

An Investigation of Sexual-Orientation Attitudes and Behaviors of College Athletes in the Atlantic Coast Conference

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Several studies have been conducted to examine campus climate, but seldom has sexual orientation been addressed. Specifically, “few studies have assessed the campus climate for gay, lesbian, bisexual (GLB) college athletes, college students’ attitudes towards gays and lesbians, or college athletes’ attitudes related to sexual orientation (Southall, et al., 2009).” This study is extremely relevant in today’s sport culture. Individuals of various sexual orientations exist, in every realm of society, including college athletics. However, the reality is that discrimination and prejudices are pervasive in the college sport environment (Southall, et al.). Even though the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and most universities have non-discrimination policies in place, discriminatory behaviors still occur and homophobic attitudes exist.

This study examined the relationship between various independent variables (gender, race/ethnicity and religious affiliation) and Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) athletes’ expressed behaviors and attitudes related to sexual orientation. A 43-question survey, including demographic questions, specific situational questions and general questions about lesbians, gay men, and bisexual men and women was designed to specifically seek respondents’ attitudes related to sexual orientation.

Descriptive statistics were compiled for all demographic information. For questions utilizing a Likert-scale measure, a Chi-square analysis examined whether a relationship existed between the chosen independent variables and athletes’ expressed behavior and attitudes related to sexual orientation. This presentation will present the study’s results and discuss the results’ implications for assisting ACC athletic administrators in determining the effectiveness of their non-discrimination policies and determining if existing educational programs are helping to foster a climate of acceptance within ACC athletic departments.