

Fall 2015

# Assessing Lesbian Gay Bisexual Resistance in Core Team Sports

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.uapa-3b66>  
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ASSESSING LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL RESISTANCE IN CORE TEAM SPORTS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Sociology

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Kevin Edward Lynch

December 2015

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

ASSESSING LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL-RESISTANCE IN CORE TEAM SPORTS

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## ABSTRACT

### ASSESSING LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL RESISTANCE IN CORE TEAM SPORTS

by Kevin E. Lynch

The purpose of this study was to examine how sport and lesbian-gay-bisexual resistance intersect with economy, media, religion, politics, education, and race and whether those institutions reinforce the hegemonic masculinity gender construction embedded in sport. Through a review of literature, I explore whether the aforementioned institutions are incorporating sociologist Eric Anderson's inclusive masculinity or whether they are stuck in the hegemonic form mainly in the core team sport of basketball, baseball, football and hockey. Also, I investigate if Allport's contact hypothesis has played any role in the movement from hegemonic masculinity to inclusive masculinity. Religion, education, and economy all seem to be embracing the inclusive form of masculinity, while sport, in general, may be experiencing a slight backlash after three active gay athletes came out in core team sport in 2014.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Yoko Baba, Dr. James Lee, and Dr. Claudio Vera Sanchez. I appreciate your intelligence, experience and insight on my thesis. A special thanks to Dr. Baba, who devoted a significant amount of time, effort, and patience to this project and its revisions. She also dealt graciously with a geographical challenge and was constantly encouraging. Also, thanks to fellow student Katelyn Riley for her guidance and suggestions. I would like to thank my wife for her inspiration and encouragement throughout my academic pursuit. I dedicate this thesis to my mother, June Lynch, who died in December 2014.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

A few notes of clarification are in order before reading this thesis. First, the thesis focuses on sexual orientation only; transgender issues in sport are complex and thus beyond the scope of this analysis. Gender segregation in sport complicates the role of transgender participants, which is not the focus of this analysis. Instead, this study is on the acceptance of, and resistance to, lesbian-gay-bisexual individuals in sport.

Consequently, the acronym LGB will be primarily used unless a specific study includes transgender subjects, in which case a “T” for “transgender” will be included.

Additionally, the LGB acronym will be used as a convenience to refer to same-sex attraction. However, at times, it will refer only to gay or bisexual males and not lesbians.

The focus of this thesis will be on how major social institutions interact with LGB issues and how that relationship impacts LGB acceptance in sport, particularly the core team sport of basketball, baseball, football and hockey. Hegemonic and inclusive forms of masculinities are explained and then used as an assessment tool for LGB acceptance in the institutions of economy, religion, politics, education, and media within a sporting context. Race, although not an institution, is also evaluated in terms of the two masculinities, again within a sporting context. Lastly, the contact hypothesis is also explained and incorporated as an analytical tool.

Motivation for the thesis grew from sport’s role as a leading institution on racial acceptance. Major league baseball, for example, integrated African Americans into their

sport in 1947, far ahead of the Civil Rights movement (Radar, 2004; Zirin, 2008).

However now, sport lags behind other institutions in LGB acceptance and sport may even generate homophobia and LGB resistance (Clarke, 1998; Curry, 1991; 1998; Gill et al., 2006; Hekma, 1998; Jacobson, 2002; Messner, 1992; Pronger, 1990). For example, most major social institutions, accept LGB workers (Estrada & Weiss, 1999; Hicks & Lee, 2001; Loftus, 2004; Lubensky, 2006) while other institutions, including religion and politics, are courting the powerful LGB community (Eggan, 2012; Fletcher Stack, 2013; Freidman, 2014; Lin, 2011; Lochhead, 2014; Saletan, 2014.)

Additionally, polls and the passage of marriage equality bills are indicators of an LGB acceptance trend. For three years, Gallup (Newport, 2012) found that a majority of Americans sampled believed gay and lesbian relations to be morally acceptable. In the political arena, the last Presidential election saw the passage of gay marriage measures in Maine, Minnesota, and Washington (Shapiro, 2012). In the summer of 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that gay marriage would be the law of the land (Morford, 2015). In the work place, Hicks and Lee (2006), Loftus (2001), and Lubensky et al. (2004) discovered a high level of acceptance of divergent sexual orientations. Even in traditional male environments, such as the U.S. military, LGB acceptance is increasing. Estrada and Weiss (1999) revealed that Marines' views of the LGB community were reflective of the general public, suggesting that the armed forces are growing in acceptance of these historically oppressed minority communities. Anderson (2010) noted that since the 1980s, polls indicate an upward trend toward LGB acceptance in general.

Conversely, according to several studies, organized male sport is a hostile

environment for gay men (Anderson, 2005a, 2005b; Clarke, 1998; Curry, 1991; Gill et al., 2006; Hekma, 1998; Messner, 1992; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2001).

Team sport, in particular, is often a setting where homophobia is established and maintained (Anderson, 2002; 2005a, 2005b; Boykin, 2005; Connell, 1995; Curry, 1991; Fine, 1987). Additionally, when athletes publically say they are gay, pockets of resistance still exist. Football player Michael Sam came out to his University of Missouri teammates before the 2013 season. However, before coming out, some of his teammates whispered about his sexual orientation behind his back (Merrill, 2014). Meanwhile, when National Basketball Association player Jason Collins announced he was gay, his orientation was called sinful by Entertainment and Sport Programming Network's Chris Broussard, one of the NBA's most high profile journalists (Blair 2014). Professional basketball player Brittany Griner revealed in her book, *In my Own Skin*, that her coach at Baylor, Kim Mulkey, told her to keep sexual orientation a secret, because Mulkey felt it would hurt recruiting (Gleeson 2014).

Several studies have explored LGB resistance in sport (Anderson 2005a ; Greene, 2011; Roper & Halloran, 2009; Southall et al., 2009). Some authors contend that LGB resistance results from how sport teaches boys to be men (Anderson, 2011; Adams, et. al., 2010; McCormack, 2010; Anderson, 2005a, 2005b, 2008, 2009). For example, sociologist Eric Anderson often cites the hegemonic masculine gender formulation as the foundation of LGB resistance in sport. Hegemonic, or traditional masculinity, is based on a hierarchical system that places white, heterosexual males on the top tier; this gender structure is then maintained by the minimization, ignorance, and criticism of LGB and

female athletes and other persons (hegemonic masculinity is defined more fully in Chapter 2). Hegemonic masculinity is often taught to boys and girls by coaches, teachers, parents and the institution of sport itself (Adams, et. al., 2010; Anderson, 2005a; Fine, 1987; Messner & Sabo, 1990). However, Anderson contends that the trend in LGB acceptance in the community at large contributes to a new gender system that he calls inclusive masculinity. This gender formulation fully accepts women and those with divergent sexual orientations in a non-hierarchical structure where power is shared (inclusive masculinity is outlined in Chapter 3).

Few, besides Anderson, have examined whether his inclusive masculinity is gaining salience in sport, particularly as inclusive masculinity relates to major social institutions. Through an investigation of literature, this thesis investigates the legitimacy of Anderson's claim that inclusive masculinity is developing and even challenging the traditional or hegemonic model through the examination of social institutions. Contact hypothesis is also applied to determine whether contact between majority heterosexuals and minority LGBs produces a reduction in prejudice.

Chapter 2 is devoted to hegemonic masculinity and the impact on gender construction in sport. Chapter 3 charts the rise of inclusive masculinity, its challenge to hegemonic masculinity, and its influence on what it means to be a man in sport today. Chapter 4 examines the galvanizing impact of contact theory on reducing bias and how it specifically works with "out" group acceptance in sport. With popular sport leagues making billions of dollars, the financial impact of LGB resistance is explored in chapter

5. The history of religion and LGB communities and, the connection to sport is examined in chapter 6. Religion and sport share a rich history with athletes often turning to religion to navigate the pressures of performance (Storch et al., 2001; Wolf-Wendall et al., 2001). The politics of the LGB struggle and its connection to sport is the topic of chapter 7. The tracking of homophobia in public education, particularly physical education and its effects on bullying, are the focus of chapter 8. How the media portrayed LGB acceptance in sport is investigated in chapter 9. Race and LGB acceptance in sport is scrutinized in chapter 10. The final two chapters are devoted to a discussion and a conclusion.

### **Why Should We Care?**

Shifts in LGB acceptance in sport could be as significant as increased acceptance in the work place, and in other societal institutions, including marriage. First of all, athletics involves children who are forming their identities, both sexual and social, and sport can be fundamental in shaping both through coach and peer relations. Secondly, sport in Western educational institutions is mandatory for children - everyone must participate. Performance in physical education often cements social hierarchies (Adler, & Kess, 1992; Eder & Parker 1987; Harrison & Lynch 2000). It is where athlete hero worship begins and where, under the dictates of hegemonic masculinity, such worship is normalized (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It is literally where the "in group" often has sanction to prey upon the "other." Physical education and youth sport are often where a fierce social stratification begins and, it can end with the tragic harassment of the

"other" (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). This dynamic can possibly be disrupted by the establishment of inclusive masculinity, where those of divergent sexual orientations are embraced in athletics and where the meaning of becoming a man is no longer based on physical strength, athletic ability, or the rejection of femininity and LGBs (Anderson, 2005b, 2009). Social contact between LGB and heterosexual athletes, and interaction between genders could be essential in reducing homophobia and misogyny (Anderson, 2009; Roper & Halloran, 2007). Learning inclusion through the process of interaction is possible gateway to acceptance and tolerance. This process could not only help end harassment, but also open avenues to the freedom and joy of individual expression.

### **Thesis Stipulation**

As a white, heterosexual male, I took on the task of attempting to understand the experience of others and regret if I did not learn enough to be fully respectful. Any blunders in descriptions or claims about LGB persons are unintentional. Additionally, the motivation for exploring this topic came from 25 years of covering main-stream sport, particularly the National Football League, and my observations of locker-room culture. For most of those 25 years, questions or discussions with athletes or coaches about LGB issues or persons were practically non-existent. Even in the year 2015, asking players and coaches about acceptance of an LGB athlete is often uncomfortable because of the hypermasculine zeitgeist of an NFL environment. In order to increase understanding, an overall glossary of terms, mostly hand-picked from Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, is provided. And as previously mentioned, my motivation behind the study

was to discover how sport could integrate racially decades before Civil Rights legislation and yet be so far behind LGB acceptance (Anderson, 2005a 2005b, 2011; Fine, 1987; Pronger, 1990). Consequently, there was a desire to explore the dynamics behind the long-held view of the LGB participant as a sport taboo, and to come closer to what New Yorker music critic Alex Ross calls “the gorgeousness of difference” in the field of sport (Ross, 2011, p. 76 ). I recognize that I may never truly understand these issues from the perspective of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals and communities. I wrote this thesis with the goal of both educating myself and the public about these important and pressing issues, as well as creating public awareness.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Hegemonic Masculinity**

In this chapter, hegemonic masculinity is defined by breaking down both words of the phrase and explaining their derivations. Next, how hegemonic masculinity fosters homophobia and homonegativity in athletic settings, particularly in youth athletics, is explained.

#### **Hegemonic Masculinity, a Definition**

Hegemonic masculinity establishes the heterosexual white male at the top of a gender hierarchy; maintenance of that position involves rejection of femininity and male “gayness” in a way that is accepted as unquestioned, natural, and normal (Anderson, 2005a; Connell, 1987). Consequently, young boys often use homophobic displays and

discourse in athletic settings. They do this to establish and protect their masculine credentials (Anderson, 2005a; Curry, 1991; 1998; Fine, 1987; Messner, 1992). For example, in 2013, former Miami Dolphin guard Richie Incognito harassed fellow teammate Jonathan Martin with racial and homophobic slurs until Martin took a leave of absence and eventually sought counseling. Martin said he even pondered suicide because of the fierce harassment by Incognito and others. Not only did the harassment occur, but several of Incognito's teammates attempted to normalize such behavior as excusable because homophobic harassment is a part of male locker room culture.

Homophobia as part of the male athletic culture can begin in early adolescence, before boys discover the nature of their own sexual identity (Anderson, 2005a; Fine, 1987; Thorne, 1993). In other words, hegemonic masculinity ingrains homophobia and misogyny into boys as a way of exhibiting and protecting their view of themselves as men. The gender theory of hegemonic masculinity was popularized by Australian gender theorist R.W. Connell, who melded the concept of Antonio Gramsci's hegemony with her own idea of masculinity (Connell, 1987). The theory of hegemony involves one group winning and enforcing dominion and a system of stratification over other groups in a way that seems normal and natural, and it determines the way in which issues are discussed and events are understood (Donaldson, 1993). Hegemony is exercised through social institutions, particularly the media.

Gramsci conceived the theory of hegemony during his work as a journalist, politician, philosopher, and linguist, and it inspired him to become a founding member of

the Italian Communist party in 1921. He created the idea of cultural hegemony in part to explain the continued entrenchment of capitalism at the turn of the 20th century (Germino, 1990). Advocating democracy, he was imprisoned by Benito Mussolini's fascist regime in 1926 and then released briefly before his death in 1937 (Germino, 1990). In his extensive prison notes, Gramsci explained that the ruling class blankets the whole of society with a cultural hegemony, which it uses to hold culturally diverse elements of a community together by manipulating values and perceptions to reflect those of the ruling elite. According to his theory, the bourgeoisie establishes norms that equate ruling class ideology with the values of the lower classes (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci used his theory of cultural hegemony to explain why the socialist revolution advocated by orthodox Marxists never occurred (Gramsci, 1971).

Meanwhile, dictionary definitions of "masculinity" associate the concept with qualities appropriate to, or usually associated with, being a man (Webster, 1977, p. 451). Connell suggests that those masculine qualities are constantly shifting and that masculinity is a system of gender practices opposed to femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The current "masculine" gender configurations were developed through modernity with the growth of European individuality, colonialism, and the rise of capitalist societies (Connell, 1995). Masculinity is therefore a series of social configurations and practices that are in flux and contestation.

## **Hegemonic Masculinity and Sport**

In blending the two concepts of hegemony and masculinity, Connell (1987) sets up hegemonic masculinity as a dominant social form where heterosexual white men establish and hold power by being exalted over women and directly opposed to gay men. Hegemonic masculinity can also incorporate the concepts of heteronormality and heterosexism. Heteronormality is described as a pervasive system that positions heterosexuality as the only acceptable sexual norm, while all other forms of sexual orientations are ignored or shunned. Heterosexism is a system of bias, discrimination, attitudes, and behaviors that establishes heterosexuality as the preferred acceptable sexual norm.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) maintain that hegemonic masculinity is naturalized through the form of the hero and that hero worship is displayed in books, films, television, and sporting events. Sport sociologists postulate that team sport in Western cultures is the seat of hegemonic masculine production (Messner, 1992; Pronger, 1990). Therefore, the athlete/hero is set up as a hegemonic masculine exemplar and fits in with psychologist Robert Brannan's (1976) guidelines for masculinity. These characteristics include: "No sissy stuff, be a big wheel, be sturdy as an oak, and give 'em hell." (Brannan, 1976, p. 26). The attributes are perceived as being directly opposed to traditional notions of femininity and male gayness. Most males, according to Connell (2005), fall into the complicit category where they are constantly appealing to the exemplar by proving their own masculine credentials. Part of hegemonic masculine

conformity pushes complicit males into hatred and fear of LGBs and rewards homophobia with social support and the confirmation of manliness (Anderson, 2005a). Hegemonic masculinity conveys a hierarchy where the depth of manliness is measured by the distance boys can put between themselves and LGBs (McCormack, 2010), and athletic ability is construed as a distancing agent (Anderson, 2002).

Consequently, adolescent athleticism is conflated with burgeoning manliness and is thus construed as being opposed to femininity and LGBs (Fine, 1987; Kane, 1988; Messner, 1992). Athletics are also highly valued by boys (Fine, 1987; Kane, 1988; Messner, 1992), and prominent athletes in school are typically assigned high social status (Messner, 1992). For example, Adler and Kess (1992) found that male status in preadolescent boys was mainly founded on perceptions of athletic ability. Eder and Parker (1987) discovered that male athletes are accorded high visibility and social status. Harrison and Lynch (2006) concluded that athletics for boys was more important to establishing social status than academics or other extracurricular activities. Boys immersed in this hegemonic masculine construction learn through athletic participation that relationships with peers are based upon admiration of athletic prowess and little more (Anderson, 2005b; Pollack, 1998). Additionally, youth and adult athletes are invested in the notion of gayness being synonymous with physical and emotional weakness (Griffin, 1998; Pronger, 1990; Southhall et al., 2009). Homophobia maintains hegemonic masculinity by keeping strong, competitive LGB athletes out of team sport and keeps it as a dominant heterosexual male environment. Consequently, boys learn to reject and ridicule any notion of same-sex desire even before they are cognizant of what sexual

desire is. A gay high school swimmer in Eric Anderson's book, *In the Game*, described the constant use of the term "fag" by his coaches before he even knew what the word meant (Anderson, 2005a). The swimmer remembered that he simply did not want to be a "fag." Later, as he discovered he was gay, he dreaded and feared his own sexual orientation.

Homophobia and homophobia, which is the fear of being perceived as Gay, and homonegativity, which is a harboring of negative attitudes towards LGBs, are all outcomes of hegemonic masculine construction. Misogyny also plays a part in the definition of hegemonic masculinity. Women are construed as being below the level of where men reside (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This fact is constantly reflected in popular, North American team sport where women are either invisible or sexualized (Messner, 2001). The maintenance of hegemonic masculinity for boys and girls in athletic settings is pervasive because sport participation is mandatory in nearly all schools in Western cultures (Messner, 1992; Sabo, 1990). Although students who are grappling with academic performance can hide such struggles because tests and grades are usually private, it is not so with physical education, which takes place in front of fellow classmates (Anderson, 2005a). The public nature of athletics makes it prevalent and popular and sets up the hegemonic masculine construct as extremely influential.

However, in the next chapter, I will illustrate how hegemonic masculinity is being contested. Connell popularized the idea of hegemonic masculinity in the 1980s (Connell, 1987). It was a time when sodomy laws were in place, when gay marriage was inconceivable, when the policy of "don't ask, don't tell" was considered almost radical,

and when an out gay athlete playing a major team sport was taboo. Hegemonic masculinity reflected the era from in which it was born.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Inclusive Masculinity**

This chapter begins by defining inclusive masculinity. Then, I compare the inclusive gender construction and the hegemonic masculine gender configuration. The chapter concludes with a discussion of former international soccer star David Beckham, and how he bridges the vast gap between the two gender theories.

#### **Inclusive Masculinity – A definition**

Remarkable progress on LGB issues has been made. One of the main tenets of the hegemonic masculine construction was that it was constantly being contested and re-defined (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Sociologist Eric Anderson proposed a redefinition with his theory of inclusive masculinity (Anderson 2005a, 2009). This gender construction, unlike the hegemonic model, was not based on a hierarchical structure that positioned white men at the top. Instead, inclusive masculinity eschews a stratified system and replaces it with a horizontal continuum where little or no meaning is attached to gay-straight, male-female, or masculine-feminine (Anderson, 2009). With inclusive masculinity, traits traditionally assigned to feminine females can be shared by straight, masculine males. In Anderson's inclusive masculinity, there is little or no

separation between the aforementioned categories of gay-straight, male-female or masculine-feminine. Each of these gender orientations can share traits and ultimately share power as well (Anderson, 2009). In a sport context, the ideal of a tough, muscular, strong, gay, athlete is no longer a contradiction in what it means to be masculine. Along the same line, women can also be LGB, strong, muscular, athletes and still considered to be feminine.

Anderson's inclusive masculinity also seeks to distinguish the distance society has travelled from the 1980s and the decades prior, when gender definitions were mutually exclusive and narrowly defined (Anderson, 2009). Additionally, those who failed to fall within the boundaries of the hegemonic male structure were ostracized, harassed, and even physically beaten (Anderson, 2002; Curry, 1991, 1998; Pronger, 1990). Meanwhile, heterosexual female athletes were often labeled as lesbians or objectified as sex objects, instead of valued as athletes (Kauer & Kane, 2006).

### **Hegemonic vs. Inclusive**

Connell broke down hegemonic masculinity into categories. The exemplar was a hero, valorized as a movie star (like John Wayne) or more appropriately for this topic, an athlete (like Joe Montana) who exemplified the masculine characteristics of grace under pressure, stoicism, physical dominance and success (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). No one, not even John Wayne or Joe Montana, could live up to the ideal, but it was out there for men to chase. Sociologist Erving Goffman described the complete male as "young, married, urban, Northern heterosexual, Protestant, father, of college education,

fully employed, of good complexion, height and weight, and a recent record in sport” (Goffman, 1963, p.128). Goffman went to write that if a male failed in any one of those categories, he considered himself unworthy, incomplete, and inferior. In order to chase what most men could not be, they engage in a performance of hyper heterosexism, with numerous sexual liaisons (Miller & Hoffman, 2009). They engage in risky behavior; they engage in sport, and they exhibit vehement misogyny and homophobia in order to prove they were real men.

Exhibiting those validating masculine behaviors within the hegemonic construct, men were striving to prove they were worthy, complete, and dominant (Connell, 1987). Most men fall into this category, and Connell categorized them as complicit males. In order to be dominant, complicit males must have a subordinated class, and that was typically comprised of gay men and women. Kimmel and Messner (2001) suggest that under this gender formation, homophobia was masculinity. Moreover, Anderson (2009) contends that within hegemonic masculinity, the one-drop rule is imposed. Harkening back to slavery, anyone deemed to have one drop of African blood in him or her were declared Negro and assigned a lower status (Kottack, 2010). Anderson applies the one-drop to LGBs; if someone engages in an LGB act, or is perceived as gay, he or she is forever labeled LGB (Anderson, 2009).

Conversely, in inclusive masculinity, there is no one drop rule, nor is there an idealized male archetype that most males attempt to strive for and emulate. Instead, the hierarchical structure based on stoicism, perceived toughness, athletic success, risk taking, heterosexual male conquest of women, homophobia, and misogyny is collapsed

into a horizontal continuum of gender practice based on individual preference (Anderson 2009). For men, the gender straightjacket is untethered, meaning men can share emotions and express feelings with one another. Pollack (1999) described the gender straightjacket as a narrow range of emotion and discourse in which heterosexual men can engage. Evidence of inclusive masculinity in Europe, according to Anderson (2009), is the practice of heterosexual men kissing each other on the lips. In the U.S., inclusive masculinity includes heterosexual male friends going to expensive restaurants, eating on white table cloths, and having wine. Consequently, men are free to roam in traditional feminine realms without fear of being labeled feminine or LGB. In addition, because men no longer have to establish or police their hegemonic gender performance, homophobia and misogyny erode (Anderson 2009). In sport, inclusive masculinity recognizes women as athletes and not sexual objects or obligatory lesbians, and gay men are accepted into popular, professional, male sport.

Anderson (2009) also writes that inclusive masculinity does not replace the hegemonic form, but rather, both exist side by side and compete with each other. Additionally, a precondition for the onset of inclusive masculinity is an era of what Anderson terms low homophobia (Anderson 2009, 2011), which he describes as a fear of being labeled as a LGB. Indications of low homophobia include positive cultural representations of LGBs. For example, films like *Brokeback Mountain* highlight a gay relationship as equal to a heterosexual relationship, and television shows like *Ellen* illustrate how host Ellen DeGeneres can be witty, smart, feminine and a lesbian. In politics, periods of low homophobia include the institution of laws recognizing gay

marriage and the extending of financial and political rights to same-sex partners. (Anderson, 2011). Other signs could consist of the erosion of political opposition to gay rights (Lochhead, 2014; Saletan, 2014).

### **Metrosexuals and David Beckham – a Bridge to Inclusive Masculinity**

Anderson contends that the path from hegemonic male dominance to the rise of inclusive masculinity needed a bridge (Anderson, 2009). Part of that bridge could have been the advent of the metrosexual – a heterosexual male who pays attention to fashion and grooming. Those behaviors are traditionally seen as feminine or gay. Shows like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, established the metrosexual male as an accepted cultural phenomenon. In the show, flamboyant gay men teach heterosexual men how to groom, dress, and decorate in order to attract women.

One figure who normalized metrosexual behavior not only in sport, but in Western cultures, is international soccer star David Beckham (Cashmore, 2013). Beckham appeared to be a hegemonic exemplar: athletic, aggressive on the pitch, white, heterosexual, and successful. In other ways, Beckham exhibited inclusive masculine traits: he wore varnish on his nails, filled his shock of light colored hair with gobs of varied hair product, and was dubbed the top underwear model of the century by fashion designer Tommy Hilffiger (Cashmore, 2013). While in command on the pitch (hegemonic), Beckham allowed his wife, Victoria, a former pop star, to manage most of his affairs (inclusive), which entailed his rare talks with the media (Cashmore, 2013). Nevertheless the real test of Beckham's hegemonic credentials came when his lithe physique and smoldering good looks made him an icon in the gay community (Cashmore,

2013). Instead of rejecting or fearing gay adulation, Beckham, a recognized and highly-esteemed heterosexual, embraced it (Anderson, 2009; Gee, 2014; Withers, 2014). For example, Beckham was asked to pose half naked for a gay magazine and he did it; he said years after the shoot that he had no problem with it and, would do it again (Withers, 2014). Because of Beckham, the sport world and Western cultures were now presented with an embodiment of a new form of masculinity – one that broke down binary definitions of gay and straight that were entrenched in hegemonic masculine structure. With his tattooed frame displayed in underwear ads internationally, and his attitude of inclusion, Beckham helped expand the definition of masculinity (Gee, 2014).

The adaptation of inclusive masculinity could be construed as a gender construction of liberation. Not only for those traditionally subordinated, such as women and the LGBT community, but also for those invested in maintaining patriarchy. Heterosexual men must no longer adhere to the narrow definitions of hegemonic masculine construction and instead are free to express emotions, display their bodies, and even show affection for their heterosexual male counterparts. In this gender construction, it is the heterosexual male who is taking cues from women and the gay community, instead of the other way around (Gee, 2014). Anderson (2009) contends that inclusive masculinity is as much about the inclusion of gay men and women as it is about the inclusion of heterosexual men's femininity.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Allport's Contact Hypothesis**

This chapter first defines contact hypothesis, then reviews literature on contact hypothesis and LGB acceptance. Contact hypothesis is then examined within the context of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender athletes. Additionally, contact hypothesis is also considered in connection with race; the chapter concludes with why sport could be an ideal testing ground for contact hypothesis.

#### **What is the Contact Hypothesis?**

Allport (1954) claimed that prejudice results from one group generalizing and oversimplifying members of another group based on mistaken or incomplete information. Allport created what he called his contact hypothesis on the premise that prejudice can be reduced. The contact hypothesis contends that if a majority dominant group relates to a minority, subordinate group, the majority group becomes more tolerant of the minority group if the following four conditions are met. First, equal status must exist between members of each group, with representatives sharing similar education, characteristics and backgrounds. Common characteristics and backgrounds include shared experiences, skill levels and even wealth (Allport, 1954). A second condition consists of common goals (Allport, 1954). For example, each group may be seeking peace, or a better education for their children, or in a sport context, harmony among teammates in order to be a more cohesive unit. Not only must both groups share common goals, they must

work together to achieve them, which comprises the third condition (Allport, 1954). For example, members of a sport team from different groups may sacrifice their own personal goals of playing time for the shared goal of winning. A fourth condition involves institutional support (Allport, 1954). In sport, for example, one illustration of institutional support would be if leagues supported LGB athletes by instituting training programs on LGB acceptance.

Furthermore, Rothbart and John (1985) added three more conditions that make contact hypothesis more effective. First, the behavior of minority groups is contrary to their stereotype. For example, Rothbart and John (1985) found in a study of college students that when white students observed Asian students at a dance party, the stereotype of Asians as introverted and quiet started to change. Second, that contact between groups was frequent and occurs in a variety of different social contexts. In the same Rothbart and John study (1985), survey questions included 32 different episodes where contact between majority white students and minority students (African American, Asian, lesbian, and fraternity members) took place, such as parties and school events. The authors found that stereotypes were not confirmed when students of different groups met in various social settings. Third, minority group members are seen as typical of their group. Rothbart and John (1985) used the example of physical characteristics to explain whether group members are typical of their group. For example, when an eagle or a hawk is said to be a bird, few would contest that categorization. However, when a penguin is said to be a bird, the connection is more ambiguous because penguins lack discernible feathers, and lack the ability to fly.

When the aforementioned conditions are met, contact hypothesis can be effective. In a meta-analysis of over 500 studies, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) discovered a positive relationship between direct contact between groups and the reduction of prejudice. However, studies of contact hypothesis have been criticized for an over reliance on indices that assess attitudes and not behaviors (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Also, if all of Allport's conditions are not met, intergroup animosity can actually increase (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Interestingly, interpersonal contact is not required between groups for prejudice reduction. For example, vicarious contact between groups can dispel fear and increase the desire to know the other group. Television depictions of positive intergroup contact, for instance, can lead to a desire for groups to get to know one another (Graves, 1999). And while interpersonal contact is best in reducing negative attitudes towards LGBs, group contact can also have a similar impact. Croteau and Kusek (1992) reviewed the literature on interactive panel discussions involving gay and lesbian panelists and found that audience members began to question their prejudicial views. Similarly, Nelson and Krieger (1997) examined the results of a 50-minute presentation in which four gay and lesbian speakers related their experiences. Audience members exhibited a more positive attitude toward LGB relationships after the presentation.

### **Contact Hypothesis and LGB Acceptance**

According to Overby and Barth (2002), at least a dozen studies confirm that contact between LGBs and heterosexuals created greater tolerance of sexual minorities by heterosexuals. More specifically, Altmeyer (2001) and Herek (1996) discovered that

heterosexuals who knew someone who identified as LGBT were more likely to hold positive attitudes toward that group. Herek and Glunt (1993) discovered that interpersonal contact between hetero- and LGB men reduced LGB resistance in straight men more than other variables including gender, race, age, education, geographic residence, marital status, number of children, religion, and political ideology. Additionally, depth and variety of contact were significant factors in reducing LGB prejudice. For example, Herek and Capitanio (1995) found that having more than one association with a gay man or lesbian reduced resistance more than if a heterosexual had just one contact with a LGB person. Furthermore, those with a close LGB friend were more accepting of non-heterosexual orientations than those with a distant LGB relative. Moreover, direct disclosure of a LGB orientation to a heterosexual greatly increased acceptance in heterosexuals (Herek, 1996). Herek and Glunt (1993) also found that contact between LGBs and highly religious heterosexuals increased LGB acceptance more than highly religious heterosexuals who had no contact with LGBs. Religiosity, which is explored in chapter 5, has traditionally been a factor in predicting resistance to LGBs (Morris, Hood & Watson, 1989).

Herek (1996) also makes an important point about the concealable nature of LGB persons. Since there are no physical traits that reveal sexual orientation, LGBT people have to unveil their sexual identity in order to be recognized. Consequently, when LGBT individuals revealed their orientation directly to a heterosexual, as opposed to hearing from a third party or through guessing, Herek (1996) found that the disclosure significantly reduced negative LGB attitudes in heterosexuals. Negative LGB attitudes

are reduced partially through the act of disclosure, which entails revealing personal information that is not readily apparent. Telling someone your height or eye color is not a disclosure because it is apparent to most. However, revealing marital status, sexual orientation, or political affiliations are considered disclosures because they are not known (Herek, 1996). Disclosure indicates a deepening social connection. Those who do disclose generally benefit from closer relationships with friends, families, and co-workers, while those reluctant to disclose experience greater isolation and loneliness (Herek, 1996). Disclosure by LGBT individuals has shown to reduce their stress and relieve feelings of shame (Anderson, 2005b). However, Anderson also noted that coming out of the closet typically occurs when homophobia is reduced or absent, when homophobic taunts and slurs are not tolerated, and when cultural depictions of LGBs are generally seen as positive (Anderson, 2009). Consequently, disclosing a sexual orientation can draw a LGB revealer and a heterosexual listener into a tighter bond, unless the listener rejects the revealer because of the listener's LGB prejudice (Herek, 1996).

### **Contact Hypothesis and Sport**

Studies testing contact hypothesis between hetero and LGB athletes are rare because so few athletes are open about their non-heterosexual orientation (Wertheim, 2005). Consequently, examining studies that test contact hypothesis on athletes of different ethnicities is required. Studies focusing on the reduction of prejudicial attitudes based on contact between teammates of different sexual orientations are examined first.

**Sexual orientation and contact hypothesis.** Kauer and Krane (2006) found in a qualitative study of female college athletes that some heterosexual players, at times, distanced themselves from gay teammates in order to be seen as more feminine. Conversely, Kauer and Krane (2006) also noted that heterosexual athletes showed greater acceptance of their gay teammates the longer they had them as teammates, even to the point of defending them against LGB taunts. In a separate study, Roper and Halloran (2007) examined the impact of contact on 371 self-identified male and gay and lesbian athletes across 12 different team and individual sport at three Northeastern colleges. They found that student athletes with more contact with gay men and lesbians exhibited more positive attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. Furthermore, the women's lacrosse team, which had the most exposure to an openly gay individual because the coach was lesbian, was the most accepting of divergent sexual orientations. In addition, female athletes responded more positively to contact and exhibited positive attitudes towards LGB individuals than their male counterparts. This confirms the results of Kauer and Krane (2006); they found among heterosexual female athletes that the presence of an openly gay teammate made them more open-minded and accepting of lesbian and gay sexual orientations than male athletes.

**Race and contact hypothesis.** Discrepancies emerged in the efficacy of contact hypothesis when race was examined, particularly in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Salvin and Madden (1979) discovered that having sport teammates of different races was highly correlated with variables assessing positive racial attitudes and behaviors, such as friendships that continued off the court or field. The study drew on a population of

2,384 10th grade students from 51 high schools and found sport teammates of different racial groups reduced prejudice far more effectively than faculty directed panels and seminars aimed at reducing tensions between races. However, Chu and Griffey (1985) asked 1,082 high school athletes in urban and suburban New York about the type of sport (individual or group) they played, their won-loss records, and years in the sport. Their study revealed little difference between athletes and non-athletes in terms of racial harmony. Chu and Griffey (1985) cited a lack of institutional support from coaches and teachers for the reason contact hypothesis failed to apply in an athletic setting.

Additionally, a qualitative study (Martin, 1999) of a middle school basketball team failed to reveal better relations between teammates of different races. Both Martin (1999), and Lapchick (1995) postulated that socio-economic differences between white and African American teammates could be a factor in why the contact hypothesis did not reduce prejudice. However, in a newer study, Brown et al. (2003), found that white high school athletes possessed more positive racial attitudes when they played a team sport with African American athletes as opposed to white athletes who engaged only in individual sport. While the testing of contact hypothesis on both race and sexual orientation needs more examination, studies examining sexual orientation reveal a clear reduction of prejudice, while studies focused on contact between white and African American teammates do not always result in prejudice reduction. Differences in socio-economic status between African American and White athletes might explain the discrepancy because it violates Allport's first condition of equal status among

participants as a successful foundation for the reduction of tension between majority and minority groups.

### **Sport as a Forum for Testing Contact Hypothesis Success**

In the following section, Allport's (1954) four conditions are examined in relation to team sport. His first condition is that intergroup members should be seen as equals. Even though differences exist on teams between starters and backups as well as star players and role players, they are all athletes in a team concept. And as such, they share similar histories, experiences, and relationships, which can lead to equal status. Additionally, most professional team athletes are college educated and have played on college teams, meaning that athletes share the struggle of juggling scholastic and athletic pursuits.

Allport's (1954) second condition concerns intergroup members seeking common goals, which is built into all sport teams. The goal is particularly salient for highly visible and competitive college and professional teams where the overriding commonality is winning, while the secondary goal is representing the school or community. Other goals include having fun and establishing camaraderie, which again touches upon Allport's first condition of intergroup members meeting each other as equals despite racial, ethnic, or sexual-orientation differences. In Allport's formulation, not only must intergroup participants establish common goals the third condition of working together to achieve them, fits into what sport teams do in practices, meetings, and games. The overall goal is winning, and in order to achieve that goal, cohesion and camaraderie among teammates is

often encouraged.

The fourth condition of institutional support for intergroup contact appears to be intact for most major college programs and professional sport teams. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) lists prohibiting discrimination on the basis of “sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression” (Greene, 2010, p. 3) in its policy statements. Major sport leagues such as the National Hockey League (Shire, 2012) and the National Football League (Boren, 2014) have instituted programs and policies aimed at LGB acceptance. As briefly mentioned above, Rorthbart and John (1985) added three more conditions for the prejudice-reducing effect of intergroup contact, which also could be easily satisfied within the sport team context. The first is that subordinate group members are contrary to their stereotype. By definition, the stereotype of LGBs exhibiting physical weakness and being non-athletic is shattered by players in the major team sport at high school, college, or professional levels, where elite physical strength and coordination are required. The second condition is that intergroup contact takes place in a variety of different places and contexts. That occurs on sport teams, with athletes interacting on the field, in the classroom, on planes, buses, hotels, restaurants, and community events, to say nothing of their own social activities. The third element is that members are seen as typical of their group, which can only be truly revealed through lengthy contact. Sport teams in college and professional levels often spend inordinate amounts of time together.

In conclusion, studies examining intergroup contact between heterosexuals and those of divergent sexual orientations are found to reduce LGB prejudice. However, the

history of reducing prejudice between races through intergroup contact on youth sport teams is mixed. Lastly, the conditions for successful contact that reduce prejudice between dominant and subordinate groups appear to be supported in a sport team context, particularly in college and professional environments. And with greater institutional support from sport leagues of all types, further reductions in prejudice could possibly be realized.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Sport, Economy, and LGB Community**

This chapter first explains how Karl Marx's theory of ideology and Antonio Gramsci's theme of hegemony shape the cultural institution of American sport. Specific examples explained in this chapter, illustrate how sport uses its influence to uphold Marx's ideology and Gramsci's hegemony. Additionally, explanations are presented of how the financial opportunities afforded by the buying power of the LGBT community could eventually disrupt the cultural structure surrounding sport.

#### **How Sport Reinforces the Ruling Ideologies**

Karl Marx wrote in the "German Ideology" that the ruling class not only controls the means of production, but it also holds dominion over cultural ideas (Marx, 1845). Marx postulated that the ruling elite justifies and legitimizes their authority through the production of ideas. These ideas establish the parameters of how a community imagines

and conceives laws, politics, morality, religion, and sport, which Marx referred to as superstructure (Felluga, 2011). Since the ruling elite is mostly comprised of white, heterosexual males in the U.S., the superstructure can consist of patriarchy, heterosexism, homophobia, and sexism, and those ideals can be disseminated through the prevalent portal of sport (Coakley, 2007; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Miller & Hoffman, 2009). As previously mentioned in chapter 2 of this thesis, Italian journalist and linguist Antonio Gramsci built upon Marx's conception of ideology by introducing his theory of hegemony. Gramsci believed the elite manipulates and maintains superstructure beliefs by casting societal norms in the values of the working class, and Gramsci termed this phenomenon cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). In hegemony, the superstructure of how we conceive and imagine laws, politics, and even sport, seems normal and natural, even though it may oppress groups like women, LGBT, and poor minority communities.

Following the ideas of Marx and Gramsci, sport sociologist Jay Coakley theorized that the institution of sport reified the American myth of equal access to money and power (Coakley, 2009). In actuality, unequal access to money and power make it exceedingly difficult for those from the lower socioeconomic rungs to become part of the elite. However, a firm belief exists in sport that a professional athlete in revenue-producing sport can become financially independent despite their socioeconomic status, and that they can save their families from economic distress (Coakley, 2009). For example, the National Football League can cite the fact that their league is nearly 70 percent African American and most of those African American players are earning six- and seven-figure salaries. As a whole, African Americans make up 13 percent of the U.S.

population but own only 3 percent of the nation's wealth (Collins, 2014). Seemingly, every year, the NFL is lifting scores of economically disadvantaged African American families out of poverty. However, because of high health care costs resulting from injury, low financial literacy, short careers, and diminished physical and mental capacities again because of injury, 83 percent of NFL players are either bankrupt or in severe financial distress three years after they retire (Fainaru & Fainaru-Wada, 2013). Minority athletes in the National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball and the National Hockey League also go broke at alarming rates, but nothing matches the NFL (Lapchick, 1995). Possibly one reason the NFL is so popular is because it's riddled with the rags-to-riches tales of current athletes that often get mentioned on national broadcasts, and more importantly, the stories affirm that access to riches and power is always open, even for those from African American ghettos. In reality, only one in 4,000 African Americans becomes a professional athlete and most of those athletes do not become starting players who draw multi-million dollar incomes (Martin, 2000). Yet Foryum (2007) discovered that despite long odds, famous core sport athletes are highly valorized in poor communities, partially because sport is framed as the only way out of poverty.

### **Popularity and Revenue of Core Sport**

Core sport is defined as the lucrative team sport and include football, baseball, basketball and hockey. Not only do those four sports produce staggering revenues, they are also influential because they consume countless hours of time. According to the 2000 Census, people spent \$17.7 billion on commercial sport in 1999 (U.S. Census Bureau,

2000). Twenty-four hour radio and television networks have blossomed over the last few decades. Sport also dominates large portions of school budgets at every level, and devour time for parents and children through participation in athletic team events. Football consumes the biggest piece of this sport financial juggernaut. In 2010, at least 170 million people, more than half the country, saw some part of an NFL game (Leahy, 2010). Also the NFL won every prime-time time slot that year, and Super Bowls account for four of the five most watched events in American history (Bauder, 2011; Leahy, 2010). The average attendance at an NFL game is about 67,000, which is nearly double the average of a Major League Baseball game. In terms of revenue, the NFL made \$9 billion in 2010, which was 30 percent higher than MLB (\$7 billion) and far greater than the NBA (\$3.6 billion) or the NHL (\$2.7 billion). By nearly every measure from television ratings to popular polling, the NFL is by far the most popular American sport league and that has resulted in large financial valuations and contracts (Plunkett, 2014). Most NFL teams are now worth over \$1 billion, and television revenues assure that the 32 teams will split about \$2 billion in T.V. money annually (Plunkett, 2014). Additionally, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell expects league revenues to be about \$25 billion by 2027. With the huge demand for core sport reflected in the aforementioned media contracts, the reach of core sport through the mass media make them a significant force in the production of American culture (Anderson, 2009).

## **Cultural Emphasis on Patriarchy and Heterosexuality in Core Sport**

With its prevalence, influence, and power, core sport convey messages that become embedded in cultural scripts (Gee, 2014; Kimmel & Mesner, 2001; Osborne & Wagoner, 2007). In sport, heterosexuality is assumed, and the male-female dichotomy with females as subordinate is emphasized (Anderson, 2005; Anderson, 2009; Gee, 2014). In terms of patriarchy, American core sport was partially created and popularized during the early 1900s as a backlash against increasing political power for women (Radar, 2004; Wachs & Dworkin, 1997). In that era, core sport was all male, and women were banished to the sidelines as cheerleaders and in the stands as wives and girlfriends. LGB identity in sport at that time was inconceivable (Anderson, 2009). The cultural script laid down by sport's popularity was that while women may have gained the right to vote, men still controlled the corridors of power (Radar, 2004).

The script for women as marginalized and subordinate to men is relatively unchanged in the NFL. The league has one female owner, few female executives, and hardly any female athletic trainers. The league was recently embarrassed when Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice initially received a two-game suspension for knocking out his fiancée in a casino elevator. A review of league suspensions showed that the NFL doled out harsher suspensions for marijuana offenses than for charges of sexual assault and domestic abuse (Moskowitz, 2014). Goodell has ruled on 56 cases of domestic violence and sexual assault since becoming commissioner in 2006, and he has suspended players a combined 13 games for those offenses (Moskowitz, 2014). The NFL has yet to answer questions about battered women and their families, who brought the

issue to the league and were met with silence (Sebastian & Bebea, 2014). The league's willful ignorance of domestic violence and sexual assault might be rooted in the NFL's history of sexism and patriarchy.

Even after Goodell publicly supported Michael Sam for coming out of the closet before he was drafted by the St. Louis Rams in 2014, the league has continued its history of heterosexism, which is a system of bias, discrimination and attitudes that supports heterosexuality as the only sexual norm. For example, Tony Dungy, the well-regarded former Super-Bowl winning coach and prominent television analyst, said that drafting an openly gay player, like Sam, would constitute a media distraction (Zeigler, 2014). Conversely, Dungy also said he would welcome Ray Rice on a team he coached, which would certainly draw media attention. Dungy's comments about Sam were set against the backdrop of his funding anti-same sex marriage initiatives in 2007, and his comments that to be with God meant opposing marriage equality (Zeigler, 2014). With his comment in 2014 about Sam being a media distraction, Dungy did not lose his job, did not apologize, and seemingly did not have his sterling reputation diminished.

Not long after Dungy's comments, the New York Giants hired former Super Bowl hero David Tyree as their director of player development (Mazzeo, 2014). Tyree made a 4th-quarter, 4th-down catch on Feb, 3, 2008, by wedging a football between his helmet and his hand. The play propelled the Giants over the favored New England Patriots in Super Bowl XLII. Tyree later said he would give away his famous helmet if it meant keeping LGBs from marrying (Mazzeo, 2014). Tyree also said there is no scientific evidence to support the claim of being born gay, despite research from the American

Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association that human sexuality is biologically determined (Mazzeo, 2014). Both the Giants and the NFL defended the hiring of Tyree by stating that his stance does not reflect the views of the team or the league.

College football also supports the shunning of LGBs. Former Nebraska running backs coach Ron Brown was adamant in his anti-LGBT stances and even testified before the Lincoln, Nebraska city council to oppose an LGBT equal rights bill. In his comments, Brown said it is God's will to discriminate against gay people and that those who supported gay rights would be accountable to God (Zeigler, 2012). Brown also said that his purpose at Nebraska is to spread the word of God, and that word apparently includes opposition to LGBs. Brown's views are in direct opposition to Nebraska's non-discrimination policy, which states that the university fosters an environment of inclusion and mutual respect for students of all backgrounds and sexual orientations. Nevertheless, the university never fired Brown, and the local media continued to interview Brown about his players (Sipple, 2015). Brown eventually left the school after new coach Mike Riley brought in his own assistant coaches in 2015. Heterosexuality in college sport in general became apparent when Calhoun and Johnson (2011) reviewed hundreds of online coaches' biographies and found that the partners of heterosexual coaches were almost always mentioned, while the partners of same-sex coaches were not.

## **Corporate Pursuit of LGBT Dollars**

As I have mentioned above, the cultural scripts of patriarchy, sexism, and heterosexism, were embedded in the founding of core American sport. And it might be a reason the institution of American core sport is slow to recognize LGBT rights (Calhoun & Johnson 2011; Mazzeo, 2014; Zeigler, 2012, 2014). However, one institution that may drag sport into LGBT acceptance is corporate America. Recognizing the \$800 billion buying power of the LGBT community, companies such as American Airlines, Ikea, and Amazon are gearing advertisements towards LGBT populations (Soshnick, 2013). Sport sponsors are also willing to partner with gay athletes. Nike actively seeks gay athletes and sponsored openly Gay former NFL player Michael Sam (Anderson-Minshall, 2014). The NBA's Golden State Warriors hired an openly gay team president and chief financial officer, Rick Welts, who heads the team's business operation and who seeks LGBT companies as sponsors. Bob Witeck, a gay sponsorship advertising expert and corporate consultant said sport, teams, and openly-gay professional athletes, could cash-in in the current environment (Soshnick, 2013). He suggested that the reward of marketing to the LGBT community through sport far outweighs the risk, and the first league or team to do it would reap the most revenue. Leagues like the NFL rarely leave advertising dollars unclaimed, but first they must confront their own heterosexism and patriarchy in order to realize the rewards.

Core sport, particularly at the professional level, still seems invested in their cultural history of sexism, heterosexism, and male valorization. Additionally, core sport owners comprise part of the financial elite, and their notions of equal opportunity and

patriarchy may shape how we think about ourselves. Eventually, the financial reward of tapping into the buying power of the LGBT community may be enough for the business of sport to cast their old ideals aside.

### **LGB Poverty: Pushing LGBs to the Margins in Sport**

As mentioned above, the power and affluence of the LBG elite may eventually get the attention of sport business owners. However, it should be noted that many in the LGB community live on the opposite end of the spectrum. For example, LGBT people are over represented in homelessness and poverty, and that could contribute to a lack LGBT interest in athletics. With the trend toward the privatization of youth sport, poor kids have fewer avenues for sport participation (Butryn, 2011). Also, poverty and homelessness do not lend themselves to extracurricular activities like sport engagement. And plenty of LGBT families and children suffer from both poverty and homelessness.

For example, single with children LGBT families are three times more likely to be near the poverty line than their non-LGBT counterparts. Married or partnered LGBT couples are twice more likely to be near the poverty line than their non-LGBT peers (Kurtzleben, 2013). Eighteen percent of non-LGBT poor people live in food insecurity, compared to 29 percent of LGBT adults living in food insecurity. According to Gallup polling, single male gay, bisexual, or transgender men experience a poverty rate that is 20.1 percent, compared to 13.4 percent for heterosexual single men (Wright, LeBlanc & Badgett, 2013). Poverty for a single person means they make less than \$12,000 a year.

For youth, African Americans, and women, the statistics can be even more

staggering. According to some estimates, 20 to 40 percent of the homeless youth are comprised of LGBT kids for example (Kurtzleben, 2013). Well over half of homeless LGBT youth (58.7 percent) are sexually victimized compared to 33.4 percent for heterosexual youth (National Coalition for Homelessness, 2009). According to the National Coalition for Homelessness, of those homeless youth that commit suicide, 62 percent are LGBT. For women, lesbian couples have seen their income go down recently, and they earned less than gay and heterosexual couples to begin with. Wage discrimination for lesbians is compounded when they live together; two women living together earn less than men-to-men couples or men-to-women couples (Durso & Gates, 2012). In addition, since lesbians are having and adopting more children, more lesbian families are experiencing poverty or near poverty. Overall, 24 percent of lesbian and bisexual women live in poverty, compared to 19 percent for heterosexual women (Durso & Gates, 2012). Not surprisingly, higher rates of poverty and homelessness for LGBTs are often a result of being LGBT. Youth can be cast out or can flee families unwilling to accept their sexual identity (Wright, LeBlanc & Badgett, 2013).

On the one hand, corporate interest in sport is recognizing the financial power of the LGB community; on the other, increased poverty in the LGBT community diminishes sport participation for LGBT youth. This duality results in pushing LGBT community members to the sidelines as sponsors and fans and away from participation as coaches and players.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The LGB Community, Media and Sport**

This chapter first summarizes the lucrative and symbiotic history between sport and media. Then, the chapter explores how increasing consolidation of media relates to the coverage of LGB athletes. Lastly, media's depiction of gay athletes is summarized and discussed.

#### **History of Media and Sport**

The emergence of American sport and the growth of mass media occurred at about the same time, and both leaned on the other to promote their respective businesses. Sport and commercial media came into being just when the United States was recognized as a coast-to-coast nation and rail travel made national sport leagues, like college football, possible (Radar, 2004). During the early 1900s, college football was sponsored by a railway company. With the advent of industrialization, the thinking about sport changed. During the early industrial revolution, sport was considered a distraction and workers had little time to indulge any leisure activities. Additionally, the camaraderie and team concept of sport also scared industrialists who feared that team sport would lead to workers organizing and asking for higher wages (Coakley, 2009). However, the discouragement of sport began to change when long hours and lack of leisure led to poor worker health; later in the industrial revolution, sport and physical recreation were encouraged for improved and greater worker productivity (Coakley, 2009). During the 1920s, sport leagues and sport heroes began to be popularized as newspapers discovered

that sport sections turned huge profits for the print industry (Radar, 2004).

In the early 20th century, newspaper tycoon William Randolph Hearst devoted an entire section of his New York Journal to sport (Coakley, 2009). Sales soared, and Hearst replicated the idea for his newspapers in Chicago and San Francisco. With leagues spanning half the nation in baseball and football, Hearst's sport sections did more than just run notices on scores; they included games stories, opinion pieces, and photographs. Sport popularity was also fueled by economic growth in the 1920s with gross domestic product more than doubling during the decade. The roaring Twenties also ushered in an era of mass consumerism with the advent of the coast-to-coast department stores, selling the same products in New York and California. During this time, sport media grew exponentially with beat writers and columnists hired to cover only sport teams (Radar, 2004). Then, a new medium catapulted sport into a new era of visibility and profits; during the feel-good 1920s, sport was splashed all over the new convention of radio, and a golden age of sport and radio was born (Miller et al., 2011).

Baseball showcased home run king Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey dominated boxing as a vicious knockout artist, and football's Red Grange was unstoppable. Radio covered it all and raked in profits from advertising sponsors (Coakley, 2009). Another medium was poised to propel sport into a higher stratum of profitability and exposure 30 years later. Television emerged in the 1950s, and when the Baltimore Colts defeated the New York Giants in the 1958 National Football League Championship Game, a struggling NFL found its medium. It was the first nationally televised NFL game and an estimated 45 million Americans watched, even though it was African Americaned out in the New

York area (Woods, 2009). Television also benefited; in 1950, there were just over 5 million televisions in the United States. By the end of the decade, that number mushroomed to 42 million and the growth of the NFL on T.V. was one of the reasons (Woods, 2009). For the next 55 years, television media rights would play key roles in the development of the NFL, Major League Baseball, the National Basketball Association, the National Hockey League, and the Olympic Games (Coakley, 2009).

In the NFL for example, the cost of television rights went from \$400 million in 1986, to \$3.75 billion in 2008 (Coakley, 2009). Rights to televise the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal were \$25 million. Eight years later, television rights for the Olympic Games in Los Angeles sold for \$225 million (Coakley, 2009). Ancillary programming began to sprout around the aforementioned sport. Unlike a play or a concert, when a sporting event concludes, there are statistics to discuss, important plays to review, and standings and records to update, which all led the way for exhaustive analysis in postgame and highlight shows. This lucrative expansion of sport through the media came at a cost. In the 1980s, the limits on ownership across media platforms in the same market was lifted and media ownership of television, radio, and newspaper outlets concentrated in fewer corporate hands (Coakley, 2009; Miller et al., 2011; Zirin, 2008). Television and radio broadcasts became less about relating the events of the game and more about corporate messaging (Coakley, 2009; Zirin, 2008). With corporations sponsoring nearly all sport programming, the aim of broadcasts became to create consumer loyalty and generate profits for corporations and their share holders. Broadcasters became less critical of leagues and teams, and turned into spokesmen and

women for advertisers (Zirin, 2008). Leagues began to capitulate to media demands for more games and to lengthen regular and playoff seasons to increase corporate profits. The expansion diluted the quality of play and made athletes more susceptible to chronic and life-long injury (Zirin, 2008).

With the advent of cable television and the internet, new revenues were created and sport was often the way in for this new media. Rupert Murdoch, the head of the powerful media conglomerate, News Corp., said he used sport as a “battering ram into new markets” (Miller et al., 2011, p. 98). The growth of the cable television market across Europe was partially fueled by sport. In France, cable company Canal+ estimated that 40 percent of its audience pays for service only to watch soccer ( Miller et al., 2011).

With the introduction of new media platforms, corporate media companies eagerly use sport as an entrée to newly created markets, which is not surprising since sport and media combined at their inception to grow their businesses. However, corporate media often ignores LBGs in sport.

### **How the Corporate Media Deals with the LGBT Community and the Openly Gay Athlete**

Most corporate environments exhibit traditional notions of masculinity, including heteronormality, which is the assumption that heterosexuality is the only acceptable norm (Miller et al., 2011). Mass media depictions of LGB populations from just two or three decades ago focused on deranged or self-loathing characters on television and movies (Mazur & Emmers-Sommer, 2002). Updated versions of characters in *Glee*, the *L Word*, and *Will and Grace* are more positive and represent varied portrayals of LGBT persons.

However, typically in film and television, LGBT characters are banished to support roles (Mazur & Emmers-Sommer, 2002). Meanwhile, the news media coverage of LGBT usually focuses on pride parades and riots (Gray, 2009).

On the sport front, from the corporate level, down to those who actually cover games (reporters, editors, and columnists), several studies indicate a pervasive heteronormality, which assumes heterosexuality is the only acceptable norm, and silence on the issue of an openly gay athlete (Coakley, 2009; Kian, et al., 2008; Messner, et al., 1996; Miller et. al., 2011; Zirin, 2008). Sport leagues, wanting to appeal to a broad audience, also reject anything that is remotely controversial even if it is for the public good. For example, the National Football League rejected a public service advertisement educating citizens on the Affordable Care Act, deeming it too political, even though the bill had become law (Marks, 2013). Networks also encourage Olympic athletes to reflect patriotism for their country on the medal stand, rather than using the medal ceremony as an opportunity to highlight an injustice or promote a cause (Miller et al., 2011).

Television executives also believe that LGB sport and athletes do not sell, unless there is a high profile disclosure of an LGB identity by an active athlete (Miller et al., 2011). Those attitudes may also reflect those that consume sport content. For example, Knight and Giuliano (2003) analyzed the responses of 91 undergraduate students to two fictitious articles about an Olympic athlete. The first article made it clear that the athlete was clearly heterosexual. The other made the athlete's sexual orientation ambiguous. Students gave a more favorable review of the article when a heterosexual orientation was clearly stated over the athlete with the sexually ambiguous orientation.

Below the level of corporate news gate-keepers, the foot soldiers of sport media - the sport editors, copy editors, columnists and reporters - also adhere to hegemonic masculine notions when writing or commenting about athletes. One reason could be that the ranks of print sport departments are dominated by men. Lapchick et al. (2013) found that men comprised 95 percent of sport editors, 87 percent of copy editors and assistant sport editors, and 93 percent of reporters and columnists at the top 300 largest American newspapers. It led them to conclude that newspapers, in general, under-analyze gay men in sport.

Additionally, in analyzing 508 articles emanating from four outlets (New York Times, USA Today, ESPN and CBS) while covering the 2008 mens' and womens' college basketball tournament, Kian et al. (2008) discovered several themes that supported hegemonic masculine ideals of valorizing men and subordinating women. The first was a constant reference to men when commenting on womens' games, which supports the notion that women can only be relevant when contrasted with men. The second theme closely followed the first in that commentators remarked that standout women players were good because they played with men. A third theme involved a constant reference to college football, when talking about basketball, particularly for Southeastern schools like Florida and Louisiana State. Football is considered the more masculine of the two sport (Anderson, 2005a; Harrison & Lynch, 2006), and is played almost entirely by men. The fourth theme concerned the prevalence of athletic fathers, who were constantly mentioned and shown on television, particularly if they played in the National Basketball Association. In the fifth theme, writers and commentators made

frequent reference to wives, girlfriends and husbands of coaches, however, the partners of lesbian coaches, who were coaching the women's teams, were never mentioned in any of the 508 articles. Messner et al. (1996) also found in an analysis of sport news and highlight shows that the electronic media ascribed masculine characteristics to successful athletes in mainstream sport including aggression, assertiveness and heterosexuality.

Media depictions of gay and female athletes are either absent or de-emphasized, partially due to a masculine corporate culture that controls major main-stream media outlets. Additionally, themes of traditional masculinity influence those covering sport, which are dominated by men (Lapchick, 2013). While blatant homophobia is mainly absent from sport coverage (Kian & Anderson, 2009), sport and sport coverage dismisses LGBs unless an active athlete comes out in a major American team sport. The mediated message is this, if you are gay, keep it to yourself.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Religiosity, Sport, and LGB Resistance**

This chapter seeks to explicate the relationship between religiosity, sport, and LGB resistance by first examining the connection between religiosity and sexual orientation. Typically, the more religiosity one has, the more averse one is to LGBs (Anderson, 2002; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Fisher, et al., 1994). Next, a brief history of sport and religion is explicated; sport and religiosity have been deeply intertwined since before the institutionalization of sport in the United States and England (Radar 2004;

Zirin 2008). After that, sport and resistance to LGB populations are briefly reviewed. Sport has traditionally been resistant to the LGB community, particularly in lucrative male team sport in the United States and most other Western cultures (Anderson, 2005a, 2005b; Clarke, 1998; Curry, 1991; 1998; Gill et al., 2006; Hekma, 1998; Messner, 1992; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2001). Lastly, the liberation of thinking concerning LGBs among major religions is assessed in relation to LGB acceptance in sport. For example the reduction in LGB resistance in the Christian religions of Catholicism and Protestantism may also be part of a cultural change that is also reflected in sport.

### **Religiosity and LGB resistance**

The most popular religions in the United States, Protestantism and Catholicism, have traditionally shunned LGBs (Morris, Hood & Watson, 1989), and most American adults are either Protestant or Catholic. According to the Cooperman (2015), 71 percent of American adults are Christian with 46.5 percent either Evangelical, (21 percent) or Mainline (18.5 percent) with historically African American churches comprising 7 percent (Cooperman, 2015). Catholics make up 20 percent of all adult Christians in the U.S. (Cooperman, 2015) and Catholic Church writings have traditionally opposed LGBs. For example, the Catholic Church delineates LGB proclivities as an “objective disorder,” meaning LGB inclinations are not sinful, but abnormal (Yip 1997a, p. 65). In the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, which was part of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith 1986, the Catholic Church states that being LGB is intrinsically disordered. It also states that since LGB relations cannot produce life; LGB lifestyles are

therefore deemed self-indulgent (Yip, 1997a). Meanwhile, Evangelical Christianity might be even more resistant to LGB acceptance than Catholicism. For example, Bierly (1985), in a survey of 309 white undergraduate students, found that Protestant Christians were more prejudiced against LGBs than Catholics or those with no religion. While Catholicism has dictates against LGBs in its Doctrine of Faith (Yip, 1997a), conservative Protestantism rejects LGB acts on the basis of the Old Testaments' teaching (Yip, 1997b). However, some Bible scholars believe those passages are addressing other forms of sexuality, such as encounters between men and boys, and not same-sex relations between adults (Wilcox, 2002).

In addition, studies also indicate that the more a person goes to a Christian Church, the more resistant to LGBs he or she tends to be. Fisher et al. (1994), for example, found religiosity to be an indicator of negative reactions to LGBs among college students. Herek and Glunt (1993) discovered in a sampling of 1,078 adults that those who attended religious services weekly or more often were almost twice as likely to hold negative LGB views as those who did not attend religious services at all. Johnson (2004) discovered that religiosity was significantly correlated with greater discomfort around gays, less endorsement of human rights for gays, and greater homophobia. Moreover, Sociologist Eric Anderson, who has made a career of studying all aspects of LGB resistance in sport, postulated that several forms of Christianity were primary institutions for the reinforcement of homophobia (Anderson 2002).

Naturally, lesbian, gay, bisexual persons often reject institutional religion in favor of individual spirituality (Clark, Brown & Hochstein, 1990; Wilcox, 2002). Others in the

LGB community individualize their traditional religions to suit their needs, meaning they choose what they want from religious teachings without embracing literature on religious intolerance, a process Wilcox (2002) labeled the “Bible buffet” (Wilcox, 2002, p. 501). Such individuation can cause stress particularly for those LGB clergy locked into a traditional religion. Fisher et al. (1994) concluded that gay clerics in the Church of England found the job more stressful than their non-gay counterparts because of fear of having their sexual orientation exposed and because of a lack of church support for the LGB community. Studies reveal that traditional Christian religions, such as Evangelical Protestantism and Catholicism, can fuel LGB resistant attitudes (Fisher, et al., 1994; Herek & Glunt, 1993).

### **Religion and Sport**

The nexus of sport and religion can be traced to the advent of Muscular Christianity. A concept popularized in the United States by then President Teddy Roosevelt among others (Zirin, 2008). Muscular Christianity was designed to toughen the aristocratic American male and de-feminize Protestant religion. Muscular Christian ideas were also instrumental in the formation of all three lucrative male sport, baseball, football and basketball, and Muscular Christian doctrine also helped institutionalize physical education (Radar, 2004). An import from England, Muscular Christianity resonated with Roosevelt and others who became aghast at the “softening” of the young upper class American male; Roosevelt spoke of his pasty complexion, soft musculature and spindly frame (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999). Roosevelt wanted a rugged populace that

could compete in war, both in mind and body, which was one reason he favored the burgeoning sport of American football (Radar, 2004).

John Hughes, the English author and lawyer and one of Muscular Christianity's chief proponents, envisioned that the aristocratic male body had to be honed for a variety of reasons. "...man's body is given him to be trained and brought into subjection, and then used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes, and the subduing of the earth which God has given to the children of men" (Ladd & Mathisen, 1999, p. 213). Football took the "training" and "subjection" of men too far with its absurd violence. In 1906, 18 players died playing college football which prompted the creation of another powerful sport institution, partially at Roosevelt's behest, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (Zirin, 2008). The NCAA was designed to lessen the violence and codify rules.

At the same time, Protestant pews were being filled with more women than men (Armstrong, 2008). Some religious leaders feared that the softer depictions of Jesus and the writing of prissy homilies were leading to a feminized Protestantism (Radar, 2004). Protestant leaders wanted to recapture their religion and thrust it back into the manly domain (Armstrong, 2008). To do so, sport, particularly team sport, were being introduced to American religions, which also coincided with the creation of the Young Men's Christian Association. The YMCA sponsors sport leagues and has a network of gyms throughout the world. Before becoming commercialized, the YMCA grew out of Muscular Christian concepts of allied physical and moral health in the service of God (Armstrong, 2008). Partially inspired by Muscular Christianity and the YMCA, public

schools began instituting physical education curriculums (Armstrong, 2008). Muscular Christianity also underpinned the development of popular team sport in the 19th century, including American team sport like football and basketball. James Naismith, a gym teacher for the YMCA, invented basketball in 1891 as a sporting activity to occupy young men between football and baseball seasons (Armstrong, 2008). Therefore, the founding of America's most popular sport (baseball, football, basketball) was partially built on Christian religions' use of sport to construct what they perceived as a rigorous and righteous masculinity (Anderson, 2005b).

Today, commercialism has replaced the religious element of toughening upper class males and de-feminizing Protestantism (Zirin, 2008). However, religion continues to be deeply embedded in sport from the hugely successful athletic program at Catholic universities like Notre Dame to Protestant organizations such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Athletes in Action (Kimmel & Aronson, 2004). Prominent players and coaches often tout their Christian faith from former Golden State Warriors coach Mark Jackson to former San Francisco 49ers coach Mike Singletary to former NFL quarterback Tim Tebow (Kawakami, 2012). In addition, past studies found that college athletes were likely to be more religious than their non-athlete counterparts. Storch et al. (2001) discovered that elite college athletes are more likely to be religious. The study also discovered that male and female student athletes reported higher levels of religious attendance, prayer, and commitment to religion than their non-athlete counterparts.

## **Resistance to LGBs in Sport**

Previous research reveals that athletic settings can be a negative environment for non-heterosexuals (Anderson 2005a ; Donnelly & Young 1988; Jacobson 2002; Messner 1992; Progner 1990). More specifically, team sport surroundings can be places where homophobia is present. For example, in professional North American men's team sport only three players have come out while still playing. National Basketball Association center Jason Collins and Major League Soccer player Robbie Rogers came out in 2013 (DeWitt, 2013). Former Missouri University defensive end Michael Sam, an openly gay man, was drafted by the St. Louis Rams of the National Football League.

However, he was chosen in the seventh and final round of the 2014 NFL draft, and most players in the seventh round fail to make significant contributions to their team (Wagoner, 2014). Sam failed to make the Rams' team in training camp that summer; after his release he was placed on the Dallas Cowboys' practice squad but never made it into a regular-season game (Klopman, 2014). The Cowboys eventually released him in November of 2014 and Sam's attempt to make an NFL team may be over. Both the Cowboys and Rams said releasing Sam was purely a football decision, implying that Sam was not good enough to play in a regular season game (Wagoner, 2014). However, Sam did receive the Arthur Ashe courage award, which recognizes the humanity of Ashe, who became the first African American tennis player to win Wimbledon, professional tennis' most prestigious tournament (Walker, 2014). The Ashe award is given to the athlete who transcends sport and past winners include Nelson Mandela and Muhammad Ali. Sam was also recognized for his courage by the National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People (NAACP).

Reasons for resistance to LGB persons in sport connect to the formulation of certain types of masculinity, which establishes misogyny and homophobia in boys (Connell, 1995). For example, Muscular Christianity was popularized as a response to the perceived feminization of Protestantism (Armstrong, 2008). In addition, the creation of football, along with baseball, basketball and hockey in the United States at the turn of the 20th century was seen as a backlash against women's increased presence in the social sphere by middle-class white men (Wachs & Dworkin, 1997). Also, men involved in these burgeoning sport were valorized as heroes and seen as physically and morally superior to women just around the time of women's suffrage (Wachs & Dworkin, 1997). More recently, in a survey of college students, Osborne and Wagner (2007) found that students involved in core sport (football, basketball, baseball, and hockey) were nearly three times more likely to express homophobic views than non-core sport students. Additionally, highly competitive men's team sport have traditionally been described as a setting that is mostly intolerant of LGBs (Donnelly & Young, 1988). Moreover, gays or those perceived to be gay, can be subjected to rampant homophobia in athletic settings (Anderson, 2002; Curry, 1991, 1998; Howard & EnglandKennedy, 2006; Messner, 1992; Pronger, 1990; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2001).

### **Christians Re-thinking LGB Orientation**

The Faith Angle Forum draws a number of the most popular religions together annually at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. Commentators and theologians discuss

issues at the intersection of society and religion (Saletan, 2014). The Catholic Church was at the forefront of discussions on LGB acceptance. Papal biographer Paul Vallely said that Pope Francis is softening anti-gay Catholic rhetoric and even considered the possible acceptance of civil unions; Vallely said Francis was the first pope ever to say the word “gay.” (Saletan 2014). Meanwhile, conservative Protestant religions are moving from considering LGB lifestyle as a sin to the criticism of LGBs as a sin. Present at the conference was Michael Gerson, who was George W. Bush’s former chief speech writer and advisor on religious right issues. Gerson accepted the notion that sexual orientation was involuntary, and therefore, gay marriage should be allowed (Saletan, 2014).

Some religious fundamentalist leaders are advancing the notion that gay marriage is acceptable as long as the gay partners stay faithful to each other, which is the same religious precept that governs heterosexual marriage (Moore & Ball, 2014). In fact, the conservative movement to ban gay marriage is eroding (Lochhead, 2014). The erosion is partially due to the LGB community coming out. Dr. Russell Moore of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, admitted that many in his congregation have gay relatives, and that some of his followers have same-sex desires (Saletan 2014).

Acceptance of LGBs from religious athletes is also percolating to the surface. Despite the fact that the Mormon Church funded California’s anti-gay measure, Prop 8, in 2008, the church now seems to be embracing their LGB membership with the help of a famous athlete. Hall of Fame quarterback Steve Young and his wife, Barbara, spoke to the 2013 Affirmative Action Conference for LGBT Mormons. Barbara Young, who has a gay older brother, told a mainly Mormon gathering in September of 2013, that Jesus

Christ's love was infinite and that his love included LGBT individuals and their families (Fletcher-Stack, 2013). She also said it was time for Mormons to have love, understanding, and, tolerance for their gay church members and their families.

Another football player, San Francisco 49ers tight end Vernon Davis, said his Christian faith taught him the tolerance to accept LGB lifestyles (K. Lynch, personal communication, Oct. 13, 2013). Additionally, some athletes are coming to terms with their devout Christian beliefs and LGB reality. For example, Pittsburgh Steelers backup quarterback, Landry Jones, is an Evangelical Christian who does not believe God countenances LGBs (Ziegler, 2013). Nevertheless, Jones would accept a LGB teammate, and Jones believes LGBs are entitled to make a career and provide for their families as an athlete, the same way he does (Zeigler 2013).

### **Religion, Sport and LGBs: A Movement Toward Acceptance**

Dr. Harry Edwards, one of the founders of sport sociology, maintains that sport reflects social movements rather than predicting them (Edwards, 1973). In addition, Eric Anderson (2009) believes a more inclusive masculinity, which accepts divergent sexual orientations, can arise in times of lower homophobia. Homophobia is the fear of being labeled a LGB. Consequently, lower fear of being labeled LGB allows men to engage in what would be deemed feminine behavior without the fear of the homophobic reprisal. It allows all men to have deeper relationships with each other, and allows them to support LGB and women's rights among other activities (Anderson 2012). Part of lower homophobia includes a reduction in LGB resistance in cultural institutions such as

religion (Anderson, 2009). And with the subsequent rise in inclusive masculinity as a result of lower homophobia, gay athletes are accepted by heterosexual athletes (Anderson, 2012). This connection between lower cultural homophobia and homophobia leading to a masculinity based on acceptance may be playing out with religion and sport. Catholicism and Protestantism seemed to be redefining what an LGB orientation means, and at the same time, more gay athletes are coming out.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Sport, Politics, and LGB Acceptance**

This chapter first examines the history of sport and politics and how they relate to the development of LGB rights. In light of these histories, I explore how Anderson's idea of how low homophobia plays into today's political climate of tolerance for gay rights.

#### **History of Politics and Sport**

Sport and politics intermingle, and no platform illustrates that more than the Olympic Games. The Olympics have been used as a platform to celebrate peace, highlight injustice, and as a pawn in Cold War politics. For example, the ancient Games were often used as a forum for the recognition of political deeds, which were sometimes inscribed on stone pillars (Kyle, 2007). One such occurrence took place in 365 B.C. when athlete Pantarces of Elis was not only recognized for winning a horse race, but also for negotiating a peace between the ancient tribes of Achaeans and the Eleans for control

over the city of Olympia, the birthplace of the Games (Kyle, 2007). The Games were originally instituted as a religious festival to recognize Zeus, a Greek god, and to spread the Greek influence throughout the Mediterranean. Warring city-states would suspend hostilities every four years to assure athletes' safe passage to Olympia. However, after a 1,200-year run, the nature of the ancient Games changed drastically when the Romans captured Greece around 390 A.D. (Kyle, 2007). Instead of free Greeks engaging in athletic events, the Romans turned the Games into a spectacle by forcing slaves into violent gladiatorial events that often resulted in death. The institution of Christianity by the Romans also removed the Games as a religious pilgrimage to honor Zeus (Perseus Project, 2005). After the Roman intervention, the Games fell dormant for centuries following the fall of the Roman Empire.

Interest in the Games rekindled after German archeologists excavated the ruins of Olympia in the 19th century. Frenchman Baron Pierre de Coubertin grew obsessed with re-invigorating the games after he attributed the French loss in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 to a French army that was physically and spiritually flabby because of poor physical preparation and education (Radar, 2004). He envisioned that the Games would inspire French soldiers to get into shape to compete. Coubertin was further motivated by the ideal of international cooperation through athletic competition; Coubertin made re-establishing the Olympics his life's work and the modern Olympics became a reality with the 1896 Games in Athens, Greece (Radar, 2004).

Since the founding of the modern Games, the Olympics have been used as a platform for social and political movements. German ruler Adolf Hitler wanted the 1936

Olympics in Berlin to be a proving ground for the Aryan race, which Hitler viewed as physically dominant over all other races. However, an African American sprinter named Jesse Owens shattered Hitler's ideal in less than 45 minutes by sweeping gold medals in the 100-meter and 200-meter races, along with the 400-meter relay (Rothchild, 2010). Owens added the broad jump to his winnings by beating German competitor Luz Long in the final. Hitler congratulated Owens after his victories, and sent Owens an inscribed photo of himself; Owens later said that American President Franklin Roosevelt never acknowledged Owens' Olympic feats (Rothchild, 2010).

Continued American prejudice against African Americans lingered and intensified during the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City when African American sprinters John Carlos and Tommie Smith took to the podium after winning medals in the 200-meter dash. Instead of saluting the American flag during the playing of the National Anthem; they raised clenched fists (Slot, 2005). The gesture was roundly criticized, even by *Time* magazine; Smith and Carlos were ostracized from the track and field community, and their families received death threats (Zirin, 2013). During the medal ceremony, neither Smith nor Carlos wore shoes in order to represent African American poverty. Smith donned an African American scarf as a symbol of African American pride, while Carlos opened his track top to represent underpaid blue collar workers. Carlos also wore a beaded necklace and said the beads represented the souls of African Americans lynched in slavery and for Africans thrown overboard during the Middle Passage (Slot, 2005). Smith later wrote that his clinched fist did not represent African American power, but rather was a salute to human rights. The gestures were later regarded as possibly the

single most overt political statements in the modern Olympic Games (Wise, 2006).

More political statements, this time in the form of terrorism and blood, visited the Olympics during the 1972 Munich Games. Black September, a faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, captured 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team during the second week of the Games. They demanded free passage out of Germany and the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. Eventually, all eleven of the Israeli hostages were killed along with their hostage takers. The incident was in direct opposition to the spirit of the ancient Games, when warring factions ceased hostilities in order to grant athletes free passage to and from the Olympics (Kyle, 2007).

The modern Games, further distancing itself from its origins as a celebration of peace, also became a forum for Cold War politics. In 1980, the United States withdrew from the Games to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviets returned the favor by withdrawing from the 1984 summer Games in Los Angeles (Wise, 2006). The Olympic Games have been used as a platform for political expression since their inception. In Ancient times, the Games highlighted a long-standing peace, while in modern times the Games were used as a front in a Cold War between two colossal super powers as well as a stage to express the plight of oppressed groups like the stateless Palestinians and powerless African Americans.

### **Historical View of the LGB Political Struggle**

Before highlighting the intersection of politics, LGBs and sport, a brief history of the LGB movement may be instructive. LGB lifestyles were generally ignored by state

institutions and political systems for the majority of political history. Anderson and McCormack (2010) wrote that LGBs were unrecognized until urbanization took place in the late 1800s when men flooded to the cities to work in close confines. Before that, rural communities failed to provide an outlet for same-sex desires among gay men or lesbians because men and women were isolated on family farms. Nevertheless, once non-heterosexual orientations began to be discovered, state institutions typically responded with intense intolerance (Ford, 2013; Marcus, 2002; Pickett, 2011). For example, in the 19th century, Germany instituted sodomy laws, and in the 1870s, a resistance by the LGB community rose up to oppose them (Marcus, 2002). The movement was described as wide spread and influential until the Nazis established power 60 years later and swiftly crushed the resistance. Thousands of archives on LGBs were destroyed and it is estimated that tens of thousands of LGBs were sent to their deaths in concentration camps (Ford, 2013). In the United States, LGBs began to be widely recognized in the aftermath of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. Marcus (2002) contends those economic crises led to same-sex orientation among men as they lived together outside family structures and in same-sex military and industrial barracks.

In the early to mid-20th century, the military and most traditional religions were intolerant of anything other than heterosexual relations (Morris, Hood & Watson, 1989). Men suspected of being gay were tossed out of the U.S. military during and after the Great Wars, and many were dumped in port cities like San Francisco and New York. During that time, several hundred dishonorably discharged service men and women arrived in San Francisco per day, and they often stayed because they were too ashamed to

go home (Marcus, 2002). In 1953, President Eisenhower codified the homophobia of the era by signing an executive order dictating that firing LGBs from federal government jobs was necessary and sufficient (Marcus, 2002). Many non-government contractors followed suit, setting up persecution of LGB persons in the work place. By the 1950s, LGB persons were fighting on two fronts, gays and lesbians were not only dealing with persecution from government agencies like the military, but also by the medical establishment, which labeled LGB orientation a psychiatric disorder (Bernstein, 2002; Greenberg, 1988; Marcus, 2002).

The labeling made some in the gay community believe they were insane and abnormal (Ford, 2013). In light of these dual persecutions of being cast as sinners and sick, the gay community began to form resistance groups such as the Mattachine Society, and the Daughters of Bilitis. The groups grew their memberships in the 1950s and annually protested anti-gay laws on the steps of the Supreme Court (Bernstein, 2002; Marcus, 2002). However, these groups grew weak and disparate, particularly when some members of the Mattachine Society were discovered to have had alleged Communist ties that drew scrutiny from U.S. Senator Joe McCarthy's witch hunt (Marcus, 2002). At the time, McCarthy used his authority to unveil LGBs in the government; many were then castigated as sexual deviants and fired (Johnson, 2004). In Anderson and McCormack's (2010) view, the 1950s and early 1960s were a time when LGBs were culturally erased, meaning that LGBs, fearing being ostracized and criminally prosecuted on sodomy and other laws, went deeply underground.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s, in which non-marital sex was becoming

accepted, also encompassed the recognition of the LGB identity as an accepted sexual orientation (Shepard, 2009). Against the backdrop of the more liberalized attitudes of the time, the LGB community felt more emboldened culturally and politically (Ford, 2013). This fact was vividly illustrated by a somewhat bizarre event on a sweltering summer night in 1969 at a grungy Manhattan bar called the Stonewall Inn. The night began when eight cops descended on the Inn for routine harassing of the mainly gay and lesbian patrons (Marcus, 2002). The police kicked out the non cross-dressed customers and ushered the transvestites into a paddy wagon, when one of them knocked a cop backwards (Bernstein, 2002).

The rest poured out of the wagon while the cops retreated to the Inn for protection and were trapped inside. Those kicked out of the bar, described as a crew of gay hippies, student activists, homeless wanderers, and dishonorably-discharged service men, joined the fight (Bernstein, 2002). They burned trash cans, threw bricks, and at one point, connected arm-and-arm and began singing and performing chorus-line kicks. Within a few hours, it was over. The event was covered worldwide and had the effect of organizing gay-rights activism throughout the world (Bernstein, 2002; Greenberg, 1988). Gay, feminist, and queer movements gained momentum and political power from that single event (Bernstein, 2002; Greenberg, 1988).

Within four years of Stonewall, the American Psychiatric Association was pressured by LGBT groups into removing homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses (Marcus, 2002). Four years after that in 1977, a major city, San Francisco, elected the first openly gay city councilman, Harvey Milk, who helped defeat a state measure

banning LGBs from teaching in public schools. However, backlash against gay liberation was felt throughout this period. Three weeks after Milk helped defeat the bill banishing gay teachers from public education, Milk and San Francisco Mayor George Mascone were assassinated by former city supervisor Dan White. He later received the lightest possible sentence for manslaughter by an all-straight jury (Marcus, 2002).

A period of anti-LGB sentiment followed in the 1980s when the AIDS crisis and violence against the LGB community spiked (Marcus, 2002). Sociologist Eric Anderson describes this era as one of high homophobia, which is a fear of being labeled as gay and conflates femininity with male gayness; periods of high homophobia include acceptance of homophobic taunts and slurs, increases in anti-gay violence, and negative cultural representations of LGBs (Anderson, 2009). This period of high homophobia lasted into the mid-1990s when the gay community challenged Eisenhower's 1953 executive order banishing LGB persons from federal employment, which included the military. It led to the Clinton administration compromise encapsulated by the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which allowed LGBs to stay employed in the military as long as they kept their orientation a secret.

However, because of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," Clinton came under pressure to push back against the gay community (Freedomtomarry, 2014). As a result, Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, which mandated unequal treatment of same-sex couples. Under the law, same-sex couples were denied federal provisions such as Social Security survival benefits, immigration rights, and family and medical leave rights (Freedomtomarry, 2014). Fifteen years later, and due to heavy lobbying by gay rights

groups, President Obama instructed the Justice Department to stop defending the Defense of Marriage Act, and that same year, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down major provisions of the law, ruling them unconstitutional. In the summer of 2015, the Supreme Court legalized gay Marriage (Morford, 2015). These victories for gay rights were won against a backdrop of low homophobia. Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, polls revealed LGB acceptance to be increasingly on the rise (Hicks & Lee, 2006). Also, positive cultural representations of LGBT individuals were reflected by popular television shows such as *Glee* and *Ellen*. Additionally, Obama's support of same sex marriage turned into a windfall for his re-election campaign (Eggan, 2012). LGB acceptance was not restricted to the political arena; sport also reflected the political world's trend of recognizing the LGB community.

### **Intersection of sport, politics and LGB acceptance**

Only recently have politicians made statements about gay athletes. In 2014, President Obama felt the need to comment in May of that year after former University of Missouri defensive end Michael Sam was drafted by the National Football League's St. Louis Rams. The White House said in a statement, "The President congratulates Michael Sam, the Rams and the NFL for taking an important step forward today in our Nation's journey. From the playing field to the corporate boardroom, LGBT Americans prove everyday that you should be judged by what you do and not who you are." (Yan & Alsup, 2014, p. c16). The statement seems to recognize Sam's action as a marker in the nation's journey for civil rights. The statement also evokes a famous quote by civil rights leader

Martin Luther King, who said that future generations should be judged not by the color of their skin, but the content of their character. The statement also speaks to the normalization of Sam's openness about his sexual orientation, not only in sport but in business. The NFL is big business and, if those in the NFL boardrooms were not comfortable with Sam being gay, he probably would have never been the first openly gay player to get drafted by an NFL team.

Also in 2014, Russian President Valdimir Putin sparked protests and international condemnation when he said that gay athletes and spectators attending the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi should feel at ease as long as they left children in peace (Friedman, 2014). Russia had passed a slew of anti-gay laws just before the Games, including one that banned the dissemination of pro gay-rights material to minors. Gay-rights advocates protested against Putin outside the Russian embassy in Berlin, and gay athletes voiced displeasure (Friedman, 2014). President Obama appointed three openly gay former athletes to the official U.S. delegation to the Games: Tennis player Billie Jean King, skater Brian Boitano and hockey player Caitlin Cahow (Friedman, 2014). In the aftermath, the International Olympic Committee inserted new language into its charter nearly a year after the Sochi games to eradicate discriminatory stances by host Olympic cities. In December of 2014, the IOC wrote, "The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, color, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (Wong, 2014, p. 14). A city must agree to this stipulation before making a bid to host the Games. The result could negate

countries with discriminatory gay laws and customs from applying to host the lucrative Games. Cities vie for the right to hold the games in the hopes of ending an economic slide and to speed the rehabilitation of shabby neighborhoods (T.W., 2013). According to Friedman (2014), the wealthiest countries have the least anti-gay legislation with the exception of Russia and China. Additionally, African and the Middle Eastern nations have the most laws criminalizing gay lifestyles. The political ramifications of the new language may mean that wealthier nations will win more bids to host the Olympics.

The recognition of LGB lifestyles and the political power of gay-rights groups is a fairly recent phenomenon. And, only within the last few years have politicians and international organizations felt comfortable in hailing the courage of LGBT athletes and assuring non-discriminatory policies by host Olympic cities. The fact that an international body responded to Russia's anti-gay criticism by the institution of new LGBT-friendly policies, could be confirmation of sociologist Eric Anderson's theory that we are in a period of low homophobia, which is characterized by a fear of being labeled as gay. Furthermore, Michael Sam's ability to declare his sexual orientation might not have happened without a decrease in homophobia, which is another characteristic of low homophobia. In addition, the progress on this front may signal that sport in general is beginning to reflect the more tolerant attitudes toward the LGBT community in Western societies.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Education, Sport and LGB Acceptance**

This chapter attempts to first trace the history of homophobia in American education, beginning with the re-education of Native Americans. Then, the impact of homophobia and LGB resistance behaviors in education is explored. Next, the connection between influence of high profile, student-athletes in athletic environments and homophobia is examined. Later, incidents involving homophobic teasing by student-athletes, and their role in school tragedies, including the infamous Columbine massacre, are investigated. Lastly, California laws designed to protect and recognize sexually-divergent populations are outlined.

#### **History of education and the LGB community**

Education in the Americas began long before the United States became a nation. When European settlers landed in the New World, one of their first missions was to indoctrinate Native peoples into Western Christianity. The subsequent erasure of Native American culture included expunging the notion of two spirits (Williams, 2010). Transgender Native Americans were considered doubly blessed with the spirit of a man and woman and were, therefore, revered by the tribe (Williams, 2010). European settlers rejected the idea of two spirits, and instead imposed Christian ideas of transgender people as deviant. The re-education of Native Americans into Western Christianity meant ostracizing LGBs (Williams, 2010). Christian ideals of LGB lifestyles as deviant in the pre-colonial era formed the foundation of how public educators perceived a non-

heterosexual orientation as the United States developed a public educational system (Coleman, 2012). LGBT teachers made sure to keep their sexual orientations a secret until the 1960s because of a federal statute declaring LGBT sexual acts, even in the privacy of the home, a felony. Not only could LGBT teachers lose their jobs, their children could be taken away and placed in foster care (Coleman, 2012). In the 1960s, gay activists began quietly inserting language into civil rights legislation that overturned anti-gay sex laws. By the 1970s, conservative activists seized upon this new legislation and started a campaign to roll back gay civil rights gains, particularly laws which allowed LGBT educators to teach the nation's children (Graves, 2012).

The most high profile advocate for the firing of LGBT teachers was actress and singer Anita Bryant. As a spokeswoman for an organization called "Save our Children," Bryant successfully spearheaded the repeal of a Florida law in 1977 prohibiting discrimination of LGBs in housing, employment, and public accommodations by arguing the law allowed gay teachers to keep their jobs (Gallagher & Bull, 1996). A year later, Bryant supported the John Briggs' initiative in California, which sought to dismiss LGBT public teachers and those who supported gay rights. Because of the lobbying of late San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk and others, the bill was defeated (Gallagher & Bull, 1996). Nevertheless, Bryant and Briggs plugged into a larger conservative agenda to not only deny LGBT teachers employment but also to fight the unionization of educators. Those who opposed the notion of a gay teacher also did not want teachers, in general, organizing (Gallagher & Bull, 1996). The result was an educational climate where teacher rights and benefits were connected to LGBT resistance movements. That

connection grew even more complex with the revelation of what the bullying of sexually divergent youth could do.

### **Impact of LGBT Resistance in Education**

Education's intolerance of LGBT teachers and students continues to be hotly debated, particularly as it relates to the bullying of gender-diverse students. Researchers are discovering homophobic teasing as a commonality in the backgrounds of school massacre perpetrators (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Newman & Fox, 2009). Additionally, studies also show that LGBT students are often desperately unhappy and that large percentages, ranging from 20 percent to 53 percent, consider suicide (Haas et al., 2011). Bullying of the aforementioned populations, particularly by male student-athletes of high social standing, can trigger severe student distress (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Osborne & Wagner; Wilson, 2002). Male student-athletes that excel in popular team sport, such as football, baseball, and basketball, often rule school social hierarchies, and thus are put in a position to bully (Eder & Parker, 1987; Griffin, 1998). Their power and influence can extend beyond simply holding sway with their classmates. Teachers, coaches, school administrators, parents, and community leaders are often permissive of high profile student-athletes' behavior (Howard & EnglandKennedy, 2006; Miller & Hoffman, 2009). In addition, school athletic culture can be a site where traditional notions of masculinity are produced with their inherent characteristics of homophobia, sexism, female objectification, bullying, increased drug and alcohol abuse, and physical self-destruction (Curry, 1991, 1998; Howard & EnglandKennedy, 2006; Miller & Hoffman, 2009).

The wide latitude afforded to student-athletes can result in bullying (Curry, 1991, 1998; Miller & Hoffman, 2009), and bullying is typically cited as a cause for suicide among LGBT students. Additionally, Kimmel and Mahler (2003) discovered that the perpetrators in 21 of the 23 school massacres they studied were recipients of harsh homophobic taunts and slurs even if they were not gay, and that the bullies were often athletes. This scenario was present in the Columbine High-School tragedy where students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 13 of their classmates and wounded 21 others. At Columbine, a star football player was elected prom king despite being on probation for burglary, the wrestling champion parked his \$100,000 Hummer in a 15-minute parking spot all day, and another football player teased a female student about her breast size in class without repercussion (Adams & Russakoff, 1999). Harris and Klebold were both teased about being LGB (Newman & Fox, 2009). Additionally, while Harris and Klebold did not specifically target student-athletes in their attacks, their writings before the tragedy often mentioned hatred of the school's athletes. More broadly, backlash against student-athlete privilege finds expression on the internet. Several anti-jock web sites have surfaced and many depict violent scenarios and imagery against high school jocks (Wilson, 2002).

A reason for anti-jock antipathy was captured in a qualitative look at a Midwestern high school and community. Howard and EnglandKennedy (2006) explored the case of a high profile prep quarterback, who placed his penis on the cheek of a non-starting, low-status, nerdy sophomore. The high-status quarterback called out to his fellow teammates and said the sophomore was trying to give him oral sex, which amused

the players in the locker room. Following the incident, the sophomore was ostracized, fell into a depression, and eventually transferred schools. Because homophobia in athletics is accepted as hegemonic, it is often construed as normal and natural and therefore goes unchallenged. In the aforementioned case, the head-master, who suspended the quarterback for his blatant sexual harassment, was pressured heavily by a powerful group of parents and coaches to revoke the suspension. The group said the quarterback was merely displaying harmless boys-will-be-boys behavior (Howard & EnglandKennedy, 2006). Deep resentments can form with such strong protection of athlete privilege coupled with an athletic environment where hegemonic masculinity is fostered (Jacobson, 2002; Wilson, 2002). Particularly if the hegemonic-masculine construct is established by high-status athletes through homophobia and sexism. And, as noted earlier, the results can be pernicious.

### **Homophobia and LGBT Resistance in Athletic School Environments**

At the college level, Jacobson (2002) determined that athletic departments were the most homophobic places on campus. Meanwhile, Shiri and Sutherland (2009) found fervent homophobia, heteronormality, and heterosexism in high school physical education settings when they reviewed 20 years of academic articles on the subject. In reviewing the literature, Shiri and Sutherland (2009) concluded that homophobia and negative views of LGBs were deeply ingrained in physical education. They also found that LGBs were silenced and that heterosexuality was celebrated, which made coming out as a gay or lesbian in physical education particularly challenging. Additionally, the three

practices of homophobia, heteronormality, and heterosexism can have a lasting impact on LGBT youth. Homophobia, heteronormality and heterosexism, even if they are subtle, can engender thoughts of depression and even suicide.

For example, an Australian study found verbal homophobic language affected 53 percent of LGBT youth while they participated in high school physical education classes (Symons et al., 2014). The study also determined that depression and anxiety went up for LGBT students subjected to verbal homophobia, even if it was deemed “casual homophobia” (Symons, et al., 2014, p. 12). Casual homophobia was described as a non-directed derogatory language such as terming something negative with the phrase, “that is so gay” (Symons, et al., 2014, p. 12). Symons et al. (2014) also found increased anxiety for transgender youth in school locker-room situations because there was tension involved in where to dress and what to wear. Anderson (2005a) noted that the public nature of physical education can cause distress for sexually divergent youth, particularly those who are non-athletic. Anderson (2005a) explained that a math quiz grade is typically only known between the teacher and student, whereas a student’s performance on a 40-yard dash, or the throwing of a ball, is witnessed by the entire physical education class and can be a basis for homophobic teasing or worse.

Laws hoping to address bullying of gender diverse students have been passed in California with SB 777 in 2007 and a bill allowing for the teaching of LGBT civil rights in public history courses (Kuehl, 2002; Lin, 2011). SB 777 not only prohibits discrimination of students based on sexual orientation, it also requires school teachers and administrators to take steps to alleviate bullying based on race, gender, nationality,

religion, disability, or sexual orientation. Additionally, California governor Jerry Brown signed a law that assured that gay history is taught in public schools. A statement from Brown said that history should be honest and should include contributions from Americans of all backgrounds and walks of life (Lin, 2011).

Often it takes time for laws to change attitudes and behaviors. However, new laws in California seem to be putting distance between homophobia and education, which dates back to the New World. It is a needed development since homophobic bullying of LGBT youth, which often takes place in athletic environments, can lead to depression, anxiety, and even death.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Homophobia, Sport, and Race**

In this chapter, a discussion of the difference between white and African Americans' homophobia is examined. Then, specific issues confronting an openly gay African American athlete are explored. Also, reasons why it may be more difficult for an African American athlete than a white athlete to come out and the subsequent implications of that fact are discussed in light of why so few active athletes come out in major American team sport. Lastly, how the intersectionality of being both African American and gay can conspire against LGB African American athletes.

## **Assessing Homophobia in African American and White Communities**

Researchers examining the impact of race and homophobia reveal that African Americans have more homonegative attitudes than whites, and that African American athletes also harbor more negative feelings toward LGBs than white athletes (Anderson, 2005b; Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Boykin, 2005; Froyum, 2007; Lewis, 2003). For example, sport agent Ralph Cindrich, in an informal study of 175 first-year NFL players in 1999, found that 91.7 percent of whites felt comfortable with playing with a gay teammate, compared to 60 percent of African American players. Similarly, 52 percent of white players said they would feel comfortable sharing a hotel room with an openly gay player, compared to 29 percent of African American players. Meanwhile, Southall et al. (2009) also found African American student-athletes self-reported homophobia was higher than their white counterparts. This suggests that African American athletes may be more invested in hegemonic masculinity than white athletes.

As explained in chapter 2, hegemonic masculinity positions white males at the top of gender and cultural hierarchies in a fashion that seems normal and natural. In the hegemonic masculine construct, athletic prowess is highly valued and the construct is frequently maintained through the rejection of gayness and femininity (Anderson, 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The hegemonic exemplar, as explained by Connell (1995), embodies the traits of physical toughness, aggression, rejection of vulnerability, and assumes authority. While the hegemonic exemplar can never be achieved, a sport star, who is seen as a tower of heterosexual male strength, can be valorized as a masculine hero (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Once that exalted status of the hegemonic exemplar is achieved, African American athletes are less likely to endanger that status by coming out as gay because the combination of being African American AND gay is more extreme than being one or the other (Kian & Anderson, 2009; Lewis, 2003). In addition, African American resistance to coming out could also stem from African Americans' lack of connection with the LGBT community. According to Lewis' (2003) extensive survey of African American and white attitudes and behaviors, African Americans view the gay community as white and as of elevated status. Lewis (2003) also wrote that half of African American gays surveyed found problems with racism in the LGBT community. Moreover, Boykin (2005), and Froyum (2007), postulate that African American athletes do not want to contend with the dual oppression of being African American and gay and are thus highly motivated to hide their sexual orientation if they are gay. In a related idea, Froyum (2007) contends that African Americans can raise their masculine capital by thinking they at least are not gay.

However, the picture of increased African American homophobia compared to whites is hardly clear, particularly in light of recent studies and events. While African Americans may hold more negative feelings towards LGBs than whites, they are also more likely to support gay civil rights than whites. Lewis (2003), in his 31-question survey spanning 27 years (1973-2000) and questioning 7,000 African Americans and 43,000 whites, found that African Americans were more supportive of gay civil rights and markedly more in favor of anti-discriminatory labor practices for gays than whites when religious and educational differences were controlled. Lewis also discovered that

African Americans, however, were more homophobic than whites even when controlling for religion, socio-economic status, and education. Those conclusions were also supported by Herek and Capitano (1995) and Negy and Eisenmen (2005). When socioeconomic status, religious commitment and religious attendance were controlled, there was no appreciable difference between whites' and African Americans' negative reactions to LGB persons in both adult populations (Herek & Capitano, 1995) and college students (Negy & Eisenman, 2005).

### **Coming out as a Gay Athlete in the African American Community**

Three of the four active male athletes in major American team sport to come out are African American. Former National Football League player Michael Sam, former National Basketball Association player Jason Collins and current college basketball player Derrick Gordon are African American, while Major League Soccer's Robbie Rogers is white. Does this mean that African Americans are courageously leading the way for LGB acceptance? More likely, those that do come out might be merely reflecting the demographics of their sport. When former NFL running back Dave Kopay, who is white, came out in 1975 after he retired, the league was mainly white. When former University of Missouri defensive end Sam came out nearly 40 years later, the NFL was nearly 70 percent African American. Former professional football players Kwame Harris, Wade Davis, and Roy Simmons, who came out in retirement, are also African American. Other known former NFL players to come out are Esera Tuolo (Pacific Islander) and Jerry Smith (white). In basketball, NBA players who have come out after

they retired, include John Ameachi and former college player Will Sheridan, and both are of African descent.

Additionally, because of the aforementioned dual oppressions of being both gay and African American, African-American athletes may be more reluctant to come out. For example, the phrase “on the down low” refers to African American men who secretly have gay sex but are outwardly heterosexual (Bond et al., 2009, p. 92), thus allowing sexually divergent African American men from having to contend with dual oppressions. Also, Bond et al. (2009) surveyed 1,151 African American men who were at least 18 years old, and had gay sex within the last 12 months, and had self-identified as being on the down low. Extensive surveys were taken in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and New York using audio, computer-assisted self interviews. Participants were tested for the HIV virus after the survey. Of this population, only 23 percent identified as heterosexual, and most African American males labeled themselves either gay or bisexual, which indicates that a significant proportion of those feigning heterosexuality, do not consider themselves heterosexual. This suggests two things; first, having a divergent sexual orientation might be more prevalent than previously thought in the male African American community (Bond et al., 2009). Secondly, those on the down low, are not just protecting their men-having-sex-with-men liaisons, they are also protecting their gay and bisexual identities. The fact that the down low community exists speaks to the pressure African-Americans feel to conceal their divergent sexual orientations.

Even though religiosity, education, and socioeconomic status are factors in the homophobia of African Americans, several surveys, nevertheless, contend that African

Americans are more homophobic than whites (Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Boykin, 2005; Froyum, 2007; Negy & Eisenmen, 2005). Also, it should be noted that religiosity among African Americans is higher than the religiosity of whites (Anderson & McCormack, 2010). Consequently, African-American homophobia may be a factor in why American team sport, particularly basketball and football, has seen so few openly gay players on the professional and major-college levels. Players in the NBA are about 73 percent African American and the NFL, nearly 70 percent of players are African American, while Major League Baseball is about 15 percent African American (Coakley, 2009; Kian & Anderson, 2009). An African-American athlete will have to risk the real possibility of being ostracized as LGB in their own community if they come out as gay. So far, very few have been willing to take that chance.

### **Intersectionality of the LGB African American Athlete**

Any discussion of race and LGBs should include the theory of intersectionality, which highlights the perception of different statuses can interact to produce discrimination unique to the combination of statuses. Often, the combination of two different discriminations compound oppression (Adewunmi, 2014; Battle & Ashley, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991). A real world illustration of intersectionality occurred in the 1970s when five African American women brought suit against General Motors and the United Auto Workers union based on race and gender discrimination. The women contended that they were laid off because they were victims of past discriminatory hiring practices. The suit stemmed from the policy of seniority agreed upon by General Motors

and United Auto Workers, which stipulated that those who were hired last were the first to be fired. In the St. Louis G.M. plant where the suit was brought, no African American women were allowed on the assembly line, and by 1970, only one African American woman worked at the plant, and she was a janitor. Later, five African American women assembly workers were hired, but they were all laid off because they were among the first hired. The court ruled that title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights law did not allow for a complaint on a combination of discriminations. The court maintained that African American men and white women were not discriminated against in hiring at the plant. Basically, the law had no answer for the intersectionality of dual discrimination (Adewunmi, 2014).

Intersectionality has also been cited in the Senate confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Anita Hill, an African American woman and a law clerk under Thomas, charged she was sexually harassed by him. Thomas, an African American man, vehemently denied the allegations, and for some, Hill was discredited when Thomas said, "this is a high-tech lynching" (Adewunmi, 2014). Law professor Kimberle Crenshaw, who was part of Hill's legal team, said the phrase erased Hill's African American background. The reference to lynching brought up images of African American males hanged from trees by angry white mobs. According to Crenshaw, the phrase made the veracity of Hill a contest between Hill's gender and Thomas' race, even though African American women were also lynched and shared a similar historical oppression as African American men (Adewunmi, 2014). What was also forgotten was the history of historic sexual violence against African American women (Adewunmi,

2014).

Intersectionality has been cited as a reason for high rates of homelessness and poverty among African American LGB couples and families (Anderson & McCormack, 2010). The chances that children from an African American male, gay couple will live in poverty is 53.3 percent, compared to 15 percent of children from married, opposite-sex African American couples (Kultzleben, 2014). Impoverished kids are less likely to engage in extracurricular activities because they often work or help out at home. If poor athletes make it to interscholastic sport in college, they are often dragged down by the family poverty. For example, many have to leave school to care for family, and if they attend college nearby, they are often called home to provide shopping, transportation, and other needs (Wolverton, 2013). Poor student-athletes often have other responsibilities that take them away from their sport, and African Americans are over represented in poverty compared to the rest of the population (Collins, 2014). Couple that with homophobia in the African American, gay community, particularly in sport, and impoverished African Americans are unlikely to become athletes without help from a coach or surrogate family (Anderson & McCormack, 2010).

Additionally, the neoliberal trend of underfunding education particularly in African American and Brown neighborhoods, puts the onus on the impoverished to pay to play (Butryn, 2011). In little leagues and high school sport, parents are often pay for equipment, transportation, and other costs. Impoverished families often cannot afford the luxury of sport participation. Furthermore, LGB kids are more likely to flee home or get kicked out of their homes once their sexual identities are revealed. For boys, half are

likely to receive a negative reaction by their families to their sexual identity and 26 percent are kicked out of the home (Ford, 2012).

Consequently, the intersectionality of being African American and LGB can conspire against those who wish to engage in athletics, particularly when sport, as has been noted in prior chapters, is not accepting of LGBs (Avayzo & Southerland, 2009; Jacobson, 2002).

## **Chapter 10**

### **Discussion**

Sociologist Eric Anderson maintains that his gender formulation of inclusive masculinity is existing alongside the older construct of hegemonic masculinity in sport (Adams, et al., 2010; Anderson, 2011; 2009; 2008; 2005a; 2005b; 2002; Southall et. al, 2011). Hegemonic masculinity is a gender formulation that positions white heterosexual men at the top of the gender hierarchy, and white heterosexual men maintain that position through sexism and homophobia among other devices. Conversely, inclusive masculinity does not contain a hierarchy and, instead, acknowledges and accepts women, LGBTs, and those questioning their sexual orientation, as equal members of the community, with equal rights and powers (Anderson, 2009). Some gender theorists maintain that sport at all levels reproduces hegemonic masculinity (Anderson, 2005a; Curry, 1991; Curry, 1998; Fine, 1987, Jacobson, 2002; Messner, 1992). By examining sport and its intersection with economy, media, religion, politics, education, and race through a literature review, I attempted to determine which institutions are reinforcing hegemonic masculinity and which are developing the tolerant inclusive masculine formation.

Additionally, Allport's contact hypothesis (1954) is incorporated, when applicable, to explain the development of inclusive masculinity.

### **Economics and Acceptance – the Importance of Institutional Support**

Another condition for the reduction of prejudice between disparate groups is institutional support when the two groups come into contact (Allport, 1954). Two examples illustrate the difference in a sporting context. In the NFL, former Missouri defensive end Michael Sam came out as an openly gay man. Sam made the announcement in February of 2014, and at around the same time, a group of gay NFL players were about to come out as well, according to ESPN (2014). The group of players stayed closeted; meanwhile Sam was taken in the seventh and last round of the draft by the St. Louis Rams. Not long after that, former NFL coach turned national media analyst Tony Dungy said he would not have drafted Sam because he said Sam and his sexuality would be a media distraction. Later, however, Dungy said he would sign domestic abuser Ray Rice, which would certainly stir intense media interest. Dungy is considered among the most respected public NFL personalities because of his calm manner and religious devotion. He has also worked with troubled NFL players like dog abuser Michael Vick. Nevertheless, Dungy's comments on Sam did little to dim his reputation. He remained a commentator for NBC sport during their popular Sunday Night Football pre- and post-game shows. Additionally, and as mentioned in the economics chapter, the New York Giants hired former wide receiver David Tyree as the director of player

development, even though Tyree made homophobic judgments a year before his hiring. The Giants and the NFL supported the hire, even though Tyree's job is to deal with player off-field issues, which may include counseling a gay player in a LGB-resistant sport. Moreover, consider the plight of Sam, a co-defensive player of the year in the highly-touted Southeastern Conference, who did not get drafted until the seventh and final round of the NFL draft. While NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell lauded Sam for acknowledging his gay orientation the NFL, as an institution, failed to provide support by at least admonishing Dungy and the Giants for their attitudes and behaviors. Had the NFL made a stand with Dungy and Tyree, maybe more gay players in the NFL would have publically acknowledged their gayness by now, but lacking support from the league, they may have felt that it was better to stay silent.

In contrast to the NFL, the world of tennis decided to support star women's player Serena Williams and her tennis-playing sister, Venus, against racist and sexist statements made by a Russian official. Bolstered by what the tennis institution had done, Williams, an African American, decided to return to the high profile Indian Wells tennis tournament after a 14-year absence (Williams, 2015). In 2001, rumors surfaced that the Williams sisters were "fixing" matches at Indian Wells so they wouldn't have to face each other in a match. They were scheduled to play against each other when Venus withdrew from the match 20 minutes beforehand because of wrist tendonitis (Zirin, 2015). The situation was exacerbated when tennis player Elena Dementieva was asked who would win a Serena-Venus showdown. Dementieva said that their father, Richard Williams, would determine the winner. Dementieva later said she was joking. Nevertheless, Richard

Williams said he was subjected to racial slurs and scenarios from the Indian Wells crowd after Dementieva's comments (Williams, 2015; Zirin, 2015).

Serena, who was 19 at the time, was booed and cat-called throughout her matches but eventually won the tournament. She cried for two hours in the locker room after it was over and has been haunted by the incident ever since. She vowed never to return to Indian Wells. In a reversal, Serena said she would return to the tournament in 2015, because she has matured and her sport had supported her (Williams, 2015). Not only was she there, but she also raised money for the Equal Justice Initiative, an organization dedicated to providing under privileged populations with better legal representation. Fans could buy a raffle ticket for \$10 for the right to stand with Williams at the tournament.

The two examples represent different oppressions, with the NFL failing to provide support for LGB acceptance in one, while professional tennis was willing to support racial acceptance in the other. Nevertheless, the concept of institutional support, a key component of contact hypothesis, is the same. It also should be noted that womens' tennis is more advanced in developing inclusive- gender acceptance than the NFL because of strong lesbian advocates in the past, which included Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova. Conversely, the NFL is struggling to even recognize LGBs, much less have a strong advocate within its ranks advancing the league from its hegemonic-masculine foundation into a more inclusive-masculine future.

## **Media's Blissful Ignorance Hurting Gay Athletes**

When Kain and Anderson (2009) did a qualitative analysis of former basketball player John Amaechi's announcement that he was gay, they discovered the media was generally supportive and sensitive to the issue. That's not surprising. After working as a sportswriter for 26 years, I find my colleagues to be decent and somewhat enlightened people. However, most are incapable of covering LGB acceptance in sport, unless there is a high profile disclosure. One reason uncovered by Kain and Anderson's (2009) analysis was the attitude among some in sport media is that ignorance of LGB resistance is somehow supporting LGB acceptance. For example, some commentators wrote that an openly gay athlete is no big deal and then they wished for the day when an athlete's sexual orientation would not matter in sport (Kain & Anderson, 2009). Meanwhile, they ignored the oppression gay athletes experience in the present day. This attitude allows sport media members to delve into the statistics, analysis, and evaluation of games, players, and general managers, while excusing themselves from the social forces that culturally define the sporting institution. This common phenomenon provides an unacknowledged but strong support for hegemonic masculinity since the overwhelming majority of sportswriters, columnists, and sport editors are white men (Lapchick, 1995). By failing to challenge the gender order in sport where heterosexual men are at the top, hegemonic masculine ideals persist.

One other observation as a member of the sport media is that some male sport media members might be attempting to validate their own masculinity by being close to

athletes, who are often valorized as masculine exemplars. If that is the case, male reporters might fear asking those in sport about gayness, believing, on some level, they might be seen as gay. In addition, a locker room can be a place that exudes a kind of hyper heterosexuality, with heavily-muscled athletes frequently talking about sexual conquest (Curry, 1991, 1998; Lynch, 2013). From personal experience, asking about LGB resistance in this environment can be daunting at first, which obviously speaks to the hegemonic masculine pressure media members and athletes alike feel when in a locker-room environment. Also, examining sport from a critical perspective can work against someone covering a team. Reporters have to tread the delicate balance between grooming sources and writing credibly and critically about the team they cover. Introducing discussions about LGBs might not appeal to many in sport, and thus, reporters might not get a call returned when asking an athlete, coach, or front office member about the topic.

Another challenge is the advent of new media, where long-form writing is frowned upon. As a sport blogger, I could write about LGB-resistance within a football locker room, which I have done (Lynch, 2013, 2014). However, in the time spent asking a number of different players and coaches difficult questions about LGB acceptance in order to fill out a long-form blog, I could have written five shorter blogs on a variety of topics that would have generated more traffic on the blog site. Moreover, as Knight and Giuliano (2003) discovered in their analysis of undergraduate responses to a fictitious article about an Olympic athlete, readers of sport do not necessarily want to know about the divergent sexual orientations of their athletes.

As this thesis suggests, institutions surrounding sport are at different junctures in doing gender, with some trending towards a more inclusive form of masculinity and sometimes showing signs of contact hypothesis in the process. As I will note in the next chapter, there is more work to be done by institutions on LGB acceptance in sport and more studies to conduct.

### **Religion and the Development of Inclusive Masculinity**

Religion has been one of the most resistant institutions to LGB acceptance (Anderson, 2002; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Fisher, et al., 1990; Morris, Hood & Watson, 1989). Several conservative religions still consider LGBs as deviant and sinful, however the major religions of Catholicism, Protestantism and Mormonism are liberalizing their views of LGBs (Lochhead, 2014; Moore & Ball; Saletan, 2014; Fletcher Stack, 2014). In Catholicism, Pope Francis is the first Pope to ever mention the word gay, and he has hinted at tolerance of LGB lifestyles (Saletan, 2014). Francis has also emphasized poverty and the environment as areas where Catholics should focus, not LGBTQ resistance. Both Catholicism and Protestantism are acknowledging that LGB orientation is biologically determined, so LGBs are not making a conscious choice to be sinful (Saletan, 2014). Protestants are entertaining the belief that LGB orientation is not a sin but intolerance of it is.

Contact hypothesis could be playing a role in these progressive viewpoints. For example, Michael Gerson, who opposed gay Marriage while advising President George

W. Bush, is now for marriage equality because he believes sexual orientation is involuntary. Gerson flipped on the issue because many in his congregation have LGB relatives and friends, or believe that they are LGB themselves (Saletan, 2014). In addition, National Football League Hall of Fame quarterback Steve Young and his wife, Barbara, spoke to a Mormon conference in Utah to espouse LGB tolerance (Fletcher Stack, 2013). Barbara Young said that Jesus Christ's love was infinite, so it had to include tolerance for LGB persons. Her words were inspired by her love for her brother, who is gay.

As LGB acceptance continues to rise, major religions are loosening their traditional views on LGB resistance, because more LGB parishioners are forcing the change along with their friends and family members. This is definitely a nod to the impact of contact hypothesis as LGB persons and their supporters make themselves personally known to church hierarchies. Assumed heterosexuality of church goers can no longer be maintained, consequently, it appears that Catholicism, Protestantism, and Mormonism have gone through a process of first acknowledging gayness, then resisting it, and now beginning to accept it. Additionally, the impact on sport could be immense. Parochial education has a major influence on young athletes, and most of the U.S. population considers itself either Protestant or Catholic (Morris, Hood & Watson, 1989). Consequently, embracing liberalizing views on LGBs could impact all institutions, including sport.

## **The Evolution of Barak Obama and LGBT Clout**

When Barak Obama first came into office, he said his views on LGBT acceptance were “evolving.” Part of the evolution was telling his Justice Department to stop defending the Defense of Marriage Act. When he did that right before the 2012 election, he was flooded with campaign contributions from the powerful LGBT community. Obama has been evolving rapidly ever since, from his support of marriage equality, to his criticism of Russia’s anti-LGBT legislation before the Olympic Games in Sochi, to his praise of Michael Sam for becoming the first active, openly gay NFL player. Obama's evolution has reflected that of the U.S. at large, with polls indicating a continuing rapid acceptance of LGBs (Anderson & McCormack, 2010).

Evolution for Obama and, seemingly, the rest of the country, would not have happened without the efforts of pro-LGBT advocacy and the results of the contact hypothesis that followed. Harvey Milk, a civil rights hero and former San Francisco Supervisor, who was assassinated in 1980, encouraged his fellow LGBT brothers and sisters to declare their sexual identity publicly. So many followed his lead, that it is now unusual for a straight person not to know someone from the LGBT community. As many studies have revealed, contact between members of different groups helps lessen prejudice between groups particularly between majority groups in power and minority groups striving for power (Allport, 1954). The prevalence of the LGBT community in American culture and their contact with heterosexuals must have helped in the acceptance of gay rights and gay marriage. One reason for such rapid acceptance (but by no means,

complete) could be attributed to a by-product of contact hypothesis. In order for a LGBT individual to come out, they have to disclose their sexual identity or orientation and disclosure can bring people together (Herek, 1996). African Americans did not have that advantage when fighting against the prejudice of the larger white culture.

### **Education's Urgent Call to Inclusive Masculinity**

Education has a long history of fighting LGB resistance (Williams, 2012), with some notable exceptions. For example, Harvard convened a secret panel to purge gay men from campus in 1920. Several careers were ruined, including that of Eugene Cummings, who was ready to become a dentist when Harvard rejected his degree. (Engardio, 2011). Cummings later committed suicide (Engardio, 2011). In the modern day, the fight for LGB acceptance has become particularly salient and acute with the advent of institutional bullying based on homophobia. Surveys reveal that LGBT students can become depressed and can consider suicide as a result of intolerance, particularly in athletic school settings (Haas et al., 2011). Also, homophobic bullying can be a variable in the lives of school-massacre shooters (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). Moving to the more open and tolerant inclusive masculine gender formulation and away from hegemonic masculinity could be seen as a matter of life and death. Recently, the institution of public education has responded to this crisis with advocacy and the passage of laws in some states that protect LGBT students (Kuehl, 2002; Lin, 2011).

However, qualitative and quantitative studies find plenty of homophobia within education, particularly within physical education and school sport (Anderson, 2002; Curry, 1991, 1998; Howard & England-Kennedy, 2006; Jacobson, 2002; Miller & Hoffman, 2009; Shiri & Sutherland, 2009).

Could contact hypothesis help with LGB acceptance in school athletic settings? Actually, contact hypothesis can, at times, work against LGBT acceptance in schools, since LGBT students are generally at the bottom of social hierarchies and high profile heterosexual male athletes, who are most susceptible to hegemonic masculinity, are at the top (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Wilson, 2002). Since the high profile athletes want to maintain the status quo, and LGBT students want to disrupt it, each has different goals. Also, it is unlikely that the two groups would mix socially, so they could not witness each other in different social contexts. Allport (1954) maintained that in order for contact hypothesis to work, both parties needed to share and work for common goals. Rothbart and John (1985) also added the condition of broad socialization as an assimilating factor in contact hypothesis. When conditions for contact hypothesis are unmet, contact between dominant and socially-marginalized groups can make matters worse. The death of middle school student Larry King in 2008 is an extreme example of contact that went horribly wrong. King, a transgender boy who wore make-up and female clothing, constantly teased an athletic classmate, Brandon McInerney, about his homophobia (Setoodeh, 2008). On Valentine's Day that year, King approached McInerney while he was playing basketball with his friends and asked McInerney to be his Valentine. A few moments later, while both were in a computer class, McInerney shot King in the head

twice and killed him (Setoodeh, 2008). Obviously, this tragic event cannot be blamed on a failed contact-hypothesis interaction, but the theory may help partially explain McInerney's broken reasoning for the crime. It is also salient that the galvanizing event took place on a basketball court, where McInerney may have felt his hegemonic masculine credentials threatened by King.

Examples do exist of a more inclusive form of masculinity resulting from contact in school settings (Anderson, 2011, 2005a; Branch; 2014) However, effective contact between students is essential, particularly in physical education and on school sport teams to reduce harm perpetrated and felt by LGBT students.

### **The Challenges Facing Gay, African American Athletes**

Anderson and McCormack (2010) wrote forcefully that African-American leaders need to embrace their own LGBT community in order to reduce prejudice and confront structured homophobia in American sport. He cited several studies in which African Americans were more homophobic than whites. This increased homophobia from African Americans and African American athletes Anderson and McCormack (2010) attributed to elevated religious fundamentalism in the African American community and the dual oppression of being gay and African American among several other factors. Anderson and McCormack (2010) also cite Allport (1954) and contend that contact between the two groups fails to lessen African American homophobia. On the one hand, contact between the two groups might not meet the criteria for Allport's contact

hypothesis, since both groups are considered subordinate to whites (Allport, 1954). One premise for contact hypothesis was the reduction of the dominant-group prejudice when in contact with a subordinate group (Allport, 1954). Secondly, Lewis (2003) found that half the gay African Americans he surveyed had problems with racism in the LGBT community.

Whatever the issues are between the two groups, the tension could be a reason that so few active athletes have come out as gay in American team sport, particularly since African Americans dominate in football and basketball. African American, gay athletes might not feel they would receive support from either community if they declared their sexual orientation. This is where the intersectionality of being both African American and gay can work against coming out. There is discomfort in being gay in the African American community, and there's also resistance to being African American in the gay community (Lewis, 2003). The only hope is that an openly gay athlete would study the experience of Michael Sam, who did receive significant support from the gay community for coming out (Zeigler, 2014). The African American community also recognized Sam with an award from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and plaudits from President Barack Obama, and influential National Basketball Association commentator Charles Barkley among others. However, with disparaging comments from former NFL coach Tony Dungy, African American support for Sam was not uniform. (Ziegler, 2014).

Another issue confronting African American gay athletes is the entrenchment of hegemonic masculinity in the African American community (Anderson & McCormack,

2010). Part of the reason for this may be is since African Americans are oppressed, their social capital is considered low, which means they may overcompensate in establishing masculine capital by choosing a more hierarchical gender configuration afforded to them by the hegemonic model. Additionally, African American athletes may reject gayness, which is characteristic of hegemonic masculinity, because being seen as gay might jeopardize their chances of becoming a professional athlete (Anderson & McCormack, 2010).

Anderson and McCormack (2010) are right for calling for an inclusive masculine approach in the African American community. Such a call could increase the comfort level of LGBT athletes of any race to come out in American team sport.

## **Chapter 12**

### **Conclusion**

Sport, like a person in a dark room, seems to be feeling its way around the issue of LGB acceptance. Declarations of same-sex orientations by basketball player Jason Collins, football player Michael Sam, and soccer player Robbie Rogers are evidence of progress. Sport could also be experiencing a backlash. The following are some points revealed from the research on the intersection of sport and LGB acceptance. The chapter and thesis conclude with areas of future study and suggestions for what can be done to increase LGB acceptance in sport.

## **Why have Athletes Stopped Coming Out?**

As of this writing, it has been more than a year since an active professional male athlete in the five American core sport (football, basketball, baseball, hockey, and soccer) has come out. Could it be that sport is enduring a far less intense version of the societal homophobia experienced in the 1950s? Anderson and McCormack (2010) wrote that the 1950s were a time of intense homophobia after Kinsey's and Masters' and Johnson's extensive studies on human sexuality revealed that LGBs were first, in existence, and that LGB sex was a normal part of human sexuality. Consequently, hegemonic males were more invested in proving they were NOT gay, because now gayness was acknowledged. During the 1950s, sodomy laws and laws sanctioning LGB discrimination in the work place and in housing appeared on the books. It drove many in the LGBT community into hiding until the sexual liberation of the 1960s created a more tolerant environment. Since the topic of LGBs in sport is now international news, it can no longer be ignored even though there are sport media members who want to do just that (Kian & Anderson, 2009). The point is that maybe this 1950s moment in sport has returned, and it is making gay athletes less likely to come out.

## **Questioning Inclusive Masculinity Motives**

Eitzen and Sage (2008), contend that the corporate sport of football, basketball, baseball and hockey are extensions of power politics. Owners of professional sport teams are almost exclusively white, male, and heterosexual, and they typically hire white, male, heterosexual general managers, team presidents, and coaches (Lapchick, 2015a; 2015b;

2014). Additionally, almost all professional team sport are business enterprises and there is a trend toward the privatization of youth and high school sport as well (Zirin, 2008). With privatization comes big business, which is typically controlled by white, heterosexual males. Several studies indicate that corporations persist in promoting patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Consequently, sport can appear to be moving toward the ideal of inclusive masculinity, however, it might just be after the significant buying power of the LGBT community (Soshnick, 2013). Thus, a disparity can exist between what big college and professional sport teams and leagues say about LGBT acceptance, and what they do about it.

Examples from the previous chapter include the NFL saying it is accepting of LGBTs but then failing to condemn commentator Tony Dungy, who has repeatedly opposed LGBT progress. Similarly, the league also failed to pressure the New York Giants into rejecting the hiring of former player David Tyree, who has made strident homophobic statements (Mazzeo, 2014). The University of Nebraska has LGBT acceptance as part of its charter statement, yet the university employed homophobic assistant coach Ron Brown for over 20 years (Zeigler, 2012). These individuals can tout their homonegative views all they want, but when they become part of organizations that profess LGB acceptance, their stances become incompatible with their employers. In assessing whether lucrative, team sport is moving toward inclusive masculinity, statements, and attitudes should align with behaviors.

## **Coaches Need LGBT Training**

A turning point might have to take place in youth sport in order to ease a transition to inclusive masculinity. Young people are far more tolerant of gender difference than the older generation, which became evident in Adams et al.'s (2010) qualitative study of an English semi-professional soccer team. The coach used homophobic baiting to try to motivate his players. However, the players just thought he was stupid and out of touch. Within the past few years, former Rutgers' basketball coach Mike Rice was captured on video slinging basketballs and homophobic slurs at his players. Additionally, former National Football League punter Chris Kluwe said a former coach used homophobic insults with his players and the players' reaction was that the coach was biased and out of touch. If this is happening at the major college, semi-pro, and professional level, imagine what might be happening in high school and youth coaches. Studies do reveal that college athletes can be more homophobic than their classmates, and that might be due to growing up in a hegemonic masculine athletic environment with homophobic coaches and parents. For example, Osborne and Wagoner (2007) found that students involved in football, basketball, baseball and hockey were nearly three times more likely to express homophobic views than students not involved in those sport. Jacobson (2002) found that school athletic departments were the most homophobic places on campus.

Youth, high school, and college coaches need training in LGBT acceptance, not only so hegemonic ideals dissipate, but also because players find homophobia distasteful. Furthermore, this thesis proves that sport environments can produce homophobia and

misogyny (Anderson 2005a, 2005b, 2009, 2011; Calhoun et al., 2011; Coakley, 2009; Fine, 1987; Harrison & Lynch, 2006; Jacobson, 2002; Kauer & Krane, 2006; Kimmel & Messner, 2001; Miller & Hoffman, 2009; Progner, 1990; Osborne & Wagoner, 2007; Shiri & Southerland, 2009) Often, it is physical education teachers and coaches who are establishing hegemonic masculinity and its inherent condemnation and rejection of women and LGBTs (Adams, et al., 2010; Curry, 1991, 1998; Shiri & Southerland, 2009; Zeigler, 2012). Homophobia and misogyny is, in effect, bullying, and for the victims, it can result in depression, violence, and suicide (Adams & Russakoff, 1999; Anderson, 2002; Curry, 1991, 1998; Howard & EnglandKennedy, 2006; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). Consequently, it is critical for educators, particularly in physical education, to be inclusive of all gender identities. Exclusion cannot only result in bullying, but it has also been linked to school shootings (Adams & Russakoff, 1999; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003). As a result, the urge to establish hegemonic male credentials by coaches can lead to horrific outcomes.

### **LGBT Awareness Should be Part of Journalism**

To a lesser degree, sporting media members also need an awareness of LGBT issues. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many are at a loss when they encounter LGBTs. For example, when Michael Sam kissed and hugged his boyfriend after he was drafted by the St. Louis Rams, the scene was displayed on television in the San Francisco 49ers press room, which was filled with mostly male, middle-aged men. The scene made the entire room fall into an awkward silence. If sport media members knew more about

the LGBT struggle, and about some of the heroic stories the movement spawns, particularly about athletes, the sporting media might handle LGBs in sport better.

### **Contact - a Potentially Important Factor**

Contact with players, students, administrators, sportswriters, and persons of the LBGTQ community could be essential in reducing homophobia and ushering in a more inclusive masculinity for athletes of all ages. Herek and Glunt (1993) found that contact between heterosexual and LGBs reduced prejudice more than any other factor including family of origin, political affiliation, religiosity, and geographic origin. Additionally, of those variables, contact is the only one that is controllable by youth, school, and professional team administrators. Also, sport, particularly at the major college and professional levels, can be a vehicle for vicarious contact. Viewers seeing majority, dominant white players celebrating with minority African-American players particularly in the NFL and NBA, could touch upon Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) finding that positive depictions of contact can encourage a white audience to find out more about the minority group, which could lead to non-confirming stereotypes. This same type of non-confirming of stereotypes is possible when gay players and their straight teammates are depicted.

### **Areas for Future Study**

Questions about player leadership would be helpful because it's curious that while most college football players in prior studies appear willing to accept divergent sexual orientations even with their teammates, major division 1A football is still without an

openly Gay player (Greene, 2010; McCormick, 2013, Southall, et al., 2009).

Consequently, future studies could focus on whether team leaders are homophobic, and thus, if the rest of the team feels inclined to be non-accepting of LGBT teammates or classmates.

Additionally, studies in all parts of this and other countries would be revealing and would add to this slim body of research. Moreover, studies just focusing on specific sport could also be informative such as baseball, basketball, and hockey. Past studies reveal that women athletes are more accepting of diverse sexual orientations than male athletes (Greene, 2010; Roper & Halloran, 2007; Southall et al., 2009). However, women's perceptions of LGBs would be instructive in terms of feminine gender construction. Comparisons between religiosity, LGB acceptance, and contact with LGBs would be valuable in comparing non-student athletes with student-athletes.

More research could also be conducted on how student-athlete homophobia is derived. For example, is the religiosity of team leaders influential in spreading homophobia? Or is homophobia developed from the masculine gender construction boys learn while growing up in a sport environment as hegemonic masculinity suggests? Lastly, asking questions to assess where athletes, fans, coaches and sport administrators in terms of hegemonic masculinity could be enlightening.

### **What Can Be Done?**

In Canada, the Coaches of Canada, AthletesCAN, True Sport Foundation, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity

(CAAWS), plus the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, Sport Officials Canada, and Egale have launched a campaign called, *Step Up! Speak Out! Ally Campaign for Inclusive Sport*. The goal is to eliminate homophobia in sport by asking athletes, coaches, officials, administrators, parents, fans, and other members of the Canadian sport community to publicly commit to being an Ally, and to bring the message of inclusion, respect, and equality to their sport. They describe the organization as anyone, regardless of sexual orientation, who takes a stand against homophobia in sport. An American chapter of this organization might be desirable.

Furthermore, what is needed in school athletic settings is a healthy and functional contact between high-status jocks and LGBT students. Since contact has been shown to be valuable in reducing prejudice among straight and LGBT persons, having a forum where LGBT students can tell their stories could be potentially of great value. Such contact could reduce the LGB bullying that can lead to alienation, depression, suicide and sometimes violent backlash.

Legal protections would also help more LGB's out of poverty, and those unencumbered by poverty are more likely to engage in sport activities. Moreover, poverty can result or be compounded by a lack of legal protections. Despite the fact that gay Marriage was legalized nationally by the Supreme Court in 2015, as of this writing, 29 states could still evict LGBT tenants and an LGBT worker could be fired without repercussion or review. Additionally, without legal protections, LGBT couples are more vulnerable financially than heterosexual couples. In addition, LGBT couples are often restricted in rental housing choices because they have to seek landlords that won't evict

them for their sexual identity, and consequently, they pay more. The same holds true for income, where LGBT persons take lower paying work from employers that presumably will not fire them because of their sexual identity (Durso & Musovic, 2014). In all, states lacking basic legal protections cost LGBT households an average of \$8,912 compared to heterosexual couples. Compared to states with LGBT legal protections, the disparity narrows to \$689 per household (Durso & Musovic, 2014).

This thesis reveals that while progress has been made in LGB acceptance in sport, sport continues to be a site where LGB resistance is produced. Recognition of this fact would not only increase LGB acceptance in sport, but in the broader culture as well. Having a prominent active and publicly known LGB athlete in a major American team sport could greatly advance LGB assimilation. However, for that to happen, the institutions of economy, religion, politics, education, and media must shed the destructive strictures of hegemonic masculinity and embrace the equalitarian constructs encapsulated in the ideals of inclusive masculinity.

## Glossary

**Bisexual, Bi** - An individual who is physically, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to men and women. Bisexuals need not have had sexual experience with both men and women; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify as bisexual.

**Gay** - The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., gay man, gay people). In contemporary contexts, lesbian (n. or adj.) is often a preferred term for women. Avoid identifying gay people as “homosexuals” an outdated term considered derogatory and offensive to many lesbian and gay people.

**Gender Identity** - One’s internal, personal sense of being a man or a woman (or a boy or a girl). For transgender people, their birth-assigned sex and their own internal sense of gender identity do not match

**Heteronormality** -A pervasive system that positions heterosexuality as the only acceptable sexual norm, while all other forms of sexual orientations are ignored or shunned.

**Heterosexism** - A system of bias, discrimination, attitudes, and behaviors that establishes heterosexuality as the preferred acceptable sexual norm.

**Homophobia** – Fear of being labeled as gay.

**Homonegative** - Hudson and Ricketts (1980) propose to use this term as descriptive for any negative attitude towards homosexuality (be it emotional, moral or intellectual

disapproval), regardless of the sources of this attitude (be it based on religious, moral, ideological or other beliefs)

**Homophobia** - Fear of lesbians and gay men. Prejudice is usually a more accurate description of hatred or antipathy toward LGBT people.

**Homosexual** - Outdated clinical term considered derogatory and offensive by many gay and lesbian people. The Associated Press, New York Times and Washington Post restrict usage of the term. Gay and/or lesbian accurately describe those who are attracted to people of the same sex.

**Hypermasculine** - Callous sexual attitudes toward women; the belief that violence is manly; the experience of danger as exciting (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984).

**Lesbian** - A woman whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay (adj.) or as gay women. Avoid identifying lesbians as “homosexuals,”

**LGBT** - Acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.”

**Sexual Orientation** - Describes an individual’s enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person.

**Transgender** - An umbrella term (adj.) for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term may include but is not limited to: transsexuals, cross-dressers and other gender-variant people. Transgender people may identify as female-to-male (FTM) or male-to-female (MTF).

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