The Intersection of Gender, Sexuality, and Student-Athlete Experience in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC)

MEGAN SKELLY AND BILL SONNEGA
1. PERSONAL NARRATIVE

2. REFLECTION AND INFLUENCE OF INDIVIDUAL MAJOR
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature Review</th>
<th>IS398: Gender Relations in Athletics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity</strong> – Eric Anderson</td>
<td><strong>Heroines of Sport: The Politics of Difference and Identity</strong> – Jennifer Hargreaves</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Investigate the role played by sport in the production of hegemonic masculinities in the United States and the ways that gay athletes negotiate this gendered space</td>
<td>• Chapter 5: Sporting Lesbians – Heroic Symbols of Sexual Liberation</td>
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<td>• Based on personal interviews with gay athletes</td>
<td>o Gender Performativity</td>
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<td>• Focuses on intersection of masculinity and homosexuality</td>
<td>o Heteronormativity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Compulsory Heterosexuality</td>
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### Literature Review

**IS398: Gender Relations in Athletics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sports and Male Domination: The Female Athlete as Contested Ideological Terrain – Michael Messner</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Ideological basis of male domination being challenged by sporting women</td>
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<td>• The media’s framing of female athletes and its construction of hegemony</td>
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<td>• Contradictions in the system of sport challenge the liberating social practice</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sport Ideology, Attitudes Toward Women, and Antihomosexual Attitudes – Joseph Harry</th>
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<td>• 304 College Student-Athletes (in 1995)</td>
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<td>• The meanings of sport differ between men and women.</td>
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<td>• Men: validating male ideals and superiority to women</td>
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<td>• Women: Nonpredjudicial and not supportive of traditional gender attitudes/roles</td>
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Other Notable Literary Resources:

1. HOW DOES GENDER AFFECT THE ATHLETIC EXPERIENCE OF DIVISION III ATHLETES? HOW IS SPORT A GENDERED EXPERIENCE?

2. WHAT DISTINCT CHALLENGES DO SEXUAL-MINORITIES FACE IN THE MIAC?

3. DOES THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE NCAA AND MIAC HELP OR HINDER WOMEN AND SEXUAL MINORITIES IN COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS?

4. WHAT IS THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF DIVISION III ATHLETICS WITH REGARD TO PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?
This project is based on the intersection of studies in gender, media, sexuality, ethics, organizational practices and sociological approaches as they relate to athletics.

- Fall 2016: Preliminary Research focused on Gender Relations in Collegiate Athletics
  - Coaches, Administrators, and the Media

- Spring 2017: Survey titled *The Intersection of Gender, Sexuality, and Student-Athlete Experience in the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC)*
  - Sent to MIAC Athletic Directors and SAAC members, distributed to student-athletes through these channels
The Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC)

- 13 Minnesota Private Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities
- 6000 Student-Athletes – 22 sports
- Range of religiously affiliations
- 4 core values
My Connections to the MIAC

- **Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) Chairperson**
  - Sat on conference subcommittees with administrators from various institutions in the MIAC
  - Most notably the Diversity Inclusion and Gender Equity Subcommittee & Marketing and Branding
## The MIAC’s Current Efforts in Diversity Inclusion

### Total Percentages

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonresident Alien</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>58%</strong></td>
<td><strong>41%</strong></td>
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Methods

30 QUESTION SURVEY

- Section 1: Sexuality
- Section 2: Gender
- Section 3: Athletics
Methods

• Google Form
  o Accessibility and Familiarity

• Why Division III?
  o Nature of Division: Student-Athlete
  o Under-researched
Methods

• Current Demographic results
• 130 responses in 1 week
• Goal: 300 responses by April 26th
Key Findings

- Sexuality
  - 87% Heterosexual
  - 5% Homosexual
  - 5% Bisexual
  - 1% Lesbian
  - 1% Gay

- To what extent do you agree with the following statement: My sexuality has negatively affected my athletic experience.

Non-Heterosexual Respondents

- 62% Agreed

Heterosexual Respondents

- 3% Agreed
Key Findings

- Gender
  - 89.7% Female
  - 10.3% Male
- Binary Representation of Gender

**Question:** How often do you feel discriminated against in sport because of your gender?
Key Findings

- Student-Athlete Experience
- 13 out of 22 Intercollegiate Varsity Sports represented

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: My athletic experience has been positive.
- 88.9% of all respondents agreed

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Being an athlete has played a role in shaping my personal identity.
- 85.8% of all respondents agreed
Intersectional Analysis

- To what extent do you agree with the following statement: My athletic experience has been positive.

Non-Heterosexual Females

Heterosexual Females

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
Intersectional Analysis

• To what extent do you agree with the following statement: My athletic experience has been positive.

Non-Heterosexual Males

Heterosexual Males

- Agreed
- Neutral
- Disagreed
Notable Happenings

- University of St. Thomas and Bethel University have responded saying they will not participate
  - Hypothesis: Participation complicated by conservative religious beliefs
Further Questions to Research

1. **How do the varying cultures in different sports affect the results of this survey?**

2. **How does the diversity of institutions within the MIAC affect the results of this survey?**

3. **Does the religious affiliations of institutions influence recruitment of diverse sexual orientations within athletics?**
   - What do these Religious affiliations and restrictions mean for competitors?

4. **How can the conference’s marketing and promotions influence diversity inclusion and visibility for sexual minorities?**
How might this data affect policy and practice in the MIAC?

1. Creating a policy specific to sexual minorities
   - Action
   - Partnerships with organizations that focus on ending homophobia in sport

2. Administrative training to aide diversity inclusion initiatives
   - MIAC ➔ Presidents and Athletic Directors ➔ Individual Athletic Departments
   - Creates conversation

3. Leadership summit and MIAC SAAC involvement
Thank You

1. **BILL SONNEGA** – ADVISOR AND PROJECT SUPERVISOR

2. **DANA GROSS AND SUSAN CARLSON** – CIS OFFICE

3. **DAN MCKANE AND SHERIDAN BLANFORD** – MIAC CONFERENCE OFFICE

4. **RYAN BOWLES, NATALIE WALSETH AND EMILY FOSTER**

5. **ALL THE STUDENTS THAT HAVE TAKEN THE TIME TO PARTICIPATE**
Questions?