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NCAA Division I Head Softball Coaches' Confidence, Openness and Stigma Tolerance Toward Sport Psychology Consultants

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AND STIGMA TOLERANCE TOWARD SPORT PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTANTS

by

Laurie Ann Neelis

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Studies Office
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2008

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NCAA DIVISION I HEAD SOFTBALL COACHES' CONFIDENCE, OPENNESS

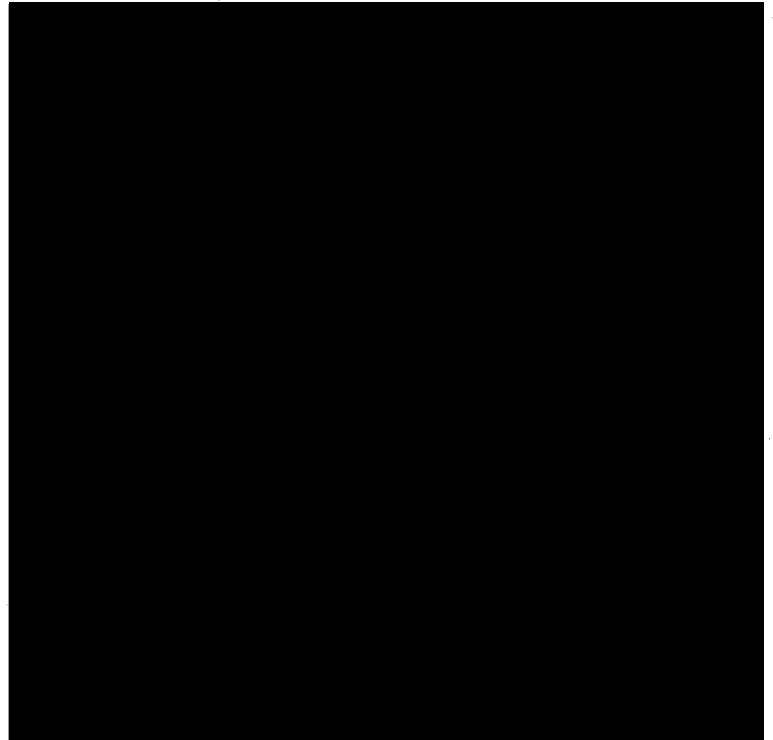AND STIGMA TOLERANCE TOWARD SPORT PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTANTS

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ABSTRACT

NCAA DIVISION I HEAD SOFTBALL COACHES' CONFIDENCE, OPENNESS

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December 2008

This study used a mixed-method to look at NCAA division I head softball

coaches confidence, openness, and stigma tolerance about sport psychology principles

and consultants, as well as what sport psychology principles, time of year used, and

what a Sport Psychology Consultant (SPC) can do to help division I head softball coaches

have more success with their teams. These variables were measured through the use of

the Sport Psychology Attitudes – Revised Coaches instrument developed by Zakrajsek

and Zizzi (2007). For the qualitative component, the researcher developed five inquiries

that allowed for a more in-depth response from the coaches concerning principles used,

confidence in using, and when they are implementing the principles.

Descriptives of the data show that coaches feel mental skills are important, while

descriptives of the independent variables of age gender and years coaching revealed that

none of these variables are significantly related to a coach's use of an SPC.

A two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze

differences in the dependent variables of openness, stigma tolerance, and confidence as a

function of gender and the use of sport psychology consultants. The results show that a

significant difference based on respondent's use of consultants; however, no significant

differences were found for gender.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as a follow-up. For the factor, use of sport psychology consultants, the ANOVA for stigma tolerance was significant. The ANOVA for confidence and openness was non-significant.

The five inquiries revealed five to eight themes per inquiry. Overall, NCAA division I head softball coaches use of sport psychology principles and SPCs falls in line with previous research done by Weinberg & Gould (2007) as to the principles used and when the best time to implement them is.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late Grandmother, who would be so proud of her oldest granddaughter. It was her bravery, courage, strength and show of endurance during her last days of battling cancer that made me realize that if I persevered and had half the courage and strength she did that I could achieve this goal. Her strength to keep fighting when it seemed as though there was nothing left to fight for, showed me that there was nothing that could stand in my way of being successful. Thanks Gram, for always supporting and believing in me.

To my mother and father who have always supported my decisions by offering encouragement and support no matter what the goal or dream I choose to pursue, to my sisters and brother, and their families, who have been praying for me, cheering me on and always giving me encouragement to pursue my life's dreams – even when those dreams took me so far away from you, and to all my friends, especially Kacy, Pam, and Carrie for understanding and enduring this challenging task right along side of me – your support, belief in me, words of encouragement, and wonderful sense of humor and love will always have a special place in my heart.

To Judd, with love, tears and fondest memories!

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Lastly, Chrissy Martin, for becoming a needed support system for me on those days when the fight within me was gone, I only hope that I offered as much encouragement and support to you during this dissertation process as you gave to me. Thanks for traveling down the same road of finishing the dissertation process at the same time with me. What a blessing your support and friendship has been.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

          Purpose of Study
          Research Questions
          Hypotheses
          Assumptions
          Delimitations
          Limitations
          Significance
          Conceptual and Operational Definitions
          Summary

          General Use of Psychologists
          Openness to Use of Psychologists
          Transition from Psychology to Sport Psychology
          Theoretical Exploration on Intentions
          Use of Sport Psychology Consultants and Principles
          Attitudes & Perceptions of Sport Psychology Consultants
          Openness towards Sport Psychology Consultants
          Stigma Tolerance toward Sport Psychology
          Summary

          Research Questions
          Hypotheses
          Participants
          Instrumentation
          Demographics
          Qualitative Inquiries
          Data Collection

Data Analysis
Procedures
References

Introduction
Theoretical Explorations on Intentions
Use of Sports Psychology Consultants and Principles
Attitudes and Perceptions of Sport Psychology Consultants
Openness towards Sport Psychology Consultants
Stigma Tolerance toward Sport Psychology Consultants
Summary
Methods
Results
Discussion
Limitations
Future Research
References

Introduction
Methods
Results and Discussion
Conclusions
References

APPENDIXES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Coaching on the collegiate level has become increasingly more demanding. It would seem as though coaches live in a "fishbowl" where the only important thing is winning and losing (Giges, Petitpas, & Vernacchia, 2004). Coaches are responsible for guiding and developing athletes, not only physically but mentally and emotionally as well (Tutko & Richards, 1971). A coach is expected to bring together a group of young, and sometimes immature, individuals to work in unison for one common goal, Win! This development of athlete tends to take on a sense of urgency for coaches due to internal and external judgment. Expectations placed on a coach are the result of large salaries, intense media scrutiny, as well as from the pressures of recruiting top level athletes. In addition, the coach is expected to teach and lead these athletes to championship seasons. Advancement and job security for a coach often depends on these young and sometimes inexperienced athletes, over which the coach has literally no control of once the athletic competition begins (Giges et al.) So, it is only natural that coaches are constantly in search of new tactics and strategies, techniques, plays, drills, and both physical and mental skills to help them attain their goals.

Sporting events are competitive in nature and one usually gauges success by whether they win or lose. Winning is traditionally one of the popular outcome goals that athletic teams set, no matter the level of competition. This goal calls for people to cooperate and communicate with one another and have good cohesion in order to achieve success on the playing field. So why is it some teams are more successful than others and what are these teams doing differently? Evidence shows that one thing they may be doing differently is seeking out mental training and counseling services of a sport psychology

consultant (SPC) (Ludwig, 1996). For example, National Hockey League (NHL) teams are utilizing sport psychology consultants (SPCs) for profiling the mental toughness of future draftees and for conducting sessions to work on team dynamics, such as, leadership, team-building, and role clarity. The SPCs actually attend approximately 50-75% of the games (Schinke, Hancock, Dubuc, & Dorsch, 2006). Other elite teams, such as National Football League Super Bowl Champions, Major League Baseball World Series Champions, and the National Basketball Association World Champions, also utilize SPCs (Cole, 2007). Coaches are beginning to realize the positive influence that sport psychology can offer their teams (Mallett & Cote, 2006; Sullivan & Hodge, 1991; Werthner & Trudel, 2006). This realization has caused an increase in a coach's tendency to want to learn more about sport psychology principles or to have an SPC working with them, (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). After attendance at a brief workshop designed to increase their perceived behavioral control, self-efficacy, openness and intentions to utilize an SPC, coaches were more aware of the benefits of utilizing an SPC (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2008). Coaches moved from pre-contemplating to contemplating the utilization of an SPC. This understanding after only a brief workshop, by coaches can be of great importance, because the correct implementation of psychological tools and knowledge can contribute to the well-being of both coaches and athletes (Cratty, 1973). Coaches are beginning to understand that in order for success to occur; their teams need to learn both physical and mental performance enhancing skills for their sport. Gradually, coaches are starting to realize the importance of enhancing the mental skills of their players on a regular basis and not just utilizing sport psychology as a tool to "fix" a problem or issue when something has gone wrong (Schinke et al.). Perhaps coaches are starting to have similar opinions to those athletes interviewed by Ferraro and Rush (2000). Of the 20

athletes they surveyed, only two had been to an SPC. When asked exactly what an SPC does in a session, six said "talk about sports," while the others stated things, like "control the mind," "help with stress," and "help one to visualize." When asked if they thought sport psychology had any effect on their performance, all twenty agreed that it did even though only two of them had previously seen an SPC.

Since people generally behave relatively to either learned or observed behaviors, it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint why they act or behave in a certain way. Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) can help form a theoretical foundation as to why coaches choose to use or not use SPCs or sport psychology principles. TRA attempts to explain human behavior with the assumption that people will act according to the information they have available when making decisions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In other words, should coaches have knowledge about the benefits of using SPCs they are more apt to act upon that knowledge and utilize an SPC. TPB was developed as an extension of TRA; its premise is to predict people's intentions as to whether or not they will engage in a certain behavior. More importantly, TPB can predict both intentions and actual behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). The two theories together can give insight and potentially help SPCs understand coaches' perceptions of SPCs, their intentions to use sport psychology, their confidence in sport psychology, and their openness and stigma tolerance to using an SPC and if these factors play a role in the actual utilization of an SPC or sport psychology principles. Ajzen's (2002) ultimate premise is that if one has sufficient control over the behavior then one would be expected to carry out their intentions when the opportunity arises. Therefore, if a coach is the one to make the decisions and has control over their player's behaviors to utilize sport psychology, according to Ajzen, having a favorable attitude, not feeling

pressured to utilize sport psychology, and having perceived control, increases the likelihood that the coaches intentions to actually perform (utilize) sport psychology is stronger.

Over the past 35 years, the field of sport psychology has greatly expanded and become a popular topic of discussion in the world of sport (Williams & Straub, 2006). Use of sport psychology consultants and sport psychology principles have been well documented with both amateur and professional athletes (e.g. Gould, Diffenbach, & Moffett, 2002; Haberl & Peterson, 2006; Halliwell, 1990; Ludwig, 1996; Mamassis, & Doganis, 2004; Sullivan & Hodge, 1991; Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). Since athletes follow instructions from the coach, it is important to understand the impact that the coach has when it comes to influencing any use of sport psychology principles. The coach's leadership plays a direct role in getting athletes to practice or use sport psychology principles and/or consultants. Therefore, the topic of interest for this study is threefold: (1) to look at the extent of assistance coaches give their athletes to develop psychological skills that may in turn help coaches and athletes become more efficient and enhance their performance; (2) to determine coaches openness, stigma tolerance and use of sport psychology consultants and/or principles, and (3) to recognize how confident coaches are in using sport psychology consultants and/or principles. Answers to these three areas have the potential to give SPCs more insight as to the use of, the needs of NCAA Division I college head softball coaches, as well as help coaches better understand the importance in developing mentally strong players to help their athletes be more successful.

This research study was developed to augment the limited research on coaches' use of sport psychology with particular emphasis on their confidence, openness, and stigma tolerance toward sport psychology consultants.

Purpose of the Study

Since winning appears to be of high importance to coaches and athletes, there seems to be this constant search for techniques, tactics and drills to help achieve success. This quest for success prompted the development of this study in order to determine how NCAA division I head softball coaches are using sport psychology, since sport psychology has been shown to enhance performance (Thelwell, Weston, & Greenlees, 2005). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to look specifically at NCAA Division I head softball coaches and determine if their perceptions of SPCs, their intentions to use sport psychology, their confidence in sport psychology, and their openness and stigma tolerance to using an SPC play a role in the utilization of an SPC or any sport psychology principles.

Coaches' values, beliefs, decisions, and behaviors are vital to the success of their teams. By researching coaches' use and intentions in regards to sport psychology consultants and principles, information will be uncovered as to what coaches can or need to do to help facilitate personal success and promote individual athletes and team success.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. Do factors such as age, gender or years of coaching experience determine a softball coach's use of sport psychology consultants and principles?

2. Does a coach's level of confidence, openness and stigma tolerance determine their use of sport psychology consultants and principles?

Hypotheses

H_1: No significant relationship exists between a coach's age, gender or years of coaching experience and use of a sport psychology consultant and principles.

H_2: No significant relationship exists between a coach's confidence, openness and stigma tolerance and the use of a sport psychology consultant and principles.

H_3: No significant difference exists between a coach's gender and a coach's openness to using a sport psychology consultant.

H_4: No significant difference exists between a coach's gender and a coach's stigma tolerance of sport psychology consultants.

Assumptions

(1) The head coach filled out the questionnaire.

(2) All instructions and procedures were followed by the head coach.

(3) The head coach answered all questions honestly.

Delimitations

Several delimitations are suggested which may affect the outcome of this study.

1. The participants were delimited to head coaches.

2. The participants were delimited to softball coaches.

3. The findings of this study will be delimited to only those coaching at NCAA Division I schools.

Limitations

Several limitations are suggested which may have affected the outcome of this study.

1. Timing of approval for paper work.

2. Time of study - teams were preparing for their season when the survey was mailed out.

3. Inexperience of the researcher.

    a. lack of comfort with research process

    b. lack of comfort with statistical analysis

4. Limited use of the SPA-RC

5. Results may only be generalized toward those who participated in the study

Significance

It is believed that the findings from this study will benefit sport psychology consultants as well as NCAA Division I softball coaches by providing more information about coaches' intentions to use sport psychology, their perceptions of SPCs, confidence in sport psychology, openness and stigma tolerance to utilizing SPCs. The information from this study can help increase SPCs' and Division I coaches' knowledge base about what current NCAA division one head softball coaches use of and perceptions are regarding sport psychology. This research will provide information about possible barriers or tolerance issues that may exist for coaches and why they may underutilize the services of an SPC. Research from this study can potentially help coaches achieve a greater awareness of the benefits that could come from using sport psychology and sport psychology consultants. Findings may afford current and future coaches information about the benefits of utilizing sport psychology principles and consultants. In addition, this information can also help enhance the overall sport experience for both coaches and athletes. By researching what coaches are doing, it is hoped that more information will help to enhance the SPCs knowledge of coaches' use of and intentions, which will in turn help them to better serve and assist coaches in their utilization of sport psychology

principles. Moreover, this research may help not only NCAA Division I softball coaches but coaches of other sports as well to gain insight as to what their colleagues are doing to make every effort to assure that their athletes are prepared mentally and equipped with all the tools necessary to be successful in every aspect of the sport.

Conceptual and Operational Definitions

The definitions for these terms are derived from several sources as well as from the researcher's summation of ideas.

Athletic Coach: The organizational leader of a specific sports team. Often manages team affairs (travel, recruiting, scheduling) in addition to having a primary role as a teacher of sport-specific skills and strategy (Zizzi, Blom, Watson, Downey, & Greer, in press).

Confidence: The belief that one can successfully perform a desired behavior (Weinberg & Gould, 2007).

Intention: How one plans on acting or what one intends to do.

Openness: One's willingness to learn about, utilize, or accept something.

Perception: One's awareness or understanding.

Sport Psychology: The scientific study of people and how they behave during sport and how to apply that knowledge to help enhance the performance of athletes (Weinberg & Gould, 2007)

Sport Psychology Consultant: An individual who works with athletes or teams to develop psychological skills to enhance competitive athletic performance (Weinberg & Gould, 2007).

Sport Psychology Principles: Mental techniques (e.g. goal setting, imagery, arousal

regulation, concentration, mental preparation) that can be developed to help

enhance athletic performance.

Stigma Tolerance: The acceptance of beliefs or practices that differ from one's own

(Merriam-Webster, 2004).

Use of: One's current utilization of sport psychology consultants or principles.

Summary

Coaches are required to make many complex decisions. Most assuredly they try to make decisions that will be in the best interest of their team in hopes that they will bring about success for their program. Sport psychology consultants' work revolves around helping not only athletes, but coaches as well, to achieve that success. It is this researcher's belief that when both the coach and the SPC have a better understanding, more openness and tolerance, and confidence of one another's role that they can collaborate and work for the same common goal. It is hoped that through the information obtained in this study that coaches will become more aware of: (1) what an SPC does; (2) how an SPC can benefit their program; and (3) how an SPC can be utilized to help their team achieve success. As for the SPC, it is hoped that this information will help them: (1) become aware of the needs of this particular population; and (2) provide current insight about what this population is doing with regards to sport psychology and allow the SPCs to provide services to help benefit these coaches.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

General Use of Psychologists

Psychology, as defined by Merriam-Webster (2004), "are the mental and behavioral characteristics of an individual or group" (p. 582). The term used to describe a professional trained in the field of psychology is psychologist. A general view of the role of a psychologist is that he or she counsels and helps individuals to maintain an overall sense of well-being in life. The use of psychologists and their popularity increased after World War I (Benjamin, 1986). Their work in the post-war period with military personnel created an interest in the work of psychologists and the benefits offered by their expertise. After a slight decline of interest during the depression years, interest in the use of psychologists was once again initiated following World War II. The inconsistency of interest may possibly be attributed to the fact that people did not understand the role of a psychologist and how people could be helped by them. Perhaps this is the reason why psychologists have not appeared to be widely accepted.

Attempts to understand attitudes toward psychologists have been undertaken by researchers who have examined the help-seeking behaviors of people (Masuda, Suzumura, Beauchamp, Howells, and Clay, 2005). Studying these behaviors has consistently shown that females have more positive attitudes; past experience with a psychologist can predict one's help-seeking patterns, and prior experience results in a positive attitude about seeking help (Ang, Lim, Tan, & Yau, 2004; Leong & Zachar, 1999; Masuda et al., 2005). Ang, et al. reported that females were more willing to recognize and seek out help as compared to males.

Prior to counseling, people are uncertain about what to expect, feel apprehension and don't want others to know they are getting help (Lambert, 2007). Lambert also found that people were confused about the correct terminology used in counseling; clients using counseling services felt that they had little support from family, counseling was only for the weak, and some experienced stigma that is associated with the negative pressures of societies cultural assumptions about seeking help. However, these same clients, after receiving counseling were happier, and more open to receiving counseling help. The cost associated with the counseling services was mentioned as being a problem for most.

Benjamin (1986) suggested that psychologists have always struggled for understanding and acceptance from the public. Reasons for this struggle by psychologists included people being confused about psychology and lacking an understanding of just what a psychologist does. More recently, society has been more accepting of counseling services and the social stigma appears less important than in the past; however, people are still struggling with time management issues as well as the fear of what others may think of them for receiving counseling services (Watson, 2006). Therefore, sport psychology consultants and counselors need to be more aware of what clients think of the profession and implement some type of education that can help clear up misconceptions about counseling (Watson). This is especially important since there tends to be a correlation between public opinion and attitudes about how psychologists can assist individuals (Leong & Zachar, 1999).

Openness to the Use of Psychologists

Past history indicates that the role of a psychologist has not always been clearly defined or understood by the public. Thus, it makes sense that consumers' lack of use may indicate hesitancy to utilize the services of a psychologist. Addis and Mahalik

(2003) suggest that services, such as those psychologists provide, are not utilized to their fullest extent by males. They suggest that gender roles, masculinity, ideologies, and gender norms contribute to the lack of men seeking help. Conformity to gender norms shows a relationship to men seeking counseling and their negative attitudes about seeking out help (Good & Wood, 1995). This may be because males need to exhibit emotional control, power, and self-reliance. Parslow and Jorm (2000) revealed that educational level and age are also predictors of whether or not men will seek help. Culture and the type of help being sought out are also factors in men's willingness to seek help (Lane & Addis, 2005). Men are less likely to even seek help for things like depression or stressful life events (Addis & Mahalik, 2003).

Komiaya, Good, and Sherrod (2000) suggested that emotional openness on the part of an individual predicts a more favorable attitude toward seeking out help. Studies have shown that when looking at gender differences, females tend to have a more positive attitude about seeking psychological help than their male counterparts (Leong & Zachar, 1999). One factor that may indicate a likelihood of someone seeking help from a psychologist by both men and women are some types of distress (Cepeda-Benito & Short, 1998). However, Komiya et al. found that women, who tend to be more open regarding the display of their emotional side, experience less of a stigma about utilizing psychologists and tend to have more severe psychological problems. In general, people with socially-restrictive attitudes tend to believe that something is wrong with those who seek psychological assistance; they also believe that something is wrong with themselves if they too pursue psychological assistance (Leong & Zachar).

Several barriers have been identified as to why people do not seek help for their psychological problems. Some barriers causing underutilization of psychological services

include: (1) lack of awareness of resources, (2) lack of insight to one's problems, (3) not wanting to burden others, and (4) a stigma that seeking out help would signify male weakness (Timlin-Scalera, Ponterotto, Blumberg, & Jackson, 2003).

Stigma causes concerns about whether one will make the decision to seek help or not. People tend to make important choices about seeking out help based on their level of stigma. Corrigan (2004) reported that people who have concerns about what others think tend to try and solve their problems on their own and that younger patients perceive more stigma than older patients. He indicated that patients tend to fear being socially disapproved or that seeking out help would diminish one's self-esteem and impede people from seeking out the help they may need.

Stigma not only causes people to avoid seeking out help, it may also be a source of hindrance once treatment or help has been started. Stigma has been shown to be a predictor of treatment discontinuation in young and older outpatients who were suffering from depression (Sirey et al., 2001). Younger patients have more perceived stigma, while older patients tend to be more affected by their stigma during the treatment process (Sirey et al.).

Studies with adolescents reveal that they are more likely to pursue informal help for problems from their friends, parents, coaches, girlfriends and other potential role models in their lives (Timlin-Scalera et al., 2003). However, with the continued efforts of mental health professionals, some reduction of stigma toward seeking psychological help has been observed (Komiya et al., 2000). Education concerning psychology and the role of a psychologist will greatly aid in improving the perception of psychologists and the role they play in society. Cepeda-Benito et al. (1998) surveyed introductory and upper level psychology classes, and found favorable attitudes about seeking help can predict a

greater perceived likelihood to get help regardless of the problem. Berthenthal (2002) supported the view that increasing psychologists' credibility through promoting and popularizing their accomplishments will increase the interest and confidence levels of the public.

<div align="center">Transition from Psychology to Sport Psychology</div>

Prior to the 1950's coaches learned how to play and teach sport activities in addition to taking courses that prepared them in the "scientific" areas dealing with the biomechanics and physiology of the body. Not until the late 1950's were there any courses dealing with the psychology of being physically active (Cratty, 1973). However, in the 1960's, there was an increase in interest in the areas of psychological and social development for those participating in athletics (Cratty). During the 1980s, Eastern Europe was the front runner in the development of the application of sport psychology tools and techniques. In the United States, most psychology books were written by psychologists and physical education professors who specialized in psychological research. This may account for why the United States was slow to apply strategies that would help athletes to achieve optimum performance levels. Though the research was informative, its main focus was on psychological and motor learning theory and not on the practical application of psychology (Mechikoff & Kozar, 1983). Therefore, a change in the approach to implementation of the practical application of psychological methods and strategies in sport needed to occur.

Change and growth has occurred in sport psychology over the last 35 years (Williams & Straub, 2006). In fact, within this time, we have seen a large increase in the number of Olympic athletes who have started implementing sport psychology principles into their routine to help with performance preparation (Haberl & Peterson, 2006). This

change and growth has created more interest in the use of sport psychologists and the use of practical applications of psychological theories to help improve athletic performance (Tod, 2007). In its most technical terms, sport psychology is defined as the scientific study of people and how they behave during sport and how to apply that knowledge to help enhance the performance of athletes (Weinberg & Gould, 2007). When studying sport psychology, there are two main objectives that are important considerations: (1) understand psychological factors which affect the physical performance of individuals and (2) understand how an individual's participation in sport affects their overall well-being and development (Weinberg & Gould).

<div align="center">Theoretical Exploration on Intentions</div>

Anderson, Hodge, Lavalle, & Martin (2004) examined the relationship between athletes' attitude and their intentions and behavior regarding sport psychology. They suggested that Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) offered the theoretical support needed to explain the relationship between attitudes towards sport psychology and intention to use sport psychology services. When applying TRA to athletes it has been shown to help explain and predict actual mental training. The end result showed that TRA has validity; it proved that one's intentions can help to predict actual mental practice, that one's attitude can predict one's intentions, and that one's beliefs about actually using mental practice helps to predict attitudes (Trafimow & Miller, 1996).

Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) TRA is an attempt to explain any human behavior and why people have particular attitudes and subjective norms. TRA's assumption is that people will act rationally and use information they have available to make decisions. It suggests that one's intentions are influenced by two determinants: (1) one's attitudes

toward a particular behavior, and (2) subjective norms. Should one perceive that performing a particular behavior will lead to a positive outcome, then that person tends to have a positive attitude about performing the behavior. The opposite occurs if the behavior leads to negative outcomes. This theory actually has the ability to predict, explain, and influence human behavior. Ultimately, people will consider the results of their actions and act accordingly. In using this theory, one can predict the attitudes that a coach has about sport psychology principles and consultants that will directly affect whether or not a coach chooses to utilize sport psychology principles or SPCs. In other words, predicting behaviors of people, in particular coaches may not be difficult to do (Ajzen & Fishbein).

The Theory of Planned Behavior was developed as an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Behavior. This theory predicts the intentions to engage in an explicit behavior. The intention toward a behavior is shaped by three independent determinants: (1) Attitude toward the behavior: formed by favorable or unfavorable affect toward the behavior; (2) Subjective norms: social pressure felt to perform or not to perform; (3) Perceived behavioral control: how easy can you execute the behavior? The theory of planned behavior predicts that perceived behavioral control influences both intentions and actual behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). When applying the theory of planned behavior to see if the variables can help mediate the effects of age, gender and multidimensional health locus of control all three variables proved to be reliable in predicting one's behavioral intentions (Armitage, Norman, & Conner, 2002). Sagas, Cunningham, and Pastore (2006) applied TPB to try and predict head coaching intentions in male and female assistant coaches. They found that the theory of planned behavior can be used to predict intentions and each of the three determinants is a positive predictor of intentions.

Subjective norms refer to the intent of someone to perform a behavior if he or she sees it as having positive results. If an individual believes that important people think that behavior should be performed, an individual is more likely to exhibit the behavior. This concept can be applied to a coach's use of sport psychology principles. If the coach perceives certain psychological principles to have positive outcomes and someone the coach holds in high regard, such as a highly respected coach who believes in it, utilizes it or recommends the use of a particular sport psychology principle or consultant, then the coach is more apt to utilize the principle or consultant (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). From Ajzen & Fishbein's view, one's intentions can be an immediate indicator of their behavior. If intentions are appropriately measured, they can provide an accurate prediction of what one's behavior will ultimately be.

Boudreau & Godin (2007) have applied TPB to obese individuals to better understand their intentions to be physically active. Findings supported the need for interventions to help obese individuals overcome barriers to help them become physically active and to try and help them develop positive attitudes toward continuing the behavior of being physically active. They suggested intention is associated with perceived behavioral control, those with previous experience have stronger intentions and that if one has a favorable attitude this too is associated with one's intentions. They concluded that TPB can be used as an appropriate theoretical framework to help understand determinants of what motivates one to be physically active with respect to obese individuals.

Armitage and Conner (2001) completed a meta-analysis of studies done using TPB and reported that overall evidence supported the use of TPB for helping to predict both intentions and behaviors. Other findings included that self-reported behavior was

superior over observed behavior and that perceived behavior control directly and indirectly influenced behaviors independent of TRA variables, allowing them to conclude that perceived behavior control was in fact a beneficial addition to TRB. A similar study by Hagger, Chatzisarantis, & Biddle (2002) found that perceived behavioral control and self-efficacy are the key influences in helping to form ones intentions to participate in physical activity. Other findings concluded that control and self-efficacy proved to be the most important predictors of whether one chooses to do physical activity and that older adults are more likely to act upon their intentions than younger adults. Lastly, Hagger et al. concluded that the inclusion of self-efficacy and one's past behavior are important additions that were made to strengthen the original model.

Other similar, significant studies have supported the fact that TPB does in fact explain one's intentions and that perceived behavioral control was found to be just as important as one's attitude about performing something or not (Godin & Kok, 1996). More recently, Chatzisarantis, Fredrick, Biddle, Hagger, & Smith (2007) studied one's intentions to perform physical activity and effort and concluded that one's effort in fact can predict their participation. Other relevant findings include: participant's intentions did predict their participation in physical activity and that one's past behaviors do contribute to the prediction of one's physical activity.

Research to date is limited on assessing coaches' attitudes, current use of, and intentions to use sport psychology consultants and how the use can be an influence on coaching practices. This area should be of particular interest for consultants. Ajzen & Fishbeins's theories, Theory of Reasoned Action (1980), and Theory of Planned Behavior (1991) offer the needed theoretical models necessary to support this investigation (Anderson, Hodge, Lavalle, & Martin, 2004). These theories also offer the

needed support to explain a coach's intentions and attitudes towards sport psychology, and if any assumptions or predictions can be made as to whether or not a coach will utilize sport psychology or consultants.

<div align="center">Use of Sport Psychology Consultants and Principles</div>

Martin and Lumsden (1987) stated that a coach's job is to teach, both effectively and efficiently, those things that will help modify an athlete's behaviors to help improve performance and help enhance skill level. The use of sport psychology principles will help modify player's behaviors since "the primary purpose of intervention is to help the players enhance their performance by improving their mental skills" (Halliwell, 1990, p. 370). Vallee' and Bloom (2005) identified other additional key attributes or qualities coaches should possess in order to help them build a successful sport program. These attributes included: (1) good personal attributes that allowed them to have good leadership behaviors, (2) the desire to foster a player's individual growth, (3) good organizational skills, and lastly, (4) good vision which allows for the athlete to trust the coaches' judgment and philosophy. This vision and judgment needs to include those things that will help to enhance the athletes overall sport experience for both the coach and the athlete.

Coaches influence athletes in a number of different ways. More specifically, coaches influence athletes by assisting them in the development of certain skills and characteristics, such as maturity, motivation, competitiveness, more contextual influences such as the team considerations and the coach-athlete dimension (Giacobbi, Roper, Whitney, & Butryn, 2002). Other influences include the development and realization of the importance of developing psychological and socializing skills (Gould, Chung, Smith, & White, 2006). The use of sport psychology consultants and sport psychology principles

have been well documented with athletes, both amateur and professional (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). However, since athletes follow instructions from the coach, it is important that coaches understand how much influence they have when it comes to any use of sport psychology principles or consultants. Influence over the athletes' values and behaviors have been documented by Gould, Chung, Smith, & White. They reported that coaches do in fact realize the importance of their roles. This leadership role has a direct impact on whether the athletes practice or use sport psychology principles and/or consultants.

Figone (1999) stated that coaches often lack the time and simply don't understand how to teach or practice psychological skills that can be implemented to help their athletes perform better. He states that coaches tend to simply use words like "relax," "concentrate," or "play with confidence." The assumption by the coach is that the athletes already know how to mentally make adjustments to what they have been instructed to do. He also states that coaches are very quick to attribute losses to the mental aspect of the game; however, the coach sees this as physical breakdowns in the athletes' performance. The result is that the coach has the team work harder in practice on the physical aspect of the game. Harris and Harris (1984) also reported that losing is attributed to mental and emotional aspects but little, if any, time was spent on developing and training athletes' mental skills.

Studies looking specifically at coaches' use of sport psychology or consultants are limited. Partington & Orlick (1987) researched Olympic coaches to reveal their perceptions and opinions about the job an SPC does for them. They reported that coaches in general reported that the experience of working with an SPC was positive, SPCs were confident in their ability to work with the athletes and were also able to work with both athlete and coach without being intrusive. Coaches surveyed in New Zealand (Sullivan

and Hodge, 1991), indicated that they didn't have enough knowledge in sport psychology, that they were in fact practicing sport psychology in their programs and virtually all coaches indicated an interest in having an SPC work with their team. Pain and Harwood (2004) did a study with English soccer coaches which surveyed national coaches, youth academy directors, and academy coaches. They found that coaches lacked knowledge about what an SPC does. Other findings that surfaced were that coaches (1) lacked money to utilize an SPC, (2) held negative perceptions about SPCs, (3) were not sure how to integrate an SPC with their team, and (4) doubted the value of sport psychology.

Voight and Callaghan (2001) looked at several universities' use of sport psychology services. Their study revealed that 19 of the 45 universities reported that coaches had hired a part-time consultant. Walker and Eslinger (2003) reported that for the most part: (1) coaches have a positive outlook about sport psychology, (2) Division I female coaches are more likely to hire SPCs, and (3) older coaches tended to utilize sport psychology more so than younger coaches. More recently, Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007) revealed that: (1) women had less of a stigma to using consultants, (2) male gender roles may dictate use of consultants, and (3) there is a correlation between one's openness and one's expectations. Previous literature about women, male gender roles, and openness and expectations showed similar results in studies done within the general population regarding influences and expectations (Good & Wood, 1995; Komiaya, Good, & Sherrod, 2000, Leong & Zachar, 1999).

Attitudes & Perceptions of Sport Psychology Consultants

First impressions usually make a lasting impression on people, so much so that decisions that one may make could very well be made quickly and could potentially

impact the utilization of an SPC. These hasty decisions could very well impact a person's perceptions so much so that one's willingness to see things in a broader perspective may be impacted. First impressions or personal perceptions have been known to sway an athlete's willingness to use an SPC (Lubker, Watson, Visek, & Geer, 2005). Athletes indicate that they are most comfortable having an SPC work with them who is similar to them (e.g. gender, sport experiences), can relate well with them and have the necessary credentials and training to be effective in helping to enhance the athletes performance (Lubker, Visek, Geer, & Watson, 2008).

Dunn and Holt's (2003) study with collegiate athletes indicated that utilizing an SPC is a benefit to the team. More specifically, athletes indicated that the absence of coaches allows players to feel more comfortable and open up to the SPC. They also saw the role of the SPC as a liaison between the players and coaching staff, which was deemed crucial to team dynamics. The athletes liked that an SPC: (1) is emotionally involved with the team, (2) shows equal respect to players who played and those who did not, (3) is approachable, positive, and (4) most importantly trustworthy when it came to confidentiality (Dunn & Holt). Athletes have also indicated that effective consultants are: (1) willing to work individually with athletes, (2) give sport-specific input, (3) did follow-up work, and (4) were perceived as being interested in the athletes (Orlick & Partington, 1987). Other notable perceptions by athletes of effective SPCs are being personable, having good communication skills, and the ability to exhibit professional skills (Anderson, Miles, Robinson, & Mahoney, 2004). Not all studies produce the same results. Blom, Hardy, Burke, & Joyner (2003) showed that high school athlete's perceptions are slightly different. Younger athletes surveyed about their perceptions indicated that they might be picked on or seen as "different" if they saw an SPC. They

thought it was important to have approval from their coach to utilize an SPC and liked the idea of having individual or group sessions with an SPC versus reading self-help books or using internet services for information.

Openness towards Sport Psychology Consultants

There are several studies that have looked specifically at an athlete's openness and perceptions toward using sport psychology or sport psychology consultants (Anderson, Hodge, Lavallee, & Martin, 2004; Brooks, & Bull, 1999; Gould, Diffenbach, & Moffett, 2002). Findings have been very similar in all of these studies. Anderson et al. (2004) found that New Zealand athletes had a positive attitude toward use of sport psychologists and were confident and open to using sport psychology. Males and those with no prior exposure to sport psychology had a slightly less than positive attitude. Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, and Lounsbury (1997) found that gender, as well as race, might contribute to the perceptions of SPCs. Their study also reported more of a stigma on the part of males than from female athletes. Brooks and Bull reported more openness and a better perception about SPCs from female athletes and that they tend to be more accepting and understanding of those who seek out help and support from SPCs. Martin (2005) found that: (1) higher levels of confidence existed from those who had experience in working with an SPC, (2) those who played contact sports tend to have more of a stigma toward utilizing SPCs, and (3) those who were younger (high school aged) had more of a stigma than older athletes.

Stigma Tolerance toward Sport Psychology

Not all studies have reported positive attitudes and perceptions about the use of sport psychology. In fact, some athletes have stated that they know the positive influence that sport psychology can have on their performance; however, they admit to under

utilizing it (Ferraro & Rush, 2000). Ferraro & Rush wanted to see why athletes resisted sport psychology consultants. They found that athletes, for the most part, do know why people go to a sport psychologist, but they do not utilize SPCs for fear of lost time and money. One point of interest was the fact that none of the twenty subjects in their study mentioned anything about the emotional aspects of their involvement with sport. They mentioned things like concentration, mental training, improving their performance and use of visualization. Their lack of discussion of their affective values led Ferraro & Rush to believe that athletes may have a fear of recognizing or understanding the importance of their emotions and affective beliefs.

Males tend to have more of a negative attitude on stigma tolerance factor than women toward services, both in the general public (Fauteux, McKelvie, & de Man, 2008) and toward the use of an SPC (Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, & Lounsbury, 1997). Martin et al. reported that males tend to feel more of a stigma towards SPCs, possibly because of the way society portrays the masculine image and defines gender roles based on one's sport of choice. They also reported that males tend to fear being labeled weak, less masculine, or as sissies if they opened up to an SPC.

Still it remains important for coaches and athletes to remember that in order to achieve success, one needs to be fully prepared to accomplish the task at hand. Athletes can achieve success if they are: (1) prepared physically, (2) know the technical and tactical skills of their sport, and (3) know how to prepare psychologically in order to achieve high levels of success (Martin & Lumsden, 1987).

Summary

Since World Wars I and II, people have not really understood what exactly the psychologist can do for their mental strength and health. This trend seems to have

continued and carried over into sport psychology as well. Several of the same barriers that are evident in the general use of psychology are prevalent with the use of sport psychology consultants as well. Some of the barriers that are similar for both areas include: (1) negative connotations associated with the use of a psychologist or consultant, (2) lack of understanding about what the psychologist or consultant can do to benefit them, and (3) the male gender tends to have more of a stigma towards using psychological services.

Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behavior help to provide the theoretical foundation and stability to support and explain why a coach may have a particular attitude about SPCs and how this may affect the use of or intentions to use an SPC. TRA helps to predict, explain, and influence a coach's behavior, while TPB helps to support the perceived behavior control that influences a coach's intentions and the actual behaviors that are displayed.

Coaches have a tremendous influence over the skills, both mental and physical, that their athletes work on and refine on a daily basis. Coaches need to have the vision and good judgment to utilize and include those things that will help to enhance the athletes' overall experience. That vision should include the use of both SPCs and sport psychology principles.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of Chapter III is to present the steps that were followed in this study

regarding the (1) description of the subjects of the study, (2) research method and design,

(3) instrumentation, (4) data collection procedures, (5) limitations of the study, and (6)

analysis of data. This study employed a mixed-methods approach. This is due to the fact

that the researcher believed "the results from one method can help develop or inform the

other method" (Creswell, 2003, pp. 15-16).

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. Do factors such as age, gender or years of coaching experience determine a

   softball coach's use of sport psychology consultants and principles?

2. Does a coach's level of confidence, openness, and stigma tolerance determine

   their use of sport psychology consultants and principles?

Hypotheses

H_1: No significant relationship exists between a coach's age, gender or

years of coaching experience and use of a sport psychology consultant and

principles.

H_2: No significant relationship exists between a coach's confidence,

openness and stigma tolerance and the use of sport psychology consultants.

H_3: No significant difference exists between a coach's gender and a coach's

openness to using a sport psychology consultant.

H_4: No significant difference exists between a coach's gender and a coach's

stigma tolerance of sport psychology consultants.

Participants

Eighty-eight National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I head

softball coaches participated in the study. The researcher used the NCAA directory,

which is the most comprehensive listing, to access the names and addresses of all

potential participants. The number of coaches available to participate in this study was

281. The return response rate was 31% (n=88). The sample included 30 males (34.1%),

56 females (63.6%) and two who did not specify gender.

Participants' ages represented all categories. Two (2.3%) indicated they held

either an EdD, PhD or PsyD, forty-two (48.3%) had a MA or MS degree, forty (46%)

indicated they had a BA or BS degree while three (3.4%) selected "other" or did not

specify their educational background. Head coaching experience ranged from 1 to 45

years (M= 11.19 years, Std. = 9.92), two participants did not specify number of years

coaching experience.

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used is a modified version of Sport Psychology Attitudes-

Revised Coaches (SPA-RC) form (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007) developed in order to

understand a coach's perceptions, intentions, confidence, openness and stigma tolerance

to sport psychology (Appendix C). The Sports Psychology Attitudes – Revised (Martin,

Kellmann, Lavalle, & Page, 2002) on which the SPA-RC is modified was originally a 7-

point scale but was modified to a 6-point scale for the purpose of improving the

reliability of the responses (Zakrajsek & Zizzi). The SPA-RC questionnaire has five

parts: (1) current use of an SPC, (2) the perceptions of coaches expectations of an SPC,

(3) the four factors: stigma tolerance, confidence in sport psychology, personal openness,

and cultural preference, (4) coaches use of mental training, and (5) demographics. The

factors are assessed through 25 items which are measured on a 6-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= moderately disagree, 3= slightly disagree, 4= slightly agree, 5= moderately agree, and 6= strongly agree). The factors are: stigma tolerance (7 items), confidence in sport psychology (8 items), personal openness (6 items), and cultural preference (4 items). The score for each factor is an average of the items associated with that factor. A higher score on the confidence factor indicates that coaches believe mental training is helpful, a higher score on openness indicates that coaches are not willing to use SPCs or principles and a higher score for stigma tolerance is an indication that coaches have a negative attitude about seeking out help (Zakrajsek & Zizzi). Part of the SPA-RC, the cultural preference factor, was not used for this study. Permission to use and modify the SPA-RC was granted from the authors.

The modified version of the SPA-RC, for this study was a 21 item self-administered survey instrument to assess three factors: stigma tolerance (7 items), confidence in sport psychology (8 items), and personal openness (6 items). The form still had five parts but was slightly rearranged to assist with the flow of the survey and make room for the addition of a qualitative component. Part one pertained to access to and satisfaction with the sport psychologist, part two surveyed the use of mental training; part three surveyed the three factors of interest for this study: stigma tolerance, confidence in sport psychology, and personal openness, (See Tables 1-3). Part four collected the coaches' demographic information and part five contained the five open-ended inquiries.

The tables serve to summarize the operationalization of the variables examined in this study. Each of the three tables indicates the variable that was examined and the survey questions used to collect data relevant to that variable.

The four factors measured by the SPA-RC were identified through an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in a study of track and swimming coaches by Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007). The SPA-RC has established reliability and validity and internal consistencies satisfactory for stigma tolerance and confidence. Reliability was somewhat lower for personal openness (Zakrajsek & Zizzi). They used promax rotation on the original 25 items to identify item clusters that were specific to attitudes of coaches toward SP consultation. The authors then retained items that had loadings of .40 and above with cross loadings less than .30. The scores for each subscale were obtained by averaging the responses within each subscale. This questionnaire revealed a 21-item, 3-factor solution on coaches' attitudes about sport psychology consulting that accounted for 45% of the total variance. Factor 1 corresponded to items pertaining to stigma tolerance, factor 2 represented confidence in SP consultation, and factors 3 and 4 represented personal openness. Because of the criteria implemented for the EFA and because factors 3 and 4 represented all personal openness items, Zakrajsek and Zizzi combined these two factors.

Table 1

Items from the SPA-RC Relevant to the Factor of Stigma Tolerance

Number	Items
11	I would not want a SPC working with my team because other coaches would harass me.
15	I would feel uneasy having a SPC work with my team because some people would disapprove.
17	If I utilized a SPC to help me coach better, I would not want other coaches to know about it.
19	Having a SPC is bad for an athlete's reputation.
24	I would not want someone else to know about my team receiving help from a SPC.
26	If my team worked with a SPC, I would not want other coaches to know about it.
28	I would think less of my athletes if they went to a SPC.

Table 2

Items from the SPA-RC Relevant to the Factor of Confidence

Number	Items
9	A SPC can help athletes improve their mental toughness.
10	If an athlete on my team asked my advice about personal feelings of failure related to sport, I might recommend that he/she see a SPC.
14	I would like to have the assistance of a SPC to help me better understand my team.
18	An athlete with emotional problems during sport performance would feel most secure in receiving assistance from a SPC.
21	If I was worried or upset about my team's performance, I would want to get help from a SPC.
23	I think a SPC would help my team perform better under pressure.
25	A SPC could help my team fine-tune their performance.
27	At times I have felt lost and would have welcomed professional advice for a personal problem.

Table 3

Items from the SPA-RC Relevant to the Factor Personal Openness

Number	Items
12	There are certain problems that should not be discussed outside one's immediate family.
13	A good idea for avoiding personal worries and concerns is to keep one's mind on the job.
16	There is something respectable in the attitude of athletes who are willing to cope with their conflicts and fears without resorting to professional help.
20	There are experiences in my life that I would not discuss with anyone.
22	Emotional difficulties tend to work themselves out in time.
29	Athletes with a strong character can get over mental conflicts by themselves.

Internal consistency was satisfactory for stigma tolerance, confidence in sport psychology consulting, and personal openness. Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007) reported coefficient alphas of .84 for stigma tolerance, .80 for confidence and .63 for personal openness. These coefficients were similar to those that Martin et al. (2002) reported. The initial report from Zakrajsek and Zizzi concerning the validity and reliability of the scale was that the reported estimates did in fact demonstrate support for the SPA-RC. The researchers also reported that the internal consistency was less than desirable for the personal openness subscale.

Demographics

The demographics section allowed the researcher to find out details specific to the coach who filled out the questionnaire. This section asked questions about the respondent's gender, age, years of coaching experience, highest degree completed, psychology/sport psychology degrees or consulting certifications held, any training specific to sport psychology and athletic conference in which they participate.

Qualitative Inquiries

The qualitative approach utilized the collection of information provided by means of five open-ended inquiries that were also included with the SPA-RC. (See Table 4) The use of this qualitative method for collecting data enabled the researcher to gain additional information about the participants' perceptions of the use of sport psychologists. This researcher believed including a questionnaire with five open-ended inquiries in conjunction with the SPA-RC helped to increase the in-depth analysis allowing for more detail about a coaches' current use of sport psychology, their perceptions of SPCs, intentions to use sport psychology, confidence in sport psychology, and openness and stigma tolerance to using an SPC. Open-ended inquiries allow for

Table 4

Items from the Open-ended Inquiries

Number	Inquiry
1. What sport psychology techniques or principles do you utilize over the course of the year?	
2. Briefly describe how confident you are personally implementing sport psychology principles/techniques	
3. Of the techniques or principles that you utilize, when do you use them?	
4. In your mind what does a sport psychology consultant do?	
5. What is the most important thing that a sport psychology consultant can do to help you and your team achieve success?	

digging deeper into a particular topic since researchers do not know what people are thinking or feeling and because they have not observed an individual's behavior in the past (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection

In order to be sure that the coaches' responses remained confidential, the questionnaire was mailed to the potential respondents at their respective college or university. Included in each envelope was a letter of explanation, a consent form, the survey instrument, the open-ended inquiries, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The coaches were directed to send the survey instrument and their responses to the open-ended inquiries in the enclosed stamped envelope to the researcher conducting this study, without indicating any identifying information about themselves. The survey instrument, as well as the open-ended inquiries, can be found in Appendix C. As recommended by

Creswell (1994), a three step procedure was used to administer and follow-up on the return responses. The three steps included: (1) sending out the initial questionnaire by mail, (2) three weeks later, sending a reminder email with the questionnaire attached to each coach that had not responded, (3) after three additional weeks a second email reminder to complete and send in the survey instrument was sent out. Once the survey instruments were returned they were entered into Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The open-ended inquiries were coded and analyzed as qualitative information for this study.

Data Analysis

Because this study used a mixed methods approach, it afforded the researcher the opportunity to make a more in depth analysis about a coach's perspective in regards to sport psychology principles and consultants. Denzin (1978) coined the term triangulation, which refers to the combining of methodologies in a study with the same phenomenon. This combining of methods helps to add more scope and breadth to the study (Creswell, 1994). All data were analyzed to determine which factors play a role in a coach's use of SPCs.

The data from the SPA-RC survey instrument was entered into SPSS 15.0. The independent variables in this study were age, gender and years coaching. The dependant variables were confidence in SPCs, openness to use of sport psychology and stigma tolerance of sport psychology. Descriptive data is given for the independent and dependant variables. Hypotheses one which states: no significant relationship exists between a coach's age, gender or years of coaching experience and use of a sport psychology consultant was analyzed using descriptives, chi-square, and a t-test. Hypotheses two which states: no significant relationship exists between a coach's

confidence, openness and stigma tolerance and the use of sport psychology consultants was analyzed using a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Hypotheses three and four which state: No significant difference exists between a coach's gender and a coach's openness and stigma tolerance, respectively, to use sport psychology consultants; was analyzed using MANOVA. All hypotheses used an alpha level of .05.

The SPA-RC question pertaining to a coaches "current use" of sport psychology services offered coaches five choices to choose from (See Appendix C, question 7). The choices were worded so that Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007) could summarize where coaches may fall in line with the Transtheoretical model. For easier statistical analysis for this study, question seven was collapsed to only two responses, coaches either used sport psychology services or they did not use. Collapsing of responses occurred after the surveys were collected.

The qualitative data for the study was collected by means of five open-ended inquiries included with the survey instrument. The five questions are: 1) What sport psychology techniques do you utilize over the course of the year? 2) Briefly describe how confident you are personally implementing sport psychology principles/techniques 3) Of the techniques or principles that you utilize, when do you use them? 4) In your mind, what does s sport psychology consultant do? and 5) What is the most important thing that a sport psychology consultant can do to help you and your team achieve success? This qualitative data allows the researcher to explore the topic when the variables or theory are not known (Creswell, 1994). This researcher chose a qualitative component because the topic is immature and needs to be explored; this allows the researcher a means of justification for using the qualitative method (Creswell).

After collecting the open-ended responses, participant's responses were transferred from the original questionnaire to a computer before printing them. The first step involved developing a manageable coding scheme in order to make identifying significant themes easier (Patton, 2002) and to give the data some form of logic and structure (Gratton & Jones, 2004). Second, a 3-person research team was organized. This process of using more than one researcher to identify themes helps with the emergence of important insights when data is analyzed by two or more which is a form of analytical triangulation (Patton). Third, the researchers independently categorized the responses. From the independently identified themes, the next step involved comparison and discussion of similarities and differences by the research team. This step allowed the researchers to collectively develop five to eight relevant themes for each inquiry.

By using Lichtman's (2006) guidelines to analyze qualitative data and the use of three individual coders was a direct attempt by the researcher to bring credibility, trustworthiness, and triangular consensus to the data. Patton (2002) points out that the most challenging part of analyzing qualitative studies is deciphering what is significant, identifying patterns, and constructing and communicating the essence of what the data has revealed. This lack of an existing formula to analyze and determine the significance of what has been reported allowed the researcher leniency in representing the data and communicating what has been revealed in relationship to the study.

Procedures

Permission was sought from The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Review Committee (See Appendix A). Once permission was granted, the head softball coaches for each NCAA Division I school were mailed the survey instrument

with the consent letter for the study (See Appendix B), the survey instrument, and a pre-paid business reply envelope.

The list of schools and contact information for each coach was retrieved from the NCAA guide that lists all Division I schools with softball teams. This guide allowed the researcher to contact all 281 schools and assisted in maintaining records of participants who completed the questionnaire. This record keeping was an assurance that every school was afforded the opportunity to participate in the study. The return envelopes were coded in order to assist in this process for following up with schools who had not returned a completed questionnaire. After three weeks, coaches who had not yet responded were sent an email reminder about the research project and another survey instrument attached to the email. Six weeks into the data collection process, coaches who still hadn't responded to either the mail out or the first email reminder were sent one last email reminder and another survey instrument.

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CHAPTER IV

MANUSCRIPT ONE

NCAA DIVISION I HEAD SOFTBALL COACHES' CONFIDENCE, OPENNESS
AND STIGMA TOLERANCE TOWARD SPORT PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTANTS

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Running head: Softball Coaches' Confidence, Openness and Tolerance

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Running head: Softball Coaches' Confidence, Openness and Tolerance

KEY WORDS: Coaches, Sport Psychology Consultants, Confidence, Openness and

Stigma Tolerance

The purpose of this study was to look specifically at NCAA Division I head

softball coaches and determine if their perceptions of sport psychology consultants

(SPCs), their intentions to use sport psychology, their confidence in sport psychology,

and their openness and stigma tolerance to using an SPC play a role in the utilization of

an SPC or any sport psychology principles. The dependent variables were measured

through the use of the Sport Psychology Attitudes – Revised Coaches instrument

developed by Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007).

Descriptives of the data show that coaches feel mental skills are important; in fact

coaches in this study indicated that approximately 75% of their sport is mental.

Descriptives of the independent variables of age, gender, and years coaching revealed

that none of these variables are significantly related to a coach's use of an SPC.

A two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to

determine if there were any differences in the dependent variables of openness, stigma

tolerance, and confidence as a function of gender and the use of an SPC. The results

revealed a significant difference based on the respondents' reported use of consultants.

No significant differences were found for gender or use by gender. The follow-up

analysis of variance (ANOVA) for each dependent variable revealed that for the factor use of sport psychology consultants, the ANOVA for stigma tolerance was significant.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine if a coach's gender had any relationship with their openness or stigma tolerance and use of an SPC. Results revealed that there were no significant differences on the combined dependent variables.

The results are discussed in relationship to the limited previous studies that have looked at coaches attitudes about sport psychology. Limitations that the researcher encountered are addressed, as well as implications and suggestions for future research on coaches and their attitudes and use of sport psychology principles and consultants.

Introduction

Coaching on the collegiate level has become increasingly more demanding. It would seem as though coaches live in a "fishbowl" that knows only winning and losing (Giges, Petitpas, & Vernacchia, 2004). Coaches are responsible for guiding and developing athletes, not only from the physically but mentally and emotionally as well (Tutko & Richards, 1971). A coach is expected to bring together a group of young and sometimes immature, individuals to work in unison for one common goal, Win! This development of athlete tends to take on a sense of urgency for coaches due to internal and external judgment. Expectations placed on a coach are the result of large salaries, intense media scrutiny, as well as from the pressures of recruiting top level athletes. In addition, the coach is expected to teach and lead those athletes to championship seasons. Advancement and job security for a coach often depends on these young and sometimes inexperienced athletes, over which the coach has literally no control of once the athletic competition begins (Gieges, et al.). So, it is only natural that coaches are constantly in search of new tactics and strategies, techniques, plays, drills, and both physical and mental skills, to help them attain their goals.

Sporting events are competitive in nature and one usually gauges success by whether they win or lose. Winning is traditionally one of the popular outcome goals that athletic teams set, no matter the level of athletic competition. This goal calls for people to cooperate and communicate with one another and have good cohesion in order to achieve success on the playing field. So why is it some teams are more successful than others and what are these teams doing differently? Evidence shows that one thing they may be doing differently is seeking out mental training and counseling services of a sport psychology consultant (SPC) (Ludwig, 1996). For example, National Hockey League (NHL) teams

are utilizing an SPC for profiling the mental toughness of future draftees and for conducting sessions to work on team dynamics, such as, leadership, team-building, and role clarity. The SPCs actually attend approximately 50-75% of the games (Schinke, Hancock, Dubuc, & Dorsch, 2006). Other elite teams, such as National Football League Super Bowl Champions, Major League Baseball World Series Champions, and the National Basketball Association World Champions, also utilize SPCs (Cole, 2007). Coaches are beginning to realize the positive influence that sport psychology can offer their teams (Mallett & Cote, 2006; Werthner & Trudel, 2006; Sullivan & Hodge, 1991). This realization has caused an increase in a coach's tendency to want to learn more about sport psychology principles or to have an SPC working with them, (Zakrajsek and Zizzi, 2007). After attendance at a brief workshop designed to increase their perceived behavioral control, self-efficacy, openness and intentions to utilize and SPC, coaches were more aware of the benefits of utilizing and SPC (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2008). Coaches moved from pre-contemplating to contemplating the utilization of an SPC. This understanding after only a brief workshop, by coaches can be of great importance, because the correct implementation of psychological tools and knowledge can contribute to the well-being of both coaches and athletes (Cratty, 1973). Coaches are beginning to understand that in order for success to occur; their teams need to learn both physical and mental performance enhancing skills for their sport. Gradually, coaches are starting to realize the importance of enhancing the mental skills of their players on a regular basis and not just utilizing sport psychology as a tool to "fix" a problem or issue when something has gone wrong (Schinke et al., 2006). Perhaps coaches are starting to have similar opinions to those athletes interviewed by Ferraro and Rush (2000). Of the 20 athletes they surveyed, only two had been to an SPC. When asked what exactly an SPC

does in a session, six said "talk about sports," while the others stated things, like "control the mind," "help with stress," and "help one to visualize." When asked if they thought sport psychology had any effect on their performance, all twenty agreed that it did even though only two of them had previously seen an SPC.

Since people generally behave relatively to either learned or observed behaviors, it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint why they act or behave in a certain way. Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) can help form a theoretical foundation as to why coaches choose to use or not use SPCs or sport psychology principles. TRA attempts to explain human behavior with the assumption that people will act according to the information they have available when making decisions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In other words, should coaches have knowledge about the benefits of using SPCs they are more apt to act upon that knowledge and utilize an SPC. TPB was developed as an extension of TRA; its premise is to predict people's intentions as to whether or not they will engage in a certain behavior. More importantly, TPB can predict both intentions and actual behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). The two theories together can give insight and potentially help SPCs understand coaches' perceptions of SPCs, their intentions to use sport psychology, their confidence in sport psychology, and their openness and stigma tolerance to using an SPC and if these factors play a role in the actual utilization of an SPC or sport psychology principles. Ajzen's (2002) ultimate premise is that if one has sufficient control over the behavior then one would be expected to carry out their intentions when the opportunity arises. Therefore, if a coach is the one to make the decisions and has control over their player's behaviors to utilize sport psychology, according to Ajzen, having a favorable attitude, not feeling pressured to utilize sport psychology, and having perceived control, increases the

likelihood that the coaches' intentions to actually perform (utilize) sport psychology is stronger.

Over the past 35 years, the field of sport psychology has greatly expanded and become a popular topic of discussion in the world of sport (Williams & Straub, 2006). Use of sport psychology consultants and sport psychology principles have been well documented with both amateur and professional athletes (e.g. Gould, Diffenbach, & Moffett, 2002; Haberl & Peterson, 2006; Halliwell, 1990; Ludwig, 1996; Mamassis, & Doganis, 2004; Sullivan & Hodge, 1991; Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). Since athletes follow instructions from the coach, it is important to understand the impact that the coach has when it comes to influencing any use of sport psychology principles. The coach's leadership plays a direct role in getting athletes to practice or use sport psychology principles and/or consultants. Therefore, the topic of interest for this study is threefold: (1) to look at the extent of assistance coaches give their athletes to develop psychological skills that may in turn help coaches and athletes become more efficient and enhance their performance; (2) to determine a coaches openness, stigma tolerance and use of sport psychology consultants and/or principles, and (3) to recognize how confident coaches are in using sport psychology consultants and/or principles. Answers to these three areas have the potential to give SPCs more insight as to the use of, the needs of NCAA Division I college head softball coaches, as well as help coaches better understand the importance in developing mentally strong players to help their athletes be more successful.

<center>Theoretical Exploration on Intentions</center>

Anderson, Hodge, Lavalle, & Martin (2004) examined the relationship between athletes' attitude and their intentions and behavior regarding sport psychology. They

suggested that Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned

Behavior (TPB) offered the theoretical support needed to explain the relationship

between attitudes towards sport psychology and intention to use sport psychology

services. When applying TRA to athletes it has been shown to help explain and predict

actual mental training. The end result showed that TRA has validity; it proved that ones

intentions can help to predict actual mental practice, that ones attitude can predict ones

intentions, and that ones beliefs about actually using mental practice helps to predict

attitudes (Trafimow & Miller, 1996).

Boudreau & Godin (2007) have applied TPB to obese individuals to better

understand their intentions to be physically active. Findings supported the need for

interventions to help obese individuals to overcome barriers to help them become

physically active and to try and help them develop positive attitudes toward continuing

the behavior of being physically active. They suggested intention is associated with:

perceived behavioral control, those with previous experience have stronger intentions and

that if one has a favorable attitude this too is associated with ones intentions. They

concluded that TPB can be used as an appropriate theoretical framework to help

understand determinants of what motivates one to be physically active with respect to

obese individuals.

Armitage and Conner (2001) completed a meta-analysis of studies done using

TPB and reported that overall evidence supported the use of TPB for helping to predict

both intentions and behaviors. Other findings included that self-reported behavior was

superior over observed behavior and that perceived behavior control directly and

indirectly influenced behaviors independent of TRA variables allowing them to conclude

that perceived behavior control was in fact a beneficial addition to TRB. A similar study

by Hagger, Chatzisarantis, & Biddle (2002) found that perceived behavioral control and self-efficacy are the key influences in helping to form ones intentions to participate in physical activity. Other findings concluded that control and self-efficacy proved to be the most important predictors of whether one chooses to do physical activity and that older adults are more likely to act upon their intentions than younger adults. Lastly, Hagger et al. concluded that the inclusion of self-efficacy and ones past behavior are important additions that were made to strengthen the original model.

Other similar, significant studies have supported the fact that TPB does in fact explain ones intentions and that perceived behavioral control was found to be just as important as ones attitude about performing something or not (Godin & Kok, 1996). More recently, Chatzisarantis, Fredrick, Biddle, Hagger, & Smith (2007) studied ones intentions to perform physical activity and effort and concluded that ones effort in fact can predict their participation. Other relevant findings include: participant's intentions did predict their participation in physical activity and that ones past behaviors do contribute to the prediction of ones physical activity.

Research to date is limited on assessing coaches' attitudes, current use of, and intentions to use sport psychology consultants and how the use can be an influence on coaching practices. This area should be of particular interest for consultants. Ajzen & Fishbeins's theories, Theory of Reasoned Action (1980), and Theory of Planned Behavior (1991) offer the needed theoretical models necessary to support this investigation (Anderson, Hodge, Lavalle, & Martin, 2004). These theories also offer the needed support to explain a coach's intentions and attitudes towards sport psychology, and if any assumptions or predictions can be made as to whether or not a coach will utilize sport psychology or consultants.

Use of Sport Psychology Consultants and Principles

Martin and Lumsden (1987) stated that a coach's job is to teach, both effectively and efficiently, those things that will help modify an athlete's behaviors to help improve performance and help enhance skill level. The use of sport psychology principles will help modify player's behaviors since "the primary purpose of intervention is to help the players enhance their performance by improving their mental skills" (Halliwell, 1990, p. 370). Vallee' and Bloom (2005) identified other additional key attributes or qualities coaches should possess in order to help them build a successful sport program. These attributes included: (1) good personal attributes that allowed them to have good leadership behaviors, (2) the desire to foster a player's individual growth, (3) good organizational skills, and lastly, (4) good vision which allows for the athlete to trust the coaches' judgment and philosophy. This vision and judgment needs to include those things that will help to enhance the athletes overall sport experience for both the coach and the athlete.

Coaches influence athletes in many different ways. More specifically, coaches influence athletes by assisting them in the development of certain skills and characteristics, such as maturity, motivation, competitiveness, more contextual influences such as the team considerations and the coach-athlete dimension (Giacobbi, Roper, Whitney, & Butryn, 2002). Other influences include the development and realization of the importance of developing psychological and socializing skills (Gould, Chung, Smith, & White, 2006). The use of sport psychology consultants and sport psychology principles have been well documented with athletes, both amateur and professional (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). However, since athletes follow instructions from the coach, it is important that coaches understand how much influence they have when it comes to any use of sport

psychology principles or consultants. Influence over the athletes' values and behaviors have been documented by Gould, Chung, Smith, & White (2006). They reported that coaches do in fact realize the importance of their roles. This leadership role has a direct impact on whether the athletes practice or use sport psychology principles and/or consultants.

Figone (1999) stated that coaches often lack the time and simply don't understand how to teach or practice psychological skills that can be implemented to help their athletes perform better. He states that coaches tend to simply use words like "relax," "concentrate," or "play with confidence" The assumption by the coach is that the athletes already know how to mentally make adjustments to what they have been instructed to do. He also states that coaches are very quick to attribute losses to the mental aspect of the game; however, the coach sees this as physical breakdowns in the athletes' performance. The result is that the coach has the team work harder in practice on the physical aspect of the game. Harris and Harris (1984) also reported that losing is attributed to mental and emotional aspects, but little, if any time, was spent on developing and training athletes' mental skills.

Studies looking specifically at coaches' use of sport psychology or consultants are limited. Partington & Orlick (1987) researched Olympic coaches to reveal their perceptions and opinions about the job an SPC does for them. They reported that coaches in general reported that the experience of working with an SPC was positive, SPCs were confident in their ability to work with the athletes and were also able to work with both athlete and coach without being intrusive. Coaches surveyed in New Zealand (Sullivan and Hodge, 1991) indicated that they didn't have enough knowledge in sport psychology, that they were in fact practicing sport psychology in their programs and virtually all

coaches indicated an interest in having an SPC work with their team. Pain and Harwood (2004) did a study with English soccer coaches, which surveyed national coaches, youth academy directors, and academy coaches. They found that coaches lacked knowledge about what an SPC does. Other findings that surfaced were that coaches (1) lacked money to utilize an SPC, (2) held negative perceptions about SPCs, (3) were not sure how to integrate an SPC with their team, and (4) doubted the value of sport psychology.

Voight and Callaghan (2001) looked at several universities' use of sport psychology services. Their study revealed that 19 of the 45 universities reported that coaches had hired a part-time consultant. Walker and Eslinger (2003) reported that for the most part: (1) coaches have a positive outlook about sport psychology, (2) Division I female coaches are more likely to hire SPCs, and (3) older coaches tended to utilize sport psychology more so than younger coaches. More recently, Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007) revealed that: (1) women had less of a stigma to using consultants, (2) male gender roles may dictate use of consultants, and (3) there is a correlation between one's openness and one's expectations. Previous literature about women, male gender roles, and openness and expectations showed similar results in studies done within the general population regarding influences and expectations (Good & Wood, 1995; Komiaya, Good, & Sherrod, 2000; Leong, & Zachar, 1999).

Attitudes & Perceptions of Sport Psychology Consultants

First impressions usually make a lasting impression on people, so much so that decisions that one may make could very well be made quickly and could potentially impact the utilization of an SPC. These hasty decisions could very well impact a person's perceptions so much so that one's willingness to see things in a broader perspective may be impacted. First impressions or personal perceptions have been known to sway an

athlete's willingness to use an SPC (Lubker, Watson, Visek, & Geer, 2005). Athletes indicate that they are most comfortable having an SPC work with them who is similar to them (e.g. gender, sport experiences), can relate well with them and have the necessary credentials and training to be effective in helping to enhance the athletes performance (Lubker, Visek, Geer, & Watson, 2008).

However, Dunn and Holt's (2003) study with collegiate athletes indicated that utilizing an SPC is a benefit to the team. More specifically, athletes indicated that the absence of coaches allows players to feel more comfortable and open up to the SPC. They also saw the role of the SPC as a liaison between the players and coaching staff, which was deemed crucial to team dynamics. The athletes liked that an SPC: (1) is emotionally involved with the team, (2) shows equal respect to players who played and those who did not, (3) is approachable, positive, and (4) most importantly trustworthy when it came to confidentiality (Dunn & Holt). Athletes have also indicated that effective consultants are: (1) willing to work individually with athletes, (2) give sport-specific input, (3) did follow-up work, and (4) were perceived as being interested in the athletes (Orlick & Partington, 1987). Other notable perceptions by athletes of effective SPCs are being personable, having good communication skills, and the ability to exhibit professional skills (Anderson, Miles, Robinson, & Mahoney, 2004). Not all studies produce the same results. Blom, Hardy, Burke, & Joyner (2003) showed that high school athlete's perceptions are slightly different. Younger athletes surveyed about their perceptions indicated that they might be picked on or seen as "different" if they saw an SPC. They thought it was important to have approval from their coach to utilize an SPC and liked the idea of having individual or group sessions with an SPC versus reading self-help books or using internet services for information.

Openness towards Sport Psychology Consultants

There are several studies that have looked specifically at an athlete's openness and perceptions toward using sport psychology or sport psychology consultants (Anderson, Hodge, Lavallee, & Martin, 2004; Brooks, & Bull, 1999; Gould, Diffenbach, & Moffett, 2002). Findings have been very similar in all of these studies. Anderson, et al. found that New Zealand athletes had a positive attitude toward use of sport psychologists and were confident and open to using sport psychology. Males and those with no prior exposure to sport psychology had a slightly less than positive attitude. Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, and Lounsbury (1997) found that gender might contribute to the perceptions of SPCs, as well as race. Their study also reported more of a stigma on the part of males than from female athletes. Brooks and Bull reported more openness and a better perception about SPCs from female athletes and that they tend to be more accepting and understanding of those who seek out help and support from SPCs. Martin (2005) found that: (1) higher levels of confidence existed from those who had experience in working with an SPC, (2) those who played contact sports tend to have more of a stigma toward utilizing SPCs, and (3) those who were younger (high school aged) had more of a stigma than older athletes.

Stigma Tolerance toward Sport Psychology

Not all studies have reported positive attitudes and perceptions about the use of sport psychology. In fact, some athletes have stated that they know the positive influence that sport psychology can have on their performance; however, they admit to under utilizing it (Ferraro & Rush, 2000). Ferraro & Rush (2000) wanted to see why athletes resisted sport psychology consultants. They found that athletes, for the most part, do know why people go to a sport psychologist, but they do not utilize SPCs for fear of lost

time and money. One point of interest was the fact that none of the twenty subjects in their study mentioned anything about the emotional aspects of their involvement with sport. They mentioned things like concentration, mental training, improving their performance and use of visualization. Their lack of discussion of their affective values led Ferraro and Rush (2000) to believe that athletes may have a fear of recognizing or understanding the importance of their emotions and affective believes.

Males tend to have more of a negative attitude on stigma tolerance factor than women toward services, both in the general public (Fauteux, McKelvie, & de Man, 2008) and toward the use of an SPC (Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, & Lounsbury, 1997). Martin et al. (1997) reported that males tend to feel more of a stigma towards SPCs, possibly because of the way society portrays the masculine image and defines gender roles based on ones sport of choice. They also reported that males tend to fear being labeled weak, less masculine, or as sissies if they opened up to an SPC.

Still it remains important for coaches and athletes to remember that in order to achieve success, one needs to be fully prepared to accomplish the task at hand. Athletes can achieve success if they are: (1) prepared physically, (2) know the technical and tactical skills of their sport, and (3) know how to prepare psychologically in order to achieve high levels of success (Martin & Lumsden, 1987).

Summary

Since World Wars I and II, people, in general, have not really understood what exactly the psychologist can do for their mental strength and health. This trend seems to have continued and carried over into sport psychology as well. Several of the same barriers that are evident in the general use of psychology are prevalent with the use of sport psychology consultants as well. Some of the barriers that are similar for both areas

include: (1) negative connotations associated with the use of a psychologist or consultant, (2) lack of understanding about what the psychologist or consultant can do to benefit them and (3) the male gender tends to have more of a stigma towards using psychological services.

Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behavior help to provide the theoretical foundation and stability to support and explain why a coach may have a particular attitude about SPCs and how this may affect the use of or intentions to use an SPC. TRA helps to predict, explain, and influence a coach's behavior, while TPB helps to support the perceived behavior control that influences coaches' intentions and the actual behaviors that are displayed.

Coaches have a tremendous influence over the skills, both mental and physical, that their athletes work on and refine on a daily basis. Coaches need to have the vision and good judgment to utilize and include those things that will help to enhance the athletes' overall experience. That vision should include the use of both SPCs and sport psychology principles.

Methods

Participants

The researcher used the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) directory, which is the most comprehensive listing of Division I head softball coaches, to access the names and addresses of all potential participants. The number of coaches available to participate in this study was 281. The return response was 31% (n=88). The sample included 30 males (34.1%), 56 females (63.6%) and two who did not specify gender.

Participant's ages represented all age categories. Two (2.3%) indicated they held either an EdD, PhD or PsyD, forty two (48.3%) had a MA or MS degree, forty (46%) indicated they had a BA or BS degree while three (3.4%) selected "other" or did not specify their educational background. Table 1 has age and degree categories. Head coaching experience ranged from 1 to 45 years (M= 11.19 years, Std. = 9.92), two participants did not specify number of years coaching experience.

Table 1

Age and Degree Categories

Age Category	N	%	Degree	N	%
21-24 years	2	2.3	BA/BS	40	46
25-29 years	19	21.8	MA/MS	42	48.3
30-34 years	14	16.1	EdD/PhD/PsyD	2	2.3
35-39 years	14	16.1	Other	3	3.4
40-44 years	12	13.8			
45-49 years	7	8.0			
50-54 years	14	16.1			
55-59 years	1	1.1			
60-over	4	4.6			
TOTALS	87	100	TOTALS	87	100

Instrumentation

The survey instrument used was a modified version of Sport Psychology Attitudes- Revised Coaches (SPA-RC) scale (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007), developed in order to understand a coach's perceptions, intentions, confidence, openness and stigma tolerance to sport psychology. The Sport Psychology Attitudes – Revised (Martin, Kellmann, Lavallee, & Page, 2002) on which the SPA-RC was previously modeled, was originally a 7-point scale but was modified to a 6-point scale for the purpose of improving the reliability of the responses (Zakrajsek & Zizzi). The SPA-RC

questionnaire has five parts: (1) current use of an SPC, (2) the perceptions of coaches expectations of an SPC, (3) the four factors: stigma tolerance, confidence in sport psychology, personal openness and cultural preference, (4) coaches use of mental training, and (5) demographics.

The four factors measured by the SPA-RC were identified through an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of track and swimming coaches by Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007). The SPA-RC has established reliability and validity and satisfactory internal consistencies for stigma tolerance and confidence. Reliability is somewhat lower for personal openness (Zakrajsek & Zizzi).

The factors are assessed through 25 items which are measured on a 6-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= moderately disagree, 3= slightly disagree, 4= slightly agree, 5= moderately agree, 6= strongly agree). The factors are: stigma tolerance (7 items), confidence in sport psychology (8 items), personal openness (6 items), and cultural preference (4 items) (Refer to Tables 2-4). The score for each factor is an average of the items associated with that factor. A higher score on the confidence factor indicates that coaches believe mental training is helpful, a higher score on openness indicates that coaches are not willing to use SPCs or principles and a higher score for stigma tolerance is an indication that coaches have a negative attitude about seeking out help (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). Although part of the SPA-RC, the cultural preference factor was not used for this study.

Similar to Zakrajsek & Zizzi (2007) the internal consistencies for this study are satisfactory and slightly higher with (Chronbach's α) reliability of .85 for confidence, .69 for personal openness and .85 for stigma tolerance demonstrating support for the SPA-RC factors.

In addition to information about the gender, experiences, and educational variables, the demographics section also allowed the researcher to determine any psychology/sport psychology degrees or consulting certifications held, any training specific to sport psychology and the athletic conference.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Items from the SPA-RC Relevant to the Factor of Stigma Tolerance

M	SD	Items
1.17	.572	I would not want a SPC working with my team because other coaches would harass me.
1.42	.813	I would feel uneasy having a SPC work with my team because some people would disapprove.
1.61	1.08	If I utilized a SPC to help me coach better, I would not want other coaches to know about it.
1.45	.743	Having a SPC is bad for an athlete's reputation.
1.63	1.13	I would not want someone else to know about my team receiving help from a SPC.
1.45	.829	If my team worked with a SPC, I would not want other coaches to know about it.
1.24	.747	I would think less of my athletes if they went to a SPC.

Table 3 provides a list of the items from the SPA-RC that concern the factor of confidence.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Items from the SPA-RC Relevant to the Factor of Confidence

M	SD	Items
5.31	.849	A SPC can help athletes improve their mental toughness.
4.33	1.229	If an athlete on my team asked my advice about personal feelings of failure related to sport, I might recommend that he/she see a SPC.
4.74	1.333	I would like to have the assistance of a SPC to help me better understand my team.
4.21	1.086	An athlete with emotional problems during sport performance would feel most secure in receiving assistance from a SPC.
4.32	1.282	If I was worried or upset about my team's performance, I would want to get help from a SPC.
5.02	1.005	I think a SPC would help my team perform better under pressure.
5.01	1.011	A SPC could help my team fine-tune their performance.
4.36	1.374	At times I have felt lost and would have welcomed professional advice for a personal problem.

Table 4 indicates the statements from the SPA-RC relevant to the factor of personal openness.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Items from the SPA-RC Relevant to the Factor Personal Openness

M	SD	Items
3.07	1.771	There are certain problems that should not be discussed outside one's immediate family.
3.22	1.45	A good idea for avoiding personal worries and concerns is to keep one's mind on the job.
3.05	1.539	There is something respectable in the attitude of athletes who are willing to cope with their conflicts and fears without resorting to professional help.
3.79	1.824	There are experiences in my life that I would not discuss with anyone.
2.82	1.253	Emotional difficulties tend to work themselves out in time.
2.66	1.312	Athletes with a strong character can get over mental conflicts by themselves.

Results

Descriptive data revealed that of the eighty-eight coaches in this sample, seventy-five (85.2%) feel that mental skills are "very important". Participants also indicated that approximately 75% of their sport is mental and that on average collectively they spend 26.5% of their time training their athletes in this area. Only 40 (45.5%) said they had access to an SPC whereas 48 (54.5%) indicated that they do not. Using a 6-point Likert scale with a range of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), when asked about being open to hiring a sport psychology consultant to work with their team, coaches indicated that they were open ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.21$) to the hiring of an SPC. Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables based on gender are given in Table 5.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for the Dependent Variables Based on Gender

	Male (n= 30)		Female (n=56)		TOTAL (n=86)	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Confidence in SPC	4.52	.82	4.74	.796	4.66	.81
Openness	3.37	.91	2.92	.96	3.08	.96
Stigma Tolerance	1.58	.75	1.31	.53	1.40	.62

As for any educational degree in psychology/sport psychology, 75% of the participants indicated that they had no education in these areas, while 13.6% indicated that they have or are in the process of acquiring a degree in the area of psychology or sport psychology. Years of coaching experience ranged from one year to 45 years ($M =$

11.2, SD = 9.9), with the greatest number of respondents indicating they had either one year of coaching experience (N=10) or eight years of coaching experience (N=10). Thirty-four different conferences were represented in this study with seven coaches participating from the Atlantic Sun and five each from the Ivy League, Ohio Valley and the Southeastern Conference.

Research question one addressed whether or not independent variables such as age, gender or years of coaching experience were related to softball coaches' reported use of sport psychology consultants. Descriptives and Chi-square testing revealed that neither age nor gender were significantly related to use of sport psychology consultants (age = x^2 (3) = .426, p > .05, gender = x^2 (1) = .483, p > .05. Years of experience were not different for those who reported using a sport psychology consultant and those reporting not using, t (82) = -.594, p = .554. Further analysis of the data showed that more female coaches indicated that they do use (n=25, 54.5%) an SPC as compared to male coaches who do (n= 14, 46.7%) an SPC. It should be noted that this use of SPCs is calculated across both age and years of coaching variables.

In order to address the remaining hypotheses, a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine differences in the dependent variables of openness, stigma tolerance, and confidence as a function of gender and the use of sport psychology consultants. The multivariate solution revealed a significant difference based on respondents' reported use of consultants, Wilk's Λ = .90, F (3, 79) = 2.97, p = .037. No such significant differences were found for gender (p > .05) or use by gender (p > .05).

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the dependent variable was conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA. For the factor, use of sport psychology consultants, the

ANOVA for stigma tolerance was significant, $F(1, 81) = 7.15$, p = .009, η^2 = .08, with stigma tolerance scores being higher for the respondents who reported not using sport psychology consultants. The ANOVA for confidence was not significant, $F(1, 81)$ = 3.72, p = .06, η^2 = .04, and the ANOVA for openness was not significant, $F(1, 81)$ = .09, p = .76, η^2 = .001. For the factor, gender, neither confidence nor stigma tolerance was significant, $F(1, 81)$ = 1.08, p = .30, η^2 = .01 and $F(1, 81)$ = .30, p = .09, η^2 = .03. On the other hand, gender did make a difference in openness scores, with males (M = 3.37) having higher mean scores than did the females (M = 2.93), $F(1, 81)$ = 4.08, p = .047, η^2 = .05. Table 7 presents means and standard deviations for openness and stigma tolerance by gender category.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for Openness and Stigma Tolerance by Gender

Gender	Openness		Stigma Tolerance	
	M	SD	M	SD
Male	3.37	.91	1.58	.75
Female	2.93	.96	1.32	.53

Discussion

In order for SPCs to better serve coaches and the needs that they have along with the needs of the athletes they coach, this study was developed in hopes of assisting sport psychology consultants learn about Division I head softball coaches' attitudes. The results of this research, while consistent in many ways to previous research, differences were found. Similar to other studies, males were less open to using an SPC and those who reported not using an SPC had more stigma toward the use of sport psychology.

Findings in this study, for example were not consistent with previous literature (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007; Walker & Eslinger, 2003; Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, & Lounsbury, 1997) in that age, gender and years of experience were not significantly related to a division I head softball coaches use of sport psychology consultants. The small number of participants (N = 88), in particular males (n = 30), may have played a role in the results. One finding that was consistent with past literature was that females reported a higher "use of" sport psychology consultants than males (Walker & Eslinger, 2003). However, it must be noted that in this study females accounted for 65% of the participants. Further studies across other division I sports may warrant a larger sample size that may bring more responses from males and different results with regards to a coaches age, gender, years experience, confidence, openness, stigma tolerance, and their use of sport psychology consultants..

Past studies (Brooks & Bull, 1999; Walker & Eslinger, 2003; Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007) have reported that women were more confident, more open, and had less stigma tolerance toward sport psychology consultants and/or principles. Findings in this study are similar in regards to the same three factors. Results from one hypothesis indicated that regardless of a coach's gender, stigma tolerance does in fact make a difference as to whether or not a coach chooses to utilize an SPC. This finding is consistent with the findings of Martin et al. (1997) and Fauteux et al. (2008). More in depth analysis of the stigma tolerance factor showed that female coaches (M = 1.31) have less of a negative attitude about seeking out help than male coaches (M = 1.58). These findings align with those of Zakrajsek and Zizzi and Martin et al. Findings for the confidence factor show female coaches confidence (M = 4.74) was slightly stronger than male coaches (M = 4.52), indicating that female coaches in this study believe that mental training is in fact

helpful. On the openness factor, which indicates a coaches willingness to use an SPC or principles, females ($M = 2.92$) again reported more willingness than their male ($M = 3.37$) counterparts to seek outside help. Although the findings here have indicated in bias of female coaches, precaution should be taken in how the results are used. The means vary slightly, as stated earlier the small number of male participants may have some effect on the findings in this study.

According to what Division I head softball coaches are indicating in this study about their thoughts on the importance of sport psychology, Ajzen's TPB (1991) would predict that coaches would have a favorable attitude toward the use of sport psychology and barring any barriers would find it easy to implement the use of principles or use of an SPC.

Limitations

The findings here can not be generalized to other NCAA division I sports, nor should they be used to generalize coaches who did not participate in this study. The time of this study (January) may have contributed to the small number of participants or because of a lack of time to complete the survey; however the non-participants may have similar attitudes about sport psychology. Pain and Harwood (2004) found that several barriers exist as to why coaches do not utilize sport psychology; one of the barriers is a lack of time. Coaches' lack of time, as well as being in season, may have contributed to the small return rate for this study.

Another limitation that could have affected the outcome of the findings is the limited use of the SPA-RC. While it must be noted that reliability coefficients for this study were slightly higher than those reported in Zakrajsek & Zizzi's (2007) study, giving

credence to the SPA-RC, future studies with more participants, in particular males, may have different findings.

Future Research

Helping coaches develop better athletes mentally is an area in which sport psychology consultants are trained. Coaches make the decisions about utilizing or implementing sport psychology to help athletes become mentally prepared to compete. This research on Division I head softball coaches is only a small part of the overall number of coaches who are the driving force that have access to athletes on a daily basis. Further investigation on coaches at this level is needed to understand if females are more open, have more confidence, and less stigma tolerance toward the use of SPCs and sport psychology principles.

The current study looked at age, gender, and years coaching of softball coaches at the Division I level. Future research may consider looking at other sports on different levels; especially sports that are male dominated, both with athletes and coaching staffs. Although age, gender and years coaching did not make a difference in the use of, in this study, previous research has indicated (Walker & Eslinger, 2003) that age and years coaching are in fact variables that indicate higher use of consultants. Future research may want to pursue these variables across other sports.

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CHAPTER V

MANUSCRIPT TWO

QUALITATIVE INQUIRY OF NCAA DIVISION I HEAD SOFTBALL COACHES'
USE AND PERCEPTIONS OF SPORT PSYCHOLGY AND CONSULTANTS

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Running head: Softball Coaches' Use and Perceptions

KEY WORDS: Coach and Sport Psychology

This study looked specifically at NCAA Division I head softball coaches to determine which sport psychology principles/techniques they use, how much confidence they have in implementing them, what time of the year they implement them, their thoughts about the role of the Sport Psychology Consultant (SPC) and what the most important thing an SPC can do to help them achieve success. Information here is part of a larger study that was done using a mixed-methods approach. The results of the findings from the open-ended questions portion of the study will be reported. The participants were asked to respond to five open-ended inquiries. As suggested by Lichtman (2006) the data was analyzed to develop common themes from the responses. Eighty-one coaches responded. The themes that emerged are discussed.

Introduction

Coaches have a direct and influential impact on athletes and the drills or techniques that athletes practice or utilize in a particular sport. Should a coach suggest or recommend a particular way to perform a skill or should they recommend a relevant technique or principle, such as those used in sport psychology, the athlete will more than likely attempt to perform the skill or practice the technique upon the coaches' suggestion. Gould, Chung, Smith, & White (2006) researched high school coaches' perceptions. Coaches indicated that they do in fact have considerable influence over their athletes' values and behaviors and they do influence their athlete's behaviors. Coaches understand that in order to develop these necessary skills or behaviors part of their job must be to "facilitate, moderate and supervise the team in order to keep them functioning in a desired direction" (Bloom, Stevens, & Wickwire, 2003 p. 137).

Coaches are gradually beginning to understand that mental factors have a vast influence on the outcome (Burton & Raedeke, 2008) and that in order for success to occur, their teams need to learn both physical and mental skills for their sport. They are starting to realize the positive influence that sport psychology has to offer their teams (Mallett & Cote, 2006; Werthner & Trudel, 2006; Sullivan & Hodge, 1991) as well as the importance of enhancing the mental skills of their players on a regular basis and not just utilizing sport psychology as a tool to "fix" something when it has gone wrong (Schinke, Hancock, Dubuc, & Dorsch, 2006). In fact, being mentally prepared could possibly mean the difference between winning and losing (Williams & Kendall, 2007).

Sport psychology has seen a vast growth over the last several decades. It is because of this growth that researchers continually try to delve into what both coaches and athletes are doing in regards to sport psychology. Research looking specifically at

what perceptions, attitudes and even what principles are more successful when working

with athletes has been done (Martin, 2005; Anderson, Hodge, Lavallee, & Martin, 2004;

Brooks & Bull, 1999; Thiese & Huddleston, 1999; Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, Lounsbury,

1997). On the other hand, literature is rare about coaches' perceptions and attitudes.

The purpose of this study was to look specifically at NCAA Division I head

softball coaches and determine if their perceptions of SPCs, their intentions to use sport

psychology, their confidence in sport psychology, and their openness and stigma

tolerance to using an SPC play a role in the utilization of an SPC or any sport psychology

principles. Information here is part of a larger study that was done using a mixed-

methods approach. In this presentation, the results of the findings from the qualitative

portion of the study will be presented. The participants were asked to respond to five

open-ended inquiries developed by the lead researcher. The questions posed were: (1)

"What sport psychology techniques or principles do you utilize over the course of the

year?" (2) "Briefly describe how confident you are personally implementing sport

psychology principles/techniques" (3) "Of the techniques or principles that you utilize,

when do you use them?" (4) "In your mind what does a sport psychology consultant do?"

(5) "What is the most important thing that a sport psychology consultant can do to help

you and your team achieve success?" As suggested by Lichtman (2006) the data was

analyzed using recommended available data to develop common themes from the

responses. As a result of this study, more information will be available about NCAA

division I head college softball coaches' use of particular principles/techniques, their

confidence levels, and what time of the year/season are they using these principles. As

well as what coaches think a sport psychology consultant is suppose to do for them and

what the most important thing a consultant can do to help them and their team achieve

success.

Methods

Participants

Eighty-one National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I head

softball coaches participated in this study. The researcher used the NCAA directory,

which is the most comprehensive listing, to access the names and addresses of all

potential participants. The return response was 29% (n=81). The sample included 54

females, 25 males, and two who did not specify gender. Ages were spread across the

following categories; 21-24 (n=2), 25-29 (n=18), 30-34 (n=14), 35-39 (n=12), 40-44

(n=10), 45-49 (n=6), 50-54 (n=13), 55-59 (n=1), 60 and over (n=4), one participant left

off their age. Head coaching experience ranged from 1 to 45 years ($M = 11.35$ years, SD

$= 9.90$), two participants did not include their years of coaching experience. On average,

participants indicated that 73% ($SD = 15.59$) of their sport is mental and they spend 27%

($SD = 22.12$) of their time on mental training.

Data Collection Techniques

This study is part of a larger study conducted with NCAA division I head softball

coaches. Data for this portion of the study was collected through five open-ended

inquiries that were included at the end of the SPA-RC questionnaire (Zakrajsek & Zizzi,

2007). The participants were asked to respond to the five open-ended inquiries listed

below:

1. What sport psychology techniques or principles do you utilize over the course of the

year?

2. Briefly describe how confident you are personally implementing sport psychology principles/techniques

3. Of the techniques or principles that you utilize, when do you use them?

4. In your mind what does a sport psychology consultant do?

5. What is the most important thing that a sport psychology consultant can do to help you and your team achieve success?

The above inquiries are looking at the head coaches use of sport psychology principles, the confidence they have in them and their perceptions of what a sport psychology consultant does and how one can assist them with their team. These inquiries were developed because it allowed the researcher to delve deeper into exactly where softball coaches are in their personal usage of either sport psychology principles and/or consultants. Patton (2002) suggests that researchers use probing questions to divulge deeper into what exactly one might be thinking in order to better understand the subject matter. The use of a qualitative investigation also allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Crust & Nesti, 2006) and by when using previous researcher's qualitative methods (Lichtman, 2006) to analyze and the use of three individual coders was a direct attempt by the researcher to bring credibility, trustworthiness and triangular consensus to the data.

Data Analysis Procedures

Participants' responses were transferred from the original questionnaire to a computer before printing them. The first step taken to identify themes involved developing a manageable coding scheme in order to make identifying the themes significantly easier (Patton, 2002) and to give the data some form of logic and structure (Gratton, & Jones, 2004). Second, a 3-person research team was organized. This process

of using more than one researcher to identify themes helps with the emergence of important insights when data is analyzed by two or more researchers, which is a form of analytical triangulation (Patton). Third, the researchers independently categorized the responses and they identified themes. From the categorized responses the researchers independently identified themes. The next step involved comparison and discussion of similarities and differences of the identified themes compiled by the research team. This step allowed the researchers to collectively develop five to eight relevant themes for each inquiry.

Results and Discussion

The following section discusses each inquiry individually. In order to enhance the explanation, the discussion of each inquiry includes comments made by coaches relevant to the inquiry. The themes that emerged for each inquiry can be seen in Table 1.

Inquiry #1: What sport psychology techniques or principles do you utilize over the course of the year?

Softball coaches indicated that they do utilize sport psychology principles over the course of the year with their players. For this inquiry, 8 themes emerged: a) goal setting, b) confidence building, c) concentration skills, d) motivational techniques, e) self-talk, f) team building, g) arousal regulation, and h) imagery. Further analysis of the inquiry indicated that most coaches utilize goal setting, confidence building, self-talk, and concentration skills more than the other themes. Goal-setting was the most often cited technique used. This finding is supported by other research (Weinberg, Butt, & Knight, 2001) that indicates coaches feel comfortable sitting down and setting goals, both short-term and long-term, for their players and the team. The next technique that seemed to garnish much attention from our coaches and would be considered a higher order theme

was self-talk. Research tells us that self-talk, when used, should be directed toward the positive perspective and when implemented and practiced properly can help with ones confidence levels as well (Zinsser, Bunker, & Williams, 2006). Self-talk has even been used coaches themselves to help them control their emotions, help get in the right frame of mind, help with relaxation, and help with rational thinking (Thelwell, Weston, Greenlees, & Hutchings, 2008). Lastly, confidence building seemed to be a higher order theme as well for the coaches in this study. Psychological skills are important skills for athletes to learn and have been indicated that they help with the maintaining and focusing of ones concentrations skills, help regulate arousal levels, enhance confidence levels and help to maintain motivational levels (Weinberg & Gould, 2007).

For this inquiry coaches used terms similar to those found in sport psychology textbooks and other research studies (Thelwell et al., 2008; Weinberg & Gould, 2007). Terms like concentration skills, team-building, goal-setting, mental visualization, positive reinforcement, motivational items, confidence building, and positive talk (self-talk) tended to be the most popular terms used by the coaches in this study. Several coaches also made a direct mention, within this inquiry, how important the mental game was to them: "We believe the mental aspect of the game is the most important part." "I talk about the mental side everyday."

Coaches also used words or phrases that may not specifically be thought of as a principle or technique in the eyes of a sport psychology consultant; however, by the mere fact that they mentioned them might be interpreted that they deem these "activities" as an important means to help their athletes be more successful. They listed things like: clearing your mind, pressure situation drills, journal writing, highlight videos and mistake recovery as forms of principles they use over the course of the year. Within this inquiry

coaches also indicated, other than a sport psychology consultant, that they used things like conference workshops, retreats, leadership camps and books to help enhance the mental component for their athletes.

Table 1

Inquiries with Emerged Themes

Inquiry	Themes
1. What sport psychology techniques or principles do you utilize over the course of the year?	Goal-setting Confidence building Concentration Skills Motivational Techniques Self-talk Team Building Arousal Regulation Imagery
2. Briefly describe how confident you are personally implementing sport psychology principles/techniques	Not at all confident Somewhat confident Confident Very Confident Confident sometimes/Not at other times
3. Of the techniques or principles that you utilize, when do you use them?	Non-competitive season Practice Constantly/Daily Games As needed
4. In your mind what does a sport psychology consultant do?	Develops mental skills Deals with adversity/challenges Provides reinforcement/assistance Enhances performance
5. What is the most important thing that a sport psychology consultant can do to help you and your team achieve success?	Develop strong mental game Teach coping skills Confidence Focus Team building

Past research has reported reasons why coaches fail to use sport psychology, with the most common reason given being a lack of time (Gould, Medbery, Damarjian, & Lauer, 1999). It is interesting and should be noted, that within this study one coach also indicated that they may feel some frustration with taking time away from their coaching duties to teach or enhance sport psychology principles by making the following statement: "I wish I had an SPC (sport psychology consultant), so I could focus on the coaching."

Enhancing the mental skills of athletes is a process that needs to be practiced similar to the physical practice of skills that coaches use with athletes. The old adage of "use it or lose it" would seem of importance when implementing sport psychology principles and techniques. However, coaches, for what ever reason may feel that if the mental skills are addressed at some point in time for their athletes that they acquire those skills necessary to perform at their peak, regardless of how often they are practiced. As evidenced by these statements made by two coaches:

> I bring in a sports psychologist at least once a year for 3-5 days to work with the team and with individuals as needed. We use mostly confidence building, goal setting and focus as our topics.

> In the beginning of our off-season we will discuss goal setting, preparation, performance strategies, self-talk during competition and training. I like to re-visit those ideas and techniques throughout the year as the players become more familiar with their mental game.

Despite the indicated use of a sport psychology consultant and/or principles by these coaches their statements would lead one to believe that the usage of sport psychology or mental practice may not be as consistent as the physical practices they put their athletes through.

Inquiry #2: Briefly describe how confident you are personally implementing sport psychology principles/techniques

The themes that evolved: a) not at all confident, b) somewhat confident, c) confident, d) very confident, and e) confident sometimes/not at other times. Sorting through the responses to this inquiry it seems that the majority of the coaches do have some confidence in their ability to implement, teach and practice sport psychology principles based on the themes that evolved. It is with caution though, that this statement is made because there is no way to clarify the strength of ones confidence level and no way to tell exactly what a coach may be confident in teaching or practicing as it relates to sport psychology. Generally speaking; however, coaches with more knowledge and training about sport psychology tend to be more confident than those with little or none (Gould et al., 1999) and those coaches who may have had prior experience tend to portray higher efficacy levels than those who don't have experience (Marback, Short, Short, & Sullivan, 2005).

Coaches' responses that would fall under the not at all confident theme indicated that they have in fact learned about sport psychology and may have even attempted to use sport psychology but for what ever reason were not comfortable with implementing it themselves:

> Not very confident - I've read a lot but don't feel confident enough to do more than the basics
>
> Not extremely confident although I have had success in many attempts individually and (with my) team
>
> I am not confident I am doing it right
>
> Not overly confident - would rather have a professional handle it

Coaches who stated that they were somewhat confident indicated that they do

have knowledge and or some experience with sport psychology and principles but

possibly due to the fact that they are not specifically trained in this area indicated some

hesitancy to be the one who implements this form of training with their athletes:

> Somewhat confident – I have used some and I feel more confident
> implementing them than those that I haven't

> Somewhat confident – I know and understand many principles but am not
> always sure about the best way to implement them

Despite indicating confidence about sport psychology, some coaches indicated

that they may not necessarily be the right person to implement the principles or

techniques. They indicated concerns with dual roles, response from athletes toward them,

their lack of experience implementing techniques, and their lack of time to spend on

them:

> I'm always concerned with dual roles. I do what I can but I always
> recommend our athletes to see the sport psychology consultant
> I can implement the skills but the team responds better (to) a consultant

> I am only confident using my own experiences to relate to the players as
> opposed to professional techniques

> I'm confident towards implementing them, but do not have enough time to
> devote to preparing and following up on strategies and ideas

Several coaches indicated that they were very confident in their ability to

implement principles and/or techniques. They also made note of why they felt this level

of confidence. Coaches cited conversations with other coaches and sport psychology

consultants (SPCs) helped to strengthen their confidence level, having an SPC work with

their teams in the past appears to help build confidence levels, while having an

educational background in psychology also appears to help increase confidence levels as

well:

Very confident – I have discussed ideas/principles with other coaches and a sport psychologist

Having dealt with an SPC before and having one involved in my program in the past and seeing the benefits I would feel very confident in my ability to implement

Very confident, but I like using our SPC so they hear it from someone else – not just me. It is reinforced

Having some background in psychology and continuing to educate myself in the area, I feel very confident

Very confident – I am constantly reading about sport psychology. My undergraduate degree is in psychology. I believe if I am not confident about it, they won't buy in.

Still other coaches indicated that they too were very confident or possibly confident at times and not so confident at other times with their ability to implement sport psychology principles/techniques; however, other issues were indicated as to why they may not utilize sport psychology:

I am very confident; (we) just don't have the time with NCAA hour limits

I feel I can effectively work one-on-one with athletes…but not necessarily with the team as a whole

Given the responses made, most coaches have some level of confidence in their ability to apply sport psychology; however, there still seems to be a need for more training and practicing of implementation. Mamassis and Doganis (2004) found that a mental training program when implemented for an entire year helps athletes to continually learn and apply (use) principles that can help anxiety levels and increase self-confidence and belief that they can be successful applying the knowledge that they have gained. So to would be the case with coaches – if all factors that may prevent them from implementing were in order (i.e. knowledge, time, training).

Inquiry #3: Of the techniques or principles that you utilize when do you use them?

This inquiry was asked to find out when coaches are choosing to teach, implement or apply sport psychology principles/techniques. The themes that emerged included: a) non-competitive season (off-season or pre-season), b) practice (pre, post or during), c) constantly/daily, and d) games and as needed. What is interesting to note here is the number of themes and wide variety of times that evolved from the data. Research indicates that the implementation of principles/techniques is best when taught in the off-season or early in the preseason to help alleviate some of the pressures about winning from the athletes (Martens, 1987; Weinberg & Gould, 2007). A large portion of the coaches did indicate more than one time of the year and that one of the times would fall under the theme of non-competitive season when they are utilizing sport psychology. Responses ranged from pre-season and in-season, practice and meetings, pre-practice and post practice, during practice and meetings, pre-season and weekly. Other responses indicated that coaches are willing to try and utilize what ever means possible to help their athletes be successful once they have been taught different principles/techniques. This is evident in the following responses:

> We try to capitalize on opportunities to strengthen the mental game by having mental meetings every 1-2 weeks and our players keep mental game notebooks

> We will implement techniques, allow the players to use and then we will talk about what worked, what didn't and what adjustments need to be made

> I spend 1 to 2 hours of our allowable hours to "chalk talk" a week, we do classroom sessions every week. Then we talk about them everyday in practice

Several coaches indicated that they did use sport psychology; however, this use may be in the early part of the season and may not be visited again depending on the needs or outcomes of player success:

> At the beginning of the season and when things get rough during season

> At the beginning in the fall and sometimes during the season, if there is adjustment needed

> As time and circumstances dictates

> Usually if an athlete comes to me or I see them struggling I will set-up a time to meet with them

> When needed

> Beginning of each semester and during pressured times

> Pre-season and when struggling

> I am confident with these techniques but by no means do I rely on them. We use them in the beginning of the year and refer back to them in times of need

This indication by coaches that sport psychology is taught or used in the off-season but is not revisited unless something is not working or needs to be "fixed" has shown to be true in previous research done with coaches and their use of sport psychology (Walker & Eslinger, 2003; Schinke, Hancock, Dubuc, & Dorsch, 2006). Use of sport psychology principles should be practiced consistently and systematically in order to maximize effectiveness (Burton & Raedeke, 2008).

Inquiry #4: In your mind what does a sport psychology consultant do?

The role of the SPC is to work with both coaches and players to help strengthen the mental ability to help the athlete have strong and consistent performances (McCann, 2005). This inquiry was asked to see how well coaches understood the role of the SPC and how it may help to enhance their athlete's performance. The themes that emerged

included: a) develops mental skills, b) deals with adversity/challenges, c) provides reinforcement/assistance, d) enhances performance, and e) teaches techniques with sub-categories (i.e. team dynamics, focus, and confidence) that the researchers felt were indicated enough to fall under the theme of teaches techniques.

The majority of the coaches indicated that the SPC's job was to enhance or develop the mental aspect of athletic performance. Descriptive words such as: develop, enhance, facilitates, increase, prepare, helps, as well as build and maintain a strong mental approach were all used to describe what an SPC does for the mental ability of athletes. Along with strengthening the mental approach for athletes, coaches indicated that the SPC also helps facilitate and provide the needed tools to create a strong mental game, they help athletes positively handle adversity, help them to focus on things that they can control, help them control and regulate emotions, overcome obstacles and fears, learn to deal with failure, establish realistic goals and help athletes prepare for peak performances. Still others seen the SPC as someone who the athlete could turn to for help, "source away from competition, a safe outlet", or that needed third source, outside of the coaches, that may be a welcomed relieve for the athlete to turn to when their performance may be suffering:

> "It gives our girls an outside person to go to for help and someone on the outside of our team who is not involved with our team daily. An objective eye."

Coaches even viewed the SPC as someone who not only works with the athletes but themselves as well:

> To assist the athletes and coaches with strategies and techniques that can help them control their mental game.

> Help athletes and coaches stay focused on the task at hand and how to refocus when we lose sight. Help work as a team and implementing positive ways to reach our goals

> Works closely with athletes and coaches to (help them) understand the dynamics within a player or team that effects performance

Some coaches viewed the SPCs role as one who could enhance the performance of their athletes. They indicated that the things that an SPC could do to help in this area would be things like:

> Help athletes maximize performance by teaching skills to control and enhance thought processes during competition

> Helps athletes perform or get over mental blocks that might be hurting their performance

> Help athlete/team eliminate the negative factor that hurts their performance

It is evident, from the responses gathered here, that coaches know and understand what an SPC can do to assist and help improve their player's performance with regards to the mental aspect. What we don't know here is the extent of use of SPCs by the participants in this study. However, we do know that coaches have indicated an interest and desire to have an SPC work with their team (Sullivan & Hodge, 1991).

Inquiry #5: What is the most important thing that a sport psychology consultant can do to help you and your team achieve success?

Finally, the last inquiry wanted coaches to indicate what, in their mind, was the most import thing an SPC could do to help them achieve success. The themes that emerged included: a) develop strong mental game, b) teach coping skills, c) confidence, d) focus, and e) team building.

In regards to the theme of develop strong mental game; coaches statements included:

> Create a stronger mental game that leads to a stronger performance

> Make them mentally tough

Help with the mental aspect of the game

Help athletes learn to not let the mind be a barrier to optimal performance use it to your advantage

Eliminate the mental clutter that many athletes have to deal with

Train their minds like we train their body.

The theme of "teach coping skills" had statements such as:

Give our athletes tools they need with situations when they feel under pressure or stress

How to control pressure and negative thoughts and external influences

Provide athletes with coping tools to be used while training, practicing and playing games

Learn techniques for handling aspects of our sport in a more positive efficient manner.

For the themes of confidence, focus and team-building, responses tended to be more direct and specific. In some cases only one word may have been used to answer this item. Or in other cases they may have only used two to three words for their response:

Give them confidence, develop confidence, create confidence

Focusing, relax and focus, focus on the moment, stay in the moment

Team-building, importance of team, focus on "team", create one attitude

The building and developing of a team can be very complex. It may take days, weeks or even several seasons to bring a group of players together and have success. Coaches indicated that they see the SPC as having an important role in that development of a "team". The development process should include setting goals, both short-term and long-term, making an effort to develop good communication and creating team cohesiveness (Veach & May, 2005). While the development of the team is of great importance, and coaches acknowledge its importance, other areas have been indicated to

be of great importance as well. Studies with elite athletes (Orlick & Partington, 1988; Gould, Diffenbach, & Moffett, 2002), who have experienced high levels of success, have noted similar areas as did the coaches in this study, for example: attentional focus, working on positive thoughts, controlling anxiety, and having high levels of confidence were named as factors that helped them to excel in their given sport. What is interesting, is that the coaches in this study made no mention of the use of or the teaching of imagery techniques. Imagery, visualizing ones performance internally, has been noted as being one of the most important mental skills that one needs to strengthen in order to possibly enhance ones physical performance (Murphy, 2005). A majority of the Olympic athletes surveyed in a study by Orlick and Partington indicated that they used imagery on a regular basis. The repetition of performing a skill over and over in ones mind and the visualization of being successful over and over helps with increasing an athlete's confidence level (Driskell, Copper, & Moran, 1994). Moritz and Hall (1996) concluded that athletes who visualized themselves mastering a skill and the emotion that is involved in the actual competition was even more beneficial than just imaging the skill (Short, Tenute, & Feltz, 2005). For this reason alone, coaches should be aware of the importance of imagery.

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

This study was an attempt to look specifically at NCAA division I head softball coaches and their use of and perceptions of sport psychology. The researcher attempted to gather more information about specific principles they are using, how confident they are applying the principles and what time of the season they are used. With regards to a sport psychology consultant, the researcher wanted to know if NCAA division I head softball

coaches understood a sport psychology consultant's job and what they thought the most import thing a consultant can do to help their team achieve success.

This study shows that NCAA division I head softball coaches are doing things that previous researchers have found to be true of other coaching populations. Specifically, softball coaches are actually utilizing principles that have been indicated as being necessary for athletes to master in order to enhance their performance levels (Thelwell et al., 2008; Weinberg and Gould, 2007). Coaches may not have used the same terminology or wording that a sport psychology consultant would use but the general meaning and understanding of what they are doing is very similar to sport psychology terminology. Secondly, coaches who have more knowledge and/or training in sport psychology have been shown to be more confident in its use and implementation (Gould et al., 1999). Coaches indicated that they have some level of confidence in their ability to teach, implement and practice those principles to help with the enhancement of their athlete's performance. Coaches have increased their confidence over time by utilizing books, having an educational background in psychology, and through conversations with colleagues, as well as with SPCs. The findings on a coach's confidence level are interesting to note because several indicated being very confident but also stated that due to time constraints they didn't utilize sport psychology to its fullest potential. Research has shown that in the past, lack of time and lack of knowledge are reasons most often given for coaches not using sport psychology (Pain & Harwood, 2004; Sullivan & Hodge, 1991).

The timing of the introduction, teaching, and practice of sports psychology is of great importance. The key is to train athletes at a time when they are able to learn and practice techniques when they are not feeling pressure to win games along with learning

and practicing new mental skills (Weinberg & Gould, 2007). Coaches, for the most part, indicated that in fact they are using sport psychology in the non-competitive season. Some indicated use at other times during the season, while others may only revisit in time of need or to "fix" something that may not be working.

A Sport psychology consultant's job is to help "develop psychological skills for enhancing competitive performance and training" (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, p. 6). Coaches did not specifically use the term psychological, however; they indicated that the consultant's job was to prepare athletes for peak performance and help athletes enhance their performance by strengthening them mentally. The vast majority of the coaches who responded to this inquiry seemed to understand exactly what a sport psychology consultant does in order to strengthen the mental performance of athletes. A select few even recognized how an SPC benefits not only the athletes but coaches, as well as the coach/athlete relationship.

In conclusion, NCAA division I head softball coaches seem to have an understanding of how sport psychology and consultants can help with their team's improved and consistent performance. Preparing for and being mentally ready for high levels of competition is of the utmost importance to achieve and continually achieve success (Orlick & Partington, 1988). Coaches need to understand the ramifications and the meaningful role they play in the decisions they make with regards to the use of either sport psychology principles or consultants. The extra effort given to practicing the mental aspects just may boost their athletes' confidence and may mean the difference between winning and losing.

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APPENDIX A

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Tel: 601.266.6820
Fax: 601.266.5509
www.usm.edu/irb

HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 27111204
PROJECT TITLE: **NCAA Division I Head Softball Coaches' Use of Sport Psychology Consultants**
PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: **11/07/07 to 11/07/08**
PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation or Thesis**
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Laurie A. Neelis**
COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Health**
DEPARTMENT: **Human Performance & Recreation**
FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**
HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **12/12/07 to 12/11/08**

Lawrence A. Hosman

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
HSPRC Chair

1-09-08
Date

APPENDIX B

January 17, 2008

Dear Softball Coach,

My name is Laurie Neelis and I am a full-time faculty member, doctoral student, and for the past four years I was a volunteer softball coach here at The University of Southern Mississippi. The purpose of this letter is to request your input on a questionnaire I am conducting for my dissertation.

For the past two decades sport psychology and its principles have been used by many Sport psychology consultants (SPC) and coaches. It is my intent to further research what principles coaches like yourself are using, when you use them the most and how much confidence you have in using them.

Most of the literature regarding sport psychology principles is written about the athletes and their perceptions about SPCs and the principles they use to teach them to help them perform better. I am hoping that with your help we can add to the literature by reporting what types of principles are most often used by coaches, what time of the year (pre-season, during season, post-season) are they most likely to use them and how confident are they in teaching and applying those principles.

Participation is completely voluntary and you may choose to discontinue your participation at any time without any penalty. Returning the survey implies that you consent to be a participant in this study. Your responses will be kept confidential, and will only be used for answering research questions. During the study all surveys will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. All surveys will be destroyed when the information is no longer needed. Enclosed is a self-addressed, stamped envelope for you to return the survey. Thank-you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Laurie A. Neelis

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601)266-6820

APPENDIX C

PART 1: Please circle or fill in the most appropriate answers below. There is no right or wrong answer, and all information will be kept confidential. We value your honest responses.

1. Do you have access to a sport psychology consultant (SPC)?   Yes _____
No_____ (if no, skip to Part 2)

2. Are the SPCs' services paid for out of your budget? Yes _____   No_____

3. How satisfied are you with these services right now? (Very Unsatisfied) 1   2   3   4   5   6 (Very Satisfied)

4. In the past, have you previously had a SPC work with your team?   Yes   No   (if no, skip to Part 2)

    a. Please estimate the total number of seasons that a SPC has worked with your team(s):_____

    b. Based on this previous experience, would you consider using services in the future?   Yes   No

Part 2: Use of mental training

5. How important is it to your team's success that your athletes have strong mental skills?
    (not at all important) 1   2   3   4   5   6 (very important)

6. In your opinion, what percent of your sport is mental? _____

7. Please **circle the letter** that best describes your team's **current use** of sport psychology services. Sport psychology services include consulting with a sport psychology professional, having a sport psychology professional meet with your team/athletes, having a sport psychology professional meet with the coach or coaching staff, and referring athletes for performance enhancement or counseling.
** *Using sport psychology services consistently each week or every two weeks is considered regular.* **

    A. We currently do not use and are not thinking of using sport psychology services as part of our athletes overall training program.

    B. We currently do not use sport psychology as part of our athletes overall training program, but we are thinking about starting by the upcoming season.

C. We currently use sport psychology services as part of our athletes overall training program, but not regularly.

D. We regularly use sport psychology services as part of our overall training program, but we have only begun doing so within the past season.

E. We regularly use sport psychology services as part of our athletes overall training program and have done so for longer than one season.

8. What percentage of your time do you devote to mental training? _____

PART 3: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements by circling the response on the answer sheet that corresponds to your feelings toward each statement. Please respond to each statement as truthfully as you can.

SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

Question	SD	MD	D	A	MA	SA
9. A sport psychology consultant (SPC) can help athletes improve their mental toughness.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. If an athlete on my team asked my advice about personal feelings of failure related to sport, I would recommend that he/she see a SPC.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I would not want a SPC working with my athletes because other coaches would harass me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. There are certain problems that should not be discussed outside one's immediate family.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. A good idea for avoiding personal worries and concerns is to keep one's mind on the job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I would like to have the assistance of a SPC to help me better understand my team.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. I would feel uneasy having a SPC work with my team because some people would disapprove.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. There is something respectable in the attitude of athletes who are willing to cope with their conflicts and fears without resorting to professional help.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. If I utilized a SPC to help me coach better, I would not want other coaches to know about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. An athlete with emotional problems during sport performance would feel most secure in receiving assistance from a SPC.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. Having seen a SPC is bad for an athlete's reputation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. There are experiences in my life that I would not discuss with anyone.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. If I was worried or upset about my team's performance, I would want to get help from a SPC.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Emotional difficulties tend to work themselves out in time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. I think a SPC would help my team perform better under pressure.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. I would not want someone else to know about my team receiving help from a SPC.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. A SPC could help my team fine-tune their performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. If my team worked with a SPC, I would not want other coaches to know about it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. At times I have felt lost and would have welcomed professional advice for a personal problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. I would think less of my athletes if they went to a SPC.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. Athletes with a strong character can get over mental conflicts by themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. I am open to hiring a sport psychology consultant to work with my athletes.	1	2	3	4	5	6

PART 4: <u>Demographic Information</u>

31. Gender: _____Male _____Female

32. Age: ____ 21-24years ____25-29years ____30-34years ____35-39years

____40-44years ____45-49years ____50-54years ____55-59years ____60 and over

33. Years Coaching Experience (as a head coach): _____

34. Highest Degree Completed: High School____ BA/BS____ MA/MS____

EdD/PhD/PsyD____ Other Degree (specify):_____

35. Do you hold any psychology/sport psychology degrees and/or consultant certifications?

_____Yes _____No If yes, please specify:_____

36. Please check any educational experience you have had related to sport psychology:

_____ One course in sport psychology   _____More than one course in sport psychology

_____ Professional conference   _____ Workshop

_____ Other: _____

37. What athletic conference does your school participate in? _____

Part 5: <u>Open-ended questions (feel free to use the back of this sheet)</u>

38. What sport psychology techniques or principles do you utilize over the course of the year? (concentration skills, arousal regulation, confidence building, goal setting, self-talk)

39. Briefly describe how confident you are personally implementing sport psychology principles/techniques?

40. Of the techniques or principles that you utilize, when do you use them?

41. In your mind, what does a sport psychology consultant do?

42. What is the most important thing that a sport psychology consultant can do to help you and your team achieve success?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! PLEASE PUT IT IN THE ENVELOPE