

COMMUNITY COLLEGE COACHES' PERCEPTIONS OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

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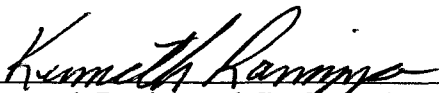
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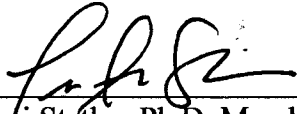
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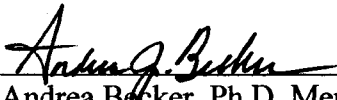
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess community college coaches' perceptions of sport psychology by administering an online questionnaire to California baseball and softball coaches employed throughout the state's community college system. Specifically, this study aimed to a) determine community college coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology, b) assess their willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant to work with them and their team, c) understand their perceptions of common barriers to utilizing sport psychology services, and d) give participants a forum to share their thoughts concerning community college athletics and sport psychology. Fifty-five head and assistant coaches completed the questionnaire that was sent via email. Statistical analyses revealed that there were no significant differences found between the coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology and the independent variables of gender, college major, title, sport, or exposure. However, when willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant (SPC) was examined, female coaches were more willing to bring in an SPC than male coaches, $F(1, 53) = 5.079, p < .05$. Frequencies counts were also generated on the coaches' perceived barrier variables, indicating that money (81.10%) and time (48.10%) were the greatest perceived barriers to sport psychology. Overall, results indicated that at the community college level, coaches value sport psychology and are willing to bring in an SPC if the conditions are favorable.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Some coaches are willing to do whatever it takes to get that competitive edge. Some coaches will run their team hours after practice should have been over. Some coaches will implement mandatory 6 a.m. weight training sessions. Some coaches will encourage their athletes to do cross training. And some coaches will enlist sport psychology to get that competitive edge they strive for. Sport psychology is a growing field that involves the study of people and their behaviors in the realm of sport and the practical application of that knowledge (Weinberg & Gould, 2003). Furthermore, Anshel (1990) explained that sport psychology is a science that focuses on the human behavior in the context of competitive sport, and how that behavior is affected by the athlete, the coach, and the environment.

Sport psychology consultants (SPCs) can provide a variety of services to address many different situations with both athletes and coaches. Researchers define SPCs as those individuals with formal training in sport psychology who consult with student-athletes and coaches concerning the psychological and emotional skills necessary for achieving peak performance and enhancing life quality (Donohue, Dickens, Lancer, Covassin, Hash, Miller & Genet, 2004; Martens, 1979). Anshel (1990) acknowledged that there are typically two categories of services that SPCs provide to coaches and athletes: educational and clinical services.

The first category of services provided is education based. Educational SPCs typically have graduate training in sport science, physical education, or kinesiology. They are oftentimes considered “mental coaches” because they generally help athletes and coaches in improving the mental aspect of their performances. Some prefer to be called a “sport counselor,” “consultant,” or “educator” (Anshel, 1990). They can be educators in the university setting, consultants to coaches and athletes in the field, or both.

Educational SPCs may have coursework in counseling, but are not licensed to treat clinical disorders (Weinberg & Gould, 2003). This element of sport psychology involves helping performers develop the psychological skills to reach their full potential, through Psychological Skills Training (PST) (Anshel, 1990). These services can be delivered by the SPC in individual or group meetings, and includes techniques such as relaxation, goal-setting, imagery, concentration/focus training, and skills to cope with stress. PST can give the performer that slight edge that is needed for success, but is not magic or a “quick fix” solution (Martens, 1987).

The other type of services provided by SPCs are clinical services. Clinical SPCs are state licensed psychologists that treat people with clinical disorders such as depression or bipolar disorder. These professionals are trained to detect increasingly common disorders in athletes such as eating disorders and substance abuse. While the majority of their training is in psychology and/or counseling, they may also have coursework in sport sciences allowing them to provide PST (Weinberg & Gould, 2003).

As evident by the aforementioned information, the roles and interests of SPCs can vary dramatically. Around the world, coaches are recognizing how crucial the mental

components are to the physical game. Many coaches are seeking out SPCs to help them and their teams achieve optimal performance. Unfortunately, some coaches have not been convinced that SPCs are beneficial for becoming or remaining successful (Anshel, 1990). Previous research indicates that Olympic, college, and elite level coaches' perceptions of sport psychology are oftentimes influenced by the stigmas that can be associated with working with an SPC. Individuals who work with SPCs are often criticized and considered "mental patients" or "head cases" (Ravizza, 1988). Additional research indicated that Olympic, college, high school, and elite junior athletes and coaches may not seek out the assistance of SPCs due to their concern with lack of time and lack of money (Bull, 1991; Ferraro & Rush, 2000; Gould, Medbery, Damarjian, & Lauer, 1999; Hill, 1993; Pain & Hardwood 2004; Voight & Callaghan, 2001).

Thus far the majority of research on sport psychology has focused on the perceptions of athletes and elite level coaches. Further investigation is needed as to other coaches' perceptions of sport psychology, their willingness to bring in an SPC, and barriers they may perceive to sport psychology. A population of coaches and athletes that has not yet been examined is that of the community college. Many research studies employ Division I athletic departments to take part in their studies, ignoring other levels of collegiate athletics. Community colleges are often an underutilized and under-examined population of participants. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to assess community college coaches' perceptions of sport psychology by administering an online questionnaire to California baseball and softball coaches. More specifically, the author aimed to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are community college coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology?
- (2) How willing are community college coaches' to bring in a sport psychology consultant to work with their team?
- (3) What are community college coaches' perceptions of previously identified barriers to utilizing a sport psychology consultant with their team?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The general public, including coaches and athletes, sometimes tend to perceive those who work with sport psychologists or sport psychology consultants (SPCs) as “head cases” or “problem” athletes, making these individuals less willing to utilize sport psychology services (Ravizza, 1988). The term “psychologist” oftentimes evokes images of a Freudian-style consultation and is associated with “fixing problems.” This has the potential to drive athletes and coaches away from the field and is just one of the many perceived barriers that SPCs face. Due to these stigmas, many SPCs choose to take a more educational approach and identify themselves as mental skills coaches or performance enhancement specialists. They focus on mental training or physical toughness, rather than exploring vulnerabilities and weaknesses. This simple shift in semantics may be more understandable within the athletic world, as well as suggest more positive perceptions of SPCs, yielding a better possibility of coaches and athletes seeking out sport psychology services.

This review of literature is divided into five sections detailing (a) the perceptions of the value of sport psychology, (b) coaches’ and athletes’ willingness to bring in and/or seek out a sport psychology consultant (SPC), (c) perceived barriers to the acceptance of sport psychology services and those professionals who provide it, (d) characteristics of effective consultants, and (e) summaries and recommendations.

Perceptions of the Value of Sport Psychology

Many studies over the past three decades have examined individual's perceptions of the value of sport psychology and the sport psychology consultants (SPCs) that provide these services. Three distinct areas of research will be explored within this section: (a) non-athletes' perceptions of sport psychology; (b) athletes' perceptions of sport psychology; and (c) coaches' perceptions of sport psychology.

Non-athletes' perceptions

Oftentimes there is a "negative halo" associated with those athletes who choose to use an SPC, especially by the general public (Linder, Brewer, Van Raalte, & DeLange, 1991). For example, Linder and colleagues (1989) presented 139 introductory psychology undergraduate students a mock quarterback scouting report. The quarterback was either working with his coach or an SPC to (a) increase his concentration to improve consistency, (b) learn to cope with stress to improve consistency, or (c) just to improve his consistency. After reading one of the three reports, students were asked to rate whether they would recommend this player for the draft. Ten additional statements (i.e., "would be a team player," "would play for individual glory") were also included. As hypothesized, the players being assisted by an SPC were recommended less strongly than the players working with their coaches. In addition, players working with the SPC were also rated as less emotionally stable, less likely to fit in well with management, and less likely to perform consistently from season to season. The experiment was later expanded to include the same scenario for a baseball pitcher and outfielder, and a basketball guard and center. The results from the basketball guard scenario proved similar to the

quarterback in that both ranked lower come draft day and it was predicted they would not get along with management. Based on these results it appears that non-athletes associate a stigma with athletes who utilize an SPC, especially those athletes who maintain a central position on a team (i.e., quarterback and guard) (Linder, Pillow, & Reno, 1989).

Van Raalte and colleagues (1990) surveyed 200 introductory psychology undergraduate students to discover their perceptions of 12 sport-oriented practitioners: sport psychologist, clinical psychologist, psychotherapist, coach, psychiatrist, counselor, performance consultant, nutritionist, sport medicine specialist, strength coach, hypnotist, and technical equipment advisor. Each participant was given a multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS). The MDS allowed the students to place the various sport practitioners on a map with four quadrants which were labeled as sport, non-sport, mental, and physical. Results indicated that these college students did not perceive the roles of mental health professionals (i.e. clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.) to be significantly different than those of sport psychologists despite the word "sport." Sport psychologists were placed in the "non-sport/mental" quadrant (Van Raalte, Brewer, Brewer, Linder, & DeLange, 1990).

Linder and associates (1991) later conducted a study which combined the experiential design of the two aforementioned studies. Older male Lions Club members were compared to male and female introductory psychology undergraduate students. Participants were again provided with the mock scouting reports that suggested a player (football quarterback, baseball pitcher or basketball center) was working with a coach, a sport psychologist, or a psychotherapist to improve consistency. Once again, participants

were asked to rate how highly they would recommend this player for the draft. Results indicated that male participants rated those players who were consulting with a coach higher than those working with a sport psychologist or a psychotherapist, with no significant difference between a sport psychologist, or a psychotherapist. Female undergraduate students did not show any differences between professionals. Also, males and females placed the 12 sport-oriented professionals in relatively the same positions on the MDS. The results of the all-male Lions Club members were similar to male college students in that the players that ranked higher on draft day were the ones working with a coach (Linder et al., 1991). In addition, there were no significant differences between the perceived roles of the sport psychologists and psychotherapists (Linder, Brewer, Van Raalte, & DeLange, 1991).

Contrary to the previous results, Brewer and colleagues (1998) found that journalists of the major United States newspapers portrayed the field of sport psychology in a “neutral” tone. An online search of the *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Post* from 1985-1993 yielded 574 articles pertaining to sport psychology. The content for each article was analyzed. The most frequent purpose identified for consultation was performance enhancement (as opposed to clinical issues); the most often discussed intervention was visualization/imagery, followed by relaxation, general mental training, and goal setting; the consultant most used was Bob Rotella; and the most common sport that used sport psychology was golf, followed by baseball, football and tennis. Contrary to previous research on the public’s image of sport psychology, this study found no stigma attached to working with an SPC in that sport psychology was

mostly linked to performance enhancement (i.e., psychological skills training) (Brewer, Van Raalte, Petitpas, Bachman, & Weinhold, 1998).

Based on the current literature, it appears that non-athletes have a poor perception of sport psychology, in that they associate a stigma with athletes that consult with an SPC (Linder et al., 1989). Overall, non-athletes consider sport psychology consultants to be more closely associated with clinical psychologists and psychotherapists than with coaches (Linder et al., 1991; Van Raalte et al., 1990).

Athletes' perceptions

Research also examined athletes' perceptions of sport psychology and SPCs. Martin and colleagues (2001) examined the expectations of athletes and non-athletes about sport psychology consulting. Neither group of participants had any prior consulting experience. Researchers used the Expectations about Sport Psychology Consulting (EASPC) questionnaire which evaluated individuals' perceptions of three factors: personal commitment, facilitative conditions, and SPC expertise. Results indicated that females exhibited higher expectancies of personal commitment to the consulting process than the males. However, there were no differences between athletes and non-athletes and their expectations of the consulting process (Martin, Akers, Jackson, Wrisberg, Nelson, Leslie, & Leideg, 2001).

Research also examined athletes with no exposure to an SPC with similar results. Van Raalte and colleagues (1992) asked members from two collegiate football teams (one that had athletic counseling/sport psychology services available and one that did not) to rate how highly they would recommend a quarterback who was working with his

coach, an SPC, or a psychotherapist to improve his performance. Contrary to past research and this study's hypothesis, the participants did not rate as lower the quarterback who was using an SPC as compared to his coach. However, the quarterback was rated lower when consulting with a psychotherapist as compared to his coach. Interestingly, there were no significant differences in the results between the team with exposure to athletic counseling/sport psychology and the team with no exposure. It appears that male athletes do not associate sport psychology with the negative stigmatization that male non-athletes do (Van Raalte, Brewer, Brewer, & Linder, 1992).

In the second part of the same study, the team with access to athletic counseling/sport psychology was presented with 11 sport-oriented practitioner titles. This was the same list used by Van Raalte and colleagues (1990) less the technical equipment advisor. Participants viewed the practitioner titles in triads and were asked to pick out the one that was dissimilar. They were also asked to rank order the practitioners based on expertise in sport, mental issues, and physical issues. Results indicated that participants ranked sport psychologists as having more sport expertise than the other non-coaching professionals. Sport psychologists were also seen as having more physical and less mental expertise than the psychological professionals. Overall, the football players associated the sport psychologist more closely with the psychological practitioners (psychotherapist, psychiatrist, counselor, etc.) than with the coach. These results parallel previous research on non-athletes (Van Raalte et al., 1990).

Results on athletes' perceptions of sport psychology appear to be mixed with some research pointing to poor perceptions of athletes who consult with an SPC (Martin

et al., 2001) and other research painting a picture of a more objective athlete (Van Raalte et al., 1992). Similar to results found with non-athletes, there was no distinction by athletes between sport psychologists and other health care professionals, despite the word “sport.”

Coaches' perceptions

Previous research examining perceptions of sport psychology was primarily focused on athletes and non-athletes. There is limited research which explores coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). Ravizza (1988; 1990) contends that SPCs have to gain the trust of the coach prior to receiving an opportunity to work with their team. This requires the coach to be open-minded and surrender a certain amount of control and responsibility to the SPC. Also, the coach will be the person reinforcing (or not reinforcing) various psychological skills when the SPC is not present.

Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007) attempted to fill this gap in the literature by surveying 374 college swimming and USA Track and Field coaches regarding attitude, previous exposure, expectations of the consultation process, and intentions to use sport psychology services. Attitude was assessed using the Sport Psychology Attitudes-Revised Form for Coaches (SPA-RC), an adaptation of the SPA-R (Martin et al., 2002). The SPA-RC included four factors: stigma tolerance, confidence in SPC, personal openness, and cultural preference. Participants ranked 12 statements on a 6-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and 6 indicating “strongly agree.” Expectations of the consulting process were evaluated using four questions from Martin et al.'s (2001)

Expectations about Sport Psychology Consulting (EASPC) survey, and 13 other researcher derived items. Finally, exposure and intentions were evaluated by four other researcher derived questions. Results indicated that gender was a possible predictor of coaches' intentions to use sport psychology services, in that female coaches had significantly more stigma tolerance and personal openness than male coaches. Martin and associates (2001) had similar findings with male and female athletes. Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007) hypothesized that this finding was possibly due to the "macho" attitude often held in male sport participation (Yambor & Connelly, 1991). The coaches' attitudes towards sport psychology, their expectations of the consulting process, and their previous exposure to sport psychology were all predictors of their future use of sport psychology services. Furthermore, when confidence in the SPC increased, stigma tolerance decreased, and as expectations in the consulting process increased, coaches' intentions to use sport psychology increased (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007).

Willingness to Bring in a Sport Psychology Consultant

Research regarding willingness to bring in an SPC and willingness to seek sport psychology services is relatively limited to the thoughts and attitudes of athletes. Most of the research in this area utilizes the Athletes' Attitudes Toward Seeking Sport Psychology Consultation Questionnaire (ATSSPCQ), and its revised successor, the Sport Psychology Attitudes-Revised (SPA-R) to assess athletes' willingness to bring in SPC (Martin, Kellmann, Lavalley, & Page, 2002; Martin, Wrisberg, Beitel, & Lounsbury, 1997).

Athletes' willingness

A pioneer study by Martin and colleagues (1997) surveyed 225 college student-athletes using the 50-item Athletes' Attitudes toward Seeking Sport Psychology Consultation Questionnaire (ATSSPCQ). The questionnaire consisted of five constructs: stigmatization, recognition of need, confidence in sport psychology, social desirability, and interpersonal openness. There were 10 items in each construct and participants were asked to rank the items on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree." Results indicated that African American athletes were more influenced by the stigma attached to working with an SPC than their Caucasian counterparts. Additionally, male athletes were more hesitant to work with an SPC than female athletes.

The ATSSPCQ has been used in many other studies as well. Page and associates (2001) utilized it with 53 wheelchair basketball athletes to evaluate if attitudes towards sport psychology differed as a function of age, education level, race, and SPC experience level. Interestingly, there were no significant differences in gender, education level, race and prior exposure to an SPC. Page and colleagues (2001) attributed these results to the small sample size and the heterogeneous nature of the participants (Page, Martin, & Wayda, 2001).

Donohue and colleagues (2004) administered the ATSSPQ to 124 athletes with varying expertise (intercollegiate, club and sport leagues), sport backgrounds (baseball, swimming, volleyball, etc.), ages, and ethnicities. Upon completing the questionnaire, participants were also interviewed in one of two ways: (a) discussion of experiences in sports interview, or (b) sport psychology benefits interview. Results revealed that the

sport psychology benefits interview was more effective in changing athletes' perceptions for the need of sport psychology services than discussing their sport experiences, thus making them more likely to seek out an SPC and sport psychology services. Neither interview method increased the participants' stigma tolerance (Donohue, Dickens, Lancer, Covassin, Hash, Miller, & Genet, 2004).

The ATSSPQ was later revised to become the Sport Psychology Attitudes-Revised (SPA-R) (Martin et al., 2002). More specifically, 25 items were deleted from the original 50-item inventory. The remaining items were placed into four factors rather than five: stigma tolerance, confidence in SPC, personal openness, and cultural preference. Martin (2005) utilized the SPA-R to explore male and female high school and college athletes' attitudes towards sport psychology consulting. Results revealed that male athletes were more likely to adhere to the stigma attached to working with an SPC and appeared to identify with consultants of their own race and culture more so than their female counterparts. High school athletes were more likely to stigmatize SPCs than college athletes; and physical contact sport participants were more likely to associate a negative stigma with SPCs than non-contact sport participants. Martin (2005) concluded that male athletes at the high school level would be less likely to seek an SPC than any of the other groups.

Similar to research conducted on perceptions of sport psychology and SPCs, Maniar and colleagues (2001) investigated athletes' willingness to seek help from a variety of sport-titled and non-sport-titled professionals including: athletic trainer, clinical psychologist, coach, counselor, friend/family, medical doctor/physician, minister/pastor,

performance enhancement specialist, professor in sport psychology, sport counselor, and sport psychologist. The participants were 60 college athletes, representing a variety of sports. The researchers designed the Athlete Preference Questionnaire (APQ) which presented three different performance problem scenarios: (a) midseason slump, (b) return from serious injury, and (c) desire to perform more optimally. Participants were asked to rank their willingness to seek help from 1 (“never”) to 9 (“definitely”). In line with previous research (Martin, 2005; Martin et al., 1997), the present study found that female athletes were more willing to seek help for the purpose of getting out of a slump and to improve their optimal performance than male athletes. The serious injury scenario ranked higher than the other two scenarios in overall willingness to seek help. In general, female athletes were more likely to seek help than males. Male athletes were more willing to seek help from a clinical psychologist and minister/pastor, whereas female athletes turned to sport counselors and sport psychologists. Across all scenarios, athletes were more likely to seek help from friends/family and their coaches than any of the other professionals (Maniar, Curry, Sommers-Flanagan, & Walsh, 2001). It appears that athletes evaluated the particular scenarios and rated the professional higher that could help them most with that scenario. For example, medical professionals (athletic trainer and physician) were rated the overall highest for the injury scenario and sport related professionals (such as the performance enhancement specialist) were rated higher for the optimal performance scenario.

Overall, it appears that male athletes are less willing to seek the services of an SPC than female athletes (Martin, 2005; Martin et al., 1997). Additionally, Caucasian

athletes were more willing to seek sport psychology services than African American athletes (Martin et al., 1997), while older athletes were more willing to seek out an SPC than younger athletes (Martin, 2005). Also, athletes are more willing to seek help when they have been seriously injured as compared to other scenarios (Maniar et al., 2001).

Coaches' willingness

Little research has focused on coaches' willingness to bring in an SPC or their willingness to seek sport psychology services. Zakrajsek and Zizzi (2007) found that similar to female athletes, female coaches were more open and willing to work with an SPC than male coaches, although the small effect size may have skewed this result. Results indicated that 87% of the coaches had previously worked with an SPC and 22% were currently working with one. Yet, previous exposure was not an indicator of coaches' intention to utilize an SPC (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007).

This gap in literature regarding coaches' willingness in utilizing sport psychology services is surprising considering that coaches are generally viewed as the "gatekeepers" to working with teams or organizations. The coach or manager is typically the one that will bring in the SPC and "check them out" (Ravizza 1988; 1990). Coaches often decide who stays and goes within the team, and this includes the SPC. Therefore, more research is necessary which investigates factors associated with coaches' willingness to bring in an SPC, and the perceived barriers to utilizing sport psychology services.

Perceived Barriers to Sport Psychology

Researchers have proposed numerous barriers, difficulties, or roadblocks that SPCs face when attempting to gain entry with a team; and after entry is gained,

maintaining a positive and productive relationship with the coaches and athletes with whom they work.

SPCs face many barriers when trying to gain entry into teams and training programs of individuals. Ravizza (1988) explained that one of the biggest barriers he faced was the negative connotation associated with psychology. Many athletes and coaches associate sport psychologists with “shrinks,” and this stereotype can threaten even the most secure and confident athletes. Psychology, and therefore sport psychology, is often associated with fixing problems and no athlete wants to be considered a “mental patient” (Linder et al., 1989). Some coaches may label athletes who work with an SPC as “weak” or “problem athletes.” Ferraro and Rush (2000) asked athletes in New York parks why they did not utilize sport psychology services and one athlete explained that he was “not crazy” (Ferraro & Rush, 2000, p. 3).

Another barrier or obstacle that many SPCs must confront is their own lack of sport specific knowledge (Ravizza, 1988). If the SPC has never actually played the sport, it is up to the consultant to gain as much knowledge about the sport as possible before consulting with a team or athlete (Ravizza, 1988; 1990). This may involve reading books, taking classes, or participating in the sport to really understand what the athletes are going through. It is important for coaches and athletes to feel like SPCs understand their sport and its culture, which includes using proper terminology and jargon (Gould et al., 1999; Pain & Hardwood, 2005).

The internal or political environment of a sport organization can also be a barrier to an SPC gaining entry (Ravizza 1988; 1990). Without the coaches’ or managers’ trust

and respect the SPC will most likely not even get in the door, much less survive in the program. Pain and Hardwood (2004) indicated that it was important for the SPC to have the respect of the coach. It is vital for SPCs to recognize and respect the power structure within the program.

One of the most discussed barriers in this research is the lack of funding athletes, coaches, and athletic departments have available for sport psychology services. Many of Ferraro and Rush's (2000) New York City park athletes said they did not utilize sport psychology services because of its cost. When Voight and Callaghan (2001) asked the athletic administrations of 115 Division I universities why they were not using sport psychology services, the most frequent response was lack of funding. Similar results were found among English soccer coaches and academy directors (Pain & Hardwood, 2004). Hill (1993) described his experience at the University of Notre Dame. This university delivers sport psychology services via a joint program through both the athletic department and counseling center. He explains that it may be difficult for other institutions, such as high schools and juniors highs, to afford this luxury.

Another regularly discussed barrier is lack of time. Both English soccer coaches and junior tennis coaches reported that lack of time to bring in an SPC or teach mental skills themselves was one of their largest barriers to utilizing sport psychology (Gould et al., 1999; Pain & Hardwood, 2004). Athletes have also expressed lack of time to be a major concern in utilizing sport psychology services (Bull, 1991; Ferraro & Rush, 2000).

Maintaining confidentiality can be a major concern for many athletes and coaches. SPCs must understand that once confidentiality is breached with an athlete or

coach, it will be difficult to regain that trust. Ravizza (1990) and Pain and Hardwood (2004) explained that confidentiality is a key component in the consulting process.

Some coaches and athletes believe that it is difficult to prove the benefits of sport psychology so they may not be willing to give sport psychology services a fair chance. Some athletic administrators have indicated that sport psychology services did not yield positive results, therefore were no longer considered beneficial (Voight & Callaghan, 2001). The coaches in the Gould et al. (1999) study concluded that it was difficult to evaluate the success of sport psychology programs. The athletes in the Bull (1991) perceived that there were no benefits to sport psychology services.

Other notable perceived barriers to sport psychology include player reluctance (Ravizza, 1990), and the fear that it is a “quick fix” solution and not something that can be sustainable over time (Ravizza, 1988). Pain and Hardwood (2004) indicated that lack of space, the SPC not fitting in with the team, lack of clarity in the provided services, the belief that psychology is common sense, and the agreement that strong players would not benefit from such services were additional barriers perceived in employing sport psychology services. Coaches in one study also suggested athletes’ lack of dedication as a barrier (Gould et al., 1999). More specifically, athletes did not adhere to sport psychology services because of their lack of interest, little parental support, lack of practical resources, lack of individualization for each player, lack of excitement, and the perception that the materials were too complex. The athletes in Bull’s (1991) study pointed to the lack of individualization in the program, a disruptive home environment, and simple laziness as their barriers to sport psychology.

Consultant Effectiveness

As evident by the abovementioned research, there are varying perceptions of SPCs and the services that they provide. There is oftentimes a negative stigma attached to those who utilize sport psychology services. One way to improve perceptions of sport psychology, as well as willingness to bring in an SPC, is to ask athletes, coaches, and SPCs their impressions of what makes an SPC effective. Orlick and Partington (1987) interviewed Canadian athletes and SPCs upon returning from the 1984 Olympic Games in Sarajevo and Los Angeles concerning their experiences with sport psychology services leading up to and during their Olympic competition. The following are some of the qualities they found were exhibited by the “best” consultants: likeable, offered something applied and concrete, flexible, knowledgeable of needs, established rapport, expressed genuine care, and conducted follow-up sessions. Some of the characteristics of the “worst” consultants were identified as: bad interpersonal skills, poor application of psychology to sport setting, lacking in flexibility, and had bad timing. Similarly, one study found that the most effective sport psychology graduate students were those who fit in with the team, had useful knowledge, and were easy for athletes to relate to (Gentner, Fisher, & Wrisberg, 2004).

In conjunction with the previous studies and in an aim to help consultants improve the services they provide to athletes and coaches, Partington and Orlick (1987) designed the Sport Psychology Consultant Evaluation Form (CEF). Canadian Olympic athletes completed the survey upon returning from the 1984 Olympic Games. The CEF included 10 items about consultant characteristics (e.g., fit in with others connected to

team) that were ranked on an 11-point scale, from 0 (“not at all”) to 10 (“yes, definitely”). The next section included six items pertaining to the amount of contact there was between the SPC and the athlete. The final section of the CEF asked athletes the effect the consultant had on the athlete and on the team, and asks them to rate the SPC on a scale from -5 (“hindered/interfered”) to +5 (“helped a lot”). The study yielded a model of what athletes perceive as an effective consultant: provides clear, practical, concrete strategies for the athlete to try; easy for the athlete to relate to; fits in well with everyone; provides individual session with athletes throughout the year; and attends at least two or three national and international competitions with the athlete or team.

Lubker and colleagues (2008) examined both athletes’ and consultants’ perceptions of what made a consultant effective by surveying 124 college athletes and 80 SPCs. They developed a measure called the Characteristics of Effective Sport Psychology Consultants Inventory (CESPCI) which included 31 items pertaining to personality traits, sport knowledge, sport culture, standard of practice, and physical traits that make an SPC effective. The participants were asked to rank each item from 1 (“not at all effective”) to 6 (“extremely effective”). Positive interpersonal skills, athletic background, sport culture, professional status, and physical characteristics were judged to be the most important factors when evaluating SPC effectiveness, with these factors being ranked as “somewhat” or “extremely important.” The participating athletes and SPCs agreed on rankings of the five factors. Furthermore, in conformity with past research (Linder et al., 1991; Van Raalte et al., 1990; 1992), athletes preferred sport-titled (i.e., performance

enhancement specialist) SPCs over those who were associated with the medical field (i.e., clinical psychologist) (Lubker, Visek, Greer, & Watson, 2008).

In addition to the aforementioned barriers, there can be additional obstacles that SPCs must overcome to be considered effective when an opposite-gendered consulting opportunity arises. Yambor and Connelly (1991) explained that women are oftentimes perceived as less educated than men, especially in the sport arena. This stereotype may make it harder for male athletes to trust female SPCs. Female SPCs may be perceived as lacking in sport knowledge and experience particularly in contact sports such as football and hockey. The researchers stress that it is especially important in these situations to know the sport, along with the proper terminology and jargon that goes along with it (Yambor & Connelly, 1991). This will only increase the female SPCs credibility and respect level from athletes and coaches. Finally, there is a firm need for female SPCs to set clear boundaries with male athletes, so as not to invite flirtation or give the appearance of attraction.

Henschen (1991) explained that there are also many crucial issues that face male consultants when working with female athletes. He indicated that open and honest communication is a key characteristic to being an effective SPC, especially a male consultant working with a female athlete. A clear line must be drawn between the SPC and the athlete, in terms of both a sexual relationship and a father-daughter relationship. Athletes, especially younger females, must understand that these feelings are natural, yet it is not appropriate to act on them. He explained that he tries to make things less complicated by minimizing his physical contact with the girls, always meeting in a

semiprivate environment (i.e., no closed doors), and not traveling with the female teams. He requires the parents be a part of the initial meeting with the athlete and keeps in constant contact with both them and the athlete's coach. He finds it quite helpful to teach intervention skills in small groups of girls rather than one-on-one because he finds that they feel more secure discussing most issues amongst their peers. Additional barriers faced when working with female athletes as a male SPC include the perception that the SPC can not possibly understand female athletics or the female mentality. Henschen (1991) explained that listening and asking good questions, as well as utilizing psychometric testing, helps him to better understand his athletes and their experiences.

Summaries and Recommendations

Athletes oftentimes feel pressure from their peers, coaches, and even society to think or act in a particular manner, regardless of whether they agree. Therefore, the stigmas associated with sport psychology may prevent both athletes and coaches from fully experiencing all the benefits that SPCs and sport psychology services have to offer. Previous research on perceptions of sport psychology has focused around Olympic, Division I, elite junior, recreational, and occasionally even high school athletes and their coaches. Little research has examined the perceptions of community college coaches and athletes. Community college athletics offer incoming high school student-athletes the opportunity to mature and adapt to college life while taking on a flexible schedule at a reasonable price (Lattman, 2008). Perhaps the most attractive aspect of life as a community college student-athlete is the opportunity to develop both as a student and athlete. The possibility of getting noticed by more four-year institutions that were

potentially not interested based on the athlete's high school credentials is also appealing. Furthermore, community college athletes do not have the same NCAA restrictions regarding eligibility. Community college baseball players, for example, are eligible to be drafted to the Major Leagues at any point in their careers, whereas a four-year college player must be 21 years old or in his third year of school. These factors make community college a desirable option for many high school graduates.

One of the disadvantages to attending community colleges is related to budget issues. Many of these schools across the country are cutting athletic programs altogether because of the lack of proper funds (Jenkins, 2006). Not only do those directly involved in the community college programs suffer, but since these schools often act as "feeder schools" for four-year institutions, everyone in the area suffers. These budget restraints also pose challenges for community college coaches because many of them must have full or part-time jobs in addition to their coaching duties. However, Lattman (2008) explained that since these coaches are also teachers, bankers, lawyers, etc., athletes are able to get broader perspective of society as a whole. These coaches have a special opportunity to help in the development of these student-athletes both on and off-the-field. This may also allow the coach to function as more of a mentor than possible in a four-year college program.

Just as community college coaches are a group of unique individuals, so are the athletes they coach. Many community college student-athletes are said to be there, as opposed to a four-year school, for a reason. "Something went wrong in their lives that they could not overcome or they'd probably be at a [four-year] university. A lot of these

athletes are ‘broken’,” stated one community college coach. (E. O’Meara, personal communication, July 10, 2008). They have many obstacles to overcome both on and off-the-field. Many face off-the-field issues such as coming from low income families, having been gang affiliated or prior drug users, or being learning disabled or having insufficient academic standings. On the field they may be physically smaller, have had bad previous coaching, could be rehabilitating an injury, or be less talented than their peers. Any of these barriers can lead to lower feelings of self-worth. One, or more typically a combination, of these obstacles directs student-athletes to a community college rather than a four-year university (E. O’Meara, personal communication, July 10, 2008).

In summary, the majority of previous research has attempted to establish the perceptions of athletes and non-athletes of sport psychology and their willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant, along with those perceived barriers that pose a threat to sport psychology consultants effectively providing athletes and coaches sport psychology services. Limited research has examined the perceptions and level of willingness of the coaches who train these athletes. Furthermore, there has been a complete absence in the literature concerning those in the community college system. Hence, the purpose of this research is to focus on expanding the literature to include community college coaches’ perceptions of sport psychology and their willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant to work with their team, as well as the issues they perceive as barriers to using sport psychology.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Participants

The final sample participants in this study were 55 head and assistant baseball and softball community college coaches in California. As Table 1 illustrates, there were 42 male coaches and 13 female coaches. Baseball coaches accounted for 38 of the participants, while softball accounted for 17. Furthermore, there were 44 head coaches and 11 assistant coaches. The author chose to focus on community college coaches because they are an untapped resource. Most college-based research studies employ larger NCAA schools for participation, thus community colleges coaches may be more apt to participate in this research as they are not approached as often. Additionally, particularly in California, community college athletics are considered a “feeder system” to high-level Division I athletics. The author enlisted the sports of softball and baseball due to their equivalent strategy and their gender comparability. Both head and assistant coaches were utilized due to the differing nature of their roles.

Table 1

Participant Demographics ($n = 55$)

Variable	Quantity	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	42	76.36%
Female	13	26.63%
<i>Sport</i>		
Baseball	38	69.09%
Softball	17	31.91%
<i>Title</i>		
Head	44	80.00%
Assistant	11	20.00%

Instrument

The instrument designed for this study was the Coaches Perceptions of Sport Psychology Questionnaire (CPSPQ). It was created by the author of the current study on the online survey site "SurveyMonkey.com." The CPSPQ integrated items from three different sources. The first source was the Sport Psychology Attitude-Revised Coaches (SPA-RC) questionnaire (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2008). The SPA-RC consisted of 25 items to examine coaches' attitudes on stigma tolerance, confidence in sport psychology,

cultural openness, and cultural preference. The second source was a questionnaire that was utilized in an unpublished manuscript to assess perceptions of the role and value of sport psychology services among presidents, athletic directors, coaches and athletes at NCAA Division-I institutions (Wrisberg, Loberg, Simpson, & Withycombe, 2008). The third source included additional items that were generated by the author of the present study. Once the CPSPQ was generated, all items were reviewed by a panel of three sport psychology experts. The CPSPQ was refined until content and face validity was confirmed.

The CPSPQ consisted of 55 items that were divided into six sections: Background Information (9 items); Experience with Sport Psychology (8 items); Value of Sport Psychology (14 items); Bring in a Sport Psychology Consultant (14 items); Perceived Barriers to Sport Psychology (8 items); and Conclusion (2 items) (Appendix F). The first section consisted of background information such as gender, college major, and their current coaching title. Prior to the second section there was an explanation of sport psychology and the services that sport psychology consultants (SPCs) provide (Donohue et al., 2004). The second section, *Experience with Sport Psychology*, was evaluated using questions such as “As an athlete, how many times did you receive services from a sport psychology consultant?” and “Is a sport psychology consultant available to work with you and/or your current team?”

The third section, *The Value of Sport Psychology*, presented participants with 14 different scenarios (i.e., dealing with pressure, improving focus, communicating with athletes, etc.) and asked coaches to rate how valuable sport psychology was in dealing

with each scenario. These 14 items were chosen based on the purpose of the current study and the research questions driving it. These scenarios were placed into three separate categories: Performance, Other Psychology Skills, and Team Building. Appendix G presents the items that were placed into each category in a scoring sheet. Coaches were asked to rate the degree to which they valued sport psychology on a 3-point Likert scale which ranged from 1 “Not at all valuable” to 3 “Extremely valuable.”

The scenarios were placed into the three categories using the qualitative analysis method of open coding. Open coding is “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). The first step in open coding is to examine the raw data and label the phenomena. To label phenomena, questions such as “What is this?” and “What does it represent?” are asked (p. 63). The next step when using open coding is called “categorizing” which entails placing the phenomena into categories. Finally, the researcher gives the category a name. The category’s name should logically represent the data which it contains (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The fourth section assessed *Willingness to Bring in a Sport Psychology Consultant* to work with their team. Utilizing the same 14 scenarios that were used in section three, coaches rated how willing they would be to bring in a sport psychology consultant to deal with the scenarios. These scenarios were placed into the same three categories: Performance, Other Psychology Skills, and Team Building (Appendix G). Coaches were asked to rate their willingness on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 “Completely unwilling” to 4 “Completely willing.”

The fifth section presented participants with previously identified barriers to utilizing sport psychology services. These particular items were chosen based on their reoccurrence in the literature review and in other instruments (ATSSPCQ, SPA-R, and SPA-RC). Coaches were asked their level of agreement (“Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”) with each barrier. The final section of the CPSPQ asked participants to rate their overall perception of the value of sport psychology on a 3-point Likert scale which ranged from “Not at all valuable,” to “Extremely valuable.” This final section also included an open-ended question asking participants to “express any additional comments regarding the use of sport psychology at the community college level.” The results of this final component were analyzed qualitatively using “open coding,” as well (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Procedure

Coaches were contacted via email using information obtained from the California Community College Athletic Association’s website. An email was generated and sent to 205 coaches using the online survey creation and administration site “SurveyMonkey.com.” The email stated the purpose of the study, provided a link for participants to click on if they chose to participate (Appendix B), and explained that the survey would take about ten minutes to complete. Participants were told they had 14 days to complete the survey. This time restriction was chosen based on the author’s preference and deadline requirements. Prior to completing the survey, the coaches were asked to voluntarily read the informed consent form that was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, Fullerton. Given the online

nature of this research, completion of the questionnaire indicated that the coaches understood the study and consented to be a participant.

As the participating coaches completed the CPSPQ, their results were automatically sent and stored in the SurveyMonkey.com database. Of the 205 email addresses that were contacted, twenty-nine notices of invalid email addresses were received. One week after the initial email, a reminder email was sent to all the coaches who had yet to respond, urging them to participate (Appendix C). With one day remaining in the allotted time, a final email was sent to those coaches who still had not responded. This email explained that it was their final chance to be a participant in this study (Appendix D). After the 14 specified days, the CPSPQ was closed and there were 56 respondents to the questionnaire. One coach was eliminated from the study because he or she did not complete all of the items on the questionnaire. As a result, there were 55 valid participants, a response rate of approximately 31%.

Data Analysis

A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was derived using the participants' data taken from the SurveyMonkey.com database. Each item from the questionnaire was then analyzed and coded to create a Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) database.

Multiple one-way Analyses of Variances (ANOVAs) were conducted using SPSS in the current study. First, five separate ANOVAs were conducted to determine the relationship between the coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology and (1) gender, (2) college major, (3) title, (4) sport, and (5) exposure. Next, five additional one-

way ANOVAs were conducted to determine the relationship between the coaches' willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant and (1) gender, (2) college major, (3) title, (4) sport, and (5) exposure. The coaches' overall perception of the value of sport psychology was determined by taking the mean score of all the participants' answers on item 54 (Appendix F). The coaches' overall willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant was also determined by combining the scores on items 32-45 (Appendix F) for all participants and calculating the overall mean.

Two additional ANOVAs were conducted to determine the relationship between the perceived barrier of time and the coaches' willingness to bring in an SPC, and the perceived barrier of money and the coaches' willingness to bring in an SPC. Those who perceived time as a barrier were compared to those who do not perceive time as a barrier to examine if that was a predictor of their willingness to bring in an SPC. If a participant answered "Strongly agree," "Moderately agree," or "Slightly agree" they were considered in the group that perceived time as a barrier. If a participant answered "Strongly disagree," "Moderately disagree," or "Slightly disagree" they were considered in the group that did not perceive time as a barrier. Additionally, those who perceived money as a barrier were compared to those who do not perceive money as a barrier to examine if that was a predictor of their willingness to bring in an SPC. If a participant answered "Strongly agree," "Moderately agree," or "Slightly agree" they were considered in the group that perceived money as a barrier. If a participant answered "Strongly disagree," "Moderately disagree," or "Slightly disagree" they were considered in the group that did

not perceive money as a barrier. An alpha level of $p \leq 0.5$ was considered significant for all comparisons.

In addition, frequency counts were summarized to determine the percentages of coaches that agreed with each of the presented barriers. If a coach answered “Strongly agree,” “Moderately agree,” or “Slightly agree” they were considered to agree with the statement. If a participant answered “Strongly disagree,” “Moderately disagree,” or “Slightly disagree” they were considered not to agree with the statement.

The concluding question in the survey, which asked for any additional comments regarding sport psychology at the community college level, was independently qualitatively analyzed using “open coding” analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Out of all the participants that fully completed the survey ($n = 55$), 37 chose to provide additional comments. Comments that contained more than one theme were broken down and placed into more than one category. The comments were then examined for phenomena. The phenomena were then placed into categories, and those categories were named. These comments were placed into nine thematic categories: money, education, proponents, nature of community colleges, time, want a consultant, doing PST on their own, psychologist, and life skills.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of the current study was to assess community college coaches' perceptions of sport psychology by administering an online questionnaire to California baseball and softball coaches. An email was sent to coaches, detailing the study and providing a link if they chose to participate. Of the coaches emailed, 55 finished the questionnaire completely. More specifically, the researcher aimed to (a) determine community college coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology, (b) evaluate their willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant to work with them and their team, (c) understand their perceptions of common barriers to utilizing sport psychology services, and (d) give participants a forum to share any further thoughts concerning community college athletics and sport psychology.

Perceptions of the Value of Sport Psychology

The first purpose of this study was to determine community college coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology. In the first section, participants were presented with fourteen statements and asked to rate how valuable they found sport psychology in dealing with the given statement. The statements were divided into three categories of situations: Performance (i.e., dealing with pressure), Other Psychology Skills (i.e., dealing with injury/rehabilitation), and Team Building (i.e., communicating

with coaches) (Appendix G). The coaches rated each statement on a scale from 1 to 3 (1=Not at all valuable, 2=Moderately valuable, 3=Extremely valuable) (Appendix F).

Multiple one-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine relationships between the five independent variables and coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology. First, a one-way ANOVA was conducted looking at the relationship between gender and coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology. There were no significant differences found between male and female coaches in their perceptions of the value of sport psychology. Next, a one-way ANOVA was performed examining education and coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology. The researcher combined all answers that indicated an undergraduate and/or graduate degree in physical education, kinesiology, sport sciences, and the like to be coined as "Kinesiology majors." Anyone not falling into this category was considered a "non-major." There were no significant differences found between kinesiology majors and non-majors in their perceptions of the value of sport psychology.

Next, the researcher performed a one-way ANOVA on the coaches' title and coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology. There were no significant differences between head and assistant coaches and coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology. Then, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the sport and coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology. There were no significant differences between baseball and softball coaches and coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology. Finally, a one-way ANOVA was performed on exposure and coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology. The researcher defined any participant that

had met with a sport psychology consultant as an athlete or coach, or both as “exposed.” A participant was “unexposed” if they had never worked with a sport psychology consultant as an athlete or coach. Similarly, there were no significant differences found between the exposed and unexposed coaches and coaches’ perceptions of the value of sport psychology.

A final item on the questionnaire asked the participants to rate their overall perception of the value of sport psychology utilizing the same 1 to 3 scale (1=Not at all valuable, 2=Moderately valuable, 3=Extremely valuable). The mean score was 2.615 ($n = 55$), indicating all of the coaches either answered “Moderately valuable” ($n = 13$) or “Extremely valuable” ($n = 42$).

Willingness to Bring in a Sport Psychology Consultant

The second purpose of this study was to determine coaches’ willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant to work with them and their team. The participants were presented the identical fourteen statements from the first section and asked to rate how willing they were to bring in a sport psychology consultant to deal with the given statement. For this section, the coaches were asked to rate their answer on a scale from 1 to 4 (1=Completely unwilling to 4=Completely willing) (Appendix F).

The same five independent variables were used in conducting multiple one-way ANOVAs to determine their relationships with coaches’ willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant. Results from this ANOVA indicated that female coaches were more willing than male coaches to bring in a sport psychology consultant $F(1, 53) = 5.079, p < .05$. Further investigation of all three categories of situations indicated that

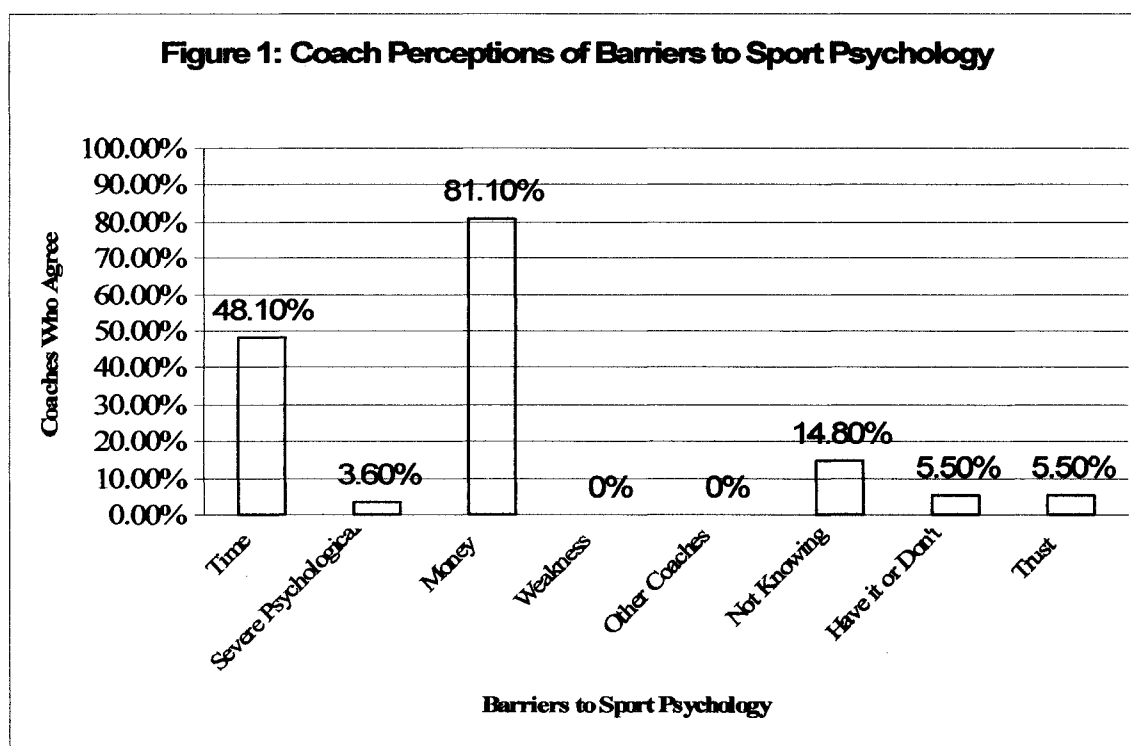
females were specifically more willing to bring in an SPC to deal with other psychological issues (e.g., dealing with injury/rehabilitation, preventing burnout, increasing sport enjoyment, and dealing with personal issues) than male coaches. There were no significant differences between majors and non-majors, head and assistant coaches, baseball and softball coaches, or exposed and unexposed coaches and coaches' willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant

To get gain a better understanding of coaches' willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant in the given situations as a whole, the researcher looked at the averages from this section and calculated an overall mean score of 3.626 (n = 55). Participants were asked to answer from 1 ("Completely unwilling") to 4 ("Completely willing"). This indicates that majority of coaches either answered "Possibly willing" or "Completely willing" in regards to their willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant for the fourteen given situations.

Perceived Barriers to Sport Psychology

The next purpose of this study was to determine the level of the coaches' agreement with previously established common barriers to utilizing sport psychology services. Coaches rated seven common barriers using a 1 to 6 rating scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 6=Strongly Agree). The percentages of coaches that agreed with each statement were calculated (n = 55) and are presented in Figure 1. Time (81.10%, n = 43) was reported as the greatest perceived barrier to utilizing sport psychology services, followed by money (48.10%, n = 26) and not knowing what was said between an SPC and an athlete (14.80%, n = 8). Of minimal concern to the polled coaches was the belief

that athletes either have mental skills or they don't and the ability to trust an SPC with athletes (5.50%, n = 3 for both). Only 3.60% (n = 2) coaches thought that sport psychology is only for athletes with severe psychological disturbances. No coaches agreed to the perceived barriers of other coaches thinking less of them or that individuals who use sport psychology are "weak".

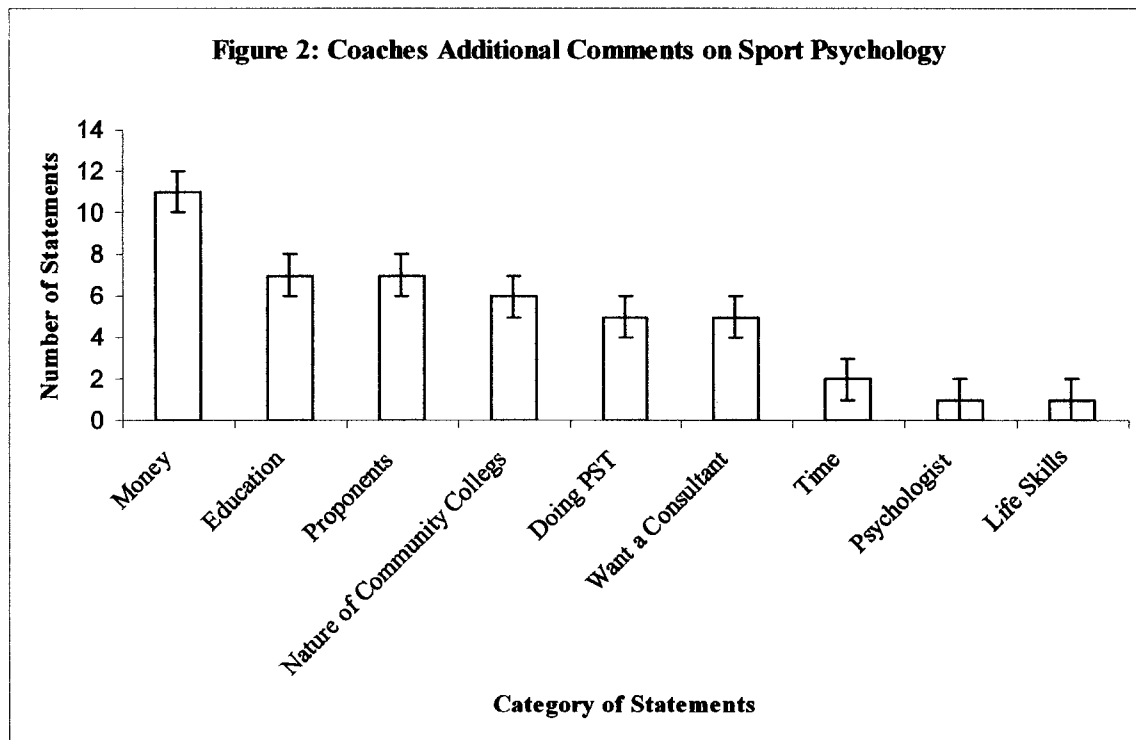


Since coaches reported money (81.10%) and time (48.10%) to be the greatest barriers to utilizing sport psychology services, the author wanted to test how these barriers affected coaches' willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant. Another one-way ANOVA was performed to compare coaches who perceived money to be a

barrier versus coaches who did not, and their willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant. There were no significant differences found between coaches who perceived money to be a barrier and coaches who did not and their willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant. Another one-way ANOVA was also conducted to compare coaches who perceived time to be a barrier versus coaches who did not, and their willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant. Again, there were no significant differences found between coaches who perceive time as a barrier and coaches who did not and their willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant.

Forum for Coaches

The final purpose of this study was to provide a forum for the coaches to share any other views they had on community college sports and the use of sport psychology. A blank was provided at the end of the questionnaire for participants to “provide additional comments regarding the use of sport psychology at the community college level.” Out of all the participants that fully completed the survey ($n = 55$), 37 chose to provide additional comments. This data was qualitatively analyzed independently using “open coding” analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These comments were placed into nine thematic categories: money, education, proponents, nature of community colleges, time, want a consultant, doing PST on their own, psychologist, and life skills. The categories and distribution of statements are represented in Figure 2.



The most discussed topic by the participants ($n = 11$) was “Money.” These coaches talked about how their budgets simply were not big enough to support sport psychology services. Participant 2 stated, “I believe it is unrealistic because there are no funds.” The next most discussed topic ($n = 7$) was “Education.” Many coaches explained that they provide their student-athletes with books and other reading materials, along with videos and guest speakers in order to teach them the fundamentals of sport psychology. Participant 5 shared, “As a coaching staff, we introduce sports psych, and provide the players with recent articles, reviews, books, etc. that address the value of sport psych.”

Several of the coaches explained that they were “Proponents” of the use of sport psychology services at the community college level ($n = 7$). These participants praised

sport psychology and what it has done for them and their teams, and expressed interest in learning more about it. Participant 34 explained that sport psychology was “a must if you want your team to reach its full potential.” The “Nature of Community Colleges” was also discussed by many coaches (n = 6). They explained that the transitory nature of the community college athlete and perhaps the lack of maturity may be reasons why sport psychology is hard to incorporate into their systems. Participant 30 said, “I am also skeptical [of sport psychology at the community college level] because community college athletes are often more immature and may not be able to comprehend the opportunity.”

Several of the coaches (n = 5) explained that they had already incorporated sport psychology into their programs and were “Doing Psychological Skills Training on their own.” Participant 5 stated, “We set aside time for mental imagery and visualization, breathing techniques to prepare for game/pressure moments. We do this on average one time every two weeks. But we encourage and instruct the players to be proactive in mental imagery on a daily basis on their own time.” Several coaches expressed that they “Want a Consultant” to come and work with them and their team (n = 5). Participant 46 shared, “I would love the idea of having a sport psychologist on staff to work with our baseball program and other athletic programs. It is imperative to at least have that option.” Two coaches expressed that “Time” was a significant barrier to utilizing sport psychology services. “Sport psychology is a great tool. If there was monetary support then we'd definitely make time for it,” stated Participant 30. One coach explained that their program utilizes a clinical “Psychologist” to help their athletes, “I have used

individuals in our psychology department to talk with the athletes. They are not sport psychologists, but have been very helpful.” Finally, one participant expressed the importance of turning the lessons learned in the sport setting into “Life Skills”: “[Sport psychology] has tremendous application to real world situations, not just athletics.”

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to assess community college baseball and softball coaches' perceptions of sport psychology. More specifically, the author aimed to a) determine community college coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology, b) understand their willingness to bring in a sport psychology consultant (SPC) to work with them and their team, c) determine their perceptions of previously identified common barriers to utilizing sport psychology services, and d) give participants a forum to share any further thoughts concerning community college athletics and sport psychology.

Examination of Results

Five one-way ANOVAs were conducted to determine if the participants' gender, college major, coaching title, sport, or exposure to sport psychology were possible predictors of their perceptions of the value of sport psychology. Five additional one-way ANOVAs were conducted on the same five independent variables and willingness to bring in an SPC. Coaches were also asked to rate their level of agreement with eight previously determined commonly perceived barriers to sport psychology. Finally, participants were given the opportunity to express any additional comments concerning community colleges and sport psychology.

In general, it appears community college coaches perceive sport psychology to be valuable. Participant 32 explained, "I believe sport psychology is extremely beneficial at

all levels . . . anytime an environment can be enhanced with resources for development and performance within the mental aspects of the game, it needs to be utilized.”

Furthermore, Participant 26 added, “If you want to win games, you should look in to the psychology of sport. If you ask any baseball player what percentage of baseball is mental, he would say 90-95%. This is a direct indication that each team could benefit from such studying and help.” In addition, it also appears overall that community college coaches are willing to bring in an SPC. Participant 9 explained, “If someone wanted to volunteer their time to work with these athletes, I would be excited to work with them.”

The following sections will examine each independent variable separately in terms of the significance of results and what they mean in regards to the purpose of this study.

Gender

There were 205 coaches emailed for the purposes of this study. Males accounted for approximately 72% (n = 149) of the recipients while females accounted for approximately 26% of the recipients (n = 56). Furthermore, all of the female coaches in this survey (n = 13) coached softball, while 4 male participants specified softball as their sport. No female coaches indicated an affiliation with baseball. These figures could speak to the underrepresentation of females in the profession of coaching.

Gender was not a predictor of the coaches’ perceptions of the value of sport psychology in the current study. Previous research on perceptions found that female non-athletes did not associate a stigma with athletes who worked with an SPC, and female athletes were more open to the consulting process (Linder et al., 1991; Martin et al.,

2001). In addition, previous research on coaches' perceptions indicated that gender was a possible predictor of coaches' intentions to use sport psychology services, in that female coaches had significantly more stigma tolerance and personal openness than male coaches (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). The absence of significant differences when observing perceptions and gender is possibly due to the low number of females in the current study ($n = 13$).

Previous research with gender and willingness indicated that male athletes were more hesitant to work with an SPC, more likely to adhere to the stigma attached to working with an SPC, and appeared to identify with consultants of their own race and culture in comparison to female athletes (Martin, 2005; Martin et al., 1997). Gender was determined to be a significant predictor of the willingness to bring in an SPC in the current study. Further investigation of all three categories of situations (Performance, Other Psychology Skills, and Team Building) revealed that female coaches were specifically more willing to bring in an SPC to deal with Other Psychology Skills (e.g., dealing with injury/rehabilitation, preventing burnout, increasing sport enjoyment, and dealing with personal issues) than male coaches. This finding could be attributed to the stereotypical belief that women are more likely viewed as "care givers" and are more "in-touch" with their emotions and feelings. In addition, in the male ego dominated world of athletics, a male coach may think he will be looked down upon if seen asking for help. Perhaps female coaches are better able or more willing to recognize when a situation arises that is out of their field of expertise than male coaches, and therefore are more

willing to bring in an SPC to deal with those situations surrounding injuries, burnout, enjoyment, and personal issues.

College major

College major was not a predictor of either the coaches' perception of the value of sport psychology or their willingness to bring in an SPC. The majority of coaches in the current study were Kinesiology majors ($n = 37$). Previous research did not include any direct observations regarding the influence of college majors on perceptions or willingness. However, it could be expected that coaches with more of a Kinesiology background would have better perceptions and be more willing because they would have a greater understanding of the field and the benefits of working with an SPC through their coursework. They would also be familiar with more individual qualified to deliver sport psychology services. For example, Participant 32 was a Kinesiology major and overall found sport psychology "Extremely valuable." She added, "I try as a coach to incorporate many of the tools I learned through undergraduate/graduate classes in sport psychology/psychology of coaching with my team." On the other hand, Participant 40 was a business major who also found sport psychology to be "Extremely valuable," and responded, "I have found the experience [of sport psychology] very valuable. I will continue to work with one as long as I am coaching." On the other hand, because of their background, perhaps these coaches have taken (or think they have taken) the necessary coursework to be capable of administering sport psychology services themselves. For example, Participant 25 was identified as a Kinesiology major who has never worked with an SPC. He explained, "I have had numerous graduate level sport psychology courses in my

education. I believe it is very important for enhancing the performance of my student-athletes. I use imagery and breathing techniques.”

A better predictor of perceptions and willingness might be the amount of coaching experience rather than their college major. The lack of significant findings with college major could be due to the accumulated knowledge that coaches gain throughout their coaching careers. Another issue inherent in the design of this study was the identification of Kinesiology majors versus non-majors for the purposes of categorizing and comparing participants. The author realized *ex post facto* that a student, depending on their concentration, can be a Kinesiology major without having any real exposure to sport psychology. They can simply enroll in classes specific to their concentration and never sit in a sport psychology-related classroom. Since the results indicated that major did not make a significant difference, this change in classification doubtfully would have made an impact.

Coaching title

Coaching title was not a predictor of the coaches’ perceptions of the value of sport psychology or willingness to bring in an SPC in the current study either. The sample consisted of 44 head coaches and 11 assistant coaches. Previous research did not include any direct observations regarding the influence of coaching title on perceptions or willingness. However, anecdotal evidence points to the tendency of assistant coaches to imitate the philosophies’ of their head coaches, regardless of their own beliefs, to maintain favor with the head coach. In other words, if a head coach is a proponent of yoga, his assistant becomes a huge fan of yoga when he is hired. For example, multiple

members of the same coaching staff from one baseball program could have completed this survey: the head coach and any additional assistant coaches. If the head coach perceived sport psychology to be “Extremely valuable,” then perhaps his assistant coaches would also respond that they found sport psychology “Extremely valuable.” The assistant coaches may be answering in a sociably desirable way to appease the head coach. Hopefully the assistant coaches in this study answered honestly given the guaranteed confidentiality of the study, but there is no way of knowing if these are the genuine perceptions of sport psychology held by these coaches, or merely an attempt to be accommodating to their head coach’s philosophy.

Additionally, head coaches may be unwilling to bring in an SPC because they do not want to give up their power. They do not want “just anyone” coming in and taking away some of the perceived control of their teams. Head coaches work incredibly hard to reach their current positions and many may be understandably hesitant to bring in someone outside of their program to work with their athletes. Furthermore, an assistant coach that wants to bring in an SPC may not have that authority. On the other hand, an assistant coach may not want to bring in an SPC because they may feel that it will take away from some of their duties, or even their income.

Lastly, the lack of significant findings regarding coaching title could be attributed to the low number of assistant coaches in the study. Many assistant coaches’ contact information is not available for public viewing because a lot of them do not stay with the same program for long, or are volunteers.

Sport

In the current study, sport was not found to be a significant predictor of community colleges coaches' perceptions of sport psychology or their willingness to bring in an SPC. There were 38 baseball coaches and 17 softball coaches. There is no past research specifically comparing the perceptions or willingness of those who coach baseball versus those who coach softball. The lack of significant findings within this variable could be attributed to the equivalent strategies of both baseball and softball. These games are very similar in that they utilize many identical techniques, both physically and mentally. Therefore, it is not surprising that there were no significant differences found in these groups in regards to their perceptions of sport psychology.

However, based on the previous significant findings in this study regarding gender, it could be predicted that softball coaches would be more willing to bring in an SPC than baseball coaches because all of the females in the study were softball coaches. More specifically, softball coaches could be more willing to bring in an SPC to deal with situations involving injuries, burnout, sport enjoyment, and personal problems than baseball coaches. Possibly because there were 4 male softball coaches, sport was not a significant predictor of willingness. Additionally, softball coaches could be more willing to bring in an SPC because their athletes are female. As stated when examining gender previously, women are said to have a better understanding of their feelings and could therefore be possibly more open to outside help whereas a baseball coach may be criticized for being "too soft" for bringing in an SPC to help his male athletes.

A possible explanation for the low response rate in this study regarding sport is that the research was conducted with baseball and softball teams in the spring. Baseball and softball are in-season during the spring. If the study took place during any other time, perhaps it would have yielded a larger response rate. Another reason for lack of significant differences in regard to sport could be the insufficient deviation between the strategies and nature of softball and baseball. If the coaches of sports outside of baseball and softball were polled, there could have been more differences. An interesting comparison would be the perceptions of those who coach contact versus non-contact sports. Previous research indicates that athletes who play a contact sport are more likely to associate a stigma with athletes who consult with an SPC than those who play a non-contact sport (Martin, 2005). In addition, it would be intriguing to explore the perceptions of those who coach individual (i.e., golf) versus team (i.e., basketball) sports. The field of sport psychology is more accepted overall in individual sports such as golf, tennis, and figure skating, so it would be expected that these coaches would hold sport psychology in high regard.

Exposure to Sport Psychology

Finally, exposure was not a predictor of the coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology or their willingness to bring in an SPC in the current study. Previous research on athletes' perceptions and their exposure to sport psychology indicated that there were no differences in those athletes who had sport psychology services available and those who did not (Page et al., 2001; Van Raalte et al., 1992). Specifically, the results of one study indicated that 87% of the coaches had previously worked with an SPC and

22% were currently working with one, yet previous exposure was not an indicator of coaches' intention to utilize an SPC (Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). In the current study, approximately 38% of the coaches used sport psychology services as an athlete, while 22% currently have an SPC available to their team. This low number of participants with exposure to sport psychology could have attributed to the lack of significant findings. If more participants would have been exposed to sport psychology services there could have been a more accurate representation of the coaching population's perceptions of sport psychology.

Furthermore, it would be expected that previous (and/or current) exposure to sport psychology services would be a significant predictor of a perception of sport psychology, although this perception could be labeled valuable or worthless depending on the participants' experience. However, perhaps the perceived effectiveness of these experiences is a more appropriate predictor. For example, of the coaches who had exposure to sport psychology services in the current study as an athlete, approximately 48% found this experience "Extremely effective." Even more telling though is that approximately 85% have referred one of their athletes to an SPC. Therefore, in regards to coaches' perceptions of the value of sport psychology, it is possible that the quality of the services provided, or the effectiveness of the SPC is a better predictor than simply the amount of exposure.

Four-Year Universities versus Community Colleges

The differences between four-year university athletics as opposed to those at the community college level can be night and day. Despite sometimes only being

geographically separated by a few miles or even blocks, they can seem a world apart. The four-year programs generally have the newest equipment, quality playing facilities, bleachers full of adoring fans, endless travels budgets, the best tutors, and infinite media exposure, while community college programs often have hand-me-down equipment, share facilities with high schools, struggle to find quality coaching, and worry if their athletes will be academically eligible.

Resources

Lack of adequate funds can be a tremendous problem for many athletic departments, especially at the community college level. Jenkins (2006) explained that budget constraints are a serious problem facing many community college athletic programs, so much so that some entire programs are being cut altogether. For the programs that manage to stay afloat, this means pinching pennies everywhere possible. Participant 36 explained, "Lack of money is a big issue at the community college level." A lack of money in the program can make it difficult to provide athletes with the best equipment, uniforms, fields of play, and access to additional services such as sport psychology.

The equipment that many community college athletes use was once new, but that may have been two, five, or even ten years ago. They are oftentimes wearing uniforms that are outdated, and equipment that is used to the point that it is unsafe. It is also difficult for these programs to employ full-time athletic trainers. Also, many of these programs must share playing facilities with local high schools, other community colleges,

and youth recreational leagues, making it both hard to maintain quality facilities and difficult to schedule practices and games.

Due to budget constraints it can be difficult for community college athletic programs to afford anything that might be considered a luxury. Oftentimes, they are just barely getting by with what they have. A luxury to a community college team could be traveling on a team bus, getting meal money, having an athletic trainer present at practice, or hiring an SPC. They may consider sport psychology services “out of their reach.” Perhaps all they know is that SPCs cost money and that is money they do not have. Since many coaches (and athletes) at the community college level have never been exposed to the potential benefits of sport psychology services, it would be difficult for them to have an educated perception of sport psychology and the services that SPCs provide.

Athlete

The community college athlete is oftentimes quite different than the four-year university athlete. As O’Meara (2008) expressed, there is a reason these athletes are at community colleges rather than four-year universities. One, or more typically a combination, of circumstances directs student-athletes to a community college rather than a four-year university.

One of the reasons an athlete may choose a community college is that they see it as an opportunity to develop both as a student and an athlete for a good price (Lattman, 2008). Some student-athletes could be disillusioned by the prospect of large class sizes far away from home, or by the outrageous price of a college education. Others may see

this as their opportunity to get bigger, stronger, and faster to get noticed by four-year programs that maybe were not interested in them as a high school athlete.

Many baseball players choose to go the community college route because of the possibility of entering the Major League Baseball Draft earlier. Once a baseball player enters a four-year program they are not eligible for the Draft until they turn 21 years old or are a junior in school. If the player chooses to go to a community college, they are eligible at anytime for the Draft. This can be very appealing to some athletes.

Another circumstance that makes many community college athletes different than four-year athletes is their background. One report states that the number of Latino students, first-generation college students, and students from low-income families that are graduating from high school and seeking to enroll in college in California is on the rise (Hayward, Jones, McGuinness, & Timar, 2004). Many of these students will enroll in the California community college system. These students may feel heavy pressure to excel at athletics and school, while still being responsible for the family. In addition, some community college student-athletes may have a troubled past that can be attributed to the environment where they were raised. Some of these athletes are gang affiliated, have been drug users, or got in other trouble with law enforcement.

Some community college athletes may be there instead of a four-year school because they have difficulties with their academics. Many community colleges do not have the tutorial services that four-year programs provide, leaving these athletes at a disadvantage. Even if the academic tutorial services are provided, many community college athletes may not have the motivation or time (because of practice, games, and

travel) to seek out such services. These players' lack of time could also be attributed to the fact that many of them have outside obligations, such as jobs to help their families. This unfortunately renders many players academically ineligible and later unable to progress to a four-year school because they cannot meet the minimum grade requirements.

Some athletes who play at the community college level are there for physical reasons. For example, they may be rehabilitating an injury that occurred in high school, or even at another college. They could see athletics at a community college as a chance to slow things down and regain the strength after the injury that is necessary to compete at the next level. They may be part of the program for less than a year and then move on. Additionally, a community college athlete could simply be there because they are not big enough, fast enough, or essentially good enough to play at a higher level. As participant 14 explained, "Community college level athletes in my program are playing one or two years and then their career is over. The minority of athletes move on."

Due to the nature of the some community college athletes, coaches may feel that they do not have time or the need for sport psychology services. These coaches may feel that they need to focus on other things like keeping their athletes out of trouble and academically eligible, rather than sport psychology techniques. However, coaches may also perceive sport psychology as a positive avenue for teaching their athletes skills such as goal-setting and anxiety control that will have a direct impact on not only their athletic careers, but on their lives as a whole.

Coach

Some head coaches at four-year schools drive cars leased by the university, have nice offices, get bonuses for making play-offs, and employ secretaries, while community college coaches frequently have to get a second job outside of their coaching duties due to the lack of money in their program's budget. This could put unwanted stress on the coaches in that they are trying to balance running their program, their additional job, their family lives, etc.

Also due to budget constraints, many assistant coaches at the community college level get paid very little, and sometimes not at all. They may be strictly volunteers that are there for the love of the game and to help teach the athletes. Many assistant coaches at this level are just finishing their playing careers and see this as an opportunity to get started in coaching.

Community college coaches face challenges and difficulties that most four-year coaches never have to encounter. The unique situations and motivations that drive these student-athletes to pursue a career in community college athletics oftentimes force the coaches of these players to be skilled multi-taskers and the wearer of many hats. On any given day, because of the nature of the community college system, a coach is a friend, mentor, father, secretary, strength coach, athletic trainer, and tutor. This does not even include the responsibilities of their second job if they are obligated to have one. On the other hand, the coaching staffs at many four-year universities could employ a whole army of individuals help to them run their program: multiple assistant coaches, secretaries, facilities director, equipment manager, travel coordinator, etc.

Due to the aforementioned obstacles that many community college coaches face, they may not consider sport psychology services a priority. They could be so overwhelmed with the responsibilities of their current coach job, and sometimes even a second job, that bringing in an SPC to work with their team has not even crossed their minds. Perhaps if it has crossed their minds, it seems, once again, out of their reach because of the lack of recourses and the nature of athletes whom they coach.

Relevance to Practitioners

The relevance of this study is vast for practitioners in field of sport psychology. For example, a majority of the coaches (81%) in the study indicated that lack of time is a primary concern with athletes and coaches in terms of utilizing sport psychology services. But when coaches (or athletes) say that they do not have time for sport psychology services, what do they really mean? Many coaches have the time to practice the same bunt defense over and over again, or have the time to stay in the batting cage until the sun goes down, yet they indicate they don't have the time for sport psychology. The answer perhaps is simple: either they don't really want it, or they don't value it as much as they say they do. If a coach truly believed in the benefits of something, whether it was yoga, calisthenics, weight training, or sport psychology, they would absolutely make time for it. Coaches that genuinely believe in the benefits of sport psychology would gladly sacrifice time in the batting cage or repetitions in the weight room in exchange for an SPC to come work with their team.

Many coaches (48%) also indicated money to be a significant barrier to utilizing sport psychology services. This problem is especially true at the community college level

(Jenkins, 2006). Participant 17 explained, “Sport psychology would be a valuable service but it is about 8th on a list of 10 of all the things we need prior to that. Budgets at the community college level in most cases would never get there.” Some community college programs cannot even pay their assistant coaches or afford new uniforms and equipment. Participant 50 explained, “With lack of funds, it is unrealistic to bring in a sport psychologist when half of our coaches are part time.” However, once again the question must be asked: If a coach really believed in the benefits of sport psychology, wouldn’t they find the money in their budgets to employ an SPC, or at the very least, seek out ways to incorporate sport psychology with minimal expense? Some coaches find the money to buy multiple \$300 titanium bats and pitching machines worth thousands of dollars, yet they claim they cannot afford to hire an SPC. In general, coaches are not even truly informed as to how much sport psychology services really cost. Most seem to make an assumption that sport psychology services echo the medical model of service provision in their fee structures. While this may be the case in some limited environments, the general reality is often far more economical. For example, many graduate programs in sport psychology will allow their students to do their internships with community colleges and high schools. In this instance, there would be absolutely no cost to the programs with whom these graduate students work. These students are simply there to accumulate knowledge from both the coaches and athletes, as well as gain practical experience as a beginning SPC.

Furthermore, several coaches agreed that a barrier to sport psychology was not knowing what was said between an SPC and an athlete. In addition, three coaches agreed

that they struggled with trusting an SPC with their athletes. The fact that these numbers are small is very encouraging. However, these perceived barriers reflect previous statements in that it is oftentimes hard for coaches to relinquish even the tiniest bit of control to anyone else, especially an outsider to the program. Many coaches may fear that an SPC will say something to the athletes that is not in line with the program's philosophy. The coach could also possibly see the SPC as someone the player will run to when they are having a bad day to criticize the coach. Coaches could also be afraid that the program's inner-workings (i.e., team conflicts, trick plays, etc.) may become public knowledge if the SPC breaks confidentially.

Only 5.50% of coaches thought that "athletes either have mental skills or they don't". This level of agreement by the coaches in this study indicates that they believe, for the most part, that sport psychology skills are something than be taught to and utilized by any athlete. Skills such as goal setting, relaxation, and imagery are not terribly complex, and with time and patience can be learned by anyone. The mental skills of the game must be developed just like the physical tools (Ravizza & Hanson, 1995). Most players are not born with all their talent; they must work hard at developing their skills.

Only two coaches agreed with the statement that "sport psychology is only for athletes with severe psychological disturbances," while none agreed with the statement that "individuals who use sport psychology are weak." This is very encouraging to the field because it is contrary to much past research. Previous research indicates that non-athletes, athletes, and coaches associate a stigma with individuals who consult with an SPC. (Linder et al., 1989; Martin et al., 2001; Zakrajsek & Zizzi, 2007). Some believe

that sport psychology is only for “problem athletes” or “mental patients” (Linder et al. 1989; Ravizza, 1988). Furthermore, SPCs oftentimes have the negative connotation of being a “shrink” (Ravizza, 1990). Results here indicate that perhaps the days of thinking of athletes who need help as “wimps” or that they should just “rub some dirt on it” have passed. Perhaps the day has finally arrived when sport psychology is associated with athletes wanting to reach their full potential, as opposed to only being for those “messed up in the head.”

Finally, none of the coaches in the present study stated that other coaches thinking less of them was a barrier to utilizing sport psychology services. This value is encouraging because it indicates that coaches are making decisions on their own, regardless of what others think around them. Hopefully, if coaches think sport psychology could benefit their team they would use it without hesitation. On the other hand, perhaps the coaches in the study answered that they did not care about what other coaches thought of them because in reality, they do not want other coaches thinking poorly of them for seeking “outside help.”

Study Limitations

Before discussing any recommendations or conclusions, this study’s limitations must be examined:

- (1) Due to the exploratory nature of the study, there were no a priori hypotheses. If the author would have established hypotheses prior to beginning the research, more comparisons and explanations could have been made upon completion.

- (2) The author assumed that the participants read and understood the directions and all aspects of the questionnaire. If a participant did not read or understand a direction or question and answered it anyway, it could have skewed the results.
- (3) The author assumed that the coaches who completed the survey were honest with their responses and that the participants did not answer the questions in a socially desirable manner. Knowing that this research was being conducted by a graduate student in sport psychology could have influenced them to answer favorably towards sport psychology. This possibility could skew the results in that overall the participants did not perceive sport psychology to be as valuable as they claimed. Also, it is possible that only those coaches who perceived sport psychology as valuable were the ones that chose to participate.
- (4) The author put a response limitation of 14 days on the recipients due to university deadlines. Perhaps if the response time period would have been longer, there would have been an increased sample size.
- (5) The questionnaire (CPSPQ) designed for this study has never been tested on any other population. It was tested for face and content validity strictly for the purposes of this study. If the CPSPQ was a more tested and reliable instrument, the power of this study could have been increased.
- (6) Since the questionnaire was administered through an online site, a possible shortcoming of this study is that the researcher could never be totally sure of who actually completed the survey.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Upon completing this project, the author realized that there are many possible recommendations for future research. For example, with regard to the content of the questionnaire, the participants should have been asked both their age and number of years in the coaching profession. The results of one previous study indicated that older males tend to associate a stigma with those who work with an SPC more than both younger males and females (Linder et al., 1991). Therefore, it would have been interesting to know if age or years coaching would have been predictors of perceptions or willingness to bring in an SPC. Perhaps, younger coaches would perceive sport psychology and SPCs more favorably because they will try anything to get the advantage. They have also grown up in a world where sport psychology is commonly more accepted. Furthermore, older coaches may not be willing to give up their power and are more established and set in their ways. On the other hand, perhaps older coaches would be more open to sport psychology because they have the accumulated knowledge which allows them to recognize when a situation is outside their realm of expertise.

Another recommendation for future research would be to enhance the CSPSQ by polling the participants regarding their perceived benefits of sport psychology services, rather than just the perceived barriers. Asking about such benefits could have made the coaches more inclined to focus on the positive aspects of sport psychology rather than the negative. However, this could also be seen as leading the participants in a predetermined direction, and as such would need to be addressed accordingly.

In conclusion, the purpose of the current study was to assess the perceptions sport psychology of community college coaches. The results of this research are encouraging in that it would appear that all of the coaches who took part in the study value sport psychology and are willing to bring in an SPC to help their team. The coaches in this study also reflected their frustration with many of the common barriers to sport psychology, such as time and money. Although many coaches expressed that time and money were the most significant barriers, perhaps these coaches just aren't ready for it or don't know how to go about seeking an SPC that could fit with their programs. Many graduate programs offer the services of their students for free to willing coaches and programs. If more coaches knew they could have an SPC come work with their teams for free, they would possibly be more willing to seek sport psychology services.

The implications of these findings are important to coaches, athletes, athletic administrators, and sport psychology consultants. It is imperative that coaches have a voice and that the appropriate professionals hear that voice. It appears that despite the stigma associated with sport psychology, community college coaches recognize its value for the success of their athletes and the sustainability of their programs. Coaches have the power to create positive environments, ones in which their athletes can mature on and off the playing field. The skills that their athletes are learning on the playing fields can also be applied to their lives. This is perhaps even more relevant for the community college student-athlete.

It is critical for SPCs to recognize that working with coaches and athletes at the community college level can be a totally different experience than working with a four-

year university program. These athletes and coaches often have completely different needs and motivations, and this requires unique attention and understanding on the part of the SPC. An SPC that chooses to work with a community college team must realize that it *will* be frustrating at times. However, the “small victories,” such as finally making a connection with that oftentimes frigid athlete, or seeing a pitcher take a deep breath and move on after a giving up a home run, are reward enough to bring a tear to the eye. Understanding and adapting to the needs of coaches at the community college level will only serve to enhance their perceptions of the field of sport psychology and make them more willing to incorporate sport psychology services, and perhaps even an SPC, into their programs.

APPENDIX A
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Stigmatization: “a brand or mark that represents a deterrent to associating with a particular person or profession” (Martin et al., 1997, p. 204).

APPENDIX B

INITIAL EMAIL TO COACHES

To: [Email]
From: kristinfrevert@yahoo.com
Subject: Community College Coaches' Perceptions of Sport Psychology
Body: Dear Coach [LastName]:

My name is Kristin Frevert and I am conducting research on community college coaches' perceptions of sport psychology as a part of my Master's thesis at CSU Fullerton. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. I am sending my survey via email to all the community college baseball and softball coaches in California.

If anyone on your coaching staff or in your coaching circle did not receive this survey and would like to be a part of this research please respond to this email with their names and email addresses. Unfortunately, the nature of the survey program I am using does not permit the survey to be forwarded.

If you are willing to participate, please click on the link below. If you choose not to participate, thank you for your time and consideration. By clicking on the link below, you are giving your consent to participate in this study.

If you choose to participate, please complete this survey BEFORE THURSDAY MAY 1ST.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Here is a link to the survey:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

If you have any questions please contact me at kristinfrevert@yahoo.com or (573) 529-3448.

Thanks, Kristin Frevert

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing <http://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

APPENDIX C

REMINDER EMAIL TO COACHES

To: [Email]
From: kristinfrevert@yahoo.com
Subject: Reminder: Community College Coaches' Perceptions of Sport Psychology
Body: Dear Coach [LastName]:

My name is Kristin Frevert and I am conducting research on community college coaches' perceptions of sport psychology as a part of my Master's thesis at CSU Fullerton. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. I am sending my survey via email to all the community college baseball and softball coaches in California.

If anyone on your coaching staff or in your coaching circle did not receive this survey and would like to be a part of this research please respond to this email with their names and email addresses. Unfortunately, the nature of the survey program I am using does not permit the survey to be forwarded.

If you are willing to participate, please click on the link below. If you choose not to participate, thank you for your time and consideration. By clicking on the link below, you are giving your consent to participate in this study.

If you choose to participate, please complete this survey BEFORE THURSDAY MAY 1ST.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Here is a link to the survey:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

If you have any questions please contact me at kristinfrevert@yahoo.com or (573) 529-3448.

Thanks, Kristin Frevert

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing <http://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

APPENDIX D

FINAL CHANCE EMAIL TO COACHES

To: [Email]
From: kristinfrevert@yahoo.com
Subject: Final Chance: Community College Coaches' Perceptions of Sport Psychology
Body: Dear Coach [LastName]:

If you have already responded to this survey request, please let me take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your participation.

If you have not yet had the opportunity to respond, please consider doing so now. Based on your colleagues' feedback it should take no more than 10 minutes of your valuable time. We have received several responses so far, but would really like to include your input!

If you cannot respond right now, but would still like to participate, please keep this e-mail and respond BEFORE THURSDAY, MAY 1st. The link included in this survey will automatically expire at 11:59 pm on Wednesday the 30th.

Again, thank you for your participation in this research, and good luck to you all this season!

My name is Kristin Frevert and I am conducting research on community college coaches' perceptions of sport psychology as a part of my Master's thesis at CSU Fullerton. The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete. I am sending my survey via email to all the community college baseball and softball coaches in California.

If anyone on your coaching staff or in your coaching circle did not receive this survey and would like to be a part of this research please respond to this email with their names and email addresses. Unfortunately, the nature of the survey program I am using does not permit the survey to be forwarded.

Again, this survey will no longer be accessible after 11:59pm on Wednesday, April 30th.

If you are willing to participate, please click on the link below. If you choose not to participate, thank you for your time and consideration. By clicking on the link below, you are giving your consent to participate in this study.

Thank you very much for your participation!

Here is a link to the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

If you have any questions please contact me at kristinfrevert@yahoo.com or (573) 529-3448.

Thanks, Kristin Frevert

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing <http://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

You are being asked to participate because you are a community college coach of baseball or softball. Please read this information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

INVESTIGATORS AND SPONSOR

Lead Researcher

- Kristin Frevert - Department of Kinesiology

Faculty Advisor

- Ken Ravizza Ph. D. - Department of Kinesiology

Study Sponsor(s):

- This study is a student project for a master's thesis.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

- The purpose of this research study is to assess community college coaches' perceptions of the field of sport psychology and the services provided by sport psychology consultants.

SUBJECTS

Inclusion Requirements:

- You are being asked to participate because you are a California community college coach of baseball or softball.

Number of participants:

- The investigator plans to enroll California community colleges coaches (head and assistant) of baseball and softball.

PROCEDURES

Total Time Involved:

- You will be involved in this study for only the time it takes to complete this questionnaire. This typically will take about ten minutes. During this time you will be asked to reflect on your perceptions of sport psychology.

RISKS

Known risks:

- The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include being uncomfortable disclosing personal information or information regarding your team.

BENEFITS

To the Participant:

- You will benefit directly from this study by reflecting on your perceptions of sport psychology and what influences those perceptions.

To Others or Society:

- Others may benefit from their information gathered from this study by discovering how perceptions can change with education and open mindedness.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

- The alternative is to not participate in this study.

COMPENSATION/COST/REIMBURSEMENT

- You will not be required to pay for research related procedures/treatments, nor will you be paid for your participation.

WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM STUDY

- You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. There will be no penalty of any kind if you choose to withdrawal.

DATA STORAGE

- The research records (computer-based data and other identifying information) will be stored in the following manner: a password protected online data bank and a password protected computer. Participants will not be identified any way other than by subject number. Data will be kept indefinitely for future research.

DATA ACCESS

- Only the researcher will have access to the raw data. The results will be presented to a thesis committee (Ken Ravizza, Traci Statler, and Andrea Becker) and a group of peers. It will later be published as a student thesis and filed in the CSUF library. This research may also be used for educational purposes and/or future publications.

NEW FINDINGS

- If during the course of this study, significant new information becomes available that may relate to your willingness to continue to participate, this information will be provided to you by the investigator.

IF I HAVE QUESTIONS

- For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact California State University, Fullerton Regulatory Compliance Coordinator at (714) 278-2327, or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair at (714) 278-2141

Contacts:

- Ken Ravizza Ph D, Department of Kinesiology
Daytime Phone: (714) 278-3577 Email: kravizza@fullerton.edu
- Kristin Frevert , Department of Kinesiology
Daytime Phone: (573) 529-3448 Email: kristinfrevert@yahoo.com

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Conflict of Interest:

- Investigators must satisfy campus requirements for identifying and managing potential conflicts of interest before a research study can be approved. The purpose of these requirements is to ensure that the design, conduct and reporting of the research will not be affected by any conflicting interests. If at any time you have specific questions about the financial arrangements or other potential conflicts for this study, please feel free to contact any of the individuals listed above.

You have been informed that Kristin Frevert has no personal financial interest in this. You also have been informed that the nature of this financial interest and the design of the study have been reviewed by the campus conflict of interest review committee, which has determined that the investigator's financial interests would not compromise the quality or reliability of the study. Furthermore, the Institutional Review Board has determined that the investigator's financial interests will not adversely affect your welfare.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary. I may refuse to answer any question or discontinue my involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I might otherwise be entitled. My decision will not affect my future relationship with CSU Fullerton. By completing this survey I indicate that I consent to participation in this research study.

Please contact the researcher (Kristin Frevert: kristinfrevert@yahoo.com) with any questions. If you have read and understand the above document and consent to participation, please proceed to the next page to begin the survey.

APPENDIX F

COACHES PERCEPTIONS OF SPORT PSYCHOLOGY QUESTIONNAIRE (CPSPQ)

Background Information

Thank you for electing to complete the following questionnaire. Please check the box of the most appropriate answer. Respond to the best of your knowledge.

- 1.) What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female

- 2.) What is your ethnicity/race?
 - African American
 - Caucasian
 - Hispanic
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - American Indian
 - Other: _____

- 3.) What is your highest level of completed education?
 - High school
 - B.S./B.A.
 - M.S./M.A.
 - M.B.A.
 - Ph. D.
 - Other: _____

- 4.) What was your college major? _____

- 5.) How much coursework related to sport psychology have you taken?
 - none
 - 1 class
 - 2 classes
 - 3 classes
 - 4 or more classes

- 6.) What levels of organized competitive sport have you participated in?
- High school
 - College
 - Professional
 - National team
 - Olympic competitor
 - none
- 7.) What sport do you coach at the community college level?
- Baseball
 - Softball
- 8.) What is your current title for the above indicated sport?
- Head coach
 - Assistant coach
- 9.) Of what conference are you a member?
- Bay Valley
 - Big Eight
 - Central Valley
 - Coast
 - Foothill
 - Golden Valley
 - Orange Empire
 - Pacific Coast
 - South Coast
 - Western State

Experience with Sport Psychology

For the purposes of the research, sport psychology consultants are defined as persons with formal training in sport psychology who are capable of providing student-athletes and coaches with the psychological and emotional skills necessary for achieving peak performance and enhancing life quality.

Specific areas where sport psychology consultants can have an impact include:

- confidence
- motivation
- communication
- team cohesion
- leadership

Skills they are capable of teaching include:

- goal setting
- imagery
- relaxation techniques
- anxiety management
- coping with stress
- thought control
- recovery from injuries
- burnout prevention

(Source: Donohue, B., Dickens, Y., Lancer, K., Covassin, T., Hash, A., Miller, A., Genet, J. (2004). Improving athletes' perspectives of sport psychology consultation. Behavior Modification, 28(2), 182-193.)

10.) As an athlete, how many times did you receive services from a sport psychology consultant?

- never (go to question #12)
- 1-3 (go to question #11)
- 4-5 (go to question #11)
- 5 or more (go to question #11)

11.) How effective was that experience as an athlete?

- Extremely
- Highly
- Moderately
- Slightly
- Not at all

12.) Is a sport psychology consultant available to work with you and/or your current team?

- Yes (go to question # 13)
- No (go to question # 18)
- Unsure (go to question # 18)

- 13.) The sport psychology consultant that works with you and/or you team is a(n):
- Athletic department employee from my community college
 - Employee of my community college from another department
 - Private practice consultant
 - Graduate student
 - Other: _____
 - I don't know
- 14.) Have you ever referred one of your athletes to a sport psychology consultant?
- Yes
 - No
- 15.) How often has a sport psychology consultant met with your collegiate team?
- Never (go to question # 18)
 - 1-3 (go to question #16)
 - 4-5 (go to question #16)
 - More than 5 (go to question #16)
- 16.) When does your sport psychology consultant meet with you, your team, and/or individual athletes?
- Team meeting
 - Practice
 - Competition
 - Individual meetings in the sport setting
 - Individual meetings in the consultant's office
 - Other: _____
- 17.) From a coaching standpoint, how effective was this experience?
- Extremely
 - Highly
 - Moderately
 - Slightly
 - Not at all

Value of Sport Psychology

Please rate how valuable you think sport psychology is in dealing with following situations by checking the circle that applies.

18. Dealing with pressure
 - Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable

19. Dealing with injury/rehabilitation
 - Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable

20. Building confidence
 - Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable

21. Improving focus
 - Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable

22. Preventing burnout
 - Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable

23. Communicating with coaches
 - Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable

24. Communicating with athletes
 - Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable

25. Dealing with personal issues
 - Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable

26. Managing anxiety
- Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable
27. Increasing enjoyment of sport
- Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable
28. Enhancing performance
- Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable
29. Performing as well in competition as in practice
- Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable
30. Managing emotions during competition
- Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable
31. Building team cohesion
- Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable

Bring in a Sport Psychology Consultant

Please rate how willing you would be to bring in a sport psychology consultant to deal with following situations by checking the circle that applies.

32. Dealing with pressure
- Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing

33. **Dealing with injury/rehabilitation**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing
34. **Building confidence**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing
35. **Improving focus**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing
36. **Preventing burnout**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing
37. **Communicating with coaches**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing
38. **Communicating with teammates**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing
39. **Dealing with personal issues**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing

- 40. **Managing anxiety**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing

- 41. **Increasing enjoyment of sport**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing

- 42. **Enhancing performance**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing

- 43. **Performing as well in competition as in practice**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing

- 44. **Managing emotions during competition**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing

- 45. **Building team cohesion**
 - Completely Unwilling
 - Doubtful
 - Possibly Willing
 - Completely Willing

Perceived Barriers to Sport Psychology

Rate your agreement with the following statements by checking the circle that applies.

46. Lack of time is a primary reason our team does not use sport psychology services.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Moderately Disagree
 - Slightly Disagree
 - Slightly Agree
 - Moderately Agree
 - Strongly Agree
47. Sport psychology is only for individuals with severe psychological disturbances.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Moderately Disagree
 - Slightly Disagree
 - Slightly Agree
 - Moderately Agree
 - Strongly Agree
48. Lack of money is a primary reason our team does not use sport psychology services.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Moderately Disagree
 - Slightly Disagree
 - Slightly Agree
 - Moderately Agree
 - Strongly Agree
49. I would consider individuals that utilize sport psychology “weak.”
- Strongly Disagree
 - Moderately Disagree
 - Slightly Disagree
 - Slightly Agree
 - Moderately Agree
 - Strongly Agree

50. Other coaches thinking less of me because my team or I work with a sport psychology consultant is a primary reason we do not use a sport psychology services.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Moderately Disagree
 - Slightly Disagree
 - Slightly Agree
 - Moderately Agree
 - Strongly Agree
51. I would struggle with not knowing what would be said between the sport psychology consultant and our athletes.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Moderately Disagree
 - Slightly Disagree
 - Slightly Agree
 - Moderately Agree
 - Strongly Agree
52. Using sport psychology services would be counterproductive; athletes either have mental skills or they don't.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Moderately Disagree
 - Slightly Disagree
 - Slightly Agree
 - Moderately Agree
 - Strongly Agree
53. It would be difficult for me to trust a sport psychology consultant to work with our athletes.
- Strongly Disagree
 - Moderately Disagree
 - Slightly Disagree
 - Slightly Agree
 - Moderately Agree
 - Strongly Agree

Conclusion

54. What is your overall perception of the value of sport psychology? Please check the box that indicates your answer.
- Not at all valuable
 - Moderately valuable
 - Extremely valuable
55. Please provide additional comments regarding the use of sport psychology at the community college level:

Thank you!

Thank you so much for participating in my study. This is part of Kristin Frevert's Master's thesis at CSU Fullerton. I will be collecting California community college coaches' perceptions of sport psychology via this online survey in hopes of better understanding both the perceptions of coaches and how they are using it in their programs. Thank you so much once again.

Please contact me (kristinfrevert@yahoo.com) or my committee member Dr. Traci Statler (tstatler@fullerton.edu) with any additional comments or questions about this research or sport psychology.

Your participation in this research is complete.

Appendix G

Scoring Sheet for CPSPQ

Value of Sport Psychology section

<u>Category</u>	<u>Items</u>
Performance	18, 20, 21, 26, 28, 29, 30
Other Psychology Skills	19, 22, 25, 27
Team Building	23, 24, 31

* Rated the degree to which valued sport psychology on a three-point Likert scale which ranged from “Not at all valuable” to “Extremely valuable”

Willingness to Bring in an SPC section

<u>Category</u>	<u>Items</u>
Performance	32, 34, 35, 40, 42, 43, 44
Other Psychology Skills	33, 36, 39, 41
Team Building	37, 38, 45

* Rated the degree of willingness to bring in an SPC on four-point Likert scale which ranged from “Completely unwilling” to “Completely willing”

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