



LGBTQ+ Identity in College Athletics

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Introduction

In contemporary United States' society, LGBTQ+ identities are widely becoming more accepted. However, LGBTQ+ athletes often experience discrimination at the college level, ranging from exclusion to hostility in sport (Attebury-Ash and Woodford, 2018; Griffin and Taylor, 2012). My research examines the experiences of current LGBTQ+ athletes competing in college by asking:

- Do all student-athletes share similar experiences of discrimination? Are some sports more discriminatory than others?
- How can answers to these questions improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals who participate in college athletics?

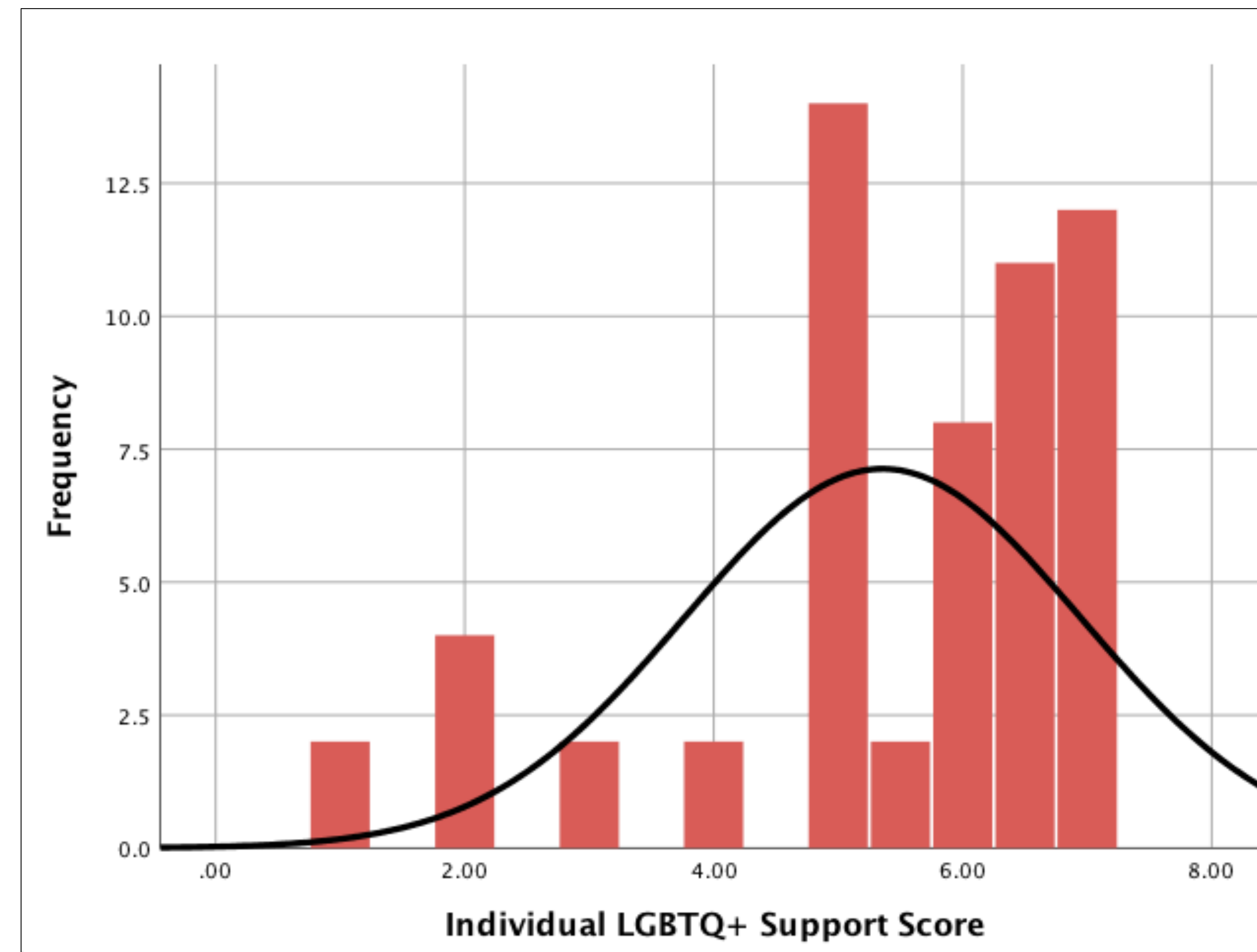
Methods

I anonymously surveyed student-athletes at Ithaca College about issues surrounding gender identity and sexuality within sport: locker rooms, bathrooms, dress code, and support by teammates, coaches, and administrative staff.

Team Gender	Percent	Participation Level	Percent
Male	23.5	Intramural	7.2
Female	55.9	Club	25.3
Mixed-Gender	20.6	Varsity	53
Totals	100	None	14.5
		Totals	100

- The majority of respondents identified as playing on a female team, with 44.1% identifying as a part of a male or mixed-gender team.
- The majority of respondents also identified as varsity athletes, with this making up 53 percent of the sample.

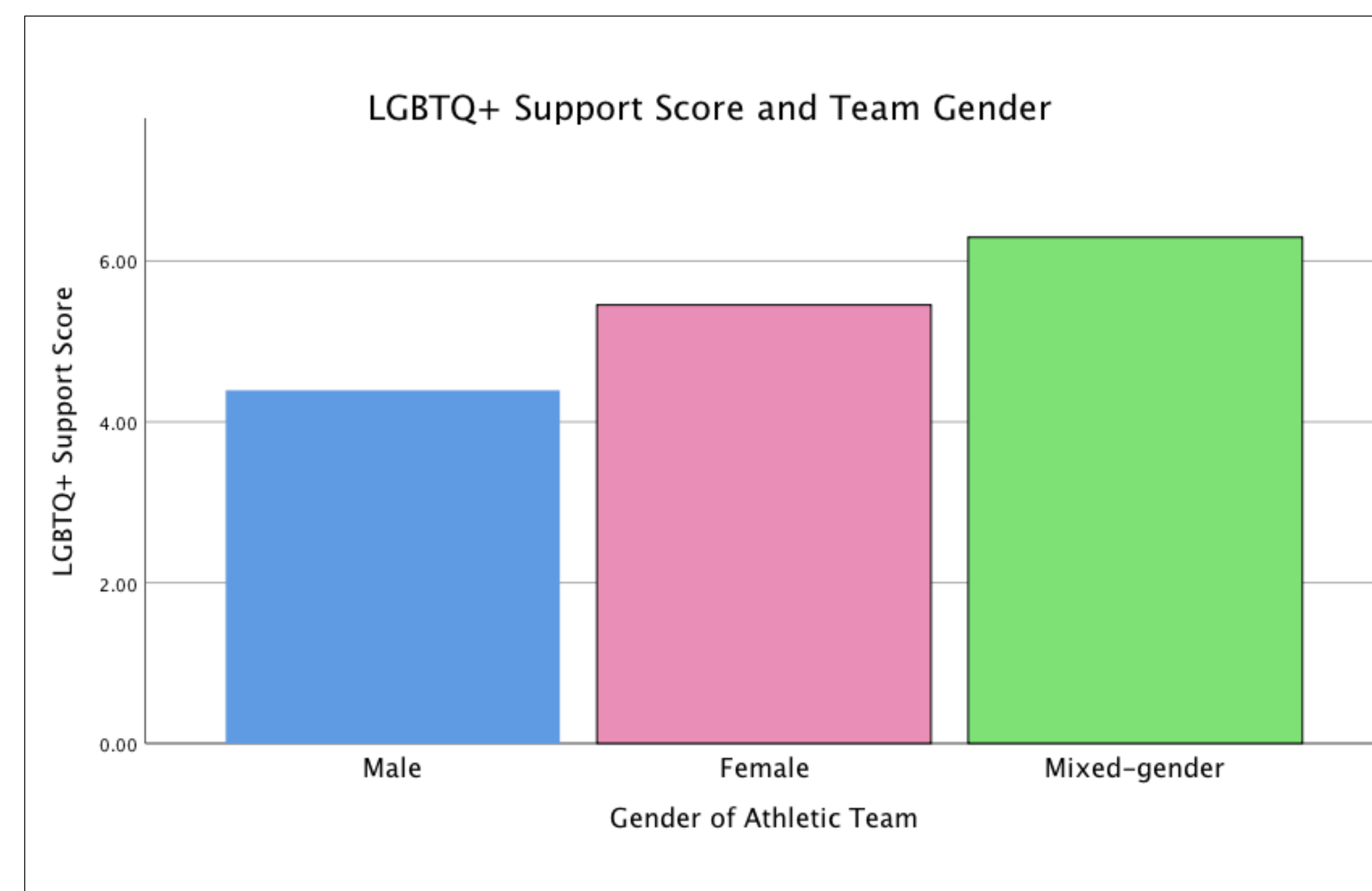
Results



To measure LGBTQ+ athletes' experiences with perceptions of discrimination, I calculated a Support Score Index. This score measured comfort with a range of athletic experiences, such as locker rooms, bathrooms, and dress code policies.

Support Scores ranged from 0 to 7, where higher numbers indicate a greater sense of support for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Overall, student-athletes showed a moderate amount of support for LGBTQ+ athletes, with a mean Support Score of 5.36.



Mean support score varied significantly based on team gender.

Differences in means were statistically significant between male, female, and mixed gender teams (p -value < 0.01).

Conclusions

The assumption that *all* LGBTQ+ athletes experience discrimination may not be entirely accurate; the LGBTQ+ Support Score Index indicates that discrimination is more likely to occur on a *male* team, but LGBTQ+ athletes are likely to be shown support on a female or mixed-gender team.

- What is it about the relationship between gender and sports that makes women's, and mixed-gender sports in particular, more supportive of the LGBTQ+ athletes?

Recommendations

The NCAA and other governing athletic bodies should prioritize developing and implementing policies and procedures that ensure equitable access to athletic programs, and safe spaces for all as a priority. These policies and procedures might include:

- Increasing programming and awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion issues
- Examining the gender breakdown of sports, including the number of women's and mixed-gender sports offered
- Examining uniform and dress code standards
- Addressing facility concerns (locker rooms, bathrooms, playing fields) to ensure equity of access and comfort of *all* student-athletes

Additionally, future research should focus on the impacts of such discrimination on athletic and academic performance.

Literature Cited

Attebury-Ash, Brittanie, and Michael R. Woodford. 2018. "Support for Policy Protecting LGBT Student Athletes among Heterosexual Students Participating in Club and Intercollegiate Sports." *Sexuality Research & Social Policy*, 15(2):151-162. Retrieved 6 Feb 2020, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.ithaca.edu/2048/10.1007/s13178-017-0283-z>.

Griffin, Pat and Hudson Taylor. 2012. "Champions of Respect: Inclusion of LGBTQ+ Student-Athletes and Staff in NCAA Programs." Edited by Karen Morrison, NCAA Director of Inclusion. Retrieved 7 Feb 2020, <https://bit.ly/3bkTIKJ>.

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Further Information

Additional information can be found at <https://qr.go.page.link/8y8hq>. For further inquiry, I can be reached at aperry3@ithaca.edu