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## THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND COWORKER SUPPORT ON LGBT ADVOCACY IN THE WORKPLACE

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Synopsis:

Conducted a cross-section study to examine LGBT advocacy in the workplace. Results indicate political orientation and coworker support for diversity positively affect advocacy, but the interactive effects are not significant.

Abstract:

AIM OF PAPER

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees frequently face prejudice and discrimination in sport organizations (Cunningham, 2011; Griffin, 2012). This has the potential to negatively affect their workplace experiences, physical and psychological-well-being, and overall performance. These patterns point to the importance of reducing sexual prejudice and heterosexism in sport organizations. Allies, or persons who advocate for the rights of others within the work environment, play an important role in this regard (Melton & Cunningham, 2014). Allies frequently have the capital, privilege, and power that marginalized individuals do not, and as such, can join with under-represented persons to argue for social justice and equality. While these benefits are known, there is less understanding factors that influence the advocacy among allies. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among political persuasion, coworker support for diversity, and LGBT advocacy.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Jost et al.'s (2009) integrated theoretical framework helps explain why people might engage in advocacy for LGBT rights. They suggest that openness to experience and a rejection of inequality influences subsequent political attitudes. These, in turn, influence how people critique systems, view issues, and express prejudice. Jost et al. suggest that progressively minded people are likely to question systems of injustice and have low levels of prejudice. Thus, we hypothesized that political progressiveness would be positively associated with advocacy for LGBT rights in the work environment (H1).

The relationship between political orientation and advocacy might be affected by organizational factors, such as the support for diversity expressed by

coworkers. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests people learn acceptable behaviors and attitudes based on, at least in part, those modeled by others around them. Similarly, information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) suggests the social contexts influences what people consider right and appropriate. In drawing from these theories, we suspect that coworker support for diversity is likely to influence LGBT advocacy (H2).

Finally, it is possible the two variables interact. In this case, even politically conservative people might advocate for others if their coworkers also do so. Thus, we hypothesized that political orientation and coworker support for diversity will interact to predict LGBT advocacy in the workplace.

#### METHODS

Data were collected from 309 employees of intercollegiate athletic departments in the United States. The sample included 67 percent women ( $n = 207$ ), 78 percent White employees ( $n = 242$ ), and the average age was 38.9 years. We measured advocacy with four items from Cunningham (2006; Cunningham & Sartore, 2010;  $\alpha = .90$ ), coworker support with three items from Cunningham and Sartore (2010;  $\alpha = .75$ ), and political orientation with a single item ranging from 1 (very conservative) to 7 (very liberal).

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We tested the hypotheses through moderated regression analysis, as outlined by Cohen et al. (2003). Given that men, older individuals, and racial minorities sometimes express more sexual prejudice than their counterparts, we controlled for gender, race, and age in the first step. The controls accounted for 8 percent of the variance ( $p < .001$ ). The next step included the standardized first order effects, and accounted for 19 percent unique variance ( $p < .001$ ). Consistent with the predictions, political progressiveness ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and coworker support for diversity ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p < .001$ ) were positively associated with LGBT advocacy. Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported. Contrary to the prediction in Hypothesis 3, the interaction term was not significant ( $\beta = -.06$ ,  $p = .27$ ). Together, the results suggest personal and work environment factors affect LGBT advocacy. Sport managers can facilitate LGBT equality in the workplace by considering a multitude of factors, including rewarding people for expressing positive attitudes toward diversity.

#### References:

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