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# Modern Sexism and Preference for a Coach Among Select National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Female Athletes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

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MODERN SEXISM AND PREFERENCE FOR A COACH AMONG  
SELECT NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION  
DIVISION I FEMALE ATHLETES:  
A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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August 2012

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Title: Modern Sexism and Preference for a Coach Among Select National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Female Athletes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

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The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods research study was to examine the relationship of modern sexism to a female athlete's preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. Female athletes (N = 155) from one National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I institution in the Northeastern United States participated in the study. The female athletes were members of the following teams: basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, track and field, and volleyball.

The study was sequential; the qualitative phase followed the quantitative phase. Participants in the quantitative phase were asked to indicate their preference for a male or female coach, to quantify the number of male and female head coaches that they had experience with at the youth sport and interscholastic level of competition, and to complete the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995).

A systematic random sampling technique was used to select the 10 participants for the qualitative phase of the study. Criteria for selection included preference for a male coach and willingness to be interviewed. During the interviews, participants were asked to reflect on their early sport experience, the traits ascribed to coaches, and the perception to which gender equality existed in intercollegiate athletics.

Results indicated that 81% of the female athletes in this study preferred a male coach. In addition, experiences with female coaches at the youth sport level were a significant predictor for their preference for a female coach later in their athletic career. Experiences with both male and female coaches at the high school and collegiate levels were also significant predictors for their preference for a coach. Further findings revealed that the participants did not hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995); however, their discourses revealed otherwise. Finally, based on their overall experience with more male coaches than female coaches, a “think coach, think male” stereotype existed among the participants in this study. This research study bolsters previous research on preference for a coach and extends the literature on sexism in sport.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to strong women who have challenged the norms and who have dared to persevere despite the barriers encountered. It is dedicated to women who have embraced the opportunity to lead and to be supportive of other women along the way.

June 2012 commemorates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Title IX. There is no doubt that tremendous strides have been made on behalf of women and sport as a result of this legislation, yet there continues to be more to do. Those who pioneered the cause were strong women leaders who fought unselfishly and tirelessly so that female athletes would have opportunities unlike any they experienced. I have been fortunate in my life to meet some of these women--Dr. Christine Grant, Dr. Donna Lopiano, Judith Sweet, and Dr. Charlotte West. They are remarkable spirits who continue to fight the battle that began 40 years ago. It is through their efforts that dreams of young girls have been realized. They are tremendous examples of women leaders.

On a more personal note, I have been fortunate to have strong women in my life. As a young professional woman embarking on a career in intercollegiate athletics, I was very fortunate to have three incredible women as role models and mentors--Joanie Desilets, Dawn Ketterman-Benner, and Connie Kunda. I learned that if a woman was to survive in the profession, it would be dependent on the support, guidance, and tutelage of other women. I will be forever grateful to them for their friendship, both personal and professional.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A project of the endeavor is not accomplished by one individual alone. The support and guidance of others throughout the process made my dream of earning this degree a reality.

First and foremost I want to thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Patricia Smeaton and Dr. Valeri Helterbran, co-chairs, and Dr. Robert Fleischman, committee member. Their collective wisdom and professional expertise guided me throughout this process. I will be forever thankful to them for their support and encouragement and their timely attention to my needs and concerns. While the experience of completing a dissertation is extremely challenging, I could not have asked for three better individuals to join me on this journey. I will forever be indebted to them for making this a very intellectually challenging but very rewarding experience.

It is important that I also acknowledge Dr. David Rheinheimer. Although Dr. Rheinheimer was not an official member of my committee, he was instrumental in ensuring that I used the appropriate statistical analyses and understood the reasons for doing so. I could not have completed this dissertation without him. His unselfish dedication to the doctoral program and its students, including myself, exemplifies his loyalty and commitment to the university.

Three other individuals also deserve recognition. First, I must thank the associate athletic director at the institution where my study was conducted. She was extremely gracious, patient, and persistent on my behalf. Her assistance and cooperation ensured that I reached my minimum sample size requirements and that I did so in a very efficient manner. The completion of this study would have been much more difficult without her support. A second individual who deserves my thanks is Dr. Angela Vauter. Dr. Vauter served as a reader and external reviewer, and as such invested a significant amount of time reviewing my work. I valued our conversations about my research and appreciated her supportive words throughout the process.

Last, but certainly not least, I would be remiss if I did not thank Dr. Elaine Rogers. Elaine served as my anchor throughout the entire process. Her steadiness guided me through challenging times. Her unselfish support was evidenced at every stage throughout this process. She truly was the wind beneath my wings.

And finally, I want to thank my parents. Throughout my life they have always supported my endeavors and surrounded me with unconditional love. This experience was no different. I learned early in life that humility, hard work, and perseverance were very important qualities. Those lessons have served me well during this experience. Thanks Mom and Dad. I love you both.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Several years ago an institution was searching for a coach for one of its women's athletic teams. The players asked to have an opportunity to meet the candidates as they came to campus. As they gathered in the hallway prior to meeting the final candidate, their facial expressions changed from anticipation to disgust and disapproval. Their behavior was in response to the candidate walking down the hall. The candidate was a woman!

As female athletes, they had made a conscious decision. The third candidate, the only female candidate of the three, was not their preference for a coach. This decision was made before one word was spoken and without any previous knowledge of the candidate's competency and experience. More astounding was the fact that these same athletes aspired to coach after graduation, and saw no connection between their behavior and how at a later date a similar behavior by other individuals might preclude them from being hired.

Why did they prefer a male coach? What prompted their reaction? Why was it so easy for them to devalue another woman and not think twice about it?

The issue of preference is complicated. This research will add to the literature on preference by examining the relationship of modern sexism to one's preference for a coach. The journey begins with a look to the past.

### **Background**

From its early beginnings organized sport, specifically intercollegiate athletics, was defined as a male domain (Lucas & Smith, 1978; Suggs, 2005). In the late 1800s intercollegiate athletic competition began for men. Although it was not long before sporting opportunities

emerged for women, it was clear from these early beginnings that the same value was not placed on these experiences.

In many ways the athletic experience paralleled a woman's place in society and both were defined by traditional sexist beliefs. Women were seen as inferior to men socially, politically, and legally (Lucas & Smith, 1978). In fact, her physical appearance was expected to be dainty and pale (Suggs, 2005), portraying a visual image of weakness. A woman's social status was further defined as one of subservience to men. Her primary function was to attract a man, bear his children, and subsequently live a life of submissiveness and domesticity (Suggs, 2005).

Based on this masculine-defined role of women, it is not surprising that sporting opportunities for women were frowned upon. In fact, social prejudices held by both women and men were responsible for defining what was deemed acceptable behavior and what was not. One common belief about the incompatibility of women and sport was that vigorous activity would inhibit a woman's ability to give birth (Lucas & Smith, 1978; Suggs 2005). It was further believed that women could not handle the physical demands of sport because of their lesser physical strength and stamina. Complicating matters was that many women accepted this devalued status as normative. This is evidenced in a statement made in 1928 by Ethel Perrin, a board member of the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation, "Girls are not suited for the same athletic program as boys . . . . Under prolonged and intense physical strain, a girl goes to pieces nervously" (Suggs, 2005, p. 23).

For the women who fought for a right to play, they still had to acquiesce to a different set of rules (e.g., basketball) and definition of purpose (Lucas & Smith, 1978; Suggs, 2005). In the formative years, the purpose of participation was centered on the social benefits of participation.

It was more important that all women have an opportunity to participate, rather than focusing on the development of skills for a select few. In addition, the rules of play were written to accommodate a woman's perceived inferior physical attributes. At no point was the intent to encourage competitiveness and aggressiveness as evidenced in male sports. This philosophy was based on an educational model promoted by women physical educators whereby the importance of participation was on developing character and promoting principles of fair play and sportsmanship (Suggs, 2005).

Not until the passage of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, which included Title IX, did the landscape for women in sport begin to change. The primary intent of Title IX was to provide increased opportunities for girls to participate in sport within educational settings. While this intent was realized, other changes have evolved over time and have not been as favorable to women, specifically those related to coaching and administrative duties. June 2012 commemorates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Title IX.

Prior to the enactment of Title IX in 1972, intercollegiate athletic opportunities for women emerged through the initiatives of women physical educators. In order for these opportunities to exist, women physical educators were expected to assume administrative and coaching responsibilities in addition to their teaching duties (Acosta & Carpenter, 2009; Suggs, 2005). Despite the increased workload, women were finding a voice and competitive programs for women began to thrive. During this time the men's and women's athletic programs functioned as separate entities (Acosta & Carpenter, 2009; Suggs, 2005), and as a result, women were in charge of their own programs.

With the enactment of Title IX came the need for institutional compliance to its legislation. Up to this time the men's and women's athletic programs differed based on the

number of opportunities available, financial support, and program leadership (Acosta & Carpenter, 2009; Suggs, 2005). For institutions to come into compliance with Title IX, more opportunities for women would need to be provided and more dollars would have to be spent on women's programs. In response to these demands, what had been established as separate programs for men and women were now combined. As a result, women were no longer in control of their own programs. With this loss of control and oversight, the number of women coaches and administrators began to decline (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

In 1972 over 90% of the coaches of women's teams were females (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). By 2012 the percentage of women coaching women had declined to 42.9%, the third lowest point in history. In 2006 the percentage of women coaching women was at its lowest point (42.4%). In contrast to the decline in the percentage of women coaching women, the number of participation opportunities for female athletes has increased since Title IX. According to Acosta and Carpenter (2012) in 1970 the average number of women's teams per college or university across all three National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) divisions, Divisions I, II, and III, was 2.5. In 2012 the average number of teams per institution was 8.73.

Over the years, researchers have investigated the factors contributing to the decline in women coaches. One explanation for the decline is provided by Acosta and Carpenter (2012). According to Acosta and Carpenter programs with a male athletic director and no senior level woman athletic administrator have fewer female coaches than those programs with at least one senior level woman administrator. One possible explanation for this finding might be attributed to the hiring practices associated with homologous reproduction (hiring people of the same sex as those in power). According to Kanter (1977), homologous reproduction occurs in an environment where the individual in power sustains his power by creating the organization in his

own image. Therefore, the extension of this theory to Acosta and Carpenter's (2012) findings infers that the male athletic director, based on his position of power, will hire men in order to ensure male dominance within the department.

While plausible, other explanations for the decline in women coaches have also surfaced. They include issues associated with adverse stereotyping (Rhode & Walker, 2008), burnout (Kamphoff, 2010), the increased emphasis placed on winning, the importance of recruiting, and the long hours associated with the job (Kamphoff, 2010), work-life balance (Kamphoff, 2010; Rhode & Walker, 2008), role conflict (Rhode & Walker, 2008), and more lucrative salaries making the job more attractive to men (Rhode & Walker, 2008).

Another perspective on understanding the decline of women coaches is to look at the issue from the athlete's viewpoint. According to Kamphoff and Gill (2008), female athletes were not as interested as male athletes in coaching at the Division I level. Reasons given for their disinterest were twofold. It was their perception that female coaches were treated differently than male coaches and that too much emphasis was placed on winning.

Based on these findings, it is clear that female athletes perceive the coaching experience to be defined differently depending on the coach's sex. In addition, research findings also indicate that female athletes may respond to female and male coaches differently. For example, Frankl and Babbitt (1998) found that female athletes responded more negatively to criticism from a female coach than from a male coach, and Weinberg, Reveles, and Jackson (1984) found that female athletes viewed female coaches in general more negatively. Furthermore, the female athletes interviewed by Frey, Czech, Kent, and Johnson (2006) indicated that male coaches provided more structure and organization and were viewed as more aggressive and demanding.

These qualities were valued by the female athletes in this study and, as such, they indicated a preference for a male coach.

Other studies investigating preference for a coach revealed that the type of sport, the status of the coach, and the experience of playing for a coach of the opposite sex also impacted preferences for a coach (Habif, Van Raalte, & Cornelius, 2001; Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994). Only when the female coach was highly successful, which was defined by earning coach of the year honors and athletes earning national recognition, was she preferred over a male coach (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994).

Based on the aforementioned findings, it is evident that female athletes perceive the coaching experience and the characteristics associated with successful coaches to be sex-related. Since traditional sex roles are linked to perceptions of masculinity and femininity, one must ask is there a “think coach, think male” relationship?

In the 1970s Schein first coined the phrase “think manager, think male” based on her research concerning managers. In two separate studies Schein investigated the relationship between sex role stereotypes and the characteristics needed to be a successful manager. Her findings indicated that male middle managers (Schein, 1973) and female middle managers (Schein, 1975) equated managerial success with male attributes. The traits ascribed to male managers by both women and men were leadership ability, competitive, self-confident, objective, aggressive, forceful, ambitious, and desires responsibility.

Fifteen years later, a study using both male and female middle managers (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein, 1989) and one using both male and female undergraduate students (Schein, Mueller, & Jacobson, 1989) found that men still perceived management to be related to masculinity; however, the perceptions of women were changing. Female managers and female

undergraduates were no longer sex-typing managerial jobs. In fact, they felt that successful managers would be best served by having a combination of masculine and feminine attributes.

This change in perception among female managers and undergraduates parallels the findings in LeDrew and Zimmerman's (1994) study with female athletes. The results of their study indicated that female volleyball players believed that women had the ability to be good coaches and that equal opportunities were provided to women to achieve that end; however, almost 50% of the respondents stated they preferred to have a male coach, and an additional 15% stated that they would *never* want to be coached by a female. The authors suggest that traditional sex role biases may be impacting an athlete's preference. Aicher and Sagas (2010) suggest that in addition to sex stereotypes, preference may be related to modern sexist beliefs.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Since the enactment of Title IX in 1972, the number of sport participation opportunities for females across all three NCAA divisions has increased from 2.5 teams in 1970 to 8.73 teams in 2012, but the percentage of women coaching women has declined from over 90% in 1972 to 42.9% in 2012 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). Complicating this issue is that female athletes often prefer male coaches, and when female athletes are coached by women, they often evaluate them more negatively. Therefore, if women are to aspire to positions of leadership and as importantly, if they are to be supported after achieving those positions, then it is important that a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of preference be explored.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods study was to examine the relationship of modern sexism to a female athlete's preference for a coach among female athletes at one NCAA Division I school in the Northeastern United States.

### **Theoretical Basis for the Study**

Preference for a coach is linked to one's values, beliefs, and attitudes and is socially constructed through observation, interaction, and personal experience. Once established, an individual's value system is very difficult to change (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995).

As has been evidenced over time, the sporting experience for women has been defined and valued differently from that of their male counterparts. This difference in value attribution emerged from a world view that categorized man as the norm and woman as the other (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). Based on this prevailing point of view, women were seen as inferior, were relegated to roles secondary to those of men, and were treated in a deferential manner. Behaviors consistent with these beliefs encourage inequitable treatment and discrimination toward women. Sport as a masculine domain has continued to perpetuate the unequal treatment of women and the limited opportunities afforded to them in positions of power and leadership.

Individuals who believe in the unequal treatment of women, who believe women are inferior, and who endorse traditional sex roles and occupational segregation are identified as "traditional sexists" (Swim, Mallet, & Stangor, 2004). For these individuals, the discriminatory behaviors and actions directed toward women are blatant, are intended to cause harm, and often result in prejudicial evaluation of women (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995).

The enactment of legislation promoting gender equality has brought an increased awareness to blatant and overt sexist behaviors, and because this behavior has been identified as socially unacceptable, the frequency of occurrence has been reduced (Dardenne, Dumont, & Bollier, 2007). Unfortunately what have emerged are more covert and subtle forms of sexism. This theoretical framework for understanding sexism is referred to by Benokraitis and Feagin

(1995) as modern sexism. What makes this form of sexism insidious is that it often goes unnoticed or is perceived as normative by both women and men (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995).

Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) described modern sexism as beliefs that perpetuate the unequal and unfair treatment of women. The behavior differs in its degree of visibility, intent, and harm; however, all three types of modern sexist behavior, that is blatant, covert, and subtle have the potential to be harmful to women.

Blatant sexism is the most overt of the three and includes behavior associated with sexual harassment, sexist language, economic disparities, and physical violence such as rape (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). Covert sexism is the most difficult of the three to detect because it is often hidden in employment practices and as such is difficult to prove. An example is the use of tokenism which portrays a façade of inclusion and diversity within an organization by placing women in visible positions, but in actuality the women in these positions have no decision-making power. Subtle sexism is the most insidious of the three because its behavior often goes unnoticed or is perceived as normative and customary by both women and men. Examples of subtle sexism are evidenced in practices associated with sexist language, paternalistic and exclusionary behaviors, and employment practices that perpetuate and reinforce the unequal treatment and the inferiority of women.

Swim, Aiken, Hall, and Hunter (1995) extend and provide support for the framework of modern sexism as proposed by Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) by purporting that modern sexism is based on a set of beliefs that reflect a denial of continuing discrimination toward women, an antagonism toward women advocating for equal rights, and a resentment toward women perceived to receive special favors based on their sex. These three tenets of modern sexism were supported in their construction of the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). Furthermore,

Swim, Mallet, and Stangor (2004) reported the subtle nature of these beliefs. They reported that individuals who endorse modern sexist beliefs as measured by this scale were less likely to detect the use of sexist language. The failure to detect sexist language by both women and men was a result of not defining the behavior as sexist and perceiving its use as normative.

Aicher and Sagas (2010) studied the relationship of modern sexist beliefs to one's gender preference for a coach and the gender role stereotypes ascribed to head coaches among students participating in physical activity classes. The research findings revealed that there were no gender differences among participants in ascribed leadership traits to head coaches; however, both female and male participants ascribed masculine attributes more consistently to head coaches. An additional finding indicated that individuals denoted as high in modern sexist beliefs also preferred a male coach.

Female athletes participating in intercollegiate athletics today were born after the enactment of Title IX. Their world is defined by increased participation opportunities, increased professional sport opportunities, and television coverage promoting women's sports unlike anything experienced to date. It is also likely that the majority of these female athletes have been coached by more men than women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). With these experiences defining what they perceive as normative, is it possible that female athletes believe discrimination toward women has ended? Is it possible that their participation experience has subtly reinforced sex role stereotypes that have perpetuated the aforementioned "think coach, think male" mentality? Finally, is the subtlety of this behavior so insidious that when given a choice female athletes indicate a preference for a male coach despite their own aspirations to enter the coaching profession?

### **Research Questions**

1. Do the female intercollegiate athletes in this study prefer a male or female coach?
2. What is the relationship between a female athlete's past experience with coaches and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach?
  - (2a) What is the relationship between a female athlete's youth sport experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?
  - (2b) What is the relationship between a female athlete's interscholastic experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?
  - (2c) What is the relationship between a female athlete's intercollegiate experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?
3. Do female intercollegiate athletes hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995)?
4. What is the relationship between a female intercollegiate athlete's modern sexist beliefs and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach?
5. What factors impact a female intercollegiate athlete's beliefs and preferences about her athletic experience?
  - (5a) What role did family play in defining and supporting her early sport experience?
  - (5b) What traits are associated with successful head coaches? Are these traits ascribed to a coach based on the coach's sex?
  - (5c) How is the competitive sport experience for women described in comparison to men?

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. The majority of female intercollegiate athletes in this study will prefer a male coach.
2. There will be a relationship between a female athlete's experience with coaches and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.
  - (2a) There will be a relationship between a female athlete's youth sport experience with coaches and her preference for a coach.
  - (2b) There will be a relationship between a female athlete's interscholastic experience with coaches and her preference for a coach.
  - (2c) There will be a relationship between a female athlete's intercollegiate experience with coaches and her preference for a coach.
3. Female intercollegiate athletes in this study will hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995).
4. There will be a relationship between a female athlete's modern sexist beliefs and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.
5. Specific factors will impact a female intercollegiate athlete's beliefs and preferences about her athletic experience.
  - (5a) Family will play a strong role in defining and supporting her early sport experience.
  - (5b) There will be a pattern of traits associated with successful head coaches, and athletes will associate these traits with male coaches more strongly than female coaches.
  - (5c) Female athletes will describe their competitive sport experience with male coaches more positively than with female coaches.

### **Significance of the Study**

Beginning in early childhood, parents and significant others in the child's life become important socialization agents (Bandura, 1977). For young athletes, coaches also serve as agents of influence and are likely to influence the formation of sex role stereotypes. As a result of their own sexist or nonsexist behaviors and beliefs, both parents and coaches impact the social learning process for young athletes. Perceptions are formed and become a framework for how young athletes view the world of sport. These factors continue to influence the behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions of young athletes throughout their lives.

Only one study known to date has investigated the relationship of modern sexism to an individual's preference for a coach (Aicher & Sagas, 2010). While this study extended the literature on modern sexism to the world of sport, it was unclear as to how many of the participants were athletes since the scale was administered to individuals participating in physical activity classes.

Since the enactment of Title IX, the percentage of women coaching women is at the third lowest point in history (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). The situation is further complicated in that often female athletes have indicated a preference for a male coach and when doing so have ascribed male characteristics to the position of head coach (Frey et al., 2006). The preference for a male coach and ascription of masculine traits to the position is particularly troubling especially when designated by female athletes aspiring to be coaches themselves one day and when it leads to more negative evaluations of female coaches.

Modern sexism has been defined as behavior so covert or subtle that both women and men perceive it as normative and as such are unaware of its influence on their behavior. If women are to have a future in coaching at the intercollegiate level, it is important that

opportunities be afforded to them; however, it is also important that when hired they be supported by both women and men in their endeavors.

Modern sexist beliefs may offer an explanation as to the prejudicial evaluation of women in the coaching profession. If there is a relationship between these behaviors, then educational initiatives can be provided that promote a greater awareness of the behaviors and an increased sensitivity to the negative implications they have on the evaluation of women.

### **Definition of Terms**

Female athlete – A female meeting eligibility requirements and certified for varsity intercollegiate athletic competition at an NCAA institution.

Gender – Cultural determinant; refers to women and men as social groups (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2010).

Gender role stereotypes – Socially constructed characteristics about women and men that define socially shared expectations of how work should be performed and by whom (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Head Coach – The coach who is designated as the one in charge and has the most authority of all the coaches on the coaching staff for a sports team at an NCAA institution.

Intercollegiate sport – A sport accorded varsity status by the institution's president and administered by the intercollegiate athletic department (NCAA Division I Manual, 2011).

Modern sexism – A set of beliefs that reflect a denial of continuing discrimination toward women, an antagonism toward women advocating for equal rights, and a resentment toward women perceived to receive special favors based on their gender (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995).

NCAA Division I – One of three NCAA levels of membership whereby the institution is granted membership based on the institution's agreement to offer a minimum of 14 sports (7 for men and 7 for women, or 6 for men and 8 for women), to schedule a minimum number of contests against Division I opponents as defined by each sport, and to provide a minimum amount of financial aid/scholarship based on one's athletic ability (NCAA, 2011, March). Based on the athletic ability of the student-athletes, Division I is the most competitive level of play among NCAA institutions.

NCAA Division II – One of three NCAA levels of membership whereby the institution is granted membership based on the institution's agreement to offer a minimum of 10 sports (five for men and five for women, or four for men and six for women). While Division II institutions are permitted to offer athletic scholarships, very few athletes receive a full athletics' grant (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2011, March). Division II is not as competitive as NCAA Division I, but more competitive than Division III.

NCAA Division III – One of three NCAA levels of membership whereby the institution is granted membership based on the institution's agreement to offer a minimum of 10 sports (five for men and five for women) if the institution's enrollment is less than 1,000 students or 12 sports (six for men and six for women) if the institution's enrollment is more than 1,000 students. Division III institutions are not permitted to offer athletic-related financial aid (National Collegiate Athletic Association Division III Manual, 2011).

Sex – Biological distinction between women and men (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2010).

Sex Role Stereotypes – Beliefs about a set of attributes, including personality traits, physical abilities, and behaviors that are defined as appropriate for each sex.

Title IX – Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Pub. L. No. 92-318, 20 U.S.C. § 1681-1688 (1972) which states that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Traditional sexism – A set of beliefs supporting the unequal treatment of women and the endorsement of traditional gender role stereotypes, the inferiority of women, and occupational segregation (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995).

### **Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

An assumption of this study was that the participants, when completing the surveys, clearly understood the instructions since a pilot study was conducted to ensure that any areas of confusion were resolved prior to its administration. A second assumption was that the participants responded honestly and independently when completing the survey instruments.

The delimitation of the study was that the participants in the study were female athletes certified to compete in basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, track and field, and volleyball at one NCAA Division I institution in the Northeastern United States. The institution was a private four-year liberal arts college.

There were several limitations to this research study. First, the research findings could not be generalized to all NCAA Division I female athletes since this is only one of 335 NCAA Division I member institutions, and female athletes at other institutions may not hold similar beliefs and preferences (NCAA, 2011, March). Although participants were not asked to disclose their ethnicity, it appeared that the participants were Caucasian and as such, the findings may not be representative of other ethnic groups. In addition, socioeconomic level and higher admission standards also limited the findings since this was a private four-year liberal arts institution.

Furthermore, the research findings could not be generalized to NCAA Division II and NCAA Division III female athletes since the guidelines for membership and the level of competitiveness differs among the three divisions; NCAA Division I represents the highest level of athletic competition. Finally, the research findings could not be generalized to female athletes participating in sports other than those included in this study since the beliefs and preferences of the female athlete participants may be reflective of those sports specifically.

The use of the words *sex* and *gender* are often used interchangeably. While not a limitation specifically, it should be noted that for the purpose of this study, the researcher used the term sex, not gender, throughout the course of her work. This decision was made based on the definitions set forth by the American Psychological Association (APA) where sex is defined as the biological differences between men and women and gender as a cultural determinant pertaining to women and men as social groups (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 2010); however, when reporting the work of other individuals, the researcher remained true to their terminology although it may or may not conform to the definition reported by APA.

### **Summary**

This chapter discussed the evolution of a woman's experience in sport and the impact of society's beliefs, attitudes, and values on that experience. From its early beginnings the sporting experience was defined differently for women and men (Lucas & Smith, 1978; Suggs, 2005). For the most part the experience paralleled the evolution of a woman's role and place in society.

In the 1800s patriarchy defined the parameters of behavior for both women and men (Lucas & Smith, 1978). The parameters were determined by the structural hierarchy as well as in the day to day behavior set forth by traditional sex roles. From a hierarchical perspective

women were subservient to men and had very little power in making decisions. Their limited power and lower status was also reflected in the legal world as well. During that time women were not permitted to own property and not until 1920 were they granted the right to vote. Traditional sex roles also defined behavior for women in general and specifically for women in sport. The sporting experience for women was defined by grace and beauty, not by competition and aggressiveness (Suggs, 2005).

Not until the passage of Title IX did the sporting experience for women begin to change. Institutions were mandated by law to provide equal opportunities for their female athletes. As a result, participation opportunities increased for female athletes, but fewer and fewer women were being hired as coaches and administrators (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). On the collegiate level and from an administrative perspective, women were no longer in charge of their own athletic programs (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Suggs, 2005).

A recent phenomenon that has emerged from this experience and one that has been documented in the research is that female athletes often prefer a male coach (Frey et al., 2006; LeDrew & Zimmerman, 1994; Parker & Greenawalt, 2007; Weinberg et al., 1984). While the preference is noted, there is very little understanding of how women have come to have this preference. This research study sought to find a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of preference for a coach with the theoretical framework of modern sexism as its guide.

### **Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

Chapter 2, the review of literature, provides the contextual framework on which this research study is based. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to conduct this study. The findings are presented in Chapter 4. A discussion of the findings and recommendations for future research are discussed in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

June 2012 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the enactment of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972. The law states that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (Education Amendments Act of 1972). Intercollegiate athletic programs fall within the purview of Title IX and as such, have been impacted by this legislation. A case in point is that since its passage, participation opportunities for female athletes have increased, yet the number of women athletic administrators and coaches has decreased (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). While the underrepresentation of women in athletic leadership positions is troubling, it is even more disturbing to think that women themselves may be hindering the success and career progression of other women and that this may be indicative of modern sexism.

Specifically, the purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of modern sexism on a female athlete’s preference for a coach. The topics included in the literature review are: historical perspective, decline in women coaches, preference for a coach, prejudicial evaluation of women, theoretical explanations pertaining to the development of one’s values and belief system, theoretical framework for this study, and sex-typing as a psychological barrier.

In the first section, the historical context provides the framework for discussing the changes that have occurred for women in sport since the passage of Title IX, particularly with regard to athletic participation and coaching opportunities. Section 2 provides explanations for the decline in the percentage of women coaching women as evidenced in the literature. In addition to the fact that fewer women are represented in the coaching profession, the literature

suggests that often women prefer to be coached by a man. This phenomenon is discussed in the third section. Section 4 summarizes studies specific to the prejudicial evaluation of women in areas other than athletics. Social learning theory, social role theory, and role congruity theory are discussed in the fifth section as plausible explanations for preferential evaluation. Modern sexism is presented in Section 6 as an alternative approach to understanding preference for a coach. Finally, sex-typing is offered as a possible psychological barrier precluding women from attaining leadership positions.

### **Historical Perspective**

Intercollegiate athletics are viewed as an important part of the collegiate experience for students, whether as spectators or participants, in American colleges today. Intercollegiate athletic competition began in the late 1800s (Lucas & Smith, 1978; Suggs, 2005). Men's teams were the first to compete on the intercollegiate level, but women's teams soon followed. As the organizational structure for intercollegiate athletics evolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it soon became apparent that men's and women's sports were valued differently as evidenced by variances in the number and types of sports available to men versus women, the financial resources dedicated to the support of men's versus women's teams, coaches pay differentials, and the emphasis placed on competition (Lucas & Smith, 1978; Suggs, 2005).

The passage of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, which included Title IX, became a watershed point for intercollegiate athletics in the United States even though the legislation did not mention intercollegiate athletics specifically. Prior to this time women's varsity teams were coached by female physical education teachers who in addition to their teaching and coaching responsibilities were expected to perform many other duties (Acosta & Carpenter, 2009; Suggs, 2005). Competitive seasons were short since it was thought that women

lacked the physical stamina necessary to compete for long durations of time. The athletic director of the women's programs was a woman who also held faculty rank and as such was expected to fulfill all duties and responsibilities associated with both positions. Financial support was limited, and as a result, female athletes were often responsible for buying their own uniforms and paying for any lodging or food costs incurred while travelling (Acosta & Carpenter, 2009; Suggs, 2005).

With the enactment of Title IX in 1972 came the expansion of participation opportunities for women. In 1972 the average number of women's teams per college or university in NCAA Divisions I, II, and III was 2.5 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). In 2012 the average number of teams per institution increased to 8.73 teams. The five most popular sports across all three NCAA divisions were basketball, volleyball, soccer, cross country, and softball (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

As the number of women's teams increased, the need for more coaches also increased. Title IX did not mandate that women's teams be coached by a woman as was often the case in the past. In addition, Title IX did not mandate salaries paid to coaches. Prior to Title IX women coaching female teams received minimal to no additional compensation for coaching duties assumed in conjunction with their teaching responsibilities. Consequently, as the salaries for coaching a woman's team increased, men became more interested in coaching women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2009; Rhode & Walker, 2008).

Other program and organizational structure changes also emerged. Prior to the implementation of Title IX, it was typical for men's and women's athletic programs to function as separate entities (Acosta & Carpenter, 2009; Suggs, 2005). In this structural framework men served as directors of the men's programs and women as directors of the women's programs.

With the enactment of Title IX the separate athletic programs were merged to form a combined program and 85% of the time the men's athletic director became the director of the combined program (Acosta & Carpenter, 1992). If the former director of women's programs chose to remain in athletic administration, she was demoted to the position of assistant director. As a result, many women left administration to pursue full-time teaching positions (Acosta & Carpenter, 2009).

As women lost control of their own programs, the percentage of women coaches also declined. From 1972, the year Title IX was enacted, to 1978, the year of mandatory compliance, the percentage of women coaching women's teams dropped from 90% to 58.2% (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). In 2012, the percentage of women coaching women declined even further to 42.9% which represented the third lowest point in history. The lowest point was 42.4% in 2006 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

### **Decline in Women Coaches**

The decline in the percentage of women coaching women is upsetting, particularly since the number of participation opportunities for female athletes is at its highest point in history. Studies have been conducted in an attempt to suggest the reasons for this decline.

Acosta and Carpenter's 35 year longitudinal national study continues to document the changes in participation, coaching, and administrative opportunities for women in intercollegiate athletics since the passage of Title IX. On average 70%-80% of the NCAA member institutions complete this survey annually. In their most recent report (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012), the data continue to demonstrate that programs with a male athletic director and no senior level woman athletic administrator have fewer female coaches than those programs with at least one senior level woman administrator. A possible explanation for this finding might be attributed to the

hiring practices associated with homologous reproduction (hiring people of the same sex). While this practice can be employed by either sex, it has most often been evidenced in patriarchal and male-dominated domains such as intercollegiate athletics.

The concept of homologous reproduction was first conceived by Kanter (1977). According to Kanter, homologous reproduction is a phenomenon characterized by group dominance, power, and privilege. The practice is put into motion when the individual in power attempts to sustain his group's power by creating the organization in a "like" image. When this theory is applied to athletics, the intercollegiate athletic directors, who are predominantly men, are more likely to hire men in order to ensure male dominance within the department. This theory and its direct application to sport were investigated by Stangl and Kane (1991).

Stangl and Kane (1991) examined the relationship between the sex of the athletic director and the sex of the head coach in 937 interscholastic sport programs in the state of Ohio. The data analysis was delimited to three specific time periods related to the passage and implementation of Title IX: initial stages (1974-1975; 302 schools), 10 years after the passage of Title IX (1981-1982; 312 schools), and current trends (1988-1989; 323 schools). The data were retrieved from the Ohio High School Athletic Association Directories for the aforementioned time periods. The findings indicated that there was a direct relationship between the sex of the athletic director and sex of the head coach. In each time period, the percentage of female coaches was significantly less when the athletic director was a man. It should be further noted that in each time period the percentage of women coaches declined from 92.6% in 1974 to 42.7% in 1981. In 1988, 33.2% of the head coaches were women.

Other possible explanations for the decline in the percentage of women coaches exist. On the collegiate level, Rhode and Walker (2008) surveyed 462 active coaches (111 male; 347

female; 4 not disclosed) of women's teams. Seventy-five percent of the total respondents were head coaches (92 male; 253 female; 3 not disclosed), and 60% of the total respondents were coaches at NCAA Division I institutions (75 male; 211 female; 3 not disclosed). Despite the underrepresentation of women in the coaching profession, it is interesting to note the increased number of women respondents compared to men. This increased number in women participants is likely to be the result of two factors: (1) the snowball sampling technique employed by the researchers and (2) the importance of the topic to women and subsequently, their use of this opportunity to ensure that their voices be heard.

The survey investigated the coaches' perceptions of the impact of Title IX on gender equity issues in college athletics. In addition to survey items, participants were asked to respond to open-ended questions which provided a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The responses most pertinent to this study included the identification of barriers faced by coaches and as a result provided further insight into the underrepresentation of women in the profession (Rhode & Walker, 2008).

Over 75% of the participants shared their perspective on the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in sport. The responses fell into two broad categories: family responsibilities and gender bias. The time demands required to perform the job were reported as the most challenging aspects of the job. Many participants expressed frustration with trying to balance the long hours, a 24/7 work week, and the travel demands associated with recruiting and competition with fulfilling family responsibilities. The overall consensus was that without cooperation at home and workplace flexibility and support, women were not likely to enter the profession or were likely to exit the profession early (Rhode & Walker, 2008).

While work-life balance was certainly a concern, the most frequent explanation that participants offered for the underrepresentation of women in college athletics was gender bias. Gender bias was referenced in some form by over 50% of the participants. Responses included the perception that men dominated and controlled every facet of athletics. A “good ole boys’ network” was perceived to exist, and as a result, the perception was that men were favored in hiring practices, program support, personal support, and evaluation. If a woman was in a leadership position within the department, it was generally in the Senior Woman Administrator’s position. Unfortunately, a woman’s presence in this position was viewed as tokenism and perceived as lacking real influence (Rhode & Walker, 2008).

Another form of in-group favoritism was reported in relationship to practices associated with performance and salaries. The perception was that a woman had to be “twice as hardworking” and “twice as successful” in order to be respected and to garner support from her supervisor for herself and her program (Rhode & Walker, 2008, p. 32). An additional perception was that there was a disparity between the salaries earned by men and women for performing similar work. In cases where the salary was comparable, more men were attracted to the position and in many cases hired (Rhode & Walker, 2008).

Another aspect of gender bias was expressed in relationship to gender stereotypes. Men were described as being more driven, competitive, and aggressive than their female counterparts. Since these qualities were deemed important to success in the coaching profession, women were viewed as less likely to be successful. On the other hand, exhibiting authoritarian-like behavior and any of the other aforementioned attributes was also problematic. In circumstances such as this, the characteristics were perceived to be incongruent with their sex role, and the end product often resulted in adverse stereotyping which often included being labeled a lesbian. Because of

these challenges and others, more women were viewing the coaching profession as undesirable, unrealistic, or unattainable (Rhode & Walker, 2008).

In another study, Kamphoff (2010) used a mixed methods approach to investigate the experiences of former collegiate coaches and their reasons for leaving the profession. One hundred twenty-one women completed the Perceived Hindrance Scale (Kamphoff & Gill, 2008) which was constructed based on data from the NCAA whereby perceived barriers to women in sport were identified. Several open-ended questions were also included in the survey. Based on their responses along with additional criteria set forth by the researcher, six women were identified and agreed to be interviewed.

The survey results revealed that the main reasons for leaving the profession were related to the time demands required by the profession, work-family conflicts, salary, emphasis on winning, and lack of administrative support. Open-ended responses yielded two additional reasons: opportunity for promotion and burn-out (Kamphoff, 2010).

Interview findings provided further insight into the phenomenon. All six participants talked about gender disparities and equated the disparities to being a female coach of a woman's team. Types of gender disparities included lack of adequate resources, low salary coupled with additional duties, lack of administrative support, gender hierarchy whereby men and male teams are privileged, and incompatibility of work and family responsibilities. In addition to gender disparities, all participants discussed the technical demands of the profession indicating that the stress and pressure associated with recruiting and winning precluded coaches in general from having a social life aside from work. Finally, a third theme centered on discriminatory practices resulting from a homophobic environment (Kamphoff, 2010). The results of Kamphoff's study confirmed many of the findings reported in Rhode and Walker's (2008) study.

Another perspective on understanding the decline of women coaches is from the perspective of the athlete rather than that of the coach. Kamphoff and Gill (2008) recruited 201 NCAA Division I college athletes (100 male; 101 female) from two state universities in the Southeastern United States. The purpose of the study was to examine the participants' interest in entering the coaching profession along with their perception of the profession in general. In order to ascertain this information, the following instruments were administered: the Coaching Intention Survey, the Coaching Interest Survey, and the Perceived Hindrance Scale. The Coaching Intention Survey included questions assessing the athletes' intent to coach in five levels ranging from youth sport to professional sport. The Coaching Interest Survey examined why athletes would want to enter the profession. The Perceived Hindrance Scale explored the perceptions associated with the barriers and discriminatory practices that coaches encounter when entering the profession.

The results indicated that female athletes were less interested than their male counterparts in entering the profession, especially at the Division I and professional levels of competition. The female participants were more interested in the profession when it was associated with the character development of athletes. An additional finding revealed that discriminatory practices were perceived to exist. Female athletes perceived female coaches to be treated differently than male coaches. Finally, the major barrier precluding female athletes from entering the profession was their belief that too much emphasis was placed on winning.

### **Preference for a Coach**

Although women may be consciously choosing not to enter the coaching profession, those who do, face an additional problem. According to the research (Frankl & Babbitt, 1998; Frey, Czech, Kent, & Johnson, 2006; Habif, Van Raalte, & Cornelius, 2001; LeDrew &

Zimmerman, 1994; Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994; Parker & Greenawalt, 2007; Weinberg, Reveles, & Jackson, 1984), it is common for female athletes to view female coaches more negatively than male coaches and as a result often prefer a male coach or state no preference for a coach based on the coach's sex.

One of the first studies investigating this phenomenon was conducted by Weinberg, Reveles, and Jackson (1984). In an attempt to investigate sex bias, Weinberg et al. (1984) developed an attitudinal questionnaire entitled *Attitudes of Athletes Toward Male vs. Female Coaches Questionnaire* (AAMFC-Q). The AAMFC-Q was used to assess an athlete's preference for a coach based on the coach's sex. The participants included 42 male and 43 female basketball players whose level of play ranged from junior high to college. A scenario was developed about a hypothetical coach who was interviewing for a coaching position at the athlete's school. The scenario portrayed the coach as knowledgeable of the game and successful as defined by win-loss record. The only variable in the scenario was the coach's sex. Using the scenario as the basis for assessment, male and female athletes were asked to respond using the 11-item AAMFC-Q (Weinberg et al., 1984).

The results indicated that there was a significant interaction effect between sex of athlete and sex of hypothetical coach in response to 8 of the 11 questions. When comparing the hypothetical male and female coach, male and female athletes perceived a male coach more favorably than a female coach. Further findings indicated that both male and female athletes displayed more negative attitudes toward a female coach compared to a male coach; however, while the female athletes viewed female coaches negatively, their negativity was not as strong as that of their male counterparts (Weinberg et al., 1984).

Another study using a similar research design that included the hypothetical coaching scenario and the AAMFC-Q instrument, was conducted by Habif, Van Raalte, and Cornelius (2001). Habif et al. like Weinberg et al. (1984) studied gender bias in the team sport of basketball, but in Habif et al.'s study the 80 male and 59 female participants were intercollegiate athletes at 10 NCAA Division III institutions, whereas in Weinberg et al.'s study, 24 of the participants were college athletes. The NCAA divisional affiliation of the college athletes in Weinberg et al.'s study was not identified. Furthermore, while the questionnaire was the same as the one used by Weinberg et al., an additional item was added to the questionnaire which asked "I would prefer it if my new coach were a man (woman)" (Habif et al., 2001, p. 76). It is important to note that of the 139 participants, 84% of the female athletes had played for a male coach, and only 4% of the male athletes had played for a female coach.

In contrast to the findings of Weinberg et al. (1984), male and female athletes in Habif et al.'s (2001) study did not have significantly different attitudes toward male and female coaches; however, although male athletes expressed a favorable attitude toward female coaches, they still indicated a statistically significant preference for a male coach when responding to that question specifically. Female athletes had no preference for a coach based on sex. This position of no preference, or indifference, further bolsters the argument that female coaches are not supported in their efforts by female athletes. By not taking a position on the issue of sex-based coaching preference, these participants provide an illustration of the challenges faced by women in the coaching profession, which also sews connective tissue to the present research in terms of modern sexism and the attitudes and beliefs inherent in intercollegiate athletics.

An explanation for this finding could be that basketball is perceived as a masculine sport (Kane, 1989) and that a male coach is often seen as a better fit for a male-dominated sport. This

argument seems appropriate for explaining the male athletes' preference for a male coach; however, it does not explain the female athletes' response of no preference.

Habif, Van Raalte, and Cornelius (2001) extended the above study to NCAA Division III male and female volleyball players. Habif et al.'s (2001) previous study with male and female basketball players revealed that male athletes had a preference for a male coach, and female athletes had no preference for a coach based on the coach's sex; however, in this study of male and female volleyball players, neither group reported a preference for a coach based on the coach's sex. In this study 64% of the participants (42 men; 87 women) had played for a coach of the opposite sex. Unlike basketball, volleyball is perceived to be a gender-neutral (Koivula, 2001) sport, and it is likely that volleyball players over the course of their career have been coached by a member of the opposite sex. In fact the previous statement is supported in this study since more than half of the participants at some point in their career had been trained by a coach of the opposite sex. This study leads one to question the importance of role models and past experiences with coaches as well as the differences that may exist among sports based on gender classification.

Research by LeDrew and Zimmerman (1994) also involved volleyball players. A 42-item questionnaire was administered to 183 male and 227 female Canadian high school athletes participating in a tournament. Based on the number of questions, it is clear that the questionnaire used was not the AAMFC-Q, and since there was no reference to a formal instrument, one must question the reliability and validity of the findings received. Nevertheless, one of the questions was similar to the additional question added to the AAMFC-Q by Habif et al. (2001) which asked athletes to identify their preference for a coach based on the coach's sex.

In LeDrew and Zimmerman's (1994) study 80% of the female participants and 100% of the male participants currently had a male coach. It is unclear if the participants in this study had any experience with a coach of the opposite sex. Results indicated that 48.8% of the female participants stated that they would *always* prefer a male coach, and 15% stated they *never* want to be coached by a woman. Male athletes *always* preferred a male coach. LeDrew and Zimmerman assert that traditional sex biases are unlikely to disappear until greater numbers of women have secured coaching positions. It is important to note that this study was conducted seven years earlier than the previous study by Habib et al. (2001). It is difficult to ascertain whether the findings in Habib et al.'s study are beginning to reflect a greater prevalence of women volleyball coaches, thereby leading to more positive attitudes toward them by male and female athletes.

Another study by Medwechuk and Crossman (1994) pursued the concept of coaching preference based on the coach's sex in another gender-neutral sport, namely swimming (Koivula, 2001). Similar to previous studies, hypothetical coaching scenarios were presented to 18 male and 20 female participants who ranged in age from 10-19 years. All participants were swimming for a swim club compared to an interscholastic or intercollegiate athletic team. The hypothetical scenario asked the participants to read a philosophy statement by a coach whereby only the sex of the coach and status differed. High status was defined as having national level coaching experience and as having received coach of the year honors. Low status was defined as not having coached athletes at the national level and as never having received coach of the year recognition.

Participants were asked to respond to four questions using a Likert scale format. The questions pertained to the coach's knowledge, ability to motivate, chance for future success, and

their desire to swim for that coach. A final question asked them to identify which coach (man or woman; high or low status) would they select if their team was hiring a new coach (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994). The results indicated statistically significant findings in several areas. Male athletes rated female coaches lower in ability to motivate and less likely to succeed. Male athletes also expressed a strong desire to swim for a male coach. The responses of female athletes were similar with the following exception: the female athletes rated the high status female coach as more likely to be able to motivate, more likely to succeed, and more desirable as a coach and as such, stated a preference for a female coach in this situation. Both male and female athletes rated the low status male coach higher than the low status female coach. Male and female athletes evaluated male and female coaches as equivalent in their knowledge of swimming. The overall findings of this study demonstrated a strong desire for male athletes to be coached by a coach of the same sex, whereas female athletes had no preference based on sex unless the female was extremely successful (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994).

In another study by Frankl and Babbitt (1998) the framework used in the previous studies was extended in three ways: (1) the examination of a different gender-neutral sport, namely track and field; (2) the addition of another interaction factor – sex of actual coach; and (3) the revision of the language of the AAMFC-Q to be more appropriate for an individual sport. In other words, not only were they examining the interaction effects of sex of athlete to sex of hypothetical coach, but they were also examining these factors in relationship to the sex of the participant's actual coach.

The participants in Frankl and Babbitt's (1998) study included 112 male and 104 female high school track and field athletes. Interaction effects were found based on the sex of the athletes and the sex of their actual coach. Their findings indicated that male athletes responded

to criticism from male coaches better than female athletes; however, both male and female athletes were less receptive to criticism from a female coach than a male coach. This finding suggests that female athletes have more difficulty taking criticism from a female coach or authority figure than they do from a male coach or authority figure.

The above mentioned studies associated with preference for a coach were all quantitative studies, and while some of the findings did indicate the presence of sex bias in one's preference for a coach, the methodology did not allow for a more in-depth investigation exploring the reason for the bias. Two qualitative studies are referenced below that provide more insight into the phenomenon of preference for a coach based on the coach's sex.

In the first study, Frey, Czech, Kent, and Johnson (2006) interviewed 12 NCAA Division I female athletes whose sport participation included basketball, golf, cross country, track and field, softball, or soccer. Out of the 12 participants, 2 had a sport history that indicated they had the same number of male coaches as female coaches, and 2 had a history of having one or two more female coaches than male coaches. The remaining eight participants had a sport history of having more male coaches with the difference in the number of male coaches ranging from three to seven per participant.

Using a semi-structured interview format, the researchers explored the perceptions and experiences of these 12 female athletes in relationship to having been coached by women and men. The interview guide included questions related to training methods, encouragement and motivation, personal relationships, level of sport knowledge, and preference for a coach. The interviews revealed four major themes: (1) discipline and structure, (2) personal relationships, (3) passivity and aggressiveness, and (4) preference based on sex of coach (Frey et al., 2006). With regard to discipline and structure, the participants indicated that male coaches were more

structured and organized, and this difference was particularly evident in practice settings. Drills had a purpose, and the male coaches, in contrast to their female counterparts, did not make exceptions to the rules, expected more from their athletes, and coached from an authoritarian perspective.

When discussing the aspect of personal relationships, the participants felt that female coaches were better able to relate to them; however, female coaches had a greater tendency to want to be their friend and at times that was problematic. The participants also felt that female coaches provided more positive feedback and encouragement (Frey et al., 2006).

In reviewing the participants' responses to passivity and aggressiveness, the researchers reported that male coaches were perceived as more aggressive and demanding (Frey et al., 2006). Their focus was on winning, and practices were perceived as harder and more strict in order to accomplish that goal. In contrast, female coaches were perceived as more laid back and as a result, practices were perceived to be less demanding and less stressful. There was no mention as to whether female coaches were perceived to be as interested in winning.

Nine of the female athletes stated they were intimidated by the male coach; however, despite being intimidated, they approved of his authoritarian style (Frey et al., 2006). When asked about which coach they preferred the most, 8 of 12 female athletes stated they preferred a male coach. The participants also identified several key elements in addition to authoritarian behavior that further defined the reason for their preference. The additional elements that impacted their decisions were the importance of respect, the ability to demonstrate coaching knowledge and perform skills, and the ability to maintain control and to enforce discipline. According to the participants, male coaches reflected these characteristics and abilities more than female coaches.

In a second study, Parker and Greenawalt (2007) examined the phenomenon of preference for a coach among NCAA Division II female athletes (N = 26). The female athletes were participants in the following sports: basketball (n = 7), field hockey (n = 2), lacrosse (n = 2), softball (n = 8), tennis (n = 4), track and field (n = 1), and volleyball (n = 2). Two of the participants were African-American and the remaining participants were Caucasian.

The researchers met with each of the 10 women's teams and invited the athletes to participate in the study. After the meetings, 26 female athletes contacted the researchers and indicated an interest in participating in the study. Based on the participant number, a schedule was developed that included five one-hour sessions. From that schedule, the participants were asked to select the session they wanted to attend. Assignments were made on a first come, first serve basis. The number of participants in each focus group ranged from four to seven.

Prior to the interview, each participant was asked to complete a demographic form which included information about their parents' athletic experience as well as information about previous coaches. A semi-structured interview guide was used to direct the focus group discussions. Questions centered on traits associated with coaches and the experience of being coached by a woman or man. A final question asked of each participant was whether they preferred a male coach, female coach, or had no preference based on the sex of the coach. Each focus group discussion was audio-taped, and the tapes were transcribed verbatim.

The results indicated that the participants' fathers were more likely to have been an athlete than their mothers (76.9% to 38.5%). In addition, 64% of the fathers coached at some point in time compared to 11.5% of the mothers. Ninety-two percent of the participants indicated that their first coach was a male, and 73% of the participants stated they had more

experience with male coaches than female coaches. Finally, 65% of the female athletes stated that a male coach had made the most impact on their athletic career.

During the focus group discussions, the participants described the experience of having a female or male coach. The participants viewed the experiences differently and as a result, the following themes emerged related to that experience: communication, emotional stability, and relationships. The participants described female coaches as less direct in communication, more moody, more likely to hold grudges, too involved with the participants' lives outside of sport, and more likely to want to befriend their athletes. In contrast, there were some positive qualities associated with female coaches. The benefits identified were that a female coach had experience playing the sport, was better able to relate to female issues, was more understanding of issues outside of sport, and was more approachable with personal problems. When asked about their preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach, 50% preferred a male coach, 21% preferred a female coach, and 29% were either undecided or had no preference.

In the above referenced studies, female athletes had more experience with male coaches than with female coaches. Based on these experiences, the participants in Frey et al.'s (2006) study indicated that they believed male coaches were more knowledgeable about the game. In Frankl and Babbitt's (1998) study both male and female athletes indicated that it was more difficult for them to accept criticism from a female coach than a male coach. Medwechuk and Crossman's (1994) findings revealed that preference was given to a female coach only when she had proven herself to be highly successful as defined by earning coach of the year honors and coaching athletes at the national level. In each of these studies, athletes were evaluating coaches based on the athlete's preferred competencies and behaviors in a coach. These preferences were linked to the sex of the coach.

## **Prejudicial Evaluation of Women**

In order to further investigate the issue of gender and evaluation in determining one's preferences, it is important to look at similar research in other settings. One of the earliest studies was conducted by Goldberg (1968). Goldberg's article, "Are Women Prejudiced Against Women?" explores this phenomenon. In his study 40 female college students were asked to review journal articles written by hypothetical male and female authors. The occupational fields represented by the authors were: law and city planning (masculine occupations), dietetics and elementary school (feminine occupations), and art history and linguistics (neutral occupations). Six articles, one from each professional field, were reviewed by each participant. Three articles were written by a man and three by a woman. The participants were asked to rate the articles for value and the authors for writing style, professional competence, professional status, and persuasiveness. Nine questions that appeared at the end of the article guided the review. Goldberg's findings indicated that college women evaluated articles written by males more favorably than those written by females regardless of professional occupation.

Pheterson, Kiesler, and Goldberg (1971) also investigated the phenomenon of prejudice in the evaluation of women. Similar to Goldberg (1968), college women (N = 120) served as participants; however, instead of evaluating articles, the participants were asked to judge paintings created by both male and female artists. Eight paintings were presented to each participant for evaluation. The variables were sex of artist, status of painting (entry or winner in a contest), and obstacles faced by the artist. Artists' biographies and associated accomplishments were fabricated for the purposes of the study, and the profiles differed only in relationship to sex of artist. Participants were asked to evaluate each painting based on technical

competence, creativity, overall quality and content, emotional impact, and prediction of future success.

The results of Pheterson et al.'s (1971) study revealed that male artists were rated as significantly superior to female artists with regard to technical competency. In addition, male artists were evaluated more favorably than female artists when the painting was described as an "entry" versus "winner." In other words, the unsuccessful male artist was preferred to the unsuccessful female artist. There was no significant difference in the evaluation of male and female artists when the painting was a winner. And finally, no significant differences in evaluation existed for creativity and obstacles faced.

Additional research investigating the phenomenon of prejudicial evaluation was conducted by Levenson, Burford, Bonno, and Davis (1975). Their research replicated Goldberg's (1968) study, as well as extended Goldberg's study in two ways: (1) to assess male attitudes toward women, not just female attitudes; and (2) to determine if knowledge about the professional area discussed in the article influenced one's evaluation. To accomplish this purpose, Levenson et al. (1975) conducted two separate studies.

In the first study, 134 college freshmen (79 male; 55 female) enrolled in English classes at a large state university in the Southwest were asked to evaluate the writing style, professional competence, persuasive ability, and overall ability of male and female authors as well as evaluate the article's overall value (Levenson et al., 1975). The findings indicated that there was no significant difference in the evaluations of male and female students across all variables and specifically with regard to the sex of the author. Neither male nor female authors were evaluated significantly more favorably than the other.

In the second study, 145 students (112 male; 33 female) enrolled in a political science class at a large state university in the Southwest evaluated a student essay that was written as a response to a political science quiz question (Levenson et al., 1975). The essays were the same except for the sex of the writer. Half of the students were given the essay written by the male student; the other half, the essay written by the female student. The participants were asked to evaluate the essay as if they were a teacher and assign a letter grade to the essay. The research findings revealed that the female participants graded the answers written by the female students significantly higher than the same answer written by the male student. The authors suggest that there may be a shift from more prejudicial evaluations of women by women in earlier studies to more favorable evaluations of women by women.

The study by Pheterson et al. (1971) was the first to introduce professional success as a variable to investigating sex-biased evaluations; however, the evaluation was based on a singular evaluation rather than an overall evaluation of the artist's career. As a result, Peck (1978) investigated the impact of differing levels of professional status as represented by one's career accomplishments as a reading instructor. Her choice of occupation, specifically reading instructor, was based on previous research conducted by Feather (1975).

In earlier research, Feather (1975) found that the sex-appropriateness of the profession influenced a participant's evaluation of an individual's happiness with the job. Two hundred sixty-eight college students (141 male; 127 female) enrolled in an introductory psychology course were randomly divided into two groups. One group was presented a questionnaire entitled "Reactions to Success" and the other a questionnaire entitled "Reactions to Failure." Each questionnaire presented the participants with 12 scenarios. All 12 scenarios included a situation involving both a man and a woman who were either competing on an exam or for a job.

The job-related scenarios included occupations that varied based on the perception of status and male dominance associated with each. The range of occupations included a company director (highest status and male dominance), typist-stenographer (lowest status and male dominance), and secondary schoolteacher (neutral status and male dominance) (Feather, 1975).

In the “Reaction to Success” questionnaire, both parties were portrayed as being successful, and in the “Reaction to Failure” questionnaire both parties were portrayed as unsuccessful. In the successful scenarios, participants were asked to identify which of the two individuals would feel the happiest about his or her success, and in the failure scenarios, participants were asked to identify which individual would feel the unhappiest (Feather, 1975). After completing the questionnaires, participants were asked to list the factors influencing their decisions as well as to rate each occupation for masculine dominance and status. The findings revealed that both male and female participants evaluated males and females as happier with success and unhappy with failure when the occupation was perceived as sex-appropriate. Additional findings revealed a positive correlation between perceptions of high status positions and masculine occupations. Finally, both male and female participants indicated that women in masculine-defined occupations would not be viewed as successful as their male counterparts.

Based on the aforementioned findings, Peck (1978) selected reading instruction as the professional occupation in her study because it was shown to be a gender-neutral profession (Feather, 1975). Undergraduate education majors (65 male; 71 female) were asked to evaluate an article written by either a man or woman. In addition to sex, the authors were portrayed as differing in status. The high status individual was described as an associate professor with an extensive list of publications and research achievements, and the low status individual was described as a doctoral student who had written the article as part of a class assignment.

Significant interaction effects indicated that both male and female participants evaluated the high status woman more favorably than the low status woman. Further findings revealed that both male and female participants evaluated the low status man more favorably than the low status woman. And finally, female participants evaluated the high status woman more favorably and the low status woman more negatively than their male counterparts (Peck, 1978). In essence, the findings suggest that the female participants looked favorably upon a woman who had proven herself while being critical and unsupportive of a woman just beginning her career.

When comparing the research on coaching preference to the research on the evaluation of women, it is interesting to note that the approaches taken and the actual findings reveal some interesting patterns. In all but two of the aforementioned studies the participants' evaluations were made in relationship to a hypothetical or fictitious scenario. Frey et al. (2006) and Parker and Greenawalt (2007) were the only researchers to interview athletes directly about their preferences for a coach.

The variable of status was introduced in the coaching preference literature initially by Weinberg et al. (1984) whereby status was defined as win/loss record. Medwechuk and Crossman (1994) defined status in terms of having coached five athletes at the national level and as having received the coach of the year award. In the non-coaching studies, Pheterson et al. (1971) defined status as a painting based on entry into a contest versus having won the contest, and Peck (1978) compared articles written by a doctoral candidate with no publications to an associate professor with numerous publications and research honors. The findings associated with status were consistent across all studies. Both male and female participants evaluated the high status woman more favorably than the low status woman. Male and female participants also evaluated the low status man more favorably than the low status woman. Finally, in several

studies the female participants compared to their male counterparts evaluated the high status female more favorably (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994; Peck, 1978; Pheterson et al., 1971). In other words, female participants in these studies recognized and positively evaluated women who were proven to be knowledgeable and competent.

A final variable was the perceived sex-appropriateness of the professional occupation. Intercollegiate athletics has been identified as a male domain (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Kane, 1989), and more specifically individual sports have been classified as masculine, feminine, or gender-neutral (Kane, 1989; Koivula, 2001). Goldberg (1968) used a similar classification system for professional occupations. The findings related to preference for a coach based on sport classification were contradictory for both male and female athletes. In other words, athletes did not necessarily prefer a male coach if the sport was classified as masculine or have no preference if the sport was classified as gender-neutral. These findings differ from those of Goldberg (1968) and Feather (1975) where sex-appropriate occupations were determined to have an impact on an individual's evaluation.

### **Theoretical Explanations**

The issue of preference is a complex phenomenon. While the aforementioned studies have attempted to determine if a preference for a coach exists, or if women are more prejudiced against other women when evaluating them, they have not explored how individuals come to have these beliefs and attitudes. A review of the literature reveals a number of plausible explanations.

#### **Social Learning Theory**

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) espouses that human thought, affect, and behavior are influenced by observations made relative to one's environment. Through observation of

another's behavior and its resultant perceived reward or punishment, an individual is able to determine selectively what aspects of behavior are to be modeled. These observational experiences are impacted by characteristics specific to the observer, by interest in the activity itself, and by the structural arrangement of human interactions. Associational patterns are interpreted, perceptions are formed, learning occurs, and decisions are made as to what aspect of the behavior becomes one's own (Bandura, 1977).

Social learning theory lends interpretation to preference for a coach by emphasizing the importance of having women role models. Observations cannot occur, and decisions about preference cannot be made based on first-hand experience if there are no women to observe. Therefore, it is important that women are hired as coaches so girls and boys, and women and men, can see women in these positions. As importantly, the environment must be seen as supportive and respectful, and their competencies must be acknowledged positively for favorable evaluations to occur.

### **Social Role Theory**

Another theoretical explanation is posited by social role theory. Social role theory is based on the premise that behavioral sex differences result from the different social roles occupied by women and men and the physical attributes associated with each sex (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). Traditionally, social roles were aligned with divisions of labor, and women and men were traditionally assigned to jobs that aligned with their physical attributes (Harrison & Lynch, 2005).

When a female coach enters the traditionally male domain of sport (a male social role or occupation), she is challenging societal norms. Using social role theory as a framework, prejudicial evaluation may occur because of the perceived lack of sex-appropriateness associated

with this career choice. In other words, coaching is not women's work, and as such, women do not possess the attributes needed to be successful.

### **Role Congruity Theory**

Role congruity theory is essentially grounded in social role theory but extends the theory beyond sex differences in physical attributes and the sex-appropriateness of the occupation to the consideration of the congruency of the gender role to the job to be performed (Eagly & Karau, 2002). According to Eagly and Karau, gender roles are socially constructed to further define socially shared expectations of how work should be performed and by whom.

Gender roles have both a descriptive (what women actually do) and prescriptive (what women ought to do) component (Heilman, 2001). According to Eagly and Karau (2002), men are ascribed agentic characteristics, and women are ascribed communal characteristics. Agentic characteristics describe assertive, controlling, and confident behaviors (e.g., aggressive, dominant, forceful, and independent). Communal characteristics are described in terms of concern for others (e.g., affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant, and gentle). Agentic characteristics are most effective when aligned with masculine tasks, and communal characteristics are most effective when aligned with feminine tasks.

Descriptive norms are in essence stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Inferences are made by the perceiver to link qualities associated with an individual's sex to expected behavior. In addition, inferences are extended to align the inherent qualities of the individual to the qualities required to successfully perform the task.

If coaching is perceived to require agentic qualities because of its perception that it is a masculine occupation, then the communal qualities attributed to women are incongruent with that role. In addition, a woman is further disadvantaged if she assumes a coaching position but

then exhibits more agentic qualities. In either case, the descriptive and prescriptive norms associated with her sex and the descriptive and prescriptive norms associated with coaching are perceived as incongruent. As a result, the perceived lack of congruity may negatively impact a woman being hired for a coaching position or if hired, subsequent evaluations may be negative based on her perceived lack of competency. This lack of congruity may also influence an athlete's preference for a coach specific to the coach's sex.

### **Theoretical Framework for this Study**

Preference for a coach is linked to one's values, beliefs, and attitudes and as indicated previously these constructs do not develop in isolation. They are constructed and deconstructed based on one's interaction with and observation of others along with assumed cultural and societal expectations. While the aforementioned theories provide some insight into understanding the phenomenon of preference, another lens through which to view this phenomenon is through the theoretical framework of modern sexism.

### **Modern Sexism**

The major premise of this theoretical framework states that traditional sexism, which promotes the unequal treatment of women, the second-class status of women, and the endorsements of traditional gender stereotypes and occupational segregation, is still present in institutional and organizational practices today; however, it is exhibited in more covert and subtle ways (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). In fact, the representative behaviors have become so covert and subtle that the behavior often goes unnoticed or is perceived as normative by both women and men. Both women and men are responsible for perpetuating sexism through their own beliefs, attitudes, and behavior and when done so in a covert and subtle manner are identified as modern sexists (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995).

Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) identify three types of sexism associated with this framework: blatant, covert, and subtle. All three forms of sex discriminatory behavior lie along a continuum of low to high visibility. Each is further defined by intent and degree of harm.

Blatant sexism is defined as the unequal treatment of women relative to men, whereby the behavior is intentional and its resultant actions bring harm to women (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). This type of sexist behavior is quite overt and may or may not be illegal under current law. Examples of blatant sexism include sexual harassment, sexist language, economic disparities, and physical violence such as rape.

Covert sexism is similar to blatant sexism in its definition, purpose, and intent but is not as easily identified (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). Examples of covert sexism often occur in hiring and employment practices. Covert sexist practices promote the façade of equality and fairness; however, in actuality, the purpose of the behavior is to set women up to fail or render them powerless. Because of its hidden nature, covert sex discrimination is very difficult to prove.

Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) refer to terms such as tokenism, containment, and manipulation as examples of covert sexist practices. Tokenism refers to hiring or promoting women for the purposes of portraying a semblance of equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion within the organization. Containment refers to restricting women to specific jobs and limiting their mobility within the organization so as not to threaten the dominant group. Manipulation occurs behind the scenes and is reflected in behaviors that question a woman's qualifications or abilities in order to threaten and subvert her power and credibility. In all three cases, women are negatively impacted by this behavior but often have no way to prove its true intent.

The third type of sexism identified by the authors is subtle sexism (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). Subtle sexism is also defined as the unequal and unfair treatment of women and has the potential to cause harm. While blatant and covert sexist behavior is usually intentional, subtle sexist behavior is often unintentional. Subtle sexist practices represent behaviors that often go unnoticed by both women and men because they have been internalized by most people as behavior that is normal or customary. It is for this reason that this type of sexism is so insidious.

Subtle sexism is often exhibited in behavior that seems friendly or harmless on the surface but in actuality can have some very serious consequences for women (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). Examples of subtle sexism identified by the authors and most pertinent to this study are: condescending chivalry, supportive discouragement, friendly harassment, liberated sexism, considerate domination, and collegial exclusion. Because subtle sexism is so inconspicuous, it is important to provide specific examples of this behavior.

Condescending chivalry refers to behavior that is paternalistic and protective (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). As a result, chivalrous behavior can limit a woman's opportunity for advancement in the workplace and its use for that purpose is not limited to men alone. For example, women are often excluded from jobs because it is assumed that they will not want to travel, or that "now that her kids are grown, she probably wants some peace and quiet and wouldn't want to take on the headache of a dean's office" (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995, p. 84). Statements such as these were made by both women and men about women during interviews with the authors.

Supportive discouragement refers to the mixed messages women are given about their abilities, intelligence, or accomplishments (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). An example of this type of subtle sexism is when women are given an impressive title; however, the title comes

without the increased salary or authority to make decisions. Another example of supportive discouragement discussed by the authors pertained to athletic participation. Many universities encourage female athletic participation by providing competitive opportunities, but discourage their participation by not providing adequate resources such as competent coaches, financial support, and access to facilities.

A third type of subtle sexism is described as friendly harassment. Friendly harassment is perpetuated in the workplace and can range from behavior that appears harmless on the surface such as flattery to behavior that causes embarrassment, humiliation, or psychological intimidation (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). One form of psychological intimidation relevant to this study is the lesbian stigma. In a historically masculine organization such as sport, the negative labeling can be targeted at women administrators, coaches, and athletes whether lesbian or not. The purpose of such behavior is to challenge their credibility, render them powerless, keep them in their place, or instill enough fear and intimidation that they eventually leave the organization or cease participation. Individuals who are lesbians and choose to remain often hide their identity in order to do so. Regardless of their choice, the primary purpose of this adverse stereotyping is to ensure male dominance and control.

Liberated sexism is yet another form of subtle sexism (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). On the surface it appears to treat women and men equally but, in reality, it places tremendous burdens on women. In essence, women working outside the home have been liberated, yet in doing so, they now have two jobs: one in the home and one outside the home. Another example of liberated sexism occurs when a woman is hired for a nontraditional job. Women, unlike men hired in a nontraditional job, are treated less professionally and receive little encouragement or

training to pursue advancement to an upper-level position. Many times the hostility encountered or the additional stress incurred causes women to quit.

A fifth form of subtle sexism is considerate domination. Considerate domination refers to the fact that high status occupations and prized competencies are associated with male dominance and male stereotypes (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). An example of this phenomenon as evidenced through language is the use of a sex qualifier in describing an administrative position such as “female” administrator. The implication is that women do not possess the overall competencies needed to be effective in high status, administrative positions, and as a result, the position is differentiated through the use of language.

A final form of subtle sexism is collegial exclusion. Exclusion can take many forms, but it is most represented in behavior that ignores, isolates, or excludes women from decision-making processes. It is often associated with battling an “old boys’ network” (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). More specific examples include situations where women are present but made to feel invisible such as when they are dismissed in conversation or passed over in promotion. This behavior also involves excluding women from important meetings and not including them in social functions. Women in nontraditional positions have indicated that they are not taken seriously and are criticized for being “too principled and not political enough” (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995, p. 115). On the other hand, when they do behave in a political or tough and aggressive manner or when they are outspoken on a topic, they are either ignored because the behavior is perceived as unfeminine or are labeled as “difficult” despite their knowledge about the topic.

The enactment of legislation to promote gender equality has brought awareness to overt sexist behavior; however, it has not reversed its use and practice totally. Unfortunately, what has

resulted is that individuals holding sexist beliefs and attitudes have been forced to find more covert and subtle ways of expressing them as referenced in the aforementioned examples. This new form of sexism is referred to as modern sexism (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995).

Intercollegiate athletics has felt the backlash of modern sexist beliefs and behavior. The research by Rhode and Walker (2008) describes numerous examples representative of modern sexist practices. For instance, covert sexism was described in terms of tokenism, particularly in reference to the Senior Women's Administrator position. Manipulative behavior was described in terms of negative evaluations and hiring practices. Subtle sexism was discussed in terms of adverse labeling or stereotyping, salary disparities, difficulty in balancing one's personal and professional life, and the lack of financial and emotional support for one's program. Each of these examples demonstrates a pattern of differential treatment toward women whereby the intent is to ensure male dominance and perpetuate the unequal treatment of women in sport.

Whether sexist behaviors are overt or covert, conscious or inadvertent, intentional or unintentional, women and men reinforce these behaviors by accepting gender inequality as customary and normative. Sexist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are perpetuated when women and men lack an awareness of discriminatory practices, internalize sex stereotypes, ignore sexist behavior in order to be accepted, and fail to act out of the fear of retaliation, rejection, or dismissal.

### **Sex-Typing as a Psychological Barrier**

Traditional sexism is based on a belief system that supports the unequal treatment of women, the belief women are inferior, and the endorsement of traditional gender roles and occupational segregation (Swim, Mallett, et al., 2004). Modern sexists indirectly condone sexist behavior either because the behavior goes unnoticed or they do not perceive the behavior to be

problematic. By condoning or overlooking such behavior, modern sexists are likely to engage in sexist behavior which supports the association of traditional gender roles with masculine-defined occupations.

Traditional gender roles are linked to perceptions of masculinity and femininity and, no matter how accurate, can lead to sexist behavior (Swim & Hyers, 2009). In the early 1970s Schein began investigating the relationship between sex role stereotyping and the characteristics needed to be a successful manager. She conducted two separate studies: one with male managers (Schein, 1973) and one with female managers (Schein, 1975).

In the first study Schein (1973) asked 300 male middle managers from nine insurance companies throughout the United States to identify characteristics ascribed to women in general, men in general, and successful managers. To complete this task, participants were asked to complete the Schein Descriptive Index (Schein, 1973) which included 92 adjectives commonly used to differentially characterize men and women. Three forms of the Descriptive Index were developed, each with the same descriptive terms and instructions. Dependent upon the form received, participants were asked to rate each word in terms of how characteristic it was of women in general, men in general, or successful middle managers. The findings revealed that managers were perceived to possess characteristics more commonly ascribed to men than to women. Terms such as emotionally stable, aggressive, leadership ability, self-reliant, objective, desires responsibility, well informed and direct were ascribed to men, and terms such as understanding, helpful, intuitive, sophisticated, and awareness of another's feelings were ascribed to women.

Two years later, Schein (1975) replicated the aforementioned study with female middle managers. In this study 167 female middle managers from 12 insurance companies across the

United States completed the Schein Descriptive Index (Schein, 1973). The findings for this study were consistent with the findings in the previous study. Successful managers were perceived to possess characteristics more commonly ascribed to men than to women. Examples of the terms ascribed to men were: leadership ability, competitive, self-confident, objective, aggressive, forceful, ambitious, and desires responsibility. The terms identified by female middle managers and subsequently ascribed to women were the same as those identified by male middle managers with the exception of the term sophisticated. The findings from this study and those of the previous study (Schein, 1973), revealed that both male and female middle managers identified managerial success with characteristics, attitudes, and temperaments more commonly ascribed to men.

Fifteen years later, Brenner, Tomkiewicz, and Schein (1989) replicated Schein's earlier research with middle managers. Brenner et al. surveyed 593 managers (420 male; 173 female) in nine firms located in the Northeastern United States. Unlike Schein's research, none of the firms were from the insurance industry. Instead the firms represented businesses in the manufacturing and service industry. Participants used the Schein Descriptive Index (Schein, 1973) to complete one of three forms regarding characteristics found in women in general, men in general, or in successful middle managers. The findings revealed that women middle managers were no longer sex-typing managerial jobs. The women in this study perceived managerial effectiveness to require both masculine and feminine characteristics. In contrast, their male counterparts still believed that only masculine characteristics were necessary for managerial success.

Schein, Mueller, and Jacobson (1989) extended Brenner et al.'s (1989) research to undergraduate students. Two hundred twenty-eight (145 male; 83 female) upper-class management students enrolled in a small private liberal arts college in the Eastern United States

were asked to complete the Schein Descriptive Index (Schein, 1973). The results of this study indicated that female undergraduate management students had similar perceptions as those of female middle managers. They, too, perceived managerial effectiveness to require both masculine and feminine characteristics. The male undergraduate management students still perceived successful management to be related to masculinity (Schein et al., 1989).

Traditionally, management has been defined as a masculine domain requiring agentic characteristics most often ascribed to men (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Legislation such as affirmative action has attempted to change this perception (Brenner et al., 1989). Perhaps its impact can be attributed to the increased number of women in middle management positions as well as the aforementioned change in female middle managers and female management students' perception of required leadership traits; however, it is important to note that women are still underrepresented in top level management positions. Only 2.6% of the Fortune 500 companies have female CEOs (Jones, 2009).

The association between sex-typed leadership behavior and sexism is especially prevalent in masculine organizations (Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002), thus engendering the phrase "think manager, think male" first coined by Schein (1975). Masser and Abrams's (2004) research further bolstered this assertion. In their study 307 participants (144 male; 137 female; 26 unspecified) completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) developed by Glick and Fiske (1996). The ASI is a 22-item inventory comprised of two subscales: hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). The ASI was used to determine whether or not sexism was evidenced in the negative evaluation of or the discrimination against a female candidate applying for a masculine-typed managerial role.

Participants were asked to review a curriculum vita that hypothetically had been sent by the candidate in response to a large retail company's job posting for a managerial position. The curriculum vita detailed the candidate's educational qualifications and relevant work experience. The candidates were portrayed as moderately qualified and differed only by sex. Participants were asked to read the vita and rate the candidate on 12 traits using a scale of 1 (not characteristic) to 7 (highly characteristic). The trait measure was comprised of traits that were stereotypically representative of masculinity and femininity as previously evidenced in the literature. In addition, the participants were asked to rate how suitable the candidate was for the position and how likely they would be to hire the candidate. Finally, the participants were asked to complete the ASI (Masser & Abrams, 2004).

The findings revealed that there was a significant interaction effect between the candidate's sex and hostile sexism. Increases in hostile sexism were associated with a negative evaluation of the female candidates and lower employment recommendations. In contrast, increases in hostile sexism were associated with higher employment recommendations for the male candidates. In other words, individuals possessing hostile sexist beliefs preferred a male manager (Masser & Abram, 2004).

Recently there has been an attempt to investigate the relationship of gender stereotypes and the effect of sexist beliefs on one's preference for a male coach (Aicher & Sagas, 2010). Aicher and Sagas (2010) administered the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995) and Bem's Sex Role Inventory--short version (Aicher & Sagas, 2010) to 116 undergraduate students (76 male; 40 female) enrolled in physical activity classes at a major university in the Southeastern United States. Participants completed the Bem sex role inventory--short version--with regard to perceptions of self and perceptions of characteristics ascribed to a successful head coach.

The findings revealed that there were no gender differences in the ascription of masculine and feminine traits to head coaches. Both male and female participants perceived masculine traits to be more aligned with a head coaching position (Aicher & Sagas, 2010). Additional findings suggested that higher levels of sexism predicted a preference for masculine leadership traits and the participant's preference for a male coach.

The above findings indicate that male and female college students enrolled in activity classes, unlike female middle managers (Brenner et al., 1989) and female management undergraduates (Schein et al., 1989), still associate masculine traits with leadership behavior. The participants in Frey et al.'s (2006) study who preferred a male coach identified traits such as discipline, structure, and aggressiveness with male coaches. In addition, these same participants perceived male coaches to be more knowledgeable about the game which is consistent with Pheterson et al.'s (1971) findings that male artists were preferred because of their perceived technical competency. The identification of the aforementioned traits further reinforces the ascription of masculinity to coaching.

Despite the legislative mandates associated with affirmative action and Title IX, women are still underrepresented in top level management positions as well as in athletic administration and coaching. While this underrepresentation of women in positions of power and authority is disturbing, it is even more troubling to consider that women are devaluing and negatively evaluating women in leadership positions based on covert and subtle forms of sexism of which they are unaware.

In light of the above research findings and the decline in the percentage of women coaching women, it is important that additional research be done to better understand the impact of modern sexism on coaching preferences. Therefore the purpose of this study is to extend the

research of Aicher and Sagas (2010) by utilizing female athletes, rather than students in physical activity classes, and by incorporating an explanatory mixed methods research design to investigate more deeply the impact of modern sexism on one's preference for a coach.

### **Summary**

The passage of Title IX (1972) resulted in many changes for women relevant to their participation in sport. While many of the changes were positive, a few have not been favorable to women. Currently the percentage of women coaches employed across all three NCAA divisions is at the third lowest point in history. Only 42.9% of the women's intercollegiate athletic teams in NCAA member institutions are coached by women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

Over the years researchers have attempted to explain the reason for the decline in women coaches and the underrepresentation of women in the profession. One aspect that continues to receive attention is related to a female athlete's preference for a coach. The aspect of preference complicates the issue, because not only are fewer women represented in the profession, but when they are, female athletes are likely to evaluate them more negatively than their male counterparts because of their preference for a male coach.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) social role theory (Eagly et al., 2000), and role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) have served as theoretical frameworks for understanding this phenomenon. While each of these frameworks provides some insight, the complexity of the phenomenon requires further research and analysis.

The sporting experience for today's female athlete is unlike anything experienced by women to date. There are more opportunities for participation, more financial dollars spent on scholarship and program support, and more visibility through media outlets than ever before, yet despite the increase in participation opportunities and related support, fewer women are coaching

women. As a result, many of the female athletes over the course of their athletic careers have never experienced having a woman as their coach (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

Based on their lived experiences, female athletes may have developed a “think coach, think male” mentality. Furthermore, if societal constructs continue to define traditional sex roles as normative, then it is possible that female athletes have become blind to discriminatory practices that continue to devalue women and limit their opportunities. In essence, female athletes may be modern sexists. It is in pursuit of examining these issues more deeply that this research was undertaken. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to further examine the relationship of preference for a coach and modern sexism.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used for this explanatory mixed methods study. The chapter begins with an historical overview of the issues that led to the identification of the research problem. The purpose of the study is presented. Five research questions are identified, and justification for the use of an explanatory mixed methods approach to answer these questions is provided. The research design is described and methods for data collection and data analysis are outlined. The chapter concludes with a summary statement.

#### **Background to the Problem**

The passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 represents a turning point in the history of women and sport. Since its enactment, participation opportunities have increased for female athletes, yet women are underrepresented in athletic administration and coaching positions at all three NCAA divisions (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). While the issue of underrepresentation is disturbing, another concern is that the women entering the coaching profession are likely to be viewed more negatively than their male counterparts. This has been represented in the literature regarding preference for a coach based on the coach's sex and the perception of masculine attributes associated with coaching as an occupation.

More recently there has been an attempt to determine the relationship of attributes of masculinity and modern sexism with the preference for a coach (Aicher & Sagas, 2010). The covert nature and subtleness of modern sexist beliefs and behavior lends credence to its existence in society in general and in perceived masculine domains such as sports, more specifically. In fact, Aicher and Sagas (2010) found that college students enrolled in physical activity classes

who held modern sexist beliefs preferred a male coach and ascribed masculine attributes to a coach.

While Aicher and Sagas's (2010) study provided a new framework for understanding the phenomenon of coaching preference, there are two areas on which the literature can be expanded. For example, the participants in Aicher and Sagas's (2010) study were students enrolled in physical activity classes, and their status as athletes is unclear. In addition, the traits as measured by the Bem sex role inventory may not accurately represent traits associated with successful head coaches. Therefore, the present study expanded the research on the relationship of modern sexism to one's preference for a coach by selecting female athletes as the target population and by employing an explanatory mixed methods research design to examine the phenomenon of preference for a male coach in a more descriptive manner. The addition of the qualitative component provided a deeper understanding of the relationship of modern sexist beliefs, traits of successful coaches, and preference for a coach.

The research design for this study was a sequential design whereby the qualitative phase followed the quantitative phase. The major purpose of the qualitative phase was to add depth to the quantitative findings. The quantitative phase included the collection of demographic information and the administration of the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). The qualitative phase consisted of interviews with 10 female athletes who were randomly selected from the participants who preferred a male coach and who had indicated a willingness to be interviewed. The qualitative phase afforded these 10 female athletes an opportunity to share their stories in light of several factors: the role of family in framing their sport experience, the characteristics associated with successful coaches, the relationship of these traits to a coach's sex, and their perception about the equality of the experience for female and male athletes and

women and men aspiring to enter the coaching profession. The addition of the qualitative phase gave voice to the female athletes' experiences and provided insight into how their "lived" experiences had influenced the construction of their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The blending of qualitative meaning with quantitative data served to strengthen the understanding of the impact of modern sexism and its association with one's preference for a coach.

### **Research Problem**

Since the enactment of Title IX in 1972, the percentage of women coaching women has declined despite an increase in participation opportunities for female athletes (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). Complicating this issue is that female athletes often prefer male coaches and as a result are likely to evaluate female coaches more negatively. Therefore, if women are to aspire to positions of leadership and be supported after achieving those positions, then it is important that a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of preference be explored.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this explanatory mixed methods study was to examine the relationship of modern sexism to a female athlete's preference for a coach.

### **Research Questions**

1. Do the female intercollegiate athletes in this study prefer a male or female coach?
2. What is the relationship between a female athlete's past experience with coaches and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach?
  - (2a) What is the relationship between a female athlete's youth sport experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?
  - (2b) What is the relationship between a female athlete's interscholastic experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?

(2c) What is the relationship between a female athlete's intercollegiate experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?

3. Do female intercollegiate athletes hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995)?

4. What is the relationship between a female intercollegiate athlete's modern sexist beliefs and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach?

5. What factors impact a female intercollegiate athlete's beliefs and preferences about her athletic experience?

(5a) What role did family play in defining and supporting her early sport experience?

(5b) What traits are associated with successful head coaches? Are these traits ascribed to a coach based on the coach's sex?

(5c) How is the competitive sport experience for women described in comparison to men?

### **Research Design**

According to Creswell and Clark (2007), the major premise of an explanatory mixed methods design is that the use of both quantitative and qualitative data sets in combination affords a better understanding of the research problem than either approach alone. To date, no study was found that examined the association of modern sexism and preference for a coach using this research design. While the results from the administration of the modern sexism scale can place a numerical value on the degree to which a female athlete holds modern sexist beliefs, and statistical analyses can assist in interpreting the association of those beliefs to her preference for a coach, the statistical analyses alone do not provide as rich and deep an understanding of the relationship than if it were combined with a qualitative data analyses. Thus, the qualitative

component of this study served as a mechanism for creating a more in-depth understanding of the quantitative findings. As a result, the explanatory mixed methods design was deemed the research method best aligned to answer the research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

An explanatory mixed methods approach represents a research design where the data is collected, analyzed, and mixed in a way to connect both quantitative and qualitative data sets (Creswell & Clark, 2007). This study consisted of two sequential phases; the qualitative phase followed the quantitative phase. The purpose of the qualitative data collection was to further explain or enhance the quantitative findings, and as a result a purposeful participant selection was utilized to select the participants for this phase of the study. In other words, participant selection for the qualitative phase of the study was aligned to the specific quantitative components warranting additional explanation, namely preference for a male coach.

During the quantitative phase of this study, demographic data were collected from female athletes at one NCAA Division I institution in the Northeastern United States. The participants were also asked to complete the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). Statistical analyses were conducted to determine the association of female athletes' preferences for a coach and the extent to which they possessed modern sexist beliefs.

A systematic random sampling technique was used to select the 10 individuals for the qualitative phase of the study (Fowler, 1993). Two criteria defined the parameters for this selection. The two criteria were preference for a male coach and willingness to be interviewed, if selected. The interviews were conducted in person in a quiet and private room. Each interview was audio-taped, and each tape was transcribed by the researcher upon completion of the interview.

## **Participants**

The participants in this explanatory mixed methods study were female athletes (N = 155) certified for intercollegiate athletic competition at one NCAA Division I institution in the Northeastern United States. The institution was selected based on the following criteria: the competitiveness of its athletic program, the ability to award athletic scholarships to its female athletes, and the employment of a fairly equal number of men and women head coaches for the women's sports programs offered. The female athletes were participants in the following sports: basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, track and field, and volleyball. There were no participants from the women's tennis team. The head coaches for basketball, lacrosse, softball, and volleyball were women; the head coaches for cross country, fencing, field hockey, soccer, swimming and diving, and track and field were men.

GPower version 3.1.3 was used to determine the minimum sample size necessary to maintain a power of .8 for the statistical tests being conducted. Based on that calculation, the minimum sample size required was 122 participants. In order to meet that requirement, all female athletes (N = 234) certified for athletic competition at this NCAA Division I institution were invited to participate in the quantitative phase of the study. The invitation to participate was extended to them through an e-mail communication from the associate athletic director in consultation with the head coach.

Three separate meetings were required before the minimum sample size was reached and exceeded. Forty female athletes representing various sports attended the first meeting. A second invitation was extended to each of the varsity teams. Participants were not permitted to complete the survey a second time. A second date was scheduled at which time the researcher met with 60 female athletes from the sports of basketball, field hockey, soccer, and swimming. Fifty-five

female athletes from lacrosse and track and field attended the third meeting. At each meeting, the demographic form and modern sexism scale were administered on site by the researcher.

After reviewing the demographic data, the participants who indicated a preference for a male coach and who indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview were identified. From these names, a systematic random sampling technique (Fowler, 1993) was used to select 10 individuals for participation in the qualitative phase of the study. Sixty-one individuals met the aforementioned criteria. Their names were placed on a list in alphabetical order by last name. A starting point was determined by picking a number between 1 and 61. The 42<sup>nd</sup> name on the list was the first interviewee selected, and the remaining nine interview participants were identified as every 6<sup>th</sup> name thereafter.

After being notified of their selection, two individuals decided not to participate. In each case, the name that preceded their name on the list was chosen. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with these 10 individuals to further explore the relationship of modern sexist beliefs and one's preference for a coach. One-on-one interviews were held on campus in a location that ensured a private and quiet environment.

## **Instrumentation**

**Quantitative phase.** During the quantitative phase of the study, female athletes were asked to complete a demographic information form and the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). The demographic form gathered background information specific to their athletic experience. Personal contact information necessary for the qualitative phase was also requested. The Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995) was administered to measure the level of modern sexist beliefs for each athlete. Participants recorded their responses to the scale on a Scantron response sheet.

**Demographic information form.** The demographic information gathered (see Appendix A) included the name of the female athlete, personal contact information, sport(s) played in college, sex of current coach, and current year of athletic eligibility. The participants were also asked to numerically quantify their experience with coaches at the youth sport and intercollegiate level of competition by indicating the number of head coaches by sex at each level of competition. Additionally, female athletes were asked to indicate their preference for a male or female coach. A final question addressed their willingness to participate in the qualitative phase, if selected.

**Modern sexism scale.** The modern sexism scale was developed by Swim et al. (1995) to examine the level to which sexist beliefs and behaviors exist in society today. History has demonstrated a connection between racist and sexist beliefs. Therefore, Swim et al. (1995) patterned the development of the Modern Sexism Scale after the Modern Racism Scale developed by McConahay (1986).

Old-fashioned (traditional) sexism is characterized by behaviors reinforcing traditional sex roles, differential treatment of women and men, a perception of women's incompetence, and the inferior status of women in relationship to men. Swim et al. (1995) purport that modern sexism, like modern racism, is characterized by the denial of continued discrimination, by feelings of hostility toward the demands of the target group, and by the lack of support for policies intended to assist the disadvantaged target group. Anti-discrimination laws may have repressed the overt behavior evidenced by traditional sexist beliefs, but Swim et al. (1995) contend that discriminatory practices and antagonistic behaviors still occur, albeit more covert and subtle.

Psychometric properties of the scale were reported for construct validity and internal reliability. Two separate studies were conducted to investigate the construct validity of the items associated with old-fashioned (traditional) sexism and those identified with modern sexism as adapted from the modern racism scale. Research findings revealed that sexism, like racism, is best represented as a two factor system: traditional and modern (Swim et al., 1995). Furthermore, eight items emerged from this analysis as items representative of modern sexist beliefs. The eight items further aligned with three constructs: denial of continuing discrimination (5 items), antagonism toward women's demands (2 items), and resentment about special favors (1 item). The second study replicated the findings of the first study. The constructs specific to each scale (traditional and modern) are presented in Appendix B. In each of the aforementioned studies, internal reliability measures were reported as .84 and .75 respectively. A value of .70 to .80 is considered acceptable (Field, 2005).

The Modern Sexism Scale (see Appendix C) was developed to measure the degree to which modern sexist behavior and gender equality are perceived to exist in society today. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the eight items on a 5-point Likert scale from -2 (*strongly agree*) to +2 (*strongly disagree*). Zero was the neutral point. Their responses to each item were recorded on a Scantron response sheet. Five of the 8 items were reversed scored (see Appendix B). In order to calculate mean scores, the aforementioned numerical values were converted to all positive numbers where 1 was labeled strongly agree and 5, strongly disagree. Based on this conversion, 3, rather than 0, became the neutral point, and as a result, any score above 3 indicated the presence of modern sexist beliefs. Permission to use the scale was granted via e-mail correspondence by Dr. Janet Swim at The Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pennsylvania on July 22, 2011.

**Qualitative phase.** The qualitative phase of this explanatory mixed methods study investigated more deeply the relationship of a female athlete's modern sexist beliefs and her preference for a male coach. According to Seidman (2006), interviewing serves as a method of inquiry whereby *meaning* is constructed through language. The interview structure can range from tightly structured (preset, closed questions) to unstructured (open-ended).

The interview design selected for this study was semi-structured. An interview guide was developed and consisted of a set of pre-determined but open-ended questions (see Appendix D). The same questions were asked of each participant, but the open-ended nature of the questions allowed for individual interpretation.

Through conversation, the participants were asked to reconstruct their athletic experience, and the conceptual framework of modern sexism guided the reconstruction process. The researcher conducted the interviews individually and face-to-face in a private and quiet room on the participants' campus. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The interview session was audio-taped, and each interview tape was transcribed by the researcher.

The first interview segment served to place the female athlete's experience in context by asking her to reconstruct her initial introduction to sport and discuss the role her family played in defining that experience. According to Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) sexism starts in the home, and once attitudes and beliefs are developed, they are very difficult to change. Therefore, the intent of this set of questions was to explore the role family members played and to explore the stereotypical nature of these roles in defining the athlete's early sport experience.

The second segment of the interview investigated the traits the participant associated with successful coaches and whether they were related to the coach's sex. According to Swim and Hyers (2009) traditional sex roles are linked to perceptions of masculinity and femininity and, no

matter how accurate, can lead to sexist behavior. Research with male managers (Schein, 1973) and female managers (Schein, 1975) revealed that both male and female managers ascribed more masculine traits to successful middle managers, which lead to her coining the phrase “think manager, think male.” Aicher and Sagas’s (2010) research with college students enrolled in physical activity classes revealed similar findings associated with the coaching profession. Both female and male students ascribed masculine traits to coaches. Whether there is a “think male, think coach” mentality is unknown. Therefore, the intent of this portion of the interview was to investigate that relationship.

The final segment of the interview explored the athlete’s perception regarding the degree to which gender equality existed in the world of sport. According to Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) and Swim et al. (1995) modern sexists are likely to state that discriminatory actions directed toward women are no longer a problem. Modern sexist beliefs are based on practices that have become so covert and subtle that they either go unnoticed or are so common they are perceived as normative. Based on these assumptions, participants were asked to describe their experience as an intercollegiate athlete compared to their male counterparts. They were also asked to reflect upon the opportunities available to both women and men who aspire to be coaches. Their responses reflected the degree to which they perceived gender equality to exist in intercollegiate athletics and as a result, served as a point of comparison to their actual scores on the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995).

In conclusion, the intent of the interview session was to afford the participants an opportunity to share their stories and to describe the circumstances that impacted their attitudes, beliefs, and preference for a male coach. By exploring the past in order to make meaning of the

present, a deeper understanding of the relationship between modern sexism and its impact on one's preference for a coach was realized.

Ensuring the integrity of the data is as important to qualitative research as it is to quantitative. According to Maxwell (1996), the three main areas of threat are in description, interpretation, and theory. These three components were addressed to ensure that the findings that emerged from this phase of the study were trustworthy.

Description pertains to the accuracy and completeness of describing one's observations and accounts. The researcher addressed this issue by audio-taping the interview sessions and by transcribing the tapes verbatim.

Concerns with interpretation arise when the researcher imposes her framework of understanding on the people studied and the meaning associated with their words. To address this concern, a semi-structured interview guide was developed (see Appendix D). Having pre-set questions ensured that the participants were asked the same questions so that themes could be identified in the event patterns materialized; however, the open-ended nature of the questions and the fact that the interviews were conducted individually allowed participants to share their interpretations of the phenomenon independent of one another.

Theoretical concerns with regard to trustworthiness arise when alternative explanations for the discrepant data are not taken into consideration when analyzing the data. To ensure the accuracy of the data analysis, the researcher incorporated the services of an external reviewer; someone not affiliated with the study in any way. The external reviewer was provided with a copy of the transcripts, was asked to read the transcripts, to note patterns across participant responses, and to identify emergent themes. The external reviewer's interpretation of the data

was compared with that of the researcher's. No discrepancies in interpretation emerged between the researcher's and reviewer's analyses of the transcripts.

When reporting the findings in Chapter 4, inconsistent patterns across participant responses were also noted to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the results. Other methods used to report the magnitude of the findings were triangulation of the data across participant responses, recognition of the links between the quantitative and qualitative findings, and connections to the literature review. Finally, a systematic random sampling technique was employed so that the findings could be generalized to the larger participant sample that preferred a male coach.

## **Data Collection**

### **Pilot Study**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of East Stroudsburg University (ESU) approved the protocol for the pilot study in January 2012. The purpose of the pilot study was to ensure that there were no procedural issues with the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study.

**Quantitative phase.** Select female athletes from one NCAA Division II institution in the Northeastern United States were invited to participate in the pilot study. The researcher contacted the female athletes by e-mail correspondence (see Appendix E). The female athletes who volunteered ( $N = 22$ ) were members of the following teams: basketball, cross country, field hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track and field, and volleyball. Participants were solicited from these sports teams since the same sports were sponsored by the NCAA Division I institution where the field study was conducted.

The researcher began by describing the nature of the study to the participants and indicated to them that they would be completing three forms: an informed consent form, a

demographic information form, and a survey instrument. The researcher provided each participant with a packet of information and a set of instructions (see Appendix F). The envelope contained the informed consent form (2 copies--one for the researcher and one for the participant), the demographic information form, the modern sexism scale, a Scantron response sheet, and a pencil. It was further explained that by signing the informed consent form (see Appendix G), they were agreeing to participate in the study; however, they were also told that they were free to leave the room at any time prior to the completion of the surveys, if they chose to do so.

Prior to completing the forms, the participants were afforded an opportunity to ask questions. When the participants were finished, they placed the completed documents in the envelope and handed the envelope to the researcher. Before leaving the room, the researcher asked them if anything about the process or forms was unclear. The researcher also reviewed the completed documents to ensure that she had no questions for them based on their completion of the survey instruments.

Upon completion of the quantitative phase of the pilot study, the researcher reviewed the responses and identified those students who indicated a preference for a male coach and a willingness to participate in the qualitative phase follow-up. The names of the individuals who met the criteria ( $N = 13$ ) were placed on a list in alphabetical order by surname. From this list, two participants were selected for this phase of the pilot study using a systematic random sampling technique. A starting point was determined by picking a number between 1 and 13. Since 1 was selected, then the first name on the list was the first interviewee selected, and the second participant was the 7<sup>th</sup> name thereafter.

**Qualitative phase.** The two female athletes selected were contacted by phone and invited to participate in the qualitative phase of the pilot study. Both agreed to do so. The interviews were scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time and were conducted in the researcher's office. This location ensured an environment that was quiet and private. Prior to beginning the interview, each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix H) for this phase of the study. The interview was audio-taped.

During the interview session, the participant was asked the questions as outlined in the interview guide (see Appendix D). The researcher attended to the participant's verbal and non-verbal responses in order to detect confusion surrounding the questions. None was noted. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. At the conclusion of the interview the researcher debriefed each participant. The purpose of the debriefing was to address any concerns regarding leading questions, body language, and facial expressions that may have impacted the truthfulness of their responses. No issues were reported.

## **Field Study**

**Quantitative phase.** The researcher reviewed the IRB procedures on-line at ESU and the NCAA Division I institution where the field study was conducted. The researcher completed the application forms for both sites and submitted all forms to the IRB at both institutions. Permission to conduct research at the host institution was granted by the provost, athletic director, and associate athletic director upon documented receipt of IRB approval.

IRB approval was granted by East Stroudsburg University, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and the field study site in January 2012. After receiving IRB approval, the researcher contacted the associate athletic director by phone to discuss the research study and to schedule a location, day, and time to administer the surveys on campus. The researcher also sent

an e-mail to the head coaches of the women's teams (see Appendix I) describing the nature of the study and indicating to them that the associate athletic director would be in contact with them about the research project. After the coaches were notified, the associate athletic director sent an e-mail notification inviting female athletes to participate in this study and notified them of the meeting location, day and time (see Appendix J).

When the researcher met with the female athlete participants, she distributed an envelope containing instructions (see Appendix F) and the research documents which included an informed consent form for the field study--quantitative phase (see Appendix K), the demographic information form (see Appendix A), the modern sexism scale (see Appendix C), a Scantron response sheet, and a pencil. The outside of each envelope was numbered from 1 to 200. Each form inside the envelope was numbered to correspond with the number on the envelope. This number became the participant's identification. Three meetings were required to accommodate the schedules of the interested parties and to meet the minimum sample requirements.

Each time the researcher explained to the participants that their participation was voluntary and that if they decided to participate, their identity in reporting the findings would remain confidential. Participants were given a chance to ask questions. When all the questions had been addressed, the participants were asked to open the envelope and remove the papers. The researcher explained to the participants that if they were interested in continuing, then they needed to first complete and sign the informed consent form. After signing the consent form, they were reminded to read the instructions and complete the surveys.

Participants were given as much time as necessary to complete the two surveys. It took no longer than 30 minutes to do so. Those individuals who chose not to participate in the study

were asked to place no marks on the consent form or surveys. They were permitted to stay in the room or leave. Prior to exiting the room, participants were asked to place the consent form and surveys back in the envelope and seal it. The sealed envelope was returned to the researcher as the participants left the room.

**Qualitative phase.** A systematic random sampling technique was used to identify 10 female athletes based on two criteria: (1) they preferred a male coach; and (2) they indicated a willingness to be interviewed, if selected. The 10 female athletes were identified, contacted by phone, and invited to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. They were reminded that their participation was voluntary. Two participants declined participation and were replaced by the individuals appearing directly above them on the list of athletes meeting the aforementioned criteria.

Interviews were scheduled with each of the participants at a mutually agreed upon time. The interviews were conducted in a room that was located on campus and afforded a quiet and private environment. Prior to beginning the interview, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form for this phase of the study (see Appendix L). The interview was audio-taped. The audio-tape was transcribed upon completion of the interview.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 19 software. The alpha level, or level of confidence, was set at  $p < .05$ . The quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed based on the data analysis procedures deemed most appropriate for each research question.

### **Research Question 1**

Do the female intercollegiate athletes in this study prefer a male or female coach?

Descriptive data, specifically frequency of response and percentage, were calculated for the response to Item 4 on the demographic information form. A binomial test for probabilities was used to assess this hypothesis.

## **Research Question 2**

What is the relationship between a female athlete's past experience with coaches and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach?

This question was divided into three additional parts: 2a, 2b, and 2c.

(2a) What is the relationship between a female athlete's youth sport experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?

Descriptive data, specifically range, mean, median, and mode, were calculated for the female athlete participants. A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the association of sex of past coach at the youth sport level to the athlete's overall preference for a coach based on sex.

(2b) What is the relationship between a female athlete's interscholastic experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?

Descriptive data, specifically range, mean, median, and mode, were calculated for the female athlete participants. A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the association of sex of past coach at the interscholastic sport level to the athlete's overall preference for a coach based on sex.

(2c) What is the relationship between the female athlete's intercollegiate experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?

Descriptive data, specifically frequency of response and percentage, were calculated for the female athlete participants. A 2 x 2 chi square design was used to categorize the data, and a

Pearson chi square test was used to test for the presence of the relationship between the two variables. This test was conducted to determine the association of sex of her current coach at the intercollegiate level to the athlete's overall preference for a coach based on sex.

### **Research Question 3**

Do female intercollegiate athletes hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995)?

Mean scores were calculated for each item. The mean scores were presented in a frequency distribution table and a histogram. A mean score for all participants combined was also calculated and is referred to as a sumscore. Confidence intervals were calculated to get an estimate of the true values of the item and sumscore means as well as to indicate means that were not neutral.

### **Research Question 4**

What is the relationship between a female intercollegiate athlete's modern sexist beliefs and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach?

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the association of a female athlete's modern sexist beliefs and her preference for a coach based on the coach's sex.

### **Research Question 5**

What factors impact a female intercollegiate athlete's beliefs and preferences about her athletic experience?

This question was divided into three parts: 5a, 5b, and 5c.

(5a) What role did family play in defining and supporting her early sport experience?

(5b) What traits are associated with successful head coaches? Are these traits ascribed to a coach based on the coach's sex?

(5c) How is the female athlete's competitive sport experience described in comparison to that for men?

The qualitative data analysis included coding the data, identifying patterns across respondents, and determining emergent themes in each of the three interview segments. Contradictory information was also noted when reporting the findings in Chapter 4.

### **Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

An assumption of this study was that the participants clearly understood the instructions for completing the survey since a pilot study was conducted to ensure that any areas of confusion were resolved prior to its administration. A second assumption was that the participants responded honestly and independently when completing the survey.

The study was delimited to female athletes certified for competition in basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, track and field, and volleyball at one NCAA Division I institution in the Northeastern United States. The institution was a private four-year liberal arts college.

There were several limitations to this research study. First, the research findings were limited to female athletes at one NCAA Division I institution in the Northeastern United States. In addition to being only one of 335 NCAA Division I member institutions (NCAA, 2011, March), the socioeconomic level of those attending the school and the higher standards required for admission probably placed limitations on the type of student who qualifies for admission. Furthermore, the findings were not necessarily representative of NCAA Division II and NCAA Division III female athletes since the guidelines for membership and the level of competitiveness differs among the three divisions; NCAA Division I represents the highest level of athletic competition. A fourth limitation was that the findings were restricted to the sports specifically

represented in this study. A final limitation was that the participants in this study appeared to be Caucasian, and as a result, the findings of this study may not be representative of other ethnic groups.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the explanatory mixed methods research design used in the present study (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The sequential nature of the design afforded the researcher an opportunity to examine more deeply the association of modern sexism to a female athlete's preference for a male coach. Five research questions were identified and guided the research process. Data analyses procedures were described for each research question.

One hundred fifty-five female athletes representing 10 different sports participated in the quantitative phase of the study. Demographic information was gathered and the modern sexism survey was completed during this part of the study. The participants who preferred a male coach and indicated a willingness to be interviewed were identified. From those 61, a systematic random sampling technique was used to select the 10 female athletes participating in the qualitative phase of the study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted on campus in a private and quiet location. A semi-structured interview guide served as the framework for the participants' dialogues. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim, and an external reviewer was used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. The intent of the qualitative phase of the present study was to further explain the relationship of modern sexism to a female athlete's preference for a coach. The results of this study are presented in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The purpose of this research study was to examine the relationship of female athletes' modern sexist beliefs to their preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. An explanatory mixed methods research design was used to investigate the nature of this association.

In this chapter, the findings of this study are presented and the data analysis is provided. The research design included a quantitative component followed by a qualitative component, and the results are reported in the same sequential pattern. The quantitative phase of the study included the administration of a demographic information form, a question indicating the participant's preference for a coach, and the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). Both instruments were administered to female athletes at a NCAA Division I institution in the Northeastern United States. From this population, 10 female athletes were interviewed for the qualitative phase of the study using a semi-structured interview guide. The interview participants were randomly selected after meeting two criteria: (1) their preference for a male coach and (2) their willingness to participate in the interview portion of the study.

Demographic information was collected for each participant. Five research questions further guided the collection of data and served as the organizational framework for this chapter. The first four research questions were related to the quantitative phase of the study, and the fifth research question pertained to the qualitative portion of the study. Each question is presented, followed by the data analysis specific to the question. Descriptive characteristics are presented first.

### Descriptive Characteristics of the Participants

Female athletes (N = 155) from one NCAA Division I institution in the Northeastern United States participated in the study. Ten of the 11 intercollegiate sports available to women were represented in the sample population. The only women's team not participating in the study was tennis. The number of participants per team is shown in Table 1. Two-sport athletes are listed separately.

Table 1

#### *Team and Participant Summary*

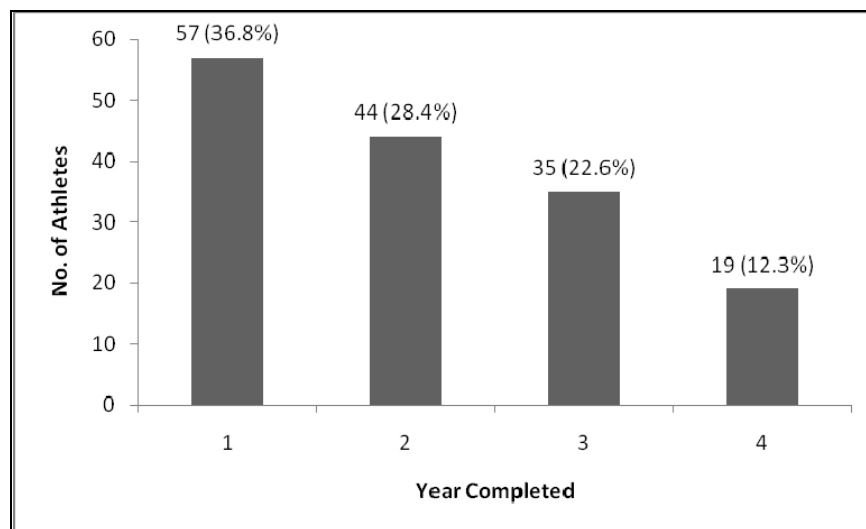
Sport Team	No. of Participants	Percentage
<b>Basketball</b>	14	9.0
Fencing	4	2.6
Field Hockey	19	12.3
Field Hockey/Lacrosse	1	.6
<b>Lacrosse</b>	28	18.1
<b>Softball</b>	13	8.4
Soccer	13	8.4
Soccer/Softball	1	.6
Soccer/Track & Field	1	.6
Swimming	26	16.8
Track & Field	18	11.6
<b>Volleyball</b>	7	4.5
Volleyball/Track & Field	1	.6
Cross Country/Track & Field	9	5.8
Total	155	100.0

*Note.* A total of 234 female athletes were certified for athletic competition at the NCAA Division I institution used in this study. The participant sample (N = 155) represents 67% of the female athlete population. Sports that appear in bold print had a female head coach.

As noted in Table 1, a woman served as the head coach of 4 of the 10 teams, specifically basketball, lacrosse, softball, and volleyball. A deeper analysis of the data based on sex of

current head coach reveals that 64 (41%) of the participants were coached by a woman and 91 (59%) had a man as their head coach.

A final descriptive characteristic refers to the participant's year of athletic eligibility. Per NCAA guidelines, a student-athlete is permitted to engage in four seasons of intercollegiate athletic competition, but must do so within five calendar years from the first semester of full-time enrollment (National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Manual, 2011). The mean score for years of athletic eligibility used for intercollegiate athletic competition reported by the participants was 2.10. A more detailed analysis of the participant frequency count for each year of eligibility used is shown in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Participant eligibility. Analysis based on NCAA four-season eligibility rule (N = 155).

### **Analysis of the Data**

An explanatory mixed methods research design was used to investigate the phenomenon of preference for a male coach among female athletes at one NCAA Division I institution in the Northeastern United States. To accomplish this purpose, the quantitative phase of the study was

completed prior to beginning the qualitative segment. This design afforded the researcher an opportunity to examine the factors impacting a female athlete's preference for a male coach through one-on-one interviews.

The issue of preference is a complex one. Therefore, the intent of this mixed methods research design was to move from simple quantification of a specific stated preference to a deeper understanding of how one comes to have this preference. The first four research questions pertain to the quantitative phase of the study and research question 5 to the qualitative phase.

The research questions, sub-questions, and their associated null hypotheses guide the data analysis. Each research question is presented, followed by a description of how the data were analyzed. The data were then reported, and an analysis of the findings presented. Note should be made that the null hypotheses for the quantitative research questions were presented prior to reporting and analyzing the findings.

To better ensure the reliability and validity of the quantitative findings and to allow for adequate power of the statistical tests, a minimum sample size of 122 was required. The participant sample totaled 155, and for each analysis exceeded the minimum required. For each statistical test, the level of significance,  $\alpha$ , was set at .05. To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, the 10 interview participants were selected using a systematic random sampling technique after meeting two criteria: (1) preference for a male coach and (2) willingness to be interviewed.

## Quantitative Data Analysis

### Research Question 1

Do the female intercollegiate athletes in this study prefer a male or female coach?

Descriptive data, specifically frequency of response and percentage, were calculated for the responses to Item 4 on the demographic information form. A binomial test for probabilities was used to assess this hypothesis.

$H_0$  The female intercollegiate athletes in this study will have no preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.

A single question on the demographic information form asked participants ( $N = 155$ ) to indicate their preference for a coach by either selecting the response of male or female. The option of no preference was not given; however, nine participants indicated a no preference response, and two left the response blank. These 11 responses were treated as missing cases and not included in the data analysis. Of the 144 participants who did indicate a preference for a coach, 27 (19%) preferred a female coach and 117 (81%) preferred a male coach.

In addition to the descriptive data, a binomial test for probabilities was used to assess the hypothesis. A one-tailed test favoring the preference for a male coach was used since previous research indicated that female athletes often prefer a male coach (Frey et al., 2006; LeDrew & Zimmerman, 1994; Parker & Greenawalt, 2007; Weinberg et al., 1984) or have no preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach (Habif et al., 2001; Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994). Using the binomial test for probabilities applied to the data for this research question (Item 4 from the demographic information form), the critical value for rejecting the null hypothesis of no preference for a one-tailed test was 82. Since the number of respondents who favored a male coach ( $n = 117$ ) was greater than 82, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis ( $p < .05$ ).

The phenomenon of preference was further investigated by examining the association of past experience, specifically experience with previous coaches at the youth sport, interscholastic, and intercollegiate levels of competition. To accomplish this purpose, Research Question 2 was divided into three additional parts: 2a, 2b, and 2c. The results for each sub-question are presented.

### **Research Question 2**

What is the relationship between a female athlete's past experience with coaches and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach?

(2a) What is the relationship between a female athlete's youth sport experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?

Participants were asked to reflect on their youth sport experience, and after doing so, were asked to identify the number of male and female coaches they had as coaches during this time in their lives. Of the 155 participants, 21 either had no youth sport experience or did not indicate a preference for a coach, and as a result, those cases were treated as missing cases and eliminated from the data analysis ( $N = 134$ ). Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Experience with Male and Female Coaches at Youth Sport Level (N = 134)*

Descriptive Statistic	Number of Coaches	
	Male	Female
Range	(0 – 13)	(0 – 11)
Mean	4	2
Median	3	1
Mode	1	1

*Note.* A zero does not reflect missing data, but rather that the participant had experience with a coach of one sex or the other, but not both.

$H_0$  There is no relationship between a female athlete's youth sport experience with coaches and her preference for a coach.

Because the dependent variable was dichotomous and the independent variables were considered to be ratio/interval, a logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the association of sex of past coaches at the youth sport level to the participant's overall preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. The sex of the coach at the youth sport level was the independent variable, and preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach was the dependent variable. The results as shown in Table 3 indicate that experience with female coaches early in one's athletic career serves as a significant predictor of a female athlete's overall preference for a female coach. In other words, the more female coaches an athlete has at the youth sport level, the more likely she is to prefer a female coach later in her career. As a result of these findings, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis specific to the predictive value of female athlete's experience with female coaches when participating in youth sports. The

researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis with regard to the predictive value of a female athlete's experience with male coaches when participating in youth sports.

Table 3

*The Logistic Regression Model for Youth Sport Experience and Preference for a Coach*  
(*N* = 134)

Variable	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>Exp</i> ( <i>B</i> )	<i>Sig.</i>	95% CI for <i>Exp</i> ( <i>B</i> )
Youth Male	0.19 (0.10)	1.21	.069	[0.99, 1.48]
Youth Female	-0.38 (0.14)	0.69	.006**	[0.53, 0.90]
Constant	1.48 (0.46)	4.39	.001	

*Note.*  $R^2 = .12$  (Nagelkerke). Model  $\chi^2_{(2)} = 10.05$ .

\*\* $p < .01$ .

(2b) What is the relationship between a female athlete's interscholastic experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?

Participants were asked to reflect on their interscholastic sport experience, and after doing so, were asked to identify the number of male and female coaches that they had as coaches during this time. Of the 155 participants, one respondent provided incomplete data, and as a result, that case was eliminated from the data analysis (*N* = 154). Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

*Experience with Male and Female Coaches at the Interscholastic Sport Level (N = 154)*

Descriptive Statistic	Number of Coaches	
	Male	Female
Range	(0 – 8)	(0 – 8)
Mean	2	1
Median	2	1
Mode	1	1

*Note.* A zero does not reflect missing data, but rather that the participant had experience with a coach of one sex or the other, but not both.

$H_0$  There is no relationship between a female athlete's interscholastic experience with coaches and her preference for a coach.

Because the dependent variable was dichotomous and the independent variables were considered to be ratio/interval, a logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the association of sex of past coaches at the interscholastic sport level to the participant's overall preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. The sex of the coach at the interscholastic sport level was the independent variable, and preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach was the dependent variable. The results as shown in Table 5 indicate that the high school experience serves as a significant factor in predicting a female athlete's preference for a coach based on the coach's sex. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis since a female athlete's interscholastic experience with both male and female coaches was a significant predictor of one's overall preference for a coach.

Table 5

*The Logistic Regression Model for Interscholastic Sport Experience and Preference for a Coach (N = 143)*

Variable	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	95% CI for <i>Exp(B)</i>
Interscholastic Male	0.76 (0.21)	2.14	.000**	[1.41, 3.26]
Interscholastic Female	-0.87 (0.21)	0.42	.000**	[0.28, 0.63]
Constant	1.82 (0.47)	6.15	.000	

*Note.*  $R^2 = .33$  (Nagelkerke). Model  $\chi^2_{(2)} = 32.54$ .  
 \*\* $p < .01$ .

(2c) What is the relationship between the female athlete's intercollegiate experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?

Descriptive data were compiled for the 144 participants who indicated a preference for a coach. Of the total participant sample (N = 155), nine participants indicated a no preference response, and two left the response blank. These 11 responses were treated as missing cases and not included in the data analysis. The data were categorized by the sport and sex of current coach. A 2 x 2 chi square design was used to further categorize the data, and a Pearson chi square test was used to test for the presence of the relationship between the two variables. This test was conducted to determine the association of the independent variable--that is, the sex of current coach at the intercollegiate level, to the dependent variable--which is, their overall preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.

$H_0$  There is no relationship between a female athlete's intercollegiate experience with coaches and her preference for a coach.

Of the 144 participants who indicated a preference for a coach, 60 participants currently had a female coach, with 84 participating under the direction of a male coach. Of the 60 participants who currently had a female coach, 17 (28%) preferred a female coach, and 43 (72%) preferred a male coach. Of the 84 participants who currently had a male coach, 10 (12%) preferred a female coach, and 74 (88%) preferred a male coach. Table 6 and Table 7 provide a more detailed look at the issue of preference specific to each team.

Table 6

*Preference for a Coach among Teams Coached by a Woman*

Sport	n	Number Prefer Female	Number Prefer Male	Number No Response
Basketball	14	1	13	0
Lacrosse	29	12	14	3
Softball	14	3	10	1
Volleyball	7	1	6	0
Total	64	17	43	4

*Note.* The sample size for the teams who currently had a female coach ( $n = 60$ ) was derived by subtracting the number of “no responses” from the total number of women currently coached by a female.

Table 7

*Preference for a Coach among Teams Coached by a Man*

Sport	n	Number Prefer Female	Number Prefer Male	Number No Response
Cross Country	9	0	9	0
Fencing	4	0	4	0
Field Hockey	19	6	12	1
Soccer	13	0	13	0
Swimming	26	2	21	3
Track	20	2	15	3
Total	91	10	74	7

*Note.* The sample size for the teams who currently had a male coach ( $n = 84$ ) was derived by subtracting the number of “no responses” from the total number of women currently coached by a male.

A 2 x 2 chi square design was used to further categorize the data whereby the independent variable used was the sex of current coach, and the dependent variable was the sex of preferred coach. A Pearson chi square test was used to test for the presence of the relationship between the two variables. The findings revealed that there was a significant association between the sex of the participant’s current coach to her overall preference for a coach. As a result, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis. Results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

*Chi-Square Test Results (Sex of Current Coach to Sex of Preferred Coach)*

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.20	1	.013*	
N of Valid Cases	144			

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ . a. Computed for a 2 X 2 table. b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.25.

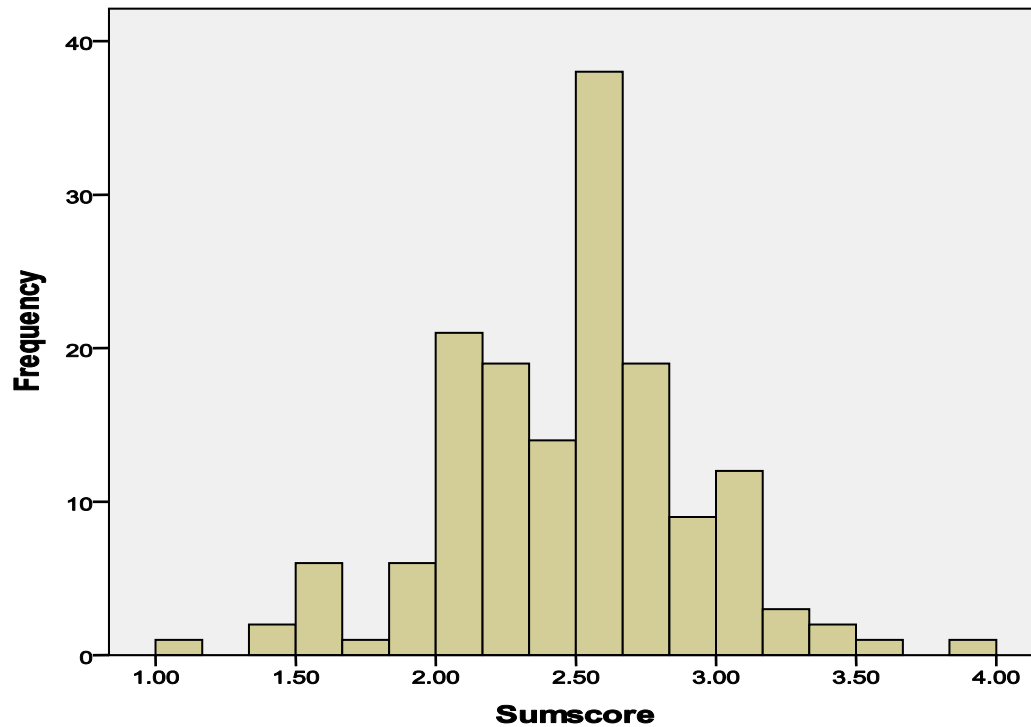
### **Research Question 3**

Do female intercollegiate athletes hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995)?

Mean scores were calculated for each participant. The mean scores are presented in a frequency distribution table and a histogram. In addition, a mean score for all participants was calculated and is referred to as the mean sumscore. Confidence intervals were calculated to get an estimate of the true values of the item and sumscore means as well as to indicate means that are not neutral. Participants were asked to rate each of the eight items on the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995) using a 5-point Likert scale where -2 was labeled strongly agree and +2, strongly disagree. In order to calculate mean scores, the aforementioned numerical values were converted to all positive numbers where 1 was labeled strongly agree and 5, strongly disagree. Three was considered the neutral point. Mean scores above 3 indicated the presence of modern sexist beliefs.

H<sub>0</sub> Female intercollegiate athletes do not hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995).

The frequency distribution of the mean scores for each participant is shown in Figure 2.



*Figure 2.* Mean score frequency distribution for each participant (N = 155). The mean sumscore is 2.46. SD = 0.44. 95% CI [2.39, 2.53]. Minimum is 1.13 and maximum is 3.88.

Mean sumscores were also calculated for each of the eight items on the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). The results are shown in Table 9. Each item description as it appeared on the scale and its associated mean sumscore is presented in Table 10.

Table 9

*Mean Sumscore for Each Item on the Modern Sexism Scale*

	N	Mean	95% CI for Mean
Item 1R	155	2.26	[2.13, 2.39]
Item 2	155	2.84	[2.69, 2.98]
Item 3R	155	1.82	[1.71, 1.94]
Item 4R	155	2.50	[2.37, 2.64]
Item 5R	154	2.73	[2.57, 2.88]
Item 6	154	2.55	[2.42, 2.68]
Item 7	153	2.22	[2.11, 2.34]
Item 8R	151	2.82	[2.69, 2.95]
Sumscore	155	2.46	[2.39, 2.53]

*Note.* Items 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8 were reversed scored on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. Not all participants completed Items 5R, 6, 7, and 8R. A mean score was calculated for the items completed.

Table 10

*Mean Sumscore for Each Item on Modern Sexism Scale with Item Description*

Item on Scale	Mean Sumscore
1. Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States.	2.26
2. Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination.	2.84
3. It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television.	1.82
4. On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally.	2.50
5. Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.	2.73
6. It is easy to understand the anger of women's groups in America.	2.55
7. It is easy to understand why women's groups are still concerned about societal limitations to women's opportunities.	2.22
8. Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about treatment of women than is warranted by women's actual experiences.	2.82

*Note.* Items 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8 were reversed scored on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. A mean score of 3 is considered the neutral point.

The analysis of mean sumscores for overall participant response and each item response revealed that female athletes in this study did not hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). As a result, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis.

#### **Research Question 4**

What is the relationship between a female intercollegiate athlete's modern sexist beliefs and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach?

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between a female athlete's modern sexist beliefs and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. The independent variable was the mean sumscore calculated for the participants who completed the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). The dependent variable was preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.

$H_0$  There is no relationship between a female athlete's modern sexist beliefs and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.

Of the 155 participants in the study, 144 participants indicated a preference for a coach and completed the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). Eleven individuals did not indicate a preference for a coach and were treated as missing cases. Of the 144 participants, 27 (19%) preferred a female coach and 117 (81%) a male coach. It should be noted that the findings reported for Research Question 3, indicated that female athletes did not hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). The results of the logistic regression analysis examining this relationship are shown in Table 11.

Table 11

*The Logistic Regression Model for Modern Sexists Beliefs and Preference for a Coach (N = 144)*

Variable	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>Exp (B)</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	95% CI for <i>Exp (B)</i>
Sumscore	0.16 (0.48)	1.18	.736	[0.46, 3.04]
Constant	1.07 (1.20)	2.91	.374	

*Note.*  $R^2 = .001$  (Nagelkerke). Model  $\chi^2_{(2)} = 0.113$ .

The results of the logistic regression analysis indicated that a participant's modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995) did not predict one's preference for a coach. Thus, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis.

In summary, the quantitative data analyses revealed several important findings. First, the female athletes in this study preferred a male coach. A second finding revealed that having a female coach at an early age was a significant predictor in a female athlete's preference for a coach later in her career. Further analysis indicated that the high school experience was also a time when the experience with both male and female coaches had a significant impact on a female athlete's preference for a coach. There was also a significant association between the sex of the female athlete's current coach and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. Finally, the female athletes in this study did not hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995), and as a result, there was no association between the participants' modern sexist beliefs and their preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.

## **Qualitative Data Analysis**

The purpose of the qualitative phase of the study was to afford the researcher an opportunity to further explore the presence of modern sexist beliefs and the impact of those beliefs on a female athlete's preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. Demographic information was compiled for each interview participant. A semi-structured interview guide was developed to provide a framework for this phase of the study (see Appendix D). The interview guide was divided into three segments: 1) introduction to sport and early sport experience, 2) sex stereotypes, and 3) equality and opportunity. The three segments of the interview guide were aligned with Research Question 5 and its associated subparts. Research Question 5 emanated from the review of literature. The interpretation of the findings was derived by quantifying the data when appropriate, by triangulating data to other research that has been reported, and by using the words of the female athletes to reinforce interpretation.

When using direct quotes to report the findings, the citation protocol as defined by the American Psychological Association (Publication Manual, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed., 2010) was followed. Three ellipsis points are used to identify the omission of original material within a sentence. Four ellipsis points indicate the omission of material between two sentences. Brackets are used when words are inserted for clarification purposes. Research Question 5 and its subparts will serve as a framework for reporting the findings in this section. Demographic information is presented first.

### **Descriptive Characteristics of the Interview Participants**

Participants for the qualitative phase of the study were selected based on two criteria: (1) preference for a male coach and (2) willingness to be interviewed. Of the 144 participants who indicated a preference for a coach, 117 preferred a male coach. Of the 117 participants who

preferred a male coach, 61 indicated an interest in being interviewed. A systematic random sampling technique was used to select the 10 individuals interviewed.

Five of the individuals who agreed to be interviewed competed in a team sport, specifically lacrosse (n = 1), soccer (n = 3), and softball (n = 1); five competed in an individual sport, specifically cross country/track and field (n = 1), fencing (n = 1), swimming (n = 1), and track and field/field events (n = 2). Demographic information for each individual is shown in Table 12. Table 12 also shows the sex of the participant's current coach and the degree to which the participant holds modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). The modern sexism scores reported are mean scores which were calculated based on the participants' responses to the eight items on the modern sexism scale. The participants are identified using the numerical identification code assigned to them when completing the quantitative phase of the study. The numerical code assigned to each of the participants is used to identify that individual when discussing the qualitative findings for the remainder of the study.

Table 12

*Descriptive Data for Interview Participants*

ID	Sport	Elig.	Youth		Interscholastic		Coach Sex	Mod. Sexism Mean score
			M	F	M	F		
015	Softball	4	6	3	2	4	F	2.63*
025	Soccer	3	4	2	1	2	M	2.38
034	Fencing	2	-	-	1	1	M	2.63*
038	Soccer	1	6	0	3	1	M	3.50*
068	Swimming	2	5	3	3	1	M	2.13
096	Soccer	3	2	0	0	2	M	2.13
105	Track	1	6	2	4	3	M	2.75*
125	XC/Track	1	4	2	3	0	M	2.25
128	Track	3	6	2	1	0	M	3.25*
132	Lacrosse	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	F	<u>2.75*</u>
Summary data		2.3	4.8	1.7	2.0	1.6		2.64

*Note.* ID = participant. Elig. – current year of eligibility or year completed at the time the study was conducted. Youth M and Youth F = # of male and female coaches that the individual had during her youth sport experience. Interscholastic M and Interscholastic F = # of male and female coaches that the individual had during her interscholastic experience. Coach sex = sex of current coach at the intercollegiate level. Mod. Sexism mean score is the mean score calculated for the participant after completing the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). The asterisk identifies participant mean scores above the mean sumscore of 2.46 [95% CI = 2.39, 2.53] reported for the total population. Summary data are mean scores for the interview sample population only.

Descriptive characteristics alone do not provide insight into a female athlete's preference for a male coach. Therefore, an explanatory mixed methods research design was employed to better understand what factors impact a female athlete's preference for a male coach, particularly within the framework of modern sexism. This was best accomplished by allowing the athlete to tell her story which was done in response to Research Question 5. Research Question 5 included three subparts: (1) the early experience and the role of one's family in defining that experience, (2) traits of successful coaches and whether or not there was a stereotypical association of the

trait with the coach's sex, and (3) the perception of equality of the sport experience among female athletes with regard to institutional adherence to Title IX and coaching opportunities afforded women.

### **Research Question 5**

What factors impact a female intercollegiate athlete's beliefs and preferences about her athletic experience?

This question is divided into three parts: 5a, 5b, and 5c.

(5a) What role did family play in defining and supporting her early sport experience?

(5b) What traits are associated with successful head coaches? Are these traits ascribed to a coach based on the coach's sex?

(5c) How is the female athlete's competitive sport experience described in comparison to that for male athletes?

A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix D), consisting of three segments aligned with the aforementioned subparts, was developed to direct the interview process. This format ensured consistency in that the same questions were asked of each participant. It also afforded the researcher the opportunity to ask additional questions for the purposes of clarification and deeper understanding, if necessary.

Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. After coding the data, labels were checked to ensure consistency in interpretation. Overarching themes were identified based on the patterns that emerged. Information that was considered outlier or contradictory information was noted. An external reviewer was used to ensure the accuracy of the interpretations.

### **Segment 1--Introduction to Sport and the Early Sport Experience**

(5a) What role did family play in defining and supporting her early sport experience?

In this segment, the participant reflected upon her early sport experience and the role family members played in defining that experience. According to Benokraitis and Feagin (1995), sexist beliefs are developed at an early age and, once established, are very difficult to change. Based on the aforementioned statement, it seemed appropriate to begin by asking the participants to reflect on the meaning of that early experience.

#### **Early Experience**

Each of the participants described being introduced to sport at an early age, generally between the ages of three and five. For 6 of the 10 participants, the opportunity was initiated by their parents, primarily their mother. The following statements reflect the importance of parental influence.

My mother said we [sister and participant] had way too much energy so she put us in sport. (Participant 025, p. 1, line 2)

Well my mom was an athlete . . . it was an understanding that it didn't matter what sport you played or how long you played it, but you had to be doing something. (Participant 068, p. 1, line 1, 4-5)

Actually, my parents pretty much had us all in sports. I have three siblings. (Participant 105, p. 1, line 1)

In addition to parental influence, the participants' stories also reflected the role their siblings played in their introduction to sport. Eight of the 10 participants had at least one older sibling; Participants 034 and 096 had younger siblings. Based on their comments, siblings,

regardless of sex and age, served as role models to these women. Reflections on these experiences are provided:

My younger brother signed up for baseball and my parents didn't sign me up, and they saw how interested I was . . . so that kind of first triggered my wanting to play sports on a team. (Participant 034, p. 1, lines 2 – 4)

I know my brother [older] played so I probably just wanted to do it because he was doing it. (Participant 128, p. 1, lines 2-3)

Participants' reflections on their early experience included both an informal and a formal component. For example, participants described informal play as occurring among both boys and girls in the neighborhood or primarily with one's sibling(s). This experience included an element of spontaneity and creativity and included several different sports, as evidenced by the following statements.

My brother played hockey and so we would always play like street hockey in the driveway and stuff . . . . We didn't really have a lot of neighbor kids; it was basically just my brother and I. (Participant 015, p. 1, lines 8-10)

Just a lot of pick-up games. I was always encouraged to be outside. I live in a farm area so we were pretty much always outside playing around. (Participant 038, p. 1, lines 5-6)

I had all guy neighbors, but I remember we played roller hockey on our street. We . . . had basketball hoops . . . we played wiffle ball. We were a neighborhood of just pick-up games and knocking on each other's door to see who could play, and it was mostly boys . . . . I have to say although I love organized sport, there's something to be said for a pick-up game that's just so much fun. It was so spontaneous. Like maybe we should change the rules or something. (Participant 068, p. 1, lines 13-16)

There was a bunch of kids in my neighborhood about my age. We all played together, boys and girls . . . . We just kind of had fun . . . kick ball and stuff like that. (Participant 128, p. 1, lines 5-9)

We kind of did it all. We . . . did a lot of roller hockey, backyard football, soccer, golf, tennis. (Participant 132, p. 1, lines 4-5)

Although the majority of participants spoke about the fun they had playing with children in the neighborhood, 4 of the 10 participants did not experience this same type of informal play. Participant 105 had to ask what was meant by informal play. Participant 125 described her experience as connecting with another child on the street but only when going to swim or dance practice, not playing games of choice at home. Participants 034 and 096 described their informal experience as recess at school, and participant 034 reinforced the importance of recess in school when she stated “I grew up in a place where houses were very isolated, very wooded, so there really wasn’t a community park other than going to school. So that was where most of the play and sport interactions would happen” (p. 1, lines 6-8).

Even though pick-up games among neighborhood friends were the norm for many of the participants, their experiences did not stop there. All of the participants were involved in more formal play through community recreation leagues or activities sponsored by community businesses. Not only do their comments demonstrate the variety of experiences available to them, but also their personal interest in playing more than one sport. In many ways, this early experience took on a trial and error approach. It was a time when they chose to play a number of different sports, rather than devote their time to playing one sport. This perspective is represented by the following statements.

I played basketball, soccer, ballet softball, and volleyball. (Participant 015, p. 7, line 7)

We did recreation leagues, travel teams . . . little league teams. We did church teams.

(Participant 025, p. 1, 13-14)

I really, really loved horseback riding and figure skating. (Participant 034, p. 1, line 10)

By the time I was in kindergarten, I was playing soccer, baseball, and basketball.

(Participant 038, p. 1, line 9)

I was a swimmer, a dancer. I played softball. I played soccer, and I was a synchronized swimmer, and now I'm on track. (Participant 125, p. 1, lines 11-12)

I swam for the community team . . . . I played soccer after that too. (Participant 128, p. 1-2, lines 11, 16)

There is no doubt that their schedules kept both the participants and their parents quite busy, yet when asked to describe these experiences, all of them indicated that it was fun and they loved what they were doing at the time. In addition to having fun, half of the participants also stated that their participation afforded them with an opportunity to make friends. Participant 038 reflects the overall consensus of the interviewees when she states "Just a fun time to be with my friends. It's what we did every weekend. I looked forward to it" (p. 1, line 10).

Another perspective about the experience is provided by Participant 125. Participant 125 admitted that she had fun competing in youth leagues and that it was really her only opportunity to make friends; however, in reflecting on her early sport experience, she made an interesting statement unlike anything stated by the other participants. She reflected on what she perceived to be a very structured time in her life. She appeared uncertain as to whether or not there was too much structure. Her statement follows.

Most of it was more structured. My neighborhood didn't have very many children so it was more like . . . go to swim practice or go to dance or something like that. So it was all structured . . . . Sometimes I think like it was *really* structured for my young age because I was always doing multiple sports at once from age 5 and on and so I really didn't do as much playing . . . so sometimes I think that I might be a little too intense . . . . I still had fun. I wouldn't have gone if I didn't have fun so there were like other kids my age and we would all joke and everything, and it was just that when we were practicing, it wasn't just practice for fun. It was practice to get better. (p. 1, lines 4-9, 13-15)

### **Parental Role**

Whether individuals participated because it was fun or to improve their performance, the experience itself could not occur without the support of and interaction with the participants' parents. In discussing the role of their parents in relationship to their early sport experience, the following themes emerged: (1) an historical perspective of sport, (2) the impact of parent's athletic experience on parental role, and (3) a gendered view of sport.

When asked if either of their parents participated in competitive sport, 7 of the 10 participants stated that their mother participated in sports, yet only six said the same about their father. Important to note is that the majority of experiences referenced for both mothers and fathers was in relationship to high school sport participation. Three participants (034, 038, and 125) stated that neither parent was an athlete.

In reviewing their statements, an interesting historical perspective emerged. All of the interview participants were traditional college age students, and as such, it is likely that their parents are between 40 and 55 years of age. Coincidentally, June 2012 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Title IX. Based on this timeline, the participants' parents were likely to have been

in high school when Title IX was either enacted or during the early years of the Office of Civil Rights' (OCR's) compliance regulations. In this context, the participants' comments are very representative of how sport for women was viewed at that time. Nevertheless, during that time period competitive opportunities for girls and women were relatively limited when compared to today. In fact, one participant even describes the limitations that traditional sex roles placed on the experience for her mother. The comments shared below emphasize these points.

My mother actually played field hockey in high school and track, but she always said it wasn't very competitive. She just did it for the hell of it to be honest with you . . . she didn't play sports in college. (Participant 025, p. 2, lines 34-35)

My mother didn't [play sports], but that's something I think she would attribute to the time where her brothers would do sports, but she . . . was required to do a lot of cooking, cleaning. (Participant 034, p. 3, lines 44-45)

She played some field hockey [high school] when she was younger, but she swam all her life. She quit swimming her freshman year [college] . . . Tulane didn't have a women's program at the time . . . they had a club women's team who trained with the men's varsity team. They didn't get much focus from the coach because they were just a club team . . . She actually wished she had chosen a program that had a varsity women's team . . . this was around 1974 . . . there weren't many swimming opportunities. For high school she and her sister were both the only girls to swim on a guy's team, and they were the first to receive varsity letters in their county or maybe even New York . . . so that's why she was more comfortable going to college where she would be training with the men's team. (Participant 068, p. 2-3, lines 32-46)

My mom was a cheerleader in high school. That was as much sports as there was.

(Participant 125, p. 2, line 21)

Despite the minimal opportunities for women, there was one exception to the above stories. The following statement provided by one participant reflects on the change underway for female athletes at that time. “My mom played [community college]. She got a scholarship to play softball but then ended up playing basketball and volleyball for the school but played softball on the side” (Participant 015, p. 2, lines 28-29).

Despite the limited opportunities afforded women and the fact that their experience was often viewed as less competitive, several mothers took active roles in their daughter’s development, especially if it was the sport they played. In these cases, they provided technical advice to their daughters about their performance, and as importantly, their daughters seemed to respect their expertise and knowledge. Several participants described the role of their mother in this way.

Both of my parents did play all the sports I played so they were always there giving me pointers, like helping me practice . . . . My mom was always the one I worked with more . . . she actually played fast pitch so it was more relatable. (Participant 015, p. 2, 33-34, 37-38)

I’d get out of the pool . . . mom would ask me more technical swimming things.

(Participant 068, p. 3, lines 62)

My mom did track in college and high school. She like loves track, and we’re doing track today . . . it was something really important to her . . . . My mom knows a lot about the sport so she gives very helpful advice. (Participant 105, p. 2, lines 21-23, 26-27)

Even though she wasn't very involved in sports [as an athlete herself] . . . she was always looking up stuff on-line so she understood a bit more about what was going on . . . so she was very educated with my sports. She knew everything . . . . She started out as a volunteer coach and ended up coaching. (Participant 125, p. 2, lines 28-31, 33)

In addition to skill development, other types of support were also discussed. For example, both parents were described by 9 of 10 participants as showing their support by attending games; however, in a few cases there was a qualifier to this statement specific to fathers, such as when schedules permitted. At other times parental support was described in more stereotypical ways.

Soccer mom . . . travelling everywhere . . . my dad worked a lot. My mom was more of the transporter. (Participant 025, p. 2, lines 39, 45)

My dad became a coach figure . . . though he didn't understand the actual sport . . . meanwhile my mom would bring me food and would make sure I had water. (Participant 034, p. 3, lines 58, 60-62)

My father coached all my teams . . . [my mom] bringing oranges to the games. She didn't know anything about the sport . . . . My mom expressed it [support] by saying 'thank God you didn't get hurt' . . . my dad by just trying to help me get better. (Participant 038, p. 2, lines 13, 17-20)

In continuing to discuss parental support, the sport itself often defined a parent's role and in this way took on a more gendered view. For example, where mothers were confident in teaching skills to their daughters, particularly if they had played the sport, they now withdrew from this role with their sons. Consistent with this phenomenon, not a single participant stated that their mother coached their brothers or worked with them on skill development. In contrast,

fathers assumed an even more active role with both sons and daughters, particularly if the sport was perceived as more masculine. Several examples highlighting these points were:

My dad also played hockey so I think he connected with my dad, because those were my dad's sports whereas I played more of my mom's sports. . . . He [brother] waited for my dad to help with techniques and stuff . . . and my mom was more so the 'go get them, you can do it' kind of cheerleader person. (Participant 015, p. 3, lines 44-45, 50-51)

My mom always went to her [sister] sporting events [regatta] . . . . I think he [father] was more in tune with my sports because he's a very big baseball person. I remember he said you should play baseball, skip softball . . . he doesn't understand crew . . . he made an effort to understand softball. (Participant 068, p. 4, lines 78, 81-82, 85)

I guess you could say my dad was more involved with their [brother and sister] sports [baseball and basketball] and my mom was more involved with me. I guess because it was girlier . . . . My mom knows more about track, my dad knew a lot more about those sports. (Participant 105, p. 3, lines 41-45)

My mom always came to my games or meets. He [father] tried to come to like one a season . . . . He didn't like soccer, and he didn't like swimming . . . . He didn't like sitting there for hours . . . . He [brother] played football and did track too . . . my dad did go to a lot of his football games. (Participant 128, p. 3, lines 24-28, 30, 34)

Based on the participants' stories, early sport experience provided a time for trying different sports, making friends, and having fun. Although parents were described as showing support, their support was expressed differently. For example, mothers were consistently described as the ones who attended games regularly, provided transportation, and ensured that food and water was available. In contrast, fathers' support was described as more conditional.

They typically attended games when their schedules permitted or when they actually had an interest in the sport.

Another difference was in the perception of the attributes needed to coach. Some of the participants' mothers coached their daughters' team, but only if they had played the sport. At no point did they coach their sons' team. Participation in the sport was not a necessary prerequisite for fathers to assume a coaching role. If they wanted to coach, they did so regardless of their past playing experiences.

During this early experience, sexist messages defining the participants' sport participation and how it was valued was being communicated. Unfortunately, the messages went unnoticed by the participants. In fact, at no point during this interview segment did any of the participants acknowledge or communicate concern over the traditional sex roles that each parent played or the lack of athletic opportunities afforded their mother. To the participants, this was accepted without question. In other words, sex differences, sex roles, and deferential treatment of women were viewed as normative at an early age.

### **Segment 2--Sex Stereotypes**

(5b) What traits are associated with successful head coaches? Are these traits ascribed to a coach based on the coach's sex?

Research has indicated that traditional sex roles are often linked to perceptions of masculinity and femininity and can lead to sexist behavior (Swim & Hyers, 2009). Schein's research revealed that both male (Schein, 1973) and female (Schein, 1975) managers ascribe more masculine traits to successful managers, which prompted her to coin the phrase "think manager, think male." Aicher and Sagas's (2010) research with college students enrolled in activity classes revealed similar findings associated with the coaching profession. Therefore, the

intent of this segment of the interview was to determine the traits the participants ascribe to a successful coach, to establish whether or not there is a “think coach, think male” stereotype among the female athletes in this study, and to understand the association of these characteristics to one’s preference for a coach.

### **Early Experience and Traits of Coaches**

The second segment in this phase of the study began by asking the female athletes to reflect on their experience with their first coach. For some, this was an easier task than for others; however, the majority described their first coach as an individual who made practices fun and enjoyable, and someone who was not overly strict. Participant 015 was about 10 at the time of her first experience with a coach and describes her recreational soccer league coach in this way “He really made everything fun, and it wasn’t like a chore to play. He wasn’t like super strict and he wasn’t like you have to do well” (p. 4, lines 69-70). Participant 125 shares several other characteristics that she valued and attributed to her first coach.

I remember my very first swim coach . . . he was very funny and nice . . . . After my races I would go and he would always tell me ‘good job’. . . . He was very caring . . . . He was always very personable with each one of us. (p. 5, lines 80, 82, 86, 88)

For two of the participants their first coach made a lasting impression, but not necessarily a positive one. Participant 105 described her experience in this way.

When I started ice skating, I had a guy coach who I did not [like]. I don’t know why, he had a thick European accent. I could not deal with it at that age so my mom went and asked them if I could have a female coach, and she was like really nice, and an older lady . . . I was a lot more comfortable with her and relaxed so I did better with that. She would joke around, make me laugh, not so serious, and if I would fall or something, she

wouldn't get angry with me. She had a lot of patience so I think that definitely helped me out to relate to her better and be comfortable around her which was a big thing. (p. 4, lines 56-62)

When asked to describe her first coach, Participant 128 responded with this account of her recollection.

I guess in soccer, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade, community, girls only. He was crazy. He always wore pants that looked like they were made of kid's bed sheets or just like weird. I could tell he dyed his hair because it always looked like really gross and stuff. I don't know. He had no idea what he was doing. He was just some girl's dad that they needed to coach so he did. No one liked him. None of the parents liked him. (p. 3, lines 40-44)

As the participants continued to share their stories about their first coach, another interesting pattern began to emerge. As stated previously, each of the 10 female athletes interviewed had participated in organized sport at the youth sport level or in conjunction with a private enterprise such as ice skating and horseback riding; however, only three of them identified their recreation league coach as their first coach. Six participants (025, 038, 068, 095, 105, and 125) identified their first coach as their club sport coach. Based on their stories the club sport experience was perceived as more competitive than the recreational league experience and included more travel. Participant 034 identified her high school fencing coach, not horseback riding instructor, as her first coach.

This pattern is noteworthy because the participants' dialogue appeared to indicate that they were beginning to differentiate between recreational and competitive sport. Even though the recreational experience involved teams competing with one another, the overall experience was perceived as non-competitive and, as such, whoever was assuming the role of coach was

doing so based more on title versus perceived competencies and respect for the position. This pattern becomes even more significant when looking at the ratio of female to male coaches and the level of competition associated with each. Of the individuals designated as the first coach, two were women and eight were men. Of the two female coaches, one was a recreational league coach and the other a club sport coach. Of the eight male coaches, two were recreational league coaches.

It is important to consider this differentiation of the experience by sex of coach as well as by perceived level of competitiveness in relationship to a female athlete's preference for a coach. The results of the quantitative findings indicated that exposure to a female coach at an early age was a significant predictor of her preference for a coach later in her career. Therefore the significance of their stories is twofold: (1) their experience with female coaches at a young age was limited and (2) when they did have the opportunity to be coached by a female, the experience was devalued when placed in the context of recreational sport. Some examples of this association are provided below.

It's interesting because the head coach . . . it was like recreational softball. It really wasn't that intense. (Participant 025, p. 2, lines 48-49)

I started when I was five so that doesn't really count as a coach at the competitive level. My first instructor was just another mother in my town who had several horses. (Participant 034, p. 5, lines 91-92)

Well my mom was my T-ball coach but that [doesn't count]. I'd have to say my first competitive swim coach as opposed to summer league . . . she was definitely the coach I think of as my first real coach. (Participant 068, p. 5, lines 106-108)

I mean like when he [brother] played football, it was for the schools, whereas when I did soccer it was just a youth thing. So his was more serious. It was varsity, and I was just doing it for fun. (Participant 128, p. 3, lines 31-33)

As the conversation continued with regard to coaches they liked best and those they liked least, other patterns emerged. For example, when talking about the coaches they liked best, 9 of the 10 participants talked about a male coach, with Participant 068 being the one exception. She talked about her club swim coach who was a woman. It is important to note that all 10 of these women were selected for the qualitative phase of this study because they indicated a preference for a male coach.

In addition to talking about male coaches, Participants 015 and 025 also talked positively about a female coach; however, for Participant 025 the importance of status became part of the conversation as evidenced by her statement provided below.

In high school I had a coach. It was a woman coach. She was a soccer coach, and she had played at the national level and had been friends with stars that I had looked up to, and she was great. She was very knowledgeable, and I really respected her. (p. 5, lines 111-114)

As was noted previously, research has shown that one of the few times a female athlete prefers a female coach is when she is perceived to be highly competent, in other words, nationally recognized (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994). Therefore, Participant 025's statement continues to reinforce the impact of status on one's preference for a coach.

### **High School Experience and Traits of Coaches**

Another pattern that emerged was specific to the impact of the high school experience on the participants' preferences for a coach. Quantitative findings previously indicated that the high

school experience is a significant predictor of a female athlete's preference for both male and female coaches. The importance of this experience is supported by the statements provided by the participants in this study. Participant 015 was the only athlete who did not specifically mention a high school coach when talking about her experience with coaches, but the statements made by the other participants provided perspective on this relationship. In looking at their statements about their experiences with male and female coaches at the high school level, an interesting pattern is revealed. There is no doubt that they identified more positive experiences with male coaches during this time period. The results are shown in Table 13.

Table 13

*Experience with Coach in High School*

Participant	Male		Female	
	Pos.	Neg.	Pos.	Neg.
015	--	--	--	--
025			X	
034	X			X
038		X		X
068	X			
096				X
105	X			
125	X			
128		X		
132	X			X
Total:	5	3	1	4

*Note.* Participant 015 did not discuss a high school coach so her response was left blank. Pos. = positive experience. Neg. = negative experience.

In further discussing their high school experiences, which at times included conversations about club sport coaches as well, characteristics began to emerge that defined their perception of

a good coach versus a bad coach. Participant 015 and Participant 032 provided a good summary of the traits associated with a good coach. Their statements were:

Someone who is very realistic . . . if your team is not very good but your coach is like we have to win the championship, then that's not a realistic goal, and I feel coaches need to be realistic. They need to know when it's ok for players to have fun versus business . . . . And coaches who won't like continually drill in your head that that's wrong . . . coaches who are more positive reinforcement than negative reinforcement . . . . Coaches who realize you do other things in your life . . . . It's supposed to be fun . . . . I need to know that my coaches have confidence in me. Like if I screw up, don't take me out of the game, because that drives my confidence down. (Participant 015, p. 5, lines 99-108)

My high school lacrosse coach . . . I don't know what it was about him . . . he was just one of those coaches who . . . really understood how to get through to a player and really encourage them and instruct them and at the same time, he'd be harsh on you when you needed it . . . . He broke the game down in different ways for different players . . . . He was a very supportive guy. (Participant 132, p. 3, lines 55-60, 62)

Other participants lent insight into traits associated with their least favorite coaches.

My high school basketball coach because he just was not encouraging at all and he'd yell, but not constructively. (Participant 038, p. 4, lines 57-58)

The high school female coach for fencing . . . she was not supportive or caring in an individual way. No personal connection and I didn't get a lot of help from her. (Participant 034, p. 6, lines 124-126)

For my first year, I didn't have the accuracy [softball pitcher] until I started working with a private coach. The first game I ever pitched . . . I didn't have such a good game, and he

[travel team coach] never let that go . . . . He didn't have confidence in my ability to do it based on that first time . . . . I didn't want a coach that didn't think that I was worthy.

(Participant 068, p. 6, lines 125-127, 131, 133)

My high school coach [female] was not level-headed at all. I don't know if it's because of working with girls and if it would be different with boys. The team followed how she was feeling. (Participant 096, p. 4, 62-64)

My lacrosse coach [high school] . . . . She picked her favorites. Wanted to more be your friend than coach you . . . . It was just like getting to hang around with the team of girls and get the drama and the gossip. (Participant, 132, p. 4, lines 69-74)

The previous statements are helpful in identifying many of the traits attributed to both good and bad coaches; however, the frequency of response is also an important consideration. As a result, a summary of all the traits mentioned in association with a good coach and a bad coach are presented in Tables 14 and 15 respectively. The frequency count for each is also shown.

Table 14

*Characteristics of a Good Coach*

Trait	Participant Response	Frequency
Understanding, caring	025, 034, 038, 068, 096, 105, 125, 128, 132	9
Motivational	015, 025, 034, 038, 068, 105, 125, 132	8
Knowledgeable about game	025, 034, 038, 096, 105, 128	6
Provides structure and organization	025, 038, 068, 105, 128, 132	6
Able to teach skills	025, 038, 068, 105, 132	5
Has confidence in players	015, 025, 038, 105, 125	5
Makes it fun	015, 025, 068, 128	4
Keeps game in perspective	015, 025, 096, 125	4
Provides constructive feedback	015, 025, 034	3
Approachable	025, 034, 125	3
Someone you can trust and respect	025, 068, 128	3
Dedicated, passionate about sport	105, 125, 128	3
Respects personal boundaries	015, 096, 132	3
Direct communicator	025, 132	2
Treats as individuals	034, 105	2
Leads by example	034	1
Knows how to recruit	132	1
Played game	096	1
Respects athlete	068	1
Emotionally mature	096	1
Self-confident	132	1

*Note.* Characteristics identified were based on experiences throughout the participants' athletic career.

Table 15

*Characteristics of a Bad Coach*

Trait	Participant Response	Frequency
Holds grudges	068, 125	2
Too emotional/Makes it personal	096, 125	2
Yells / Negative motivator	034, 038	2
Provides little constructive feedback	034, 038	2
Shows favoritism	015, 025	2
Not supportive or caring	034, 038	1
Punished for mistakes	015	1
No personal connection	034	1

*Note.* Characteristics identified were based on experiences throughout the participants' athletic career.

After identifying the characteristics of a good coach, the participants were asked if these traits were more representative of male or female coaches. This association of trait to sex of coach is critical when determining if there is a "think coach, think male" stereotype among the female athletes in this study. As a result, each of their responses follows:

Well ironically when I was saying all those I was envisioning my head coach which is a male . . . . I don't necessarily feel like it is male versus female. I can see those characteristics in both but it just so happens when I was initially saying it I was thinking about my male head coach. (Participant 025, p. 7, lines 207, 210-212)

If just listing those qualities and thinking about a male or female coach, I would not attribute them to one or the other, but when I say those things and just think about all my coaches, they've been mostly male. So I think of all the coaches I've had and in that way I associate it with males because I'm putting certain male faces with the idea in my head.

But I would equally expect to have a coach, male or female, with those qualities. I just haven't had female coaches. (Participant 034, p. 7, lines 162-168)

Could be either but personally I just associate it with a male because that's what my experience is. (Participant 038, p. 6, lines 85-86)

Well, I was just thinking of my current swim coach in college and to my male high school coaches, because they were male. (Participant 068, p. 8, lines 198-199)

Well I think from my experience, my personal experience, I've seen these qualities more in my male coaches that I've had but that's not to say that all the females aren't capable. I just think it has to do with the individual female coaches that I've had, but I don't think that it's not possible. (Participant 096, p. 5, lines 88-91)

I actually was thinking about a male the whole time I was saying that. I didn't realize it. I don't know if it's because I've had more negative experiences with female coaches, but I mean when I was little I definitely preferred the female coaches, but now . . . .

I wouldn't say I do. (Participant 105, p. 6, line 115-118)

I'd say from my own experiences that they're more in males just because I haven't had a head coach that's a female. (Participant 125, p. 8, lines 183-184)

Yeah, I'd say their representative of a male coach . . . . I've had female coaches who hold the majority of those qualities. Personally, I've always had better experiences with male coaches. (Participant 132, p. 5, lines 104, 108-109)

Two participants had a differing point of view.

I've definitely had both male and female coaches who have those qualities, but I don't particularly think of those criteria and think like male or female. (Participant 015, p. 6, lines 109-110)

No. I don't think about that at all with that stuff. It's just coach. I'm not like oh she's a woman. (Participant 128, p. 6, lines 87-88)

As indicated by the aforementioned statements, 8 of the 10 participants attributed the traits characterizing a good coach as more often associated with a male coach. Of those eight, five mentioned that female coaches could exhibit those qualities, yet that was not the case based on their personal experience. Only Participants 015 and 128 offered a more gender-neutral response. Not surprisingly, all of the participants were relating their answer to their own personal experience.

Based on their statements, there is definitely a "think coach, think male" mindset among these female athletes. In fact, several of the participants actually talked about envisioning a male face when thinking about the association of traits to the sex of the coach. What makes this information noteworthy is that actual traits are being identified by female athletes and that the traits are associated with the perceived competencies required of successful coaches. This is important because it extends the work of Aicher and Sagas (2010) in two important ways: (1) the sample population in their study was college students, not athletes; and (2) the traits associated with the "think coach, think male" stereotype were terms associated with masculinity and femininity, not necessarily competencies required of a coach.

### **Overall Experience with Coaches**

While it is important to understand the traits associated with a good coach and the relationship of those traits to the coach's sex, it is also important to recognize that the female athletes in this study described the overall experience of having been coached by a man or woman very differently. There were significant differences in the following areas: (1) emotional stability, (2) passivity and aggressiveness, (3) personal relationships, and (4) discipline and

structure. Each of these themes will be addressed as reflected through the words of the participants.

**Emotional stability.**

I just really didn't like her style, and it kind of personifies why I don't like a woman coach versus male. She . . . let her emotions get too much involved, and kind of just was very snippy, too girly, catty . . . I feel like it's almost already enough girl drama happening with being on a woman's team . . . a male coach kind of evens the playing field. (Participant 025, p. 8, lines 217-222)

[He] didn't get too emotionally wrapped up in it . . . didn't play emotional games with us. (Participant 096, p. 4, lines 56)

I find that they're [male coaches] much more consistent about their moods. (Participant 105, p. 6, lines 124-125)

**Passivity and aggressiveness.**

My female coaches were much more soft-toned. They didn't want to hurt your feelings . . . . They were almost too nice sometimes. (Participant 038, p. 5, lines 64-66)

Women coaches are a little easier. They're not quite as tough . . . men are tough, harsh, while . . . instead of being straightforward and harsh, they [women] try to make it a little softer . . . . Males can be in your face about it . . . are a lot more confrontational . . . female coaches aren't as direct. (Participant 125, p. 7, lines 141-144, 194-195, 204-205)

**Personal relationships.**

You always want to be their friend [female coach] because you are a girl, and it's kind of natural to be friends with them, but it's hard because you're not supposed to be their friend, and I feel like as a player that's hard, too, because . . . they're like connecting with

you, like one of the head coach characteristics. You feel like so they're my friend now, then they tell you, you're doing terrible right now. It hurts more because they're your friend. (Participant 025, p. 8, lines 223-228)

I feel like she became friends with a lot of us. (Participant 105, p. 5, lines 93-94)

You can connect to them [female coaches] a little bit better because you're a female yourself so you can talk to them more . . . . They're more your friends when they are coaches. I'm not sure if that is necessarily really a good or bad thing. (Participant 125, p. 6, lines 131-134)

### **Discipline and structure.**

I feel like the male coaches . . . have been more disciplinarianish and it's more serious . . . female coaches were more like it will be ok; we're here for fun . . . . I just think that male coaches are not going to let things slide. Like if you kind of half-ass practice . . . they're going to get on you about it. (Participant 015, p. 5, lines 92-94, 111-112)

I can see a male more like an authoritative figure. (Participant 025, p. 8, lines 229-230)

Part of having a successful team is having the head coach be kind of the enforcer where if you need him you can fall back on him as a support system, but you also need him to be a force where you don't feel like you can take advantage of him, whereas the female coaches . . . are sort of pushovers. (Participant 038, p. 5, lines 67-70)

Everything he said had a purpose. (Participant 132, p. 4, line 81)

It is interesting to note that the themes identified by this researcher are the same as those identified by Frey et al. (2006), with one exception, the addition of emotional stability; however, it should be noted that emotional stability was previously identified as a theme in Parker and Greenawalt's (2007) study with NCAA Division II female athletes.

When the female athletes in this study described their experiences in relationship to being coached by a man or woman, their stories and words mirrored those in Frey et al.'s (2006) and Parker and Greenawalt's (2007) studies. Female coaches were viewed as moody, more likely to hold grudges, more likely to want to befriend their athletes, and indirect in their style of communication. Conversely, male coaches were described as task-oriented, less emotional, straightforward, and direct when communicating with athletes. As a result, it seemed fitting to use the same thematic structures when appropriate.

In addition to the themes that emerged, other similarities and differences are worth mentioning. The similarities between the present study and Frey et al.'s (2006) include the following: (1) the participants were NCAA Division I female athletes; (2) the participants were primarily Caucasian women; (3) the overlap of some sports represented, specifically cross country, soccer, softball, and track and field; (4) interviews were conducted one-on-one; and (5) the participants in both studies indicated a preference for a male coach. The only similarities between the present study and Parker and Greenawalt's (2007) were the themes that emerged from the participants' experiences, specifically emotional stability and personal relationships.

In addition to the similarities, there were also differences among the three studies. One difference was in the sports represented. For example, the additional sports represented in the present study were fencing, lacrosse, and swimming, and in Frey et al.'s (2006) study basketball and golf. Parker and Greenawalt's (2007) study also included field hockey, tennis, and volleyball. Another difference was in the number of participants. Twelve women were interviewed individually by Frey et al. (2006) and 10 were interviewed in this study. Parker and Greenawalt (2007) used five focus groups in their study (N = 26). A final difference was specific to the issue of preference. The participants in the qualitative phase of this study were

selected because they had indicated a preference for a male coach. In contrast, the issue of preference emerged as one of the themes in Frey et al.'s (2006) study and was a direct question posed by Parker and Greenawalt (2007). In all three studies the female athletes indicated a preference for a male coach; however, the percentage of preference was different. It was 81% in this study, 67% in Frey et al.'s (2006) study, and 50% in Parker and Greenawalt's (2007) study. It is important to note that the percentage might be lower in Parker and Greenawalt's (2007) study because no preference or undecided was presented as one of the response options. Twenty-nine percent responded in this fashion.

The similarities in the stories shared and the themes that emerged are noteworthy. By looking at the results of the three studies in combination, more weight can be placed on the interpretation than either study alone. The ability to triangulate the data not only provides more credibility to the findings in this study, but also allows the researcher to speculate that the findings are more representative of female athletes in general, not just the participants in this study, and not just NCAA Division I female athletes.

### **Preference for a Coach**

In concluding this segment of the interview, participants were reminded that when they had completed the demographic information form, they had indicated a preference for a male coach. In fact, 117 (81%) of the participants had stated a similar preference. A systematic random sampling technique was used to select the interview participants so that their voices were more likely to be representative of the larger sample, not just the 10 women interviewed.

Of the 10 participants only 2 were somewhat surprised by their response, but like the others deferred to their past experience to explain their answer. Each participant reverted back to previous segments of the interview in order to offer an explanation. The two primary reasons

used to justify their preference for a male coach were that they had more experience with male coaches than female coaches, and based on this experience, they associated the traits needed to be a good coach with a man. Male coaches were perceived to be more knowledgeable about the game, and more able to provide the structure and discipline needed to be successful. Participant 068 sums it up in a way that is representative of the entire group of interviewees. Her statement follows:

Well I was just thinking of my current swim coach in college and to my high school coaches because they were both male. I loved my female coach, but there's something about a male coach that demands a different level of respect. (p. 8, lines 198-200)

It should be noted that 8 of the 12 participants in Frey et al.'s (2006) study linked their preference for a male coach to the issue of respect as well.

In summary, there are some very important findings that emerged from this segment of the interviews. There is no doubt that the participants in this study have been exposed to fewer female coaches throughout all levels of their athletic career. It is also clear that they view the youth sport experience as recreational, not competitive, and that by the time they get to high school, sport participation has taken on a different importance in their life. Their statements further reinforce that the high school experience is a significant predictor in their overall preference for a coach.

In their identification of coaching characteristics, the participants definitely exhibited a "think male, think coach" mindset. In reviewing their statements it is evident that this perception is more directly aligned with past experience than a direct association with sex stereotypes; however, a form of sex-typing has occurred because of how they described the differences in the experience of being coached by a man or woman.

### **Segment 3--Equality and Opportunity**

(5c) How is the female athlete's competitive sport experience described in comparison to that for male athletes?

The final segment of the interview explored the athlete's perception regarding the degree to which gender equality is practiced in the world of sport. According to Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) and Swim et al. (1995) modern sexists are likely to state that discriminatory actions directed toward women are no longer a problem. In order to frame their words from this portion of the interview in the context of modern sexism, it is important to revisit the primary tenets of modern sexism. Modern sexist beliefs emanate from beliefs aligned with traditional sexism, specifically the belief that women are inferior, that the unequal treatment of women is justified, and that sex stereotypes and sex roles exist to further define the place of women in society. While the behavior may be blatant, more often than not the behavior is so covert and subtle that it goes unnoticed or is perceived as normative (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995).

Based on these assumptions, participants were first asked to reflect on the impact Title IX had on their experience as an athlete. They were then asked to compare their experiences as intercollegiate athletes to that of their male counterparts. The final question required them to share their perceptions about the opportunities afforded to women and men who aspired to coach. The hope was that their responses would shed light on the degree to which they perceive gender equality to exist in intercollegiate athletics, and just as important, to see if they held modern sexist beliefs. The attitudes and beliefs reflected by their responses were to serve as a point of comparison with their actual scores on the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995) which indicated they did not hold modern sexist beliefs (see Table 12).

## **Impact of Title IX**

Each of the 10 participants was asked to describe the impact Title IX had on her experience as a female athlete. Three of the participants responded by asking “What is Title IX?” (Participant 034, p. 8, line 182; Participant 096, p. 6, line 98; Participant 105, p. 7, line 128). One participant saw no relationship between Title IX and her own experience. In her mind, her experience would be the same regardless of whether Title IX had been enacted. Her only discussion was with regard to how it impacted others. Her viewpoint about how Title IX was impacting others follows:

I haven’t [been impacted] as of yet, but I’ve seen it with other schools where men’s track has been cut and stuff like that. Like they’re getting the scholarships and now all the women’s teams are worrying about who’s going to get the scholarships and stuff, but that really hasn’t affected me. (Participant 128, p. 7, lines 99-101)

Two of the remaining six participants discussed their understanding of Title IX in relationship to their mothers’ experiences, specifically with regard to participation opportunities. Their thoughts were:

It’s had a huge impact because my mom always talks about how she would have loved to been able to play sports, but she wasn’t able to and she kind of encouraged us to get involved as we could because we have that opportunity. So that’s been huge. (Participant 038, p. 6, lines 90-92)

Well, just comparing mine to my mom’s experience, I think I am lucky to be able to continue what I want in college. (Participant, 068, p. 9, lines 207-208)

Their collective understanding of Title IX was that it afforded more participation opportunities for female athletes, and if men were granted athletic scholarships, then women had

a chance to receive them as well. At no point did they discuss women being granted a benefit before men. From their experience, it was only when men received a benefit first that it become an option for the women. The statements provided below are examples of this perception.

In middle school we were able to have a soccer team because the boy's had a lacrosse team, and if they had not had that, we would not have had soccer . . . . And also, now, here, football has just gotten scholarships, so now the soccer team has a chance to get scholarships. (Participant 038, p. 6, lines 92-96)

I think it's actually pretty great . . . especially for the softball program. The baseball team got a brand new . . . state-of-the-art hitting facility, and if it wasn't for Title IX, we wouldn't have access to it really because it was the baseball's thing, but because baseball has it, we can use it . . . . Also now that the football team is getting scholarships, that means however many they get, female sports get that many too. (Participant 015, p. 6, lines 121-126)

While the majority of participants recognized that they had benefitted from Title IX, their lack of understanding about how sport had changed for women as a result of the enactment of the legislation was reflected in Participant 025's statement.

I kind of missed the boat on that whole thing. I mean when I entered in to this [sport]. I mean I was lucky enough to be privileged by that. I don't really know much about it because all I've ever known is equality. (Participant 025, p. 8, lines 238-240)

It is evident by the aforementioned statements that the female athletes in this study either view their status as second class citizens as normative or feel that they truly were treated equally. In both cases, their perception was that discrimination is no longer a problem. This perception is

reflective of modern sexist beliefs and is contradictory to their responses to Items 1 and 5 on the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995).

### **Female Athlete Experience Compared to Males**

Based on their statements about Title IX, the participants demonstrated a limited understanding of the law and its impact on women's sport. This lack of awareness was further evidenced in their discussion about their experience as female athletes compared to their male counterparts. A few described their experiences as equal and no different than that of their male counterparts. Others recognized the differential treatment of women, but used a system justification approach to excuse the behavior. In each case, the assumption was that sport was and will always be a male domain, and that is just the way it is. The following quotes provided below illustrate this point.

It's hard right now, I mean like the men's team here is sponsored by Puma so we get to see them walk around in full out Puma gear and get all this Puma stuff . . . whereas my team is selling grilled cheese at night to drunk people to raise money so we can go on a trip in the Fall . . . maybe it's just me being . . . but I do feel like sometimes the male teams are more supported fan wise . . . . There's more fans at male soccer games than there are at women's soccer games. Even though not normally . . . not to start something, this year we did better than the men's team which is the first time in forever. I think there is a difference, but it's not going to go away. I think just in general watching a men's soccer game is more entertaining than watching a women's soccer game because it's a higher pace. It's different. It's just how it is . . . I don't think it's fair to compare the women's soccer team to the men's soccer team because they are supported by PUMA which is an outside affiliation; it's not really [my school's fault] . . . . So we don't have

as much financial support . . . I think the football team here is in my opinion a little bit over the top. They get a lot of respect and a lot of stuff and again, I think that is from outside things. It's not [my school] doing it. From my experiences . . . I don't see a difference with how he [AD] treats any of the athletes whether they're male or female . . . . I feel like it's very even throughout. I mean there is always going to be the financial dispute about who gets more, but I don't think that's [my school's] play; I think that's more outside stuff. (Participant 025, p. 9, lines 255-260, 262-268, 270-276)

Most people don't ever come to a pool . . . I've always seen that. But I'd have to say that I feel guys sports are publicized more than girl's sports . . . I think that says a lot . . . maybe not about the institution, but just people in general and what they go out of their way to see. (Participant 068, p. 10, lines 246-248, 251-252)

I feel like we all get the same respect and everything, but when it comes to like actually tangible things, it depends on 'friends of' your alumni. If your alumni give back a lot of money, you in turn reap the benefits from that large group . . . I don't know about all the other sports, but I know baseball has a bigger 'friends of' than we do, and football too. I think in those regards, the men's sports get more because they have a bigger alumni base, but in regards to respect and everything, it's pretty similar. (Participant 015, p. 7, lines 135-139)

In general, when comparing their experiences to their male counterparts, the major differences discussed were attendance, publicity, and financial resources. In each case, men's sports were seen as the favored group. In addition, football was perceived as the top sport and would always receive the most funding. Yet, despite acknowledging these differences, at no

point did they equate this behavior to sexist practices; it simply reflected what they interpreted as normative.

### **Comparison of Coaching Opportunities**

Based on their responses, it seems that their perceptions continue to frame how they view the world and what they interpret as normative. When the participants in this study were asked to reflect and share their perceptions regarding the coaching opportunities afforded to women and men, they continued to exhibit modern sexist beliefs. The following themes emerged in support of that statement: (1) discrimination is no longer a problem, (2) males are the favored sex, and (3) covert and subtle sexist practices are prevalent in intercollegiate athletics.

**Denial of discrimination.** Examples indicating the participants believed that discriminatory practices no longer exist for women who aspire to coach were:

I feel like they have similar opportunities and especially because females actually play it. They have almost a better opportunity . . . . I feel like it's an equal playing field.

(Participant 015, p. 7, lines 141-143, 146)

I would think that it's an equal opportunity . . . as long as you know enough about fencing, fencing's a pretty unique sport, so if you have knowledge about sport, I don't think your gender would discriminate. Just because it's such a unique knowledge that if you have it, you have it and that's valued. I would think that fencing in particular would have equal opportunity for women. (Participant 034, p. 10, lines 249-255)

I don't think it's [soccer] as dominated by males as other sports are. (Participant 096, p. 7, lines 118-119)

I think it all depends on your knowledge and the experience you have because if you're a good female coach, why wouldn't someone want to hire you. As long as you have the stuff to back it up, I think you're in good shape. (Participant 128, p.8 lines 100-111)

I'd say that at least 9 out of 10 coaches [lacrosse] at the DI level are female. I'd say it's a very concentrated job like you don't run into male coaches that often so I think they have . . . plenty of opportunities . . . to be a DI coach. (Participant 132, p. 6, lines 126-128)

In the above mentioned statements, the general consensus was that as long as women had experience and knowledge about the game, then they had an equal opportunity to be hired. Data gathered by Acosta and Carpenter (2012) document a very different picture for women and the coaching profession. The participants' responses seem to indicate that the discrimination faced by women who aspire to coach is going unnoticed. Their perceptions of the opportunities available to women as described in this segment are in direct contrast to their responses to the second item on the Modern Sexism Scale (see Table 10), which pertained to women missing out on jobs due to discriminatory practices. The mean sumscore (N = 155) reported for this item was 2.84 which indicated that the female athletes in this study believe women do miss out on jobs; however, their words paint a very different picture.

**Men are the favored sex.** As the participants continued to discuss the coaching opportunities afforded women in comparison to men, a difference in their perception of the opportunities provided emerged specific to the type of sport, specifically whether it was a women's or men's team. The following statements illustrate their perception on this issue.

I do think the type of sport makes a difference. I don't feel like women should be coaching men's sports because they have never experienced that sport . . . I think that it

does depend on the sport, but I think it's all a pretty equal playing field. (Participant 015, p. 7, lines 151-154)

Players want someone to be their coach who has played the game before and has been through the experiences that they are going to go through and obviously females don't play football . . . I just don't think that they would have respect from the players . . . it seems that males are less likely to respect a female coach than females are to respect a male coach. (Participant 096, p. 7, lines 120-122)

I feel like for the female teams there's female coaches. (Participant 105, p. 7, line 143)

I think it would just depend on what the sport is. I guess a female coach isn't going to apply for the men's basketball head coach position or anything like that. I could see a man applying for the women's position . . . having had experiences with male coaches, it just seems more normal, I guess, them coaching girls. (Participant, 128, p. 8, lines 112-116)

I'd say when it comes down to cheerleading or dancing, a female would be the main ideal coach, just because . . . they're more feminine sports. (Participant 125, p. 12, lines 268-269)

Needless to say, their statements are contradictory. For example, the type of sport is an issue only if it pertains to a woman coaching a men's team. They continue by stating that it is important for the coach to have played the sport, and that this is problematic for women wanting to coach a men's team; however, the same concern is not expressed in relationship to men coaching women. In addition, they offer the same argument when it comes to hiring practices. In other words, men can be hired to coach women, but women should not be hired to coach men. Their perception is that male athletes would not have the same respect for a female coach. Based

on their preferences for a male coach, it seems that they, too, have less respect for a female coach.

It appears from their responses with regard to coaching opportunities, and type of sport, that society has not reached the point where men and women have equal opportunities, otherwise it would be just as acceptable for women to coach men's teams as for men to coach women's teams. Again, it is important to note that their responses during the interview segment are in direct contrast to their response to Item 5 on the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). Item 5 states that society has reached a point where men and women have equal opportunities. While the mean sumscore indicates a lack of modern sexist beliefs, their words seem to be indicating otherwise.

**Covert and subtle sexist practices.** In addition to stating their perceptions about their own experiences and the opportunities afforded women, they also discussed some observations they had made with regard to head and assistant coaches. In sharing their observations about these positions, it was evident that sexist behavior was occurring, yet they were unaware of its existence because of its covert nature and subtle message.

Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) stated that covert sexist behavior often occurs in hiring practices. The intent of the behavior is to promote the façade of equality or to restrict women to specific positions, where their role and power is limited. Examples of this type of sexist behavior are illustrated in the following statements.

A couple of them will have a female assistant coach, but they definitely don't play the role that male coaches do, and I have no idea why. You can just tell from the pool [swimming] dynamic that there's a head coach . . . and maybe one or two assistant

coaches with them, and swimmers go to the male assistant coach to ask a question about their performance. (Participant 068, p. 10, lines 256-259)

There's definitely a lot more males coaching at this level of sport. In track I really don't see a lot of female coaches, and if I do, they're just assistant coaches taking down times. They're not really involved with the team. (Participant 105, p. 7, lines 137-139)

[in track], Women are even in the minority as assistants. (Participant 128, p. 8, lines 118-119)

In further analyzing the aforementioned statements, a few additional points are worth mentioning. In all three cases, there is no reference to a woman head coach. In addition, Participant 105's use of language is interesting when describing assistant coaches as *just* assistants. In this situation, her comments are directed at female coaches; therefore, as a woman she seems to be devaluing another women. The final point that emerges from these statements is the reference to status by Participant 068. Her perception, based on the observed behavior, is that a male assistant coach is preferred over a female assistant coach. In other words, a lower status man is preferred over a lower status female. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994).

As the statements made by the interview participants are further analyzed, another form of modern sexist behavior emerges, specifically behavior representative of subtle sexist practices. According to Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) the insidiousness of subtle sexism is that it is either so subtle that the behavior goes unnoticed or so pervasive that it is perceived as normative. Collegial exclusion, condescending chivalry, and supportive discouragement were three examples of subtle sexist practices that emerged through their stories about women coaches.

Collegial exclusion refers to practices that exclude individuals from meetings or social gatherings (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). The following statement represents this type of behavior. “Swimmers go to the male assistant coach, ask a question about their performance or something about the meet or something about their race and the female coaches are just sort of bystanders” (Participant 068, p. 11, lines 259-261). Although the female assistant is present she is ignored and made to feel invisible. It is unclear regarding whether or not Participant 068 goes to her for guidance or defers to the male assistant in a manner similar to her peers; however, the following statement made by Participant 068 indicates that she perceives the women’s swim team as different from the men’s team, perhaps lower in status. “I know our female assistant coach is like our head assistant coach which is unique . . . I actually like it because I think she offers something at least to the girls team” (p. 11, lines 261-263).

Another type of subtle sexism that is present in the participants’ stories is behavior referred to as condescending chivalry. Condescending chivalry is best defined as behavior that recognizes women as potential candidates for a position, but then provides rationale as to why they would not be interested in the job if it were offered to them (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). An example of this type of sexism follows:

I would say that women are less able to become coaches. Just because I think that women, I know a lot of women that like to coach, and just looking at colleges . . . all their coaches tend to be males, and so I guess I don’t know if women just aren’t applying for these jobs . . . . I don’t really believe that no females are applying for these jobs. And I feel like women are just as qualified also to become coaches, but you don’t really see it in the colleges. You see mainly male coaches even for female sport. And so I think it could be a lack of desire because I mean college coaching is a very intense thing and college

sports are a lot more intense than high school sports and so maybe women don't desire to go up to that level [college], and they'd rather stay at the high school or middle school. (Participant, 125, p. 11, 252, 254-262)

Based on her comments, Participant 125 appears to be searching for answers. She seems to make an attempt to explain the absence of female coaches in intercollegiate athletics through statements that reflect a lack of desire on the part of women in applying for jobs and reluctance to enter the profession due to time demands. In fact, research has indicated the lack of work-life balance is a reason women leave coaching or one that precludes them from entering the profession in the first place (Rhode & Walker, 2008).

A final type of subtle sexist behavior that is reflected in their stories is supportive discouragement. Supportive discouragement is behavior that appears supportive of women but in the end undermines a woman's achievement (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). Some statements made by the participants about women having the necessary qualities to be a coach, but then indicating that they still preferred a male coach have already been shared, and a few other examples of supportive discouragement were:

She has a very big resume . . . of coaching . . . which may or may not have been aided by her husband who also coaches. (Participant 025, p. 10, lines 300-301)

I feel like people would favor having a same gender coach. (Participant 034, p. 11, line 275)

I loved my female coach, but there's something about a male coach that demands a different level of respect. (Participant 068, p. 8, lines 199-200)

To better understand the concept, it is important to examine more closely the statements and their intended meaning. In the first statement the coach's achievement is recognized, but

then her credibility is undermined by the implication that she may have been hired because of her husband's credentials. In the second statement, there is an implied preference based on the fact that she is a female athlete and is likely to prefer a female coach; yet in the end, the participant prefers a male coach. The final statement is the one that metaphorically puts the final nail in the coffin as to whether female athletes hold modern sexist beliefs. If that statement is to be viewed as normative, which is not a stretch based on what has been shared thus far, then one has to wonder if women will ever regain a majority status when it comes to women coaching women which was the case prior to the enactment of Title IX.

### **Comparison Among National Collegiate Athletic Association Divisions**

Up to this point the participants discussed their perceptions of the coaching opportunities afforded to females and males based on their experience as NCAA Division I athletes. The final question in the interview segment asked the participants whether coaching opportunities would be different at NCAA Division II or III schools.

The overall consensus of the group was that Division I represented a higher level of competition and was more intense when compared to Division III. Despite the difference in competitiveness, five of the participants felt the coaching opportunities afforded women would be similar. Four of the 10 thought women would have a better opportunity to coach at an NCAA Division III school, and one participant felt that men would have a better opportunity to do so.

Of the five participants who expressed a belief that the coaching opportunities would be different at an NCAA Division III school, four stated that the differential status favored women; one participant felt it favored a male coach but specific to her sport of softball. In each case, the rationale was that Division III was not as competitive; therefore, minimal expertise would be required to coach at that level. Their statements are provided to support this conclusion.

A lot of times you're looking for someone who is experienced as a coach so if you're going to coach at a DI school, you want someone who played at a DI school, and for women, at least in the past, they could only really play competitively at DIII where DI was much more exclusive. (Participant 038, p. 8, lines 124-127)

I just think men still dominate sports and then they're going to be given opportunities before females will as far as jobs. And if females don't get the jobs at DI, then their step down is DII or III and not to say that those are worse, but it's just different. (Participant 096, p. 8, lines 129-131)

They [DIII schools] have coaches that my coach [female] recognizes . . . maybe they're [female coaches] not as qualified as some of the DI coaches. They're like oh, that's something I did so I can just help other people do it. (Participant 105, p. 8, lines 156-159)

I'd say that those [DI and DII teams] would be a lot less likely to have female head coaches than DIII, just because DIII is seen as you don't really have to be recruited to play on a DIII team. You can just walk on. You don't have to be that good of an athlete to play at DIII . . . . I'd say that because of the lower view of those sports and because of the idea that it's not as competitive or not as intense, then I'd say that they have more of a chance of having female head coaches. (Participant 125, p. 12, lines 277-282)

I don't think it should be, but I feel like it would be because its, I guess most coaches who aspire to be coaches kind of want to be at the top, and so the ones who don't get the top positions might be looking down at DII or DIII. Probably there are more male coaches at DII or DIII realm especially for softball. (Participant 015, p. 8, lines 156-159)

The aforementioned statements, except for one, see a relationship between inferior status which is identified as coaching at the Division III level and women. Not one of these participants stated that women make a conscious choice to coach at Division III. The implication was that if women aspire to coach, then they have a better chance at being hired at a Division III institution because athletics are more laid back, are taken less seriously, and require less athletic ability.

Their rationale for the number of women coaches at Division III may or may not be correct; however, the data documented by Acosta and Carpenter (2012) indicate that there are more female coaches in Division III (46.3%) than in Division I (42.3%). Division II has the lowest percentage (37.5%) of female coaches across all three NCAA divisions. When looking at the percentages in relationship to the sports represented in this study, the only sports that have fewer female coaches in Division III institutions are basketball, lacrosse, and track and field. In effect, the perceptions of the female athletes referenced seem to be accurate when based on percentages alone; however, their rationale is associated with the belief that women are inferior to men which is indicative of modern sexist beliefs.

The intent of this segment of the interview was to explore the participants' perceptions regarding gender equity practices in intercollegiate athletics and opportunities for women who aspire to coach. With regard to their athletic experiences, the participants noted differences between their experiences and that of their male counterparts, yet interpreted the differences in ways that justified the behavior in favor of the men. In relationship to coaching opportunities, they perceived that women were afforded the same opportunity as men and in cases where this did not hold true, it was due to the lack of experience women had in competitive sport. In many instances, their stories reflected a belief that discrimination is no longer a problem for women,

that female coaches are inferior to male coaches, and that sexist practices are so prevalent in intercollegiate athletics that the participants viewed them as normative. In essence, the participants interviewed in this study did hold modern sexist beliefs despite the fact that their scores on the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995) indicated otherwise.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the research findings for this explanatory mixed methods research study. The research questions and subsequent data analyses were discussed according to the sequential nature of the research design with the quantitative phase being completed prior to the qualitative phase.

The research findings indicated that 81% of the female athletes in this study preferred a male coach. A second finding indicated that experience with female coaches at an early age was a significant predictor of a female athlete's preference for a coach later in her career. In addition, experiences with both female and male coaches at the interscholastic level and intercollegiate level were significantly related to a female athlete's preference for a coach. A final finding associated with the quantitative phase of the study revealed that female athletes did not hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995), and as a result, their score on the scale was not associated with their preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach; however, the qualitative findings based on participant statements contradict this finding.

The qualitative phase of the study was designed to determine and further explore the factors that impacted a female athlete's preference for a coach and the relationship of that preference to modern sexism. The qualitative findings revealed that the youth sport experience provided a time for the participants to explore different sports. The focus was on having fun, and

the experience was perceived to be less competitive than the high school experience. The qualitative data supported the quantitative findings by further emphasizing the importance of a female athlete's experience with coaches at the interscholastic and intercollegiate level in determining her preference for a coach. When discussing coaching traits and their experiences with coaches, the female athletes identified more positive traits and experiences with male coaches than with female coaches, thereby supporting a "think coach, think male" stereotype. Modern sexist beliefs and practices were reflected in the participants' stories; however, the practices either went unnoticed or were so subtle that they were perceived as normative. This later finding is in contradiction to the participants' scores on the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995).

These findings are further discussed in Chapter 5. Ten key findings are identified and serve as the framework for the discussion. The implications of these findings for athletes, coaches, and administrators are presented. Changes that can improve the situation for female coaches in intercollegiate athletics are proposed. Finally, suggestions are made for future research that can extend the knowledge and understanding of modern sexist practices in intercollegiate athletics and the impact of these beliefs on preference for a coach.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

Since the inception of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, the percentage of women coaching women has declined. Complicating matters is the fact that often female athletes indicate a preference for a male coach. Of the studies referenced, several have quantified the issue of preference through attitudinal surveys (Frankl & Babbitt, 1998; Habif et al., 2001; LeDrew & Zimmerman, 1994; Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994; Weinberg et al., 1984); two have examined the issue in a qualitative manner (Frey et al., 2006; Parker & Greenawalt, 2007).

Aicher and Sagas (2010) extended the literature on preference by examining the issue using modern sexism as a theoretical framework and by attempting to identify whether or not the traits associated with coaches were perceived to be more masculine or feminine. While their findings revealed that there was a “think coach, think male” stereotype and that modern sexist beliefs were positively associated with this perception, the participants in the study were not athletes. As importantly, the terms associated with masculinity and femininity were not traits generally used to describe coaches. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to further extend the literature on preference for a coach using modern sexism as the theoretical framework and to employ an explanatory mixed methods research design to do so.

The explanatory mixed methods research design was selected because of its sequential nature in which the quantitative phase was completed prior to the qualitative phase, thereby affording the researcher an opportunity to examine more deeply the relationship of preference for a male coach and modern sexism. Five research questions were developed to examine this relationship. The first four questions pertained to the quantitative phase of the study, the fifth

question, to the qualitative phase. The five research questions that guided this investigation were:

1. Do the female intercollegiate athletes in this study prefer a male or female coach?
2. What is the relationship between a female athlete's past experience with coaches and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach?
  - (2a) What is the relationship between a female athlete's youth sport experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?
  - (2b) What is the relationship between a female athlete's interscholastic experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?
  - (2c) What is the relationship between a female athlete's intercollegiate experience with coaches and her preference for a coach?
3. Do female intercollegiate athletes hold modern sexist beliefs as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995)?
4. What is the relationship between a female intercollegiate athlete's modern sexist beliefs and her preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach?
5. What factors impact a female intercollegiate athlete's beliefs and preferences about her athletic experience?
  - (5a) What role did family play in defining and supporting her early sport experience?
  - (5b) What traits are associated with successful head coaches? Are these traits ascribed to a coach based on the coach's sex?
  - (5c) How is the competitive sport experience for women described in comparison to men?

The participants in the quantitative phase of the study were 155 NCAA Division I female athletes from one college in the Northeastern United States. The female athletes were members of the following teams: basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, lacrosse, softball, soccer, swimming, track and field, and volleyball. Forty-one percent of the participants were currently coached by a woman, and 59% had a man as their head coach at the time that they participated in the present study.

One of the questions asked of the participants was whether they preferred a female or male coach. The participants that stated a preference for a male coach and indicated a willingness to be interviewed were identified. Using a systematic random sampling technique, 10 female athletes were selected from this group to participate in the qualitative phase of the study.

This chapter discusses the findings of this research study. A brief review of the literature on preference for a coach is presented first. A discussion of the findings of this research study follows. The research questions serve as a framework for guiding the discussion of the results. Since this research study incorporated an explanatory mixed methods design, the findings associated with Research Question 5, the qualitative component, are presented along with the quantitative findings in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the numerical data. Ten key findings are identified and implications of the findings are discussed. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

### **Review of the Literature on Preference for a Coach**

Before discussing the findings specific to preference, it is important to review the major points outlined in the literature specific to female athletes. One of the first studies examining the issue of preference for a coach was conducted by Weinberg et al. (1984). In response to the 11-

item *Attitudes of Athletes Toward Male vs. Female Coaches Questionnaire* (AAMFC-Q), female high school and college basketball players indicated a preference for a male coach on 8 of the 11 items. Another study using Canadian volleyball players was conducted by LeDrew and Zimmerman (1994). Their findings revealed that 48.8% of the female participants indicated a preference for a male coach and 15% stated they never wanted to be coached by a woman. In 2001, two studies conducted by Habib et al., one with NCAA Division III basketball players and one with volleyball players, revealed that in both studies female athletes had no preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.

In addition to stating one's actual preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach, Medwechuk and Crossman's (1994) research added another dynamic to the understanding of the phenomenon of preference, that of status. Female swimmers indicated that they believed female coaches were less able to motivate their athletes and were less likely to be successful; however, there was one exception, a high status female coach. In this study, the female athletes had no preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach unless she was nationally recognized. Only then did they prefer a female coach.

Another component related to the issue of preference for a coach was highlighted by the research of Frankl and Babbitt (1998). Their study revealed that female high school track athletes were less receptive of criticism from a female coach than a male coach. In other words, this finding suggests that female athletes have more difficulty taking criticism from a female coach.

One final component worthy of mention is the relationship of past experience with coaches to an athlete's overall preference for a coach. In Weinberg et al.'s (1984) study with

basketball players, 84% of the female athletes had played for a male coach. In Weinberg et al.'s study, female athletes indicated a preference for a male coach.

In LeDrew and Zimmerman's (1994) study with volleyball players, 80% of the female participants had a male coach. No mention was made if they had experience with female coaches. In their study, female athletes indicated a preference for a male coach.

In Habib et al.'s (2001) study with basketball players, 84% of the female participants had never played for a female coach. In their 2001 study with volleyball players, the findings revealed that 64% of the male and female participants combined had played for a coach of the opposite sex. In both studies, female participants indicated no preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.

Similar findings were reported in the two qualitative studies discussed. Frey et al.'s (2006) study revealed that 67% of the female collegiate athletes interviewed preferred a male coach. In Parker and Greenawalt's (2007) study, 50% of the female collegiate athletes interviewed preferred a male coach and 29% were undecided or had no preference. In both studies, the female athletes stated that they had more experience with male coaches than female coaches.

In summary, the review of literature reveals that female athletes either prefer a male coach or have no preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. There was only one instance where female athletes indicated a preference for a female coach, specifically when the female coach was nationally recognized (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994). In addition, the female participants in each of the above mentioned studies had more experience with male coaches than female coaches, regardless of the sport; however, simply having experience with a coach of one sex or the other did not necessarily equate to a preference for a coach based on sex

(Habif et al., 2001). Finally, based on the findings presented by Frankl and Babbitt (1998), female athletes find it more difficult to receive criticism from a female coach, and this may affect their preference.

The findings of the present study specific to the issue of preference for a coach and past experience with coaches provide a point of comparison to the research on this topic that spans nearly 30 years. Not only are the results of this study supportive of the findings reported in previous studies, but also they extend the literature on the association of preference for a coach to modern sexism. The discussion of the key findings is presented below.

### **Finding 1: Eighty-One Percent of the Female Athletes in this Study Preferred a Male Coach**

Female athletes (N = 155) were asked to indicate their preference for a male or female coach. The choice of no preference was not an option; however, nine participants recorded a no preference response, and two participants left the response blank. These 11 cases were treated as missing cases and as a result, were not included in the data analysis. Of the 144 female athletes who did indicate a preference for a coach 81% (n = 117) preferred a male coach. Only 19% (n = 27) preferred a female coach.

The female athletes who participated in the quantitative phase of the study were members of the following teams: basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, lacrosse, softball, soccer, swimming, track and field, and volleyball. The head coaches of the basketball, lacrosse, softball, and volleyball teams were women. Men served as head coaches for the remaining six teams. The percentage breakdown by sex of coach revealed that 41% (n = 64) of the participants were coached by a woman, and 59% (n = 91) of the participants were coached by a man. Of the participants who currently had a female coach and indicated a preference for a coach, 28% (n =

17) preferred a female coach and 72% (n = 43) preferred a male coach. Of the participants who currently had a male coach and indicated a preference for a coach, 12% (n = 10) preferred a female coach and 88% (n = 74) preferred a male coach. Demographic data further indicated that the female athletes in this study had more experience with male coaches than female coaches over the course of their athletic career.

Previous studies (Frankl & Babbitt, 1998; Frey et al., 2006; Habif et al., 2001; LeDrew & Zimmerman, 1994; Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994; Parker & Greenawalt, 2007; Weinberg et al., 1984) revealed that it was not uncommon for female athletes to view female coaches more negatively than male coaches and as a result, often prefer a male coach or state no preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. When percentages were reported, the highest percentage indicating a preference for a male coach was 67% (Frey et al., 2006). In Habif et al.'s (2001) study, no percentage was reported for the participants' responses of no preference. In Parker and Greenawalt's (2007) study, 50% of the participants preferred a male coach and 29% were undecided or had no preference.

Based on the review of the literature, the researcher hypothesized that the female athletes in this study would have a preference for a male coach; however, what was unexpected was the degree to which the female athletes in this study indicated this preference. Eighty-one percent of the female athletes in this study preferred a male coach. This percentage was higher than any percentages previously identified in the literature.

In discussing the results of this study, it is important to note that the participants in the present study were asked to make a forced decision, that is, a choice between a male or female coach. In other words, a choice of no preference was not an option. That being said, nine participants did feel strongly enough about the issue that they wrote their response of no

preference next to that question. In designing this research study, the researcher decided to force the decision since the primary purpose of this study was to explore the issue of preference for male coaches.

Another factor associated with a female athlete's preference that warrants consideration is the categorization of sports as masculine, feminine, or gender-neutral. Labels categorizing sports in this way are socially constructed based on sex stereotypes and sex role expectations and differ in relationship to aesthetics, risk, and speed (Koivula, 2001). If sex role theory is applied to sport, then the assumption follows that it is more appropriate for women to coach feminine sports or gender-neutral sports. There were no sports represented in this study classified as feminine; cross country, swimming, track and field, and volleyball were represented and are classified as gender-neutral sports (Koivula, 2001).

It should be noted that sex role appropriateness per sport classification does not equate to a greater representation of women serving as head coaches in these sports (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012); however, if male athletes are more likely to be coached by women in gender-neutral sports (Habif et al., 2001), then a reasonable assumption is that female athletes are also likely to have had a female head coach in a gender-neutral sport at some point during their athletic career. If this is true, then that experience serves as a point of comparison with male coaches when determining her preference.

Based on the aforementioned assumptions, it can be hypothesized that the type of sport (e.g., gender-neutral) and experience with female coaches may influence a female athlete's preference for a female coach. Unfortunately, this hypothesis was not supported in studies with volleyball players (Habif et al., 2001; LeDrew & Zimmerman, 1994) and swimmers (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994). In the present study, 81% of the participants who were

members of the gender-neutral sport teams preferred a male coach. When considering experience alone, 64 participants currently had a woman as a head coach, yet of the 60 who indicated a preference for a coach, 43 (72%) preferred a man. Thus, it appears that the type of sport and experience with female coaches alone do not determine a female athlete's preference for a coach.

## **Finding 2: Past Experience with Coaches was a Significant Predictor of a Female Athlete's Preference for a Coach**

Experience alone may not determine a female athlete's preference for a coach; however, the interpretation of that experience becomes an important tool in understanding the association. Consequently, participants were asked to reflect on their experience with coaches at the youth sport, interscholastic, and intercollegiate levels of competition. After reflecting upon this time in their lives, participants were asked to numerically quantify the number of male and female coaches who had coached them during their youth sport and interscholastic years of competition. Demographic data revealed the number of participants who were currently being coached by a man or woman at the intercollegiate level.

The data indicated that the female athletes in this study on average had two times the number of male coaches compared to female coaches at the youth sport level and interscholastic level of competition. Based on the teams represented in the present study, 59% ( $n = 91$ ) of the participants currently had a male head coach, and 41% ( $n = 64$ ) of the participants had a woman as their head coach. Consequently, at each juncture in their athletic career, the participants in this study had more male coaches than female coaches. It should be noted that previous research also indicated that regardless of sport, female athletes had more experience with male coaches than female coaches (Frankl & Babbitt, 1998; Frey et al., 2006; Habif et al., 2001; LeDrew &

Zimmerman, 1994; Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994; Parker & Greenawalt, 2007; Weinberg et al., 1984).

Further analysis of the quantitative findings revealed that experiences with female coaches at the youth sport level and experiences with both male and female coaches at the high school level were significant predictors in the participants' overall preference for a coach. The sex of the female athletes' current coach was also significantly associated with their preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.

One cannot have a preference if there is little to which it can be compared. Since the participants in this study had more experience with male coaches than female coaches, then by pure numbers alone, it seems reasonable that they would prefer a male coach. On the other hand, despite limited experiences with female coaches, the positive or negative perception of these experiences and the value attributed to the experience are likely to also impact their preference for a coach.

The participants' stories about their youth sport and high school experiences shed light on preference as a social construct. As a result, several key findings emerged from these conversations that provide more insight into better understanding the phenomenon of preference.

**Finding 3: Experiences with Female Coaches at the Youth Sport Level of Competition Influenced a Female Athlete's Preference for a Female Coach Later in Her Athletic Career**

The youth sport experience was described by the participants as a time when they played different sports. Both parents and siblings played a role in introducing them to sport participation during this time in their lives. All of the participants described the experience as fun and something to which they looked forward.

As the interviews continued, their words began to give meaning to the quantitative findings. The quantitative findings revealed that experience with female coaches prior to middle school was a significant predictor for a female athlete's preference for a coach later in her athletic career. In other words, experience with female coaches at a young age was likely to increase their acceptance of women as coaches as they continued with their athletic pursuits.

While this finding is encouraging, what is problematic is that on average the participants had twice as many male coaches than female coaches during this time. In addition, when the interview participants were asked to discuss their first coach, only 3 of the 10 participants mentioned their youth sport coach. For some reason their youth sport coach did not come to mind when asked to describe their first coach.

The participants' perceptions of this early sport experience provide an explanation for this omission. For example, the overall experience was described as non-competitive despite competition with other teams. Coaches were often their parents or parents of friends. Very few of these individuals had personal athletic experiences beyond high school, and none had formal training as a coach. As a result, the participants devalued the youth sport experience because it was perceived as less competitive than the high school and college experiences. Furthermore, those who served as youth sport coaches were perceived as performing a service, rather than training athletes to become more elite performers.

The perception of the early sport experience is a critical component to understanding the importance of past experience and its association with preference for a coach. The quantitative findings indicated that experience with female coaches at an early age was more likely to influence the participants' preference for a female coach later in their career; however, even if female athletes have experience with female coaches during their youth sport years, the

experience will not favor women if the experience is viewed as non-competitive or if the women serving as coaches are viewed as not possessing the necessary competencies to serve in that role. When participants devalue the youth sport experience, they are in turn devaluing the person designated as coach. As a result, any respect that otherwise would have been attributed to women serving as coaches during this time is negated.

Since the enactment of Title IX, participation opportunities for women have increased at both the high school and intercollegiate level of competition. It will be interesting to observe over time if these post Title IX beneficiaries become more involved with their children's sport experiences, and how that role will be defined. Will they continue to embrace the stereotypical roles such as transporter and nurturer, or will they begin to dismantle those stereotypes by serving as coaches?

Stereotypes are socially constructed and that process begins at an early age. Only when young girls and boys have the opportunity to be coached by competent and confident women who are treated with respect by other coaches and parents, will past experience with female coaches result in a favorable evaluation of them in that role.

#### **Finding 4: Experiences with Coaches at the High School Level were the Most Important Predictors of a Female Athlete's Preference for Both Male and Female Coaches**

The interviews with the 10 female athletes reinforced the significance of the high school experience in relationship to their preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. For the participants, this was a time when their attention was focused on the competitiveness of the experience and in turn the importance of improving their performance. Based on numbers alone, the participants had twice as many male coaches as female coaches during this time in their lives; however, it is in conversations about the qualities associated with good and bad coaches and how

the experience of being coached by a man or woman is described that the value attributed to these experiences becomes apparent.

As they reflected on the traits associated with good and bad coaches, 9 of the 10 participants referred to their experiences with high school coaches. As they continued to discuss these experiences, seven of the nine talked in depth about a positive experience with a male coach or a negative experience with a female coach (see Table 13). Only two participants differed from their peers in their accounts of this experience; one participant stated she had a positive experience with a female coach, and another participant indicated she had a negative experience with a male coach. What is noteworthy about their stories is that their statements reinforced the quantitative findings indicating that the high school experience was a significant predictor of the participants' preference for a male or female coach.

The importance of the high school experience in determining a female athlete's preference for a coach is an important message of which high school athletic directors need to be made aware. While many coaches are hired based on their sex and personal athletic achievements, those attributes alone are not enough if the experience is to be meaningful and positive for all athletes. As a result, coaching education courses or coaching certification should be required of all individuals serving as coaches. In addition, athletic directors need to hire women to coach their women's teams, if not some of the men's teams as well. If female candidates are not forthcoming, then athletic directors need to actively recruit women to apply. As importantly, when female coaches are hired, they need to be granted the same support and respect afforded their male counterparts. If education, in general, and sports, more specifically, have as their mission the development of young women and their leadership abilities, then these

young women need to see women in coaching positions so as to have a model to which they can aspire.

### **Finding 5: There was a “Think Coach, Think Male” Stereotype Among the Female Athletes in this Study**

Research with male managers (Schein, 1973) and female managers (Schein, 1975) revealed that managers in general were perceived to possess characteristics more commonly ascribed to men than to women, thereby leading her to coin the phrase “think manager, think male.” Later research began to indicate a shift in these perceptions. While male managers continued to ascribe male characteristics to successful managers, female managers perceived that managerial effectiveness required both masculine and feminine characteristics (Brenner et al., 1989).

Aicher and Sagas’s (2010) research examined the extent to which college students enrolled in activity classes ascribed traits associated with masculinity and femininity to coaches. Their findings revealed that both male and female college students associated the coaching profession more with masculine attributes than feminine ones. Although Aicher and Sagas’s (2010) research revealed a “think coach, think male” phenomenon in athletics, their study did not utilize athletes, nor were the terms associated with masculinity and femininity necessarily traits ascribed to coaches. Therefore, one of the purposes of this study was to extend the literature not only by identifying actual traits associated with coaches based on perceptions of athletes, but also by examining the relationship between preferred coaching traits and sex of the coach.

Each of the 10 interview participants was asked to identify characteristics ascribed to a good coach and those ascribed to a bad coach. Numerous characteristics were mentioned (see Table 14); however, six characteristics ascribed to a good coach were mentioned by at least half

of the participants. These characteristics were: understanding and caring, motivational, knowledgeable about the game, able to provide structure and organization, able to teach skills, and able to demonstrate confidence in their players. When the participants were asked if these traits were more representative of male or female coaches, 8 of the 10 stated that based on their personal experiences, the traits were more representative of male coaches. In fact, words such as “envisioning” and “thinking about a male coach” were used by the participants when discussing the traits ascribed to good coaches. These findings revealed that there was a “think coach, think male” stereotype among the participants in the qualitative phase of the study; however, since the interview participants were randomly selected from the larger participant sample who preferred a male coach, then an assumption could be made that the other participants who indicated a preference for a male coach, yet were not selected to participate in the qualitative phase of this study, would hold similar perspectives with regard to the “think coach, think male” association.

This finding, perhaps more than any other one identified in this study, represents the challenge that women face when aspiring to coach or to seek positions of leadership in male-dominated professions. Eight of the 10 participants envisioned coach as man. No words represent the degree of this disconnect better than those of Participant 128 who stated “I totally forgot my coach now is a woman [laugh]. So I do have a female coach” (p. 5, line 75). Based on this statement, not only are women underrepresented in the coaching profession, but also, those who are in the profession have been rendered invisible. The social role identification of coaching as a male occupation and the traditional masculine stereotypes associated with the position serve to define what is perceived as normative. This masculine-defined worldview serves to perpetuate modern sexist behavior that is discriminatory toward women.

For women to be accepted and respected as coaches and then to be evaluated favorably once hired, society as a whole must change its perception of what leadership entails and to whom it applies. From an early age the sexes are differentiated by color of clothes, toys with which they can play, and messages being communicated about appropriate behavior. Parents specifically, and society in general, must move from this dichotomous position of masculine or feminine defined by traditional sex role stereotypes to a position that views differences more in line with a continuum theory where both women and men are encouraged to embrace the traits and behaviors most representative of them as individuals.

Acknowledging that traits associated with leadership can be gender-neutral and that either sex can possess the competencies required of leaders becomes an important first step in changing attitudes and perceptions about leadership. In reinforcing this change of thought, it is important to note that the traits the participants identified in this study to be reflective of good coaches were not more descriptive of one sex or the other. In other words, the traits identified could be described as gender-neutral. The only reason these traits were ascribed to men was because of the pervasiveness of the participants' experiences with male coaches.

**Finding 6: The Experience of Being Coached by a Man or a Woman was Described Differently and Does Not Support a Favorable Evaluation of Women in that Role**

As the participants continued to discuss their experiences with coaches, four themes emerged that reflected on their perception of the behavioral differences between male and female coaches. The themes were: (1) emotional stability, (2) passivity and aggressiveness, (3) personal relationships, and (4) discipline and structure. It is important to note that several of the aforementioned themes emerged from Frey et al.'s (2006) and Parker and Greenawalt's (2007) research studies as well.

In general, female coaches were described by the participants as moody, indirect in their style of communication, and more likely to want to befriend their athletes. Male coaches were described as less emotional, direct in their communication with athletes, and task-oriented. The perceived sex differences in coaching styles are directly aligned with the communal and agentic characteristics ascribed to women and men espoused by role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Characteristics of communal behavior are described in terms of affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturant, and gentle (Eagly & Karau, 2002). According to role congruity theory, these characteristics are more often ascribed to women. In the present study, the participants described the experience of being coached by a woman in a way that is consistent with this theory. For example, the participants stated that female coaches were more likely to seek a personal relationship with their athletes and to be soft-toned, gentle, and less direct in their communication. In addition, female coaches were described as more approachable and better able to understand and relate to issues faced by female athletes.

In contrast, agentic characteristics such as assertive, controlling, confident, aggressive, and dominant were ascribed to men and are more aligned with the participants' experiences with male coaches. Consistent with these characteristics, male coaches were described as confident and knowledgeable about sport, in more control of the practice environment, and assertive and direct in defining their expectations and when providing feedback.

Awareness of the traits perceived to be reflective of good coaches and the behavioral differences that exist between male and female coaches is important information for women who aspire to coach female athletes and to be successful when doing so; however, there are several areas that are problematic and deserve further discussion. For example, the most important

coaching trait identified by 9 of the 10 interview participants was understanding and caring.

From a role congruity standpoint, this aligns with communal characteristics which are more often ascribed to women. What is problematic is that half of the participants indicated that female coaches have difficulty showing they care without becoming too emotionally involved.

The overall consensus of the participants was that female coaches wanted to befriend them and were more interested in gossip associated with their personal lives than was necessary. In other words, although the participants wanted a coach who took a personal interest in them, they also felt that all the drama and emotion that they associated with females in general needed to remain separate from what was occurring on the field. The participants believed that female coaches routinely crossed this boundary. Participant 025's statements were the most pointed on this matter when she said "Sometimes women tend to be too woman-like; they tend to be too emotional . . . . It's a sign. In our opinion it's a weakness . . . . I mean you can't really blame them. They are women" (p. 6, lines 165-166, 168-171).

Despite Participant 025's belief that female coaches were too connected to their players, she also discussed the conflict she had as a female athlete in trying to navigate the coach-athlete relationship. Her thoughts are expressed in the following quote.

You always want to be their friend [female coaches] because you are a girl, and it's kind of natural to be friends with them, but it's hard because you're not supposed to be their friend, and I feel like as a player that's hard too, because they're like connecting with you, like one of the head coach characteristics. You feel like so they're my friend now, then they tell you, you're doing terrible right now. It hurts more because they're your friend (p.8, lines 223-228).

Participant 025's statements reflect three related but different issues associated with women coaching women. First, social learning theory and gender role theory have influenced and reinforced Participant 025's beliefs that communal characteristics are linked to her behavior as a woman, but these characteristics are incongruent with hierarchical structures associated with leadership in male-dominated organizations. Secondly, Participant 025 associates her social identity with her sex which places her and her coach in the same social group. A final issue is communication expectations between women in hierarchical organizational structures where one woman has been granted power over the other by virtue of her leadership position.

DeBoer (2004) sheds light on the complexities of this relationship in her book *Gender and Competition*. According to DeBoer, interdependence is a primary tenet of the female worldview. Differentiated play experiences in early childhood set the stage for boys being more comfortable with hierarchical structures and girls being more socialized to a flattened or web-like structure. Males grow up keeping score and understanding that there is a winner and a loser. In contrast, females are constantly assessing their place in the group. When a woman sets herself apart from other women, she is often chastised because when doing so, she has separated herself from the group.

The female worldview as espoused by DeBoer (2004) provides insight into the coach-athlete dyad, particularly when both parties are women. For example, female coaches are socialized that to be accepted, one must become a member of a group. It is also understood that group membership entails social exchanges between friends which establishes an emotional connection linked to the sharing of similar interests.

Based on these assumptions, it is not surprising that female coaches have a tendency to want to befriend their athletes. In essence, they are trying to establish their place in the group.

Female coaches also understand that group membership in a flat structure requires them to blend in, rather than stand out. As a result, a direct communication style would not only separate them from the group because of its association with power and hierarchy, but the consequences of this behavior would likely result in falling from group favor which in turn would lead to criticism and negative evaluation. Therefore, a female coach may employ a more indirect style of communication so as not to hurt her athletes' feelings.

Since perceptions about behavior are socially constructed, then it is not surprising that female athletes as part of the larger social group, women, find the experience of being coached by a woman confusing and disturbing. In other words, female athletes see themselves and their female coaches as members of the same group, yet they know that the hierarchical structure in sport dictates otherwise. The female coach is now an authority figure, and based on her position, she not only stands apart, but because of the power and responsibilities attributed to the position, she is also now expected to provide feedback and criticism to her athletes. This is uncomfortable to the female athlete since the tasks and responsibilities associated with the role of coach are incongruent with how women have been socialized to behave and interact with one another. As a result, female athletes are likely to find it more difficult to take criticism from a female coach, and in turn may respond with more negative evaluations of their female coaches. In fact, this perspective was supported by Frankl and Babbitt's (1998) research as well as by two of the participants in this study. When Participants 025 and 128 discussed their experiences with coaches, they indicated that they would be receptive to a more direct style of communication from a female coach as long as the messages were not hurtful.

The traits and behaviors ascribed to coaches by the female athletes in this study demonstrate the complexity of the coach-athlete relationship particularly when both parties are

women. The role incongruity from both a prescribed and described perspective make it very difficult for female coaches to be accepted, respected, and evaluated favorably by their female athletes.

**Finding 7: The Sex of the Female Athlete's Intercollegiate Coach was Significantly Associated with Her Overall Preference for a Coach**

In further examining the issue of preference, the reference to past experiences with coaches was a consistent theme that emerged from the participants' discourses; however, it is important to note that most of the references to past experience were mostly discussed in terms of experiences prior to college. In fact, only two of the participants specifically mentioned their current coach when reflecting on the characteristics ascribed to coaches.

This is noteworthy because the quantitative findings indicated that there was a significant association with the sex of the participants' current coach to their overall preference for a coach, but there was no indication as to what might explain that association. Based on the participants' stories, it seems that their preferences were well-established prior to college, and while the college experience may continue to reinforce the participants' preferences for male coaches, further research is warranted with regard to the college playing experience and the effect, if any, on perceptions, attitudes and beliefs specific to coaching preference.

**Finding 8: The Modern Sexism Scale Did Not Reveal the Modern Sexist Beliefs Held by the Female Athletes Interviewed in this Study**

The modern sexism scale was developed by Swim et al. (1995) to examine the degree to which sexist beliefs exist in society today, albeit more covert and subtle. The scale consists of eight items that represent three distinct constructs: denial of continuing discrimination (5 items), antagonism toward women's demands (2 items), and resentment about special favors (1 item).

Participants (N = 155) were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the eight items on a 5-point Likert scale where -2 was labeled strongly agree and +2, strongly disagree. In order to calculate mean scores, the aforementioned numerical values were converted to all positive numbers where 1 was labeled strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree. Based on this conversion, 3, rather than 0, became the neutral point, and as a result any score above 3 indicated the presence of modern sexist beliefs.

Mean sumscores were calculated for each of the eight items on the modern sexism scale (see Table 10). The average mean sumscore for all the participants was 2.46, compared to the mean sumscore of 2.64 for the interview participants. The findings based on the scale alone revealed that the female athletes in this study did not hold modern sexist beliefs; however, the qualitative findings indicated otherwise.

The reasons for the discrepancies in the findings are unclear; however, several thoughts come to mind that offer explanation. First, the scale items may have been worded in such a way that a social desirability effect skewed the responses. In other words, the phrasing of the items in conjunction with the scale's title may have lacked subtlety, and as a result, the participants responded to the statements in a way that they believed was expected of them per societal norms. A case in point is Item 1 which stated "Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States" (Swim et al., 1995). The participants may have indicated that discrimination was a problem because that was perceived to be the socially correct answer. In addition, societal norms may differ from the norms existent in intercollegiate sport or athletics. Future research is warranted to examine if the discrepancy truly exists or was inherent only to this study. It is also recommended that a modern sexism scale be developed that is more specific to gender equity issues prevalent in sport.

### **Finding 9: The Findings Relative to the Qualitative Phase of this Study Indicate that the Majority of the Participants Interviewed Hold Modern Sexist Beliefs**

Modern sexism is based on the beliefs associated with traditional sexism whereby women are inferior, the unequal treatment of women is justified, and sex stereotypes and sex roles exist to further define a woman's place in society. The major difference between the two types of sexism is that behavior associated with modern sexist beliefs is more covert and subtle, and as a result the behavior often goes unnoticed or is perceived as normative (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995).

The qualitative phase of the research study was designed to explore the association of modern sexism and a female athlete's preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach. The interview guide consisted of three segments: (1) introduction to sport and early sport experience, (2) sex roles and stereotypes, and (3) equality and opportunity. Each segment was designed to offer a more detailed explanation as to how female athletes come to have a preference for a coach, but also to ascertain the degree to which modern sexist beliefs factor into that decision.

#### **Early Sport Experience**

The first segment was based on the premise that sexist beliefs are developed at an early age, and once established, are very difficult to change (Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). As the participants discussed their early sport experiences, it was evident that sexist messages were being communicated and in essence were beginning to define what the participants interpreted as normative. For example, when the participants described the competitive opportunities afforded their mother, they used phrases that devalued the experience. The experiences were described as lacking competitiveness, very limited opportunities, and lower in status compared to men's sports.

The participants also discussed parental support in ways that aligned with more stereotypical sex roles. The mother was described as the transporter and sustenance provider. The father's support was more conditional. He showed his support by attending games when time allowed or when he was more interested in the sport because it was defined as more masculine. In fact, one father actually told his daughter she should skip softball and play baseball, implying that softball was not a real sport. In the end, the father's independence was respected, and the mother's dependability was expected.

Each message, subtle or not, differentiated between the values attributed to men and women and the sport status associated with each. The messages conveyed to the participants at an early age implied that sex differences, sex roles, and differential treatment of women were normative. Based on these differences, men were the privileged sex. In other words, power and higher status were afforded to males, and women were seen as inferior. Because the participants accepted this perspective without question, they were in essence displaying modern sexist beliefs and attitudes.

### **Sex Roles and Stereotypes**

Research has indicated that traditional sex roles are often linked to perceptions of masculinity and femininity and can lead to sexist behavior (Swim & Hyers, 2009). Therefore, segment two of the qualitative phase was designed to examine the degree to which female athletes attributed masculine traits to coaches and the association of these traits to sexist behavior. It was during this segment of the interviews that more sexist beliefs, some less subtle than others, emerged.

As was discussed previously, the female athletes in this study had a "think coach, think male" mindset. It was clear from their descriptions that they perceived the traits associated with

good coaches to be more aligned with male coaches. Even when discussing their overall experiences of being coached by a man or a woman, the experiences were described in a way that favored male coaches and denigrated the behavior of female coaches.

For the most part, female coaches were viewed as less competent than their male counterparts. Even negative experiences with men were interpreted more positively than negative experiences with women. The one exception was when female coaches had achieved national recognition. Participants 025 and 105 acknowledged that national recognition did positively influence their evaluation of a female coach. The importance of high status and its association with a more favorable evaluation of female coaches was also supported in other research (Medwechuk & Crossman, 1994). Unfortunately, while status influenced Participant 025's initial perception, she still succumbed to sexist behavior by stating that despite her coach's impressive resume, her coach was probably hired because of her husband's professional network.

The primary tenet of modern sexism that emerged during this portion of the interview segment was the overwhelming belief that women were inferior as coaches. Conversations were often framed in the context of a woman's limited experience playing a sport which translated into her not having the necessary skill set required of good coaches. Other statements were more critical of a female coach because of the attributes the participants associated with being a woman and the incongruence of those characteristics with their perception of a good coach. The participants were totally unaware of their sexist behavior and the negative consequences that their attitudes and beliefs posed for women entering male-dominated professions.

### **Equality and Opportunity**

While modern sexist beliefs emerged in the previous two segments of the interviews, it was in the third segment of the interviews when the behavior became most pronounced.

According to Benokraitis and Feagin (1995) and Swim et al. (1995) modern sexists believe that discriminatory practices and gender inequality are no longer a problem for women. When the participants discussed the impact Title IX had on their experiences as female athletes, it was clear that they viewed their status as women in general and female athletes more specifically as inferior to that of their male counterparts. Whether it was a discussion related to facilities, attendance, equipment, or scholarship dollars, the participants' conversations revealed that they understood that men were the favored group, yet for some reason they did not view the differential treatment as discriminatory. In their minds, they were afforded the same degree of respect and opportunities as their male counterparts. The level of acceptance of this behavior, and the fact that it was not challenged by one participant or ever discussed with a degree of anger demonstrates that the participants had come to accept the inferiority and unequal treatment of women as normative.

When the participants in the qualitative phase of the study were asked to reflect on the opportunities afforded women who aspired to coach, the degree to which these female athletes held modern sexist beliefs became even more apparent. First and foremost, the participants' perceptions were that discrimination was not a problem for women who aspired to coach. In their mind, if a woman wanted to coach, then without question she would be given the opportunity and ultimately hired. Unfortunately, the data reported by Acosta and Carpenter (2012) portray a very different picture. Interestingly, this perception was in direct contrast to the interview participants' response to Item 2 on the modern sexism scale. Their response to Item 2 indicated that they believed discriminatory employment practices were still a problem for women in society; however, for some reason they did not perceive the same problem to exist for women seeking coaching jobs in intercollegiate athletics.

Modern sexist beliefs continued to be expressed as the participants discussed coaching opportunities for women in relationship to the type of sport. Not only were their statements hypocritical, but they were also prejudicial toward women. For example, if discrimination was no longer a problem, and society had reached a point where men and women were treated as equals, then it would be as acceptable for women to coach men's teams as it is for men to coach women's teams. In other words, both men and women would be equally accepted and respected by male and female athletes when assuming a coaching position.

Unfortunately, at least half of the participants made very pointed statements which reflected their beliefs that women should not be coaching men and that playing the sport was important. In the first situation, their perceptions were linked to the degree to which a coach was granted respect when coaching athletes of the opposite sex. In other words, it was easier for female athletes to respect a male coach than for male athletes to respect a female coach since female athletes had more experiences with male coaches than male athletes with female coaches. As they discussed the importance of having played the sport, the participants stated that women should not coach football because they never played the sport; however, it was acceptable for men to coach a women's team regardless of whether they had played the sport. Participants 015 and 025's statements provide further emphasis to this perception.

I don't feel like women should be coaching men's sports because they have never experienced that sport. (Participant 015, p. 7, lines 151-152)

I mean a woman could never coach a football team even if she's been brought up playing football . . . . There's no way that I feel like she could ever, like personally, I don't think she could ever coach a football team. (Participant 025, p. 10, lines 309-312)

In both cases, the participants' statements reflected a different standard for female coaches than for male coaches, and in each case, men were favored in hiring practices and the respect attributed to them based on their expertise. The participants were seemingly unaware of the discriminatory nature of their statements, but based on this belief system, the interview participants were reflecting the attitudes of modern sexists. This behavior was in direct contrast to the interview participants' responses to Items 1 and 5 on the modern sexism scale. These items stated that discrimination for women was no longer a problem, and society had reached a point where men and women have equal opportunities.

The qualitative phase of the study was designed to shed light on a female athlete's preference for a male coach and the degree to which her preference was associated with modern sexism. Ten female athletes were selected for this purpose; however, since they were selected using a systematic random sampling technique with the primary criterion being preference for a male coach, then it is reasonable to think that their perceptions about the experience are more representative of the larger population ( $n = 117$ ) who preferred a male coach. Therefore, based on the sampling technique used to select the interview participants along with their statements reflecting modern sexist beliefs, it is the researcher's conclusion that the majority of female athletes in this study who preferred a male coach are likely to be modern sexists.

#### **Finding 10: An Explanatory Mixed Methods Research Design Yielded a Deeper Understanding of the Phenomenon of Preference**

A sequential, explanatory mixed methods research design, where the quantitative phase was completed prior to the qualitative phase, was well-aligned to the purpose of this study. The research design afforded the researcher an opportunity to explore a deeper understanding of the association of modern sexism to a female athlete's preference for a coach.

The quantitative data analyses revealed several findings that were statistically significant; however, the numerical data alone did not paint as detailed a picture about the phenomenon of preference as did their words. The qualitative findings provided tremendous insight into the participants' interpretations of the sport experience and the association of past experience with coaches to one's preference for a coach. In addition, the degree to which the participants possessed a "think coach, think male" mindset was dramatically reinforced through words such as envisioning or thinking about a male coach when describing the traits associated with good coaches. The most perplexing finding was the contradiction between the interview participants' low scores on the modern sexism scale, which indicated they were not modern sexists, to their stories, which revealed that they did hold modern sexist beliefs.

### **Implications of the Findings**

It has been 28 years since Weinberg et al.'s (1984) study first examined the attitudes of female athletes toward female coaches. June 2012 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the enactment of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972. Despite the significant progress made in participation opportunities for women at both the high school and collegiate levels, women continue to be underrepresented in coaching and athletic administrative positions (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

The underrepresentation of women in coaching was evidenced in this study at every stage throughout the participants' athletic careers. In fact, as noted by the data reported, the participants had twice as many male coaches as females. The research design of this study afforded the researcher an opportunity to not only gain a better understanding of a female athlete's preference for a male coach but also to better understand the factors that were associated with the development of that preference.

The underrepresentation of women in the coaching profession is of concern when it comes to developing a preference. The absence of female role models in these positions is problematic not only for women who aspire to coach, but also for female athletes who are denied the experience of having women role models and mentors. When female athletes are not afforded the opportunity of being coached by women, then it should be no surprise that they prefer a male coach.

When female athletes have limited experiences with women as coaches, then their worldview of what is normative becomes male-focused. Complicating this matter is that modern sexist beliefs reinforce the perception that women are inferior, that discrimination is no longer a problem, and that the unequal treatment of women is justified. Unfortunately, because the female athletes' worldview has been socially constructed, then modern sexist practices become part of everyday life and as such, are viewed as normative. Complicating matters more is that women themselves are likely to hold these beliefs because the behavior has become so prevalent that it is perceived as normative and goes unnoticed.

The lack of female role models in essence continues to reinforce modern sexist beliefs. Women's noted absence in the coaching profession serves to bring even more attention to those who do serve as coaches. This heightened attention often results in their differential treatment, especially by female athletes. Sexist messages, some more subtle and covert than others, serve to guide this evaluation. Female athletes view these women as less competent and less deserving of respect. Even when the female coaches have demonstrated accomplishments, it is difficult for female athletes to respect them without question.

This lack of respect may lead to prejudicial and negative evaluations of women coaches by their female athletes; negative evaluations might contribute to termination of employment.

Further complicating the matter is that 79.7% of all athletic directors across all three NCAA divisions are men (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). Therefore, women who aspire to coach face a double-edged sword. They initially may not be hired based on hiring practices associated with homologous reproduction (Kanter, 1977), yet when they are hired, they are likely to be evaluated more negatively by their players. Whether homologous reproduction hiring practices are occurring, negative evaluations of female coaches by female athletes continues to reinforce and encourage the hiring of male coaches.

The negative perception and evaluation of women as coaches simply because they are women must stop. Not only does this behavior have negative consequences for women in athletics, but also for all women in any leadership position. Women need women role models. Women also must do a better job mentoring other women. In addition, subordinates must be made aware of their sexist behavior and the negative consequences it poses for women in leadership positions. Only when women begin to support one another will discriminatory practices directed toward women begin to diminish.

The women who supported Title IX fought a battle that was undertaken on behalf of all girls and women. Prior to the enactment of Title IX, 90% of the women's teams were coached by women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). If the issue of preference was addressed with pre-Title IX women, would the preference for a coach favor women? Additionally, if salaries had not increased for coaching women's teams, would men have been as interested in coaching women's teams? If the majority of athletic directors were women, would hiring practices still favor men? It's difficult to imagine that the women who championed this cause anticipated the inverse relationship its enactment would have on participation opportunities and coaching and

administrative opportunities afforded women. This unintended consequence represents the dark-side of Title IX.

Short of amending legislation, what else can be done? The first step is increasing awareness of the issues and the second, implementing initiatives to address them. Attitudes and behavior cannot change if individuals are unaware of the consequences of their behavior. Women will not be embraced as leaders if they are perceived to lack the competencies necessary, nor will they be hired to positions in male-dominated organizations if sexist behavior and discriminatory practices continue. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, initiatives are proposed to increase awareness of the issues that women coaches currently face. In addition, the initiatives are directed at not only advancing the opportunities afforded women who aspire to coach or assume other athletic leadership positions, but also to ensure a more positive evaluation after securing those positions. The findings reported in the present study are important for athletic administrators, coaches, and athletes at all levels of athletic participation and prompt the following recommendations for action.

### **Youth Sport**

The interview participants in this study perceived the coaches at the youth sport level to be less competent, yet the quantitative findings indicated that experience with female coaches at a young age can lead to a more favorable evaluation of women later in one's career if the experience is valued and viewed positively. Therefore, the first step is to share the findings of the present study with youth sport directors at local, regional, and national meetings. Secondly, community recreation organizations need to make a conscious effort to recruit women to serve as coaches, but as importantly, coaches and parents need to treat these women with respect and cease directing sexist behavior toward them in front of young girls.

Often well-intentioned parents volunteer to coach at this level with little prior training. Therefore, to ensure professional behavior as well as proper coaching techniques, community recreation organizations should pursue grant money to support coaching education initiatives and certification programs such as those offered by the National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS). In addition, workshops on sportsmanship and on creating inclusive environments that include gender-related issues should be offered to coaches, parents, and athletes. By providing educational opportunities to women coaches, the perception of their competencies will improve and by providing workshops that value respect, the sexist behavior directed toward women will become less prevalent.

### **High School**

The quantitative findings of the present study indicated that the high school experience was a significant predictor of a female athlete's preference for a coach. The qualitative findings provided a deeper meaning to this statement by revealing that traits associated with successful coaches were more aligned with male coaches and that this association was reinforced by past experience which included more experience with male coaches. Ultimately, the impact of this experience equated to a "think coach, think male" mindset among the interview participants.

The findings that emerged related to this issue need to be shared with athletic directors, athletic administrators, and coaches serving at the high school level. Presentations to this end could occur in conjunction with in-service days at the local level or at regional and national conferences such as those sponsored by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) or the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA).

Research by Stangl and Kane (1991) revealed that since the inception of Title IX, the percentage of female coaches at the high school level has declined, particularly when the athletic director is a man. As a result, hiring initiatives more inclusive of women also need to be implemented. High school administrators and athletic directors need to actively recruit women coaches, and their role should not be limited to coaching only women's teams. If women are to be successful and respected as coaches, both female and male athletes need to see them in this role. Furthermore, initiatives within the athletic department need to include the creation of an inclusive and supportive environment for the women coaches.

### **College**

The quantitative findings revealed that experience with a female athlete's current coach was a significant predictor of her preference for a coach; however, based on the stories of the interview participants, it appears that the issue of preference is determined prior to the college years. It is unclear whether or not a female athlete's preference can be changed as a result of her college experience. What is clear is that college athletic administrators, coaches, and athletes need to be made aware of the findings reported in the present study so as to reduce sexist behavior and discriminatory practices directed toward female coaches. The behaviors are most often associated with hiring practices, treatment when hired, and evaluation procedures. These sexist behaviors and practices certainly do not help change a female athlete's preference for a coach.

The primary tenet of modern sexism is that the sexist behavior is so covert and subtle that individuals are unaware of its existence, or it is so prevalent that it is thought of as normative. Based on the interview participants' stories, there is no doubt that modern sexist practices exist in sport, and as problematic is the fact that these same athletes held modern sexist

beliefs. Because of the random sampling technique used to select the interview participants from among those who preferred a male coach, then it appears the majority of female athlete participants in this study were modern sexists. Those who were interviewed seemed unaware of their behavior and the impact it had on their preference for a coach, let alone the negative consequences it presented for female coaches.

Athletic directors, coaches, and athletes need to be made aware of modern sexist practices that exist in intercollegiate sport. To accomplish this purpose, the findings of the present study need to be shared with the various constituent groups. This can be done at the local, regional, or national levels. National conferences such as those sponsored by the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA), the National Association of Collegiate Women Athletics Administrators (NACWAA), and the Alliance of Women Coaches can serve as critical forums for discussing the ramification of these findings in relationship to the underrepresentation of women in coaching and administrative positions. Workshops can also be conducted at the local and regional level.

In addition to increased awareness, other action must be taken. First and foremost, athletic directors need to actively recruit and subsequently hire women coaches to coach both women's and men's teams. Secondly, the athletic director must ensure that the environment is supportive, inclusive, and respectful of women. It must be clear that sexist behavior is not tolerated. Professional development, mentoring, and training opportunities should be provided to female coaches. Third, female athletes should be given an opportunity to evaluate their coaches, but athletic directors need to understand that the evaluation of female athletes is likely to be more negative, and as such, their voice cannot be given more power than it deserves. Athletic directors must support the women they hire, and male athletic administrators should not be

allowed to use female athlete evaluations alone as an excuse to fire female coaches and hire male coaches. Finally, female coaches need to understand how their female athletes perceive them as do women in all leadership positions. They need to realize that their female subordinates are likely not to support them in a leadership role. The issue of preference can no longer be used by both women and men to justify the unequal treatment of women in general, and female coaches more specifically, in relationship to hiring, retention, and promotion practices.

A female athlete's preference for a male coach has been socially constructed over time. Sexist behaviors, some more subtle than others, have reinforced the superior status and power afforded men in general, and men in intercollegiate athletics more specifically. Female athletes deserve the opportunity to be coached by strong, competent women, and until this happens their preference for a male coach is unlikely to change. As importantly, opportunity and support must be afforded to the women trying to enter and pursue the profession.

### **Delimitations and Limitations of this Study**

The present study was delimited to female athletes certified to compete in basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, track and field, and volleyball at one NCAA Division I institution in the Northeastern United States. The institution was a private four-year liberal arts college. As a result, several limitations restrict the degree to which the findings of this study can be generalized. First, the participants were female athletes from one NCAA Division I institution in the Northeastern United States. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to other NCAA Division I institutions nor to NCAA Division II and III female athletes since the level of competitiveness differs among the three divisions; NCAA Division I represents the highest level of athletic competition. Secondly, the specific institution's higher socioeconomic demographics and admission standards may impact the type

of student athlete who chooses to attend. A third limitation is that the sports represented in this study were basketball, cross country, fencing, field hockey, lacrosse, soccer, softball, swimming and diving, track and field, and volleyball. Intercollegiate female athletes do participate in sports other than those represented in this study. Finally, although the participants were not asked to report their ethnicity, by appearance the majority of the participants were Caucasian. Consequently, it is unclear if the findings of this study are representative of other ethnic groups.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This research study extended the literature on preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach and explored its association with modern sexism. The explanatory mixed methods design was an important component to providing a deeper understanding and interpretation of the quantitative findings. It is suggested that a similar design be utilized in future research.

Since this was the only study known to date to examine the relationship of preference for a coach based on the sex of a coach to female athletes' modern sexist beliefs, it is important that replication studies be conducted with female athletes from other NCAA division schools at all three levels. In addition, it is suggested that research focus on female athletes from various ethnic groups as well. Deeper consideration should be given to the type of sport and its potential impact on female athletes' preferences for a coach and their modern sexist beliefs. A final suggestion is that the issue of preference for a coach be explored with female athletes who prefer female coaches or with those who indicate they have no preference for a coach based on the sex of the coach.

While the aforementioned extensions of the literature are important to this topic, another area must be addressed. The findings of this study revealed that the scores reported for the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995) did not indicate modern sexist beliefs, yet the

qualitative findings revealed otherwise. It is unclear as to why this occurred. Therefore, it is important that consideration be given to constructing a new scale that is more aligned with gender equity issues as they pertain to sport.

### **Summary**

June 2012 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Title IX. Despite the progress made in participation opportunities, the percentage of women coaches is at its third lowest point in history (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). The underrepresentation of women coaches is of concern and based on the findings revealed in the present study is associated with a female athlete's preference for a male coach and the degree to which she holds modern sexist beliefs.

The absence of female coaches in the profession implies that men are perceived to be more suited to this profession, and as a result are preferred because of their perceived higher competencies in comparison to women. When female athletes have more experience with male coaches than female coaches, then what is associated as normative is defined by men in this role. When men are perceived to best suited for the job, then discriminatory practices directed toward women by both women and men result. Without female coaches to serve as role models, it is unlikely that a female athlete's preference for a coach will change.

The findings in the present study have implications for administrators, coaches, and athletes at all levels of sport competition. Attention must be paid to training and mentoring initiatives, to recruiting and hiring practices, and to efforts that create an environment where discriminatory practices directed towards women are not tolerated. More women must be hired as coaches and subsequently must be supported upon doing so. Only when women are perceived as capable and competent will they begin to earn the respect of their female athletes.

Female athletes today are the beneficiaries of Title IX, and while much progress has been made, there is more work to be done. Unfortunately little progress will be made if their perception is that equal opportunities have been realized or that there is a lack of role congruency between women and the coaching profession. Thus, it is important that educational initiatives be implemented to increase their awareness of the inequities that still exist and the impact of their behavior on women in the profession. Finally, because of the aforementioned implications, additional research must be conducted to extend the literature on the relationship of modern sexism and preference for a coach.

This generation of female athletes has an obligation to their predecessors to continue the fight for equality on behalf of girls and women in sport. It is important that they continue to challenge the male-defined norms evidenced in sport and that they assume leadership positions so that young girls have female role models and career opportunities to which they can aspire. Only when women find the courage to challenge the status quo and support one another when doing so will continued progress be realized.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Demographic Information Form

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate all sport(s) played in college:

Circle current year of eligibility or year just completed:

1) \_\_\_\_\_

1      2      3      4

2) \_\_\_\_\_

1      2      3      4

3) \_\_\_\_\_

1      2      3      4

*Please respond to the following statements by **placing a numerical value in the blank space**, or if you did not play on an organized youth sport team or on an interscholastic team in high school, then please check Not Applicable (N/A). **Your response should be in relationship to the HEAD coach**, not assistants or volunteers.*

1. When I played **organized youth sports in community recreation leagues**, I had...

\_\_\_\_\_ # of male HEAD coaches      \_\_\_\_\_ # of female HEAD coaches      \_\_\_\_\_ N/A

2. When I played **interscholastic sports in high school**, I had...

\_\_\_\_\_ # of male HEAD coaches      \_\_\_\_\_ # of female HEAD coaches      \_\_\_\_\_ N/A

***Please circle your response.***

3. My current **intercollegiate HEAD** coach is...

Sport: \_\_\_\_\_ Male Female

Sport: \_\_\_\_\_ Male Female

Sport: \_\_\_\_\_ Male Female

4. Based on my overall experience, my personal preference for a coach is a...

\_\_\_\_\_ Male Coach      \_\_\_\_\_ Female Coach

**If selected, would you be willing to participate in a 60 minute interview with the researcher as a follow-up conversation to the information gathered today?**      \_\_\_\_\_ YES      \_\_\_\_\_ NO

## APPENDIX B

### Old-Fashioned and Modern Sexism Scale Constructs

Scale	Item
Old-Fashioned Sexism	<p>1. Women are generally not as smart as men.*</p> <p>2. I would be equally comfortable having a woman as a boss as a man.</p> <p>3. It is more important to encourage boys than to encourage girls to participate in athletics.*</p> <p>4. Women are just as capable of thinking logically as men.</p> <p>5. When both parents are employed and their child gets sick at school, the school should call the mother rather than the father.*</p>
Modern Sexism	
Denial of continuing discrimination	<p>1. Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States.*</p> <p>2. Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination.</p> <p>3. It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television.*</p> <p>4. On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally.*</p> <p>5. Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.*</p>
Antagonism toward women's demands	<p>6. It is easy to understand the anger of women's groups in America.</p> <p>7. It is easy to understand why women's groups are still concerned about societal limitations of women's opportunities.</p>
Resentment about special favors for women	<p>8. Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women's actual experiences.*</p>

\*Items with an asterisk require reverse scoring on a scale whereby -2 is strongly agree and +2 is strongly disagree.

Permission was granted via e-mail correspondence by J. K. Swim to use the Modern Sexism Scale.

Swim, J. K., Aikin, K. J., Hall, W. S., & Hunter, B. A. (1995). Sexism and racism: Old-fashioned and modern prejudices. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68(2), p. 212.

## APPENDIX C

### Modern Sexism Scale

*Please use a #2 pencil to record your answers for each item on the Scantron response sheet provided. Fill-in the bubble on the sheet that corresponds to your answer.*

**1. Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

**2. Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

**3. It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

**4. On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

**5. Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

**6. It is easy to understand the anger of women's groups in America.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

**7. It is easy to understand why women's groups are still concerned about societal limitations to women's opportunities.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

**8. Over the past few years, the government and news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of women than is warranted by women's actual experiences.**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
-2	-1	0	+1	+2

Permission was granted via e-mail correspondence by J. K. Swim to use the Modern Sexism Scale.

Swim, J. K., Aikin, K. J., Hall, W. S., & Hunter, B. A. (1995). Sexism and racism: Old-fashioned and modern prejudices. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68(2), p. 212.

## APPENDIX D

### Interview Guide

Number of sessions: 1

Duration of session: 60-90 minutes

#### **Segment 1 – Introduction to sport and supporters**

1. When did you develop an interest in sports? Did you engage in informal play with boys and girls in the neighborhood? How would you describe that experience?
2. What organized/competitive sport experiences did you have when you were growing up? How would you describe those experiences?
3. Did your parents participate in competitive sport? What role did your parents play in supporting your sport experiences?
4. Do you have siblings? Describe the competitive sport experiences your siblings had in relationship to your own? Describe the role your parents played in supporting your siblings with their sport experiences.
5. What individual(s) had the most impact/influence on your interest in playing sports and how was that reinforced?

#### **Segment 2 –Sex roles and stereotypes**

1. Tell me about your first coach.
2. When you think back over your athletic career, which coach did you like *best* and why?
3. When you think back over your athletic career, which coach did you like *least* and why?
4. Describe your experiences relative to being coached by a female or male?
5. What qualities do you think are needed to be a “good” coach?
6. What is the relationship between the qualities you described and the sex of the coach?
7. When you completed the demographic information form, you indicated that you had a preference for a male coach. What factors impacted that decision?

### Segment 3 – Equality and opportunity

1. Describe the impact Title IX has had on your opportunities and experiences as an athlete?
2. How would you compare your *intercollegiate* athletic experience to that of your male counterparts (e.g. participation opportunities, facilities, resources, respect etc.)?
3. How would you compare the opportunities woman have compared to men to coach at an NCAA Division I institution?
  - a) What role if any does the type of sport have on this opportunity?
  - b) Would the opportunity depend on whether or not it was a women's or men's team?
  - c) How would the opportunity be different if it were a NCAA Division II or III school?

## APPENDIX E

### Pilot Study

#### E-mail Invitation to Female Athlete Participants

Dear Athletes,

For the last several years I have been working on my doctoral degree. The degree is in Administration and Leadership and is offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg.

In April 2011, I finished my coursework, and I am now preparing for the dissertation portion of my degree. My study is entitled “Modern Sexism and Preference for a Coach Among Select NCAA Division I Female Athletes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis.” The intent of the study is to examine perceptions of female athletes regarding their personal athletic experience and experiences with female and male coaches.

In order for me to proceed, I need to find volunteers to help me with a pilot study. The purpose of the pilot study is to clarify any issues with my instructions, general procedures, demographic information form, and interview questions. The pilot study will be conducted in two parts. The first part will entail the completion of two survey instruments and the second part, which will be scheduled for another day and time, will be an interview. Only two individuals will be selected to participate in the interview portion.

Participation is voluntary. There is no incentive for doing so other than knowing that you are helping me in a very important stage of this process which is the refinement of the research instruments, instructions, and protocol. I am anticipating that it should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete the survey instruments.

For those who do agree to participate, it is from that group that I will be selecting *two* individuals to participate in the interview portion of the study. The interview will be scheduled for another day that is convenient to the participant. The interview session will take approximately 60 minutes.

It is not necessary for you to respond to this message; however, if you are interested in participating, I am scheduling a meeting (Date, Time, and Location). Please give my request some thought. For those of you who have the time and are willing to participate, I will be asking you to sign an informed consent form prior to your participation on (Date and Time).

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to seeing you on (Date and Time).

Sincerely,

Professor Greenawalt

## APPENDIX F

### Instructions for Participants

**This envelope contains 5 documents:**

- 1) Instructions (pink)**
- 2) Informed Consent Form (white; 2 copies – one for researcher and one for participant)**
- 2) Demographic Form (yellow)**
- 3) Modern Sexism Survey (beige)**
- 4) Scantron Response Sheet**

If you are missing a form, please contact the researcher.

### **PLEASE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE CONTINUING.**

1. *If you have decided to participate* in the study, you will need to first read and then sign the Informed Consent Form. By signing this form you are agreeing to participate in this research study by completing the survey instruments. Please remember you may withdraw at any time by leaving the room. After signing the Informed Consent Form, place the signed form in the envelope. Please keep the second form for your records.

*If you have decided **NOT** to participate* in the study, please do not place any marks on the surveys. Place all documents back in the envelope, seal the envelope, and return the envelope to the researcher as you exit the room. You may leave the room at any time.

2. Complete the demographic information form.
3. Complete the Modern Sexism Scale by using the Scantron form and a #2 pencil to record your answers.
4. When all documents are completed, please place them in the envelope with the signed consent form and seal the envelope.
5. Please give the sealed envelope to the researcher as you exit the room.

## APPENDIX G

### Pilot Study - Quantitative Phase

#### INFORMED CONSENT

**For a Research Study entitled  
“Modern Sexism and Preference for a Coach Among Select NCAA Division I Female  
Athletes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis”**

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Nancy Jo Greenawalt, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The intent of the study is to examine perceptions of female athletes regarding their personal athletic experience and experiences with female and male coaches.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a demographic information form and one survey. It should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete the two forms. All forms will be administered during the same time period, and you will only need to complete the forms once.

You will be asked questions about your personal athletic experience and about your experience with female and male coaches. I do not anticipate the risks associated with answering the questions to be greater than any risks you encounter on a day-to-day basis. Your participation will be instrumental in extending the literature on modern sexism and its impact on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in intercollegiate athletics.

There is no compensation for your participation in the study.

Any information you provide as part of your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The research records will be kept private and will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher will have access to the research records.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision as to whether or not you participate will not affect your relationship with your school, coach, or teammates. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time by leaving the room.

This project has been approved by the East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. If you have any questions about the study, please ask them now or contact Nancy Jo Greenawalt by phone 570-422-3795 or by e-mail at [ngreenawalt@esu.edu](mailto:ngreenawalt@esu.edu). You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Smeaton by e-mail at [psmeaton@esu.edu](mailto:psmeaton@esu.edu). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by phone 570-422-3336 or e-mail at [sdavis@esu.edu](mailto:sdavis@esu.edu).

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.**

Participant signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX H

### Pilot Study - Qualitative Phase

#### INFORMED CONSENT

##### For a Research Study entitled

##### **“Modern Sexism and Preference for a Coach Among Select NCAA Division I Female Athletes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis”**

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Nancy Jo Greenawalt, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The intent of the study is to examine perceptions of female athletes regarding their personal athletic experience and experiences with female and male coaches.

The interview session will last approximately 60 minutes. The interview session will be audio-taped. The audio-tape will be transcribed after the interview session. At a later date you will be given an opportunity to review the transcript record for accuracy.

During the interview session, you will be asked questions about your personal athletic experience and about your experience with female and male coaches. I do not anticipate the risks associated with answering the questions to be greater than any risks you encounter on a day-to-day basis. Your participation will be instrumental in extending the literature on modern sexism and its impact on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in intercollegiate athletics.

There is no compensation for your participation in the study.

Any information you provide as part of your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The research records will be kept private and will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher will have access to the research records.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision as to whether or not you participate will not affect your relationship with your school, coach, or teammates. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time by leaving the interview session.

This project has been approved by the East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. If you have any questions about the study, please ask them now or contact Nancy Jo Greenawalt by phone 570-422-3795 or by e-mail at [ngreenawalt@esu.edu](mailto:ngreenawalt@esu.edu). You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Smeaton by e-mail at [psmeaton@esu.edu](mailto:psmeaton@esu.edu). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by phone 570-422-3336 or e-mail at [sdavis@esu.edu](mailto:sdavis@esu.edu).

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.**

Participant signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX I

### Field Study

#### E-mail Notification to Head Coach

Dear Coach,

This letter is to inform you that I have received permission to conduct research with female athletes at your institution. The permission has been granted by the Institutional Review Boards of East Stroudsburg University and [name of host institution] along with [name of Provost], [name of Athletic Director], and [name of Associate Athletic Director].

I am conducting a research study entitled “Modern Sexism and Preference for a Coach Among Select NCAA Division I Female Athletes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis.” The study is being done in partial fulfillment of a doctoral degree in Administration and Leadership offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The intent of the study is to examine perceptions of female athletes regarding their personal athletic experience and experiences with female and male coaches.

I am notifying you with the hope that you will encourage the participation of your athletes. The female athletes will be asked to complete two surveys. It should take no longer than 30 minutes for them to do so. Based on their responses, 10 female athletes will be asked to participate in a qualitative follow-up. Participation in both phases of the study is voluntary. Informed consent will be received from all participants.

[Name of Associate Athletic Director] is assisting me in finding a room and a day and time that is convenient for the female athletes to meet. It is during that time that I will administer the surveys. After that information is determined, the associate athletic director will communicate it to you and the female athletes.

The findings of this study will be important to administrators, coaches, and student-athletes. Your support is instrumental and your assistance in encouraging the participation of your athletes is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Nancy Jo Greenawalt

## APPENDIX J

### Field Study

#### E-mail Invitation to Female Athlete Participants

This letter is to inform you that Nancy Jo Greenawalt has been granted permission to conduct research with female athletes at our institution. The permission has been granted by the Institutional Review Boards of East Stroudsburg University and [name of host institution] along with [name of Provost] and [name of Athletic Director].

She is conducting a research study entitled “Modern Sexism and Preference for a Coach Among Select NCAA Division I Female Athletes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis.” The study is being done in partial fulfillment of a doctoral degree in Administration and Leadership offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The intent of the study is to examine perceptions of female athletes regarding their personal athletic experience and experiences with female and male coaches.

I am notifying you with the hope that you will decide to participate. [Name of host institution] is the only college participating in this study so it is important that we have a good participation rate to ensure adequate sample size.

You will be asked to complete two surveys. It should take no longer than 30 minutes for you to do so. Based on your responses, 10 female athletes will be asked to participate in a qualitative follow-up. Participation in both phases of the study is voluntary. Informed consent will be received from all participants.

In collaboration with Ms. Greenawalt, the following date, time, and location has been agreed upon at which time the survey instruments will be administered.

**Date**  
**Time**  
**Location**

The findings of this study will be important to administrators, coaches, and student-athletes. Your support is instrumental in her successful completion of her degree. Please support her in this endeavor by participating on Date and Time.

Sincerely,

[Name of Associate Athletic Director at host institution]

## APPENDIX K

### Field Study - Quantitative Phase

#### **INFORMED CONSENT**

**For a Research Study entitled  
“Modern Sexism and Preference for a Coach Among Select NCAA Division I Female  
Athletes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis”**

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Nancy Jo Greenawalt, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The intent of the study is to examine perceptions of female athletes regarding their personal athletic experience and experiences with female and male coaches.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a demographic information form and one survey. It should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete the two forms. All forms will be administered during the same time period, and you will only need to complete the forms once.

You will be asked questions about your personal athletic experience and about your experience with female and male coaches. I do not anticipate the risks associated with answering the questions to be greater than any risks you encounter on a day-to-day basis. Your participation will be instrumental in extending the literature on modern sexism and its impact on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in intercollegiate athletics.

There is no compensation for your participation in the study.

Any information you provide as part of your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The research records will be kept private and will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher will have access to the research records.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision as to whether or not you participate will not affect your relationship with your school, coach, or teammates. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time by leaving the room.

This project has been approved by the East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. If you have any questions about the study, please ask them now or contact Nancy Jo Greenawalt by phone 570-422-3795 or by e-mail at [ngreenawalt@esu.edu](mailto:ngreenawalt@esu.edu). You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Smeaton by e-mail at [psmeaton@esu.edu](mailto:psmeaton@esu.edu). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by phone 570-422-3336 or e-mail at [sdavis@esu.edu](mailto:sdavis@esu.edu).

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.**

Participant signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX L

### Field Study - Qualitative Phase

#### **INFORMED CONSENT**

##### **For a Research Study entitled**

##### **“Modern Sexism and Preference for a Coach Among Select NCAA Division I Female Athletes: A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis”**

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Nancy Jo Greenawalt, a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership program offered by Indiana University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with East Stroudsburg University. The intent of the study is to examine perceptions of female athletes regarding their personal athletic experience and experiences with female and male coaches.

The interview session will last approximately 60 minutes. The interview session will be audio-taped. The audio-tape will be transcribed after the interview session. At a later date you will be given an opportunity to review the transcript record for accuracy.

During the interview session, you will be asked questions about your personal athletic experience and about your experience with female and male coaches. I do not anticipate the risks associated with answering the questions to be greater than any risks you encounter on a day-to-day basis. Your participation will be instrumental in extending the literature on modern sexism and its impact on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in intercollegiate athletics.

There is no compensation for your participation in the study.

Any information you provide as part of your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The research records will be kept private and will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher will have access to the research records.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision as to whether or not you participate will not affect your relationship with your school, coach, or teammates. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time by leaving the interview session.

This project has been approved by the East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. If you have any questions about the study, please ask them now or contact Nancy Jo Greenawalt by phone 570-422-3795 or by e-mail at [ngreenawalt@esu.edu](mailto:ngreenawalt@esu.edu). You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Smeaton by e-mail at [psmeaton@esu.edu](mailto:psmeaton@esu.edu). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the East Stroudsburg University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by phone 570-422-3336 or e-mail at [sdavis@esu.edu](mailto:sdavis@esu.edu).

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.**

Participant signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_