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PERCEPTIONS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS, COACHES AND SCHOOL/ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATION REGARDING LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) STUDENTS

Introduction

In 2015, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Americans have achieved greater equality in our country than at any other time in the history of our nation. With the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in Obergefell v. Hodges, marriage equality has been guaranteed in all 50 states. We see a transgender woman, Laverne Cox, gracing the cover of Time in 2014 and the first transgender actor to be nominated for an Emmy award. Similarly, the epitome of masculinity, Bruce Jenner, transitioned to Caitlyn Jenner amid a media firestorm. Michael Sam came out prior the NFL draft along with numerous college athletes who also came out this past year. Further, Outsports.com reported “gays in sports” were the #4 hot topic on the Associated Press Top Sports Stories list in 2014. Additionally, the Washington Post (December 18, 2014), noted 107 athletes and sports officials actually came out in 2014, and a recent (January 22, 2015) Huffington Post poll revealed “… seventy-three percent of America says they would fully support a professional sports team that signed a gay or lesbian athlete…”. Although sports have added notoriety to the LGBTQ topic, it’s not all about sports when it comes to equality and justice for students in K-12 education. School administrators, coaches and teachers alike need to be up-to-date on LGBTQ research and be prepared to handle issues during the educational daily routines as well.

As attention toward LGB is heightened so too is attention being given to TQ concerns. Transgender and questioning (TQ) youth are finding K-12 school acceptance programs as places to communicate with others and to propagate equality agendas within the activities of daily school-life, as well as post-school activity options. While the acceptance is catching up with the
equity in our country, schools remain faced with the challenge of ensuring the legal rights of LGBTQ students, protecting athletes and guaranteeing current anti-bullying and harassment laws and using policies when incidents occur.

The literature review for this paper is presented in a manner that will aid the reader by providing a brief view of LGBT as it relates to schools and sport. While the review is comprehensive, it is not exhaustive. The intent was to lay a foundation for practitioners who require additional information and resources. Our completed study will highlight the need for additional professional development for pre-service teachers, current teachers, coaches and administrators.

**Review of Literature**

Since LGBTQ is not a “suspect classification” or an “immutable marker of identity” under federal law (Lugg, 2014), it may be hard to garner policy support through federal mandate, but schools can certainly add more policy depth to the Fifth Amendment (prohibiting intentional harm from being inflicted on unpopular political minorities) when writing their own rules and regulations. One such consideration lies in a national education survey, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) where in the 2011 YRBS Survey (from San Francisco Unified School District Middle Schools), as noted by Shields, Cohen, Glassman, Whitaker, Franks, and Bertolini (2013), reported 1.7% of students surveyed identified as gay or lesbian, 2.1% identified themselves as bisexual, and 12.1% of the 2,730 middle school students reported that they were “not sure.” Protection policies should begin at the elementary school levels and include schools with sports programs. No matter what numbers may tell us inclusion and social justice for all students should be amenable among all adults in education because safety (mental and physical) is a number one priority for educators, leaders, and coaches.
Do schools care? According to Watson (2012), schools contribute greatly to the mind-set of isolation and stigmatization many LGBTQ students experience, noting even with an increased awareness LGBTQ students continue to face severe social, legal and institutional discrimination across our nation. In an attempt to answer the question whether schools care, the Watson (2012) study of staff and students at a California high school examined how the Safe Schools curriculum impacted the climate for students who identify as LGBTQ. The purpose of California law and the school district policy require discrimination-free programs, activities, and employment practices based on sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Specifically the state penal code defines gender as follows: “Gender is sex, and includes a person’s gender identity and gender related appearance and behavior whether or not stereotypically associated with the person’s assigned sex at birth” (California Law). A 2004 revision expanded the wording to include sexual orientation and individuals perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual and individuals whose appearance or behavior may not conform to gender stereotypes (California Safe Schools Coalition, 2015).

The major findings of the Watson (2012) study illuminated the prevalence of homophobic language, discomfort amongst staff regarding LGBTQ issues, intervention, and use of LGBTQ-infused curriculum. The study further revealed limitations of using the Safe Schools curriculum, Club Rainbow positive influences, more girls than boys who were openly “out,” and a need for additional campus support at the 9th grade level. Recommendations by Watson included yearly program evaluations with nondiscrimination policies specifically addressing sexual orientation, and gender identity inclusive curriculum, support groups for students, and staff development and support.
**LGBT Student Athletes**

Barber and Krane (2007) study highlighted professional athletes such as Sheryl Swoopes, John Amaechi, Rosie Jones, Billy Bean and Amelie Mauresm who “came out” facing little discrimination and receiving much support. Although the sports world appeared more accepting of gay and lesbian athletes, they noted little evidence of this role model attitude in LGBT youth sport environments. In their study, Barber and Krane posed and answered the question:

While these professional athletes have opened the door for more dialogues about LGBT athletes, is it not our responsibility as teachers, coaches, and administrators to ensure that young LGBT athletes and student also experience a welcoming and inclusive climate?

We say a resounding yes. (p. 6)

In 2007, LGBT students and athletes continued to feel unsafe attending physical educations classes and athletic events where they are least protected or supported. Knowing homophobia as a frequently used term describing an irrational fear of lesbians and gay men, implying the fear is from an unknown origin, Barber and Krane (2007) purposefully chose to use the term “homonegative,” believing homophobia is a known fear, one learned from parents, peers, teachers coaches, and daily interactions. They posited if this fear is learned, it can be unlearned or not learned. Although change can occur, Barber and Krane saw perceived barriers subsist in physical education and athletics where sexual orientation and gender identity silence is pervasive and a climate of paralysis and lack of concern exist. To overcome these barriers, Barber and Krane advocated actively working to change homonegative attitudes in schools by supporting and protecting LGBT youth.


**K-12 Environment**

In a later youth study, Spitz (2012) looked to gain an understanding of the perceptions of Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) youth advisors regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGTBQQ) youth in California schools. The results showed that five domain areas were believed to contribute to school climate. Specifically, the domains studied included training, advocacy, staff, students, and bullying. Participant advisors from California schools ranged in age from 25 to 70 years of age with the majority of participants being female (24 female; nine male; and one transgender). The participants identified their authenticity as follows: 31 Caucasian; one Asian; one Latino; one mixed Latin and Caucasian. The study concluded a lack of training appeared to be the greatest contributing factor hampering the perceptions of a positive school climate for LGTBQQ students with a less than ideal advocacy of LGTBQQ students or presence of a supportive student body. Although the domain areas of supportive staff and the absence of bullying scored highest, the combined score was too low to support the study’s hypothesis. California GSA advisors reported their schools maintained a positive school climate for LGTBQQ students.

In another 2012 study, Perkins, a researcher from Canada who focused on principals, school leaders, and social justice in British Columbia schools, used an ethnodrama to reveal an understanding of homophobia within the studied schools. Examining six administrators’ understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender, two-spirited, intersex, queer, and questioning (LGBTTIQQ) students, this study revealed teachers, administrators and coaches were unprepared to address homophobia, resulting in LGBTTIQQ students feeling like the “outgroup,” or referenced as the “others” in their schools. Perkins found “When the ‘Other’ tries to assert identity, they challenge the dominant group’s implicit claim to universality” (p. 63).
This creates a dissonance whereby hegemonic cultural meanings were challenged, and at times led to violence. Some principals claimed LGBTTIQQ issues only existed at the high school level, failing to recognize (or admit) any existence at elementary schools.

Perkins (2012) findings, overall, pointed to a lack of social justice support for LGBTTIQQ students. For future practice and policy, Perkins recommended schools develop LGBTTIQQ inclusive policies and curriculum, professional development for all staff, resources on LGBT issues, self assessment regarding personal views on LGBTTIQQ issues, at least one gender-neutral restroom/locker room, and seek community-wide support. An earlier study by Kosciw, Greytak and Diaz (2009) had also established this lack of support and safety for youth susceptible to harassment, discrimination and other negative experiences. In their recommendations are seen a need for LGBTQ inclusive curricular and support as well.

In a 2011 case study by Hickman and Hoffman, they focused on interactions among teachers and administrators regarding language use at an urban middle-sized high school serving 1,800. Their paper began with a narrative of a high school English teacher named Marie who was a tenured teacher. Marie reported youth instances of hazing and fighting with students from other schools, gun violence resulting in injuries and deaths (from shootings and evidence of gangs), along with cultural changes related to students and among faculty.

Work gets done, according to Marie, although each teacher works independently from other faculty except for test preparation time. Faculty meetings did not address the “climate, culture, or other concerns but strategies for test taking” (Hickman & Hoffman, 2011, p. 27) where a fear to challenge students, for fear of retaliation, existed. This cultural fear affected faculty, and use of heteronormative profanity by students also added to the culture fear. Of special interest was Marie’s focus on the need to address social justice issues impacting students
and staff who were LGBTQ. Perhaps Marie’s scenario was not an uncommon one for many schools across the nation. Giroux’s (2007) and Kincheloe’s (2007) earlier studies had gleaned that the cornerstones of critical pedagogy where an unequal social layering and grouping occurred were based on class, race, and gender against those of power, status and privilege.

Hickman and Hoffman (2011) believed the use of critical pedagogy might help educators with a lens which uncovers inequities and a perpetuating of the status quo where LGTBQ students experience oppression. They asserted that educators need to understand the negative synergy at work, reflect on their beliefs and what they choose to do (or choose not to do), then take action to correct these inequalities. The culmination of these reflections would result in a changed culture where inappropriate behavior would be dealt with through disciplinary action. The focus needs to be on social advocacy for all students and faculty, especially those marginalized.

**School Climate/Safety**

Another study conducted in 2011, and reported in 2012, was an attempt to analyze school climate changes over time, and glean a better understanding of what LGBT students experience in K-12 schools across the nation. The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) gathered data across the county by using the 2011 National School Climate Survey. Their report told a startling story about the experiences of LGBT youth in our nation’s schools. In particular, GLSEN’s research documented the fundamental struggles LGBT students experienced in K-12 education. For more than a decade GLSEN’s research examined experiences of LGBT students with regard to indicators for negative climate. With the use of national, regional and local organizations providing services to, or advocating on behalf of, LGBT youth, as well as targeted advertising on the Facebook social network, GLSEN researchers obtained a national sample of
LGBT youth. The final sample of 8,584 participants was from youth aged 13 through 20 (grades 6 – 12). Two thirds of the respondents were white (67.9%), almost half (49.6%) female, and over half (61.3%) identified themselves as gay or lesbian.

The GLSEN (2012) indicators were based on hearing biased remarks, feeling unsafe, absenteeism, harassment, assault, academic achievement, future educational aspirations, psychological well-being, and victimization. In addition, the survey examined how school officials and staff addressed problems, how school experiences of LGBT student characteristics differed from others, what degree of school support and resources LGBT students received (including clubs such as Gay-Straight Alliances), and what anti-bullying/harassment policies/laws, and curricula inclusive LGBT-related topics were in place. Key findings for biased remarks revealed that 84.9% of students heard “gay” used in a negative way and 91.4% reported they felt distressed because of this language. Also, 61.4% heard negative remarks about gender expression – not acting masculine or feminine enough, and 56.9% heard homophobic or negative gender remarks from their teachers and other school staff.

When looking at school safety and experiences of harassment and assault (GLSEN, 2012), 63.5% felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation, 43.9% because of their gender expression, 81.9% were verbally harassed, 55.2% experienced electronic harassment, and 38.3% were physically harassed while 18.3% were physically assaulted. The indicator findings for absenteeism were also problematic by revealing that 29.8% of students skipped a class at least once in the previous month due to an unsafe or hostile environment. This high incidence of harassment and assault was noted to further be exacerbated by school staff who, according to the GLSEN report, rarely, if ever, interceded on behalf of LGBT students, which denied them their right to an education. The desire to pursue post-secondary education posed additional challenges
for LGBT students. With higher levels of victimization, these students reported they did not plan to pursue post-secondary education twice as often compared to those with lower levels of victimization (10.7% vs. 5.1%). The psychological well-being of LGBT students suffered as well, revealing higher levels of depression and lower levels of self-esteem.

To mitigate these problems, GLSEN (2012) offered four solutions. The first solution was establishing a more welcoming school environment through clubs like the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), as students in schools with these clubs, and similar organizations, reported hearing fewer negative homophobic remarks, were more likely to have school personnel intervene (19.8% vs. 12.0%), less likely to feel unsafe (54.9% vs. 70.6%), experienced less victimization (23.0% vs. 38.5%), and had a better “sense of connectedness” to their schools. Another solution offered included providing positive curricula, those more representative of LGBT people, history, and events to promote respect and improve school experiences. Students in schools with an inclusive curriculum reported more acceptance of LGBT students (66.7% vs. 33.2%). Further, the presence of many LGBT supportive educators was also shown to have a positive impact on LGBT students and their well-being. Although most students (95.0%) identified at least one supportive staff member, only half (54.6%) could identify six or more supportive staff. With more supportive staff in their schools, fewer LGBT students missed school (21.9% vs. 51.2%).

The last solution addressed comprehensive bullying/harassment policies and laws established for anti-bullying and harassment; policies and laws important in the creation of safer learning environments for all students, and especially for students with gender identity/expression and sexual orientation characteristics. In support of their findings, GLSEN works to provide resources in an attempt to reduce bias and violence towards LGBT students in national K-12 schools.
The microcosms in school cultures mirror that of societal biases towards LGBTQ individuals. As LGTBQ students are affected, so too are schools. GLSEN, perhaps the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe and affirming schools for all students, released their most recent report in 2015 called *From Statehouse to Schoolhouse: Anti-Bullying Policy Efforts in U.S. States and School Districts* (Kull, Kosciw, & Greytak, 2015). This research examined anti-bullying policies in 13,181 school districts at the elementary, middle and high school levels across the country, looking at how state laws affect policies at the district level – the prevalence of anti-bullying policies and whether state laws and guidance are being implemented at the district levels. More specifically, whether district policies protect students on the basis of personal characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, race and religion, and whether anti-bullying professional development for educators is required. Further, the research examined district accountability for incident reporting as well as whether there was an impact on school climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students.

With K-12 bullying and harassment serious problems affecting our youth nationally, the 2015 GLSEN report found it imperative for schools districts, state legislatures, and state educational agencies to ensure safe and supportive learning environments for all students and our even more at risk lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students. According to the report, school efforts in developing and implementing anti-bullying policies are crucial as they can support LGBT students and counteract a hostile school climate. Students whose schools had such policies experienced more positive school climates, shedding light on existing problems schools face as well as important advances schools have made across the nation in both recognizing and addressing bullying at the district and state levels.
Even with this knowledge, little research is available on the protection school districts provide for LGBT students. They simply identify themselves as having anti-bullying policies and are supportive of LGBT students. Districts may or may not address the improvement of LGBT students’ educational experiences. According to the 2015 GLSEN report, nearly one third of U.S. school districts lacked an anti-bullying policy. Of the 70.5% of U.S. schools with anti-bullying policies, less than half (42.6%) reported having protection for students based on their sexual orientation. Very few (14.1%) reported protections for students based on their gender identity and/or gender expression, and approximately one fourth (26.8%) require professional development on bullying and harassment for their staff. Additionally, less than one third (30.3%) required any accountability and only 3% of all school districts included policies addressing enumeration regarding LGBT students, professional development, or accountability. When asked about a district’s enumeration, only three in ten listed sexual orientation. One in ten included both sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, and only two in ten required professional training for staff or accountability for bullying incidents. A shocking 2% of all school districts across the nation provided all three elements – enumeration, professional development, and accountability!

On a regional level, the 2015 GLSEN report found school districts in the Northeast were the most likely to have anti-bullying policies and LGBT-inclusive policies with professional development requirements. In the South and West there is less likelihood to have protections for any group of students. This held true for rural school districts where anti-bullying policies and professional development requirements were lacking in general. By contrast, the report noted those states with laws, regulations, and policy guidance at a state level had significantly more school districts with policies aligned to state mandates. By far, having laws protecting LGBT
students was the most influential in school districts developing and implementing anti-bullying policies, noting school districts having anti-bullying state laws were twice as likely to have anti-bullying policies. Regulations appeared to exert the least amount of influence, and in some cases, had no influence at all.

Over and over the literature is replete with varying degrees of discrimination and prejudices towards LGBTQ students and education professionals; however, one gap in the literature lies in examining parents’ attitudes toward LGBT coaches. Although parents in one study (Cunningham & Melton, 2014) expressed unequivocally pro-LGBT attitudes, their support varied. Indifference was viewed as a positive mindset towards LGBT coaches more because the respondents stated they really did not think about it due to more pressing issues in American society. Other parents expressing support did so qualifying responses that were rooted in religious beliefs, past contact with sexual minorities, and parent background. As a whole, these responses served to perpetuate underlying stereotypes such as LGBT coaches having ulterior motives to promote their sexual orientation, and were seen as sexual predators (Cunningham and Melton, 2014). The results of this study are indicative of dual attitudes, one of support and one of prejudice where subtle, yet implicit discriminations, may exist.

In their qualitative study examining the spiritual, religious and social justice implication for an African American administrator, Reed and Johnson (2010) found an administrator’s leadership practices were guided by a conservative spiritual foundation and religious beliefs. These beliefs hindered the administrator’s protection, support and social justice engagement for LGBT students. Probing the African American school leader’s conservative religious upbringing, and ability to serve high school students with a high self-identified population of African American LGBT students, the study examined how one African American administrator
incorporated spirituality and social justice in her leadership practices and what contradictory social justice limitations existed when addressing the needs of LGBT students. According to their study, many scholars find spirituality (or religion) plays a critical role in the disposition of equitable treatment of students. Citing the findings of Taylor, Chatters, and Levin (2004) in their study 69.9% of African Americans in general responded as being both religious and spiritual (50.2% of the respondents White). Although the Reed and Johnson study focused on one African American leader, their recommendations target all school administrators with a need to reflect on their own practices, attitudes, and beliefs, and then take actions to meet the needs of all students, especially providing a safe, welcoming and productive environment where LGBT students can flourish.

Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover, at 12 years old, took his life because he was unable to live with the torment he endured every day at school (Stufft & Graff, 2011). Carl played football and basketball, belonged to Boy Scouts, and was involved with his community. Although Carl did not identify himself as being gay, his classmates teased and implied he was. Common in our culture are students like Carl who continually experience bullying, harassment, cyberbullying and violence (Stufft & Graff, 2011). The result of this kind of treatment in schools leaves many LGBTQ students feeling unwelcome, isolated, at risk of depression, suicidal, wanting to drop out of school, abusive of drugs or alcohol, and inclined to other harmful behaviors. Further, many principals do not acknowledge nor are aware of the extent LGBTQ students are harassed. Frank discussions and training on the law surrounding LGBTQ individuals, pedagogy, and LGBTQ content curricula are what is needed, along with support, positive role models, and zero tolerance policies addressing anti-gay harassment and violence in all forms (Lugg, 2014; Shufft & Graff, 2011).
If LGBTQ issues are not addressed, the impact of victimization, and the risk of suicide for LGB students, is too high. The Shields, Whitaker, Glassman, Franks and Howard (2011) study investigating the association of sexual orientation, victimization and suicide risk among 2,154 youth in San Francisco schools, showed an 84% response rate that revealed self-identifying adolescents were two to three times more likely to report suicidal ideation and attempts than heterosexual youth, with LGB students four times more likely to make a suicide plan than non-victimized youth! How can anyone being victimized feel safe?

Do students on Gay Straight Alliance campus feel safer? According to Flemming (2012) an assistant principal at the Mayfair Middle/High School in Lakewood, California, the answer is yes for his school. Flemming’s staff reported feeling that the GSA and other clubs working together changed the campus culture. Together the clubs promoted an atmosphere of kindness, tolerance and understanding for students and staff. For students, GSA members make all new members feel welcome. At meetings, students are introduced to everyone and invited to visit other clubs about schoolwork, fundraising, and activities. This diverse group attracted students who were sorting out their own identities and showing support of others, and students wishing to support civil rights issues for their LGBT community. One student summarizing the club’s mission said, “I’ve seen positive stuff, such as new friendships and tolerance for different races, ethnicities and gender expressions. It’s a group of different kids who you’d normally not associate with, but we’re all friends” (p. 14). These are obviously students who know how to communicate openly with one another.

What do you say to LGBTQ youth? In their 2011 study, Sherriff, Hamilton, Wigmore and Giambrone interviewed 29 participants (11 youth, aged 13-16, and 18 practitioners) on their experiences and support of LGBTQ youth in the United Kingdom. The research explored the
views of LGTBQ young people as well as the experiences, fears, concerns and training needs of practitioners working with LGTBQ youth. Their conclusions supported the growing evidence and need to address health equity and inequities LGTBQ youth experience from homophobic/transphobic bullying (verbal harassment and intimidation to physical violence), discrimination and marginalization. Threats to the physical, emotional and mental health were found connected to the “complex interplay between negative societal reactions (homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism), discrimination, social stigma, and a lack of support from family or institutions (e.g., school)” (p. 940). Broader health impacts from a myriad of scholars were noted in their study showing higher rates of homeless LGTBQ youth, drug and alcohol abuse, isolation, suicidal ideation, and a prevalence of mental health conditions (e.g., depression and anxiety) as compared to their heterosexual peers. Youth participants who “came out” spoke of feeling confusion, contradictions, and acceptance around perceptions of transitioning gender and sexual identities. Additionally, many LGBTQ identified practitioners stated they too struggled with coming out in the workplace. The bottom line was the majority of youth saw a critical need for teaching, housing, police, youth workers, and mental health practitioners to be better trained regarding LGTBQ issues and bullying. Practitioners reported a similar need for training, recognizing that “support needs associated with coming out or bullying cannot be separated from these young people’s service needs” (p. 950).

Adding to all the important research above, students with disabilities who identify as LGBT have even more significant challenges, especially in adolescence where human development is an important questioning time for core beliefs and developing identity foundations (Morgan, Mancl, Kaffar & Ferreira, 2011). Existing is a double complexity for sexuality identity development for LGBT students with disabilities as they feel isolation because
of their disability and their sexual identity. This may result in destructive behaviors (Morgan, et. al., 2011) including low self-esteem, anxiety and depression disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, sexually risky behaviors, truancy, academic failure, and suicidal ideations. Exacerbating these problems are educators who fail to address the needs of the LGTB student population because of personal attitudes about homosexuality, personal religious beliefs, and fear of school/community reactions.

Elevated risk factors are not attributed to LGBT students’ sexual identity, according to Morgan et. al. (2011), but to social norms and cultural environments. Since a large part of this development is spent in the school setting, it is important for educators to create a safe environment for LGBT students as they explore their identities. The support of educators and administration for this student population is again and again shown to be of significant need. Taking action to best support LGBT students with disabilities requires ongoing educational training (students, staff, and parents), inclusive curriculum, the implementation of anti-bullying policies and GSAs, and financial support for resources. Beyond the system wide strategies in school settings, Morgan et. al. recommend individual special education professionals can work to create safe spaces for LGBT students with disabilities, and be willing to address any negative opinions or biases they may have.

Collegiate/Sport LGBT

At the collegiate level where pre-service administrators, coaches and athletic directors earn their training and degrees, negative attitudes persist as well. Collegiate coaching provides challenges for gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals (GLB) at some colleges and universities across the nation, with many studies in the later 1990’s documenting hate crimes, prejudices and discrimination towards gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals.
Since 1999 (Pitts), the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) sports industry has grown with approximately 11 million lesbian and gay Americans participating in some type of sport, recreation leisure, or fitness activity. With the LGBT sports community growing over the past two decades, a major shift has been seen in the resolution of conflicts. One such shift occurred after the Montreal 2006 Gay Games organizing committee was unable to resolve their conflicts with the Federation of Gay Games resulting in losses of over 5 million dollars and leading to the filing for bankruptcy protection. The 2010 study conducted by McKay, examined these conflicts and offered logic on how organizational fields have been influenced.

The results of the McKay (2010) study revealed competing logics within the field of LGTB sport events leading to a dominance struggle. One such logic was seen in the Gay Games movement that began in 1968. This movement emphasized doing one’s personal best regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation or athletic ability. While primarily volunteer and community driven, the events relied on sponsorship from LGBT organizations, clubs and supporting governments. In 2001, the Federal Gay Games awarded the Gay Games VII to the Montreal bidding team. Trouble began to brew as both groups disagreed over the budget, size, cost of licensing, and significantly moved away from their previous volunteer/community-driven history. The change proposed an industry market and, structurally, a broader range of potential social players shaping resource distribution and who monitors and influences change affecting participants.

In addition to a major shift occurring in 2004, another new governing body, the Gay and Lesbian International sports Association (GLISA) was established. Looking at this shift, the McKay (2010) research applied an archival and institutional-embedded case study design to look at professional reports, governmental reports, organizational documents, formal legislation as
well as popular press and formal/informal presentation to provide context and observational processes that led to the creation of the GLISA, and influenced both the Gay Games in Chicago and Outgames in Montreal.

In looking at GLBT images and governance, McKay (2010) found an organizational image dictated how the organization desired to be perceived, the language they use for social interactions, and their level of professionalism. Although the negotiations had failings, the overall outcome led to a business model where governance, management, marketing and finance changed the landscape of GLBT sports. Further, even though multiple logics often result in divergent perspectives and governance structures, the study provided a better understanding of competing practices for GLBT sport issues in the creation of future practice.

Another study by Dawkins, in 2012, examined the perceived attitudes towards lesbian and gay men among heterosexual collegiate student athletes and student non-athletes, focusing on five attitudinal variables (gender, contact with lesbians and gay men; educational level, religiosity, and sport). In this study, 269 respondents self identified as follows: three gay men, three lesbian, six bisexual, two questioning, one as other, and 254 as heterosexual men or women. The overall conclusion showed heterosexual men’s and women’s attitudes towards lesbians did not differ; however, heterosexual men expressed significantly more negative attitudes toward gay men than did heterosexual women. When looking at student athletes exclusively, the results indicated male student athletes expressed slightly more negative attitudes towards lesbians than did female student athletes, with male student athletes having significantly more negative attitudes towards gay men than did female athletes. Further student male and female athletes with increased contact with lesbians and gay men were found to have more positive attitudes while more religious men and women athletes were found to have more
negative attitudes as did those who regularly attended religious services. Educational level showed no association differences. This conclusion was found to be consistent with other research (Herek, 2000; Roper & Halloran, 2007; Whitley & Aegisdottir, 2000) where heterosexual men were noted to have more negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbians than heterosexual women. One plausible reason given was the romantic norm where men “should be strong, aggressive, competitive, masculine, and show little emotion” (Dawkins, 2012, p. 61).

Attitudinal change at the collegiate level is more recently evidenced in a study by Oswalt and Vargas (2013), utilizing a participant pool selected from southern United States’ athletic departments for all Division I colleges (Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Mississippi, New Mexico, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas). Included in the Oswalt and Vargas (2013) study were 52.4% male coaches and 47.6% female coaches ranging in age from 22 – 69 years with coaching experience from first year coaches to 44 years of experience. The instrumentation provided for three scales: Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men—Short Scale, Heterosexism Scale, and a Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality Scale. The analysis resulted in answering three queries: “what are collegiate coaches’ attitudes toward GLB individuals” and “what is their level of heterosexism” (Oswalt and Vargas, 2013, p.125). The third question looked at “how demographic characteristics affect these attitudes and level of heterosexism” (p. 126). The results of the study revealed “moderately positive attitudes towards GLB individuals” along with “low levels of heterosexiam” (p. 126). Although indicative of a changing attitude within collegiate athletics, the low response rate and noted possible respondent bias, this study shows promise of attitude alteration. It further showed while the factors that influence the athletic setting are many, the
role of the coach substantially affects team climate and athletes regardless of an athlete’s sexual orientation.

**Bullying and Harassment**

Along with physical and verbal discrimination, smart phones and thumbs are all students need to instantaneously post online text messages, videos, or pictures for millions to see (Bentley, 2012). Our media era entices a voracious messaging audience, significantly revolutionizing communication and opening doors for harassment, discrimination, and ensuing legal battles. Common in public schools (and their sports venues) are cell phone misuses. One example is when a 2012 police investigation was conducted of an incident where a nude basketball player was videotaped on a teammate’s cell phone and sent out for others to view (Stuart, 2013). Inappropriate sexting, cellphone, and social media use by athletes, and all students, commonplace.

Some college coaches are reacting to the inappropriate athlete communications by banning the use of social media postings and engaging in athlete discipline (Bentley, 2012). Can collegiate athletes be banned for social media posting or be disciplined legally? It depends. In order for an individual to claim a valid First Amendment violation, a state action is required. This means an employee of a public college or university is subject to a potential claim, while an employee from a private college or university is not. To further complicate a First Amendment legal issue (freedom of speech and expression, freedom of association, the separation of church and state, due process or the freedom of religion), a suit must be brought against the individual versus the college or university. This places a significant need for coaches and athletic directors to be well schooled in the complexities of constitutional issues. Conversely, private colleges and
universities are exempt because the First Amendment does not require adherence due to the U.S. Constitution’s separation of church and state (Bentley, 2012).

The First Amendment differences for private versus public colleges and universities are critical for coaches and athletic departments to know as private entities are able to implement restrictive social media policies or disciplinary actions without the threat of a First Amendment claim. Public institutions, on the other hand, need to structure their policies and disciplinary actions according to the mandates of the First Amendment or face the possibility of a lawsuit (Bentley, 2012), a powerful message for K-12 public education.

To protect individuals from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil rights (OCR) enforces Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This amendment, mandating nondiscrimination, applies to all institutions, including school district in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For public schools (schools that accept federal funds), Title IX covers athletics, sex-based harassment, and discipline. Specifically the Amendment states that:

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. (US Department of Education, 2015)

Offering both reactive litigation solutions to discrimination and harassment and pro-active systemic remedies, administrative enforcement by the U.S. Department of Education’s OCR mandates school compliance through the withdrawal of Federal funding or referral to the Department of Justice (Stuart, 2013). Remedies may be sought by a victim if the school knew about, or reasonably should have known about, a hostile student-on-student harassment as seen
in *Davis v. Monroe*, where a fifth grade female was sexually harassed by a male peer despite numerous student and parent requests for the teacher and school administrator to intervene. The U. S. Supreme Court held public school districts are liable when students are treated with “deliberate indifference” in cases of sexual harassment where “. . . they have actual knowledge, that is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it can be said to deprive the victims of access to the educational opportunities or benefits provided by the school” (*Davis v. Monroe*, 1999). To be liable, a school district must have actual knowledge of the harassment. According to this ruling, a school employee has the ability to stop such abuse. If a school or employee has no knowledge of the harassment, however, they cannot be held liable (Stuart, 2013).

Athlete harassment, along with physical and psychological abuse of more junior team members by those senior members, is more than humiliating in public schools. It is dangerous. Team leaders are seen to use “sexual assaults to keep younger members in their place by feminizing them or challenging their ability to conform to a hegemonic masculine sports stereotype,” perpetuating a perceived rite of passage (Stuart, 2013, p. 374). Exampling this behavior in *Roe v. Gustine Unified School District*, freshman John Roe attended a three-day football camp where he was sexually assaulted and harassed by older players. In this case, four upperclassmen assaulted or attempted to assault 15 players, one being Roe who sued prevailing under Title IX. Such attacks on younger team members is “not just sexually exploitative but sexual abusive; they reveal deviance as a tool for power in the hierarchy” (p. 411). In this case, and similar hazing cases as well as the harassment cases like *Davis v. Monroe*, Title IX is a potent tool when suing a school district.

As a preventative measure Stuart (2013) pointed out, Title IX requires schools to establish administrative procedures that mitigate peer sexual harassment. Schools must also
provide a notice of their nondiscrimination policy(ies), appoint a Title IX coordinator, and develop grievance procedures for complaints. Further, school officials and coaches need to take direct responsibility for the behavior of athletes to break the code of silence. In addition to Title IX required administrative processes, the OCR recommends educational programs provide:

1. Orientation programs for new students, faculty, and employees;
2. Training for students who serve as advisors in residence halls;
3. Training for student athletes and coaches; and
4. School assemblies and ‘back to school nights’ (Stuart, 2013, p. 413)

Stuart further addresses a need for educational resources for administrators, faculty, coaches and students along with highly visible supervision. Title IX provides the guidance and enforcement tools, states pass laws, and now schools need to step up with policy-regulating protection, education, and intervention. The only way to break the tradition of hazing and harassment is to hold school adults responsible for inappropriate student behavior. As education moves forward and protections exist everywhere, perhaps peoples’ foundational beliefs, and personal resources they can offer LGBTQ students, will assure that all children are special, and equal, no matter what sexual orientations they may have or perceive of having.

**Methodology**

**Context of the Study**

Recent societal developments and the emergence and acceptance of LGBT individuals inspired this study. In a few short years there has been great progress with the inclusion of LGBT youth in sport. Our desire was to explore places of opportunity for K-12 practitioners and higher education professionals to further expand educational programs and areas of professional development. This study was completed in two different phases. The initial study was concluded
with pre-service administrators, both school and athletic, and coaching candidates. The second phase of the study encompassed pre-service teaching candidates. After the first phase, the survey questions were adjusted to solicit pre-service teacher candidates’ educational needs. The common questions between the two surveys included their foundational beliefs as well as their knowledge of resources available to LGTBQ students/athletes.

**Participants of This Study**

The participants for the current study were enrolled as undergraduate or graduate students at a comprehensive public university located in the Northwest portion of the United States. Participants included thirty-one (31) pre-service School Administration students, thirty-two (32) Athletic Administration students, twenty-one (21) coaching students in an Ethics in Sports course, and fifty-six (56) pre-service teacher candidates for a total of one hundred twenty seven (127) participants.

Demographics of those who responded to the survey show fifty-two (52) males and seventy-five (75) females whose median age is 25.6 (the youngest being 19 and the oldest being 55). One hundred-twenty (120) of the students’ sexual identities were listed as Straight while seven (7) reported themselves as Bisexual, all female. As for students’ degree objectives, sixty-four (64) were seeking bachelor’s degrees, seven (7) were post-baccalaureate, twenty-six (26) seeking master’s degrees in Athletic Administration, sixteen (16) seeking master’s degrees in School Administration, thirteen (13) working toward School Administration certification, and two (2) working toward coaching certification.

**Materials and Procedures**

The researchers, through reviewing the literature, developed an 11 question open-ended survey. For purposes of this paper, we focused on two of the survey questions which dealt with
the participants’ foundational beliefs and their knowledge of school resources. The survey questions were sent out to two individuals with expertise in this area to review and offer suggested revisions. One reviewer was a female school administrator and mother of a gay son, and the second reviewer was a gay male teacher and coach. Once revisions were incorporated into the survey, using Qualtrics the survey was distributed electronically to all students enrolled in the selected courses.

Student responses to the survey questions remained anonymous as the authors only looked at aggregated data. Students were provided the opportunity to opt-out of the survey at any time, or to skip questions for which they did not wish to respond.

After the surveys were completed, the authors used qualitative research protocol to arrive at coded themes for each question or prompt and then disaggregated the data per degree objectives. Only anecdotal attention was given to the seven respondents who reported their sexual identities as bisexual because the authors were looking for data that would give them the “big picture” about LGBTQ perceptions among pre-service teachers, pre-service school administrators, pre-service athletic administrators, and coaching course students.

**Results**

For this paper, the researchers focus on the following two questions from the survey:

Q1: What are your foundational beliefs regarding LGBTQ?

Q6: What resources could you provide a LGBTQ student?

For Q1, forty-six (46) respondents answered that their foundational beliefs regarding LGBTQ are ones of equity and respect for all students (no matter what identity). Three (3) of the respondents’ answers fitting into this theme had responses that were hard to judge as positive or negative in nature. Here are their responses:
21 year-old female pre-service teacher: “couldn’t care less who people love or marry”

31 year-old male pre-service teacher: “do whoever and whatever you want”

23 year-old female pre-service teacher: “I support and believe that individuals have a natural right to associate with whatever identity they choose as long as it doesn’t encroach on my personal lifestyle in a negative manner”

There were four (4) survey respondents whose foundational beliefs did not include LGBTQ. Their comments are as follow:

21 year-old male pre-service teacher: “I personally believe that romantic relationships should be between a man and a woman, not someone of the same gender, and that it is wrong to be LGBTQ”

20 year-old female pre-service teacher: “I believe that acting upon LGBTQIA+ desires is sin”

22 year-old female pre-service teacher: “I am a Christian so I do not agree with lifestyle choices of the LGBTQ community”

21 year-old female pre-service teacher: “what the Bible says”

Thirty-four (34) of the respondents to Q6 noted that resources for LGBTQ students should come from counselors or alliance groups by way of referral. In other words, the respondents would refer rather than assist directly. Fourteen (14) of the respondents would either help with, or point the LGBTQ students to, internet or media (pamphlets, programs, or books) sources. Four noted comments are below:

22 year-old male pre-service teacher: “Novels that feature LGBTQ protagonists”

23 year-old female pre-service teacher: “websites”
21 year-old female pre-service teacher: “I could guide them to the internet, specifically campuspride.org where there are many pages about LGBTQ students and how to organize Pride events”

21 year-old male pre-service Athletic Administration student: “I am sure there are plenty of blogs out there”

There was one respondent (21 year-old male pre-service teacher) who wanted to get a student a counselor, but then wrote, “I don’t think it is appropriate to provide any other resources to a student who is under 18 because I do not know the wishes of the parents.”

In addition to the above themes for Q6, there were six (6) survey respondents who were uncertain about resources. Two of the respondents noted the following:

24 year-old female pre-service teacher: “Personally I do not have a lot of resources I could provide, I am not very knowledgeable, and as an educator, I am not sure where the law falls on me providing information”

21 year-old female pre-service teacher: “Truthfully I do not have any. My high school had a LGBTQ club, but outside of that my resource knowledge is limited”

To conclude Q6 results, two of the respondents mentioned they would provide a “safety zone” as a resource for LGBTQ students. The respondents were 22 and 23 year-old females in the pre-service teacher program.

**Recommendations**

For the two questions of focus in this paper, students have their own beliefs about LGBTQ students and their own perceptions about resources that are available, or that they can give. In finding out respondents’ beliefs and perceptions, the researchers garnered important
information to help establish a direction for their programs’ pedagogies concerning LGBTQ education.

Results indicate that information, education, and training are needed when it concerns LGBTQ topics in order to promote social justice as the students become teachers or administrators. Most respondents know that treating students equitably and with respect is important, but their way of assisting in that endeavor is to refer students to counselors or alliance groups. The question about resources (Q6) did not give the researchers information about why the respondents would refer the students to counselors or alliance groups. Is it because they feel uncomfortable working with LGBTQ students one-on-one, or because they truly believe counselors and alliance groups are most helpful? Future research would suggest that a “why” component be added to the question to code for other themes within the responses.

In order to help pre-service educators, administrators, and coaches with social justice for LGBTQ, it is also recommended that current case law surrounding LGBTQ issues be included during their coursework and training. When future teachers, administrators, and coaches practice social justice within their professional settings, they will be more equipped to handle one-on-one connections with LGBTQ students. They will become a resource rather than just a referral source.
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