

**Gender Beliefs and Sexual Prejudice Predict Identification with Different Sports**

*Woojun Lee, Texas A&M University*

*George Cunningham (Advisor), Texas A&M University*

**Diversity**

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**20-minute oral presentation  
(including questions)**

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Sexual prejudice, or the negative attitudes people express toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals (Herek, 2000), is prevalent in sport. This can be seen in abuse toward athletes believed to be LGBT (Anderson, 2002), discrimination toward sexual minority coaches (Griffin, 1998; Krane & Barber, 2005), and prejudice toward LGBT individuals in the hiring process (Cunningham et al., 2010). In addition, many researchers have suggested that men tend to hold more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities than do women, especially toward gay men (Gill et al., 2006; Herek, 1988; Steffens & Wagner, 2004). These differences are thought to manifest from differences in gender beliefs, as Kite and Whitely (1996) posited that men are prone to hold more traditional beliefs about gender roles, which encourage them to be more negative toward homosexuality.

The link between traditional gender beliefs and sexual prejudice might also affect consumer behaviors. Certain sports are traditionally viewed as masculine or feminine regardless of current trends where they are played by both genders (Perotti, 2009). Gymnastics, figure skating and field hockey are frequently seen as feminine sports, while baseball, basketball, and football are seen as masculine endeavors. People's beliefs about the gender-appropriate nature of certain sports have the potential to influence their behaviors. For instance, Matteo (1986) found that men's adherence to traditional gender norms was negatively associated with their participation in gender-inappropriate sports, and other researchers have also observed this pattern (e.g., Barber, 1998; Kane, 1990). It is also possible that gender beliefs influence fans' activity and sport consumption. That is, sexually prejudiced individual might be reluctant to attend or watch gender-inappropriate sports because doing so is believed (by them) to be unsuitable. Furthermore, if gendered beliefs serve as an antecedent of sexual prejudice (Herek, 2009; Kite & Whitely, 1996), then it is possible that sexual prejudice serves as a mediator between traditional gender beliefs and reluctance to watch gender-inappropriate sports.

The purpose of this study was to examine these possibilities. We predicted a mediational model such that traditional gender beliefs were expected to be positively associated with sexual prejudice (Hypothesis 1). Sexual prejudice, in turn, was then expected to hold a positive association with identification with football (Hypothesis 2) and a negative association with identification with figure skating (Hypothesis 3).

Participants were students (n = 150) from a large university in the United States. The participants were asked to answer a questionnaire in which they provided their demographic information and to complete items measuring prejudice toward gay men (alpha = .90; Herek, 1984), their gender beliefs (alpha = .77; Swim et al., 1995), and the degree to which they identify as fans of figure skating (alpha = .86) and football (alpha = .93; Robinson & Trail, 2005).

We tested the predictions through structural equation modeling, examining both partially and fully mediated models. Given that women and men are likely to differ in their sexism and sexual prejudice (Herek, 1988), we included that variable as a control. Results indicate the fully mediated model was a close fit to the data: chi-square (n = 150, df = 113) = 234.10, p < .001; root mean square error of approximation (90% CI = .07, .10) = .08; comparative fit index = .92. The chi-square difference test showed the fit from this model did not differ from the partially mediated model: change in chi-square (df = 2) = 1.35, p = .51. Thus, as the fully mediated model is more parsimonious we accept it and interpret those results.

Hypothesis 1 predicted sexism would be positively associated with sexual prejudice. This hypothesis was supported (beta = .42, p < .001). Hypotheses 2 and 3 were also supported, as sexual prejudice was positively associated with identification with football (beta = .27, p < .01) and negatively associated with identification with figure skating (beta = -.28, p < .01).

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As we expected, sexually prejudiced individuals were less likely to support gender-inappropriate sports. This study has theoretical implications, such as (a) it strengthens the understanding of sexually prejudiced sport fans, (b) it explains how sexual prejudice plays a role in a consumer's identification with different sports, and (c) this study offers further analysis of the influence of sexual prejudice on sport industry. By raising awareness of sexual prejudice in the sport industry, this study may also prove beneficial toward improving the conditions of athletes, coaches and applicants seeking employment in sport who are identified as LGBT.