Championing Sexual Orientation Diversity: Predictors of Ally Support among Sport Employees

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Diversity	**Thursday, May 30, 2013**	**20-minute oral presentation (including questions)**
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Despite an increased awareness of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues in both mainstream sport media and the sport management literature (see Cunningham, 2011), heterosexism and instances of sexual prejudice continue to diminish the experiences of LGBT individuals in sport (Cavalier, 2011; Sartore & Cunningham, 2010). Similar to other forms of prejudice, sexual prejudice is typically negative and characterized by hostility or dislike toward people who are (or perceived to be) LGBT (Herek, 2009). Manifestations of this form of prejudice may include overt instances of violence against sexual minorities, more subtle bias, or exclusionary behaviors—all of which have the potential to negatively affect the psychological well-being, physical health, and opportunities of individuals who are (or are perceived as being) LGBT.

Within the sport management literature, enactments of sexual prejudice are prevalent in a variety of sport settings. For instance, lesbian coaches and athletes frequently encounter heterosexist environments within women's sport—compelling many of these women to conceal their sexual identity and portray themselves in ultra-feminine (and thus, presumably heterosexual) manners (Krane 2001; Krane & Barber, 2005). Sadly, disclosing one's sexual orientation, or failing to appear heterosexual, may result in a number of negative outcomes (Griffith & Hebl, 2002). Specifically, research suggests sexual minorities are oftentimes harassed, negatively stereotyped, and socially excluded in team or work settings—experiences their heterosexual counterparts do not typically encounter (Krane, 1997; Griffin, 1998). Although much of the extant sport literature focuses primarily on athletic settings, empirical examinations of gay sport industry professionals (Cavalier, 2011), and women (presumed to be lesbian) working within heath and kinesiology departments (Sartore & Cunningham, 2009a, 2010) have reported similar findings. Collectively, these studies point to the urgency for sport organizations to create policies and practices that promote LGBT inclusion. Doing so will allow sport to become a more welcoming and supportive places for sexual minorities.

One way to create more inclusive sport environments is by eliciting the support of sport employees who are heterosexual allies for LGBT equality (Brooks & Edwards, 2009; Martinez & Hebl, 2010). Heterosexual allies are particularly powerful and essential advocates for LGBT equality within sport, as these individuals do not have a stigmatizing identity. As such, they oftentimes have more power and privilege within athletic departments, making them effective leaders for change. The supportive attitudes and actions they display not only set an example for appropriate behavior, but can also successfully persuade others to adopt more inclusive mindsets (Martinez & Hebl, 2010). Therefore, it is important to understand what factors encourage allies to take a public stand for LGBT inclusion in the workplace.

Recent research suggests employee support, whether psychological or behavioral in nature, is key to ensuring the success of any diversity-related change initiative (Avery, 2011; Harrison et al., 2006), and change initiatives concerning LGBT inclusion are no exception. According to Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), employees' behavioral support for organizational initiatives (e.g. LGBT-inclusion policies and practices) can manifest in two forms: focal and discretionary. With respect to the behavioral forms of support, employee responses to organizational change initiatives can take two forms: focal or discretionary (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Focal behaviors relate to actions the organization requires the employee to do—failure to exhibit these behaviors could result in negative consequences (e.g., poor appraisals, job termination). The authors use the term compliance to refer to instances when employees adhere to organizational policies, and use resistance to describe when employees fail to perform such actions (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

It is also possible, though, for employees to display discretionary behaviors, which involves behaving in ways that exceed the organizations requirements and expectations (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). This is shown when employees engage in cooperation or championing behaviors. Cooperation requires employees to make modest

sacrifices to ensure an organizational policy is successful, while championing relates more to when employees fully embrace the merits of an initiative. Oftentimes, champions believe the initiative symbolizes their core values, and therefore are willing to devote significant effort into garnering support for the cause.

Considering champions can play a vital role in making sport more inclusive for sexual minorities, the purpose of this study was to examine antecedents of individual support for sexual orientation diversity in sport organizations. Specifically, I adopted a systems perspective, which recognizes that employee behaviors are shaped by multiple factors at various levels of analysis (Chelladurai, 2009). By adopting such a perspective, I gained a more complete understanding of how individuals can both shape and be shaped by their sport environment (cf. Cunningham, 2010). I expected that certain individual (i.e., race, gender, extroversion, openness to experience), organizational (i.e., sexual orientation diversity of the department, diversity climate), and macro level (i.e., type of media consumed) factors would impact championing behaviors among sport employees.

NCAA Division I athletic department administrators and staff (N=309) participated in the study. The sample was comprised of 207 women (67.0%), 101 men (32.7%), and one person who did not indicate her or his sex (0.3%). The participants' ages ranged from 22 to 77 years (M = 38.33; SD = 11.60), and the mean organizational tenure was 7.96 years (SD = 7.90). Most of the sample was White (n=242, 78.3%), followed by African Americans (n=40, 12.9%), Latinos (n=10; 3.2%), Samoans (n=5, 1.6%), Asian Americans (n=1; 0.3%), Native Americans (n=1; 0.3%), and persons who did not report their race (n=10, 3.2%).

Participants were mailed a questionnaire that assessed their demographic information, openness to experience (OTE), and extraversion (Rammestedt & John, 2007), type of media they consumed (liberal or conservative), the support their supervisors and coworkers showed for sexual orientation diversity in the workplace (adapted from Cunningham & Sartore, 2010), degree of sexual orientation diversity in the department (Harrison et al., 2002), and the department's commitment to diversity (McKay et al., 2008). To assess the dependent variables, we adapted Herscovitch and Meyer's (2002) model to reflect LGBT-inclusion initiatives in the department (e.g., non-discrimination policies based on sexual orientation, ally training, etc.), and asked participants to indicate their level of support for such initiatives. Specifically, after reading a description of each type of behavioral support, participants reported if they display (a) resistance (b) compliance (c) moderate support (i.e., cooperation) or (d) strong (i.e., championing) support for LGBT-inclusive initiatives within the athletic department.

Multinomial Logistic Regression (MLR) was used to determine what factors influenced championing behaviors. The final model was significant (χ^2=299.27, p < .001). Championing behaviors were positively related to race (p = .003), OTE (p < .001), sexual orientation diversity (p = .01), supervisor support (p < .001), coworker support (p < .001), diversity climate (p = .053), and type of media consumed (p < .001). Championing behaviors were not significantly related to gender or extroversion. In addition, the findings suggest sexual orientation diversity (b = -.57, Wald $\chi2(1)$ = 10.26, p = .001), supervisor support (b = -1.60, Wald $\chi2(1)$ = 26.75, p < .001), and the type of media one consumes (b = -1.10, Wald $\chi2(1)$ = 15.92, p < .001) are key in determining whether someone becomes a champion for LGBT equality or simply complies (neither opposes or supports) with such inclusive initiatives.

This study offer several practical implications which can benefit athletic departments in their quest to become more inclusive for sexual minorities. For instance, considering the influence of supervisor support on championing LGBT-inclusion initiatives, administrators need to engage in open and honest conversations regarding sexual orientation diversity in the workplace. Specially, sport managers should effectively communicate both the consequences of discrimination, as well as the benefits of LGBT inclusion to their employees. Doing so can tremendously affect attitudes toward sexual minorities, which should then increase championing behaviors. In the final presentation we will discuss additional theoretical contributions and practical implications and suggest avenues for future research.