THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT, SPORT

IDEOLOGY, COLLECTIVE SELF-ESTEEM, HOMOPHOBIA,

AND TYPE OF SPORT AMONG

WOMEN ATHLETES

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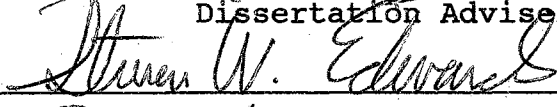the Degree of
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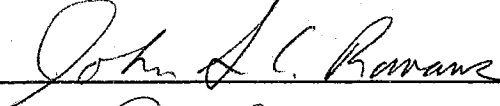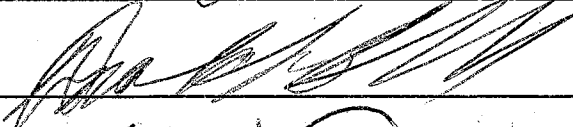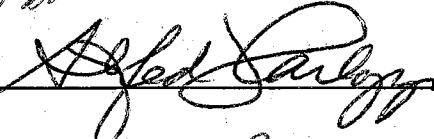
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expressed their confidence in me and believed in me in their own unique ways.

I dedicate this work to two people who I lost during this last year. My grandfather, Mr. Hugh L. Clay, who valued education, having fun, and being independent. He always expressed his pride for me and my accomplishments. He could not wait to call me "doctor". Also lost way before her time was my life issues mentor, Ms. Suzi Fisch. She had a high regard for my liberal philosophies and provided precious lessons for my life. Suzi had the ability to light up a room and make any space comforting . She is sorely missed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Study

Participation of women in athletics has been a widespread controversy in our society (Hargreaves, 1994), particularly with respect to which sports are suitable for women. In light of this controversy, literature on women in sports has identified two significant categories (types) of sports (Metheny, 1965): those sports that are socially "appropriate" for women's participation, and those that are socially "inappropriate". Sports that are aesthetically pleasing to watch, require accuracy but not great strength, and do not require physical contact or aggression are generally considered socially acceptable and appropriate for female participation (e.g., tennis, swimming, and gymnastics). However, sports that require physical strength, face-to-face opposition, aggression, and bodily contact have generally been considered socially unacceptable or inappropriate for women (e.g., basketball, softball, and track; Metheny, 1965; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983).

Numerous studies have attempted to explain the dichotomy of women's sports (appropriate versus inappropriate), and several of which have focused on the sex-role orientation of women athletes (Bem, 1974) as a potential causative factor. Burke (1986), for example,

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utilized Bem's Sex-Role Inventory (1974) to investigate if inappropriate sports psychologically attracted androgynous women. Results indicated that there were no differences in the type of sport "androgynous" women played versus women in other sex-role categories. However, women with masculine characteristics tended to participate in inappropriate sports more than the appropriate sports.

A study examining the social constraints placed on women's sport participation was conducted using nonathletes from a general university population to determine the effects the individuals' sex-type (masculine, feminine, neutral) and gender might have on their sport choice (Matteo, 1986). Results indicated no gender differences in overall sport participation, although men and women participated in the sports considered appropriate for their gender most often. Additionally, sex-typed women participated in sports significantly less often than androgynous and undifferentiated women.

Koivula (1995) investigated the effects of sex-role orientation and gender on individuals' definition of appropriate sports for women. Results indicated that men, sex-typed men, and cross-sex-typed men were more likely to stereotype sports as masculine and feminine than women in all BSRI groups. Results of both Matteo (1986) and Koivula (1995) indicate that the sport experiences for men and women are still limited to the social appropriateness of the sport for the athletes' physiological sex.

Some investigations attempting to understand athletic

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opportunities for women considered social influences along
with the athletes' personal characteristics (i.e., sex-role
orientation). Engel (1994) found that social stereotyping of
sports as appropriate or inappropriate for girls and women
begins influencing female athletes' participation at a young
age. A significant decrease in sports, specifically
those classified as "masculine", occurs as girls get older.
However, a decrease in female athletes involved in
"feminine" or "neutral" sports has not been found (Engel,
1994).

Declining sport participation among young women was
investigated within the high school population (Kane, 1988).
Kane specifically focused on the acceptability or "social
status" of female athletes and if social status differed
according to sport the young women played. Women who
participated in inappropriate sports during high school were
described as the "least desirable to date" by high school
men, while high school women described these athletes as
"least desirable for a best friend" (Kane, 1988). Results
also indicated that men chose the role of athlete most often
as the role for which they would like to be remembered,
while women chose the role of leader in activities. In fact,
women chose the role of athlete the least often of all other
role options given.

As research on socially acceptable versus socially
unacceptable sport types continued, additional variables
were considered for their possible effect on young women's
sport participation decisions. One of the variables examined

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was the amount and kind of social support female athletes received. Sarason, I., Levine, Basham, and Sarason, B. (1983) defined social support as "the existence or availability of people on whom we can rely, people who let us know that they care about, value, and love us" (p. 127).

Greendorfer (1977) investigated the socializing agents (e.g., parents, teachers, coaches, peers) of female athletes across three life stages (childhood, adolescence, and adulthood). Greendorfer (1977) explained that socializing agents are extremely influential due to their power to distribute rewards and punishments and for their ability to instill values.

Parents were found to have a strong socializing influence during childhood, but decreasing influence as the child ages. Teachers and coaches had significant influence during adolescence, while peers were influential during every stage. Athletes also indicated that male athletes were seen as "role models" during every life stage, whereas female athletes were not viewed as role models by the participants during any life stage (Greendorfer, 1977).

Several years later, Whitaker and Molstad (1988) found that female high school athletes preferred female players and coaches as role models, whereas female college athletes' role model preference changed to male athletes. The authors concluded that the preference change between high school and college was due to the significant number of athletic men who were successful and in the public eye, in comparison to the number of women in such positions.

An additional variable which has been only minimally examined for its influential power over women in athletics is homophobia, which is defined as the personal/emotional responses of aversion, disgust, fear, anxiety, discomfort, and anger with respect to contact or interactions with individuals who are gay or lesbian (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980). Rotella and Murray (1991) described how homophobia has negative ramifications for gay and lesbian athletes as well as heterosexual athletes. The authors interviewed individuals currently active in sports to learn how homophobia affects their sport experience. Statements they gathered described how: (a) some parents will discourage their children from making an honest commitment to sports due to their concern that participation may influence their children's sexual preference; (b) some athletes may go to ridiculous extremes to prove to others that they are indeed heterosexual, including being sexually promiscuous; (c) some gay or lesbian athletes and coaches undermine their own successes for fear that their sexual orientation will be discovered; (d) some people stereotype others as gay or lesbian due to their bodybuild, mannerisms, clothes, hair length, and sport choice.

Athletic institutions are known for their traditional sex-role beliefs and homophobic attitudes (Blinde & Taub, 1992a). That is, homophobia has become a weapon to use against women in order to restrict their involvement in athletics or to devalue their sport experiences. Griffen (1994) proposed that the most powerful means of restricting

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women's involvement in athletics is to question their femininity and "the most threatening of all strategies for keeping them in their place is to accuse them of being lesbian" (Griffen, 1994, p. 251). Women athletes worry about being stigmatized as lesbian just because of the sport they play or because they look "athletic" (Blinde & Taub, 1992a). Oftentimes, women athletes counter the lesbian stigma by hiding their athleticism, wearing very feminine clothing, and minimizing their true athletic abilities (Blinde & Taub, 1992a).

Homophobic ramifications do not necessarily occur according to the sexual orientation of the athletes, but rather according to the sport being played. Rotella and Murray (1991) found that the lesbian stigma was assigned most often to women participating in team sports because these sports require more athleticism, physical contact, and competitive and aggressive behaviors than the more individual sports (e.g., golf, tennis, swimming). Team sports are also more commonly viewed as sports played by men (Blinde & Taub, 1992a).

Blinde and Taub (1992b), using phone interview data of women athletes, discovered a substantial number of negative societal stereotypes about women athletes and lesbians. The authors concluded that "silencing" female athletes about the lesbian stigma along with athletes' internalizing negative social stereotypes diminishes the self-actualizing gains they could otherwise receive from their successes in sport.

Sport ideology, a set of moral beliefs that sports

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offer important benefits for society and individuals (Harry, 1995), has also been considered an influential variable affecting women's athletic experiences. Fleshin and Oglesby (1986) emphasized two traditions that are commonly accepted about sport: 1) Sport serves as masculinity training for men and 2) society accepts women in sport by offering them a lesser sport experience which is more appropriate and suited to women. These traditions emphasize the belief that sport must be performed primarily by men because only men can provide the role model for masculine dominance (Fleshin & Oglesby, 1986). The authors concluded that the adoption of these traditions may influence rigid beliefs about masculine/superiority and feminine/inferiority in physical conditioning, athleticism, and financial gain.

One of the few empirical studies investigating sport ideology hypothesized that sport ideology was associated with sexism and negative attitudes toward women, gay men, and lesbians (Harry, 1995). Results indicated that sport ideology was not directly related to antilesbian attitudes, but was significantly related to traditional gender roles. Therefore sport ideology was concluded to have an independent link to antigay and antilesbian beliefs by way of its support for traditional gender roles.

Self-esteem of female athletes is the final variable to be considered here for its influence on women's participation in sports. Generally, literature measuring the self-esteem of athletes has focused on self-esteem differences between athletes and nonathletes. Results

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consistently indicated that differences in physical self-esteem could be found, but differences between the athletes' and nonathletes' global self-esteem was not significant (Hall & Durborow, 1986; Jackson & Marsh, 1986; Marsh & Jackson, 1986; Zaharopoulos & Hodge, 1991).

Another common approach to studying self-esteem within the athletic population has been to examine the relationship between self-esteem and the athletes' sex-role, as determined by the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ). Results of a study by Del-Ray & Sheppard (1981) indicated that participants categorized as androgynous or masculine displayed higher self-esteem than feminine or undifferentiated participants.

Crocker and Luhtanen (1990) suggest an alternative method of evaluating self-esteem, especially when investigating individuals who belong to a social, racial, or cultural group that has been stigmatized or oppressed in some way. This new construct of self-esteem, <u>collective self-esteem</u>, represents those evaluative aspects of identity which have to do with memberships in social groups.

Collective self-esteem is based on Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theory which suggests that individuals not only strive for a positive personal identity, but for a positive collective identity as well. Collective self-esteem reflects the positive or negative sentiments respondents feel toward their membership in their particular group and specifically considers respondents' perceptions of how their group compares to other social

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groups.

In summary, the literature presented has supported the notion that social categories of sports for women exist and are based on the sports' appropriateness for women's participation. Several studies have been conducted to assess the personality variables affecting female athletes decisions regarding their sport of choice.

Background of the Problem

Research investigating the appropriateness of sports for women has commonly concentrated on the women who play the inappropriate sports by investigating how their sex-role orientations differed from those of women involved in appropriate sports. (Bem, 1974; Burke, 1986; Koivula, 1995; Matteo, 1986). An additional study involving the personal and psychological characteristics of female athletes focused on the athletes' attitudes and adherences to "traditional" female role, thus determining if these athletes were "liberal" or "conservative" thinkers (Salisbury & Passer, 1982).

Research focusing on the personal and psychological characteristics of female athletes (i.e., sex-role orientation or alignment with traditional roles for women) are problematic in that they suggest that these characteristics are potential causative factors for women participating in masculine sports. In contrast, social contextual influences (i.e., social influences, homophobia, sport ideology, or collective self-esteem) have been ignored within this line of investigation, thus leaving unclear the

impact such variables may have on decisions girls and young women make regarding their sport participation. By overlooking these other, potentially influential variables, while maintaining a focus on the personal aspects of female athletes, the stereotyped categorization of sports as truly being appropriate or inappropriate for women is perpetuated.

Many of the independent research studies investigating these contextual variables related to choosing which type of sport to play are problematic as well. Some investigations are problematic due to the use of general university populations as participants rather than female athletes. (e.g., Harry, 1995; Weiss & Barber, 1995; & Whitely, Jr., 1987). Another problem is the lack of consideration for the types of sports being represented by the female athlete sample population. Significant biases may occur within research that (a) has not controlled for the types of sports represented in the female athlete sample (e.g., Colker & Spatz-Widom, 1980; Weiss & Barber, 1995); (b) utilizes males in the comparison groups used (e.g., Harry, 1995); or (c) uses athletes from a program with a "no-cut" policy, meaning anyone can play regardless of ability (e.g., Colker & Spatz-Widom, 1980). Athletes in this latter study may not experience the choice process with respect to sport type in the same way as athletes in most university programs who must maintain their sport position by way of performance and commitment to the sport.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the considerable amount of empirical

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investigations of women in athletics, few studies have considered variables reflecting society's influence and the athletes' specific environment. The variables chosen for this study (e.g., homophobia, social support, collective self-esteem, and sport ideology) were believed to assess more directly the relationships of social context variables with the decisions women make to participate in one or another type of sport. These variables have been considered in other studies, but have never been studied together to determine both their individual and combined impact on the type of sports chosen by female athletes.

Therefore, the current study investigated the relationship between the type of sports in which female athletes are involved and their perceptions of the social support received, their level of homophobia, their alignment with sport ideology, and their collective self-esteem.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Does a relationship exist between social support, sport ideology, collective self-esteem, level of homophobia, and the type of sport in which women athletes participate?

2. Does a relationship exist between the female athletes' level of sport ideology and the athletes perception of appropriateness of their sport with the athletes' level of homophobia?

Definitions of Terms

Appropriate Sport Types for Women refer to sports that are aesthetically pleasing to watch, require accuracy but

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not great strength, and are competitive but do not require physical contact with opponents (Metheny, 1965). This category of sport generally includes tennis, swimming, and gymnastics (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983).

Collective Self-Esteem represents those aspects of identity that have to do with memberships in social groups and the value placed on those groups (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994).

Homophobia is the personal/emotional responses of aversion, disgust, fear, anxiety, discomfort, and anger, with respect to contact or interactions with individuals who are gay or lesbian (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980).

Inappropriate Sport Types for Women are those sports that require physical strength, face-to-face opposition, aggression, and bodily contact (Metheny, 1965). This category of sport generally includes basketball, softball, and track (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983).

Sex-role Identity/Orientation is a psychological construct which refers to the degree to which a person expresses masculine and/or feminine tendencies or regards herself or himself as masculine and/or feminine (Bem, 1974).

Social Influences (Social Support) are those social agents which significantly influence the individuals' socialization processes because of their power to distribute rewards and punishments and for their ability to instill and confirm values (Greendorfer, 1977).

Sport Ideology is the societal belief that sport offers honorable values for society and individuals (Willis, 1982).

## Significance of the Study

Few empirical investigations have attempted to discover variables that affect girls and women as they make decisions about their sport experiences. Several variables were evaluated in this study, although many more societal variables may need to be considered before an accurate presentation of women's athletics can be created. If a primary goal of athletic equality for men and women exists, then knowing the pressures and social consequences young women endure in order to play sports must be recognized by teachers, coaches, administrators, and counselors for equality to truly occur.

## Assumptions and Limitations

Several basic assumptions underlie the present study. The first assumption is that in general, an "athlete" is someone competing in a formally organized sport program in which her or his commitment to the sport and playing ability are required and assessed for continual participation in her/his sport. A second assumption is that the NCAA Division I and NCAA Division II university sport programs are similar in requirements for players regarding age, academic progress, time requirements for practice and competition, and expected level of commitment to the sport.

A third basic assumption is that the sample population of female athletes from the universities located in the Midwestern area of the United States, represented female athletes throughout the nation due to national level recruiting within these divisions of sport.

Several limitations to this study must also be noted. The first is that self-report questionnaires were used in this study and individuals other than the researchers administered the instruments. The second limitation was that certain sports were specifically designated for this study (e.g., basketball, softball, tennis, swimming, golf, and gymnastics) which could hinder the generalizability to female athletes in other sports.

A third limitation of this study concerns the difficulty of acquiring willing teams and coaches to participate. Due to teams various competition schedules, NCAA limits on how much contact coaches can have with their players during each week, and the number of research efforts being conducted utilizing athletes, it was necessary to utilize teams based on availability rather than on random selection for inclusion in this study. The final limitation of this study concerns the literatures' omission of bisexual individuals when describing homophobia and its victims (Griffen, 1994; Herek, 1984; Messner & Sabo, 1990). For the current study, "biphobia" and its impact on female athletes was not specifically addressed, although its existence in the population studied is believed to be likely.

Summary and Overview of Remaining Chapters

In summary, this study assessed the relationship of the type of sports women play (appropriate versus inappropriate) with the their collective self-esteem, sport ideology, social support received, and expressed homophobia. Furthermore, it assessed the relationship between the female

athletes' level of homophobia with level of sport ideology
and the athletes' perception of appropriateness of their
sport.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The present study examined the relationships of the type of sports women play with the social influences women receive, their adopted sport ideology, collective self-esteem, and expressed homophobia. The first two sections of the literature review introduced the notion that differing sport types exist and that social influences affect women's decisions about which type of sport to pursue and whether to stay active in the sport in which they are currently excelling. The next section examined homophobia in sports and how homophobia served as a means of devaluing and restricting women in athletics. The psychological impact homophobia has on female sport participants was also discussed. The following section included a definition and discussion of sport ideology as it related to homophobia and as it served to maintain traditional beliefs about the treatment of women. The final section of the literature review examined self-esteem in female athletes as it related to their participation in sports and to homophobic attitudes surrounding female athletes.

Types of Sports for Women

The literature on female athletes identified two major categories of sports for women, as defined by societal expectations: sports that are deemed appropriate and

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congruent with the social role of women and sports that are inappropriate and incongruent with the role of women (Metheny, 1965). For example, Snyder and Spreitzer (1983) examined the attitudes of the general public through a series of five surveys administered to representative samples over the last decade. Their results indicated a clear pattern of differential attitudes toward female athletes that was dependent upon the type of sport played. The general public tended to be favorable toward women's participation in tennis, swimming, and gymnastics. However, less favorable attitudes were expressed toward female athletes involved in basketball, softball, and track (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983).

Metheny (1965) also found that sports which were aesthetically pleasing to watch, required accuracy but not undue strength, and were competitive but did not demand physical contact, were considered acceptable activities for female participants by respondents in her study (e.g., golf, gymnastics, tennis, swimming). Unacceptable sport activities required physical strength, face-to-face opposition, aggression, and bodily contact (e.g., softball, basketball).

Efforts to further understand the social categories of appropriate and inappropriate sports for girls and women have investigated these categories related to the sex-roles of the participants. For example, Burke (1986) examined whether traditionally inappropriate sports such as basketball, softball, volleyball, and long-distance running, attract psychologically androgynous female athletes or

enhanced their already existing androgynous traits more so than participation in "appropriate" sports, such as tennis, swimming, diving, and gymnastics. Burke (1986) gave the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) to 49 female athletes involved in tennis, swimming, basketball, or softball. Results revealed no significant difference in the number of psychologically androgynous female athletes participating in traditionally inappropriate sports versus traditionally appropriate sports. However, there was a significant difference in the level of masculinity expressed by the two groups, with more masculine traits being expressed by inappropriate sports participants. Burke (1986) speculated that sports deemed inappropriate may have provided reinforcement of masculine traits for these participants than women in the traditionally appropriate sports did not receive.

Koivula (1995) investigated the effect of gender and sex-role on the classification of type of sport (i.e., appropriate versus inappropriate). She gave 104 women and 103 men from psychology classes at a major Stockhom university the Bem Sex Role Inventory and a questionnaire which assessed their feelings about the appropriateness of men and women participating in sports. The participants rated 60 sports in terms of gender appropriateness, based on their personal views. Results revealed differences in gender appropriateness ratings between BSRI groups and between men and women. Men, sex-typed men (i.e., men who endorse a significantly higher number of masculine personality

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characteristics), and cross-sex-typed men (i.e., men who endorsed a significant number of feminine characteristics), were more likely to stereotype sports as masculine or feminine than women and all other sex-role groups.

Matteo (1986) also examined the relationship of gender and sex-role orientation (Bem, 1974) of participants using a predetermined list of sports classified as feminine, masculine, or neutral. The participant pool originally consisted of 80 university freshmen from an introductory psychology class who completed the BSRI. Students were selected from that pool on the basis of their BSRI scores in order to provide equal numbers of male and female sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgynous, and undifferentiated subjects (Bem, 1974). The participants completed the Sport Participation Questionnaire (SPQ), which involved rating the 68 sports previously classified as masculine, feminine, or neutral on a nine-point scale from "extremely masculine" to "extremely feminine". Participants also completed the Sport Background Questionnaire, developed by Matteo for this study, which focused on the individual's personal commitment to one or more sports as well as the level of participation in specific sports during different periods of life.

Results indicated no sex difference in overall sport participation; however, females participated in significantly more feminine-typed sports than males and males participated in significantly more masculine-typed and neutral sports than females. Findings also revealed that sex-typed males typically avoided sport activities deemed

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inappropriate for males to a greater extent than androgynous and undifferentiated males.

Results of Matteo's (1986) investigation also indicated that sex-typed women reported significantly less participation in all three sport categories (neutral, masculine, and feminine) than undifferentiated or androgynous women combined. The study further indicated that cross-sex-typed women and androgynous women reported higher levels of participation in all three sport categories than sex-typed and undifferentiated women. Together these results indicated that while similar numbers of men and women are participating in sport activities, their sporting experiences are still limited to the appropriateness of the sport for their physiological sex.

Sport type has also been investigated as it relates to attitudes toward women's societal roles. Salisbury and Passer (1982) conducted a study which examined whether women participating in traditionally less feminine sports held more liberal attitudes toward women's roles than women who participated in the more feminine or appropriate sports. Participants for this study included 189 women between the ages of 19 to 65 and 184 high school girls between the ages of 14 to 18. All participants had played competitively in basketball, soccer, volleyball, track/long-distance running, tennis, softball, or rugby. They were each given the Attitudes Toward Women Scale, and a supplementary questionnaire that assessed how they perceived the gender appropriateness of different sports for women. They were

also asked to rank the sports from least to most unfeminine.
Results yielded the following rankings of least to most
unfeminine sports: tennis, volleyball, softball, track/long
distance running, soccer, basketball, and rugby. However,
results of the adult sample and the student sample differed
with respect to liberal attitudes toward women. Results of
the adult sample supported the hypothesis that more liberal
gender-role attitudes would be found among women
participating in the stereotypically unfeminine sports,
whereas results of the student sample did not support this
hypothesis.

Coakley and White (1992) were also concerned with how
young people made decisions to participate in formal sport
activities. In-depth semistructured interviews were
conducted with 34 men and 26 women, ages 13 to 23, who were
from working-class families and who only had informal
athletic experience. Interview questions focused on
participants' descriptions of their sport experiences, and
how they incorporated these experiences into other aspects
of their lives. Results were classified into five summary
statements, three of which are relevant here. First,
decisions about sport participation were based on concerns
about becoming adults. Both men and women shared thoughts
that sport may not fit into their lives as they go through
the transition into adulthood. However, young women were
more likely than young men to state that sports had little
or nothing to do with them becoming an adult. Indeed, women
further explained that sports could actually be incongruent

with their understanding of the characteristics of an "adult woman". Second, decisions about sport participation were based on concerns about personal competence. Gender was a significant determinant in how participants defined themselves as sportpersons. Women were less likely to define themselves as sportpersons, even when they were currently active in informal sport activities. In contrast, men were far more likely to define themselves as sportpersons, even if they were not currently active in a sport. Third, decisions about sport participation reflected constraints related to money, parents, and opposite-sex friends. Financial constraints were mentioned by both groups; however, parental constraints were mentioned almost exclusively by female participants. It was speculated that parents where more restrictive with their daughters' activities than their sons'. Relationships with persons of the opposite sex showed a significant gender difference. Young women were far more likely to alter or withdraw from their sport activities when they had boyfriends. In contrast, young men explained that their girlfriends understood that men's sport activities were priority, and they expected them to be supportive.

Social stereotyping of certain sports as appropriate or inappropriate for girls or women appeared to begin to influence potential female athletes at a young age. Engel (1994) surveyed the patterns and levels of sport participation in two groups of young women, 12-to-13-year olds and 15-to-16-year olds, for a total sample size of 200.

She hypothesized that the older group would report less athletic participation than the younger group and that participation in the "masculine-typed" sports would also be less for the older group than the younger group. Participants were given the Sport Participation Questionnaire that included a list of 36 sports previously classified as masculine, feminine, or neutral. Respondents indicated whether or not they participated in each of these sports. Additionally, nine questions regarding respondents' perceptions of girls and women in sports were included in the questionnaire. Results indicated that masculine-classified sports played by young women decreased as their age increased. In contrast, neutral and feminine classified sports did not show the same decline. Engel (1994) interpreted these results as being reflective of societal pressure to conform to stereotypical feminine roles.

Reasons were speculated for the declining sport participation among young women as they get older. For example, Kane (1988) speculated that social status attainment within high school settings might affect sport participation for adolescent girls. She replicated Coleman's (1961) original work on social status systems of high school adolescents. Coleman had found that the achievement of status among high school males was primarily a function of athletic involvement. Kane's (1988) study examined the relationship of athletic participation and status for female high school athletes with special consideration for the type of sport played. A forced-choice questionnaire was given to

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232 students (111 females and 121 males). Social status was measured by a question asking which role students would most want to be remembered for in high school. Social status was also measured by asking male participants which female athlete they would most likely want to date and asking female participants which female athlete they would most likely have as a best friend. The five sports used in this study were golf, tennis, and volleyball for the sex-appropriate sports and basketball and softball for the sex-inappropriate sports. Results of the question regarding the role they most wanted to be remembered by revealed that men chose the role of an athlete and women chose the role of leader in activities. In fact, women chose the role of athlete the least often of all other role options given. Women participating in sex-appropriate sports were chosen significantly more often (85.12%) as potential dating partners by males than were the participants of sex-inappropriate sports (14.88%). Female athletes who participated in sex-appropriate sports (86.49%) were chosen significantly more often (86.49%) as "best friends" by female participants than female athletes participating in sex-inappropriate sports (13.51%). Kane (1988) concluded that the social acceptability of female sport participation was directly influenced by traditional views of what was considered appropriate feminine behavior.

Social Influences

To understand why girls and women choose to play sports initially, why they continue to play sports as they develop

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and how they determine their sport of choice or even develop a professional interest in athletics requires acknowledging the social influences that affect their lives. Bowlby (1980) described social support as the presence and availability of people that can be counted on and who love, value, and care about others.

Whitaker and Molstad (1988) examined role modeling and female athletes at the high school and college levels. A 30-item survey was administered to a sample of female high school and college athletes to learn who they viewed as their role models and the gender of that person. Results indicated that female high school athletes preferred female players and coaches as role models, whereas college female athletes preferred male coaches and athletes to emulate. The authors concluded that the preference change from high school to college was possibly due to the significant number of athletic men who were successful and in the public eye, and thus, available to be role models in comparison to the number of women in such positions.

Earlier work examining the socializing agents of girls and women in sports compared social influences at three life stages (childhood, adolescence, and adulthood) for 585 women involved in intercollegiate athletics (Greendorfer, 1977). Greendorfer explained that "socializing agents substantially influence the outcome of the socialization process because of their prestige and power to distribute rewards and punishments and for instilling and confirming values . . ." (p. 304).

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Results of a fixed-alternative questionnaire developed by Greendorfer (1977) revealed that socializing agents change through the life stages (childhood, adolescence, and adulthood). Parents were found to be strong socializing agents during childhood, but had decreasing influential power during adolescence and adulthood. Teachers and coaches were significantly influential during the adolescence stage only, whereas female athletes' peers were significantly influential during all three stages. It was also discovered that male athletes served as significant role models across each life stage, whereas female athletes were not significantly chosen in any life stage.

A recent study of social influences affecting female collegiate athletes compared female athletes who competed in 1989 with female athletes who competed 10 years earlier (Weiss & Barber, 1995). Comparisons were also made between female collegiate athletes and female and male nonathletes across childhood, adolescence, and college years.

Participants included 345 female Division I volleyball and basketball players who competed during the 1989-1990 season. The comparison sample included 95 Division I volleyball players who competed 10 years prior and a group of 219 male and female college students. Participants were given the Female Sport Socialization Questionnaire which measures the degree of influence by parents, siblings, best male friend, best female friend, and coaches on the participants' sport involvement during the three stages of development. "Influence" was measured by summing the

presence of the following: modeling behaviors, interest shown toward sports, encouragement for the individual's participation in sport, and responsibility for respondent's interest and involvement in sports.

Results of the comparison between current and past athletes revealed that social support had increased over the last 10 years for every life stage and in most relationships. The father, mother, and coach were the prominent influences responsible for the interest and participation in sport during each life stage. Female athletes today also perceived greater social support than the nonathlete comparison group from parents, peers, and coaches during childhood and current college years.

Weiss and Barber (1995) were attempting to show that a significant increase in social support has occurred for female athletes. However, one limitation to their study was the use of respondents who had played or are currently playing volleyball, a female sport previously determined appropriate for girls/women (Salisbury & Passer, 1982). Thus, this data did not include social support perceptions of female athletes participating in sports considered inappropriate for females. Another problem with the study was the author's use of males in the nonathlete comparison group. Results may have been influenced by the different perceptions of social support noted by males versus females.

Homophobia in Athletics

Until fairly recently, gay men and lesbians were considered to have a psychopathological illness due to their

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sexual orientation. For many years, scientists worked on finding a cause or cure for such deviant behavior (Herek, 1984). A Newsweek Poll (1983) conducted over a decade ago indicated that only one-third of adults in the U.S. felt that homosexuality was an acceptable lifestyle. However, one-half of the adults who participated in a more recent Gallop Poll (1992) also felt that gay, lesbian, or bisexual people should be limited as far as occupations held. "Few issues seem to stir emotions and elicit feelings of resentment and hatred as do the socially learned attitudes and beliefs concerning homosexuality" (Rotella & Murray, 1991 p. 356). While progress toward acceptance of gays and lesbians has occurred since the time of the earlier public opinion poll (Herek, 1984), anger, hostility, discrimination, and rejection are still common societal reactions toward individuals who identify with the gay or lesbian identity (Griffen, 1994).

Griffen (1994) described the negative treatment of gay and lesbian sport participants and proposed that athletic institutions promote traditional sex role beliefs and homophobic attitudes. Griffen supported her claim by summarizing the works of Cart (1992); Denney (1992); Lipstyte (1991); and the USA Today (1991). These studies independently documented specific occurrences of hostility and fear expressed toward gays and lesbians that are common in college athletic programs, professional athletes, coaches, and sports administrators.

Griffen (1994) further explained the impact homophobia

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has on female athletes by pointing out that, "given the function of athletics for men, the presence of women in athletics poses a challenge to the traditional gender order" (p. 81) and requires them to possess qualities associated with stereotypical homophobic features of lesbian women: "If women can successfully compete aggressively, competitively, and be tough-minded, strong and confident, the whole notion of what is masculine and what is feminine will have to be redefined" (p. 81). In other words, Griffen proposed that in order to maintain the traditional, more elite status of men in athletics, women are discouraged from participating.

Messner and Sabo (1990) explained that homophobia is not only the irrational fear or intolerance of gay men or lesbians; it also includes the fear of behavior that is perceived to be outside the limits of traditional gender-role expectations. In Griffen's previous work (1992a), she explained that the most powerful means of restricting womens' involvement in athletics has been to question their femininity and "the most threatening of all strategies for keeping them in their place is to accuse them of being lesbian" (Griffen, 1994, p. 251). As long as society maintains the notion that homosexuality is pathological, immoral, and sinful, gays and lesbians will be stigmatized. This stigma also appears to serve as a social control function for male-dominated athletics by assisting in maintaining the traditional gender order and by idolizing masculine characteristics, particularly when they are expressed by men (Griffen, 1994).

Whitely (1987) conducted a study which examined how the endorsement of traditional sex-role beliefs, sex-role self-concept, and traditionality of sex-role behavior was related to attitudes toward homosexuals. A packet containing: the Self-Concept Inventory, the Wilson and Patterson's Conservatism Scale, the Attitude Toward Women Scale, the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ), the Sex-Role Behavior Scale, the Heterosexual Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Scale, and the Index of Homophobia was given to 135 female and 107 male introductory psychology students. Results indicated that women held less negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians than did men. Women and men with less masculine tendencies also displayed significantly less negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians than did individuals who displayed more masculine tendencies. Further results indicated that women with higher self-esteem held more positive attitudes toward homosexuals. However, given equal self-esteem, less masculine women held more positive attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women.

Rotella and Murray (1991) examined how homophobic attitudes affected female and male athletes by interviewing individuals who were currently participating in sports. Responses from athletes indicated that: a) some parents will discourage their children from making an honest commitment to sports due to their concern that participation may influence their children's sexual preference; b) some athletes may go to ridiculous extremes to prove to others that they are indeed heterosexual, including being sexually

promiscuous; c) some gay and lesbian athletes and coaches
undermine their own successes for fear of their sexual
orientation becoming known; d) some people stereotype others
as gay or lesbian due to their bodybuild, mannerisms,
clothes, hair length, and sport choice. The authors
concluded that homophobia has negative ramifications for
both homosexual and heterosexual players, causing a
detrimental influence in overall sport performance.

Blinde and Taub (1992a) examined the impact homophobia
has on female athletes by focusing on how these athletes
manage the "lesbian label" and the accompanying masculine
image assigned to them due to their sport participation. The
study consisted of 60 to 90 minute phone interviews with 24
collegiate varsity female athletes. Interviews focused on
collegiate sport experience with regard to society's
perception of women's sports and female athletes; the
positive and negative ramifications of women participating
in sport; and stereotypes of female athletes that they
confronted most often. Additional questions were asked
concerning the lesbian stigma commonly attached to female
athletes and how that stigma influenced them.

Results from the study revealed that the vast majority
of respondents thought labeling women athletes lesbian or at
least questioning their sexual identity was a common
practice by the public. Some women believed the label
existed due to their athletic role being directly contrary
to the traditional role for women. Some of the respondents
also felt that being labeled lesbian was a way to punish

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female athletes for their participation in a male sport, while others thought the lesbian stigma was a means of devaluing women athletes in general. Many athletes in the study mentioned that they often felt that people did not try to get to know them personally, but rather assumed that because they were female athletes -- they must be lesbian. "Their master status of lesbian overrides their athletic role" (Blinde & Taub, 1992a, p. 532).

Responses to Blinde and Taub's (1992a) questions regarding how the athletes dealt with the lesbian stigma revealed that concealment of their athletic participation or abilities was the most popular strategy. Participants explained that they would hide their athleticism and masculinity by overemphasizing their femininity through dress, sexual activity, or long hair. In all cases, the athletes reported that they felt like their personal presentation was constantly monitored or altered in order to conform to the appropriate gender roles.

Results of Blinde and Taub (1992a) also indicated that female athletes were labeled lesbian due to their appearance, personality characteristics, and the nature of their sport. Respondents explained that the lesbian stigma was most often assigned to women participating in team sports and far less frequently assigned to women in individual sports. They went on to explain that team sports received the lesbian stigma more often due to the fact that they require more athleticism and strength, involve more physical contact, and are more commonly viewed as sports

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played by men (i.e., were most inappropriate for women;

Blinde & Taub, 1992a).

It was evident to Blinde and Taub (1992a) that most of

their respondents had accepted and internalized the societal

stereotypes (homophobia) attached to lesbianism, as made

evident by responses such as: "I don't look like an athlete

so I'm not labeled lesbian"; "I've never seen somebody that

looks like a girl called a dyke or lesbian"; "We don't have

the lesbian label problem because my teammates are all

pretty"; or "Some women have earned this stigma because they

'play the part'". Self-hate and low self-esteem was also

apparent in responses indicating that some athletes felt

"unattractive and less desirable to men" and that they

always felt the need to worry about how they look. Due to

their fear of being stigmatized, participants described how

they distanced themselves from the athletic role and

accentuated the nonsport activities in their lives.

Blinde and Taub (1992b) utilized additional data from

their original phone interview to further explore how

labeling female athletes lesbian and the accompanying

homophobia affected women in sports. Respondents reported

learning very quickly in their sport experience that

lesbianism in sport was an issue not addressed or discussed

by the players, coaches, or administration. Instead,

respondents discussed how they felt silenced about the

lesbian stigma assigned to them. During the interviews,

Blinde and Taub (1992b) gleaned a substantial number of

negative societal stereotypes about women athletes and

lesbians from participants' responses. The authors concluded
that silencing female athletes about the lesbian stigma
combined with the internalization of negative social
stereotypes paralyzes these athletes with regard to self-
empowerment, and detracts from the potential self-
actualizing benefits they should/could otherwise receive
from their successes in sport.

## Sport Ideology

In order to understand sport ideology, the role and
power sport exerts on society must first be described. In a
recent essay on sports and society, Frey and Eitzen (1991)
theorized how sport is tied to social change and to the
process of socialization. This is due to sports' integration
into the political arena as well as its negative influence
on the social attitudes of the public regarding gender and
race (Frey & Eitzen, 1991). The authors also focused on the
social and financial power of sport, particularly since
sport has evolved from a playful activity to a business
entity ruled by corporate, commercial, and entertainment
industries.

In a recent article, Fleshin and Oglesby (1986)
discussed the gender issues of sport. They emphasized two
traditions that are commonly accepted in sport: (1) sport
serves as masculinity training for men and (2) society
accepts women in sport by offering them a lesser sport
experience which is appropriate and suited to women and
girls. These traditions emphasize the belief that sport must
be performed primarily by men because only men can provide

the role model for masculine dominance. Fleshin and Oglesby (1986) argued that the adoption of these traditions reinforced rigid beliefs about masculine/superiority and feminine/inferiority in physical conditioning, athleticism, and financial gain. These common beliefs make the event of victory by a female athlete over a male athlete so foreign that an explanation is generally required for the situation to make sense.

Thompson (1990) used the analysis of sport to illustrate the service women provide for the leisure of others. "Women are incorporated into sport to provide the institution with the service of maintenance and reproduction" (Thompson, 1990, p.375). Thompson argued that women's role in sport is limited by their domestic roles and by the definition of women as sexual objects. The author concluded that, "women who challenge the standards of femininity by being very successful in sport may find their femininity and womanhood questioned" (p. 375).

Willis (1982) identified several basic characteristics of sport in American society and how sport has been affected by "patriarchal ideology", particularly its women athletes. Willis proposed that patriarchal ideology invades commonsense understanding to promote the general ideological view of the physical inferiority of female athletes. This view has been adopted by society through sport ideology, societal beliefs that sport offers honorable values for society and individuals (Willis, 1982).

Harry (1995) investigated how sport ideology was

related to attitudes toward women as well as gays and
lesbians. Harry explained that "sport ideology is a set of
moral convictions that sports provide important benefits for
society and individuals". This study attempted to assess
attitudes people hold toward the institution of sport,
rather than the more commonly studied attitudes and/or
characteristics of athletes (e.g., sex-role, liberal versus
conservative, masculine versus feminine, or sexual
orientation) (Burke, 1986; Koivula, 1985; & Matteo, 1986).

Harry hypothesized that sports ideology is associated
with both sexism and negative attitudes toward gays and
lesbians, and that these relationships differ by gender.
Instruments used by Harry (1995) included: The Psychological
Functions of Sport Scale which measures sport ideology
(participants' attachment to sport), the Attitude Toward
Women Scale which measures support for sexism/patriarchy,
and the Condemnation Tolerance Factor which measures
attitudes toward lesbians, women, and gay men. The sample
consisted of 304 undergraduate students from a Midwestern
university. Results indicated no significant difference in
sport ideology, suggesting that both men and women believe
strongly in this ideology. The data also indicated that
within the female sample, only support for traditional
gender roles was a significant predictor of antilesbian or
antigay attitudes, while sport ideology had no significant
effect. Harry concluded that "sports ideology seems to have
an independent link to antigay and antilesbian beliefs, both
directly and indirectly through its link with support for

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traditional gender roles".

Harry (1995) did not find a significant relationship between sport ideology and antilesbian attitudes; however, limitations to Harry's study must be considered. There were significantly more women (N = 196) than men (N = 111) included in the participant pool which may have led to a generally more tolerant sample. Also, a significantly lower number of poorly performing students were represented by the participant pool than were present in the larger student population. Previous research reported significant negative correlations between poor grades and antigay and antilesbian attitudes (Kurdek, 1988). Harry also included participants from the general student population, instead of utilizing athletes who might conceivably adopt a far different sport ideology than nonathletes. Additionally, athletes' attitudes toward gays and lesbians might be far different (i.e., less tolerant) than the nonathletic population.

The literature on sport ideology has been primarily theoretical, with very few empirical studies. However, Spreitzer and Snyder (1978) developed the Psychosocial Functions of Sport scale (PFSS), that assesses the social and psychological consequences of sport ideology.

The PFSS was mailed to 945 participants, of which 510 returned a completed questionnaire. Results indicated that respondents generally perceive sport as a positive agent for both society and the individual (Spreitzer & Snyder, 1978). This was particularly true with respect to sports' function of socialization and social control.

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Self-Esteem

Zaharopoulos and Hodge (1991) examined differences between male and female sport participants and male and female non-sport participants with regard to levels of multidimensional self-concept. The study included 28 male and 35 female sport participants and 23 male and 27 female non-participants. Findings from this study demonstrated significant differences between athletes and nonathletes in physical ability self-concept, but not in global self-concept. These findings were similar to the findings of Marsh and Jackson (1986) and Jackson and Marsh (1986). These authors also concluded that athletic participation may only enhance the physical self-concept while not profoundly affecting the global self-concept. Together these three studies (Jackson & March, 1986; March & Jackson, 1986; Zaharopoulos & Hodge, 1991) demonstrated that self-concept in general should be understood as a multidimensional construct.

Del-Ray and Sheppard (1981) focused on sex-roles, as measured by the Personal Attributes Questionnaire, and self-esteem, as measured by the Texas Social Behavior Inventory. Results showed that a majority of the 119 undergraduate participants fell into the androgynous and masculine categories. These participants also displayed a higher self-esteem than participants in the feminine and undifferentiated categories. The authors concluded that the presence of masculine characteristics was related to high self-esteem while the presence of feminine characteristics

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showed no relationship with self-esteem. Douctre, Harris, and Watson (1983) were also interested in sport participation and gender as they affect the self-image of 9th - 12th grade athletes. Results showed that males experienced more positive benefits than females from sports participation, and more males than females attributed their psychological and physical gains to their athletic participation. The authors concluded that there is a need to examine athletic traditions which do not meet the needs of all athletes. Douctre et al.'s findings possibly represent the beginning of the developmental process whereby young women initially place value on athletics, and then either continue participating or devalue athletics and choose to pursue other, more socially acceptable interests.

Colker and Spatz-Widom (1980) investigated psychological masculinity, femininity, self-esteem, and attitudes toward women with 71 women who were currently participating in intercollegiate women's varsity teams. The sports represented in the study included: crew, squash, basketball, and swimming. Instruments administered were the Personal Attributes Questionnaire, the Texas Social Behavior Inventory, and the Attitudes Toward Women Scale. Athletes' commitment to their sport was assessed on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 indicating lowest commitment and 10 the highest. One-way ANOVA's were computed for each of the attitudinal variables and the sex-role categories for the four types of sports. Results suggested that the sport chosen by the female athletes was not related to their sex-role of

masculine or feminine, their level of self-esteem, or their attitude toward women.

Although this study was designed in a way that investigates variation with the population of female athletes, the authors utilized an athletic program that has a "no-cut" policy. This policy allows any woman to choose to participate in a sport, regardless of ability. Thus, the open-door policy allowed women who may have never created an athletic identity, developed a commitment to sports, or had their traditional sex-role identity challenged, to participate in a study designed to analyze variables directly related to an athletic identity.

A similar study by Hall and Durborow (1986) investigated the relationship of the self-esteem of female athletes and nonathletes in relation to sex-role type and sport type. Seventy-five female collegiate athletes involved in basketball, golf, gymnastics, softball, swimming, tennis, track, or volleyball made up the athletic participant pool. A random sample of female undergraduates formed the nonathletic pool of 75 women. The instruments used were the ANDRO Scale of Masculinity and Femininity which measures the level of masculinity and/or femininity and the Interpersonal Disposition Inventory which categorizes subjects into four sex-role types and also contains a self-esteem measure.

Results showed that athletes achieved higher levels of self-esteem in comparison to nonathletes; however, this difference was not great enough to be significant. Feminine typed individuals who were not athletes scored significantly

lower on self-esteem than all other sex-role typed

individuals. However, there was no significant difference in

self-esteem between any of the athlete sex-role categories.

Results also demonstrated no significant differences in

self-esteem between "high femininity" sport types (swimming,

tennis, golf, and gymnastics) and "low femininity" sport

types (basketball, softball, track, and volleyball).

Softball players scored lowest of all athletes on self-

esteem (Hall & Durborow, 1986).

One limitation of Hall and Durborow's study is that the

self-esteem measure was embedded in the Interpersonal

Disposition Inventory and had somewhat lower reliability

scores (.68 - .75). Additionally, the manner in which the

authors categorized the sports as either low femininity or

high femininity was not explained. Their assignment of

volleyball into the low femininity category was not

consistent with past research (Salisbury & Passer, 1982;

Kane, 1988).

In addition to examining the personal self-esteem of

athletes, Crocker and Luhtanen (1990) suggest that a second

type of self-esteem, collective self-esteem, exists.

Specifically, "collective self-esteem" denotes those aspects

of identity that have to do with memberships in social

groups and the value placed on those groups. Crocker,

Luhtanen, Blaine, and Broadnax (1994) explained that for

"many individuals, particularly those who belong to minority

or stigmatized groups, group memberships represent an

important aspect of the self".

Collective self-esteem is based on social identity theory (Taijfel & Turner, 1986), which suggests that individuals not only strive for a positive personal identity, but for a positive collective identity as well. "To the extent that one's social groups are valued and compare favorably with relevant comparison groups, one's collective identity is positive. A person with negative or threatened social identity may leave or dissociate themselves from a social group" (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992, p. 303).

# CHAPTER III

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants included athletes who were currently competing intercollegiately at a NCAA Division I or Division II university within the Midwestern region of the United States. Two groups of sport teams representing categories of sport types distinguished by the sports' appropriateness or inappropriateness for female participation were used (Metheny, 1965; Snyder & Kivlin, 1975; del Ray, 1977; and Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983). Twenty teams were included in this study with 147 packets mailed to the appropriate sport teams (golf, swimming, and gymnastics) and 136 packets mailed to the inappropriate sport teams (softball and basketball) for completion. Of those packets mailed, 164 useable packets were returned, with 57 packets representing the appropriate sport group (golf, swimming, and gymnastics) and 107 packets representing the inappropriate sport group (basketball and softball).

The participants ranged in age from 18 to 36. Table 1 contains information regarding mean ages and standard deviations of participants by sport for the entire sample and by group. Table 2 contains information regarding mean ages and standard deviations of the age at which participants began competing in their sport by sport group.

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Table 1

Age Means and Standard Deviations for Total Sample and by

Sample Group

| Sample | N | Mean Age | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 164 | 20.13 | 2.48 |
| *Group 1 | 107 | 20.13 | 2.87 |
| **Group 2 | 57 | 20.12 | 1.53 |

*participants in inappropriate sport group

**participants in appropriate sport group

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Age Participants Began

Competition in Sport by Sport Group

| Sample | N | Mean Age | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 164 | 8.08 | 3.16 |
| *Group 1 | 106 | 7.84 | 2.64 |
| **Group 2 | 58 | 8.53 | 3.93 |

*participants in inappropriate sport group

**participants in appropriate sport group

The racial diversity of the participants included 84%

Caucasian, 5% African American, 5% Hispanic, 2% Asian

American, 1% Native American, 3% Biracial, and .6% indicated

"other" category. Table 3 summarizes the information

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regarding race.

Table 3

Demographic Information Regarding Race

| Ethnicity | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| African-American/Black | 8 | 5 |
| Asian-American/Asian | 3 | 2 |
| Caucasian | 137 | 84 |
| Hispanic | 8 | 5 |
| Native American | 2 | 1 |
| Biracial | 5 | 3 |
| Other | 1 | .6 |

## Instruments

Participants were administered the following instruments: a) the Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Scale, b) the Collective Self-Esteem Scale, c) The Psychosocial Functions of Sport Scale and d) the Social Support Questionnaire. Additionally, a demographic sheet which requested information regarding the participants' current sport, age, and race, along with a likert-type item assessing their perception of the appropriateness of their sport for women was administered (Appendix E).

The Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals

The Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals (IAH; Flores & O'Brien, 1996; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980). was developed to measure levels of homophobia, "the personal affective

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responses of disgust, anxiety, aversion, discomfort, fear,
and anger with respect to either proximal or distal contact,
or involvement with homosexual individuals (Hudson &
Ricketts, 1980, p. 367). A 5-point Likert scale ranging from
"strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" was used to respond
to 25 items describing various situations in which
interaction with gays or lesbians was required (e.g., I
would feel uncomfortable if I learned that my neighbor was
homosexual). Some items were reverse scored to control for
response set biases. A total score was obtained by summing
all items and dividing by number of items, with a high score
on the IAH indicating higher levels of anxiety and
discomfort when in contact with gays and lesbians.

Flores and O'Brien (1996) recently modified the IAH
according to recommendations by the scale's original authors
(Hudson & Ricketts, 1980). These recommendations included
changing the title of the scale from the Index of Homophobia
(IHP) to the Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals (IAH) to
prevent social desirability responses. A total of 5 items
were eliminated due to low content validity and replaced
with 5 new items that had been offered by Hudson and
Ricketts (1980). The range of scores possible on this
instrument is 0 to 100 with a cut-off score of 50. Scores
below 50 represent lower levels of homophobia while scores
above 50 represent higher levels of homophobia. The
resulting range of scores were 0 to 97 with total scores
utilized in this study.

The revised 25-item IAH was administered by Flores and

O'Brien (1990) to 125 participants who were counseling psychology masters and doctoral level students. Participants also completed the Counseling Self-Estimate Inventory-Lesbians and Gay Men (COSE-LG), which measured participants' perceived level of efficacy in counseling lesbian or gay clients; the Future Interest Scale (FIS), which measured participants' interest in working with gay or lesbian clients; the Experience with Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (EXPS), which measured participants' past or present success in working with gays and/or lesbians; and a demographic sheet. As predicted, the IAH was significantly correlated with the COSE-LG (-.47), the FIS (-.68), and the EXPS (-.69), which demonstrated the construct validity of the revised IAH.

Factor analysis of the IAH initially revealed four factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1.00 (Flores & O'Brien, 1996). Of the 20 items that loaded significantly on these factors, 7 loaded highest on the first factor, 7 loaded highest on the second factor, and 6 loaded highest on the third factor. The three factors resulted in high levels of internal consistency (.76, .84, and .86, respectively), with an overall alpha of .91 for the IAH. The factors were interpreted to measure 1) attitudes toward lesbians and gay men in close relationships, 2) reactions to being sexually attractive to someone of the same sex or reaction to being attracted to someone of the same sex, and 3) attitudes toward lesbians and gay men in sexual contexts in which an advance is made. This three-factor solution accounted for

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52.3% of the variance and indicated that the IAH was a multidimensional scale (Flores & O'Brien, 1996) rather than a unidimensional one, as Hudson and Ricketts (1980) previously suggested. The current study obtained a coefficient alpha of .96.

The Collective Self-Esteem Scale

The Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES; Appendix F; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) assessed the individuals' self-esteem concerning their membership in certain demographic social groups, as based for example, on race, religion, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic class (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). One important component of the scale was its ability to assess the global and relatively stable levels of collective self-esteem. Much of the previous work with social identity theory focused on situational factors that temporarily influenced an individual's collective self-esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

For the current study, collective self-esteem of participants focused on their membership in the social group of "women athletes". Collective self-esteem reflected the positive or negative sentiments respondents felt toward their membership in their specific sport group. If membership was highly valued and the sport group of women athletes was perceived by respondents to compare favorably with other groups, a positive collective self-esteem was expressed. If membership was negatively valued and the sport group of women athletes was perceived by respondents to compare unfavorably with other groups, a negative collective

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self-esteem was expressed. All items on the CSES were
modified to specifically focus on women athletes and their
membership in their particular sport. Total scores were
utilized in this study.

The 16-item CSES scale used a 7-point Likert scale
ranging from "strongly disagree" (rated as 1) to "strongly
agree" (rated as 7) with 8 items reverse scored. Four
subscales of the CSES included:  (a) "Membership Esteem",
which reflected how worthy of membership the individual felt
he or she was; (b) "Private Collective Self-Esteem", which
assessed how positively he or she felt about the group, (c)
"Public Collective Self- Esteem", which assessed the
individuals' perceptions of how the public evaluates the
group, and (d) "Identity Items", which assessed the
importance of one's social group membership to one's self-
concept. Four items were assigned to each of the four
subscales (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). A higher overall score
denoted high global and relatively stable levels of
collective self-esteem. The range of possible scores was 0
to 112 with this study resulting in a range of 55 to 87.
Internal consistencies in a study conducted by Crocker,
Luhtanen, Blaine, and Broadnax (1994) were .63, .79, .86,
and .81 respectively.

Alpha coefficients of the four subscales ranged from
.83 to .88 (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The present study
obtained a coefficient alpha of .72 for the total scale.
Factor analysis of the CSES revealed that 14 of the 16 items
had factor loadings of .70, while the remaining 2 items had

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factor loadings of .62 and .58 (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).
All items significantly loaded on the appropriate factor
(i.e., subscale). The 4-item subscales also significantly
correlated with the total scale score ($r = .90$ or higher).

The 16-item Collective Self-Esteem Scale was correlated
with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) which resulted
in moderate and positive correlations between the two scales
($r = .34$, $p < .001$). Specifically, the Membership subscale
and the Private subscale were most highly correlated with
the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ($r = .47$, and $r = .34$, $p <
.001$, respectively) which supported the authors' claim that
these subscales measured respondents' individual perceptions
about their group membership. The Public and Identity
subscales were not significantly correlated with the
Rosenberg scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

The Psychosocial Functions of Sport Scale

The Psychosocial Functions of Sport Scale (PFS;
Appendix G; Harry, 1995) measures individuals' beliefs in
the moral qualities of sport, referred to as their sport
ideology (Harry, 1995). Specifically, sport ideology is a
set of moral beliefs that sports confer important benefits
on the society and on the individual participant (Spreitzer
& Snyder, 1972). The PFS is unique in that it assesses
attitudes that individuals have toward the institution of
sport, rather than previously used scales which measure the
characteristics and attitudes of the athletes themselves
(Harry, 1995).

The PFS was administered to respondents who were

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selected randomly from a city directory of a large metropolitan area. The participant pool originally consisted of 945 people who were contacted and mailed the PFS. Of these, 510 were useable. Participants were asked to rate on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree) 15 items reflecting various definitions of the psychosocial functions of sport. Examples of these items include: "Sports are not particularly important for the well-being of our society" and "Sports are valuable because they contribute to the development of patriotism". Higher scores on the PFS indicate the respondent's view of sport as having beneficial consequences for individuals and society. The range of possible scores is 0 to 75 with this study resulting in a range of scores from 27 to 61. As predicted, most respondents clearly viewed sports as a positive agent for society at large and the individual, particularly with respect to socialization and social control of young people (i.e., items referring to sports as teaching proper social behavior or teaching self-discipline received "strongly agree" ratings from a large percentage of both men and women).

Factor analysis of the 15 items resulted in two factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1.00; these factors were labeled as "Societal functions" and "Individual functions". Of the 15 items, 7 significantly loaded on the Societal factor and 5 other items significantly loaded on the Individual factor.

The final Psychosocial Functions of Sport Scale that

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was used in this study has 2 subscales containing a 7-item societal subscale with an associated alpha of .80 and a 5-item individual subscale with a resulting alpha of .85. Higher scores on these subscales represent the perception of sports as having a favorable impact on society and on the individual, respectively. The current study utilized total scores and obtained a coefficient alpha of .62.

Harry (1995) also correlated the PFS with demographic variables (e.g., age, education, involvement with sports). A negative correlation (-.24, p < .01) was found between age and the social value of sports, indicating that younger respondents were more likely to perceive a positive impact from sports. However, there was no significant relationship between age and psychological value of sports. A positive relationship was also found between education and social values of sports (.46, p <.01) and between education and psychological values of sports (.22, p < .01), indicating that respondents with higher levels of education tended to perceive the social and psychological value of sports more positively than those with less education. Lastly, negative correlations were found between the involvement in sports and the social value of sports (-.45, p <. 01) and the involvement in sports and the psychological value of sport (-.15, p < .01), indicating that respondents who were least involved in sports tended to be the strongest proponents of sports with regard to the social and psychological values it provides.

## The Social Support Questionnaire

The Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ; Appendix H; Sarason, Levine, Basham, and Sarason, 1983) was designed to assess individuals' perceptions of the support they received from people closest to them (Sarason, Levine, Basham, and Sarason, 1983). The SSQ was originally developed through a series of studies (e.g., Barrera, Sandler & Ramsey, 1981; Brim, 1974; Caplan, 1974; Henderson, 1980; Kelly, Meunoz & Snowden, 1979; Luborsky, Todd & Katcher, 1973; Miller, Ingram & Davidson, 1976; Medalie & Goldbourt, 1976; and Weiss, 1974). Sixty-one items were initially created to represent the great variety of situations in which people might value social support.

Sarason et al. (1983) conducted a series of pilot studies in which the original 61-item SSQ was administered to 602 university students. Intercorrelations among some items were .70 or better and were retained for the final scale. Items resulting in low correlations with the other items were eliminated, creating the final 27-item Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) to be used here. The 27-item SSQ requires a two-part answer for each item. Each item first requests a list of persons the respondent can rely upon or turn to, given the circumstances presented by each item. Summing the number of people listed, then dividing by 27 produces the SSQ-N score. A high score denotes a greater number of supportive people the respondent has available to him or her. The range of possible scores for the SSQ-N is 0 to 243 with this study's resulting range of scores being 27

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to 243.

A sample item of the SSQ scale includes the question: "Whom can you really count on to listen to you when you need to talk?" Nine spaces are available for respondents to list those people available to given the situation. A follow-up question such as,"how satisfied are you with this support?" is asked for each item.

The alpha coefficient obtained by Sarason et al. (1983) for the SSQ-N subscale was .97. This study utilized total scores and obtained an alpha coefficient of .97. SSQ-N interitem correlations ranged from .35 to .71, with a mean interitem correlation of .54. Correlations of SSQ-N items with the total SSQ score ranged from .51 to .79. Test-retest correlations, at a 4-week interval, for the SSQ-N was .90.

Separate factor analyses of the SSQ-N and SSQ-S subscales yielded a significant factor for each subscale. The first factor of the SSQ-N subscale accounted for 82% of the variance in the SSQ-N score With factor loadings for the SSQ-N exceeding .60.

<div align="center">Procedures</div>

NCAA Division I and Division II university coaches for women's basketball, softball, golf, swimming, and gymnastics in the Midwest United States were contacted by phone to assess their willingness to allow their teams to participate in this study. Coaches who agreed to participate were sent a letter introducing this study (Appendix A) and a list of instructions which described the procedures for distributing and collecting the packets of test materials (Appendix B).

They also received individual packets for each of their team members which included: A letter describing this study (Appendix C), an information and consent form (Appendix D), a demographic questionnaire (Appendix E), the Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Scale (Appendix F), the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Appendix G), the Psychosocial Function of Sport Scale (Appendix H), and the Social Support Questionnaire (Appendix I). The information sheet contained in each packet instructed the participant to seal the packet upon completion for their privacy and protection. The administrators (coaches) mailed the sealed completed packets and the unused packets to the researcher. The included information sheet explained how the resulting data would be presented and provided information necessary for participants to contact the researcher or the dissertation director for questions or concerns about this study. The order of materials in the packets was counter-balanced and required 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Coaches were asked to provide standard testing conditions via a classroom setting where tables and chairs were available.

## Statistical Analysis

In the first hypotheses, Discriminant Analysis was performed where the type of sport chosen (appropriate vs. inappropriate) was the group variable and the level of homophobia, collective self-esteem, social support received, and level of sport ideology were the discriminating variables. For the second hypothesis, Multiple Regression was performed where the level of homophobia was the

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dependent variable and the level of sport ideology and the athletes perception of the appropriateness of their sport were the independent variables.

The null hypotheses were as follows:

Ho1: There is no relationship between social support, sport ideology, collective self-esteem, homophobia, and the type of sport in which women athletes participate.

Ho2: There is no relationship between the female athletes' level of sport ideology and the athletes perception of appropriateness of their sport with the athletes' level of homophobia.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The first step of analysis was to determine the
descriptive statistics for each of the scales. Table 4 lists
the means and standard deviations for the scales of sport
ideology, collective self-esteem, social support received,
appropriateness of sport, and expressed homophobia by sport
group (appropriate or inappropriate). Softball and
basketball were in the inappropriate group while gymnastics,
swimming and golf were in the appropriate group for women's
participation. For each of the scales, a higher score
indicated a stronger expression of the particular construct
being measured. Two packets were returned with incomplete
responses and were not included in this analysis resulting
in Group 1 (appropriateness of sport = 57) and Group 2
(inappropriateness of sport = 107). Table 5 contains the
means and standard deviations for each sport and table 6
provides the means and standard deviations of sport
ideology, collective self-esteem, social support,
appropriateness of sport, and homophobia by groups combined.
Table 7 contains the correlation values between collective
self-esteem, sport ideology, homophobia, social support, and
sport group.

Research Question 1: Does a relationship exist between
social support, sport ideology, collective self-esteem,

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Sport Ideology, Collective

Self-Esteem, Social Support, Appropriateness of Sport, and

Homophobia by sport group

| Scale | *Group 1 Appropriate n = 57 | | **Group 2 Inapproparite n = 107 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Sport Ideology | 39.69 | 5.12 | 39.42 | 5.84 |
| Collective Self-esteem | 92.42 | 8.50 | 91.03 | 8.62 |
| Social Support | 118.80 | 54.39 | 115.69 | 54.23 |
| Appropriateness of Sport | 8.37 | 1.61 | 8.57 | 1.51 |
| Homophobia | 52.64 | 22.52 | 51.53 | 20.30 |

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of Sport Ideology, Collective

Self-Esteem, Social Support, and Homophobia by Sport

| Sport | Scale | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Softball | Collective Self-Esteem | 67.05 | 4.22 |
| | Psychosocial Function of Sport | 39.84 | 5.21 |
| | Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals | 49.56 | 23.67 |
| | Social Support | 116.84 | 55.10 |
| Basketball | Collective Self-Esteem | 66.59 | 4.05 |
| | Psychosocial Function of Sport | 39.22 | 5.01 |
| | Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals | 60.47 | 17.74 |
| | Social Support | 123.41 | 53.25 |
| Golf | Collective Self-Esteem | 65.62 | 3.67 |
| | Psychosocial Function of Sport | 39.19 | 7.45 |
| | Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals | 64.62 | 17.37 |
| | Social Support | 94.57 | 42.92 |
| Swimming | Collective Self-Esteem | 68.92 | 7.27 |
| | Psychosocial Function of Sport | 39.20 | 5.41 |
| | Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals | 36.64 | 14.56 |
| | Social Support | 132.56 | 57.40 |
| Gymnastics | Collective Self-Esteem | 64.36 | 2.69 |
| | Psychosocial Function of Sport | 40.36 | 2.98 |

Continue Table 5

|  | | |
|---|---|---|
| Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals | 60.55 | 15.27 |
| Social Support | 125.00 | 52.72 |

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations of Sport Ideology, Collective
Self-Esteem, Social Support, Appropriateness of Sport, and
Homophobia for groups combined.

| Scale | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Sport Ideology | 39.57 | 5.38 |
| Collective Self-Esteem | 91.51 | 8.57 |
| Social Support | 118.21 | 53.96 |
| Appropriateness of Sport | 8.45 | 1.56 |
| Homophobia | 52.38 | 21.80 |

Table 7

Correlation between Collective Self-Esteem, Sport Ideology,

Homophobia, and Social Support

| | Collective Self-Esteem | Sport Ideology | Homophobia | Social Support | Sport Group |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Collective Self-Esteem | 1.000 | -.097 | .028 | .031 | -.009 |
| Sport Ideology | -.097 | 1.000 | .046 | .049 | -.015 |
| Homophobia | .028 | .046 | 1.000 | -.100 | -.028 |
| Social Support | .031 | .049 | -.100 | 1.000 | -.015 |
| Sport Group | -.009 | -.015 | -.028 | -.015 | 1.00 |

level of homophobia, and the type of sport in which women athletes participate? Discriminant Analysis was conducted where the type of sport (appropriate versus inappropriate) for women's participation was the group variable and the level of homophobia, collective self-esteem, social support received, appropriateness of sport, and level of sport ideology were the discriminating variables. The results of the Discriminant Analysis revealed that very little variance was explained by the combination of variables. The Eigenvalue was .0117 and the associated Wilks Lambda was .988 which indicated no significant treatment effect between group association. Thus, results did not reveal a relationship between social support, sport ideology, collective self-esteem, homophobia, and type of sport.

Research Question 2: Does a relationship exist between the females' level of sport ideology and the athletes' perception of appropriateness of their sport with the athletes' level of homophobia? This question was evaluated using Multiple Regression where the level of sport ideology and the participants' perception of the appropriateness of their sport was correlated with the participants' level of homophobia. No variable or combination of variables was found to be significant, $F$ (2, 162) = 1.32, $p$ = .2686 at the alpha level of .05.

Post Hoc Analysis

Post hoc analysis that utilized an adjusted data set was performed in order to further investigate the data for significance. The analysis was performed due to the

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concernthat the "softball" group, given their identified larger (n=75), was overpowering the other sport groups involved in the study. Table 8 reflects the original numbers of participants in each sport group.

A random sample of softball participants was generated that equaled the mean of the combined groups' participants (n = 32). The adjusted data set utilizing the randomized number of participants in the sport of softball was used to analyze questions 1 and 2 again. Table 9 lists the means and standard deviations for the variables of sport ideology, collective self-esteem, social support received, appropriateness of sport, and level homophobia.

Questions 1 and 2 were re-analyzed using the adjusted data set. Question 1: Does a relationship exist between social support, sport ideology, collective self-esteem, level of homophobia, and the type of sport in which women athletes participate? Discriminant Analysis was performed where the appropriateness of sport for women's participation versus the inappropriateness of sport for women's participation was the group variable and the level of homophobia, the collective self-esteem, the amount of social support, and the level of sport ideology were the discriminating variables. The Eigenvalue was .02 and the associated Wilks Lambda was .98, again revealing no significant treatment effect between group association.

Question 2: Does a relationship exist between the female athletes' level of sport ideology and the athletes' perception of the appropriateness of their sport with the

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athletes' level of homophobia? Multiple Regression was used
to answer this question with the level of homophobia being
the dependent variable and sport ideology and the perception
of appropriateness of sport being the independent variables.
No variable or combination of variables was found to be
significant, $F$ (2, 119) = 2.378, $p$ = .0971 at the alpha
level of .05.

Table 8

Number of Participants by Sport Group

| Sport | N |
|-------|-----|
| Softball | 75 |
| Basketball | 32 |
| Golf | 21 |
| Swimming | 25 |
| Gymnastics | 11 |

Table 9

Adjusted Mean and Standard Deviation of Sport Ideology, Collective Self-Esteem, Social Support, Appropriateness of Sport, and Homophobia by Sport Group

| | *Group 1 Appropriate n = 57 | | **Group 2 Inappropriate n = 64 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scale | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Sport Ideology | 39.4 | 5.8 | 38.8 | 4.9 |
| Collective Self-Esteem | 92.4 | 8.5 | 91.0 | 8.7 |
| SSQNTOT | 117.1 | 53.6 | 115.0 | 51.8 |
| Appropriateness of Sport | 8.6 | 1.4 | 8.4 | 1.6 |
| Homophobia | 51.5 | 20.4 | 56.7 | 22.1 |

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Women athletes have been dichotomized according to
their sport participation for many years. Metheny (1965)
found that women in sports had two distinct categories,
those types of sports that were appropriate for women and
those that seemed inappropriate for female participation.
The determination of which sport was deemed appropriate was
made by how aesthetically pleasing it was to watch. The
sport could require accuracy, but not great strength, and it
would not require physical contact or aggression toward
other players. The sports identified for this category, were
swimming, tennis, and gymnastics. Inappropriate sports were
more team oriented and required physical strength and
aggressive contact such as basketball, softball, and track
(Metheny, 1965; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1983).

The participation of women in sports has been an
ongoing battle causing widespread controversy in our society
(Hargreaves, 1994). In an effort to discover why women chose
the sports that were deemed inappropriate for their
participation, early research focused on the women's sex-
role orientation (Bem, 1974) or on their sex-type
(masculine, feminine, or neutral) (Matteo, 1986). The
literature supported the construct that social categories of
sports exist and are based on the sports' appropriateness

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for women's participation. The literature also described several studies assessing the possible social influences that impact female participation in sports. This study attempted to move away from evaluating the personal and psychological characteristics of female athletes, and assessed a combination of potential social influences in order to identify some of the pressures female athletes face as they make decisions regarding their participation in sports. Specifically, social support, homophobia, sport ideology, athletes' perception of appropriateness of their sport, and collective self-esteem were evaluated.

## Summary of Study

This study was designed to investigate whether a relationship existed between social support, sport ideology, collective self-esteem, level of homophobia, and the type of sport in which women athletes participated. Also investigated was whether a relationship existed between the female athletes' level of sport ideology and their perception of appropriateness of the sport with the athletes' level of homophobia.

Participants included 164 NCAA Division I and II female collegiate athletes competing in softball, basketball, gymnastics, swimming, and golf within the Midwestern region of the United States. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 36 and on average began competing in their sport at age 8. Coaches for each of the teams were asked for permission for their players to have the opportunity to participate in this study. Each participant completed a packet of materials

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which included a letter describing the study, an information and consent form, a demographic questionnaire, the Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Scale, the Collective Self-Esteem Scale, the Psychosocial Functions of Sport Scale, and the Social Support Questionnaire.

## Conclusions

The first question was analyzed using Discriminant Analysis where the type of sport chosen (appropriate vs. inappropriate) was the group variable and the level of homophobia, collective self-esteem, amount of social support received, and the level of sport ideology were the discriminating variables. The results of this study revealed little or no difference between sport groups using these measures. In other words, the level of homophobia, collective self-esteem, amount of social support received, and level of sport ideology of women athletes did not classify collegiate women athletes into appropriate sports and inappropriate sports groups.

The second question was evaluated using Multiple Regression where the level of homophobia was the dependent variable and the level of sport ideology and the athletes' perception of the appropriateness of their sport were the independent variables. This study did not find a relationship between the participants' level of homophobia and their sport ideology and their own perception of the appropriateness of their sport.

## Implications

Many studies have supported Metheny's (1965) idea of

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categories of sports for women based on the appropriateness
for female participation. However, the current study did not
support Metheny's (1965) theory when using the combination
of variables specified here. That is, these findings appear
to indicate that the social perspective on women in sport
has changed, and that today's athletes are making their
sport participation decisions according to their sport
talents and interests rather than on society's evaluation of
the appropriateness of the sport.

Society's acceptance of a more muscular body for women
and the drive for more healthier bodies for women, has
possibly encouraged society to define an attractive woman as
someone who is strong, muscular, and athletic. The findings
also suggest that today's female athletes refuse to be
categorized by society's definition of appropriate sports
for women.

Another contributing social factor possibly influencing
these results may be due to the passage and enforcement of
Title IX which dictates that young women and young men
should be treated equally regarding athletic participation.
Due to the Title IX rulings, college athletic programs have
been pushed to increase media coverage, increase the quality
of women's athletic facilities, increase team budgets, and
provide more athletic opportunities for women at the
collegiate level. All of these mandated steps toward valuing
female athletes have possibly impacted the participants'
view of the appropriateness or social acceptability of their
sport.

Additional considerations which possibly impacted the results of this study include the possibility that the participants were not a true representation of young women in general. For example, athletes who have been raised with traditional "gender-role" expectations and/or who have a high level of homophobia, could remove themselves from competitive athletics prior to going to college due to the incongruence between women being "athletic" and women meeting "female gender role" expectations set by their social support network. Possibly utilizing young women in high school for this study would better represent young women in general because they are still making their decisions about being in sport and may not feel the pressure to give up athletics at this point in their lives.

In addition, the participant pool may not have adequately represented female college athletes due to sampling bias that emerged during data collection. Although the same number of coaches of sports from both groups (appropriate and inappropriate) were contacted, the coaches in the inappropriate group (softball and basketball) were far more willing to allow their athletes to participate in this study than the coaches of appropriate sports (swimming, gymnastics, and golf). When contacting the coaches for permission to utilize their athletes, some coaches of the appropriate sports for women reacted negatively to the study possibly due to its assessment of homophobia. Also interesting was the fact that only the male coaches refused to participate, and they were primarily

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coaching the appropriate sports for women (swimming, gymnastics, and golf). Very few minority athletes participated in this study making it more likely that this sample may not have accurately represented the women's athletic population.

In addition, it is important to realize that this study was the first attempt to combine these particular social contextual variables in order to assess their impact on the sport participation of female athletes. Very little research has been performed examining these variables and very few instruments exist that can assess gender issues within an athletic milieu. That is, it is possible that the chosen instruments may not have adequately assessed the constructs of interest.

Assessed individually and qualitatively, each of the social variables included in this study had previously revealed further understanding of some of the pressures and devaluation women athletes endure. For example, observation of the literature reflects that several qualitative studies found homophobia to have a great impact on women athletes' sport decisions even though significance was not found here.

Coakley and White (1992) used an interview format which found that young women involved in sports strongly considered the social implications when making decisions regarding their sport participation. They were also less likely to identify as an athlete, and felt that sports could actually be incongruent with their understanding of the characteristics of an adult woman.

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Homophobia was previously assessed in several qualitative studies which revealed the existence of a lesbian stigma in sports (Blinde and Taub, 1992a; Griffen, 1994; Rotella and Murray, 1991; and Whitely, 1987). Being assumed to be lesbian due to sport participation often prevented female athletes from outwardly identifying with their team, influenced parents' decisions on which sport they allowed their daughters to choose, and influenced the athletes' social behavior due to the women feeling pressure to "prove" they were not lesbian. Griffen (1992a) described the most powerful way to restrict and control women in athletics has been to question their femininity, with the most powerful threat to the female athletes is to accuse them of being lesbian.

Blinde and Taub (1992a) found, through interviewing collegiate athletes, that for female athletes, it was important to conceal their athletic status as one way to avoid the lesbian stigma commonly tagged onto women in inappropriate sports. Blinde and Taub (1992a) went on to describe the measures young women take to disguise their athletic affiliation, such as having long hair, refusing to where team logo clothing, and increasing sexual activity. These may be signs of a desire to disassociate with the lesbian stereotypes. This study was designed to assess the inner, more subtle aspects of distancing from lesbian stigma. Perhaps, the Index of Attitudes Toward Homosexuals scale did not adequately assess how negatively female athletes felt about themselves due to their association with

an "inappropriate" sport that attracts the "lesbian stigma".

The importance of social support and/or social status to a particular athlete also was not affected by sport group as measured in this study, but had been previously shown to be very influential to female athletes. Kane (1988) conducted interviews of high school males and females and discovered young women in sports were the least likely to be chosen as a "best friend" and least likely to be chosen by the opposite sex for a date. Kane (1988) concluded that "social acceptability" was a significant influence on young women's decisions to participate in sports and on which sports they would choose. The analysis of social support received by female athletes was conducted in the current study using a measure that assessed the amount of support each athlete received rather than evaluating the kind of support received, and may not have been a sensitive enough measure.

Although significance was not discovered using the combination of variables selected with the chosen measures, rigid social influences still have powerful implications for female athletes. The 1996 Olympics provided an excellent example of the differing value placed on appropriate sports for women and inappropriate sports for women. Prime time television coverage was given primarily to women's gymnastics while women's basketball had limited coverage and only the medal rounds of women's softball were given television coverage which occurred at 2:00am. Some argue that due to Title IX, society is accepting women athletes in

every kind of sport and the results of the current study

appear to support this contention. However, this does not

appear evident given current media coverage described here.

In summary, this study did not support past research or

current events that reveal the devaluation of women athletes

in inappropriate sport groups. The constructs being assessed

were very complex and often difficult for individuals to

define in themselves or their lives (homophobia, lack of

social support, collective self-esteem, appropriateness of

sport, and alignment with sport ideology). The intricacy and

subtle nature of these constructs and the idea that they are

"social context variables" indicates that it might be better

evaluated by a qualitative study which would include

analysis of the female athletes' social contextual

influences (i.e., parents, siblings, coaches, and friends).

Limitations

One limitation of the current study was the inability

to randomly select the schools for participation. It was

necessary to use personal contacts in order to get coaches

to sacrifice the time to administer the study given the

NCAA's strict regulations on how much time the coaches can

demand of their athletes per week. An additional limitation

was the need for the coaches to be the research

administrators. While athletes were instructed to seal their

packets before returning them to their coaches, their

responses still may have been influenced by the potential

lack of privacy of this procedure.

This study was limited to self-report measures which

may not have accurately presented the relationship among these variables. The data were collected using paper and pencil tests which can be subject to a number of response sets and self-report biases which could produce misleading results.

## Future Directions

There continue to be many inconsistencies among studies of women athletes regarding their social acceptance when participating in the sports at one time categorized as inappropriate for women's participation. Due to the complexity of the constructs being assessed and the difficulty of measuring homophobia, sport ideology, social support, and collective self-esteem, a qualitative method utilizing a one-on-one interview format is suggested. It would also be beneficial to interview young men and women who are not participating in collegiate athletics in order to asses the acceptance of women involved in all sports and to ascertain the existence and power of the lesbian stigma.

An interview of girls in high school or junior high school would possibly more effectively assess the pressures and decision making processes young female athletes encounter as they make decisions regarding sport participation. An interview of the parents while considering social support, homophobia, collective self-esteem, and sport ideology, and their perception of the appropriateness of the sport which their daughter has chosen, could possibly reveal the value parents place on certain sport types, the amount of influence they have on their daughters' sport

participation decisions, and the amount of support they provide their daughters in each sport group.

## Summary

In summation, this study was the first assessment of the combination of these particular social variables within the milieu of women's athletics. The goal of this effort was to move the focus away from the personal characteristics of each female athlete, and assess the impact social contextual influences have on women as they make their sport participation decisions.

Since the results of this study did not support the hypothesis and did not support the results of the previous qualitative research, it may be that the intricacies and subtleties of the variables call for a different manner of assessment than what was utilized here.

One interesting note from this study was the refusal of many of the coaches of the appropriate sports to allow their teams to participate in this study. This combined with the media's severe neglect of the women's inappropriate sports during the 1996 Olympics, suggests that the categorization of sports as appropriate or inappropriate and the devaluing of female athletes still exists today.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR

Dear Research Administrator,

This is a research project designed to gain a better understanding of the pressures and social consequences young women face while participating in sports. Several variables (i.e., self-esteem as a team member, support received given certain situations, attitudes toward gays and lesbians, and the importance of sport) will be examined in this study in an attempt to construct a more accurate presentation of women's athletic experiences. Learning how women athletes are stigmatized and how that impacts their sport experiences is key to this study and in need of investigation.

I would greatly appreciate your help in this research for my doctoral dissertation by allowing your team to participate in this study. Your team's participation is entirely voluntary and should only take approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

I want to assure you that your athletes' responses will be completely anonymous and confidential. No one, including myself, will know the names of the specific athletes as they relate to the responses given on the instruments. Specific steps are included in the instructions in order to protect the individual identity of the respondents and to protect the identity of each university participating. The data collected from your team will be kept in a secured manner and destroyed when no longer used. The results of this study will be reported as group data without indicating specific results of individual athletes or indicating specific results of teams at certain institutions.

Instructions for administering the questionnaires are included on the next page. Please read the instructions carefully and follow them strictly. If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Julie Roark 405-372-9161 or Dr. Marie Miville, Department of Applied Behavioral Studies, Oklahoma State University, at 405-744-9453. If you have any questions regarding your players' rights as research participants, please contact Gay Clarkson at the OSU University Research Services 405-744-5700. To obtain results of the completed study, contact me or Dr. Miville at the numbers listed above. Your cooperation and effort is greatly appreciated.

Thank you. I appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,


Julie K. Roark, M.S.

APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THIS STUDY

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THIS STUDY

The following information provides specific instructions for the administration of the questionnaires included in this study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. An athlete can choose to discontinue herparticipation at any point in the study without reproach.

## STEPS FOR ADMINISTRATION

Administration procedures should be followed closely for the protection of the athletes and the standardization of the study.

1. Please locate a classroom, meeting room, or other facility equipped with tables and chairs.

2. Distribute one packet to each athlete.

3. Ask the athletes to read the enclosed letter addressed to them and the Information and Consent Form included in the packet.

4. REMIND THE ATHLETES THAT PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY AND THEY MAY WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY AT ANY TIME WITHOUT PENALTY.

5. INSTRUCT THEM **NOT** TO PUT THEIR NAMES ON ANY OF THE SHEETS IN THE PACKET OR ON THE PACKET ITSELF.

6. Upon completion of the questionnaires, the athletes should put everything back into the packet except the Information and Consent Form. This form is for them to keep for possible future reference.

7. INSTRUCT THE ATHLETES TO SEAL THE PACKETS BEFORE RETURNING THEM TO YOU.

8. Put sealed packets and any unused packets in the addressed postage paid envelop provided and mail to me.

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Dear Research Participant,

I would greatly appreciate your help in this research project for my doctoral dissertation. This project is designed to gain a better understanding of the pressures and social consequences young women face while participating in sports. Several variables (i.e., self-esteem as a team member, support received given certain situations, attitudes toward gays and lesbians, and the importance of sport) will be examined in this study in an attempt to construct a more accurate presentation of women's athletic experiences.

Your participation should take approximately 30 to 40 minutes and is strictly voluntary. Your responses will be completely anonymous and confidential. No one, including myself, will know your name or make any attempt to learn your identity through your responses. Please do not write your name on any of the research questionnaires.

As communicated on the Information and Consent Form, your completion of the accompanying packet of questionnaires serves as your consent to participate in this study. You should keep the Information and Consent Form for possible future reference. The results of this study will be reported as group data, not as individual responses.

Thank you. I appreciate your time and assistance.

Sincerely,


Julie K. Roark, M.S.

APPENDIX D

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

# INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Thank you for participating in this study. your responses are very important to me and will help me understand some of the common life experiences collegiate women athletes share. I am specifically interested in the kind of influences that impact women's decisions regarding their sport choice. I am also interested in the implications women experience due to their participation in sports.

During this study, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire that will provide me with some background information about you. You will also be asked to complete other questionnaires that will indicate your self-esteem as a member of your team, the support you receive during given situations, your attitudes toward gays and lesbians, and how important sport is to you.

The information I am requesting from you is personal, however your responses will be completely anonymous and confidential. You may choose not to participate, or you may begin but then withdraw at any time with no penalty. The results of this study will be reported as group data with no indication of individual responses or team responses. No one, including your coach or myself, will know your name.

## STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I have read and fully understand the Information and Consent Form. My completion of the accompanying packet of questionnaires serves as my consent to participate in this study. I will keep this copy of the Information and Consent Form for my records. Given your consent to participate, please follow the short list of instructions.

1. DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON ANY OF THE FORMS IN THE PACKET OR ON THE PACKET ITSELF.
2. FOLLOW EACH QUESTIONNAIRE'S SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS AND ANSWER EACH QUESTIONNAIRE COMPLETELY.
3. KEEP THIS FORM FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE REFERENCE.
4. PUT THE QUESTIONNAIRES IN THE PACKET AND SEAL THE COMPLETED PACKET BEFORE RETURNING IT TO THE RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR (COACH).

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Julie Roark 405-372-9161 or Dr. Marie Miville, Department of Applied Behavioral Studies, Oklahoma State University, at 405-744-9453. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Gay Clarkson at OSU University Research Services 405-744-5700. To obtain information regarding the results of this study, please contact me or Dr. Miville at the numbers listed above.

# APPENDIX E

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please provide the following information about yourself.

1. Your intercollegiate Sport:_____

2. Age:_____

3. Race:          African American_____
   (please check)
                  Asian_____

                  Biracial_____
                            (please Specify)
                  Caucasian_____

                  Hispanic_____

                  Native American_____

                  Other_____

4. How old were you when you began playing the sport in which you currently compete?_____

5. What other sports did you formally participate in sometime during your past?_____

_____

6. To what degree do you believe that society views your sport to be appropriate for women? (Circle only one number).


       1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10
Not at all                                       Very
Appropriate                                   Appropriate

APPENDIX F

THE COLLECTIVE SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

## COLLECTIVE SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Please read the instructions carefully and complete the items listed on the back of this sheet.

We are all members of different social groups or social categories. Some social groups or categories pertain to gender, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. I would like you to consider your membership in your specific sport group (team). Respond to the following statements on the basis of how you feel about belonging to this particular group. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these statements; I am interested in your honest reactions and opinions. Please read each statement carefully, and respond using the scale provided.

## COLLECTIVE SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Using this scale, please rate each of the following statements.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Disagree Somewhat | Neutral | Agree Somewhat | Agree | Agree |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

1.  I am a worthy member of the sport group I belong to. . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

2.  I often regret that I belong to the sport group
          that I do . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

3.  Overall, my sport group is considered good by
          others. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

4.  Overall, my group membership has very little to do
          with how I feel about myself.. . . . . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

5.  I feel I don't have much to offer to the sport
          group I belong to . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

6.  In general, I'm glad to be a member of the sport
          group I belong to . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

7.  Most people consider my sport group, on the average
          to be more ineffective than other social groups. . . . \_\_\_\_\_

8.  The sport group I belong to is an important
          reflection of who I am . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

9.  I am a cooperative participant in the sport
          group I belong to . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

10. Overall, I often feel that the sport group of
          which I am a member is not worthwhile. . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

11. In general, others respect the sport group
          that I am a member of. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

12. The sport group I belong to is unimportant
          to my sense of what kind of person I am . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

13. I often feel I'm a useless member of my sport group . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

14. I feel good about the sport group I belong to . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

15. In general, others think that the sport group
          I am a member of is unworthy . . . . . . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

16. In general, belonging to a sport group is an
          important part of my self-image . . . . . . . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX G

THE PSYCHOSOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF SPORT

The Psychosocial Functions of Sport

Use the following scale to respond to each item.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Not Sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

1. Sports are not particularly important for the well-being
   of our society . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ____

2. If more people were involved in sports, we would not
   have so much trouble with drugs in our society . . . . . . . . ____

3. Sports are valuable because they help youngsters to
   become good citizens . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ____

4. The emphasis that sports place on competition causes
   more harm than good . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ____

5. Sports are valuable because they teach youngsters
   respect for authority . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ____

6. Sports are valuable because they teach youngsters
   self-discipline . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ____

7. Sports are valuable because they contribute to the
   development of patriotism . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ____

8. Sports are valuable because they provide an opportunity
   for individuals to get ahead in the world . . . . . . . . . . ____

9. Sports promote the development of fair play . . . . . . . . . ____

10. Sports are a good way for me to relax . . . . . . . . . . . . ____

11. For me, sports are pretty much a waste of time . . . . . . . . ____

12. For me, sports are a way of getting together with
    friends and having a good time . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ____

13. Sports are part of being a well-rounded person. . . . . . . . ____

14. Sports are a source of little or no satisfaction
    in my life . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ____

15. Sports help me to get away from the worries and
    pressures of the day . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . ____

# APPENDIX H

# SOCIAL SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

# SOCIAL SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please read the instructions carefully and complete the following items.

The following questions ask about people in your environment who provide you with help and support. Each question has two parts. For the first part, list all the people you know, excluding yourself, whom you can count on for help or support in the manner described. Give the person's first initial and their relationship to you (see example). Do not list more than one person next to each of the numbers beneath each question.

For the second part, circle how satisfied you are with the overall support you have.

If you have no support for a question, circle the words **"No One"**, but still rate your level of satisfaction. Do not list more than 9 persons per question.

**EXAMPLE**

Who do you know whom you can trust with information that could get you in trouble?

No One     1)T. (brother)   4)S. (mother)   7)
           2)T. (sister)    5)S. (friend)   8)
           3)K. (friend)    6)              9)

How satisfied? (Circle one)

| very satisfied | | | | | very dissatisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

# APPENDIX I

## APPROVED IRB FORM

# OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
## HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 03-20-97             IRB#: ED-97-080

Proposal Title: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT, SPORT IDEOLOGY, COLLECTIVE SELF-ESTEEM, HOMOPHOBIA, AND TYPE OF SPORT IN WHICH WOMEN ATHLETES PARTICIPATE

Principal Investigator(s): Marie Miville, Julie Roark

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE APPROVAL PERIOD.
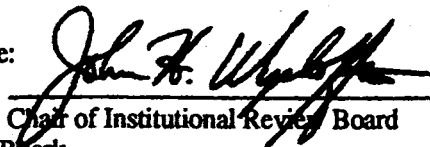APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

---

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature: _____         Date: March 26, 1997

Chair of Institutional Review Board

cc: Julie Roark

VITA

Julie Karen Roark

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT, SPORT
IDEOLOGY, COLLECTIVE SELF-ESTEEM, HOMOPHOBIA, AND
TYPE OF SPORT AMONG WOMEN ATHLETES

Major Field: Applied Behavioral Studies

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Jenks High School, Jenks,
Oklahoma in May 1981; received Bachelor of Science
degree in Management from Oklahoma State
University in December 1990; attended Tulsa
University, Tulsa, Oklahoma from January 1992 to
August 1992; received Master's of Science degree
in Counseling and Student Personnel from Oklahoma
State University in May 1994. Completed the
requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree
with a major in Counseling Psychology at Oklahoma
State University in December 1998.

Experience: Employee Relations Specialist for Conoco
Oil, Inc.; Employee Relations Coordinator for
Conoco Oil, Inc.; Psychotherapist at Edwin Fair
Community Mental Health Center; Psychology Intern
at Texas Woman's University Counseling Center;
Graduate Teaching and Supervising Assistantships
for undergraduate and graduate courses at Oklahoma
State University.

Professional Memberships: American
PsychologicalAssociation; Texas Psychological
Association, Association for the Advancement of
Applied Sport Psychology.