EXAMINING HIGH SCHOOL COACHES' LIKELIHOOD TO REFER TO, INTEREST IN WORKING WITH, AND PLANS TO HIRE A SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2013

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Austin, Harlan. *Examining high school coaches’ likelihood to refer to, interest in working with, and plans to hire a sport psychologist.* Doctor of Philosophy (Counseling Psychology), December 2013, 66 pp., 2 tables, references, 64 titles.

The primary goal of the current study was to extend previous research suggesting that coaches are the primary gatekeepers who may be a barrier to working with athletes by examining high school coaches likelihood to refer to, interest in, and intention to hire a sport psychologist. Specifically, the current study examined relationships between high school coaches’ sex, age, and type of sport coached (i.e., contact vs. non-contact) and their likelihood to refer athletes to a sport psychologist for a variety of presenting issues (i.e., poor attentional focus, poor leadership, family issues, etc.). It also examined relationships between coaches’ sex, age, and type of sport coached (i.e., contact vs. non-contact) and their interest in working with a sport psychologist. Finally, the study examined reasons why coaches did not plan to hire a sport psychologist. An examination of the possible reasons that high school coaches do not plan to hire a sport psychologist served an exploratory purpose. Participants included 450 coaches who coached high school sports in the United States. Results indicated that female coaches and non-contact sport coaches were more likely to refer athletes to a sport psychologist for a variety of referral issues than male coaches and coaches of contact sports. Similarly, significantly more female coaches and non-contact sport coaches showed interest in working with a sport psychologist than male coaches and coaches of contact sports. Coaches who did not plan to hire a sport psychologist reported that cost, lack authority to hire, and lack of availability as primary reasons. Implications of the findings, limitations, and future directions are discussed.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all of the people who believed in me throughout this long journey. I would not have been able to achieve this goal without your everlasting support, assistance, and consult. Trent Petrie, I appreciate your patience and willingness to allow me to find my own way. Through our years working together, I have grown to become the professional I am today. Trish Kaminski, your support and patience played a key role in me being able to finish this journey, I will always be grateful. Many things in my life have changed throughout this odyssey, but the one thing that has remained has been the friendships in my life. From coast to coast, I have had support from a number of people, which has fueled my zealous and persistent pursuit of this degree. My Ohio people—“How Firm Thy Friendship”—those words say it all. My New Mexico people—always spiritual beacons and perpetual light. My Texas people—always understanding, always laughing, and always there. My Colorado people—thank you for the encouragement, guidance, and the mountains. My family—always loving, always patient, and always believing—thank you. My wife Aubrey—always loving, always supportive, and perpetually inspiring—thank you my Love! Finally, my daughter Avery—you are my Love, my Now, my Forever, and the reason for everything I do.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
Overview

Sport psychology has grown as a profession through the last 35 years, with consultants increasingly working with athletes, teams, and coaches at the elite and Olympic levels and more recently at the collegiate level (Brewer, Van Raalte, Petitpas, Bachman & Weinhold, 1998; Wrisberg, Loberg, Simpson, Withycombe, & Reed, 2010). A logical progression for the field of sport psychology is to not only see it used at elite levels of competition, but also at the high school and youth sport levels of competition. High school aged athletes in particular stand to benefit from mental skills training, as they are in a critical period of development in which they are establishing core aspects of their identity (Erikson, 1968). As adolescents are developing their identity, participation in athletics has been show to have a positive impact on self-esteem and self-concept (Larson, 2000). It follows that the utilization of sport psychology consultation to assist in the development of specific mental skills can assist in the overall healthy development of young athletes. The purpose of this study is to assist the growth and trickle down of sport psychology usage to high school athletes by examining high school athletic coaches' likelihood to refer an athlete to a sport psychologist as well as their interest in actually hiring a sport psychologist to work with their teams in a variety of roles.

Exploring attitudes toward sport psychology consultation (SPC) has been one focus of researchers seeking to better understand how to gain entry to work with athletes and coaches (Martin, 2005; Martin, Kellmann, Lavallee, & Page, 2002). Martin
and colleagues (2002) found that factors such as stigma tolerance, confidence in SPC, personal openness, and cultural preference are all attitudes that influence how athletes view SPC. Knowledge of an athlete’s attitude towards SPC can help provide sport psychologists with information about the specific barriers that may be in the way of that athlete seeking services. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) suggests that people’s behavior is determined by their intentions, which are in part determined by an individual’s attitudes (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, understanding athletes’ and coaches’ attitudes toward SPC can provide valuable information in regards to the possible behavior intentions of these potential consumers of SPC.

Working with a team generally is predicated on gaining the approval of the head coach (Ravizza, 1988). However, research on coach attitudes towards SPC has been limited. Examining the coach as consumer may provide valuable information about what sport psychologists can do to gain entry and provide applied services (Wrisberg et al., 2010; Zakrajsek, Martin, & Zizzi, 2011). In one such study, Wrisberg and colleagues (2010) examined college coaches’ willingness to refer athletes to SPC and found that college coaches were willing to encourage their athletes to seek SPC for both personal and performance concerns. A coach’s willingness to refer to a sport psychologist could, however, be related to specific attitudes towards SPC. As such, research that focuses more specifically on coach attitudes may help provide more clear data in regards to how coach attitudes impact their interest in using SPC.

Interest in SPC by Olympic and college coaches indicates that there are potential opportunities to provide sport psychology services, however, this represents a small percentage of the potential athlete pool that exists in the United States. For example,
there are approximately 154,876 NCAA athletes, which represents a small percentage of the approximately 2,999,506 high school athletes in the US (National College Athletic Association, n.d.). Thus, high school sports represents a large population of young men and women who could benefit from the mental skills that SPC can provide at a critical period in their psychosocial development. Developing mental skills, such as improving focus, managing emotions, and learning to communicate with others during this transitional period can provide high school athletes with skills and strategies that can be transferred to other areas of life, such as academic performance, and assist with success now and in the future.

In order for high school athletes to benefit from the mental skills that SPC can provide, sport psychologists will need to first gain entry with high school coaches. This study will seek to understand how to better gain entry with high school coaches by furthering the research on high school coaches’ willingness to refer athletes for SPC, and interest in hiring a sport psychologist to work with coaches, athletes, and teams.

Usage of Sport Psychology Consultation

Sport psychology has expanded as a field through the growth of academic training programs, developing professional organizations (e.g. Association for Applied Sport Psychology), and launching scholarly journals (e.g., *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*; Kirschenbaum, Parham, & Murphy, 1993). During the last 25 years the interest and use of applied sport psychology services has also been slowly increasing at the Olympic and NCAA Division I levels of competition (Gould et al., 1991; Partington & Orlick, 1987; Kornspan & Duve, 2006; Wrisberg, Simpson, Loberg, Withycombe, &
Reed, 2009). In fact, recent research has estimated that between 30%-50% of NCAA Division-I athletic programs have contractual relationships with sport psychology consultants (Wrisberg, Loberg, Simpson, Withycombe, & Reed, 2010). Within NCAA athletic departments, Division I, II and III athletic directors have reported a higher number of colleges employing sport psychologists and also an increased use SPC. Athletic directors also reported that they have a desire for more involvement by sport psychologists with their programs and that they would hire consultants if they could afford to do so (Kornspan & Duve, 2006).

This trend is encouraging, considering that when surveyed, college athletic directors reported that they place a higher value on the services provided by athletic trainers and strength coaches than those provided by sport psychology consultants (Wilson, Gilbert, Gilbert & Sailor, 2009). The use of athletic training and strength conditioning programs has trickled down from the elite and college levels to the high school level, helping provide younger athletes with the many benefits of programs focused on their healthy physical development. The use of SPC in high school sports could also provide younger athletes with programs that aid in healthy psychological development. With millions of high school athletes who could benefit from developing mental skills through the use of SPC, it behooves sport psychology researchers to gather information regarding gaining access in order to help the positive psychological development of this population.

Benefits of Sport Psychology Consultation

A review of the sport psychology literature suggests that mental skills training can
serve a number of purposes in preparing athletes for competition and also help improve
the quality of their lives (Kimball & Freysinger, 2003; Martin, Vause, & Schwartzman,
2005; Murphy, 2005; Orlick, 2008). Some of the mental skills that athletes can benefit
from include: improving focus (Orlick & Partington, 1988), managing anxiety (Mamassis
& Doganis, 2004), managing emotions (Lazarus, 2000), dealing with personal issues
(Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005), dealing with pressure (Beilock &
Carr, 2001), building confidence (Myers, Payment, & Feltz, 2004), communicating with
coaches (Sullivan, 1993), communicating with teammates (Yukelson, 1997), performing
as well in competition as in practice (Frey, Laguna, & Ravizza, 2003), improving skills
for coping with stressful events (Zinsser, Bunker, & Williams, 2005), and increasing the
enjoyment of sport participation (Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1989). Linking valuable
mental skills training with high school aged athletes (who are in a critical period of their
identity development) can help to contribute to positive self-esteem and self-concept
(Larson, 2000). That being said, it is high school coaches who often provide athletes
with much of the technical sport knowledge that is the foundation of their athletic
careers. Integrating mental skills training into the technical training that is already
provided may help better prepare athletes for continued success both on and off of the
field. In order for high school athletes to benefit from the mental skills that SPC can
provide, sport psychologists will need to first gain entry with high school coaches.

Coach as Gatekeeper

Although many SPC interventions are geared towards athletes themselves, it is
often the coach who decides whether to allow a sport psychologist to work with his or
her team (Partington & Orlick, 1987; Ravizza, 1988; Voight & Callaghan, 2001). Consultants have reported that the most successful sport psychology interventions happen when coaches are open-minded about the use of mental skills training (Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza, & Rotella, 2003). Exploring coach attitudes towards SPC helps provide valuable information about potential barriers that may prevent a coach from being open-minded towards consulting with a sport psychologist. Coaches have stated that mental preparation is important for their athletes and they are generally receptive to incorporating the effective use of mental skills in their training programs (Gould et al., 1991; Partington & Orlick, 1987; Wrisberg, Loberg, Simpson, Withycombe, & Reed 2010). For example, coaches have reported that they view the concept of mental toughness as a key component of success in sport, and have identified psychological skills, motivation to succeed, and resilience as key components to an athlete possessing mental toughness (Weinberg, Butt, & Culp, 2011). Developing mental toughness is a skill that can be fostered through mental skills training that SPC provides (Zinsser et al., 2005). However, if a coach is not open to the concept of SPC, the opportunity to provide their athletes with mental skills training that they value may be missed.

The openness of coaches to seeking SPC has been shown to be influenced by the amount of previous exposure they have had to SPC. Wrisberg and colleagues (2010) surveyed a group of 815 NCAA (447 males, 368 females) Division-I coaches to examine their willingness to refer their athletes to a sport psychologist for assistance. Wrisberg and colleagues (2010) found that coaches who had previous experience with sport psychology consultants of more than five meetings showed more interest in
referring athletes for mental training focused on dealing with pressure, building confidence, improving focus, communicating with coaches, communicating with teammates, and managing emotions than coaches who had less previous experience with sport psychology consultants. In addition, coaches reported that they were more willing to refer an athlete to a sport psychology consultant for performance concerns than for personal concerns. Coaches also reported they were more willing to have a sport psychology consultant available to their athletes away from practice or competition rather than having them actually attend practices or competitions. Additionally, coaches reported that they were more likely to seek SPC if they perceived SPC to be effective at providing mental training focused on dealing with pressure, building confidence, improving focus, managing anxiety, enhancing performance, performing as well in competition as in practice, and managing emotions during competition (Wrisberg et al., 2010). Coaches also have demonstrated more willingness to seek SPC when their perceived effectiveness of SPC is high (Wrisberg et al., 2010; Zakrajsek, Martin, & Zizzi, 2011). These findings suggest that although coaches are receptive to what sport psychologists have to offer, there are specific situations or circumstances in which they are willing to refer their athletes to a sport psychologist. Further exploration of coach interest in SPC may help to explain how they make decisions in regard to the circumstances they would choose to work with a sport psychologist. Additional research exploring Olympic athletes and coaches indicated that receptivity to SPC was influenced by perceptions of the effectiveness of the sport psychologist, again suggesting that the attitude of the individual influences the planned behavior to use SPC (Gould et al., 1991; Orlick & Partington, 1987; Partington & Orlick, 1987).
Although NCAA Division-I college coaches (85%) have reported wanting sport psychologists to be available to their athletes, fewer (43%) support having sport psychologists attend practices or competitions to work with their athletes (Wrisberg et al., 2010). These results suggest that the modality of sport psychology services is also an important factor to coaches. In addition to wanting SPC in a limited capacity, Olympic level coaches have reported that they are unwilling to tolerate ineffective sport psychologists (Partington & Orlick, 1987). It appears that although Olympic and college level coaches are open to the services that SPC provides, the ability of a sport psychologist to provide this service is impacted by how a coach views SPC. Research on elite level coaches has helped sport psychologists begin to develop their understanding of elite coaches’ attitudes towards SPC. Although researchers have focused on exploring the interest of Olympic and college level coaches, there has been little focus on the interest of high school coaches. Expanding knowledge of high school coaches’ interest, or lack thereof, in SPC can help provide consultants with valuable information regarding the potential barriers that may inhibit the ability to provide high school athletes with valuable mental skills training. High school coaches hold the key to the integration of mental skills training programs into high school athletics. Therefore, learning about high school coaches’ attitudes towards SPC can help sport psychologists understand how to gain access to provide sport psychology services to their athletes.

Attitude Impact on Help Seeking Behavior

Gaining entry with a team or individual is the challenging first step to providing applied sport psychology services. Barriers to gaining entry with coaches and athletes
can occur at the sport culture level, institutional level, and even the individual level. For example, negative perceptions of psychology can influence athletes’ and coaches’ biases toward sport psychologists and often create a negative perception that must be overcome if a sport psychologist is to gain access and have any chance of providing services. Some people may be uneasy about seeking professional help, whether from a counselor (Fischer & Farina, 1995; Good & Wood, 1995) or sport psychologist (Linder, Brewer, Van Raalte, & DeLange, 1991; Linder, Pillow, and Reno, 1989; Maniar, Curry, Sommers-Flanagan & Walsh, 2001; Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, & Lounsbury, 1997). Apprehension to seek help from a professional may result from fear of a negative social evaluation. Vogal, Wester, and Larson (2007) identified factors such as social stigma, treatment fears, fear of emotion, fear of anticipated risks, and fear of self-disclosure as contributing factors to the avoidance of seeking help.

Social stigma attached to seeking professional help has been identified as one of the most significant barriers to treatment for mental health issues (Sibicky & Dovidio, 1986; Vogal et al., 2007). Athletes and coaches alike may possess attitudes that help to create a negative social stigma towards help-seeking behavior similar to that of those seeking other forms of professional help. The result of these perceptions can lead to the derogation of athletes who consult with a sport psychologist and thus could reduce athletes’ willingness to work with one (Linder et al., 1989). Coaches are often former athletes, and as such, may possess attitudes and perceptions of help-seeking behavior similarly to how athletes do. Van Raalte et al. (1990) suggested that the title “psychologist” might hold the most salience in the public’s perception of the term sport psychologist, and thus be the reason sport psychologists are perceived as more similar
to clinical psychologists or psychotherapists than to coaches. It appears that the public's misperception about the title "sport psychologist" may contribute to a stigma associated with receiving assistance, and thus create a barrier for a sport psychology consultant to overcome when trying to gain entry with athletes, teams, and coaches.

Gender, age, and type of sport also have been shown to influence attitudes of those who seek SPC (Martin et al., 2002; Martin, 2005; Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007; Wrisberg, Simpson, Lobert, Withycombe, and Reed, 2009; Wrisberg et al., 2010). For example, Martin (2005) administered the Sport Psychology Attitudes-Revised (SPA-R) to high school (n = 362) and college (n = 431) athletes. The SPA-R consists of four scales (a) Stigma Tolerance, (b) Confidence in Sport Psychology Consulting, (c) Personal Openness, and (d) Cultural Preference. Martin (2005) found that male high school and college athletes viewed consulting with a sport psychologist as being more stigmatizing than did female high school and college athletes. Wrisberg and colleagues (2009) also recently examined sex differences of NCAA Division I athletes' receptivity to SPC. They found that female athletes had a higher willingness to seek SPC for dealing with pressure, building confidence, communicating with coaches, communicating with teammates, dealing with personal issues, managing anxiety, and managing emotions during competitions than did male athletes. Female athletes also rated their perception of the benefits of SPC higher than did male athletes. Similarly, a study of coaches' attitudes towards SPC found that female coaches had less stigma towards SPC than did male coaches (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). The impact of sex has also been found to be a factor that impacts mental health help-seeking behavior (Vogal et al., 2007). Sex, or more specifically, gender roles may play a part in mental help-seeking behaviors.
Studies have shown that women tend to have more positive attitudes than men do regarding seeking professional help (Fischer & Farina, 1995). Researchers have suggested that traditional gender roles influence mental health seeking behaviors, such that men, who may hold more masculine gender roles with an emphasis on independence and control, are threatened by the perceived social stigma that may be placed on men that are unable to solve problems on their own (Vogal et al., 2007). The act of seeking help becomes particularly difficult for men who subscribe to traditional gender roles due to the fear of being viewed as a failure (Vogal et al., 2007). The studies by Martin (2005), Wrisberg and colleagues (2009), and Zakrajsek & Zizzi (2007) appear to demonstrate similar attitudes in male athletes and coaches. Female athletes and coaches, like their female mental health-seeking peers, appear to have a greater tolerance of the potential social stigma associated with help-seeking behaviors (Fischer & Farina, 1995; Martin, 2005, Vogal et al., 2007).

Age has also been shown to influence attitudes towards SPC in both athletes and coaches. When surveyed, high school-aged athletes viewed consulting with a sport psychologist as more stigmatizing than college-aged athletes (Martin, 2005). Similarly, research focusing coach attitudes demonstrated differences based on age (Zakrajsek, Martin, & Zizzi, 2011). In a study of high school football coaches, Zakrajsek and colleagues (2011) found that coaches under age 30 had a higher negative stigma, lower confidence, and lower willingness to work with sport psychology consultants than did coaches over age 30. Research focusing on mental health has shown that age influences help-seeking behaviors. Specifically, adolescents tend to underutilize services (Boldero & Fallon, 1995) and may view counseling less positively than adults.
(Timlin-Scalera, Ponterotto, Blumberg, & Jackson, 2003). Other barriers that have been found to exist for adolescents include fear that things will get worse, suspicion that counseling will not be useful, and fear of confidentiality being broken (Wilson & Deane, 2001). During adolescence, building autonomy and a sense of identity may contribute to reluctance in seeking help, as it may represent a threat to the developing self-esteem and self-concept (Vogal et al., 2007). Younger athletes and coaches may also be developing their athletic identity or coaching identity. Individuals who are working to establish their identity may have lower self-confidence, and tend to look to others for a social evaluation of their self-worth (Vogal et al., 2007). The negative social evaluation of help-seeking behavior can then have a negative impact on younger athletes who are especially wary of potential negative evaluation (or stigma) associated with seeking help from SPC, in turn creating a barrier to them seeking SPC. Younger coaches may, like adolescents or high school-aged athletes, have lower confidence in their coaching identity. This may result in a fear of negative social evaluation, and thus a reluctance to behave in a way that they fear will be negatively evaluated such as hiring a sport psychologist (Gould et al., 1991; Partington & Orlick, 1987; Wrisberg et al., 2009).

The norms and social expectations associated with the culture of a particular sport have also been shown to influence attitudes of athletes and towards SPC. Martin (2005) found that athletes who participated in contact sports (defined as sports that involve bodily contact, physical intimidation, and possible injury) viewed SPC as more stigmatizing than athletes who participated in non-contact sports. That is, athletes from wrestling and football had the highest stigma towards SPC. Socialization processes may help explain these differences. Athletes in contact sports may be socialized to
accept pain, physical risk, and injury more readily than athletes who compete in non-contact sport (Martin, 2005). The acceptance of pain or injury may play into a mentality that help-seeking behaviors are a sign of “weakness,” a similar stigma that prevents individuals who subscribe to certain cultural norms from seeking mental health assistance (Vogal et al., 2007). Non-contact sport athletes, on the other hand, may be socialized in a way that does not glorify pain or look at help-seeking behavior in a negative manner. This may result in athletes from non-contact sports being more open to the idea of help-seeking (Martin, 2005). In a related study, Wrisberg and colleagues (2009) examined how the culture of a particular sport influenced athlete openness to SPC. The authors found that athletes who participate in individual sports were more open to SPC for mental skills training to enhance performance in competition than were athletes in team sports (Wrisberg et al., 2009). Athletes who compete in individual sports may feel a stronger sense of personal responsibility for performance in competition than team athletes, and thus be more open to seeking help for such issues (Wrisberg et al., 2009). Another possible reason that individual sport athletes are more open to SPC than team sport athletes could be the fact that there is less social pressure (from teammates) to avoid discussing problems with others. Social groups (e.g., sport culture) have been shown to have an influence on and individual’s willingness to seek help. For example, counselors have been characterized as “out-group members” who are not a part of a social network or family, and thus not to be trusted (Atkinson, Whitely, & Gim, 1990; Vogal et al., 2007). It is possible that athletes who participate in a team sport may view a sport psychologist as an outsider that is not part of the social network of the team, and thus untrustworthy. Whereas, an athlete who does not perform
as part of a team may not experience the same social pressure to avoid bringing perceived problems to an out-group member.

When seeking to gain entry with any athlete population it is helpful to develop an understanding of the prevailing attitudes towards SPC that exist in that culture. For example, information about the group members’ confidence in SPC can help a sport psychologist know if there is a need to educate the potential population in ways that can increase their confidence. As discussed above, attitudes toward SPC have been shown to differ based on sex, age, and sport culture. To summarize, men tend to have lower confidence in SPC as well as place higher stigma on SPC than women (Martin, 2005; Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007); younger athletes and coaches have reported lower confidence in SPC as well as higher stigma towards SPC (Martin, 2005; Zakrajsek et al., 2011); and athletes who compete in contact sports have shown lower confidence in SPC as well as higher stigma towards SPC (Martin, 2005). The previous research focusing on athlete and coach attitudes towards SPC may be able to help describe the reasoning behind the decision of an individual to actually work with a sport psychologist. Continuing to examine high school coaches’ attitudes towards and actual intention to use (or not use) SPC can help further our understanding of the process of gaining entry and ultimately working with coaches and athletes at the high school level.

Intention to Use SPC

The theory of planned behavior has been used extensively across academic disciplines as a helpful tool for understanding and predicting human behavior (Armitage & Conner 2001). The theory of planned behavior postulates that people’s behavior is
determined by their intentions. In turn, these intentions are influenced by the underlying constructs of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). In combination, these three constructs lead to the formation of intention, where behavioral intention is assumed to be the immediate antecedent of the actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Ultimately, people are expected to carry out a specific behavior when the opportunity arises, given they have an existing behavioral intention.

The construct of attitude illustrates the individual’s positive or negative evaluation of the expected consequences resulting from performing an intended behavior, the subjective norm reflects the perceived normative expectations of others, and the construct of perceived behavioral control is used to explain a person’s volitional control over a behavior (Ajzen, 1997). Studies measuring behavioral intention tend to use questions such as: “I intend to donate money to charity in the next three weeks” to measure the actual behavioral intentions of respondents (Smith & McSweeney, 2007). The forced choice response is aimed at providing a clear example of a planned behavior in a clearly defined timeframe.

When determining the behavioral intention of a coach to work with a sport psychologist, the combination of coach’s attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control dictate his/her actual behavioral intention to seek SPC. For example, if a coach possesses an attitude that working with a sport psychologist is be beneficial, believes that using SPC is congruent with the social norms expected of a coach, and perceives they have control over the decision to work with a sport psychologist, then the coach will have behavioral intention to actually work with a sport psychologist. Conversely, if a coach possesses negative attitudes towards SPC, believes working
with SPC goes against the social norms for a coach, and does not perceive they have control over the decision to work with SPC, the behavioral intention would be to not work with a sport psychologist.

Although there has been significant research on athlete and coach attitudes towards SPC, few studies have examined the behavioral intentions of athletes and coaches to use SPC. One study by Wrisberg and colleagues (2009) found that both male and female athletes were more willing to seek SPC if they had previous experience with a SPC (i.e., exposure to SPC >5 times) than athletes who had little previous experience with SPC (i.e., exposure to SPC <5 times). Additionally, female athletes were found to be more willing to seek SPC for dealing with pressure, building confidence, communication, dealing with personal issues, managing anxiety, and managing emotions than male athletes. Similarly, Wrisberg and colleagues (2010) examined coaches’ willingness to encourage their athletes to see a consultant for performance-related and personal concerns. The study found that the majority of coaches were willing to encourage athletes to seek services. However, this study did not examine coaches’ actual intention to refer athletes to SPC. Only one study has actually examined coaches’ actual behavioral intention to use SPC. Zakrajsek, Martin, and Zizzi (2011) examined high school football coaches’ attitudes towards SPC as well as their intention to use sport psychology services. The construct of intention was measured by asking coaches if they planned to contact a sport psychology consultant in the next week. Zakrajsek and colleagues (2011) found that high confidence and openness towards SPC were related significantly to coach intention to contact a sport psychology consultant in the next week. Further, the coaches’ confidence in SPC was
related moderately to their likelihood of contacting a sport psychologist to obtain services in the next week (Zakrajsek et al., 2011). This research finding suggests that positive attitudes (i.e., confidence, openness) towards SPC resulted in the behavioral intention to use SPC, as the Theory of Planned Behavior would suggest. Recent research on attitudes and receptivity to SPC suggests that the more exposure to (and knowledge about) SPC that consumers have, the more open they will be to services (Wrisberg et al., 2009, 2010; Zakrajsek et al., 2011). Given the small number of studies that have examined the behavioral intentions of coaches to use SPC, further research in this area is warranted.

Study Purpose

The primary purpose of this study is to extend previous research on high school coaches’ interest in working with SPC (Wrisberg et al., 2011; Zakrajsek et al., 2011). High school coaches work with athletes during a key period in their athletic and personal development. Erikson (1968) asserted that identity construction is a central task during adolescence. As adolescents are developing their identity, participation in athletics has been show to have a positive impact on self-esteem and self-concept (Larson, 2000). Developing mental skills, such as managing emotions, improving focus, and learning to communicate with others during this critical period can provide high school athletes with skills and strategies that can be transferred to other areas of life. Gaining skills in academic performance and goal setting are likely to assist with student-athlete success in high school and in the future. Although some high school athletes’ parents may take their sons or daughters directly to a sport psychologist, in many
cases, access will be determined the athletes’ coach and whether or not he/she invites a sport psychologist to work with his/her team. Learning more about high school coaches’ willingness to refer athletes to sport psychologists, and their interest in receiving sport psychology services gives sport psychologists information on how to best connect with coaches and gain access to their athletes and teams.

Based on past research (Martin, 2005; Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007; Zakrajsek et al., 2011), the first purpose of my study was to examine how high school coaches’ sex, age (i.e., coaches over 30 vs. coaches under 30), and sport coached (i.e., contact vs. non-contact) influenced their likelihood to refer an athlete to a sport psychologist for a variety of issues (e.g., “demonstrating poor or ineffective leadership,” “performing or practicing inconsistently”). One of the limitations of previous research was that the potential interactions of these three variables had not been studied. Thus, I examined the two and three way interactions first, and then main effects. Although interaction effects had not previously been examined, based on prior research I hypothesized that female coaches and older male coaches of noncontact sports would be more willing to refer athletes to a sport psychologist than younger male, contact sport coaches (Martin, 2005; Zakrajsek et al., 2011; Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). I expected to find the following main effects: coaches who are female, coaches over thirty, and coaches of non-contact sports would be more likely to refer an athlete to a sport psychologist for all presenting issues than male coaches, coaches under thirty, and coaches of contact sports.

The second purpose of my study was to determine the percentage of high school coaches that were interested in having a sport psychologist work with them, individual athletes on their teams, or their entire teams. I also examined how high school coaches’
sex, age (i.e., coaches over 30 vs. coaches under 30), and sport coached (i.e., contact vs. non-contact) influenced their interest in hiring a sport psychologist. Consistent with research examining college coaches’ desires to work with a sport psychologist (Wrisberg et al., 2010) I expected more high school coaches than not to say they were interested in having a sport psychologist to work with them and their staff, their athletes, and their teams. I also expected that female coaches, coaches over thirty, and non-contact coaches would be more interested in hiring a sport psychologist to work with them, the individual athletes on their team, and their entire team than male coaches, coaches under thirty, and contact sport coaches. Regarding the modalities in which they might work with a sport psychologist, I explored whether coach demographics (i.e., sex, age, contact sport status) would impact coach preference to work with a sport psychologist: away from the sport venue (e.g., in their offices), as needed (e.g., phone consultation), at practices, and finally at competitions.

The third purpose for my study was to explore the reasons why a coach may not be interested in having a sport psychologist work with them, their athletes, and their teams. In addition, I explored reasons that coaches who expressed interest in working with a sport psychologist (but did not plan to hire a sport psychologist) would not hire a sport psychologist.
CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

A sample of 530 participants was recruited from high schools across the United States via email to participate in the study. Of the 530 participants, 80 participants were eliminated because of largely incomplete protocols; that is, they completed only minimal portions of the online questionnaire and did not finish. The final sample consisted of 450 individuals (women = 26% \[n = 119\]; men = 70% \[n = 319\]) with high school coaching experience.

The participant ages ranged from 21 to 70 (women: \(M = 36.9, SD = 10.1\); men: \(M = 41.9, SD = 11.7\)). The racial make up of the participants included White (79.3% \[n = 357\]), Black, African-American, or Negro (5.8% \[n = 26\]), other (4% \[n = 18\]), Chinese (2.2% \[n = 10\]), Filipino (1.3% \[n = 6\]), Japanese (1.3% \[n = 6\]), American Indian or Alaska Native (0.4% \[n = 2\]), Asian Indian (0.4% \[n = 2\]), and Samoan (0.4% \[n = 2\]). Coaches reported having varying levels of education, including BA/BS (49.3% \[n = 222\]), MA/MS (38% \[n = 171\]), other (8.9 % \[n = 40\]), and PhD/EdD (2% \[n = 9\]).

Participant coaches came from 7 different states, with most being from California (54% \[n = 244\]), followed by Florida (17.1% \[n = 77\]), Texas (16.7% \[n = 75\]), Colorado (6.7% \[n = 30\]), Ohio (2.7% \[n = 12\]), Arkansas (0.4% \[n = 2\]), and Oklahoma (0.4% \[n = 2\]). The types of high schools coached at included large public school (45.8% \[n = 206\]), medium public school (16% \[n = 72\]), small private school (13.3% \[n = 60\]), medium private school (9.6% \[n = 43\]), large private school (7.8% \[n = 35\]), and small public school (6.2% \[n = 28\]). The coaches held varying types of coaching positions including
teacher-coach (40% \( n = 180 \)), part time coach (25.1% \( n = 113 \)), full time coach (17.6% \( n = 79 \)), administrator-coach (10.7% \( n = 48 \)); and other (4% \( n = 18 \)). Coaches represented both contact and non-contact sports: non-contact sports (74.2% \( n = 334 \)), contact sports (25.8% \( n = 116 \)). Participants identified one primary sport that they coached, including football (14.7% \( n = 66 \)), basketball (12.9% \( n = 56 \)), soccer (12% \( n = 54 \)), other (11.1% \( n = 50 \)), volleyball (8.4% \( n = 38 \)), lacrosse (6% \( n = 27 \)), swimming (5.8% \( n = 26 \)), baseball (4.9% \( n = 22 \)), softball (4.9% \( n = 22 \)), track & field (4.4% \( n = 20 \)), wrestling (4.2% \( n = 19 \)), golf (4% \( n = 18 \)), tennis (2.7% \( n = 12 \)), cross country (2.2% \( n = 10 \)), hockey (0.0% \( n = 4 \)), and gymnastics (0.4% \( n = 2 \)).

Measures

Demographics

Participants provided information concerning their sex, age, race/ethnicity, highest degree achieved, type of school at which they are coaching (e.g., public, private), primary sport coached, highest level coached in primary sport (e.g., high school, college, etc.), primary sport in which they participated as an athlete, highest level of athletic participation in their primary sport, and overall length of time coaching, length of time coaching in their primary sport, and length of time coaching in their current position.

Likelihood to Refer to a Sport Psychologist

Based on previous research (i.e., Wrisberg et al., 2009, 2010), questions were
developed to assess high school coaches' likelihood to refer their athletes to a sport psychologist for assistance on 16 different issues. For example, for issues such as “experiencing poor attentional focus” and “experiencing emotions (e.g., anger, frustration) during practices and/or competition that interfere with performances,” coaches used a 5-point scale that ranged from 1, \textit{not at all likely to refer} to 5, \textit{extremely likely to refer}, to rate their likelihood of referring their athletes. Each issue was treated as a separate dependent variable in the subsequent analyses.

\textit{Interest in Working with a Sport Psychologist}

Developed for this study, these items measured coaches' interest (assuming cost of the services is not an issue) in having a sport psychologist work with: (a) them and their staff; (b) their individual athletes; and (c) their whole team. For each area, coaches responded “YES” or “NO”. If they responded “YES,” they were asked to indicate whether or not they would like to have the sport psychologist work with them (or their athletes, or their teams) in each of the following modalities: (a) consult individually separate from practices/competitions (b) attend practices regularly (c) attend competitions regularly and (d) be available for consultations on an “as needed” basis. If they responded “NO,” that is, they indicated that they do not want a sport psychologist to work with them, their athletes, or their teams, they were asked the following question: “Please list the reasons you would NOT be interested in having a sport psychologist work with you and your coaching staff.”
Intention to Hire a Sport Psychologist

Developed for this study, these items assessed the coaches’ behavioral intention of hiring a sport psychologist to work with coaches, individual athletes, or their whole teams. If the coaches responded “YES” to being interested in having a sport psychologist work with them, their athletes, and/or their teams, they were asked the following question associated with each area: “Do you plan to hire a sport psychologist in the next year” (i.e., YES or NO). If coaches answer “NO”, they were asked “Given your interest in working with a sport psychologist, please tell us the reasons why you do not plan to hire one in the next year.”

Procedure

Once the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research approved the project, the coaches were outreached through email contact. Initially, I contacted (via email and phone) the directors of each state’s high school coaching association to solicit their assistance in distributing information about my study (and the link for the confidential website) to coaches in their state. Many associations reported that they do not provide contact information for their member coaches; other associations did not return messages. There were two state organizations that agreed to provide emails of coaches, one being the Central California High School Coaches Association and the other the Florida High School Coaching Association. Survey participation request emails were sent to all coach emails that were provided. In addition, administrators and coaches from other states were outreached via emails that were collected through referral or through finding emails online on district or
individual high school websites.

In the brief cover letter coaches received, an overview of the study was provided as well as a request for their assistance. Participants were given the URL for the confidential website that hosted the online questionnaire. After clicking the URL in their email, the first page of the website contained the consent form that participants read and then clicked “I agree” to verify their understanding of the voluntary nature of the research study. Participants were then directed to the online survey, which included: the likelihood to refer to a sport psychologist questions, the interest in hiring a sport psychologist questions, intention to hire a sport psychologist questions, and finally the demographics questionnaire. The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Coaches were given the option to request to receive a copy of the aggregate results when the study was completed.

Data Analysis

First, I computed the percentage of missing data, evaluated patterns of missingness, and determined that 80 participants be eliminated because of largely incomplete protocols (Schlomer, Bauman, & Card, 2010). Next, the data were examined prior to running all analyses to examine distributional assumptions, such as skewness, kurtosis, and outliers. No outliers were identified, therefore I determined that no additional cases should be deleted, or transformed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The data were determined to be not normally distributed, however, cell sizes were greater than 30, and thus MANOVA was still determined to be a robust procedure (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).
To examine Hypothesis 1 (likelihood to refer an athlete to a sport psychologist) I used Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) to determine if differences in coaches’ age (i.e., coaches over 30, coaches under 30), sex, and sport coached (i.e., contact sports, non contact sports) were related to their likelihood to refer. The three-way MANOVAs were conducted separately for each set of DVs (i.e., willingness to refer items) and examined the three-way and all two-way interactions as well as the main effects. As needed to address significant findings, univariate ANOVAs were employed.

To examine Hypothesis 2 (coaches’ interest in working with a sport psychologist) I identified the percentages of coaches who reported they were interested in working with a sport psychologist and coaches who reported they were not interested in working with a sport psychologist. A chi-square was used to examine the extent to which coach sex, age (i.e., over 30 & under 30), and type of sport coached (i.e., contact & non-contact) were related to coach interest in working with a sport psychologist. Additionally, for Hypothesis 2, a chi-square test was used to explore the extent to which sex, age, and type of sport coached were related to the modalities (i.e., away from the sport venue, as needed, at practice, and at competitions) that coaches could work with a sport psychologist.

For the final purpose of my study, (reasons coaches do not plan to hire a sport psychologist) I examined coaches’ responses to questions regarding the reasons they did not plan to hire a sport psychologist. I also conducted a content analysis of the free responses to determine the themes regarding why coaches did not plan to hire a sport psychologist. Finally, the responses of coaches who were not interested and did not plan to hire a sport psychologist were also examined.
CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Relationship of Demographic Variables to Willingness to Refer

The proposed 3-way MANOVA (Age X Contact Sport Status X Sex) was unable to be run due to an insufficient “n” for the female contact sport cell. Therefore, two different 2-way MANOVAs (Age X Sex; and Contact Sport Status X Age for just male coaches) were run to examine the relations between these demographic variables (IVs) and the coaches’ willingness to refer to a sport psychologist for the 16 different presenting issues (DVs).

Age X Sex

Results of the first MANOVA examining participants’ age and sex yielded a significant interaction effect on coaches’ willingness to refer to a sport psychologist, Pillai’s Trace = .068, $F(16, 419) = 1.903$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .068$. Follow-up ANOVAs revealed that 15 of the 16 interactions were significant. Willingness to refer an athlete for “loss of confidence or negative emotion during recovery from an injury” varied significantly among coaches, $F(3, 434) = 8.399$, $p < .001$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that the younger female coaches ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.89$) were significantly more likely to refer than older female coaches ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.46$, $d = .61$), older male coaches ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.34$, $d = .94$), and younger male coaches ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.29$, $d = 1.02$); these three groups did not differ significantly from each other.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “family issues” varied significantly among coaches, $F(3, 434) = 5.783$, $p < .01$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger
female coaches ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 1.32$) and older female coaches ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.37$),
who did not differ significantly from each other, were significantly more likely to refer
than younger male coaches ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.12$, $d's = .46$ to .53) and older male
coaches ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.13$, $d's = .38$ to .46), who also did not differ significantly from
each other.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “emotions during practice or competition that
interfere with performance” varied significantly among the coaches, $F(3, 434) = 10.371,$
$p < .001$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger female coaches ($M = 3.77,$
$SD = 1.03$) and older female coaches ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.37$), who did not differ
significantly, were more likely to refer than younger male coaches ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.27,$
$d's = .48$ to .94) and older male coaches ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.35$, $d's = .43$ to .87), who did
not differ significantly.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “peer relationship problems” varied significantly
among the coaches, $F(3, 434) = 5.889$, $p < .01$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that
younger female coaches ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.98$) were significantly more likely to refer
than younger ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.22$, $d = .71$) and older ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.33$, $d = .72$)
male coaches, who did not differ significantly from each other. The older female
coaches ($M = 3.26$, $SD =1.56$) did not differ significantly from any other group.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “performing poorly academically” varied
significantly among the coaches, $F(3, 434) = 7.864$, $p < .001$. Tukey HSD comparisons
indicated that younger female coaches ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.00$) were significantly more
likely to refer than younger male ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.24$, $d = .91$) and older male ($M =
2.72$, $SD = 1.32$, $d = .83$) coaches, who did not differ significantly from each other. The
older female coaches ($M = 3.15, SD = 1.50$) were similar in the strength of their ratings with all other groups.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “communicating poorly with teammates” varied significantly among the coaches, $F(3, 434) = 3.323, p < .05$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger male coaches ($M = 2.58, SD = 1.19$) were significantly less likely to refer than older male coaches ($M = 3.18, SD = 1.40, d = .46$) and older female coaches ($M = 3.23, SD = 1.56, d = .47$), who did not differ from each other. The younger female coaches ($M = 3.23, SD = 1.35$) did not differ significantly from any other group.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “communicating poorly with coaching staff” varied significantly among the coaches, $F(3, 434) = 4.003, p < .01$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger female coaches ($M = 2.97, SD = 1.48$) were more likely to refer than younger male coaches ($M = 2.12, SD = 1.04, d = .67$). The other two coach groups did not differ significantly from each other or the younger female and younger male coaches.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “poor attentional focus” varied significantly among the coaches, $F(3, 434) = 6.420, p < .001$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger female coaches ($M = 3.87, SD = 0.83$ were significantly more likely than younger male coaches ($M = 2.85, SD = 1.24, d = .96$) and older male coaches ($M = 3.02, SD = 1.31, d = .77$), who did not differ significantly, to make such a referral. The older female coaches ($M = 3.30, SD = 1.36$) did not differ significantly from any other group.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “poor leadership” varied significantly among the coaches, $F(3, 434) = 9.335, p < .001$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger
female \((M = 3.54, SD = 1.25)\) and older female \((M = 3.01, SD = 1.35)\) coaches, who did not differ significantly, were more likely than younger male \((M = 2.44, SD = 1.07, d's = .47\) to .95\) and older male \((M = 2.56, SD = 1.26, d's = .35\) to .78\) coaches, who did not differ significantly, to make this referral.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “difficulty learning or executing new skills or plays” varied significantly among the coaches, \(F(3, 434) = 4.071, p < .01\). Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger female coaches \((M = 3.10, SD = 1.41)\) were more significantly likely to make this referral than older male coaches \((M = 2.52, SD = 1.24, d = .44)\). No other between group comparisons were significant.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “physical over arousal prior to competition” varied significantly among the coaches, \(F(3, 434) = 6.491, p < .001\). Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger female coaches \((M = 4.03, SD = .932)\) were significantly more likely than younger male coaches \((M = 3.12, SD = .1.23, d = .83)\) and older male coaches \((M = 3.44, SD = .1.18, d = .55)\), who did not differ significantly, to make this referral. Older female coaches \((M = 3.80, SD = 1.28)\) differed significantly only from younger male coaches \((d = .54)\).

Willingness to refer an athlete for “performing or practicing inconsistently” varied significantly among the coaches, \(F(3, 434) = 5.094, p < .01\). Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger female \((M = 3.95, SD = .944)\) and older female \((M = 3.85, SD = 1.29)\) coaches, who did not differ significantly, were more likely to refer than younger male coaches \((M = 3.17, SD = 1.32, d's = .52\) to .68\). Older male coaches \((M = 3.85, SD = 1.294)\) did not differ significantly from any other group.
Willingness to refer an athlete for “lack of motivation or competitive drive” varied significantly among the coaches, $F(3, 434) = 5.336$, $p < .01$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger female coaches ($M = 3.36, SD = 1.11$) were significantly more likely to refer than both younger male coaches ($M = 2.49, SD = .119, d = .75$) and older male coaches ($M = 2.57, SD = .080, d = .66$), who did not differ significantly. Older female coaches ($M = 2.86, SD = 1.357$) scored similarly to the other three groups.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “cognitive anxiety prior to or during competition” varied significantly among the coaches, $F(3, 434) = 5.011$, $p < .01$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger male coaches ($M = 2.10, SD = 1.17$) were less likely to refer than younger female coaches ($M = 3.15, SD = 1.31, d = .85$) and older male coaches ($M = 2.64, SD = .140, d = .42$), who did not differ significantly. Older female coaches ($M = 2.53, SD = 1.33$) scored similarly to all three other groups.

Willingness to refer an athlete for “not setting or ineffectively setting goals” varied significantly among the coaches, $F(3, 434) = 7.074$, $p < .001$. Tukey HSD comparisons indicated that younger female ($M = 4.28, SD = .724$) and older female ($M = 4.00, SD = 1.11$) coaches, who did not differ significantly, were more likely to refer than both younger male coaches ($M = 3.46, SD = .141, d's = .42 to .73$) and older male coaches ($M = 3.54, SD = 1.22, d's = .40 to .74$), who scored similarly to each other.

The only presenting concern that was not significantly different among coaches was “using or abusing substances” ($F(3, 434) = 2.304, p = .076$).

**Age X Contact Sport Status**

The second MANOVA examining the male coaches’ age and contact sport status
(i.e., contact vs. non-contact sport) yielded a significant main effect for contact sport status, Pillai’s Trace = .172, \( F(16, 300) = 3.896, p < .001, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .172; \) neither the main effect for age, Pillai’s Trace = .079, \( F(16, 300) = 1.613, p = .064, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .079, \) nor the interaction, Pillai’s Trace = .078, \( F(16, 300) = 1.578, p = .074, \) partial \( \eta^2 = .078, \) were significant. Examination of the Univariate ANOVAs revealed that the male coaches of non-contact sports were significantly more willing than the male coaches of contact sports to refer their athletes to a sport psychologist for all 16 presenting issues. Means, standard deviations and F-values are presented in Table 2.

Coach Interest in Hiring a Sport Psychologist

**Overall Interest**

Significantly more coaches indicated that they were interested, than not, in hiring a sport psychologist to work with (a) them or their coaching staff (Yes = 77.3\% \( [n = 348]; \) No = 22.7 \% \( [n = 102]; \) \( \chi^2 (1, n = 450) = 134.48, p < .001), (b) individual athletes on their team (Yes = 83.4\% \( [n = 372]; \) No = 16.6\% \( [n = 74]; \) \( \chi^2 (1, n = 446) = 199.11, p < .001), and (c) their whole team (Yes = 78.9\% \( [n = 348]; \) No = 21.1\% \( [n = 93]; \) \( \chi^2 (1, n = 441) = 147.45, p < .001). Given that the coaches were significantly more interested in hiring a sport psychologist than not, I ran chi-square tests to examine the potential relationship between coach demographic characteristics (i.e., coach age, coach sex, contact or non-contact sport coached) and their interest.

**Coach Age and Interest**

The relations between coach age (30 and under vs. 31 and older) and interest in
hiring a sport psychologist were not significant with respect to working with (a) them and their coaching staff, $\chi^2 (1, n = 444) = 1.33, p = .249$, (b) individual athletes on the team, $\chi^2 (1, n = 442) = .002, p = .963$, and (c) the entire team $\chi^2 (1, n = 437) = 2.573, p = .109$. Regardless of age, coaches were more interested, than not, in hiring a sport psychologist to work with them, their athletes, and their teams.

**Coach Sex and Interest**

The relations between coach sex and hiring a sport psychologist were not significant with respect to working with (a) them or their coaching staff, $\chi^2 (1, n = 438) = .080, p = .777$, (b) individual athletes in their team, $\chi^2 (1, n = 436) = .456, p = .499$, or (c) working with the entire team, $\chi^2 (1, n = 431) = 1.04, p = .308$. Regardless of the coaches’ sex, they were more interested, than not, in hiring a sport psychologist to work with them, their athletes, and their teams.

**Coach Contact Sport Status and Interest**

The relations between type of sport coached (contact vs. non-contact) and hiring a sport psychologist were significant for all three contexts assessed. A significantly larger percentage of non-contact coaches (Yes = 79% [n = 275]; No = 57.8% [n = 59]) reported interest in hiring a sport psychologist to work with the coaching staff than contact sport coaches (Yes = 21% [n = 73]; No = 42.2% [n = 43], $\chi^2 (1, n = 450) = 18.49, p < .001$).

Similarly, a significantly larger percentage of non-contact coaches (Yes = 78.8% [n = 293]; No = 50% [n = 37]) reported interest in hiring a sport psychologist to work with
individual athletes on their team than contact sport coaches (Yes = 21.2% \(n = 79\); No = 50% \(n = 37\), \(\chi^2(1, n = 446) = 26.54, p < .001\)).

Finally, a significantly larger percentage of non-contact coaches (Yes = 79% \(n = 275\); No = 56% \(n = 52\)) reported interest in hiring a sport psychologist to work with their entire team than contact sport coaches (Yes = 21% \(n = 73\); No = 44% \(n = 41\), \(\chi^2(1, n = 441) = 20.45, p < .001\)). In sum, a larger percentage of non-contact sport coaches reported being interested in working with a sport psychologist than coaches of contact sports in all three contexts.

Coach Interest in Various Consultation Settings

**Overall Consultation Setting**

The majority of coaches surveyed indicated that they wanted to work with a sport psychologist in multiple consultation settings, including: individually and separate from practice or competition (Yes = 90.8% \(n = 316\); No = 9.2% \(n = 32\), \(\chi^2(1, n = 348) = 231.77, p < .001\)), at practices regularly (Yes = 62% \(n = 216\); No = 38% \(n = 132\), \(\chi^2(1, n = 348) = 20.276, p < .001\)), at competitions regularly (Yes = 62% \(n = 216\); No = 38% \(n = 132\), \(\chi^2(1, n = 348) = 20.276, p < .001\)), and on an as needed basis (Yes = 97.7% \(n = 340\); No = 2.3% \(n = 8\), \(\chi^2(1, n = 348) = 316.736, p < .001\)). Given that the coaches were significantly more interested in working with a sport psychologist than not, I ran chi-square tests to examine the potential relationship between coach demographic characteristics (i.e., coach age, coach sex, contact or non-contact sport coached) and coach interest in working with a sport psychologist in each setting (i.e., individually.
separate from practice or competition, during practice regularly, during competitions regularly, and being available as needed).

**Coach Age**

Coach age (30 and Younger vs. 31 and Older) was not related significantly to whether or not the coaches wanted a sport psychologist to work with them (a) individually separate from practice or competition, \(\chi^2 (1, n = 345) = .220, p = .639\), (b) at practices regularly, \(\chi^2 (1, n = 345) = .875, p = .350\), (c) at competitions regularly, \(\chi^2 (1, n = 345) = .017, p = .898\), or (d) on an “as needed” basis for consultation, \(\chi^2 (1, n = 348) = 4.161, p = .041\). Regardless of age, coaches were more interested, than not, in having a sport psychologist work with them in these various ways.

**Coach Sex**

Coach sex (Male vs. Female) was not related significantly to whether or not the coaches wanted a sport psychologist to work with them (a) individually separate from practice or competition, \(\chi^2 (1, n = 339) = 2.043, p = .153\), (b) at practices regularly, \(\chi^2 (1, n = 339) = .446, p = .504\), (c) at competitions regularly, \(\chi^2 (1, n = 339) = .118, p = .731\), or (d) on an “as needed” basis for consultation, \(\chi^2 (1, n = 339) = .014, p = .905\). Regardless of the coaches’ sex, they were more interested, than not, in having a sport psychologist work with them in these various ways.

**Coach Contact Sport Status**

Coach sport status (Contact vs. Non-Contact) was not related significantly to
whether or not the coaches wanted a sport psychologist to work with them (a) individually separate from practice or competition, $\chi^2 (1, n = 348) = .344, p = .557$, (b) at practices regularly, $\chi^2 (1, n = 348) = .035, p = .852$, (c) at competitions regularly, $\chi^2 (1, n = 348) = .007, p = .933$, or (d) on an “as needed” basis for consultation, $\chi^2 (1, n = 348) = 4.161, p = .041$. Regardless of contact sport status, coaches were more interested, than not, in having a sport psychologist work with them in these various ways.

**Coach Intention to Hire a Sport Psychologist in the Next Year**

When asked about their intention to hire a sport psychologist in the next year, the majority of coaches stated that, despite their interests, they were not planning to do so to: (a) work with coaches (No = 94.7% [n = 325]; Yes = 5.3% [n = 24], $\chi^2 (1, n = 349) = 259.602, p < .001$), (b) work with individual athletes (No = 93.8% (n = 345) Yes = 6.2% [n = 28]; $\chi^2 (1, n = 373) = 269.408, p < .001$), or (c) work with the entire team (No = 93.8% [n = 324] Yes = 6.2% [n = 28]; $\chi^2 (1, n = 352) = 248.909, p < .001$).

**Interest, No Intention**

The coaches who reported that they were interested in hiring a sport psychologist, but had no intention to do so in the next year, were also asked about the reasons they did not plan to hire. Coaches reported their decisions to not hire a sport psychologists to work with their coaches ($N = 325$) were due to cost (71.7% [n = 233]), not being in a position to hire (65.2% [n = 212]), lack of availability of a sport psychologist (17.8% [n =58]), and inconvenience (4.3% [n = 14]).
Participants interested but not planning to hire a sport psychologist to work with individual athletes on their team ($N = 345$) reported it was due to cost (68.9% [$n = 238$]), not being in a position to hire (62.9% [$n = 217$]), availability (15.7% [$n = 54$]), and inconvenience (6% [$n = 21$]).

Similarly, interested coaches reported they did not plan to hire a sport psychologist to work with their entire teams ($N = 324$) due to: cost (70.3% [$n = 228$]), not being in position to hire (62.3% [$n = 202$]), availability (16% [$n = 52$]), and inconvenience (8% [$n = 26$]).

In addition, coaches who were interested in working with a sport psychologist, but not planning to hire one, were asked to provide free responses regarding the reasons why they did not plan to hire. A content analysis was conducted on the coaches’ free responses to determine possible themes in their answering patterns. Five major themes were identified: hiring cost, coach lack of authority to hire, coach existing knowledge of sport psychology, coach unsure how to hire, and coach in need of more information.

The theme of ‘hiring cost’ included responses directed at the presumed high cost associated with hiring a sport psychologist. Responses included: “We don’t have a budget for that,” “Cost,” and “No resources”. Although coaches had previously been given the option to choose “Cost” as a reason for not hiring, a few coaches found this theme to be important enough to also include it as a free response.

The ‘coach lack of authority to hire’ theme represented the idea that coaches often do not have the authority within their respective organization (school, district, etc.) to make hiring decisions. These responses included statements such as: “I don’t do the
hiring,” “AD won’t support,” and “I am not authorized to hire staff.” These free responses were also previous options in the questionnaire (“Not Being in a Position to Hire”), and similarly appear to be important enough for coaches to also include as a reason in their free responses.

The ‘coach existing knowledge of sport psychology’ theme represented responses that indicated a coach’s belief that he or she already possessed the knowledge needed to provide sport psychology consultation services. Reasons such as: “I have a degree in sport psychology,” “I already know it,” and “I have coached for 30 years, I’m not being arrogant, but I basically have more experience dealing with high school athletes” were typical. These responses appear to indicate that although many coaches have interest in sport psychology, some of them believe they are capable of providing sport psychology services on their own due to existing knowledge they have on the topic.

The ‘coach unsure how to hire’ theme describes responses that expressed confusion or a lack of awareness regarding how they would go about hiring a sport psychologist. The theme was represented by responses such as: “I don’t know how to find a sport psychologist,” “If in my area, I don’t know about him/her,” and “How do I hire one.” These free responses suggest that although some coaches have an interest in sport psychology, they are unaware of the steps that they would need to take to connect either themselves or their teams with a sport psychologist.

Finally, the ‘coach in need of more information’ theme represented comments reflecting comments that indicated coaches needed or wanted more information about sport psychology consultation prior to making any decisions regarding the topic. This
theme included responses such as: “Need more information,” “More information would be required,” and “Unsure of how we would use a sport psychologist”. These responses suggest that although coaches have an interest in sport psychology, they are in need of more information, perhaps outreach, in order to make an informed decision regarding hiring a sport psychologist.

**Not Interested**

The coaches who were not interested in working with a sport psychologist also provided reasons for their lack of interest. The most frequently cited reason for not being interesting in having a sport psychologist work with their coaching staff \((N = 102)\) was lack of interest \((41.2\%, [n = 42])\), followed by not seeing a benefit \((24.5\%, [n = 24])\), not in a position to hire \((23.5\%, [n = 24])\), cost \((17.6\%, [n = 18])\), and lack of availability \((8.8\%, [n = 9])\). The most frequently cited reason for coaches not wanting a sport psychologist to work with individual athletes on their team \((N = 74)\) was lack of interest \((35.1\%, [n = 26])\), followed by not seeing a benefit \((32.4\%, [n = 24])\), not in position to hire \((25.7\%, [n = 19])\), cost \((13.5\%, [n = 10])\), and lack of availability \((8.1\%, [N = 6])\). Regarding having a sport psychologist work with their teams \((N = 93)\), the most frequently cited reason for their disinterest was not seeing a benefit \((33.3\%, [n = 31])\), followed by lack of interest \((26.9\%, [n = 25])\), not in position to hire \((26.3\%, [n = 25])\), cost \((18.3\%, [n = 17])\), and not available \((9.7\%, [n = 9])\).
CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was threefold. First, I examined high school coaches’ likelihood to refer an athlete to a sport psychologist across a variety of typical performance and interpersonally-related situations. Second, I determined their interest in working with a sport psychologist for (a) the coaching staff, (b) individual athletes on their team, and (c) their whole team as well as their interest in working with a sport psychologist in multiple settings (i.e., individually separate from practice or competition, at practices regularly, at competitions regularly, and as needed). Third, I determined the coaches’ intention to hire a sport psychologist to work with (a) the coaching staff, (b) individual athletes on their team, and (c) their entire team. High school coaches from across the United States were surveyed via an online questionnaire on these topics. I also examined how coach demographics (e.g., sex, age) were related to the coaches’ likelihood to refer to, be interested in working with, and hire a sport psychologist.

Coach Interest in Working with and Hiring a Sport Psychologist

Significantly more coaches were interested, than not, in wanting a sport psychologist to work with them individually and separate from practice or competition (90.8%), at practices regularly (62%), (c) at competitions regularly (62%), and (d) being available as needed (97.7%). Further, the majority of the coaches indicated that they wanted to hire a sport psychologist to work with (a) them or their coaching staff (77.3%), (b) individual athletes on their team (83.4%), and (c) their whole team (78.9%). The coaches’ interest in working with and hiring a sport psychologist did not vary
significantly by their age or sex, though whether they coached a contact sport did seem to matter with respect to hiring. A larger percentage of non-contact sport coaches reported being interested in hiring a sport psychologist than coaches of contact sports in all three contexts (i.e., with them or their coaching staff, with individual athletes on their team, and with their whole team). The reason for this difference may be due to the coaches’ own past experiences with a sport psychologist (or sport psychology). For example, coaches from non-contact sports may have had more opportunities in their own athletic career, through college coursework, or within their own sports’ governing bodies to be exposed to sport psychology. Previous studies have suggested that athletes’ and coaches’ openness to mental skills training may be increased with more frequent exposure to sport psychology concepts or a sport psychologist (Martin, 2005; Wrisberg et al., 2009; Wrisberg et al., 2010). For example, Wrisberg and colleagues (2010) found that coaches with more than five previous meetings with a sport psychology consultant rated their interest as more “favorable” than coaches with less than five previous exposures. It seems possible that through previous exposure, non-contact coaches may have a more positive attitude and more openness towards sport psychology consultation. On the flip side, coaches of contact sports may simply have had fewer opportunities to work with a sport psychologist, or had sport psychology talked about in relation to their sports. As a result, contact sport coaches may not view sport psychology as relevant as other areas of training, such as strength and conditioning.

In a recent survey of 815 NCAA D-I coaches (n = 447 men and 368 women), 84.5% and 77.8%, respectively, rated their interest as “favorable” with regards to having
a sport psychologist available to their team and adding a sport psychologist to the full-
time athletic department staff (Wrisberg et al., 2010). College coaches also reported
that they were “favorable” of using sport psychology consultants for both performance
consulting (88.8%) and for personal counseling (77.5%). Additionally, Wrisberg and
colleagues (2010) found that coaches showed even higher levels of support for using a
sport psychologist if other conference (88.8%) and NCAA (89.9) schools were doing so.
These findings suggest that, overall, coaches (at both the high school and college level)
are positively inclined toward sport psychology and see a benefit in having a sport
psychologist in their employ.

Coaches’ Willingness to Refer to a Sport Psychologist

Despite the generally favorable view of working with a sport psychologist,
coaches did vary in their willingness to refer an athlete for assistance for specific referral
issues. Across 14 of the 16 situations, such as ‘poor attentional focus’ and ‘family
issues’, younger female coaches were significantly more likely to refer their athletes to a
sport psychologist than male coaches (younger male coaches in 15 situations, and
older coaches in 11). Older female coaches’ referral ratings were similar to the younger
female coaches on 15 of the 16 situations and they were significantly more likely to refer
an athlete to a sport psychologist than male coaches on eight of 16 issues. Of the 16
referral issues, the 5 highest rated issues included referring athletes for ineffective goal
setting, loss of confidence due to injury, physical over arousal, performing or practicing
inconsistently, and poor attentional focus.
Thus, with few exceptions, the female coaches were more open to referring athletes to sport psychologists across a wide-range of personal and performance issues than were the male coaches. Female coaches and athletes have been found to feel less stigma towards help-seeking behaviors (and sport psychology consultation in general) than male coaches and athletes (Martin, 2005; Vogal et al., 2007; Wrisberg et al., 2009; Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). For example, Wrisberg and colleagues (2009) surveyed 2,440 NCAA Division-I athletes ($n = 592$ men and $1848$ women) and found that a significantly higher percentage of female athletes than male athletes rated as “high” their willingness to seek mental training for a variety of issues. Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007) found similar results in their study of 373 collegiate coaches ($n = 278$ men and $74$ women), in which female coaches were found to have less stigma toward sport psychology consultation and were more open and willing to work with sport psychology consultants than men. If female coaches generally do not perceive seeking psychological assistance as being negative or stigmatizing, and possibly see it as potentially beneficial, it makes sense that they would be open to referring someone else for such services and would have higher referral scores than a group who stigmatizes psychological treatment.

Previous studies have suggested that gender role socialization impacts individual’s attitudes towards help-seeking behaviors (Vogal et al., 2007). It is plausible that male coaches often buy into “macho” gender role socialization, which can contribute to the stigma they may place on sport psychology consultation (Martin, 2005). Contact sport culture may also be more closed off to outsiders, which would potentially result in coaches being less likely to include an outsider (i.e., a sport psychologist) into their inner circle. Additionally, the value they place on the use of a sport psychologist
may also play a role on their willingness to refer. Previous research (Wrisberg et al., 2010) has shown that coaches with prior exposure to sport psychology consultation are more willing to make referrals. It follows that male high school coaches with little to no previous exposure to sport psychology may not be as willing to refer as female coaches, who have been shown to be more open (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007), and as a result may have had more previous exposure. Another plausible explanation male coaches are less likely to refer could be that, due to a lack of understanding of sport psychology, they fear that sport psychology will not work or could lead to decreases in performance as a result of athletes thinking too much (Haslam, 2004). Although stigma may be the primary reason for male coaches’ lowered referral rates, these other explanations also may be at work.

With regard to age, older coaches had statistically similar likelihood ratings to younger coaches of the same sex on most items (15 of 16 for female coaches, and 15 of 16 for male coaches). This finding is contradictory to previous research regarding age and stigma/help-seeking behaviors, which suggests that younger people tend to view consulting with a sport psychologist as more stigmatizing, and therefore tend to be less willing to work with a sport psychology consultant (Martin, 2005; Wrisberg et al., 2009; Zakrajsek et al., 2011). For example, Zakrajsek and colleagues (2011) surveyed 235 male high school coaches and found that coaches under 30 reported higher stigma towards sport psychology consultation and were less willing to work with a sport psychology consultant than coaches over 30. Amongst male and female high school coaches, it may be that their sex (male vs. female) is more influential in how they view such referral options than their age. Gender role socialization has been shown to have
an impact on help-seeking behaviors (Vogal et al., 2007) and is likely to be at play with regard to why the sex of a coach appears to be an important factor with regard to high school coaches’ views of sport psychology. Women may also be more willing to admit they need help, which results in them being more willing to refer one of their athletes to a sport psychologist when they feel they cannot provide the assistance they may need. Traditional gender roles lead society to consider help-seeking as something that men are not supposed to need, and therefore contributes to the stigma they perceive is placed on such behaviors. Male coaches are not immune this phenomenon, and it appears that it plays a role in how they view the process of referring an athlete to a sport psychologist.

There was one referral issue that was rated statistically similarly by all coaches: using or abusing drugs. The fact that all coaches rated this item in a similar manner (mean ratings ranged from 2.83 to 3.44) suggests that not only male and female, but also younger and older, coaches were in agreement on their willingness to refer for this issue. Drug and alcohol abuse may be an issue that high school coaches are keenly aware of, due to the nature of experimentation and risk-taking behaviors that adolescents often engage in. High school coaches may agree on the importance of this issue due to what is at stake for the athletes who may be engaging in such risky behaviors.

Contact sport status was related significantly to referral ratings. Specifically, non-contact sport coaches were significantly more willing than contact sport coaches to refer their athletes for all 16 presenting issues (only male coaches were examined due to a lack of female contact sport coaches). Researchers (Martin, 2005; Vogal et al., 2007)
have found that contact sport participants tend to be more stigmatizing of sport psychology consultation than non-contact participants, and therefore are less likely to engage in the help-seeking behavior of working with a sport psychologist. Within the culture of a contact sport accepting pain and injury and being strong and independent are valued and likely dissuade athletes from seeking assistance from others, such as a sport psychologist (Martin, 2005). Consistent with these values, contact sport coaches might perceive seeking help as a sign of weakness, resulting in them being less likely to refer one of their athletes to a sport psychologist regardless of the issue. It also may be that contact sport coaches believe they (or their athletes) can handle such issues themselves and do not need the assistance from someone outside of their immediate coaching/training staff. Thus, contact sport athletes may experience more internal and external barriers to seeking help from a sport psychologist across a wide range of issues related to their sport performances.

Overall, the five highest rated referral issues included referring athletes for ineffective goal setting, loss of confidence due to injury, physical over arousal, performing or practicing inconsistently, and poor attentional focus. These issues scores averaged from 3.13 to 3.68 on a 5-point scale, indicating that coaches are highly likely to refer their athletes for certain issues that appear to be related to enhancing an athlete’s ability to perform.

Coach Intention to Hire a Sport Psychologist in Next Year

Regardless of coaches’ stated interest, almost none reported planning to hire a sport psychologist in the next year. These findings were consistent across all three
modalities in which a coach might work with a sport psychologist (i.e., with coaches, with individual athletes, or with the entire team).

Coaches most frequently endorsed ‘cost’ as the reason why they would not hire a sport psychologist. Frequent referencing of cost suggests that the financial component of working with a sport psychologist is an important factor in coaches’ hiring decision, regardless of their interest in doing so. What is not clear is if the coaches’ reason is based on an objective understanding of how much it might cost them to actually work with a sport psychologist, or if they simply believe it would be cost prohibitive. Previous researchers have suggested that offering services with varying price options and time commitments may help to potentially increase coaches’ perceptions of their control in accessing and using sport psychology consultation (Zakrajsek et al., 2011). Thus, it may be important for sport psychologists to educate coaches about their fees, but more importantly, how the financial costs would be made up for by the value provided by the sport psychologists work with them, their teams, and their individual athletes. If coaches believe a service can help them have a more successful team, they are going to be more willing to pay for it.

The next most frequently endorsed reason for not planning to hire was ‘not being in a position to hire.’ Many high school coaches do not have authority to make personnel hires themselves, of coaches or other athletic department staff, which may be a barrier for them gaining access to a sport psychologist to work with their teams. As mentioned previously, some coaches may not yet see the “value” inherent in having a sport psychologist work with them and their athletes, and thus may not advocate to administrators for hiring such a professional. For example, some coaches have reported
difficulty with measuring the performance benefits of sport psychology (Pain & Harwood, 2004), and may fear that sport psychology might not work and lead to a decrease in performance due to the athletes thinking too much during the game (Haslam, 2004). In order for coaches to advocate for the hiring of a sport psychologist, they must first value the service.

The next most frequently endorsed reason for not hiring a sport psychologist was ‘lack of availability,’ which suggests that either there are not viable sport psychologists in their area or coaches are unaware of where (and how) to locate sport psychologists. Lack of available sport psychologists may in fact be an issue for some coaches in rural or remote areas, yet 79% of the United States population lives within an urban area (census.gov). There are over 300 AASP certified sport psychology consultants located in the United States and Canada, most of which are in or around major metropolitan areas (appliedsportpsych.org, n.d.). As a result, many high schools may be within workable geographic distances of sport psychologists. If so, it primarily may be a lack of knowledge on the part of the consumer as to where to find a sport psychologist for themselves and their programs. Thus, it is important for professional organizations, such as AASP, to be active in marketing and outreach across the country in order to educate coaches and administrators and increase awareness about the availability and credentials of competent sport psychology professionals. Conferences and workshops have been identified by coaches to be a common way to gather new information about their sports (Read, Rodgers, & Hall, 2008). Perhaps conferences and workshops are a starting point for professional organizations to focus marketing and outreach programs.
Another, albeit infrequently endorsed, reason coaches rated was ‘inconvenience,’ which suggests that when coaches do a cost-benefit analysis of locating and hiring a sport psychologist and the time commitment of themselves and their athletes, the costs appear to outweigh the benefits and overall it may be viewed as simply inconvenient to do. Coaches often have limited times for practice and contact with their athletes due to interscholastic rules and/or regulations, and they may assume that working with a sport psychologist would take away from this time. Additionally, some coaches may be unaware of the steps they need to take to contact or connect with a sport psychologist—or may need more information before making a decision to do so. The theory of planned behavior suggests that perceived behavioral control influences an individual’s decision to carry out an intended behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Helping coaches understand the logistics (in turn, increasing their behavioral control) of working with a sport psychologist is important for these professionals to consider when finding the best way to deliver their services to coaches who are interested in working with them. Exploring the best possible management of time seems to be an important aspect of the planning phase when seeking to provide services to high school coaches.

Coaches also reported having sufficient knowledge of sport psychology and believing they could provide services on their own. Many coaches, through their experiences and education, understand the importance of the mental side of training and performance, and these coaches already may be incorporating mental skills training into their practices. For these coaches, there may be less of a need for working with a sport psychologist directly, but perhaps they could benefit from articles and videos about sport psychology topics. Educating coaches through these means will be
an important way for sport psychologists to spread the word about how mental skills play a role in performance success and how coaches can integrate such skills into preparing their athletes.

Limitations

The findings represented in this study must be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, although there was a relatively large sample ($N = 450$), it is limited with respect to race/ethnicity and type of sport coached. Thus, results should be applied to only coaches of similar demographics. Future researchers should attempt to target a more diverse population of coaches. Second, although I attempted to get coaches from across different regions of the U.S., the result was a sample of convenience. Targeting a broader population of coaches, perhaps in attendance at a national coaching convention, may help to achieve a more representative sample of participants. Third, 80 participants were dropped from the study due to mostly incomplete questionnaires. It is unclear if these participants were meaningfully different from those who completed the study and would have provided different types of responses to the items. In future studies, researchers might present the surveys to coaches in person, for example, by attending a national coaching conference, coaches’ meetings at school, in a computer lab, etc., to help minimize attrition. Fourth, the data collected in this study was self-report. Coaches’ reports were based on hypothetical situations, and perhaps future studies could survey coaches who actually have the option of referring to or hiring a sport psychologist. Fifth, when sex differences were examined amongst coaches, the constructs of gender-role identity (i.e., masculinity, femininity, androgony) were not
measured. Future research may choose to examine how these gender roles may influence coaches’ views of sport psychology. Finally, coaches’ scores on various measures of stigma or their past experiences with sport psychology were not used in the analysis of the data. Adding additional measures of these areas could add to the depth of understanding of why coaches responded in the ways that they did.

Future Research

The findings of the current study suggest that most high school coaches are interested in working with and hiring a sport psychologist, though there were some differences in the coaches’ likelihood to refer their athletes for assistance on a broad range of issues and only very few reported planning to hire a sport psychologist. Thus, a next step for researchers would be to examine how to translate interest into actual hiring, such as what marketing messages might best educate coaches about the value of sport psychology and increase their likelihood of adding a sport psychologist onto their staff. Further, through qualitative methodologies, researchers could examine in more depth the reasons why coaches do not intend to hire. Research examining the cost of sport psychology consultation may also help to provide valuable data on the topic of increasing the usage of sport psychology consultation. Additionally, examining how to make coaches who tend to show less interest (i.e., contact sport coaches) become more interested in (and accepting of) sport psychology services may also provide valuable information for the growth of the field. For example, a study that first provides coaches with skill-specific seminars focused on developing certain mental skills, and collects pre and post-training measurements of coaches’ likelihood or stigma
scores could provide data on the effectiveness of such seminars. Similarly, research focusing on whether or not coaches who show less interest are primarily impacted by negative stigma, or some other potential reasons, can help to inform the field regarding this population. The use of programs designed to increase public knowledge and awareness of the many benefits of sport psychology services can potentially help to decrease negative stigma and increase interest in the field. Public campaigns have been used by other mental and behavioral health organizations, and could perhaps work as models for the development of sport psychology specific community outreach programing (nimh.nih.gov, n.d.).

Implications for Practice

Overall, the results of this study provide support for the need of sport psychologists to educate high school coaches about their availability and what they do. National professional organizations (i.e., AASP, APA Division 47) have promoted community education regarding sport psychology in the past. For example, guidelines for how to hire a sport psychologist have been distributed at national conferences with the hope of providing quick and easy outlines for potential clients. It appears that there continues to be a need for such outreach programming. High school coaches appear to be interested in working with a sport psychologist, yet there remains an unfortunately large gap between interest and actual action (i.e., hiring). Such programs have been developed for mental health outreach in the community (i.e., National Institute of Mental Health Outreach Partnership Program) and could be followed as models when seeking to increase the public’s access and understanding of sport psychology consultation.
Suggestions for how to develop sport psychology outreach programs are listed below.

For example, sport psychologists may target male coaches (in particular those of contact sports) to educate them about the value of their services and how sport psychology can be easily integrated into their training and create an ongoing dialogue about sport training and high level performance. Such efforts, including putting a “face” to sport psychology, may reduce the possible negative stigma they have toward the field in general and seeking help in particular.

Overall, it appears that strong interest in sport psychology exists for high school coaches (regardless of their sex, age, or the setting in which services are delivered). This interest suggests that sport psychologists may want to work with high school coaches to help them overcome the barriers that exist to them actually hiring a sport psychologist to work with them and their teams. This study suggests that the major barrier that lies between coaches’ interest in working with a sport psychologist and the actual plan do so is resource based. Therefore, availability of resources is an important factor for consultants to consider when planning outreach programs. Although coaches are an important audience for potential sport psychology consultants to reach, it appears necessary for messages about the benefits of sport psychology consultation to reach people in financial decision making positions. In particular, athletic directors and athletic booster organizations may be target audiences. The actual cost of sport psychology consultation may not be known by coaches or administrators, and thus it seems to be an important aspect of outreach for sport psychologists to consider. In
addition, offering pro bono programming may be a convenient and affordable way for sport psychologists to help educate the public about the benefits of sport psychology.
**Table 1**

*Means and Standard Deviations of Age X Sex ANOVAs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Younger Female Coaches (n = 39)</th>
<th>Older Female Coaches (n = 80)</th>
<th>Younger Male Coaches (n = 59)</th>
<th>Older Male Coaches (n = 260)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Partial $\eta^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of confidence-injury</td>
<td>4.05$^{a}$ (.887)</td>
<td>3.31$^{b}$ (1.46)</td>
<td>2.92$^{b}$ (1.29)</td>
<td>2.98$^{b}$ (1.34)</td>
<td>8.399***</td>
<td>.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family issues</td>
<td>2.82$^{a}$ (1.32)</td>
<td>2.75$^{a}$ (1.37)</td>
<td>2.17$^{b}$ (1.12)</td>
<td>2.26$^{b}$ (1.13)</td>
<td>5.783**</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions during practice</td>
<td>3.77$^{a}$ (1.04)</td>
<td>3.31$^{a}$ (1.37)</td>
<td>2.68$^{b}$ (1.27)</td>
<td>2.72$^{b}$ (1.35)</td>
<td>10.371**</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer relationship problems</td>
<td>3.67$^{a}$ (.982)</td>
<td>3.26$^{a,b}$ (1.56)</td>
<td>2.88$^{b,c}$ (1.22)</td>
<td>2.83$^{b,c}$ (1.33)</td>
<td>5.889**</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing poorly academics</td>
<td>3.69$^{a}$ (1.00)</td>
<td>3.15$^{a,b}$ (1.50)</td>
<td>2.66$^{b,c}$ (1.24)</td>
<td>3.15$^{b,c}$ (1.50)</td>
<td>7.864***</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate poorly w/ teammates</td>
<td>3.23$^{a,b,c}$ (1.35)</td>
<td>3.23$^{a,b}$ (1.57)</td>
<td>2.58$^{c}$ (1.19)</td>
<td>3.18$^{a,b}$ (1.40)</td>
<td>3.323*</td>
<td>.022</td>
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<td>Communicate poorly w/ coach</td>
<td>2.97$^{a}$ (1.48)</td>
<td>2.69$^{a,b}$ (1.41)</td>
<td>2.12$^{b,c}$ (1.04)</td>
<td>2.44$^{a,b,c}$ (1.33)</td>
<td>4.003**</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor attentional focus</td>
<td>3.87$^{a}$ (.833)</td>
<td>3.30$^{a,b}$ (1.36)</td>
<td>2.85$^{b,c}$ (1.24)</td>
<td>3.02$^{b,c}$ (1.31)</td>
<td>6.420***</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor leadership</td>
<td>3.54$^{a}$ (1.25)</td>
<td>3.01$^{a}$ (1.35)</td>
<td>2.44$^{b}$ (1.07)</td>
<td>2.56$^{b}$ (1.26)</td>
<td>9.335***</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty learning new skills/plays</td>
<td>3.10$^{a}$ (1.41)</td>
<td>2.90$^{a,b}$ (1.30)</td>
<td>2.46$^{a,b,c}$ (1.13)</td>
<td>2.52$^{b,c}$ (1.24)</td>
<td>4.071**</td>
<td>.027</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical over arousal</td>
<td>4.03$^{a}$ (.932)</td>
<td>3.80$^{a,b}$ (1.28)</td>
<td>3.12$^{c}$ (1.23)</td>
<td>3.44$^{b,c}$ (1.18)</td>
<td>6.491***</td>
<td>.043</td>
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</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 1 (continued).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Younger Female Coaches</th>
<th>Older Female Coaches</th>
<th>Younger Male Coaches</th>
<th>Older Male Coaches</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Partial $\eta^2$</th>
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<tr>
<td>Performing inconsistently</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.95$^{a,b}$ (.944)</td>
<td>3.85$^{a,b}$ (1.29)</td>
<td>3.17$^c$ (1.32)</td>
<td>3.46$^{b,c}$ (1.27)</td>
<td>5.094**</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation or competitive drive</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.36$^a$ (1.11)</td>
<td>2.86$^{a,b}$ (1.36)</td>
<td>2.49$^{b,c}$ (1.19)</td>
<td>2.57$^{b,c}$ (1.29)</td>
<td>5.336**</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive anxiety</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.15$^a$ (1.30)</td>
<td>2.53$^{a,b}$ (1.33)</td>
<td>2.10$^b$ (1.17)</td>
<td>2.64$^a$ (1.40)</td>
<td>5.011**</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective goal setting</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.28$^a$ (.724)</td>
<td>4.00$^a$ (1.11)</td>
<td>3.46$^b$ (1.42)</td>
<td>3.54$^b$ (1.22)</td>
<td>7.074***</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using or abusing substances</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td>M, (SD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.44 (1.41)</td>
<td>3.48 (1.68)</td>
<td>2.83 (1.44)</td>
<td>3.31 (1.52)</td>
<td>2.304</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Likelihood items scored between: 1 (not at all likely to refer) to 5 (extremely likely to refer)
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$
a,b,c,d = Means that do not share a common superscript are significantly different at $p < .05$. 

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations of Male Contact Sport ANOVAs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Non-contact Coaches (n = 210)</th>
<th>Contact Coaches (n = 109)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Partial $\eta^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of confidence/Injury</td>
<td>3.25 (1.24)</td>
<td>2.44 (1.33)</td>
<td>20.572***</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family issues</td>
<td>2.44 (1.10)</td>
<td>1.86 (1.08)</td>
<td>18.605***</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions during practice/competition</td>
<td>2.95 (1.37)</td>
<td>2.27 (1.14)</td>
<td>19.078***</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer relationship problems</td>
<td>3.01 (1.13)</td>
<td>2.50 (1.25)</td>
<td>15.448***</td>
<td>.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing poorly academically</td>
<td>3.00 (1.25)</td>
<td>2.15 (1.22)</td>
<td>27.120***</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating poorly with team</td>
<td>3.20 (1.34)</td>
<td>2.82 (1.44)</td>
<td>5.675*</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating poorly with coaches</td>
<td>2.54 (1.34)</td>
<td>2.06 (1.44)</td>
<td>9.555**</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using/abusing substances</td>
<td>3.32 (1.48)</td>
<td>3.03 (1.56)</td>
<td>8.287**</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor attentional focus</td>
<td>3.20 (1.24)</td>
<td>2.60 (1.32)</td>
<td>13.421***</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor leadership</td>
<td>2.77 (1.20)</td>
<td>2.10 (1.17)</td>
<td>19.082***</td>
<td>.057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty learning new skills/plays</td>
<td>2.71 (1.19)</td>
<td>2.12 (1.19)</td>
<td>23.473***</td>
<td>.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical over arousal</td>
<td>3.66 (1.14)</td>
<td>2.84 (1.12)</td>
<td>38.593***</td>
<td>.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing inconsistently</td>
<td>3.71 (1.19)</td>
<td>2.81 (1.24)</td>
<td>39.791***</td>
<td>.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of motivation/competitive drive</td>
<td>2.77 (1.28)</td>
<td>2.14 (1.17)</td>
<td>20.714***</td>
<td>.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive anxiety</td>
<td>2.69 (1.35)</td>
<td>2.27 (1.40)</td>
<td>7.075**</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No or ineffective goal setting</td>
<td>3.76 (1.15)</td>
<td>3.08 (1.33)</td>
<td>28.595***</td>
<td>.083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Likelihood items scored between: 1 (*not at all likely to refer*) to 5 (*extremely likely to refer*)
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$
APPENDIX

SPORT PSYCHOLOGY LIKELIHOOD QUESTIONNAIRE
Sport Psychology Likelihood to Refer Questionnaire

I. A **Sport Psychologist** is defined as a person with training in sport psychology that is capable of assisting athletes in developing the psychological and emotional skills necessary for achieving peak performance and enhancing life quality.

Assume that you had access to a **Sport Psychologist** (as just defined) and cost/fees were not an issue. For each issue/area listed below, please rate how likely you would be to refer one of your **athletes** to the sport psychologist for assistance. That is, if one of your athletes was experiencing this type of difficulty/issue and it was interfering with his/her sport performance, how likely would you be to refer the athlete to the sport psychologist for help. There are no right or wrong answers, so please respond honestly by stating what you would be likely to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not At All Likely To Refer</th>
<th>Somewhat Likely To Refer</th>
<th>Extremely Likely To Refer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicate how likely you would be to refer one of your athletes were:

1. Experiencing poor attentional focus (e.g., becoming distracted during performances and making errors)
2. Communicating poorly with you and your coaching staff
3. Communicating poorly with teammates
4. Experiencing physical/somatic over arousal (e.g., muscle tension, “butterflies”) prior to or during competition
5. Experiencing emotions (e.g., anger, frustration) during practices and/or competition that interfere with performances.
6. Having difficulty with learning and executing new skills or plays
7. Experiencing cognitive anxiety (e.g., worry about performance, negative self-talk) prior to or during competition
8. Having no, or ineffectively set, goals for practices, performances, and/or athletic success.
9. Demonstrating poor or ineffective leadership
10. Lacking (or insufficient level of) motivation or competitive drive
11. Performing or practicing inconsistently (e.g., not having a well-developed pre-performance routine).
12. Experiencing family issues (e.g., parents getting divorced)
13. Experiencing peer relationship problems (e.g., break-up of a romantic relationship)
14. Performing poorly academically (e.g., failing a class)
15. Using/abusing substances, such as alcohol or other drugs
16. Experiencing a loss of confidence or negative emotions (e.g., sadness, anger) during recovery from injury (e.g., while going through rehab following season-ending knee injury)
II. As a reminder, a **Sport Psychologist** is defined as a person with training in sport psychology that is capable of assisting athletes in developing the psychological and emotional skills necessary for achieving peak performance and enhancing life quality.

Based on this definition, and assuming that cost/fees are NOT a limitation for you, would you be **interested** in having a sport psychologist work with:

a. You and your coaching staff:  ___YES  ___NO

   If YES: Please indicate whether or not you would like the sport psychologist to work with you in each of the following capacities:

   1. Consult individually with you and your coaches separate from practices/competition (e.g., in your office)  ___YES  ___NO
   2. Attend practices regularly to work with you and your staff.  ___YES  ___NO
   3. Attend competitions regularly to provide support and assistance to you and your staff.  ___YES  ___NO
   4. Be available for consultations on an “as needed” basis (e.g., a phone consultation when an issue arises that you’d like to discuss).  ___YES  ___NO

   Do you plan to hire a sport psychologist in the next year?

   YES: go to b
   NO: Given your interest in working with a sport psychologist, please tell us the reasons why you do not plan to hire one in the next year:__________

   If NO: Please list the reasons you would NOT be interested in having a sport psychologist work with you and your coaching staff:__________

b. Individual athletes on your team:  _____YES  _____NO

   If YES: Please indicate whether or not you would like the sport psychologist to work with your athletes in each of the following capacities:

   1. Consult individually with your athletes separate from practices/competition (e.g., having the athletes meet in the sport psychologist’s office)  ___YES  ___NO
   2. Attend practices regularly to work with your athletes.  ___YES  ___NO
   3. Attend competitions regularly to provide support and assistance to your athletes.  ___YES  ___YES
4. Be available for consultations with your athletes on an “as needed” basis (e.g., a phone consultation when an issue arises).
   __YES  __NO

Do you plan to hire a sport psychologist in the next year?
YES: go to c
NO: Given your interest in working with a sport psychologist, please tell us the reasons why you do not plan to hire one in the next year:__________

If NO: Please list the reasons you would NOT be interested in having a sport psychologist work with individual athletes on your team:__________

c. Your team as a whole:  ____YES  ____NO
   If YES: Please indicate whether or not you would like the sport psychologist to work with your team in each of the following capacities:
   1. Consult with your team separate from practices/competition (e.g., in the office of the sport psychologist or in your practice area, but at a time separate from practice)
      __YES  __NO
   2. Attend practices regularly to work with your team.
      __YES  __NO
   3. Attend competitions regularly to provide support and assistance to your team.
      __YES  __NO
   4. Be available for consultations with your team on an “as needed” basis.
      __YES  __NO

Do you plan to hire a sport psychologist in the next year?
YES: Go to Part III
NO: Given your interest in working with a sport psychologist, please tell us the reasons why you do not plan to hire one in the next year:__________

If NO: Please list the reasons you would NOT be interested in having a sport psychologist work with your team as a whole:__________
**NEW PAGE ON WEBSITE**

**General Demographic Information**

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age: __________ years

3. Race/Ethnicity: **Use drop-down menu to follow census approach**

4. What is your highest degree? ☐ BA/BS ☐ MA/MS ☐ PhD/PsyD/EdD ☐ MD ☐ Other (please list__ )

5. What type of High School do you coach at?  
   *Drop down box with public, private, small, medium, large (3 levels of 2 types i.e., small public, large private, etc.)

6. What is the primary sport you coach (please pick only 1)?  
   *Drop Down Box with alphabetical list of sports

7. What is the highest level you have coached your primary sport?  
   ☐ High School (Public) ☐ High School (Private) ☐ Com. College  
   ☐ 4-Yr College/Univer. ☐ Youth Sport ☐ Recreational  
   ☐ Club Team ☐ Prof. Sports ☐ Other (__ )

8. What was the primary sport you played as an athlete?  
   *Drop down box with alphabetical list of sports

9. What is the highest level you have participated in your primary sport?  
   ☐ High School (Public) ☐ High School (Private) ☐ Com. College  
   ☐ 4-Yr College/Univer. ☐ Youth Sport ☐ Recreational  
   ☐ Club Team ☐ Prof. Sports ☐ Other (__ )

10. How long have you been a coach?  
    Overall  
    For your primary sport  
    In your current position
REFERENCES


