must be clearly articulated in an addendum request and the proposed changes must not be incorporated without an approval
- Be advised that the proposed change must comply within the requirements for exemption
- Changes to the research location must be approved – appropriate permission letter(s) from external institutions must accompany the addendum request form
- Changes to funding source must be notified via email (irb_submissions@mtsu.edu)

- The exemption does not expire as long as the protocol is in good standing
- Project completion must be reported via email (irb_submissions@mtsu.edu)
- Research-related injuries to the participants and other events must be reported within 48 hours of such events to compliance@mtsu.edu

The current MTSU IRB policies allow the investigators to make the following types of changes to this protocol without the need to report to the Office of Compliance, as long as the proposed changes do not result in the cancellation of the protocols eligibility for exemption:

- Editorial and minor administrative revisions to the consent form or other study documents
- Increasing/decreasing the participant size

The investigator(s) indicated in this notification should read and abide by all applicable post-approval conditions imposed with this approval. [Refer to the post-approval guidelines posted in the MTSU IRB's website](#). Any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918 within 48 hours of the incident.

All of the research-related records, which include signed consent forms, current & past investigator information, training certificates, survey instruments and other documents related to the study, must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the secure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data storage must be maintained for at least three (3) years after study completion. Subsequently, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity. IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University

Quick Links:

[Click here](#) for a detailed list of the post-approval responsibilities.
More information on exempt procedures can be found [here](#).