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Behind the Stripes: An Exploration of Female Football Officials' Experiences

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**BEHIND THE STRIPES:
AN EXPLORATION OF FEMALE FOOTBALL OFFICIALS' EXPERIENCES**

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
Physical Education, Sport, & Exercise Science**

The University of New Mexico
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July, 2013

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DEDICATIONS

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Phil and Rosemary, my sisters Karla and Jennifer, and brother-in-law Travis. I would never have finished this long journey without all of their love and support.

I also dedicate this dissertation in memory of fellow doctoral candidate Robert Hohnke who passed away while pursuing his Ph.D. at the University of New Mexico. He was awarded a Posthumous Degree in May, 2013.

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My sincere thanks go out to each participant in this research study who graciously gave their time to share their experiences with me. It was my privilege to be the one to share their love for football officiating with others.

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I would also like to thank all of my friends and colleagues at the University of New Mexico who helped me through the challenging process of writing a dissertation. I was able to call them when I had questions or when I needed a friendly reminder that finishing a dissertation can be accomplished.

Lastly, I want to thank my family and friends that have supported me throughout my doctoral program and my many years of education. They took the long drive with me from Washington to New Mexico numerous times and helped read over my dissertation. To my mom Rosemary, my dad Phil, my sisters Karla and Jenny, my brother-in-law Travis and my sweet nieces and nephew Clara, Annie, and Rocco, this dissertation partially belongs to each one of you as well. I love you all and cannot thank you enough for your encouragement and support.

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the personal and work-related experiences of high school and college female football officials. The purpose of this study was to gain a holistic perspective of the experiences of these women working in the male-dominated career of football officiating. Previous literature has examined sports officials in regards to retention, recruitment, and their safety, but relatively little research has focused specifically on female football officials. The participants were able to share their unique experiences in this vocation.

Qualitative research was employed in order to illustrate the experiences of female football officials. The theoretical framework for this study was based on the feminist perspective along with social role theory (Eagly, 1997). A case study methodology was used with eight purposeful and criterion selected participants. In-depth interviews were conducted with each participant and served as the primary source of data collection. Data was

thoroughly analyzed and coded using open, axial, and selective coding methods. The data was then used to answer the studies research questions and the following three themes emerged: 1) Sense of Community and Support; 2) Varied Gender Experiences Officiating Football; and 3) Passion for Officiating and the sport of Football. The findings from this study illustrate that women have the ability and the knowledge to officiate in the masculine sport of football. The participants have become role models to other women that may not have known football officiating was an occupation accessible to them.

The findings of the study have implications for various constituencies, including aspiring and current female football officials, male football officials, coaches, players, spectators, and officiating administrators. The information and data gathered from this study may assist officiating associations with their recruitment and retention of female officials, as well as add to the literature on gender equity in sport and on females working in male-dominated sport careers. Recommendations for further research include: exploring the experiences of women officiating in other male sports such as wrestling or baseball, interviewing a larger sample of female officials, and researching the topic of female sports officials using a different theoretical framework than was used in the current study.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The test for whether or not you can hold a job should not be the arrangement of your chromosomes.

– Bella Abzug (Kulkarni, 2010, p.1)

Historically, sport has been played predominantly by men, but women's quest for equality in society has had its counterpart in the sports world (Messner, 2007). The role of women in sport has been evolving ever since the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972. The foundation of Title IX was based on prohibiting sex discrimination in any educational program or activity receiving any federal financial aid. It later fundamentally and forever changed the characteristics of women's sports (Kane, as cited in Moore, 2012).

Participation rates of girls and women in sport have risen each year since 1972. The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) reported that in 1971, before Title IX was passed, there were 3,666,917 boys and 294,015 girls participating in high school athletics in the United States (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). In 2011, there were 4,494,406 boys and a dramatic increase to 3,173,549 girls participating. The increase in athletic participation by women was also seen throughout college athletics. In 2012, there were over 200,000 female athletes competing on 9,274 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) teams, which is the highest number to date (Wolverton, 2012).

The opportunities for females in athletics have increased significantly, but this has not translated into high percentages of women in athletic administration positions or other sport vocations. Scholars Vivian Acosta and Linda Carpenter have recorded participation

opportunities and employment positions of girls and women in sport since the mid-1970's. In 1972, 90% of women's teams were coached by females, in contrast to 2012 when only 43% of the teams were coached by women. A majority of the jobs held by women in college athletic departments are typically held in support staff roles rather than policy-making positions (Acosta & Carpenter, 2008). In 2012, only 20.3% of all intercollegiate athletic directors were women and perhaps a more significant fact is that 9.2% of intercollegiate athletic departments had no women anywhere in the administration (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012).

Research has also shown that there were lower percentages of females working in college sports careers such as head athletic trainers (30.7%), sports information directors (9.8%), and strength and conditioning coaches (34.6%) (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Depledge, 1998). In 2012, there were 13,792 female professionals employed within Division I intercollegiate athletics (including coaches, assistant coaches, sports information directors, athletic trainers, athletics administrators, and strength training coaches), which is the highest number in history. Acosta and Carpenter (2008) explained that, "many factors may account for the disparity, some of which are market based, some of which are probably based on discrimination and disparate recruitment, and some of which are based on the increased opportunities provided by Title IX in other professions" (p. 14).

Professional athletics has also been an area that is dominated with males in the workforce, specifically in ownership, leadership, and administrative roles. The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports at the University of Central Florida publishes the Racial and Gender Report Card annually to indicate areas of improvement, stagnation, and regression in the racial and gender composition of professional sports personnel (Lapchick, 2011a). In the

National Football League (NFL), as of 2012, Amy Trask of the Oakland Raiders remains the only female president/CEO of a team in the NFL, a position she has held since 2005. The percentage of female vice presidents in the NFL is around 15 percent (Lapchick, 2011c). In the National Basketball Association (NBA), women held 42 percent of the professional positions and there were 33 women in vice president roles. There were two women that held the role of NBA presidents in the 2010-11 season and they were the first female presidents since the 2006-2007 season (Lapchick, 2011b). Laurel Richie became the new president of the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) in 2011, the first female of color to become president of a professional sports league. In 2011, there were six female head coaches and four women held major ownership in a WNBA franchise. Women filled 70 percent of WNBA professional staff positions in 2011, which is the highest of all professional sport leagues (Lapchick, 2011a).

Despite the gains, Title IX has long been scrutinized as one of the most “noticeable applications for gender controversy” in American sport history (Suggs, 2005, p. 2). Proponents of Title IX had hoped that it would automatically produce a dramatic shift in the cultural values regarding women in sport (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Fink and Pastore (1997) assert that the addition of women's sports had little to do with an approval of women's sports. The rules and policies that were implemented following Title IX focused exclusively on increasing the numbers of girls and women participating in sport and did not change the prevailing beliefs and norms of society (Fink & Pastore, 1997). The injustice is often seen in negative attitudes about female athletes and the low numbers of women in sport leadership positions. The increased interest in sport by women in the post-Title IX era has not only posed a threat to traditional gender role ideologies of separate and gendered activities, but

this historic movement in sport has also motioned a quest by women for equality and empowerment (Messner, 1988).

Even though significant gains have been made in the area of women in sport, there is still much room for improvement. Policies and strategies for gender equality and empowerment of women are only useful if there is a systematic process in place with effective implementation. Even with the enactment of Title IX, men still hold many of the positions of power and decision making in sport, which can make it more difficult for women to break into certain professions. One of these male-dominated professions that have been difficult for women to negotiate into has been the area of sports officiating.

Sports Officials

Sports officials are an integral part of all sporting competitions. For the most part, there cannot be an official sports game or contest without having someone oversee or manage the rules of the game. These individuals are called various names depending on the sport being played. Umpires, referees, and officials are defined as those individuals that preside over competitive athletic or sporting events, detect infractions, and decide penalties according to the rules and laws of the game (Bureau of Labor, 2012). With sports being played by millions of people in various levels including youth, recreational, club, college, and professional, it is easy to see why the position of a sports official is invaluable to athletics.

Prior to the passing of Title IX, athletic contests played by women were predominantly officiated by women (Casey, 1992). Since then, there have been many changes in sports officiating for both genders. One noticeable change has been the increase in male officials of women's sport contests, specifically in women's basketball, softball, and volleyball (Casey, 1992). It is considered out of the ordinary for a female to officiate a male

contest, but a common practice for a male to officiate a female contest (Casey, 1992).

Therefore, it is a particularly rare occurrence to see females officiating football. As of 2012, there were five reported female football officials in Division I football and a small number of women officials in the lower collegiate divisions (Associated Press, 2009; NCAA, personal communication, June 5, 2012).

Sternberg, Stern, Moore, and Korth of *Referee Magazine* (2011) compiled statistics on high school sports officials through a survey that was sent to all state high school officiating associations. The results revealed that there were around 281,000 high school sports officials nationwide (This value counted officials only once even if they were a multi-sport official). Although, only 24 out of the 50 states responded to the section of the survey that included the distribution of male and female sport officials, it was clear that a disparity exists in this profession. Out of the 24 states that responded, there were 140,298 total sports officials, of which 89% were male and 11% were female (Sternberg et al., 2011).

Another survey conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) in 2012 assessed each state high school athletic association for data on female high school football officials. Thirty-three of the state associations responded to the survey as having female high school football officials, twelve responded as not having any, and four states did not respond (R. Zayas, personal communication, March 12, 2012). Even though over half of the states had female football officials, the total number of female officials in each state was sparse.

The 33 state athletic associations that responded as having female high school football officials and the four that did not respond, were contacted via phone or email by the researcher of the current study in order to find the total number of female high school football

officials in each state. It was difficult to determine an exact number of female football officials because most states did not separate their officials by gender. Therefore, many of the high school officiating administrators had to estimate the total number of female football officials they had in their state. Twenty-seven out of the 33 states responded and out of these states there were approximately 34,366 total high school football officials, of which 183 were female (see Appendix A). These results suggest that less than one percent of all high school football officials in the United States are female, which clearly shows that football officiating is a highly male-dominated position.

The disproportion in the number of female officials is especially true in sports that are played by primarily male athletes (e.g., football, baseball, and wrestling). In the state of New Mexico, there were only five female high school football officials, two female wrestling officials, and one female baseball umpire during the 2011-2012 school year (D. Sanchez, personal communication, July 28, 2012). The Illinois High School Association reported having thirteen female high school football officials, five female wrestling officials, and thirty-six female baseball umpires for the 2011-2012 school year (M. Schaeffer, personal communication, June 4, 2012). These statistics are similar in other states and it provides further evidence that sports officiating remains male-dominated.

At the professional level, there have been only two female officials in the National Basketball Association (NBA), one in the National Football League (NFL), and none in Major League Baseball (MLB) or the National Hockey League (NHL). Professional Tennis is an exception, having employed female officials since the 1800's (McManus, 2011a). For example, at the 2010 U.S. Open tennis tournament, 33 percent of the chair umpires in the men's competitions were women (McManus, 2011a).

While other sports still lag behind, some progress has been made for female football officials in recent years. Annice Canady became one of the first females to officiate a collegiate game when she was the line judge for Benedict vs. South Carolina State in 2002 (Associated Press, 2002). Sarah Thomas followed when in 2009 she was the first female to officiate a Division I major bowl game (Drape, 2009). National headlines were made on August 9, 2012 when Shannon Eastin became the first female to officiate in the NFL as a line judge for the pre-season game between the San Diego Chargers and Green Bay Packers (Murphy, 2012). These female officials have made tremendous strides in overcoming gender barriers in their vocation and they continue to promote gender equity in male-dominated sports professions. Even with the recent gains in officiating, there are still many other women struggling to have equal opportunities as their male counterparts in the profession of officiating. This indicates the importance of scholarly research in the area of football officiating, in order to get the first-hand personal stories of the women that are currently working in this vocation.

Statement of the Problem

Many view Title IX as having solved the problem of gender discrimination in athletics as it removed barriers for women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; McDonagh & Pappano, 2008). While Title IX has been influential in creating opportunities for women in sport, there have been some unintended consequences from the law as well (Messner, 1988). Male sport performance is the standard against which female performance is measured. Women may do well in “feminine” sports such as ice-skating, gymnastics, or volleyball, but if they participate in “masculine” sports such as wrestling, football, or baseball, they are seen as “biologically and physically disadvantaged” (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, p. 40). If

women do perform well in these male sports, their femininity may be called into question and they may be perceived as more masculine (Garcia-Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2006; McDonagh & Pappano, 2008; Messner & Sabo, 1990; Messner, 2007). The assumption that girls must not play in certain male-dominated sports, perpetuates gender stereotypes such as the belief that women are inferior to men (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008).

Regardless of the terms used (gender discrimination, inequality, gender equity), research continues to support the proposition that men control athletics and they have yet to share their power with women (Sage, 1990). This current environment is enabled by the organizational culture in which athletics operate. Furthermore, sport has been associated with traditionally masculine qualities such as competition, brute strength, power, and win-at-all costs mentality, all of which continue to be deeply ingrained within the American sport culture (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Since girls and women see few females in positions of power in athletics and in sport vocations such as officiating, it may cause them to look elsewhere for future employment (Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Dixon, Warner, & Bruening, 2008; Whisenant, 2003). The result then is a continuation of the perpetual cycle of male domination in the realm of sports (Whisenant, 2003).

One of the objectives of athletics should be to strive for gender equality in all aspects of sports, including in the position of sport officiating. As seen throughout history when professional sport leagues contend that they pick the best person for the job as an official, that person is nearly always male (McManus, 2011b). Billy Jean King, the historic tennis pro, stated:

The difference in whether a league has women in the system seems to come down to professional leagues' willingness to attract and train prospects, then allow

competition for jobs on an even playing field... If you aren't creating an opportunity for women to come through the door, it is hard for any woman who wants to officiate to break those barriers on her own. (McManus, 2011b, p. 2)

There have been various state and regional programs over the years that have addressed the declining numbers of women in officiating and other sport leadership positions, but not all have been successful (Casey, 1992). In general, sport officiating is a male-dominated career and by encouraging women to participate in these types of occupations the perceptions of male dominance in sport may fade, such that a more equitable environment is created.

Since officiating is a male-dominated position, it is important to understand what the experiences are like for a woman in this type of vocation. Female football officials were chosen for this study because football is played predominately by male athletes. Therefore, it appears to be a unique phenomenon when females officiate alongside male officials in the "masculine" sport of football. Success in football favors size, strength, speed, and power. It is a game suitable for aggressive "manly" behaviors and has been deemed a means of teaching young boys to become men (Fields, 2005). Although women have gained more rights and privileges throughout society in recent years, football has remained "the ultimate masculine preserve, a strong hold against changes in the structure of American society" (Fields, 2005, p. 37).

Recent media attention over females playing or officiating in the sport of football has brought the issue of gender equity and gender-role stereotypes to the forefront of sport. Most media portrayal of females dictates which sports are "sex-appropriate" for their gender (Walker & Bopp, 2011). Feminine sports such as golf, tennis, or gymnastics are deemed appropriate for women and masculine sports such as football and wrestling are not. If a news

article is written on females participating in male-dominated sports, it is usually portrayed as a human interest story. For instance, headlines have read: “Female football player represents remarkable progress”, “Griffith, Munster varsity football players accept their female teammate,” and “A Study in Pink: First female referee makes NFL history.” As long as society continues to permit the inferior role of women in sports, women will continue to endure unequal representation in sports and sports careers (Walker & Bopp, 2011).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the personal and work-related experiences of female football officials, including those who work in high school and college football. The study explored the participant’s perceptions of what it is like to be one of the few females working in this type of vocation. Much of the current research has centered on the recruitment, retention, and safety of officials (e.g., Chiafullo, 1998; Graf & Konske, 1999; Kellett & Warner, 2011; Rainey, 1995; Seidler, Scott, & Hughs, 2004; Sabaini, 2001; Titlebaum, Haberlin, & Titlebaum, 2009; Warner, Tingle, & Kellet, in press). Therefore, there is a gap in the literature that includes research specifically on the experiences of females in officiating positions. It is important to understand the involvement of these participants, as they all have unique experiences and circumstances that have led them into a traditionally male-dominated field.

Understanding the experiences of current female football officials may help officiating associations and administrators learn how to be more successful in their recruitment and retention of female officials. Furthermore, the current study will also call attention to gender equity in regards to attitudes, perceptions, and practices in various sports careers.

Research Questions

Creswell (2007) recommends that the qualitative research process begin with a grand tour question and associated sub-questions. The grand tour question that guided the current study was: *What are the experiences of female football officials?* This study also used sub-questions to help refine the central question, including: (a) Why did the participants enter into the vocation of officiating? (b) How do participants characterize successes and/or positive aspects in officiating? (c) How do participants characterize challenges and/or negative aspects in officiating? (d) How have the participants gained and sustained entry in the male-dominated position of officiating? (e) What are the participants' experiences being one of the few women in football officiating? (f) How has the decision to become a sports official impacted the participants' lives? and (g) How can the officiating associations and their members promote and encourage women to join the officiating profession?

The information gathered while examining the experiences of female football officials, will provide insights into the experiences of females working in this male-dominated field and will give these women a stage in which they can share their personal experiences.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in a qualitative study is the “understructure, the scaffolding or frame of a study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 66). It results from the stance or beliefs the researcher brings to the study. The theoretical lens or perspective in qualitative research provides an orienting lens for the study of questions on gender, class, or race (or other issues of marginalized groups) (Creswell, 2009). For the current study, a feminist perspective will be used to understand the nature of gender inequality and examine women's social roles and

lived experiences. Feminist theory helped situate this study because it focused upon the gender disparity of females in the career of sports officiating. The belief of equality has been a main argument by feminists for many decades, most notably liberal feminists, in their quest to gain opportunities and resources for girls and women in sport (Hall, 1996). This theory is founded on the recognition of gender as a legitimate category of analysis (Scott, 1986).

Gender roles are the shared beliefs that apply to individuals on the basis of their socially identified sex (Eagly, 1987). Gender roles are both “*descriptive* and *prescriptive* in that they indicate what men and women usually do and what they should do” (Eagly, 2009, p. 654).

Beliefs about men and women can be summarized in two dimensions which include communion (communal), or connection with others, and agency (agentic), or self-assertion.

Women, more than men are more likely to be communal, which is friendly, unselfish, concerned with others, and emotionally expressive. Men are thought to be more agentic, which is described as masterful, assertive, competitive, and dominant (Eagly, 2009).

Gender role beliefs are created via societal and cultural ideologies, gender stereotypes, and physical and emotional differences in men and women. The distributions of women and men into occupations are usually correlated with their gender stereotypes. Women are seen in smaller percentages in occupations such as police officers, fire fighters, and soldiers due to these positions being associated with protecting others or more agentic dimensions (Eagly, 2009; U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). Whereas, men are seen in smaller percentages in the careers of social workers, nurses, and kindergarten teachers, because these positions emphasize caring for others or more communal dimensions (Eagly, 2009; U.S. Department of Labor, 2008).

Grounding this study in gender ideology will allow individuals to understand the impact gender has on being in the profession of officiating. Feminism is an appropriate platform because it is “an approach to studying women from the perspective of their own experiences to develop versions of reality that more accurately reflect their experiences” (Young, 2003, p. 37). By using a feminist framework, the assumptions or previously accepted ideas can be re-examined across a broad range of disciplines and fields of study, including officiating (Young, 2003).

Along with a feminist framework, social role theory (Eagly, 1997) will be used to explore the phenomena of gender roles in sport officiating. Social role theory proposes that there are societal expectations regarding the roles and behaviors of men and women in society (Eagly, 1997). When gender roles are applied to men and women, certain jobs can be viewed as more appropriate for each gender. This includes women taking on roles that are more often assumed as being in the home and men’s roles as being in the workplace. “The gender roles that emerge from a society's division of labor by sex are thus not arbitrary cultural constructions but are socially constructed sets of ideas that are firmly grounded in the requirements of a society's productive activity” (Eagly, 1997, p. 1381).

Social role theory assumes that people communicate gender role expectations in social interactions and can directly persuade the individuals of these expectations to engage in behavior that conforms to these expectations (Eagly, 1997). In turn, the implication of social role theory is that men and women may be choosing careers because of social stereotypes that surround them. Football officiating is portrayed as requiring someone to be physically fit, have detailed knowledge of the game, be able to effectively manage others, be firm and assertive, have accurate judgments, be able to deal with criticism, and be observant

(American Sport Education Program, 2011). These characteristics appear to go along with more masculine, agentic characteristics which are considered as more assertive and dominant (Eagly, 2009). Football is also played by predominantly male athletes, which may lead to more males becoming football officials because of their familiarity with the game.

In addition to social role theory, the sex-matching model (Kiesler, 1975) provides information regarding why women and men choose certain career paths. This model illustrates that “men and women are matched to specific jobs based on the ratio of men and women that currently occupying such positions” (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007, p. 248). Glick, Zion, and Nelson’s (1988) investigation of the sex-matching model demonstrated that the ratio of men to women holding positions in a particular profession acted in such a way as to match men and women to specific domains. As such, if women occupied the majority of positions in a particular field, women would be perceived as a better match for jobs within that field. The same may also be true for male-dominated occupational domains. Since football officiating is a male-dominated vocation, women do not see many role models to follow into this specific vocation. This is another reason why the current research is important; as it will bring awareness that football officiating can be a choice for females to pursue.

These gender and social-role stereotypes in the workplace may be one of the reasons that females are less likely to choose the position of a football official. A social role perspective along with a feminists theoretical framework, will provide this current study a lens that will “help shape the types of questions asked, inform how the data is collected and analyzed, and may provide a call for action or change” (Creswell, 2009, p. 62).

In situating the study within related literature, the next chapter will provide a summary of the relevant literature on the topic of female football officials. This includes exploring the history of women in sport and women working in sport careers. Various theoretical constructs have been used in past research studies in regards to underrepresentation of women in various career fields. A few of these constructs will be examined in regards to their effect on why very few women pursue football officiating as a vocation of choice.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review for the purpose of this study examines scholarly research crucial to understanding the background and nature surrounding the vocation of female football officials. The role of women in athletics has been a well studied domain, but the topic of female football officials is an area that has not been systematically researched using academic rigor. Most of what has been written on female officials has been found in various secondary sources, including sports news articles and online sports forums. In order to gain a thorough background on the topic, the literature review has been divided into five main sections: (a) history of women in sport; (b) women working in male-dominated careers; (c) gender roles; (d) challenging feminine ideologies; and (e) women pioneers in sports officiating.

History of Women in Sport

Women's participation in sport has a history marked by division and discrimination, but also one filled with monumental achievements by female athletes and important advancements in gender equity ("Division for the Advancement of Women," 2007). In order to fully understand and examine the position of female football officials, it is beneficial to gain a historical perspective on women's roles and their participation in athletics. Women would not be where they are today in various careers including in sport, if it were not for the pioneers that helped pave the way for future generations.

Prior to 1870, sports for women existed in the form of "play" activities that were recreational and without rules, rather than competitive (Gerber, Felshin, Berlin, & Wyrick, 1974). Women would normally participate in activities that were "appropriate" for their

gender, such as horseback riding or swimming. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, women began to form their own athletic clubs. Many men's clubs allowed women to become associates and to participate in female-only activities; however, they typically were not given full status in the clubs (Bell, 2007). Activities such as tennis, croquet, bowling, and archery were popular for women to participate in at clubs around the country (Bell, 2007). Women and girls found places for exercise and play either informally in their own neighborhoods or through schools and YWCA's. Historically, their access was limited by society's belief that participation in athletics was unladylike and even dangerous to their reproductive lives (Hums, Bower, & Grappendorf, 2007). Therefore, during the adolescent years; there was continual tension between allowing girls to participate in athletic competitions while still maintaining their femininity.

Women's participation in intercollegiate athletics was held only to intramural, club, and sorority matches, unlike their male counterparts who had regular sanctioned intercollegiate events (Bell, 2007). A few weeks after James Naismith invented basketball in Springfield, Massachusetts, Senda Berenson taught the game to her students at Smith College. She believed that this "simple game, tossing a ball into a basket, could help develop her students' physical strength and character" ("Smith College," 2011, p. 1). In 1896, the first women's teams to compete in an intercollegiate athletic competition included the basketball teams of University of California Berkeley versus Stanford and the University of Washington versus Ellensburg Normal School (Gerber et al., 1974).

Competitive events for women in college continued to increase throughout the early 1900's, although these competitions looked very different than men's athletics. The characteristics of men's varsity competitions were in conflict with the philosophies of

women's physical educators of the era. The educators wanted to “preserve young women’s modesty and accommodate their perceived daintiness” (Suggs, 2005, p. 23). They did not want women’s athletics to turn into the aggressive, competitive environment that existed in men’s sports and they were determined to keep athletics in an educational environment.

The passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920 gave women a renewed sense of freedom with the right to vote. In the 1940’s, World War II forced many men to enter the military, leaving women to fill their positions in factories and other male-dominated professions. Many women believed that if they could compete successfully in the work force, then they could certainly compete on the athletic fields (Chafe, 1972). In 1943, the first woman's professional athletic team was formed. The All-American Girls Baseball League was started as an attempt to replace Major League Baseball, which had been canceled due to the war. The league gave over 600 women athletes the opportunity to play professional baseball and to play it at a level never before attained. The league operated from 1943 to 1954 and represented one of the most historically unique aspects in baseball history (“League History,” 2012). When World War II ended, women’s sport became more competitive and intercollegiate and interscholastic competition spread (Gerber et al., 1974). In the 1960’s, a wave of feminist activism was born, which propelled the movement for women's rights in the workforce and in athletics (Bell, 2007).

In 1966, with the desire to consolidate governance of women's intercollegiate athletics under one organization, the Division for Girls and Women in Sport (DGWS) appointed a Commission on Intercollegiate Sports for Women (CISW) to assist in conducting intercollegiate competitions. In 1967, it was renamed the Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (CIAW) (Ware, 2007). The role of the CIAW was to assume

responsibility for designing, sponsoring, and sanctioning women's intercollegiate sports and championships. With the need for an institutional membership and elected representation over women's intercollegiate athletics, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW) later replaced the CIAW in 1971. This organization was conceived by physical educators to give female athletes expert coaching and better competition on varsity-style teams. The organization created rules that specifically were designed to "safeguard" the amateur and educational approach to sport (Suggs, 2005). They promoted broad participation over competition, banned athletic scholarships, and placed restrictions on recruiting. The AIAW was influential in creating opportunities for female athletes, which increased awareness of gender equality in sport. Although not officially affiliated with the women's rights movement, AIAW leaders were moving in the same direction (Ware, 2007).

During the 1960's and 1970's, the NCAA had no interest in women's athletics, nor did administrators of the AIAW have an interest in the NCAA. The NCAA was managed in a different manner, which was seen as being commercially driven, neglecting the meaning of student-athlete. The AIAW continued the rules established by the CIAW, which were intended to prohibit "unethical practices" that were observed in men's sports (Suggs, 2005). The AIAW wanted to keep women's sport in its "purist" form.

Title IX. The two words "Title IX" have become synonymous with women's athletics. Many of the breakthroughs in women's sports have been credited to only Title IX, when in fact they were a product of a broader social change that gave women and girls more rights in many aspects of American life. Since sports were on a national stage, gender discrimination could not be ignored. Even if Title IX had not been passed, historians believe there would still have been an increase in women's athletic participation, maybe just not to

the same magnitude (Ware, 2007). As sports historian Kathryn Jay explained, “sports had become too important to American society to exclude half the population” (as cited in Ware, 2007, p. 2).

The Education Amendments Act that included Title IX was signed by President Richard Nixon on June 23, 1972. It was only thirty–seven words long and it read, “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” (Ware, 2007, p. 3). The sponsors of Title IX were Birch Bayh (Senate) and Edith Green (House of Representatives) (“Title IX,” 2011). Title IX was intentionally created to draw attention to systematic gender inequality in educational policies, but also was later used to overcome disparity in sports programs (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008). This statute required all schools receiving federal funds to perform self-evaluations to determine if they offered equitable opportunities based on gender, which included athletic programs.

Implementation of the law got off to a slow start because many universities found it difficult to know how to apply the law. College athletic administrators and college presidents realized what an impact this would have on intercollegiate athletics and they struggled on how or where to make the changes in their own departments. Members of congress including Senators Tower, Bartlett, and Hruska introduced Senate Bill (S. 2106), which proposed to exclude revenue-producing sports from Title IX coverage (“Title IX,” 2011). The bill later failed in committee before reaching the Senate floor.

In 1979, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare issued a policy interpretation of Title IX that included a three-prong test to be considered in assessing an

institution's compliance. To prove it was providing males and females equitable opportunities to play sports, an institution had to do one of the following:

1. Demonstrate that the percentage of its female athletes is nearly the same as the percentage of female undergraduate students;
2. Show that it is steadily increasing opportunities for women;
3. Prove that it is meeting the athletic interests and abilities of its female students.

(“Title IX”, 2011)

In 1980, the Department of Education was established as a Cabinet level agency. and they were given the oversight of Title IX through the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) (“Title IX”, 2011). The three-prong test gave educational institutions options in their compliance of the law.

On February 28, 1984 the case of *Grove City v. Bell* limited the extent of Title IX. The Supreme Court decided that Title IX only applied to specific programs (i.e. Office of Student Financial Aid) that received federal funds. Under this new interpretation, athletic departments were not necessarily covered. On March 22, 1988 the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 was enacted into law. By passing this Act, Congress overrode a presidential veto and overturned the 1984 court case of *Grove City v. Bell* and also restored Title IX's institution-wide coverage. Now the law states if any program or activity in an educational institution receives federal funds, all of the institution's programs and activities must comply with Title IX (“Title IX”, 2011). Another landmark case occurred on February 26, 1992 in *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools*. The Supreme Court ruled that individuals were entitled to monetary damages, both compensatory and punitive, if their challenges were successful in court. Lawyers now had a stronger incentive to take on Title IX cases.

The percentages of women and men that attended college started to change in the 1990's. When Title IX was first implemented women were in the minority, but by the year 2000 women earned 57% of bachelorette degrees compared to 43% of men (Ware, 2007). If a university was trying to follow Prong One of Title IX, they would have to increase the number of women athletes to comply with the law. In 1996, the NCAA made a list of the "emerging sports" which would help increase the number of female athletes. They included: ice hockey, synchronized swimming, team handball, water polo, archery, badminton, bowling, squash, equestrian, and crew (Ware, 2007). Crew became an important sport because the roster could include 50-75 women, which would help offset football in the proportionality total. Schools still had a choice in complying with Title IX and could use the other two prongs if they could not comply with obtaining proportionality.

In addition to adding sports, some schools chose to cut men's sports, specifically the non-revenue sports of wrestling and men's gymnastics in order to achieve gender equality. This became a point of tension between many groups. The Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Education put out a report that stated that cutting sports was a "disfavored" route to gain Title IX compliance (Ware, 2007). Title IX has historically been blamed as the cause for men's sports being cut, but it was up to the individual universities and schools to decide where to allocate their athletic funds. Often, they decided to cut non-revenue men's sports, not always so they could fund women's sports, but so they could put more money into football and other revenue sports. For example, in 2006, Rutgers University decided to cut men's tennis, which had a budget of approximately \$175,000. That same year, Rutgers spent approximately \$175,000 on hotel rooms for the football team's home games ("The Women's Sports Foundation", 2009). Unfortunately, Title IX has been an easy target to blame for the

changes in men's sports over the years. The intent of Title IX has always been to expand opportunity, not trade men's for women's opportunities.

NCAA and AIAW. During the 1970's, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) only allowed men to participate in its championships. The NCAA began to see the popularity of women's athletics and became interested in allowing women to participate under their organization. Many women's sports leaders became suspicious in the newfound interest of the NCAA in women's sports. From the start, the NCAA had actively and publicly opposed Title IX, including trying to exclude revenue making sports such as football from the law. Once it became clear that Title IX was not going away, the NCAA made the move to integrate women's athletics into their organization. In the 1970's, the NCAA was well established as the largest athletic organization in the country and their management disagreed with the way the AIAW ran women's athletics, which promoted participation not competition (Bell, 2007). The NCAA felt, "if Title IX was to apply to intercollegiate sports at all levels and women were to be elevated to a status equal to the men, its (NCAA) financial assets and political power were threatened" (Bell, 2007, p. 1). To maintain control, the NCAA created their own NCAA Women's Committee and excluded the AIAW (Bell, 2007).

When college presidents realized in order to comply with Title IX they needed to provide "equitable" programs for women, it led to many campus-wide debates. Many college administrators believed that women's sports program should look similar to the men's program's already in place; which was very different to how the AIAW ran their programs (Suggs, 2005). During the 1970's and 1980's, head athletic directors were for the most part male. As compliance with Title IX continued, it was common for universities to move their women's athletic program out of the physical education departments to under the direction of

the head athletic director. The women who were at one time in charge of women's athletics, were commonly moved to the position of associate athletic director, which took them out of the main leadership role in women's athletics (Suggs, 2005). In 1972, the AIAW changed their rule to permit sports scholarships to avoid losing members to the NCAA. Many view this as the turning point to the way women's sports were originally created by the AIAW (Suggs, 2005). They had built their organization around providing an athletic experience for all women and that changed when the NCAA got involved in women's athletics.

The NCAA had provided three million dollars to support women's championships and the AIAW was not able to compete with that amount of money. The AIAW sued the NCAA to prevent it from providing women's championships arguing it was an illegal monopoly power over college sports (Suggs, 2005). The AIAW was unsuccessful in their anti-trust lawsuit and in 1982, the AIAW ceased operations (Festle, 1996). Legendary basketball coach Pat Summit recalled her time during the battle of women's sports equality in the book titled: *A Place on the Team: The Triumph and Tragedy of Title IX* (Suggs, 2005):

I've been around the game a long time, and I'm appreciative of all the pioneers, the women who fought for women's championships under the AIAW, but I also recognize that what really gave our sport the boost in the eyes of the country was the NCAA. That gave us some clout, and eventually brought about the television package that otherwise we never would have gotten...It just opened up the door of opportunity. (p. 65)

Throughout the historical battle of women's equality in athletics, many people did not argue with the fact that women deserved equal rights to education and athletics. "The legal and cultural battles have been fought instead over the assortment of rules and regulations the

government published to implement Title IX” (Suggs, 2005, p. 66). Since the passing of Title IX, a growing number of women compete professionally and as amateurs in almost every major sport. Female high school athletic participation increased from 295,000 in 1971 to 2.8 million in 2002-2003, an increase of over 840% (Bell, 2007). Women’s involvement in sports has also created a \$60 billion industry in the United States (Klenke, 2011). Even with all the opportunities and accomplishments in the last forty years of women’s athletics, there are still challenges to overcome. The Women’s Sport Foundation (2011) compiled the following facts on gender inequality in college and professional sports:

- Although the gap has narrowed, male athletes still receive 55% of college athletic scholarship dollars, leaving 45% to be allocated to women.
- Women's teams receive 38% of college sport operating dollars and 33% of college athletic team recruitment spending.
- In NCAA Division I-A, head coaches for women's teams receive an average salary of \$850,400 while head coaches for men's teams average \$1,783,100. This is a difference of \$932,700.
- Total prize money for the PGA tour is \$256 million, which is more than five times that of the LPGA tour at \$50 million.
- For a WNBA player in the 2005 season, the minimum salary was \$31,200 and the maximum salary was \$89,000, the team salary cap was \$673,000. For NBA players in the 2004-2005 season the minimum salary was \$385,277 and the maximum salary was \$15.355 million, the team salary cap was \$46 million. (p. 1)

Title IX was initially created with education, not athletics in mind, but the law has fundamentally changed women’s opportunities in sports forever. A sports historian stated,

“Title IX is the biggest thing to happen to sports since the invention of the whistle” (Ware, 2007, p. 27). Title IX not only had an effect on women's participation in sports, but culturally it influenced the way people view women and athletics.

Women Working in Male-Dominated Careers

Women's battle with equality in sports has been paralleled by their struggle for equality in the workforce. Throughout the women's liberation movement, there has been a push in equality for women in numerous career fields. Over the last twenty-five years, more women are choosing to join traditionally male-dominated careers. According to the United States Department of Labor (2008), a nontraditional or male-dominated occupation for women is one in which women comprise 25% or less of total employment. Data available for various occupational groups from the past two decades clearly indicate two major points.

First, the gender distribution of many occupations has shifted substantially. Second, despite these shifts, women and men still tend to be concentrated in different occupations. For example, women are highly overrepresented in clerical and services occupations, while men are disproportionately employed in craft, operator, and laborer jobs. (Wooten, 1997, p.1)

Although, in the last decade, more women are choosing to enter traditionally male-dominated careers, including the fields of architecture, engineering, firefighting, construction management, and welding (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008).

There have been numerous studies on women working in the fields of engineering and science (e.g., Ceci & Williams, 2007; Halpren et al., 2007; National Science Foundation, 2008; Richman, vanDellen, & Woods, 2011). Unfortunately, women continue to be in the minority in these fields, but “women's increasingly greater entry and success indicate that

some women are coping effectively with their minority status in math-intensive science and engineering fields” (Richman et al., 2011, p. 493). Women’s coping mechanisms in these types of career fields have included finding helpful female role models and social support (Richman et al., 2011).

Often, females wish to enter a career field which has been traditionally male-dominated, but for various reasons have decided to pursue other jobs. Frome, Alfeld, Eccles, and Barber (2006) conducted a study on a cohort of 104 females who aspired to enter male-dominated careers after graduating from high school. When these women were surveyed seven years later, 82% of these females changed careers to working in traditionally female-dominated or gender-neutral careers. Reasons given for why the women changed from pursuing traditionally male-dominated careers included: perception of lack of ability and/or intrinsic values, the job demanded too much time, and difficulty trying to combine a career with family roles (Frome et al., 2006). Holland and Eisenhart (1990) found in a similar study that as young women got older, it was more difficult to raise a family and be employed in a professional career. Frequently, time demands of the job were the cause of a career shift for women.

Women have regularly been viewed as less capable and competent than men in traditionally male-dominated jobs (Grove & Montgomery, 1999). Despite the fact that more women than men enroll in college and earn more graduate degrees, women still tend to major in lower-paying career fields and earn slightly more than a man with a high school diploma (Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Touchton, Davis, & Makosky, 1991). Some barriers women face in male-dominated fields include: resentment from male colleagues, discouragement from family or friends, and lack of perceived skills and characteristics of a manager, such as being

strong, results-oriented, and willing to take risks (Morgan, 1992). Researchers also found that females tend to face the following in male-dominated careers: isolation, competition, low self-confidence, child and family issues, lack of role models, and insufficient financial resources (Brainard, 1992; Touchton et al., 1991). Although attitudes towards women's rights and professional ambitions have undergone a great change since the mid-20th century, there are still many misconceptions and stereotypes in regards to women choosing certain non-typical careers, including careers in the sports realm.

Women working in male-dominated sports careers. Although female athletic participation has increased since the passing of Title IX, females working in sports careers have not mirrored this pattern. Women, as a whole, are underrepresented in leadership positions in professional sport (Lapchick, 2011a), intercollegiate sport (Acosta and Carpenter, 2012), and interscholastic sport (Whisenant, 2003). Acosta and Carpenter (2012) found that women continued to be underrepresented among collegiate head coaches in both men's and women's sports. Only 43% of all collegiate women's teams are coached by women, compared to 90% prior to 1972. In addition, only 19% of head athletic directors in college athletics are female. The percentage of women coaching men's sports has stayed relatively stable since 1972 (2–3%) (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). One of the few women to have worked in a major men's collegiate program was Bernadette Locke Mattox. She was an assistant men's basketball coach for the University of Kentucky for four years starting in 1991 (Walker & Bopp, 2010).

There are also other careers in sport that have been dominated by males over the years, one of which has been sports broadcasting. In a study by Grubb and Billiot (2010) numerous female sports reporters were interviewed about their experiences and the obstacles

they have faced as women in this male domain. The participants in their study claimed that many women were hired for their looks rather than their sports knowledge, and that they had to prove their credibility in ways not required by their male counterparts. Other barriers they faced included: not being considered for promotions, being relegated to covering minor sports, and having fewer responsibilities (Grubb & Billiot, 2010). Despite the obstacles, women have gone from just a few opportunities in sports broadcasting to approximately 100 on major television networks (Hardin & Shain, 2005). ESPN was the first national network to hire a woman in an anchor position and CNN followed by hiring Hannah Storm to cover sports. According to Hardin and Shain (2005), although the number of women employed as sportscasters has increased, they have routinely been hired as reporters and analysts for low-profile sports.

Athletic Training has also been a domain that has been considered male-dominated. Although the numbers of women in athletic training positions have increased rapidly, female head athletic trainers are still underrepresented at the NCAA Division I level and in professional sports (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). Division III intercollegiate sports have the highest percentages of female athletic trainers at 40.5% and Division I have the lowest at 17.5% (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). In addition, there are still sports that have a limited number of female athletic trainers on staff; some of these include football, men's basketball, and baseball. Recently, Sue Falsone made history by becoming the first woman to hold the title of head athletic trainer for a men's major professional sport when she was hired by the Los Angeles Dodgers (Sorlie, 2012). One of the reasons women face challenges as they progress to head athletic trainer positions is the perception that male athletes feel uncomfortable with female athletic trainers in regards to certain injuries (Drummond,

Hostetter, Laguna, Gillentine, & Del Rossi, 2007). Also, some athletic training rooms are still located in the men's locker room, which can create an environment that is unwelcoming to female athletic trainers.

Females that do work in various sports careers have found disparity in pay and in overall opportunities compared to their male counterparts. This is especially true if the career has historically been male-dominated. The lack of female role models in sport leadership positions has been found to perpetuate the impression that athletics is not a viable career option for women interested in sport (Tiell, 2002).

Gender Roles

The term “duality” has been used to describe the fact that “men can continue to coach and advance in leadership positions in women's sports, while the authority of women remains marginalized in sports as a whole” (Walker & Bopp, 2011, p. 50). As women's sports have become more important, more men have been making the move to work or coach in these sports (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012; Coakley, 2009). Many researchers have identified factors that may deter women from obtaining or maintaining a career in leadership positions in sport. Some of these include: a lack of mentoring and role models (Avery, Tonidandel, & Phillips, 2008), gender-role stereotyping (Burton et al., 2009), oversexualization and marginalization of women by the media (Duncan, 1990), intention-related variables such as interest and self-efficacy (Cunningham, Doherty, & Gregg, 2007), and homologous reproduction (Stangl & Kane, 1991). Many gender role stereotypes have led to the media depiction of women in athletically marginalized and stereotypical ways (Walker & Bopp, 2011).

There has been extensive research in the area of work-family conflicts of women in various male-dominated careers (e.g., Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Eby, Casper, Lockwood,

Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Weiss & Stevens, 1993), but the research is still emerging in sports careers (e.g., Bruening & Dixon, 2007; Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Palmer & Leberman, 2009; Weiss & Stevens, 1993). Dixon and Bruening (2007) found that there can be negative outcomes from work-family conflict in collegiate coaching, such as reduced job satisfaction, poor health, stress, and high job turnover rate. Many careers in sport require nontraditional hours, which can include working weekends and nights which can lead to work-family conflicts. There can also be logistical concerns for working mothers when it comes to nontraditional child care schedules and other family duties. In addition, attempts at balancing work and family duties can place “considerable strain on the marriage or partner relationships of coaching mothers” (Bruening & Dixon, 2007, p. 482).

Cultural definitions of a “good mother” typically conflict with definitions of a “good worker,” even though more than half of women in the United States with children under six years of age are in the labor force (Garey, 1995). Hochschild and Machung (1989) coined a term called “second shift” which explains that even when both parents work, the mother is still primarily responsible for child care and domestic duties around the house. Men often put their roles at work before family due to the cultural norm that men are the providers for their families (Leberman & LaVoi, 2011). Women often deal with both work and family at the same time because of societal expectations they may face (Eagly & Carli, 2007). With all of the pressure that a working mother can be put under, they often decide to quit or change their job to concentrate on their family (Leberman & LaVoi, 2011). Even with many challenges, there are many positive outcomes for mothers that work in sport. Their children are being exposed to women’s athletics, they are being taught the importance/benefits of exercise and participation in sports, as well as promoting gender equity.

The current sports industry culture has equated to increased pressure to work excessive hours and travel frequently. Athletic departments want to have winning programs and this may mean employees putting work over family. This pressure has made it difficult for some women to compete in male-dominated careers (Fagan, 2001). The career of a sports official has similar time constraints as coaching because they work odd hours which include evenings and weekends. They also spend hours preparing for games by watching film and going to trainings or clinics. Most sports officials have a full-time job on top of officiating. This means going from an eight-hour day job to another four to five hour night job. As seen in coaching research (Bruening & Dixon, 2007; Dixon & Bruening, 2007), if the official is a woman they may also have additional challenges because of their commitments in the home and to their family.

Challenging Feminine Ideologies

Much of the controversy or debate around females working in male-dominated careers or in male spots are around the ideas of gender-role beliefs or ideologies. People generally categorize themselves and others into social groups in order to establish their own identity. A visible characteristic, such as one's own biological sex, is one of the most likely bases for these categories (Kidder & McLean-Parks, 2001). There are cultural and social expectations of how females and males should act and what careers they should choose. In our society, people are expected to act in accordance with their traditional gender roles and when people step outside the boundaries, it can cause chaos and confusion. Because of these common beliefs about gender norms, females and males tend to sort themselves into occupations according to their gender (Kidder & McLean-Parks, 2001). This can begin at an early age when children see males doing certain jobs, such as a police officer, doctor, or

construction worker and females in roles such as a nurse, secretary, or teacher. Gender is a major social construction category, which is just as significant as the other commonly used categories of class and race. “Gender is a conceptual tool used to understand the social world as well as a theoretical construct that requires careful, sustained analysis” (Hall, 1988, p. 331). There is a tendency to translate “gender” to mean “women” and this can become problematic (Hall, 1988). For example, a college course titled “Gender and Sport” is assumed to be about women and considered only for women to take. “Women’s experiences are seen as variations (or deviations) from men’s; we know women only in relation to men” (Hall, 1988, p. 331).

Like many other forms of knowledge, gender stereotypes are part of an individual’s cultural and social heritage. The stereotypes are usually learned early in life, often before people have an opportunity to understand or reject them (Devine, 1989). “As a result people form *implicit gender stereotypes*, which automatically associate men and women with stereotypic traits, abilities, and roles, even when they disavow these traditional beliefs” (Rudman & Phelan, 2010, p. 193). Since these implicit beliefs are so well learned, they can affect a person’s perceptions of others without intent. Jost and Kay’s (2005) research on gender stereotypes corroborated previous claims that the differences in gender beliefs exist in a manner as to balance out the strengths and weaknesses between men and women. Their research also suggests that particular stereotypes may be dictated by the context or situation. For example, one’s stereotypical belief in a certain context may be that women do not possess the abilities to coach a male sport or that it is inappropriate for a woman to officiate in the sport of football or wrestling. The stereotype may be that it is more appropriate for women to officiate volleyball or women’s basketball. Cultural and societal held gender stereotypes have

penetrated and impacted a variety of sport organizations and sport domains (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007).

Sports become stereotyped as gender-neutral, feminine, or masculine based on beliefs regarding gender, gender differences, and beliefs about the appropriateness of participation due to gender (Colley, Nash, O'Donnell, & Restorick, 1987). Sports labeled as feminine are those that allow women participants to act in accordance with the stereotyped expectations of femininity and that provide for beauty and aesthetic pleasure (based on largely male standards). A sport is labeled as masculine if it involves contact, aggressiveness, and power (Koivula, 2001). Particular relevance to this current belief of gender appropriateness in sport, are the theories of *sex-matching* and *trait-matching*.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the sex-matching model asserts that men and women are matched to specific jobs or careers based on the ratio of men and women currently occupying such positions (Kiesler, 1975). The trait-matching model proposes that men and women are matched to jobs based on stereotypical perceptions of the necessary skill and abilities that one must possess to successfully perform a certain job (Heilman, 2001). If women occupy the majority of jobs in a certain field, women are perceived as better qualified or matched for jobs in that domain. The same is true for fields that are dominated by males, such as sports officiating. Since there are very few women that officiate football, the women that do work in the sport are seen as not properly “sex or trait matched” for the position. A great deal of influence for these beliefs comes from historical and social based norms and ideologies (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007).

Sports officiating ideologies. The role of a sports official is associated with authority, control of others, and power, which are characteristics that are inconsistent with

stereotypical feminine roles (Bem, 1981; Graf et al., 1999). There are cultural and social expectations of how females and males should act and what careers they should choose, if these expectations are not followed this can cause controversy. The underrepresentation of females in various sport careers may be the perceptions of women's ability in the historically masculine domain of sport, and the congruity of their abilities when compared with stereotypical gender roles (Burton, Grappendorf & Henderson, 2011)

There are various reasons why men and women go into the field of officiating. Purdy and Snyder (1985) found the most common reasons include: social motivation, interest and enthusiasm for the sport, challenge and excitement, extra money, and lastly the feeling of control generated by officiating. A majority of the referees in this study were males; suggesting a need for further investigation of female officials.

Concerns about women's physical strength and stamina, have led to strong opposition of females participating in or being employed in physical sports, such as football. Historically, the sport of football has been presented as the "last bastion of male dominance. It is an exclusive 'men's club,' the one place where men can protect what is their own that excludes women" (Boxill, 2006, p.116). Football is presented as a location where male athletes can show their brute strength and toughness, where manhood is exemplified. Messner (1988) described how football creates a male "godlike status:"

Football, based as it is upon the most extreme possibilities of the male body (muscular bulk, explosive power and aggression) is a world apart from women, who are relegated to the role of cheerleader/sex objects on the sidelines rooting their men on. In contrast to the bare and vulnerable bodies of the cheerleaders, the armored male bodies of football players are elevated to mythical status, and as such give testimony

to the undeniable “fact” that there is at least one place where men are clearly superior to women. (p. 202)

The societal view of football is that of a masculine sport and there is a stereotype or belief that the only location for women during the game may be on the sideline cheering on the team. This may be the reason that female football officials are somewhat controversial; since they are surrounded by male athletes in the masculine sport of football.

A societal shift is occurring where gender views are not as strong as in the past, but changes still need to happen to rid our culture of these gender job-role stereotypes (Kidder & McLean Parks, 2001). Despite the number of local, state, and national officiating programs, there is still a scarcity of female officials in the United States (Graf et al., 2009). The literature clearly indicates that gender inequality exists in many sport careers. Little research has been done on exploring the careers of sport officials, especially female officials that work in male sports. By examining their experiences, and gaining a better understanding of what it is like to be a female football official, it may aid in recruitment and retention and add to literature on the topic.

Women Pioneers in Sports Officiating

Despite the fact that the profession of sports officiating has been shown to be a male-dominated career, there have been many influential women in the past that have paved the way for current female officials. Some of these women have broken gender barriers and became the first women to officiate in sports played by predominately male athletes, including baseball, basketball, and football.

Bernice Gera was the first women to umpire in professional baseball. During her time, baseball umpiring was strictly a male profession. She graduated from an umpire school in

West Palm Beach in 1967 and sent her resume to various minor leagues. The New York-Pennsylvania league offered her a contract in 1969, but it was soon revoked by the president of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues (NABL) (Davis, 1989). Gera confronted abuse and resistance from other umpires and administration due to her gender. Gera took the issue to court and it nearly went all the way to the Supreme Court. After years of court battles, she finally won her discrimination suit against the NABL in 1972 and soon after received a contract to work in the New York-Pennsylvania Baseball League. She gained national attention on June 24, 1972 when she umpired the first game of a Class A minor league double header between the Geneva Rangers and Auburn Phillies. This opened the door for females wanting to work as umpires (Davis, 1989). In 1974, she stopped umpiring to work for the New York Mets in community relations.

Pam Postema was another pioneer in baseball officiating. She was the first woman to umpire a Major League Baseball spring training game. Postema spent thirteen years trying to become the first female umpire for Major League Baseball. She spent seven years in Triple A before “the game decided either she wasn't good enough (possible) or it wasn't progressive enough (definitely) to promote her... She was released in 1989” (Graney, 2007, p. 1). Many players accepted Postema working in baseball, but there were also others that objected to the idea of a female umpire. In an article written in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* Postema claimed, “I never wanted to umpire for the publicity or to be the first woman to make it. I just wanted to make it. I hate losing at anything. I'm a bad loser. The more they told me I couldn't do it, the more I said, Hey, this is all me” (Graney, 2007, p. 1).

The only female since Postema to work in a major league baseball game has been Ria Cortesio. In 2007, she umpired the Chicago Cubs versus the Arizona Diamondbacks

exhibition game. The 2007 season was her ninth and final professional season and fifth at the Double A level. In an article by the Associated Press (2007), former Chicago Cubs manager Lou Piniella made the following comment about Cortesio, “I think it's good. I really do. I think there is a place for women in the umpiring ranks -- they're certainly as qualified as anybody else. I'm sure if they get the same opportunities, the same schooling that their male counterparts do, they'll do a really nice job” (p. 1). In November, 2007, Cortesia lost her battle to be the first women umpire in a Major League Baseball regular season game, when she was let go by Minor League Baseball (Associated Press, 2007).

In 1997, Violet Palmer and Dee Kantner became the first female referees to work in a major U.S. professional sport when they were hired by the National Basketball Association (NBA) (Bolch, 2012). Kanter was let go by the NBA in 2002, but Palmer continued to officiate in the NBA and the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) for many years. As of 2012, Palmer was working as the coordinator of women's basketball officials for the Pac-12 and West Coast conferences and managing a basketball referee school. There are currently eight female basketball referees in the NBA’s D-League or minor league system and 11 who are scheduled to work for the WNBA in 2012, which proves there is encouraging progress for female officials in professional basketball (Bolch, 2012). Palmer explained that she never aspired to be a pioneer in officiating; she merely wanted to do the best job she could and reach the top of her profession (Bolch, 2012).

The determination that female baseball and basketball officials have shown, has also been seen in the sport of football. It is rare to see female officials out on the football field because football is not a sport that most women grew up playing. Annice Canady is believed to be one of the first female football officials to officiate a Division I college football game in

2002 between Benedict and South Carolina State. Canady stated in an Associated Press article, “I knew I was going to have to break barriers to do this, and I wasn't going to let them run me out. They didn't accept me, but I had to go out there and show I could do the same job” (2002, p. 1).

There have been other female football officials that have followed in Canady’s path. Terri Valenti began officiating football in 1999 and worked her way up to the United Football League (Seipel, 2011). Sarah Thomas officiated a major college game in 2007 between Memphis and Jacksonville State. In 2010, it was the first time in history that two females worked in the same college football game. Catherine Conti and Mary Podesta were part of the officiating crew that worked the Division II game between Menlo College and Whitworth (NCAA, 2010). History was made in the fall of 2012 when Shannon Eastin was the line judge in a game between the St. Louis Rams and the Detroit Lions. She was the first woman to be an NFL official in a regular-season game (Associated Press 2012). She was one of the many replacement officials hired by the NFL while the regular officials were under lockout. The Pro Football Hall of Fame felt the game was instrumental because they will be displaying Eastin’s hat and whistle she used during her first NFL game at the hall of fame in Canton, Ohio (Associated Press, 2012).

Eastin is entering her 17th season as a football official. Eastin told USA Today before her game, “For me, this is my dream coming true, I'm honored that the NFL has chosen to place me in this position. I feel blessed and excited” (Sipple, 2012, p. 1). Eastin started officiating youth and high school football and eventually moved her way up to college and the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference, where she became the first women to be a crew chief (“ESPN News,” 2012). She is also a national judo champion, as well as owns a company

called SE Sports Officiating, which trains officials in football and basketball. (“ESPN News,” 2012). The NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell had these comments to say about Eastin becoming the first female official in the NFL:

Having Eastin on the field is a great opportunity for her and the league...She's well prepared for it, and I think she'll do terrific...So we're excited about that...And there are more coming, by the way. We've been working along this path to try to properly train and prepare a female official, and now we have the opportunity. (Associated Press, 2012, p. 1)

There are also other female officials waiting to get the opportunity to officiate in the NFL. Commissioner Goodell seems open to the idea, but time will tell if others are given the same chance as Eastin and hired on as full officials not just as a replacements.

There have been many other female officials that have worked in male-dominated sports, but without there being much written on this specific topic it was difficult to find documented data on the women in this field. This is one of the main reasons this current study is important.

Summary

A broad review of the literature was needed for the topic of female football officials, since there is a lack of research on the subject. There have been great strides made in regards to women and girls in sport since the passing of Title IX in 1972. With the increase of women entering traditionally male-dominated sport careers, it shows that women have the desire, interest, and ability to work in all levels and areas of sport. Overall, it is believed that societal, structural, political, and organizational changes need to be in place in order for women to successfully obtain positions in the male-dominated workplace (Walker & Bopp,

2010). There is hope that gender ideologies and beliefs will change over time, especially as women become more established in these non-traditional professions.

This study will add to the literature on women working in male-dominated sports careers and will help create a new line of research on female football officials. The data found may also be useful in assisting officiating associations and organizations in their hiring and recruiting practices for future female officials.

Chapter 3:

Methodology

Introduction

This qualitative study utilized a case study methodology. Using qualitative methods allowed for a more in-depth and rich data collection while providing an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of female football officials. In seeking to understand this phenomenon, the study addressed the following research questions: The grand tour question that guided this study was: *What are the experiences of female football officials?* This study used the following sub-questions to help refine the grand tour question, including: (a) Why did the participants enter into the vocation of officiating? (b) How do participants characterize successes and/or positive aspects in officiating? (c) How do participants characterize challenges and/or negative aspects in officiating? (d) How have the participants gained and sustained entry in the male-dominated position of officiating? (e) What are the participants' experiences being one of the few women in football officiating? (f) How has the decision to become a sports official impacted the participants' lives? and (g) How can the officiating associations and their members promote and encourage women to join the officiating profession?

The following chapter describes the study's research methodology and includes discussions around the following areas: (a) qualitative inquiry, (b) researcher perspective, (c) research sample and recruitment, (d) data collection methods, (e) data analysis procedures, (f) validity/reliability, (g) limitations, (h) delimitations, and (i) ethical concerns.

Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry

The primary purpose of this study was to better understand the professional and personal experiences of female football officials. Since this is a relatively new area of research, a qualitative methodology was chosen in order to explore the phenomena of being one of the few females in this position. Qualitative research is more concerned with the process rather than the outcome or product, with the goal of examining how a participant makes sense of their own unique experiences (Merriam, 2009). Creswell (2009) explains:

One of the chief reasons for conducting a qualitative study is that the study is exploratory. This means that not much has been written about the topic or the population being studied, and the researcher seeks to listen to participants and build an understanding based on what is heard. (p. 26)

Researchers employing qualitative inquiry, utilize an inductive approach to analyzing data without preconceived categories in mind. As a result, openness allows the researcher to generate a wide variety of information about a select group of people (Patton, 2002). I chose qualitative inquiry for this study because it was also the most appropriate method to answer my research questions.

Qualitative research or inquiry is the umbrella term for all types of research that fall under this category. There are many types of qualitative methods that can be employed in a research study, but Creswell (2007) identified the five most common approaches as: narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Each method has its own area of focus resulting in different formats; as well as different questions being asked and varied ways to analyze the data. For the current study on female football officials, a case study methodology was used. A case study is a type of research that examines a certain

phenomenon such as a process, a social group, or a person (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) believed “how” and “why” research questions are conducive to the case study method because these seek insight and discovery. Therefore, the current study was structured as a case study in order to gain a description of the lived experiences of female football officials.

Case Study

According to Creswell (2007), case study research is a qualitative approach in which “the investigator explores a bounded system (case) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes” (p.73). The case study methodology was employed in this current study because it included participants within a “bounded system.” Thus, using this approach allowed for the possibility of gaining significant knowledge and insight into the lives of female football officials. Case studies are constructed to richly describe, explain, or assess and evaluate a phenomenon (e.g., event, person, program, etc.) (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The case study is written in narrative form and is primarily concerned with providing the reader with insight and understanding of the unique cases and situations of the participants. According to Stake (1995), “Qualitative research tries to establish an empathetic understanding for the reader, through description, sometimes *thick descriptions*, conveying to the reader what the experience itself would convey” (p. 39).

The unit of analysis or bounded system is a critical factor in all case study research. Case studies tend to be selective, focusing on one or two issues that are fundamental to understanding the system being examined (Yin, 2003). The bounded system for the current study was that the participants needed to be of the female gender and currently work or have

worked as a football official. The participants had to have shared the same phenomena in order to fully describe the particular experiences under study. The rationale for the current bounded system is that male and female football officials may have different experience while doing their job and I wanted to specifically explore the experiences of women in this position. Being a football official is the other requirement for this current case study. This specific sport was chosen because being an official in other sports, such as basketball, soccer, or volleyball, may offer different experiences. Also, football is predominately played by male athletes, so it is a unique phenomenon to be a woman working in the sport of football.

Using a case study methodology for the purpose of this research study offered a methodology that facilitated the collection of data from a bounded system and the development of an analysis based on the experiences of female football officials. The data made available through this research provided a record of the experiences of females that worked in the male-dominated field of football officiating. Since this topic has not been studied in academia, this may help start a new line of research. Understanding the experiences of current female football officials may also help officiating associations and administrators learn how to be more successful in their recruitment and retention of female officials. Furthermore, the current study will also call attention to gender equity in regards to attitudes, perceptions, and practices in various male-dominated sports careers, including officiating.

Researcher Perspective

As a researcher, particularly one who utilizes a qualitative methodology, my role is very complex. I have the responsibility of promoting objectivity in my study and towards my participants. In an effort to clarify my beliefs and ideas, I have included a discussion of my

personal background as it relates to the overall topic of interest. It is expected when using qualitative methodologies that researchers come in to a study with previous knowledge or experience on the topic. Attempts to disregard or ignore these thoughts or knowledge would be counterproductive (Creswell, 2007). The researcher's position is related to the integrity of qualitative research. Maxwell (2005) explains that:

The reason for making your perspective, biases, and assumptions clear to the reader is not to eliminate *variance* between researchers in values and expectations they bring to the study, but with understanding how a particular researcher's values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study. (p. 108)

Prior to data collection, the researcher should explore his or her own experiences to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions (Merriam, 2009). This process is called "epoche," a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment (Merriam, 2009). The assumptions or beliefs of the researcher are then "bracketed" or temporarily set aside so that the researcher can examine the phenomena from a fresh perspective. The way that epoche or bracketing was used in this current study was by discussing the researchers past experiences as they relate to the topic of study, as well as through the use of a reflective research journal throughout the entire research process. The journal is an ongoing record, kept by the researcher of the ideas and impressions that emerge during the interviews and written transcriptions of the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) also call this method "memoing" or the act of recording reflective notes throughout the study. This can also assist with the credibility and trustworthiness of the study because the researcher can reflect upon their notes or memos during data analysis. Memos can help the researcher achieve an analytical distance from the raw data and force them to conceptualize the data.

Researcher background. I came into this study with a vested interest in the topic. I have participated in sports for many years, as well as worked in various athletic vocations. I have also continued my education in the field of sports administration while working on my doctoral degree. My interest in sport began when I was very young. I would give myself the title of a “tomboy” since I was usually one of the few girls out playing football, soccer, or baseball with the boys. I was very athletic and could play at the same level as most boys when I was young. I started playing basketball in the first grade and soccer in the fourth grade. I also always enjoyed playing and watching the sport of football. In elementary school I would play two-hand-touch football with my friends. I was the first girl in my community to attend the high school football camp when I was in the 6th and 7th grade. I remember it being a very unique experience being surrounded by all guys. I was a bit intimidated being the only girl, but the other football camp members made me feel accepted and included me in all the activities.

Around 1992, I remember hearing details about Title IX and how it was having its 20th anniversary. I had posters on my wall of many women’s sports stars such as soccer players Mia Hamm and Brandi Chastain. I do not think I fully grasped what a struggle it had been for female athletes over the past century. After being educated in the history of women’s athletics and Title IX, I now have a greater appreciation for the battles fought and won by so many women in athletics and in overall equal rights in America.

I played high school soccer, basketball, and track and was also on a traveling club teams for soccer. In college, I played intramural basketball and soccer and worked in the college recreation department. I would not be the person I am today without having the opportunities to participate in sports. I have learned many life skills including: teamwork,

overcoming adversity, being responsible, and being a leader. I have also had the opportunity to coach youth, high school, and college athletes, where I have been able to share my knowledge and skills with the players.

I have also had past experiences with sports officiating. I was a youth soccer referee and basketball official throughout high school and college. It was a good way to make extra money and still be involved in sports. I found out very quickly that officiating is not an easy job. Every game I was yelled at numerous times by coaches, players, and parents. It seemed that when the whistle blew, the call was never right. I struggled with being an official because I am the type of person that does not like controversy or disputes and as an official, everything was a constant debate. I had a few friends that continued on to officiate at the higher level, but I was ready to call it quits as an official during my college years.

I can honestly say that I have disagreed with many calls that have been made during games that I have watched or participated in. I feel that I can now look at a call with a different perspective, since I was at one time the person wearing the striped shirt and blowing the whistle. I have great admiration for individuals that officiate at all levels, but especially in college and professional leagues where millions of dollars are on the line and the outcome is extremely important for all parties involved. They have the job of trying to keep the game running smoothly, watching for infractions, and being fair in their judgment; all while trying to watch the game at full speed with many distractions. Most sports officials have other daytime jobs as well and they have to spend their own time and money training to become an elite official. Many fans, players, and coaches continually complain about the calls sports officials make, but there are very few people that can say they wish they were the ones out there making the tough calls.

I first learned of a female official working in a male sport while watching the NBA. In 1997, Violet Palmer became one of first females to officiate a male professional sporting event. She was able to break the “glass ceiling” in her career and carry the banner for women in a traditionally male-dominated profession. I found it to be inspirational seeing her work alongside men that were all bigger and stronger than she was. She was not intimidated or scared; Palmer was just out there doing her job.

In 2010, while attending graduate school, I went and watched a D-League NBA basketball game, where I saw a woman officiating the game. This gave me the idea to interview women that officiated men’s sports for a qualitative research class I was taking at the time. I ended up interviewing three women that officiated boy’s high school baseball, basketball, and football. It was great to listen to their experiences in this unique profession for women. When I realized there was not much written on the subject of female officials, it led to the idea to use this topic as my dissertation.

I narrowed my topic to female football officials because football is a sport where one rarely sees female officials. Since the game is played by predominantly males, they are the ones that usually officiate. In 2009, I remember hearing about Sarah Thomas officiating in a college football post-season bowl game. I thought it was great that a woman was working in the sport of football and I had great admiration for her and others in similar situations. I was interested in finding out why there were so few women in this vocation and I felt that these women needed a place to share their stories with others.

The topic of female football officials became headline news again, when in 2012 Shannon Eastin became the first female to officiate in the NFL. The historic moment came when the league employed replacement officials, after labor disagreements between regular

officials and the NFL. When I saw how much debate and conversation there was over a female official working in the most prominent football league in America, I knew it was a topic that needed to be explored further. My goal was to understand the experiences of these women and I am confident that this study will help create a new line of scholarly research, as well as add to the research on women working in male-dominated sport careers.

Research Sample

Samples for qualitative studies are generally much smaller than those used in quantitative studies. The size of the sample in a qualitative research study varies upon the methodology used. In a case study, the sample selection occurs by using “boundaries” or selection criteria followed by searching for participants that fit into the cases (Merriam, 2009). A general guideline in qualitative research is not only to study a few individuals or sites but also to collect extensive detail about each case or individual (Creswell, 2007). Since qualitative research is very labor intensive, analyzing a large sample can be time consuming and often simply impractical. For case study research, Creswell (2007) recommends studying three to ten participants or cases. Miles and Huberman (2002) state that “a number between 4 and 10 cases usually works well...with fewer than 4 it is often difficult to generate theory with much complexity...and with more than 10 cases, is quickly becomes difficult to cope with the complexity and volume of the data” (p. 27). Therefore, for the current study, I included eight female football officials as participants.

The current study focused on the personal and work-related experiences of female football officials. Since generalization in a statistical sense is not the goal of qualitative research, these individuals were “purposefully selected” for the study using specific criteria (Creswell, 2009). Patton (2002) argues that the power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting

information-rich cases for *in-depth* study, which will best inform the researcher about the research phenomena under study. The criteria for the participants in this current study included gender, the sport officiated, and their geographic location. With the methodology of a case study, the participants needed to have experienced the same phenomena being explored so they could articulate their shared lived experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Selection criteria include the following requirements, must be of the female gender and a current or past high school or college football official. The rationale for including high school and college officials was that these individuals had sufficient experiences officiating. If I chose a youth football official, they may be new to the sport and may not have the same experiences as those that have been a football official for many years. I was able to obtain information on what level of officiating experiences the participants had by having them fill out a demographics form during in the initial screening process (see Appendix E: Demographics Form). I was looking for female officials that had at least two or more years of football officiating experience, so that the participants could share their experiences during this time.

There are many types of sampling methods that are employed in qualitative research. The most common method used is purposive or purposeful sampling. “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Creswell, 2007, p. 77). The techniques within purposeful sampling that were used in the current study included criterion, snowball, and convenience sampling (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

Criterion sampling was used in order to assure that each participant met the specific criteria of being a female football official. Since the population of female football officials is

very small compared to male officials, many of the officials knew one another. By using snowball sampling, I was able to locate participants that met my criteria and then asked these participants if they knew of other female football officials that would be interested in participating in my study. The last technique of convenience sampling was used with some of the participants. I tried to find participants that were in close geographic proximity to where I lived in order to conduct in-person interviews. Face-to-face interviews are a preferred way of collecting qualitative data in order to gain rapport with the participants and to be aware of the non-verbal social cues, such as voice and body language of the interviewee, which can give the interviewer a lot of added information (Merriam, 2009). There were certain instances where in-person interviews were not feasible. In these cases, I conducted phone interviews with the participants. I am aware that using participants from one area of the country may be a limitation in the study, but I have addressed these issues in the “limitations” section later in this chapter.

Participant Recruitment

Once this study was approved through my university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) on January 30, 2013; I sent out emails to recruit participants for the study. I started with contacting high school officiating associations in the states around where I lived. Their contact information was found by looking on the state association’s web site and identifying who was in charge of football officials for their state. I sent the recruitment email (see Appendix: B) to these individuals as well as followed up with a phone call. These individuals sent me email addresses for female football officials that were members of their state’s high school officiating association or forwarded my email on to the members. A few of the states had difficulty identifying female officials because they only had a list of officials and it was

not broken up by gender. The individuals gave me permission to contact the officials via email and I proceeded to send them the participant letter (see Appendix C: Participant Letter) as well as explain to them how I received their contact information and the purpose of my study. I received great feedback from the participants and they were all excited to talk with me about their experiences officiating football. I made email contact with a total of fifteen female football officials and eight of these individuals fit the requirements and their schedules allowed them to participate in the study.

I was able to locate five participants through the various high school officiating associations. I will not name the state associations I contacted due to confidentiality and protection of the participants identity. The other three participants I found via snowball sampling, where one of the participants gave me the contact information for another female official. Guidelines for determining the number of participants in qualitative research vary (Creswell, 1998; Seidman, 2006), but the objective is to reach data saturation (Seidman, 2006). Data saturation is the term applied to the point at which no new data emerge or that new data are redundant of data already collected (Grady, 1998). In interviews, when the researcher starts to hear similar comments over and over again, data saturation is said to have been reached. I interviewed eight participants and then determined that saturation had been reached.

Data Collection Methods

All data gathered from participants were collected with explicit permission from the participants and in full compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. Data collection occurred between February and April 2013. This time frame was chosen because I was finished with all the coursework for my degree and it met my time frame for graduating

from my doctoral program. I realize that the fall may have been a better time to collect data since then I could have observed the officials in action, but that time frame did not fit with my particular dissertation schedule. This will be something to think about for further research on this topic, and it will also help with triangulation in further studies.

According to Stake (1995), “Qualitative research tries to establish an empathetic understanding for the reader, through description, sometimes *thick description*, conveying to the reader what the experience itself would convey” (p. 39). The outcome of a rich narrative text describing the experience of female football officials is dependent upon organized, flexible, and careful data collection methods. Qualitative data can occur in a variety of ways, such as through observations, interviews, field notes, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2007). The primary method of data collection in the current study was through participant interviews. The secondary method included reviewing secondary documents including various books, articles and videos on the topic of football officiating.

Participant interviews. For case studies, the process of collecting data involves primarily in-depth interviews. When explaining the purpose of interviewing, Seidman (2006) stated, “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). In order to fully understand the essence and meaning of the participants’ experiences, it is important to appreciate the depth, which is often obtained through interviews (Patton, 2002). My connections with working in high school and college athletics were useful when making connections and developing a rapport with my participants during interviews.

Often, multiple interviews are conducted in order to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for the individuals that have experienced it. For the current study, two or three

interviews were planned with each participant. With some participant's schedule, it worked better to conduct one longer interview that covered most of the research questions and a shorter follow-up interview. Prior to the first interview, research procedures and confidentiality measures were described to each participant (see Appendix D: Informed Consent). The participants signed and returned a consent form before any interviews or data collection took place. The chosen eight participants also filled out a demographics form that gave me additional information on their age, occupation, race, and the number of years and sports they officiated (see Appendix E: Demographics Form).

The interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions (see Appendix F: Interview Protocol). The use of open-ended questions allowed participants to freely describe their experiences for a given topic (Merriam 2009). The interviews took place either in-person or via phone depending on the location and schedule of each participant. All the interviews were audio-recorded with consent from the IRB and the participants, in order to be transcribed and used for data analysis. Seidman (2006) recommended that interviews be spaced three days to a week apart. The interviews in the current study took place at least five to seven days apart in order to allow time for transcription and for the researcher and participant to reflect on the questions asked.

The following interview progression was developed by Dolbeare and Schuman (Schuman, 1982) and is recommended when conducting a three-interview series in a qualitative study.

- Interview one: Focused life history – The researcher seeks information regarding the participants' life experiences related to the topic up to the present time. I asked

questions about the participants' professional and personal histories as related to football officiating.

- Interview two: Details of experience – The purpose of this interview is to focus on the details of the participants' present lived experiences related to the topic. Information regarding their daily professional and personal experiences as related to football officiating were asked.
- Interview three: Reflection on the meaning – In the final interview, participants were asked to make meaning of their lived experiences. This session served to wrap-up data collection, as participants were asked to describe their understandings of their lived experiences as related to football officiating.

(see Appendix F: Interview Protocol)

After each interview was conducted, I transcribed verbatim the recorded interview from my recording device. By transcribing my own data I was able to get intimately familiar with the data collected (Friese, 2012). Being instantly immersed in the data, I was also able to start the first levels of data analysis (open coding) immediately.

Since each participant had a different work or home schedule and were located in various parts of the United States, I had to be flexible when conducting the interviews with each participant. Not all interviews followed the exact three interview protocol. Most participants were able to do one long interview that lasted 60-90 minutes, either in-person or over the phone. I then waited a week or two in order to transcribe the interviews and followed up with additional questions via phone or email. I felt I was able to gain more than enough information from each participant during the interview process.

Other methods of data collection. When using a case study methodology it is common to include a wide array of data collection methods in order to build an in-depth picture of the case. I would have liked to use observations during my study, but unfortunately the timeframe I had to collect my data was in the spring and the participants were not involved in football games during this time of year. The other forms of data that were used in this study included analyzing secondary documents (e.g., news articles and videos) and reviewing similar studies and articles conducted on women working in other male-dominated careers. As stated by Marshall and Rossman (1999), “The review of documents is an unobtrusive method, rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting” (p. 116).

There are currently no scholarly articles written on female football officials, but there are numerous articles and news reports. These include news stories and online video reports of current female football officials. Sports news organizations such as ESPN and FoxSports have both conducted stories and interviews on current and past female football officials. These documents were viewed in order to get other perspectives on the topic and it helped provide context for the study.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis in qualitative research has a two-fold purpose: (a) to understand the participants’ perspectives; and (b) to answer the research questions. Qualitative case study research accumulates large amounts of raw data; therefore, it is essential to maintain the data in an organized and timely fashion (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 2002; Yin, 2003). It is imperative that preliminary data analysis be conducted immediately after collection or simultaneously with data collections (Merriam, 2009). The methodology of a case study

guided the way I analyzed my data. Merriam (2009) explains that a case study is an, “intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit. Conveying an understanding of the case is the paramount consideration in analyzing the data” (p. 203). All the data is brought together to form a case study database (Yin, 2003). This database is then thoroughly analyzed to fully understand the participants’ experiences working as high school and/or college football officials.

As mentioned early in this chapter, one of the first steps in qualitative data analysis is “epoche” or “bracketing” (Merriam, 2009). As I collected the data and personal reactions came about, I used my research journal to write and reflect my reactions prior to analyzing the interviews and other data. According to Patton (2002), this assisted in “keeping the data in pure form, uncontaminated from extraneous intrusions” (p. 485). My case study database consisted of around 20 hours of audio taped interviews, 24 pages of notes from my reflective journal, and 15 pages of notes from reviewing secondary sources (e.g., newspaper articles and videos on female football officiating). I personally transcribed all the interviews in order to maintain accuracy and to get intensely familiar with the data.

Coding. During and after data collection was complete, data analysis occurred. This analysis process included coding and identifying themes among all the data collected (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009), which is a very time consuming and taxing process. A code in qualitative research is “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldana, 2013, p. 3). Coding is the critical link between data collection and the explanation of their meaning, and it is the initial step toward analysis and interpretation. It allows the researcher to link the data to the main idea or topic being studied.

There are many methods used to analyze and code qualitative data. The method used in the current study is one that is used frequently in qualitative research. It included the three steps of: Open Coding, Axial Coding, and Selective Coding (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

Open Coding. This level of coding was the first cycle of coding completed in the current study. Creswell (1998) states open coding is “when the researcher forms initial categories of information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information” (p. 57). This is completed while reviewing transcriptions of interviews, interview notes, researcher’s reflective journal, and various outside documents. This entails keeping notes, comments, observations, and queries in the margins that are relevant to the study (Merriam, 2009). Open coding occurred in the current study by going through each piece of data multiple times and marking or highlighting sections of the text that described a certain behavior or category. After conducting “open coding” on all of the data, I came up with approximately 47 codes. Some of the open codes found in the data included: athletic background, family, love for officiating, mentoring, challenges, support system, gender barriers, knowing the game, studying the rules, overcoming adversity, reactions from others, positive aspects, training, advice, work/life balance, negative remarks, being female in officiating, love for football, experiences in football, advice, and recruiting.

For example, a quote from one participant interview read, “she took me under her wing, and took care of me, showed me the ropes, it really helped to have someone especially being another woman as well...I am not sure I would have stuck with it [officiating] without her.” In the margins next to that line in the transcription I wrote “mentoring” and “support” as the code for that entry. Another example of coding occurred with one of the secondary documents, a Fox Sports News article by Reiter (2011). Female football official Catherine

Conti stated, “That was the thing I hadn’t anticipated — the camaraderie, that fraternity, being welcomed into this social entity” (Reiter, 2011, p.5). This statement was similar to testimony by the participants in my current study. I coded this statement along with others that were similar with the codes of “family” and “support system.”

By assigning codes to pieces of data, I was able to begin to construct categories. After completing open coding on all of my data, I moved on to the second step in qualitative analysis, which is axial coding. This is where I grouped the categories, comments, and codes that perceived to go together.

Axial Coding. This next process in the analysis is grouping open codes which is called axial coding or analytical coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Creswell, 2007). This form of analysis goes beyond descriptive coding and the researcher starts to make sense of what the data is telling them. For instance, as in the above example of “support system” in open coding, I grouped together all the sections with that same code along with the codes of “mentoring,” “family,” and “finding assistance/help” during the axial coding process. Axial coding goes beyond descriptive coding because it comes from reflecting on the meaning of the codes. After working through the data again and by reviewing literature on the topic and the theoretical framework of the study, I was able to come up with around eight categories.

Once I had a tentative group of categories, I sorted all the evidence into sections. Marshall and Rossman (2006) called these visual categories “buckets or basket’s into which segments of text are placed” (p. 159). The categories chosen should have the following characteristics: be responsive to the purpose of the research, be exhaustive, be mutually exclusive, and must answer the research questions (Merriam, 2009). The eight categories were then narrowed down to three “buckets” including: 1) support and mentoring; 2)

experiences being a female officiating football; and 3) enjoyment and love for officiating. This led to the final stage of data analysis, which is called selective coding.

Selective Coding. During selective coding, previously identified concepts and categories were further investigated and refined and then brought together to develop a clear analytical story from the data. This process is also what Patton (2002) refers to as a “case study database” or “case record,” which pulls together and organizes the case data into a comprehensive analysis. The final themes capture recurring patterns that incorporate all the data. These themes were created through a systematic process and were informed by the studies purpose, research questions, researcher’s knowledge, the theoretical framework, and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves (Merriam, 2009).

It was through this three-step data analysis process that the essence of the participants’ lived experiences as football officials were understood. After coding and analyzing the data, the information was organized into three major themes, these included: 1) Sense of Community and Support; 2) Varied Gender Experiences Officiating Football; and 3) Passion for Officiating and Football. These themes are presented and discussed in detail throughout Chapter 4.

Computer Software Assistance. To help keep the large amounts of data organized during the analysis process, I used the qualitative data analysis software called “Dedoose.” This program allowed me to link codes from multiple data sources together. For example, I used the same code tag of “gender barriers” on an interview transcription, a newspaper article, and a video segment in the Dedoose software. I could choose the code tag “gender barriers” and all the data sources would appear that that contained that specific code. The

ability to have a link between the codes helped with the construction of categories and themes and also helped display the logical relations between the codes (Merriam, 2009).

Data Management Plan

The real names of the participants were not used in the recordings, research journal, transcriptions, or write-up of the final research study. As stated in the informed consent, the information that the participants shared were kept private and confidential. I chose a pseudonym for each participant to ensure anonymity. All data were stored on a single tape recorder which I personally transcribed. The tape recorder was kept in a locked drawer in my work office and I was the only one with access. The transcriptions and all other data were stored on a computer that was password and firewall protected. All data were destroyed once the research study was completed.

Ensuring Quality and Credibility

Unlike quantitative researchers who seek causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative researchers use a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings (Golafshani, 2003). While the credibility in quantitative research depends on instrument construction, in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument (Creswell, 2007). Whereas quantitative researchers use the terms validity and reliability, qualitative researchers use terms such as credibility, consistency, dependability, and transferability (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009, Patton, 2002).

Validity/Credibility. Validity refers to the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings. This topic has been an issue of debate in qualitative research, since it has a different connotation in quantitative research. Since the researcher is the instrument in a qualitative

study it is their duty to ensure that the findings are credible and that the data are accurate. Validity centers on the credibility of the skill, competence, and rigor of the researcher (Patton, 2002). There are many validation strategies used in qualitative research. The procedures used in this current study included: triangulation, presenting researcher positionality, member checking, using rich/thick descriptions, and peer debriefing (Creswell, 2007; 2009).

Triangulation. Triangulation refers to using multiple sources of data and comparing and cross-checking the data collected (Merriam, 2009). The use of triangulation demonstrates the researcher's goal to acquire an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). There are various methods of triangulation used in qualitative research. The method of triangulation that was used in the current study included using the data collection method of interviewing and comparing it to secondary documents (e.g., newspaper and magazine article on female football officials). This was accomplished by taking all of the data collected and looking for consistencies and inconsistencies and for reoccurring ideas or themes on the topic of female football officials. The secondary articles were useful to see what commentary was currently discussed on the topic and to see individual's different viewpoints and perspectives. I was also able to see how the theoretical framework for my study (feminist theory and social role theory) was portrayed in the data collected throughout the interviews and by reviewing outside sources. Since there has not been any scholarly research written on the topic of female football officials; secondary documents were the next best source of data available.

One other method of triangulation that was used was called "within-subject triangulation" (Newing, 2011). This was used when I conducted a second or third interview

with some of the participants and asked them similar questions or more probing questions. I checked the information with my first interview to see if there were any similarities and/or differences. Using within-subject triangulation also gave me the opportunity to conduct member-checks with each participant. I asked each participant for comments, corrections, or feedback on the data collected in order to make sure I was interpreting their information correctly. The member check is one of the most crucial techniques for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Gruba, 1985).

To create a stronger form of triangulation in the current study, it would have been useful to use observations of the participants while they officiated a football game. Unfortunately, with the time schedule of the dissertation that was not feasible since the study took place in the spring. This will be something to look into for future research since it will generate stronger validity and credibility in the study.

Researcher positionality. Earlier in the methodology section, I wrote about my position as the researcher in the current study. I have past experience in athletics and as a sports official. During data collection I consistently “bracketed” my related thoughts and experiences and did not make assumptions in the interpretations of my data. Wolcott (1994) explains the importance of this in his book *Transforming Qualitative Data*:

Qualitative researchers are welcome to their opinions, but focused inquiry is not a soapbox from which researchers may make any pronouncement they wish. Plainly put, studies purported to be research-based must be just that. When the claim is made that an interpretation derives from qualitative/descriptive inquiry, the link should be relevant and clear. (p. 37)

As mentioned previously, bracketing my thoughts throughout the research process helped me avoid assumptions and allowed the participants words and interpretations to emerge. To support the evidence of my interpretations, I used participant quotations taken from raw data as I reported the results in chapters four and five of the current study.

Member checks. Another common method to enhance the internal validity of a qualitative study is the use of “member checks” or “respondent validation” (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). This is where the participants in the study are given the chance to review and approve all transcripts, participant profiles, and interpreted information. This helps rule out misinterpretations of the data. As the researcher, it is my responsibility to accurately depict the participants’ experiences to the best of my ability. By allowing the participants to be a part of this process it solidified the accuracy of the data. I emailed all the data to the participants and they gave me feedback on any changes that needed to be made.

Rich/thick descriptions. When writing up the results of my qualitative study, it was important for me to use rich and thick descriptions of the participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007). This included using long quotations from the transcribed interviews. By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail, a reader can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people. (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). This is one way of achieving external validity in a qualitative study.

Peer debriefing. The last method I used to maintain validity or credibility in my qualitative study was through peer debriefing or review. This provided an external check of the research process and data analysis procedures (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For my peer reviewer, I chose a fellow doctoral student that had familiarity with qualitative

research to review my interview notes, transcripts, and results. Rossman and Rallis (2003) stated, “that the purpose of a critical friend, or peer debriefer, is to serve as an ‘intellectual watchdog’ as the researcher modifies decisions, develops categories, and explains the phenomenon of interest” (p.69). This individual was able to ask critical questions about the data and research process, as well as play devil’s advocate (Creswell, 2007).

Reliability/Dependability/Consistency. Reliability refers to the degree that a study can be replicated and the findings will be similar. This is problematic in qualitative research because when working with human beings in dynamic circumstances, the results can vary because human behavior cannot be isolated (Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) use “dependability”, in qualitative research which closely corresponds to the notion of “reliability” in quantitative research. There are various ways that researchers can confirm if their approaches are consistent or reliable. I followed the suggestions of Creswell (2009) in regards to maintaining reliability procedures in the current study, these included: (a) checking transcripts to make sure that they do not contain obvious mistakes during transcription; (b) making sure there is not a drift in the direction of the codes or a shift in the meaning of the codes during the process of coding; and (c) comparing the codes with the data and by writing memos about the codes and their definitions (p. 190). Yin (2003) suggests when using case study methodology that the researcher should document the procedures of their cases including as many of the steps of the procedures as possible as well as maintaining a case study protocol and database.

Polkinghorne (1989) suggests researchers ask themselves the following questions to help maintain consistency in a research study: (a) Did the interviewer influence the contents of the participants’ descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the

participants actual experience? (b) Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meanings of the oral presentation in the interview? (c) Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience? and (d) Is the description situation specific or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations? These methods of maintaining reliability were employed when I conducted data collection as well as throughout the data analysis process.

Limitations

This study contains certain limiting conditions, some of which are related to the common critiques of qualitative research methodology and some of which are inherent to the studies research design. One unique feature in qualitative research is that the researcher is the instrument that collects and analyzes all of the data. Therefore, an overriding concern for researcher bias can occur. One way researcher subjectivity was managed in the current study was through the use of a reflective journal. This journal gave me a place to write my thoughts and assumptions that came to mind throughout the data collection and data analysis process. Using a reflective journal improves the credibility of qualitative research and enhances the trustworthiness of the study (Patton, 2002)

Although appropriate for a qualitative study, the sample size for the current study will not allow for generalization to other female football officials. The findings from this study found the unique experiences of the eight participants, but will not necessarily be transferable to every female football official. However, the research meets the need of filling a gap in the current field of gender and sport. With using human respondents, there is a limitation in the assumption that these participants will respond truthfully and candidly to the questions being

asked. In order to truly understand the experiences of these women, I will rely on their willingness to tell their stories. It is sometimes difficult to build a rapport with strangers when working with them in a research study, but with my background in sports and my ability to interact well with others, I was able to gain a relationship with the participants. This made them feel comfortable and willing to share their stories with me.

The other limitation in the study was the geographic location of the participants. Five out of the eight participants were from the western part of the United States and the other three were from the southwest region. The participants in these locations may have had different experiences than officials in other areas of the United States. Further research with participants from various parts of the country will help with this limitation.

Delimitations

This study examined the experiences of female football officials. In order to gain in-person interviews with the participants my goal was to find individuals that lived in the western part of the United States. The experiences of female football officials could vary depending on their geographic location; therefore, the study was delimited by the participants' respective locations. One other delimitation for the study was that only female football officials were used as participants. I specifically wanted to explore what the experience is like for women in this position. For future research, I would like to interview female officials from various parts of the United States, as well as male football officials in order to get their perspective on working alongside female football officials.

Confidentiality and Ethical Concerns

In any research, ethical issues relating to protection of the participants are of vital concern (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Regarding the commitment to ethical principles of

the current research study, I ensured that any and all agreements with the participants were clear and understood. The participants signed a consent form after approval through the IRB at the University of New Mexico (see Appendix D: Informed Consent). Confidentiality was maintained so that no personal, organizational, or geographical identifiers appeared in the presentation of data. Pseudonyms were used for all participants, as well as names for organizations, cities, and states. This was very important for the current study since there are only a small number of female football officials in the United States. I provided full disclosure to each participant as to the nature, purpose, and requirements of the research study and I informed each participant of his/her right to withdraw from the study at any time if needed. Additionally, the design and process of data collection was completely open for discussion with any of the participants. They were all briefed on the procedures of the study and were also informed of the tape recordings that took place during the interviews and how all the information would be recorded and stored.

Summary

The current study on female football officials utilized a qualitative case study methodology. Since this is a new area of research, qualitative inquiry was chosen to explore the phenomena of being one of the few women working in the football officiating vocation. The case study included that the participants needed to be of the female gender and a current or past football official with at least two years of experience. The primary method of data collection was through in-person or phone interviews with each participant.

Data were analyzed using the three-step method of Open, Axial, and Selective coding (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Validity and credibility were maintained through the use of triangulation, presenting researcher positionality, member checks, using thick and rich

descriptions, and peer debriefing. Reliability and consistency was preserved through the use of checking transcripts for accuracy, writing memos throughout the study, and maintaining proper case study protocols throughout the data collection and analysis process. The research questions and case based themes will be presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4:

Findings/Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to better understand the personal and work-related experiences of female football officials, including those that work in high school and college football. The study explored the participant's perceptions of what it is like to be one of the few women working in this type of vocation. This chapter presents the findings from participant interviews as they relate to the research questions composed for this study.

The chapter consists of several sections. First, participant profiles provide brief descriptions of the participants' background as they relate to becoming a football official. Second, data from the study are presented and explained using the research questions which were established as the foundation for the study. Lastly, the main themes and findings are identified and described to develop a clear and analytical story derived from the data. Throughout this chapter, participant quotations provide examples and illustrations of their individual and collective experiences.

Section One: Participant Profiles

Descriptions of the participants are presented in order to introduce them prior to explaining the study's findings. Glimpses of how sports played a role in their life, what led them into football officiating, along with their respective career paths are included in each profile. The participant's pseudonyms were chosen by the researcher in order to preserve and protect their identities. Names of the places where the participants grew up or currently live and the organizations for which they work have been changed or not included for

confidentiality purposes. See *Appendix G: Participant Information* for a detailed list of information on each of the participants.

Beth. Beth is 33 years old and identifies herself as Caucasian and Hawaiian. She was very involved in sports growing up and started playing soccer around age seven. She ended up playing goalie because she could kick hard and loved getting dirty. Softball became her sport of choice as she got older and she played throughout college. Football was one of the other sports Beth loved to watch and play. She wanted to play football when she was in high school but her mom said no because she did not want her getting hurt. Therefore, Beth settled on playing for the girl's powder-puff football team. The games seemed to always turn from flag football into a bloody tackle football game, which Beth explained "was fantastic!" Beth's brother was 12 years older than her and he loved sports as well. She remembers growing up watching and cheering for the Pittsburgh Steelers along with her brother.

Beth's passion for football led her to join a women's football team that plays in the Women's Football Alliance, which is a full-contact nation-wide football league. While playing for the team, one of her teammates asked if anyone would be interested in signing up to become a football official. Beth had officiated softball in the past and enjoyed that, so she thought she would give football officiating a try. Beth started officiating football when she was 28 years old and just completed her fifth year. She has worked games at the youth level up through high school varsity. Her current profession is a clinical services coordinator for a non-profit organization. Beth works and lives in the western part of the United States and is married to her partner and they have one daughter.

Hilary. Hilary, 52 identifies herself as Caucasian and grew up in the southeastern part of the United States. She was a very active child growing up and played many sports

alongside her four other siblings. Hilary was the most active girl in the family and played volleyball in junior high and ran track in high school. She was also very involved in the marching band in high school and college. Hilary has an undergraduate degree in Engineering Science and a graduate degree in Engineering Economic Systems. She eventually moved to the west coast where she currently lives with her husband and two of her five sons. Hilary is currently a stay-at-home mom and formally an adjunct professor.

As her sons got older, Hilary was trying to find something to do to help her stay in shape and be active. She had always loved the sport of football and thought it was one of the greatest team sports. Hilary explained:

So the idea just popped in my head, how can I stay active and be outside with my kids. My one son was in youth football and I had others that were going to start and I said hmmm... well maybe I could officiate football.

She knew a family friend that was a football official and she called him and said “you are going to think this is crazy, but I want to officiate football, how do I do it?” Her friend put her in touch with the local high school football association and she began her adventure of football officiating. Little did Hilary know all the opportunities she would gain taking on this new vocation.

Hilary only officiates in the sport of football and started in 1999 when she was 38 years old. She started working in youth football and worked her way up to high school and college and was eventually the first women to officiate in the professional association of the United Football League (UFL). Hilary loves the thrills and challenges that football officiating offers. Hilary has officiated at the following levels:

- Youth: 7 years

- High School: 13 years
- Junior College: 9 years
- Small College (D II/III): 4 years
- Division I college: 3 games and various scrimmages
- Professional: 4 years
- Italian League: 5 games
- Arena Football: 3 years

Mary. The next participant in the study was Mary, age 61 who identified herself as Native American. She grew up in the southwestern part of the United States where she joined her brothers as they participated in sports. Her dad played semi-pro baseball; therefore she grew up being around athletics. Mary explained, “I was in the [baseball] dugout from an early age, I could probably keep score before I could walk.” Mary grew up before the passage of Title IX; therefore there were few opportunities for girls to play sports, especially in her small town. Her dad coached her brother’s little league team and she was always out there on the field with them. Mary said, “I was always at practice and when my dad would get frustrated while trying to coach the boys, he would say ‘hey Mary come show them how to hit the ball’.” Throughout her middle and high school years she played softball and basketball. Mary really enjoyed the team camaraderie that came with playing sports.

Mary was in a car accident at the age of 27 which injured her knees and ended her sports playing career. During this time, the sports leagues near her hometown were looking for officials and they knew Mary had been heavily involved in sports, so they asked if she wanted to become a sports official. She was unsure at first, but was looking for something that would replace her love for playing sports. Therefore, she made the switch from being a

player to being an official. Mary's town had little league baseball, women's softball, and semi-pro baseball. The referee association first assigned Mary to youth little league and women's softball in order for her to learn the aspects of becoming an official. Two weeks later, due to a shortage of umpires, Mary was advanced to semi-pro baseball. She was able to pick up the skills needed to be a successful official very quickly, which is one attribute her colleagues liked about her. Mary then moved on to officiate other sports including basketball and football.

Mary has been a sports official since she was 28 years old and finally retired from high school officiating in 2009 because of re-occurring injuries. Currently, she still helps at local college football games on the chain crew. Mary's daytime job was in education working as a school psychologist and clinical counselor, where she worked with children and adults with disabilities. Below is the description of the different sports Mary officiated:

- Volleyball: high school, 6 years
- Baseball: youth, high school, and club, 30 years
- Baseball: college, 18 years
- Baseball: semi-pro, 25 years
- Softball: youth, high school, and club 30 years
- Softball: college, 20 years
- Basketball: high school and club, 27 years
- Football: high school 27 years
- Football: youth, club, and semi-pro, 19 years

Laura. Laura is a 52-year-old high school football official that identifies herself as Caucasian. Laura did not grow up playing sports, but she always enjoyed watching sports that

her brothers were involved in. At the age of 39, Laura went to watch her nephew play in the band at a high school football game. During the game she kept yelling at the officials for making “bad calls.” Her brother turned to her and said “well if you think they are calling such a bad game, why don’t you get out there and do it yourself.” Laura is not one to turn down a challenge, so that is just what she did. Laura went and found her local football association and went to a meeting for new football officials. She recalled, “It was not an easy process of learning about a game that I never played before.” She spent many hours studying for required rules and mechanics tests and had other officials mentor her along the way. Laura started officiating in her local youth and junior high football leagues. Currently, she officiates varsity high school football. Laura explained that, “I am not in it for the money; I do it because I love the game of football and working with such great individuals.”

Laura has been officiating youth and high school football for 13 years. Laura is married and explained that her husband is “very supportive” of her officiating career, even though it takes her away from home many nights during the season. Laura received her bachelor’s degree at a southwestern university in mathematics and currently works as a manager of an engineering group. The engineering field is also a male-dominated career, therefore she experiences being one of the few females in both her occupations.

A notable addition to Laura’s officiating resume came after data collection and analysis was concluded for the current study. It was such a significant honor, that I felt it was important to include in my dissertation. Laura was chosen as one three women from the United States to officiate the International Federation of American Football (IFAF) Women’s World Championships in Vantaa, Finland June 30th – July 6th, 2013. Laura was thrilled to get the chance to represent America in such a prominent tournament. Laura’s hard work and

dedication to football officiating has rewarded her with an opportunity to show her skills at the international level.

Robyn. Robyn 34, identified herself as Caucasian and currently lives in the western part of the United States. She grew up in the south-central part of the U.S. where she and her brother were heavily involved in athletics. Robyn's dad was very athletic and her mom was once a cheerleader. She started playing t-ball at a young age and then proceeded to play most any sport that was in season. Many of her childhood memories were being at a sport practice or game. Robyn grew up playing volleyball, basketball, softball, track and field, and swimming.

When she went to college she was looking for a way to still be involved in athletics. Robyn's first week at her college campus, she saw that they were looking for students to be intramural sports officials. Robyn thought, "oh man this is great, I am going to be a basketball official, this is going to be great, it is my sport, I love it, and I can still stay active..." The intramural department gave her a call and said even though she signed up for basketball would she be interested in flag football, since that sport came first in the intramural sports season. Robyn was a little unsure, but they convinced her to attend a flag football officials meeting. There were two female intramural supervisors, but there were no other females that officiated football. Robyn recalled,

I wasn't convinced of it at first...The first time we got out on the field they wanted us to blow the whistle, the Fox 40's, I couldn't blow the whistle, I was afraid, they are very loud, and they call you out by name. Basically the supervisor said 'if you can't do this here in practice, what makes you think you will be able to do it out on the field in a game, blow the damn whistle.' After I got over that fear, I think I did one game

where I was scared to death, but after that I thought I can do this, I got this, and I never looked back after that.

Robyn officiated football for 12 years in two different states. Her current job as a sports reporter made it difficult for her to have enough time to officiate football. Robyn is currently taking a break from officiating, but knows she will one day return. She explained, “once you have officiated, that passion is always in you.” Below is the description of the different sports Robyn officiated:

- Flag football: college intramurals, 4 years and gained All-American Honors
- Football: youth and high school junior varsity, 10 years
- Football: varsity high school, 8 years
- Basketball: college intramurals, 4 years

Jill. Jill 54, identifies herself as Caucasian and grew up in the Midwest part of the United States. She was always involved in some type of sport growing up. She has a twin sister that was the “girly girl” of the family and she was always the “tomboy.” She loved football and was a huge fan of the Ohio State Buckeyes and the Pittsburgh Steelers. Jill played tackle football with her friends until around age 15 because that is when she explained, “everyone started to change and get bigger.” Jill was also involved with swimming and diving. She moved to the west coast around the age of 21 to attend college. She had a son at the age of 23 and moved to where she currently lives on the west coast at the age of 29. At that time, Jill was a business owner, but she never lost the love for sports.

As she was going through a divorce, Jill was looking for something new to do that would keep her busy. She felt something was missing in her life, since she was not competing

as an athlete anymore. She met a friend that was a football official (who later became her boyfriend) that knew she had always been involved with sports. He told her that she should become a football official. Jill was a little unsure at first, but she remembered how much she enjoyed playing football as a child, so she thought she would give it a try. She did not start out in youth football like most new officials; they sent her right into a high school scrimmage game. Luckily, her boyfriend was right there on the sidelines helping her out and yelling, “Get the spot, where they go out of bounds, wave your hands, kill the clock, follow the play, get the spot....” That went on for most of the game until it finally started to click; Jill knew where to go and when to stop the clock. She recalls, “Everything came back to when I was 15/16 years old playing backyard tackle football, the thrill, the excitement, and the blessing from God of whatever it was back then, he gave it back to me.” After that Jill was hooked. She started going to officiating trainings and camps in order to move up the ranks. She has officiated high school football for 23 years, college football for 13 years, and youth and high school basketball for 4 years. She is currently a business owner and consultant in a mid-size city on the west coast.

Karla. Karla is 48 years old and lives on the west coast with her husband and two kids. She grew up playing softball, volleyball, and soccer. Her dad loved to watch football when she was young, but she was not interested in the game at first. Her dad started to explain the rules and strategies to Karla and she began to understand the sport and started to watch the games with her father. To this day when someone asks Karla the goal of football, she tells them what her dad told her:

I tell them well obviously to win...but to advance the ball ten yards in four tries, now how you do that, there are a bunch of other strategies and techniques or whatever...

but that is the goal to advance the ball ten yards in four tries. If you can break it down into a simple concept anyone can understand it.

Karla had done some baseball and soccer officiating in the past but she had no idea football officiating was even an option for her. She had a boss at the time that officiated football and he encouraged her to give it a try. He convinced her to come to one of the meetings where she listened to a gentleman give a presentation on what it takes to be a football official. After the meeting, both men convinced Karla to give it a try. She recalled:

I was very lucky in that respect that the group or the two men, really pushed me along and encouraged me, they were really receptive. I was accepted by my whole unit, well there were a couple of old timers that were like “ehhh, no way.” But you know... I stayed with that unit for around ten years...I really loved it

Karla did take time off from officiating to have children, but she returned because she loved being out there on the field helping the athletes. Karla currently is an elementary school teacher and has officiated in two different states for a total of 18 years. She officiated youth baseball for 2 years and football for 18 years (youth flag football, pop warner, middle school, high school, and men’s flag football). Karla is currently married and has two children.

Peggy. Peggy is 58 years old and identifies herself as Caucasian. She grew up in the eastern part of the United States with a family that was very active. Her dad ran a couple miles each night and is still active today at the age of 90. They lived near an ice rink so Peggy was on ice skates at the early age of five. She eventually got into ice dancing with her dream of one day going to the Olympics. Her abilities did not take her that far, but she still received a bronze test medal in ice dancing from the United States Figure Skating Association. She attended college and received a degree in Communications. Peggy’s dream job was to be a

sports reporter, not realizing at the time (1977) there were no females that reported sports at news stations. After college she tried finding a job in sports broadcasting but she felt she was not given the opportunity because of her gender.

Peggy moved to Washington D.C. where her aunt lived and she began working as a waitress. Her aunt had a friend that was an amateur hockey referee. They went to a hockey game one night and the man was talking about how they did not have enough hockey referees. The aunt mentioned to him that Peggy used to ice skate. He said to Peggy, “well do you want to referee?” Peggy decided to take on the challenge and turned in her application to officiate hockey. It took the association over a year to get back to her but they finally called and asked if she was still interested in being a referee. Peggy went to a one day class, took a test, and they assigned her to referee a youth hockey game later that week. She quickly realized she had never been on hockey skates before, all her life she grew up on figure skates, which she explained are very different. Peggy recalled her first hockey officiating experience:

I thought no problem, I can do this, so I went to my first game and it was little tiny 5-year-old hockey players. I went out and I bent over and I fell right on my face, I was used to a toepick on ice skates...I fell three more times and I remember looking up and seeing these little kids staring down on me...oh man I will never forget that first game.

Peggy drove home that night after her first officiating experience in 1979 and thought, “That is what I need to do. I don’t know enough about the game of hockey or the other major sports, what I need to do is show people that I know enough about the sports, then I may get a chance to be in sports broadcasting.” Peggy worked over the next couple of years to become a certified amateur official in the five major sports: baseball, basketball, soccer, ice hockey,

and football. After that, she started to apply to news stations and finally got hired on at four local stations covering sports. She felt that officiating gave her credibility within the field of sports. She was eventually hired on as one of the first female SportsCenter anchors at ESPN.

She eventually moved to the southwestern part of the United States and was told she was too old to be an on-air reporter (she was close to 40 years old at the time). She had always been around high school aged kids officiating, so she decided to go back and get her masters degree and teaching certificate. She currently teaches communication and video classes and manages the school newspaper. She is also a reading specialist and certified history teacher.

Even though Peggy tried officiating many sports, football and baseball were always her biggest passions. Peggy officiated baseball for 25 years and she just finished her 30th year officiating football. She said she will continue to do it until her body will not allow her to.

Peggy officiated the following sports throughout her officiating career:

- Ice Hockey: youth, 5 years
- Baseball: youth, high school, men's league (1 professional exhibition), 25 years
- Football: youth, high school, men's leagues, 30 years
- Basketball: youth, 2 years
- Soccer: youth, 1 year

Section Two: Research Questions with Results and Findings

The current research study used a qualitative case study methodology to collect data on the experiences of female football officials. The grand tour question that guided the entire study was: *What are the experiences of female football officials?* There were seven sub-

questions that helped direct the study. These seven questions were answered by methodically interviewing the eight participants and conducting a thorough data analysis. The following section will provide an explanation and interpretation of the findings for each research question.

Research Question (a). *Why did the participants enter into the vocation of officiating?*

As described in the participant profiles, each individual had some connection to sport whether it was from growing up playing sports, watching sports, or having family members involved in sports. The participants would not have had the desire to try officiating if it were not for those connections.

Even though Laura was not an avid athlete she got into officiating for the challenge and to honor her brother, she explained:

I never grew up playing sports, or being a jock, my brothers used me as a tackling dummy when I was younger, but that is as close as I got. I had a brother that passed away in a motorcycle accident when he was 19. He coached a little league team and at his funeral all the kids came in their uniforms. I felt I needed to finish what he started and when I got into football officiating, I finally felt like I found a way to do that.

Many of the participants including, Mary, Peggy, and Jill all missed that feeling they got from being an athlete, they wanted to fill that void of being out there on the field with their teammates. Officiating was one way they found they could do that. Mary said, “I missed that connection to sport, that feeling you get from playing a sport.” Jill recalled:

Being out there on the football field...I get to be out there under the lights, the fans are there, the players, I look around and realize...look where I am at and what God

has given back to me, Wow! Wow! ...it is like when I used to play, I got those same feelings.

The other main reason the participants entered into officiating was the connection they had with the athletes on the field. All the participants had memories of instances where they were able to help an athlete develop into a better person through officiating. Beth recalls an occasion where she felt she made a difference with an athlete out on the football field:

I will always take the opportunity to help, when you are the team who is blowing out the opponent and they are now getting a little chippy and you are winning yet you feel the need to either answer or retaliate for something they have done to you. I will always take the opportunity to say, “How would you feel if you were losing that big, how would you feel if you were on the other team. You are already winning, the scoreboard is already telling everyone what is going on, why do you feel the need to take it upon yourself to now humiliate that dude who is already losing and feeling bad”...This one kid actually hung his head and said I am sorry because he realized what he was doing and that it was the wrong thing... I told him “don’t apologize to me just realize what’s going on around you”...I have like three seconds to mold them into a better athlete or person with a better attitude and sometimes you really have that opportunity [while officiating] and it works.

Robyn and other participants said that especially in youth football, “you are not only officiating, but you are teaching at the same time, you want them to learn the game the right way.”

It is more than just a job for these women; they feel they are in a position of power they can use in a good and positive way. They do not care who wins the game, they just want

to do the best job they can, make the right call, and make sure the athletes stay safe and have fun. Mary explained, “the greatest perk is probably watching the athletes grow, develop, and see them improve, I am still friends to this day with kids that I officiated back in the day, those relationships are so important.” All the participants agreed that once you step out onto that football field and officiate, you become part of the game; you develop a love and a passion that you do not want to give up. As Robyn stated, “I think once you are a part of that group [officiating], you will always be one of them.”

Research Question (b). *How do participants characterize successes and/or positive aspects in officiating?*

The participants entered into the officiating profession for various reasons. The eight participants in this study all seemed to thoroughly enjoy officiating and remarkably have a total of 144 years of officiating experience between them. They felt if they did not have success or find positive aspects in officiating there is no way they would have continued to officiate all these years. Officiating is a very difficult job in general because officials are constantly getting yelled at and there are very few instances of accolade. This is because once the whistle is blown and the flag is thrown, typically half the people agree with their call and half the people do not.

Many of the officials have found that one of the most positive aspects of officiating is the relationships they create, whether it is with the athletes, coaches, players, fans, or fellow officials. The participants felt it was those relationships that they created that are very special and unique to the field of officiating.

Compared to the millions of athletes around the world, there is only a select group of individuals that choose to wear the zebra stripes and call themselves officials. There is a sense of pride and accomplishment from being one of these few. Jill explained:

It's the adrenaline that you can't get anywhere else. When you walk out there with your fellow officials, the lights are on, the stands are packed, and you now a part of it. The five of you walk out onto that field in stripes and it is up to you to run the game...it is an emotional experience that only those that have been in your shoes can explain.

Beth loved being part of the game and having that chance to watch players learn and develop as athletes. She enjoys seeing the progress they make from their freshman year in high school to their senior year. She recalled:

Just being around it [the game of football], seeing the kids, and they are there because they want to be there and they love to be there, and they work so hard...And so its nice to be a part of that and sometimes you get a kid that you officiated and then you hear he signs with California, Oregon or wherever, and that's cool, I get to say I got to be a part of that.

The participants all discussed how the challenge of being an official keeps them excited about the profession. The rules are always changing and they have to constantly train and study to be successful. Hilary recalled:

Each level has something unique about it. I love being on the field and getting that high of being in the zone and calling a game...the challenge of putting together my rules knowledge, mechanics, and being where I need to be at the right time. The

communication you have with the other players and officials...it is a very challenging experience but I get a lot of good training and feedback.

Karla agreed with other the other participants and reiterated that she loves to talk about football with the other officials. They meet after games and discuss strategies and where they made mistakes or how they can get better. The other part of football officiating that the participants said was important was their success out on the field while training to be the best. They all spend a lot of time training, studying, taking tests, attending camps, and learning from one another to get to that next level of officiating. Jill recalls her time at a camp where all the “big name” officials were in attendance:

I was in awe, all the officials that I watched on TV and learned from were there, ones from the NFL, Pac-10, Big East...they really helped us out, they watched us, critiqued us, graded us...I have learned so much from attending these camps and trainings all across the United States. It's all about the connections you make and the people you know.

Hilary discussed another positive aspect of officiating is that she has received encouraging feedback from various people about her being a football official.

It does affect your personal life, when you take on something that kind of defines you. My whole community knows that I referee football and I get a lot of questions, and the really fun thing is that I would get high school coaches asking me rules questions, like can they do this on the field and or can they do that, and that is really satisfying to help them that way and have people look to you for answers. It's something that is not traditionally asked of females and that is pretty cool.

The other way the participants felt success and positive aspects in football officiating, was through awards or accomplishments they received through the years of being an official. Many told me about their various accomplishments and said it helped them gain that passion for officiating. It made them proud to be out there wearing the stripes on the field. Beth's experience with this was the following:

We have a banquet every year and they give out awards for different things and one of them is named after an official that passed away that was a great official and overall great person. I never got the chance to meet him, but it's kind of like the rising star award and usually you have to be fourth, fifth, or sixth year official to get it. Well I got it last year at the banquet, my fifth year, so that was crazy and very exciting, I was the first female to get the award and I was so stoked and honored...

Robyn also received an award that really made her feel accomplished as a flag football official. She recalls:

So as a freshman I saw these guys doing it, officiating in the flag football championships, by my sophomore year I was officiating at the national tournament. My junior year I got All-American honors, the third female in the history of the tournament to get that. I was very honored and excited.

All of these positive experiences made the participants feel proud to be an official. Even though they get yelled at continuously and deal with a lot of challenging issues, it is these positive experiences that keep them involved in such a rewarding career.

Research Question (c). *How do participants characterize challenges and/or negative aspects in officiating?*

Even though there are a lot of positive aspects to officiating there are also many negative or challenging aspects as well. Being a sports official or referee is a position that many people do not want to take on. There is actually a shortage of officials in various levels in many sports across the nation because of the non-typical work environment. Peggy explained her thoughts on this topic:

Getting yelled at isn't tolerated in most professions, you would get fired from screaming or yelling at another. I think every person that has a child in a sport should be required to officiate a couple games so they can understand what it is like out there officiating. The other thing is very few jobs beside say police officer or fire fighter have to make such immediate decisions. I have to throw the flag, blow the whistle, and know what to call. I don't get to go back and get a redo, it's instantaneous. You can't just say oh sorry didn't mean to blow the whistle or make that call...

In officiating it is hard to make everyone happy. Laura explains, "the longer you officiate you get thicker skin, you have to stay focused on the game and not worry about who is yelling behind you, although it is mentally tough to do." Many of the officials have been verbally threatened by parents and fans. Many games the officials are escorted off by police officers.

The participants feel one of the main reasons they get yelled at so often is that the coaches, players, fans, and parents do not understand the rules of the game. Many watch professional football on Sundays and feel that those rules apply to every level. There are

times in every a game that the participants just want to turn around and yell “that rule does not apply here!” For example Robyn explains:

You will never take the human element out of officiating the game or sport, so why do you expect the officials to be perfect, we all make mistakes, the coaches and players never play a perfect game. I promise every official is trying their best to get the right call...that is why I stopped doing youth football, the parents just don't understand the game and take it out on the officials. They think that their kid is going to get a full ride scholarship and going to play in the Superbowl and it's great to have aspirations for the kids, but once you start yelling at officials, you are teaching the kids that it's ok, and it's not ok at any level.

One of the other challenging aspects of officiating is that the job is also very rough on the officials' bodies. All the participants have been hurt multiple times while officiating. Laura has had multiple strains and sprains and a dislocated knee cap. Mary has had multiple surgeries, and Peggy says she has been plowed over and hit by players multiple times and has broken more bones than she can remember. The participants all replied that even with all the injuries, they will keep officiating until their bodies finally say “no.”

One of the other challenges or negative aspects in officiating for all the participants are the politics or the way the league or officiating associations are managed. Each state has a different way in which they run their association; they use different methods in which to train officials and different policies for allowing advancement. The participants see part of the challenge with there being so few women in the profession, is that there are also very few women in decision making positions within officiating associations. Hilary explained:

For me as a female I would have to say there is still the “old boys network” or mentality, the prevailing thought that if you haven’t played football you can’t officiate it, and that is so not true, there are many male officials that have not played the game. You are brushing up against some preconceived ideas and whatnot, so you kind of a battle those situations, and you battle a lot of personalities, a lot of competing demands for advancement, you know it’s like anything, to get to the top sometimes it’s who you know, were you at the right place at the right time, there is a lot involved, even if you are a perfect official or you are a really good official it doesn’t guarantee that you move up. It’s all about getting the lucky break or getting to know the right people.

Jill had aspirations to one day make it to the NFL, but felt she had a few things going against her. One was her age, since she got into officiating a bit later in life. An official usually has to stay at a certain level for so long before they get looked at or recruited to move up. Since Jill started at an older age, she felt that she never really got to that level where she could be looked at by major college or eventually the NFL. Jill recalled:

So unfortunately when I told them I was turning 50, which I should not of, I was cut off, it wasn’t supposed to be an issue...the next year one guy said you are better than the others moving up, so I said tell them [the association] and maybe they would consider bringing me on...and he came back and said sorry, it’s just their philosophy, and I said I know the philosophy of the game...The observer of officials just looked at me and I looked back at him and I stated, “You’re talking about the philosophy of my age.” The observer just lowered his head in disappointment and sadness. I then realized that my age of 52 and if I had to officiate and work years at each of the

advancing levels I would be almost 60. My reply to him was that I understand, and it has been a great ride.

The other reason Jill felt she might have been overlooked was the area she was located in or the region she officiating in. As far as advancement Jill's impressions were:

It's who they hook up with or work with, what region they are in, who is in the region, I am not in a good region there is nobody here looking...you have to be located in the right place to get the push... and that is just how many things are in life, but I still had a good ride, I went out and marketed myself and went to all the camps and met great people.

Mary and Peggy began officiating back when there were very few women officials and remember facing many challenges including gender discrimination. Many times they would step out on the field and the coach would look at them with this view of "what are you doing out here on my field." Peggy recalled:

It would be this very specific look, when we would go out and talk with the head coaches before the game. It was usually new coaches that had not had me before but my fellow official would see it and tell me "hey there's that look." It's the look of being skeptical of my abilities; "you are not a real referee" I would always just do my best and prove to them I belonged...It still happens even today if I come across a new coach or someone with the old school thinking.

Mary officiated both football and baseball games regularly but she remembered specifically an instance where her ability was put into question because of her gender and the belief that she did not play the sport so how can she officiate. She recalled:

You try to block that stuff out, you work hard in terms of your rules knowledge, and then to dispel the belief of so many men and the comments they would make “well you did not play the game so you can’t be a good official.” In one region we had a supervisor that was real “old school” and wouldn’t give me any decent games, that was his mentality. So we get our football contracts and first game of the season I got a really big game. So I told my fellow officials I know exactly what he is doing, this is a big game and he is waiting for me to screw it up. I want to prepare and work hard for this game and I want you to really help me. We all worked hard to prepare, and I had a good game...So after the game the supervisor found me and said “well I hate to say this but you did a good job.”

All the officials at times felt they had to work extra hard to make their way through the politics of the male-domain of sports officiating and football.

One of the last main challenges in officiating is the large time commitment that being an official takes. Football season is in the fall but many training sessions or camps start in early summer and then the football season can stretch into winter. There can be multiple games a week and on weekends. If an official is working college or professional games they can be flying all over the United States for games. This can create many difficulties managing their daily family life and career. This work and life balance has been researched in many male-dominated careers. The participants explained that it was a challenge and they had to work very hard to create a life where they could officiate and still be with their family. At times, the participants had to take several years off when they had children. Laura explained, “my husband is very supportive of me officiating football and he allows me to say goodbye

from August through November.” Hilary explained how being an official changed the way things were in her household:

As far as my family adjusting my kids and all, I have been doing it for so long, but in the early years I would try to make my absences from home or dinner as unnoticeable as possible. Meaning everything was ready for dinner, the house, the food, and things were prepped for them the next day at school or whatever. It wasn’t helter scelter at home, I had to work extra hard as a mom to do that, to get away [for officiating]. At first it was like what is mom doing here, this is weird, but after the first couple of months and as I gained respect on the field it was even cooler for my kids to see me out there.

Many of the officials liked to go together after games and meet at a bar or restaurant and talk about football and just relax and hang out. Many of the participants enjoyed this time with the other officials off the field. It helped them get to know one another on a more personal level. Karla did say that with being a mom and a wife she did have some challenges with finding time to get together with the other officials. She recalled:

Again, I have kids so it’s a little different, so I can’t always go every night. I might hang out with them at a game but then I have to get home to pick my kid up from band or something. It’s not always convenient for me to go, but they are always “come on, come on hang out with us,” and I tell them I can’t always come out, you have kids you guys depend on your wives to take care of your kids but I am the wife I got to take care of them. So they don’t quite understand that...But you know getting together is fun...

Beth would love to one day officiate in small college but she knows it would even be a bigger time commitment than it is now doing high school football. She says it is hard every Friday night and some Thursdays and Saturdays to be away from home. “You and your spouse have to find the balance and understanding of the time commitments.” Beth also recalled:

With having a new baby and knowing I may want to get pregnant soon it makes it hard to work around football, it may just not happen [officiating in college]. Some of these guys they do it like all through their 30’s and 40’s so they did it with young kids because their wife stayed home and took care of the kids and now their kids are in high school or graduated so it doesn’t even matter any more, now some of their kids are even officiating...It may be a little bit more difficult being a female especially if you are in a straight relationship. Is your husband really going to want to stay and take care of the kids while you are hanging out with a bunch of guys? He would have to be very understanding...Having a child has changed my life and it changed what I can do as far as officiating in the future, but even if I have to take some time off I will always come back to it [football officiating]. You just have to find the balance of being able to do that.

The time commitment of football officiating affected Robyn in regards to what she wanted to do as a profession. As a sports reporter she had to cover games and that took her all over the United States. She was unable to keep her full officiating schedule and try to keep her fulltime job as well. As of now, Robyn has stopped officiating football, but she knows that one day she will return because it is one of her passions. Robyn’s reaction to the time commitment challenge of officiating was:

The problem is it requires so much time and so much flexibility in your schedule, many of the guys that are officiating big college ball or NFL are in very high positions in their companies or business and they are able to take off on Thursdays and Fridays without anybody questioning them. They don't have to worry about cost...that was never going to be an option for me once I went the broadcasting route. I think for a lot of women, depending on what your chosen career path or family path is officiating is a lot harder to fit into a schedule. They [officiating association] may not want you to only work Friday nights, they want you to work Monday-Saturday nights and that gets to be a lot. You have to find a balance that works for you, your family, and work situation.

The issue of work/family balance is not unique to the field of officiating. It is common in many sports fields such as coaching, athletic administration, and in many business occupations. There has been much research on how this affects women in male-dominated careers (e.g., Bruening & Dixon, 2007; Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Palmer & Leberman, 2009; Weiss & Stevens, 1993). There may not be one clear answer on how to make it work for women working in these types of careers. It is a very personal and family decision that each individual has to decide on, as far as what type of work/life balance is right for them and their situation. Even with the many challenges, there are many positive aspects to having women work in sport and business. They are acting as role models for others that may think a certain career choice is not an option for them. They are also role models for their own family by teaching their children the importance of finding your dream and passion and going after it.

Research Question (d). *How have the participants gained and sustained entry in the male-dominated position of officiating?*

Officiating in any sport is hard work, and as stated by the participants there is much preparation and studying that goes into it. There are steps in training that have to take place, tests that have to be passed, and training/camps that have to be attended. To be a good official and to have a sustainable career, the person has to show a sense of professionalism in regards to officiating. The participants mentioned multiple times that you have to take officiating seriously and study the rule book and the mechanics, “become a student of the game.” You have to spend hours of your own time watching film and studying rule books. The participants thought it was ironic when fans and parents would yell at them for not knowing the rules, when they are the ones studying and taking the tests to become certified officials.

Laura recalls there were many times she wanted to leave the officiating profession. The first football evaluation she ever received was the evaluator saying to her “you better find something else to do with your time.” Instead of giving up, she took it upon herself to get better. She studied films and rule books and asked other officials to help her improve.

One of the key concepts to being a successful official and staying in the profession was finding others to help. All of the participants found someone in or outside of their organization to support them. Hilary recalls, “having a mentor from one of the [officiating] camps really helped, he worked with me pretty heavy...he really helped me improve as an official, so much faster than if you were just trying to figure it all out on your own.” Laura had a female official as her mentor when she started officiating, which she felt really helped her succeed and helped her to stay in officiating. She is currently a mentor to new officials in

her organization, so she feels she has come full circle. Laura describes her mentor relationship:

Well of course [name omitted] took me under her wing when I first started and it was great to have another female help me... You have to have a support system to get through it all, at home and at work. Without this support I know personally I would have quit a long time ago. Officiating is a tough job and you have to have people around you that will help you through the bad days or tough games...you can't do it yourself.

In the officiating organization that Beth works for, they set up new officials in a developmental crew program. They would match experienced officials with novice ones in order to help them through their first two years. Having a support system, a mentor, and a sense of community or family came up so frequently during data analysis that it became one of the major themes of the study. These topics will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Research Question (e). *What are the participants' experiences being one of the few women in football officiating?*

All the participants agreed that being one of the few women working as a football official can make for some very interesting situations and circumstances. The participants felt, for the most part very welcomed into the vocation of officiating by their male counterparts. Beth stated that she has a very easy going attitude and that it helped her make friends with the other officials. Beth also recalled:

I know there is still that “good old boys network” you know...believe it or not the guys have their cliques just like girls do, you are getting talked about all the time, you don’t know whether it’s good or bad or the fact that you are a girl.

Beth would get compliments from fellow officials about her being a really good official, which she appreciated but some of these men she had never even officiated with before. That is how she knew the other guys talked. Beth feels she has a good relationship with most of the officials in her association.

There were some instances where the participants felt like they were “left out” of certain opportunities in football officiating because of their gender. Peggy really enjoys the group of guys that she works with in high school football but there are certain supervisors higher up in the organization that will not give her crew the chance to work the state championship games, even though her crew has the same skills and experiences as other crews getting the games. Her crew knows it is not going to happen for them and they feel it comes down to gender.

Peggy had one humorous incident that occurred during a football game about 15 years ago, where she proved she was not afraid of anything out on the football field. She recalled:

There was a football game years ago and the coach from the very beginning of the game was giving me that look like I am a complete joke, my partner stops the game because there was a huge tarantula on the field, and I could just see it getting into one kid’s helmet or pads. I could hear this coach yell from the other side to me “What are you gonna do about it” and stare me down. All these people were watching me, so I just bent down and let the huge spider crawl up my arm and I just was praying it would not bite me. I walked very slowly and I gently shook it off outside the field. I

walked back onto the field grabbed the ball and put it down and said “let’s play.” I looked up and everyone was silent and everyone was looking at me...The rest of the game the coach was like “yes ma’am, no ma’am”...I have had people come up to me years later saying you are the tarantula lady, but it was funny that it took that incident to happen for that coach to see me as a good official.

Being one of the only females attempting to get ready in the locker room with male officials can also create some interesting situations. Hilary explained that most female officials she knows are very accommodating when it comes to dressing down for the games. They will either come dressed or change in a bathroom stall. The challenges come from others making a “big deal” about there being a woman on the officiating crew. The barriers that Hilary has encountered have come from site administrators at the different schools. Some of them make a big deal about finding the women their own changing room. Hilary and the other participants explained that they do not want it to be a big deal and they usually work out the dressing room situation with the other officials beforehand. Hilary feels that some site administrators may have delayed certain officials or caused a barrier for some female officials to work at certain places. Karla had an interesting locker room experience when after a game the crew went to go change and their changing area happened to be in the home team’s locker room. She recalled:

We were coming in and the players were already in there out of their uniforms and here I come walking in and there were bare butts and all...and I was like Yikes! I quickly covered my eyes and kept walking.

Karla just laughed it off and in the future she made sure another official checked the locker room before she entered. Mary had a unique experience when she showed up to officiate a game. She recalled:

I guess the manager did not understand at first because he got everything situated for the other guys and he probably thought “oh great one them brought his girlfriend.” I asked if they had a room for me and he panicked and had to find a room for me to change. It is always those “old school” coaches and staff that are just not used to seeing a woman around the game of football, so it is very funny to see the double takes they do when they first see a women coming their way.

The participants get a wide range of reactions from people when they find out they are football officials. Jill explained that many people were shocked to begin with:

When I first came to the field they don’t know what to do. The trainers would come up and say there is a woman here we have to take her to a separate place, and I said that is alright, I will suit up with my guys. They are like really, I said yes I have done this many times before.

Mary had similar experiences when she told people she officiated football. She said:

Some were skeptical and doubted I could do the job; there were also many people that were supportive and were excited to see a woman out there with a bunch of men.

Some old school coaches though do no want to have a woman out there, in their mind football is no place for women to be.

Beth had a similar experience during one game when she made a big fourth down call on the goal line when the other team did not get the ball across for a touchdown. She pointed the other way and said, “no touchdown, 1st and down other teams ball.” She recalled:

I expected to get yelled at like “where are your glasses, you suck,” but the comments after that call were “you don’t belong on the field, you should be in the kitchen,” when I bet if I were a guy that made that call it would be how bad I sucked, but because I made the call it was because I was a girl and I didn’t know what I was doing, and that actually surprised me...at the end of that game the cops had to escort us off the field.

The participants have felt on various occasions that the coaches or other officials have questioned their calls or their decisions because of their gender. Robyn explained that a challenge when you first start officiating is proving your skill level to others, especially if they have not had you as an official before. Robyn stated:

When you first get in you are going to get a question such as how many yards is that penalty. They are going to ask you and you give them the answer and then they will turn to the next ref and say how many yards is the penalty and they say the same thing you did...it is really how long can you handle and deal with that and still be gracious and stick around.

All the participants said the players probably had the best attitude when it came to having women officiate their football game. They just wanted to play; they could care less who was wearing the stripes. The participants said that many players were surprised to hear a women’s voice out on the field because at first they would not notice there was a women official in the group. Beth explained:

The players are great, they think it is pretty neat to have a women official...As far as female officials and refs, as long as you know it [the game], the rules, and you can administer the rules, the players should respect you no matter what the gender...and

you know fans are going to either like or dislike a ref no matter what the gender is...It's amazing how many times, still to this day when I meet someone new and I tell them I play football they say but you are a girl, and I say sooooo, I then I tell I officiate high school football and they reply again but you are a girl, and I say sooooo. It is crazy that to this day people still have the preconception that girls can't be involved with football. I think a lot of it is exposure, getting females out there in those roles, making it apparent that we can do whatever it is the guys are doing.

The participants gave many examples of how their gender either hampered or helped them in their position as a football official. Being one of the only women working with a group of men can sometimes put them in very interesting situations. A few of the participants also work in a male-dominated career for their daytime job as well, so they have challenges in both careers. One of the themes for the study centered on the participants' gender playing a part in their experiences being a football official. This theme will be explored in more detail later in the chapter.

Research Question (f). *How has the decision to become a sports official impacted the participants' lives?*

Each participant reiterated that they love to officiate and they could not picture their lives without it. They have met such great people including other officials, coaches, and players throughout their years of officiating. The relationships they have created have lasted many years. Laura explained, "I like being associated with a great group of people, we send each other emails throughout the season with positive remarks and it helps us to get better and feel support from each other."

Both Robyn and Peggy had the goal of being in the profession of sports reporting. They both feel officiating helped them reach their professional goal. Robyn stated:

I got into officiating for two reasons. One, I needed a new challenge, a physical challenge, it took the place of me being an athlete and two, I knew when I went to college I wanted to be a broadcaster. I thought it [officiating] would give me a niche and a leg up on the competition. Clearly I had never played collegiate sports, and it did eventually give me credibility in that area. Now when I tell people I officiated high school football, even though I have had to put it on hold for a couple of years, I get a level of respect from those in the business and the players and coaches.

Being a football official has given the participants opportunities they would never have experienced if it were not for their involvement in officiating. They got to travel to exciting places and stadiums, meet great people, and be involved in the great sport of football. Laura recalled her experiences:

One of my first varsity games was a long road trip. It was in my fourth year. I was the head linesman. It was special for lots of reasons, it was the homecoming game for the school, the game was really intense and close with both teams showing exceptional sportsmanship, the chain crew was great, the fans were great, and the three of us [officials] were totally in sync as a crew. The home team PTA fed us dinner after the game in the cafeteria where members of both teams came up and thanked us for making the 3.5 hour drive to call their game. My fellow official [name deleted] with many years of experience told me on the drive home that he had been a bit nervous about bringing an inexperienced person on the crew, but he would call a game with me anytime, which we did many times. It just doesn't get better than that!

One of the other major themes that emerged from the data was having a true love and passion for officiating, which Laura described in her last quote. This theme was re-occurring during data analysis and will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Research Question (g). *How can the officiating associations and their members promote and encourage women to join the officiating profession?*

This last research question was very important for the current study. One of the main purposes for the study was to use the information gained to assist officiating associations with their recruitment and retention of female football officials. Since the participants have 144 years of officiating experience between them, I was able to gain their insight on this question and they answered it very candidly.

The participants were eager to participate in the current study because they wished more women would realize that football officiating is an option for them. Many did not know it was a choice because they saw no other women officiating football. They feel that the lack of exposure really affects getting other women involved in football officiating and officiating in general. Beth explained:

Well I think part of it is unless you know somebody or someone is there to introduce it [football officiating] to you, you may not know it is an option. Unless you are so interested in officiating that you want to do this and you seek out the information. If it wasn't for my mentor, as much as a love football, I would have never thought, oh I should go be a football official...I hate to sound sexist or whatever but it takes a special person to be any kind of official. It takes another extra special person to want to run around the field with a bunch of boys with pads. I think there are tons of women that could do it [officiate football] and who would be great at it and who

would love doing it, but is it just that they aren't really exposed to it so they don't think of it. Because other than word of mouth it's not really advertised for women. Hilary knows how challenging it is to be an official and agrees with Beth that it take a person with a certain type of personality and disposition to handle the pressures and responsibilities that come with officiating. Hilary explained:

I think officials in general are slim pickings right now because it's hard to be an official these days and in this society, that goes for males or females. It's a very satisfying job but you are not going to get a lot of pats on the back or a lot or reinforcement on what a good job you did, when half the stands hate you and half the stands accept you. So that is hard. I think seeing females out there helps, clearly! Because all of a sudden somebody says oh she can do that, and um maybe its not that they come out and do football maybe they are a volleyball player and then they will get into volleyball officiating, it's kind of twofold they can try officiating and maybe they will get into football, so I don't know what the exact answer is.

Karla is in agreement with Beth and Hilary; she feels that if there was more information available out there, it may trigger the interest of other women. She feels that the way they recruit football officials in her area is the reason more women do not know it is an option for them. Karla stated:

I think the way we recruit say to speak is a barrier, our commissioner goes to the football coaches and he tries to recruit...we have a program where they recruit current high school football players to help out with the young kids leagues, hoping some of them will then move up. They have meetings for those particular guys but the only thing they are doing is going to the football coaches and asking for football players,

they are not really opening it up to any of the high school girls because they don't really play football. Whether the commissioner does it or they have me or the other women officials go talk to the girls and tell them they can do this. They need to see other women do it and it is open to them, you don't have to play football, does it help, ya I'm not going to lie it helps, but I feel everyone has the ability to do it [officiate football] if they work at it.

All of the participants agree that officiating is a very unique career and it is not for everybody. They want individuals to try officiating only if they are interested. They may find it is right for them or they may not. The participants do not want people to get the impression that they feel more women are needed in football officiating just to make a point, to fill a quota, or to portray equality. They feel women should be given a fair chance the same as men would. Robyn explains:

I also have been asked many times if I think there should be more females officiating, and I really don't care, it's not about having this equal numbers, if you want to and if you have the passion, and if you work hard enough, and if that's what you want to do, then no one should stand in your way if you are qualified to do it. But I don't think we should have a push to have more females out there...

Jill concurred with Robyn by explaining:

First of all it is not a desire for most women because they don't play it [football], second of all life now a days, life is so crazy just being able to live, they [women] have to work all these jobs and if they have kids, they may not have time to do it, who would watch their kids. I was self-employed so I took my son to my games. You have the concept of do they want to be a football official, like I said I played backyard

tackle football with the boys in the neighborhood until the age of 15/16 and I felt I was getting a second chance, I never thought it would happen, getting that same feeling may not happen for all women.

The other subject area the participants talked about when it came to recruiting more women into the field of officiating was having the support of the officiating association and managers or supervisors. Many have had great supervisors that have given them respect and support, but others feel there are still some supervisors that give them less of an opportunity to advance in the officiating ranks than their male counterparts. This topic of administrator consideration has been a topic in other officiating studies as well (e.g., Warner, Tingle, & Kellet, in press). The research has shown that having a lack of supervisor support can increase the rate of dropout for officials. The participants in the current study feel there needs to be more conversations at the management level on the process of how officials advance in order to ensure equality for all individuals involved. Hilary explains her experience over the years:

I was fortunate to have a mentor that was very knowledgeable and experienced and what not, everybody needs a mentor, everybody that wants to move up and improve needs somebody ahead of them to say hey look at “so and so” they are doing great, let’s bring her up [move her to higher levels of officiating including college].

Everybody needs somebody to pull them up, and women were not getting that. Now all of a sudden it almost became who is going to do it first and some people were willing to take the chance, but most were not. I had a number of supervisors I knew personally and they did not give me opportunity for whatever reason you know, it’s just still very hard for female officials.

Karla had some difficulty when she moved from one state to another and joined a different high school officiating association. She felt there was no congruity between state associations. She explained:

When I was in [state name deleted] I was working everything from flag to pop warner, to middle school and high school. I was even working playoff games. When I moved to [state name deleted] I am back to square one, it didn't matter how many years experience I had under my belt, they put me back in what they call rookie school...So starting at the beginning, I can't even do high school games, even though I had worked playoff games in the other state. I am going to be the first one to say I was a little rusty from taking some time off, but it doesn't mean I don't know what I am doing. You know cause there were some guys there that haven't taken time off and you say oh my gosh what are they doing on the football field, they don't know what they are doing.

Karla feels it would help all officials if there were more similarities in training and advancement procedures with high school officiating associations across the United States. Many states seem to have varied rules when it comes to football, so this may be a difficult task. Robyn also had interesting experiences when she moved from one state to another.

When I moved it was different, not only did they use a different rule book, and there are some nuances there, but I felt they did not take it as seriously compared to what I was used to, it floored me that even though I had a pretty good background coming in, they will let you start working varsity games right away, which to me says, a) you really don't have the knowledge base, you are talking about guys that are first time officials, some of which are right out of high school themselves, and b) it is an honor

to work high school games, you should have to work hard to get there. It was different there, just a different mentality, not to say that there were not plenty of people that did take it seriously and get looked at, but the guys I worked with in the other state [named deleted] that were in my group and mentored me, every single one of them did small college ball, everyone was being looked at for a larger college position. It was just different.

This may be something that the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) could investigate, as far as having more congruency between state officiating associations. This seems it would help officials in all sports.

The participants each shared an immense amount of information about their experiences working as football officials. Each research question was answered throughout the data analysis process. There were many subjects and topics that came up multiple times throughout this process. These re-occurring topics became the themes of the study and will be discussed in detail in section three of this chapter.

Section Three: Themes- Findings and Interpretations

Three prominent re-occurring themes emerged from the data. Analysis of the data revealed that these themes are indicative of the lived experiences of the participating football officials. Collected supporting qualitative data are provided for each theme and sub-theme. These themes include: 1) Sense of Community and Support, 2) Varied Gender Experiences Officiating Football, and 3) Passion for Officiating and Football. Throughout section three, participant quotations provide examples and illustrations of their experiences.

Theme 1: Sense of Community and Support.

It is well documented that officiating is a career in which individuals endure verbal abuse from players, coaches, and spectators (Chiafullo, 1998; Kellett & Warner, 2011; Sabaini, 2001; Seidler, Scott, & Hughs, 2004; Graf & Konske, 1999). This type of work setting can lead to officials feeling stressed, burned out, and cause many to leave the profession all together (Anshel & Weinberg, 1995; Rainey, 1995). One way to help with the stress of officiating is by having a strong support system set up. Throughout the literature on women working in various male-dominated careers, there have been many examples of women becoming successful in their field by having mentors, support systems, or a community of support around them in the workplace. A “community” can be defined as a process of social learning that occurs when people get together that share similar interests, come up with strategies, develop solutions, and help each other develop and grow collectively (Wenger, 1998).

According to Wenger (1998) there are three requirements that are needed to have a “community of practice.” These requirements include: having a shared domain of interest (in this current study the shard interest is football officiating), there needs to be a community that engages in shared activities where they learn from one another (football officials weekly meetings, get-togethers, formal/ informal), and there needs to be a practice where the individuals share stories, help each other with problems, and come up with solutions (mentoring). A community of practice helps an organization through a variety of methods including: problem solving, requests for information, seeking experiences with others, discussing developments, looking at the future, and identifying gaps (Wenger, 1998).

A key factor in a community of practice is that the individuals are active participants in the practices of their social community. People continuously create their shared identity by engaging in and contributing in the practices of their communities. Football officials do this on a weekly basis because in order to be a successful, the individuals have to continually learn the ever changing rules and nuances of the game. This learning takes place by creating a community within an officiating association as well as with members of other similar officiating associations. The communities of officials watch videotapes of games, study for exams, discuss areas of improvement, and create solutions for problems. Officials only get paid when they are on the field, but most of their learning takes place when they gather together and discuss the game. This shows that they are a “Community of Practice” because they are committed to becoming better officials by spending many hours perfecting their craft and working together for a common goal.

A similar topic on community in the workplace has been called a “Sense of Community.” The term Sense of Community or SOC was coined by Sarason (1974). Chavis, Hogge, McMillan & Wandermans (1986) defined an SOC as “a feeling that members have of belonging and being important to each other, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met by their commitment to be together” (p. 11). In the past, there have been a limited number of studies using the SOC framework in the sports field or with athletes, but recently researchers have been investigating this topic within the sports domain.

Recently, Warner and Dixon (2011) interviewed 20 former student-athletes and asked them what their experiences were as college student-athletes. They found that the group of students felt an SOC within their team or athletic department. The themes of their SOC included: leadership opportunities, administration consideration, social spaces, equity in

administration decisions, and competition. An additional qualitative study conducted by Kellett and Warner (2011) investigated the experiences of 22 Australian Rules Football Umpires. The researchers wanted to gain the participants' views on the SOC in their current officiating organization. The study found three key factors impacting the lack of developing of an SOC within their group, including: a lack of administrative consideration, inequality between umpire groups, and competition. The one key factor in their group that did improve or enhance the SOC was common interest among umpires.

The past research conducted on this topic has shown that having a community of practice or sense of community can influence the type of environment that exists in the sport organization. Specifically in officiating, having a thriving SOC and a good community of practice can help retain sports officials within an organization (Kellett & Warner, 2011). Some of these same feeling and beliefs were reiterated by the participants in this current study.

Sense of community or family. All the participants discussed that they felt like they were in a "family" or a special group while working as a football official. They felt that they shared unique experiences with their fellow officials that a non-official would not understand or appreciate. This current study did not have the same goals or research agendas as the SOC research described earlier, but there was definitely a sense from the participants' stories and experiences that some form of SOC or community of practice existed within their officiating organizations.

When an individual decides to become a sports official, the job comes with a sense of responsibility and honor. It is their job to keep the game or sport moving fluidly, safely, all while following very specific rules and guidelines. Those on the outside or non-officials may

not fully understand what it takes to become an official. The spectators, parents, or coaches usually have no problem disagreeing with or yelling at an official, yet if you gave them the chance to get out and try to officiate themselves, most will say no. It is a very challenging profession where human errors occur but are rarely tolerated. The individuals with the title of “official, referee, or umpire” realize they share these unique experiences with only fellow officials. This distinctive bond makes them a unique community of practice. The officials working a game are a team, just like the group of athletes playing the sport of football on the field. In order to survive the challenging vocation of officiating, the participants all agreed that there needs to be support given to one another in order to be successful.

In the current study, the participants all felt a sense of community within their organizations. Mary stated, “It is a great group people, a small community, I was really accepted... They put me with a seasoned official and he took me under his wing.” Laura stated, “They had a mentor program when I started and a support system set up to help.... When I felt like I wanted to quit, three other male officials helped me, and believed in me, and I became a much better official because of it.” These quotes show that once these two participants were members of the community of officiating, they were given the support that they needed.

Robyn felt it was the relationships she had with her fellow officials that really made officiating a unique and positive experience. She explained:

It’s the relationships that you have when you work with the same people over and over again. It is one of the best teams, you’ve got 5 people and you are all trying to do a good job and get the same outcome and you have to know what that other person is thinking and doing and feeling, and you have to stay within yourself, and know what

you are supposed to be doing and looking at...I do like that it keeps your mind sharp too, you have to think through things... it was an exciting way to be a part of the game and to share it with the other officials.

Other participants felt that having that group of officials or mentors to talk with about their games and how they officiated helped them to improve and advance in officiating. They were able to learn from the one another's experiences and create a bond with one another through their vocation. Robyn really enjoyed having those relationships with the other officials, she recalled:

That was the most fun part, we would go out and would dissect every play or go over the rule book, those times were the best, and when I started working up here [a different state] I was working with guys who had done it for 20 years and I got to listen to their stories and learn from their experiences, oh ya, it was great, the best.

Laura had similar experiences in her association, she stated:

I vented to a lot of the guys and they talked me back from the edge of the cliff [the times she felt like quitting]. I don't know what I'd do without them...The other officials that I work with, we are like a family we take care of each other on the field and off. We hang out together and talk and watch football, it is so fun and I really enjoy the support I have gotten...Without this support I know personally I would have quit. Officiating is a tough job and you have to have people around you that will help you through the bad days. All of the new rules and learning all the mechanics, you can't do it all by yourself.

Having the support of the other officials and knowing that they all belong to the special, unique group of officiating really helped build that sense of community within the

participants' officiating organizations. The participants are all very proud to be a part of this select group.

Mentors. The other part of having that sense of community within officiating was described by the participants as having one or more mentors that took the time to help them become better officials. It has been revealed in past research that having a mentor is an important factor in organizational advancement, salary, and career satisfaction (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Scandura & Ragins, 1993). It has also been shown that women in male-dominated occupations need a mentor, just as much if not more than their male counterparts (Scandura & Ragins, 1993). The participants all described in their interviews the importance of having a mentor and how it helped them maintain employment in the challenging vocation of football officiating. Being one of the few women in this type of career makes them unique, but the participants said they saw the mentor relationships being made with both male and female officials. Beth recalled her experiences with her mentor:

Your mentor is really the one responsible to help you, mine was [name omitted], so a lot of times when I would go to varsity pre-games I would try to go to her games, because we did so much stuff with football we had a lot of time to talk. A lot of it is you have somebody you feel comfortable to go to ask the silly questions to. I could go to her and say I should know this, but explain to me what does it mean to do this or that...To have that mentorship and to have someone to ask what you feel may be a stupid question and to feel comfortable you are going to get good information is really nice...I really like the program they have set up for us [developmental program for new officials], and they still do that a mentor- mentee program and you get your mentor for two years and then a lot of times even if you are not friends beforehand

you've spent two years establishing that relationship, you keep it. That is really cool, I like that part.

Robyn found great mentors when she switched from flag football and joined her local high school officiating association. She recalled:

The mentors that I had, I was able to go and ask them my questions, "hey explain this rule to me, or if this happened in my game how would you have made the call, should I be doing anything differently?" In addition to giving me that push when I needed it, there were many nights when I officiated and I would go home and cry which sounds very girly and stupid, but when you are as passionate about something as I was and I am sure as any of the others are, you can't help but on occasion have a bad day, it just makes you cry and you need somebody else to say "look, I know you are upset but you have the skills you can do this, don't listen to everybody else, you are fine." Ya just kind of like the sheparding along, that is why you don't get stuck or complacent and you don't just stay as a flag football official. You actually try and you become proud of what you are.

Hilary's mentor reached out to her at one of the major football officiating camps. She explained:

At that time, he was starting to notice women officials at these camps...and they were working hard, and you know they need some help because they weren't getting it.

Prior to the early/mid 2000's there was no help for us, we [women] were getting stuck at the high school level, we were getting left there, we weren't getting invited up and we were only going as far as our own talents can take us. Because to get to the next level like I said, you have to be invited...And they overlooked the women, and so my

mentor started taking thought that these women are really trying hard, and he spotted me and it really helped me get to that next level...He would fly out on his own dime and come to a couple of my games and we would talk about it afterwards and he would critique my game, and he kept tabs on me. I was fortunate to have a mentor... everybody needs a mentor.

Karla had a mentor in officiating that helped her understand the game of football. Since she had not played the game before, she did not know all the terminology and she felt that was holding her back. She recalled:

So I had to really talk with somebody that I could be comfortable with asking, because you don't want to ask the dumb questions in front of all the men, they would wonder why is she officiating if she did not even know what a split end is or a flanker or whatever. I found I did not want to ask those kinds of questions, but with a mentor I was able to ask and feel comfortable and really learn the game...it was really cool and that is what really helped me, we would go out to lunch or dinner, and I remember one distinct time and we had out the sugar packets in what a line should look like, here is where the positions are, and this is what it means to be on the line and off the line and here are the covered end and what it means to be uncovered. I was like "oh ok now I know what you are saying," because a lot of the terms officials use are for people that have played football, and those of us who haven't go in going, well I know the rules, I'm good on the rules, but what in the world does covered versus uncovered mean. So thankfully I was able to get help and see that and know what things mean. And now every time I work a football game I know what that stuff means.

Jill had a mentor who later became her boyfriend, so they talked football and officiating all the time. He had been a football official for many years prior to encouraging Jill to try officiating. He really helped her through her first few years of officiating. She recalled:

Well especially my boyfriend, oh my gosh before we went out in the scrimmage he is telling me what to do and where to be, really helped me out, you know...being a mentor there and then teaching me...he was very critical on the basics and how to dress and look professional, very clean... so my mentor taught me how to look and act, and worked with me out on the field, in Pop Warner, and then at camps...

The participants felt that their success in football officiating came from those relationship they gained from their mentor(s) and by being a part of the community of officials or as Jill stated the “fellowship of officials.” All the participants had someone in their association that helped them and welcomed them into their group. The participants also stated that the mentor or assistance programs were offered to all officials, regardless of gender. When Peggy got into officiating, there were hardly any other women officials; therefore most of her mentors have been male. When she started training to be a baseball official, Peggy did find an individual that helped her immensely. She recalled:

I was sent to a class and the guy that taught it was an ex-police officer and he was yelling and he used every foul word you could say. I just sat there and I came back the next day, and he was shocked that I came back, and he took me under his wing and he encouraged me to go to umpire school.

This was not to say that everyone in the association shared these same feelings. Just like in any organization or business there will be people that do not get along or that disagree with certain decisions. The participants had experiences with these individuals in their

respective organizations as well. After Peggy had been officiating football for over 25 years, she was interested in being a mentor to other officials. A letter was sent out in her association saying they were looking for new mentors. She replied to the letter saying that she was interested. Peggy recalled how she was met with opposition:

The football association had a meeting and they were looking for mentors for new football officials, so I volunteered and signed up to be a mentor. To my surprise I get a call from an old official saying he was going to be my mentor, and I was like wait I signed up to be a mentor, not to have one of my own. I have been an official for many years, I was so pissed, but I said ok...he recommended that we swap crews and he would grade my crew. So I switched with another referee to work with his crew and normally in my own crew it doesn't matter who the referee is you listen to them, they are the leader, but when I went to his crew, they [the rest of the officiating crew] ignored me and didn't listen to me at all. Now I know when that other guy went and worked with my crew they [Peggy's crew] did whatever he said and were respectful. I knew without asking my crew that they acted in any way to help the other guy. I sent emails back and forth with this guy saying how disrespectful it was when I worked with his crew... I was shocked, here to begin with I had signed up to be a mentor in the first place and still I have not been given that chance.

As seen with past research on Sense of Community (SOC) in officiating organizations, one of the factors of a failing SOC was a lack of administration consideration or lack of support (Kellett & Warner, 2011). The participants feel there is still the "old school" or "good old boys" mentality that exists in the male-dominated field of officiating. This can cause there to be disorder within an organization or create the lack of ability to build

a strong SOC amongst officials. This remains an area of needed improvement in many male-dominated careers. Along with some difficulties when it came to mentoring opportunities, there were also other gender differences or challenges that the participants experienced while working as football officials. These will be discussed in the next theme in this section.

Theme 2: Varied Gender Experiences Officiating Football.

The participants decided to become football officials for various reasons. Most of them said it was because they loved the sport of football, enjoyed the camaraderie of others, and it gave them a challenge. The participants understood that since football is a male-dominated sport, there would be very few other women officiating in the sport. The participants realized they may come across some challenges or resistance while working in this male-dominated vocation. They felt as long as they studied, worked hard, and had a passion for officiating; they would prove they belonged on the football field just as much as any other official.

Gender role beliefs. There are various barriers that women face in male dominated careers. Morgan (1992) explained that some of these barriers include: resentment from male colleagues, discouragement from family or friends, lack of perceived skills and characteristics, and willingness to take risks (Morgan, 1992). The participants in the current study did not want to be known as the “women football official.” They wanted to be seen as “an official,” or an equal to the other officials on the football field. The participants felt that some people did not take into account that they had to pass the same tests and receive the same training as all other football officials in their respective associations. While working in a male-dominated career the participants all had some unique experiences being one of the few women out on the football field. Karla recalled her collective experiences:

I think one of the toughest things about being a female in football is that you know for some reason, it is still a “good old boys network,” it is one of the last good old boys things that is left. It is a challenge and a fight to get the guys to say “hey look” oh she had to take the same tests she knows the rules, she is good, she being any female, if they are here it means they have paid their dues and they know their stuff.

Robyn had similar opinions, she recalled:

If you have the talent, the skills, you are driven, and are passionate about it, you shouldn't be held back. But you cannot believe that it is going to be all roses, cupcakes, and fairy dust and it's going to be magical, you have to figure out how to navigate the “good old boys network.” I don't think it's any different than a female executive, you are just doing it in stripes on a football field and they are doing it in a boardroom.

Laura felt that she had to show skeptics that she could do the job. When I asked Laura about the perceived thought “that men were better suited for football officiating than women because they had played the game” she commented:

Like it or not, I do think that the initial reaction to me on the sideline is different because I'm a woman. What becomes of that reaction is largely up to me. By not making my gender a factor in how I work the game it usually becomes moot. At least that is how I prefer to deal with it. I want my actions to speak for themselves to show that I can do just as good of a job as the men.

Laura chose not to think of herself as a female football official, just as an official, the same as all of the other officials out on the field. Jill tried to blend in with the other officials as much as possible while officiating. She recalled:

I cut my hair short the 2nd year of officiating football, I didn't want them to know I was a women out there, um...tried to be less noticed, the best officials are the ones that are less seen, I was not out there "oh look at me I am a women," oh my gosh that is NOT what I want to do...I don't get into that, I get into being out there on a football field, calling the game, being under the lights, the snap, look what I am able to do.

The participants felt that one of the main barriers or obstacles females have while officiating are similar to the barriers women have in any non-traditional role. Laura explained further:

You have to get past the thought that they [females] can't do it. I credit my parents for instilling in me that I could do what ever I chose to do. It never occurred to me that I shouldn't try [being an official]. The biggest obstacle is choosing what it is that we want to do.

Laura's parents were able to instill in her the beliefs that what is expected socially or culturally as a career for a certain gender can be challenged. Therefore, she and the other participants are challenging the current feminine ideologies and gender/social role beliefs by trying to change the views of society in regards to women's involvement in football.

Many of the officials also discussed one of the other barriers was being perceived as incompetent because of their gender and working in the sport of football, a sport in which many women do not play. Mary explained:

All I want is to be judged by my ability, not on my gender. You know obviously when you walk out onto the field and until you prove yourself, that is how they look at you, they [coaches, players, fans] are very critical and they are going to challenge you and once you prove yourself, it's not so bad.

Karla felt at times that other officials or coaches looked at her differently because she had never played the game of football. She felt it gave the other officials a step up from having played the game, but she also claimed it was not required that you play football in order to officiate the game. Most of the participants could recall a few male football officials in each of their respective associations that did not play football either. Karla took this upon herself as a challenge to learn the game. She studied the rules and mechanics, attended officiating camps and trainings, asked other officials for assistance, and watched many games. Karla felt that the “not playing football belief” is only a barrier if you let it be one. She chose to overcome and prove she could learn the game even though she had no football experience.

Hilary discussed how important it was to stay true to herself and keep her feminine side while participating in the masculine sport of football. She stated:

It is just finding the right balance, I try not to lose my femininity, when I show up to the football field and we have to wear business attire and sometime suits, sometimes my suits have pants and sometimes skirts. I do wear makeup on the field, but I would never keep guys waiting while I fixed my makeup. You have to find that balance...

The participants discussed how they tried to not make it a big deal that they were one of the few women out on the football field. They came to the field to do a job, just the same as every other official. They felt by working hard, making the right calls and keeping the game running smoothly and safe, that they were doing a good job of representing all officials, regardless of gender. The participants explained that they felt it will take a while to change the perceptions of women working in the sport of football. They currently are trying to be

ambassadors for that change by educating others that football officiating is a vocation for either gender.

Perceptions from others. The participants had an array of comments and reactions from coaches, players, fans, and others when they would show up to officiate a football game. Some of the reactions were positive and others were negative. Karla recalled:

Initially when I first started doing it [officiating], it was like “there is a women out here”...and in fact there was one game where a fan just yelled, “get the lady ref off the field,” because they don’t like your calls...From the players it has been different, most of the players don’t care, I remember when I first started the kids saw me and were like “ohhh there is a girl out here,” they would kind of whisper like I couldn’t hear them...So a lot of those kids were freshman and saw me and then saw me in each grade as they got older, and it was funny when they were seniors and it was no big deal and they would get on the other team or other kids who hadn’t seen me before and they would come and say “Ok don’t say anything this is a lady ref, and she is good and don’t say anything and keep your mouth shut,” they were almost protective of me... I think for the most part I would say it is a positive reaction...but there are still some, but I just kind of chalk it up to ignorance or insecurity or you know whatever...I try not to let it bother me because if I did then I wouldn’t be out there, I would be worried the whole time, what are they thinking, do they think I am a good official, I have to be confident in what I do.

Robyn had a unique experience with a field supervisor at a specific high school field she routinely worked at. She recalled:

One of the schools I went to twice a week every week during the season had an older African-American gentleman who was the field supervisor, and every single time I signed in he would harass me and tell me “your place is in the kitchen, your place should be at home,” at first I thought he was kind of joking and I kind of joked back with him, but then I realized it was a 15 minute song and dance with him every single time I came to sign my name because he did not think I belonged, that got very old after a while. I find it somewhat ironic considering he possibly faced some discrimination himself in his lifetime.

Peggy started officiating in the days when there were very few women officials working in male sports. She says currently with the passage of Title IX and more women playing sports, she feels women’s involvement in non-traditional sports is slowly becoming more accepted. She stated:

Women are more involved in sports in general, there used to be virtually no one. I started long before everyone else was, I was the freak. I think at first, I didn’t really know that officials were abused anyways and I took offense that I was getting yelled at because I was a woman. I think they [teams, coaches, players, fans] are at a point here in my state where they are used to me...when we have a conference with coaches and captains every once in while a coach will look at me with a very specific look like “what are you doing out here”....The look of I am a complete joke.

Beth currently plays football on an all women’s tackle football team and also officiates. She has seen people’s various reactions to her both playing and officiating football. She explained her thoughts on women being involved in football:

It's really neat to see women officials in high school, college football and the NFL. You know because no matter what your thought process is on whether we [women] belong here or not, you know they [female football officials] are there because they deserve to be there, they [football administrators] are not going to allow them to do it at that type of level if they can't or don't have the experience. So that is pretty awesome. I think a lot of times what people need to realize for me at least, is whether it be playing football or officiating football I am not here to take over the man's world. I want to play football because I love to play football, not because I want to be a boy, not because I want to play with the guys, come on I'm not stupid I don't want to get hurt, I just want to play the sport, it's a fantastic sport...same thing with officiating, I want to be involved with the sport...I love the game...and I am out there because I love the game and I want to be a part of the game, that is what it's all about.

Beth makes an insightful statement in her comments about not wanting to take over the "man's world." The sport of football is seen in our society as one of the last sports that is traditionally designated as a masculine activity (McDowell & Schaffner, 2011). Many of the various "old school" gender beliefs have diminished over the years, but football has maintained that atmosphere that seems to limit female involvement. Beth explains that her goal is not to take over and steal what was once an "all male" activity but instead to become a part of it and to participate in it because she loves the game of football. Since this idea is challenging the general social order or gender norm, it will take individuals such as the participants in this study to dispute and change the prevailing views of women's involvement in football.

Legitimacy. Both Peggy and Robyn wanted to get into the field of sports broadcasting after college. They felt there were some barriers to this goal since sports reporting was also a male-dominated career field. The odds were really against Peggy because she was trying to break into the field in the late 1970's when no women were broadcasting sports. They both felt that to help them in their careers and to dispel some of thoughts that women do not know enough about sports, they decided to become sports officials. Peggy recalled after getting certified as an official in the five major sports, "I kept applying to news shows to do sports and they finally hired me, I worked for four local stations and each one of the stations loved that I officiated, it gave me credibility." Robyn chose to officiate football because it gave her a challenge and it fit her personality, she explained:

I never did it to make a statement, I did it so I could create a niche for myself and further my career [in sports broadcasting]...I am very proud of my officiating background and that and I am able to express that to a guy like [omitted name of NFL coach] or [omitted name of NFL General Manager], or any of our players. I get a different level of respect and I am able to create a connection with them.

Both women felt that by having that background in athletics and in officiating it gave them the legitimacy needed when they were questioned about their sport knowledge while working in the male-dominated profession of sports broadcasting. Officiating gave them confidence to pursue their dreams.

Mistakes made females in the profession. Some of the participants explained that with there being so few women working in the field of football officiating, they are constantly under a microscope. A mistake made by one female official can turn into the belief, stereotype, or generality that all women officials must be the same. Robyn stated:

You know you have that women, a kicker that just tried out to play for the NFL who was terrible and made a mockery of it and it really pissed off a lot of women. In my field [sports broadcasting] we have a lot of female interns and many of them have ruined the opportunity and you see that in my business. There is any number of them that I could name, people that have been elevated to their status and are held up at being the best of that they do, when those of us that work inside the business know that they aren't the best and know that they may have gotten there for other reasons...they don't have the character that we would aspire...So I think there can be harm done, if you are a female and you don't take advantage of the opportunities the right way. I think when you are a football official, if you can make it past the first two years or so when you are really learning, it's different when you have proven yourself. It's hard I think to be an official and to do females a disservice once you get to that two year mark...you can't just get by on good looks, you can't get by on asking people questions and having them feed you questions during interviews, you can't just say "oh I am going to try it and see what happens." You have to be pretty serious, so I think women who have been football officials for a few years or more show everybody else that they are smart, dedicated, and can handle themselves.

Mary had the experience of seeing women officials in the profession for the wrong reasons or getting promoted for the wrong reason. She stated:

When I went to football officiating camps there were a few other women that came, but there is that perception that there is a sex related reason why you are there, or an underline agenda. Unfortunately, the second year I went the last night everyone went out and there was one female official that messed around with a married referee, and

she was using him to get to a college game, trying to get in [deleted name] conference. All that hard work that I did gets torn down by one person...Everybody generalized that if there was a bad female ref then all must be bad. There could be bad officials but since there were more males they didn't get the generalization. If there was a bad call by a female they just thought they don't belong in the game, so it was tough. One of the other female refs I knew didn't commit herself to the game as much as I did, you have to study and be a student of the game...When you prove yourself, you can admit to having a bad day.

As seen in theme two of the current study, the participants have had varied experiences being one of the few women working as football officials. Even though the participants experienced negative comments and challenging times while officiating, they also had many positive and exciting experiences. If it were not for these good experiences they would not still be in the vocation. By becoming a football official, the participants knew they were going against the generally accepted gender beliefs or ideologies in the sport of football. They accepted the challenge and worked hard to become successful at their profession. The participants felt if they put in the time, and effort, and showed people they knew just as much about football as other officials, they could start to disprove the current gender norms or beliefs in football officiating.

Theme 3: Passion for Officiating and Football.

The third theme that emerged during the current study was the passion the individuals had for the vocation of officiating and for the sport of football. Passion, in its general sense, is defined as a strong inclination and desire toward an activity that one likes, finds important, and in which one invests time and energy (Vallerand et al., 2003). There are two elements

that underlie the basics of “work passion.” The first element is affective in nature, capturing the strong, intense liking for and enjoyment of the job; the second element is a cognitive one capturing the perceived importance or significance of the job to the individual, such that the job becomes internalized to the self and defines who the individual is (Vallerand et al., 2003). Consequently, in order for an individual to be considered having work or job passion, they must have intense liking for the job, as well as view the job as personally important to them.

All the participants in the current study described that they would not be in this type of profession if they did not thoroughly enjoy and get personal satisfaction out of officiating. Even though officiating is a very challenging vocation, with risk of injury and constant verbal abuse from coaches, players, and spectators; all of the participants have a love and a passion for officiating and for the sport of football.

Laura explained that she has come across challenges throughout her officiating career but she will continue to officiate “as long as my body holds up and I can stay in shape, and as long as I add value and can help the game, it is very rewarding and I really love being an official, it is just really fun! I recommend anyone to give it a try.” All of the participants explained that officiating gave them a type of feeling or fulfillment they could not get anywhere else. For example, it opened up opportunities to meet new people and allowed them to travel to new and exciting places. Laura recalled:

Officiating gave me something I cannot get anywhere else. Actually, I think being an official has opened doors for me professionally. I lean daily on my training as an official to help me in my role as a female manager in a male-dominated engineering department. I don't think I have a different “officials” identity. Better or worse, it is part of me.

Robyn also believes that officiating opened up professional opportunities for her in sports broadcasting. She explained that she got to travel to some first class college campuses while officiating. Having these great opportunities and sharing them with her fellow officials gave her the passion for the vocation of officiating. Robyn recalled:

It's being part of a game that I never played, it keeps you close to the action...there really isn't anything better on game day. It's the relationships that you have when you work with such great people...Through officiating I also got to travel to flag football tournaments in various states...if you were one of the top 5 or 10 officials you got an automatic bid to go to the flag football championships. Which sounds really silly, however, it was a week of games leading up to the Sugar Bowl. So you would go down and to the [deleted name] university campus, and it was huge, teams from all over the country, the military plays flag football by the same rules so we had Army and Navy teams, it was a big, big deal... I also did it so I could create a niche for myself and further my career

Hilary never imagined she would meet such great people nor have the opportunity for travel through officiating. She explained:

My mentor [name deleted] was an advisor for an Italian football league that has been going for 15-20 years. He would send American officials over to help train their officials...he had some female officials over there, a lot more than we have actually, so I went over to work with some of their female officials. They send you over for two weeks; you work wherever the games are both weekends. It was a very fun experience, I took my sister and we just had a ball...The second thing I really enjoy are the people, the guys that I worked with for the most part were high quality guys

and I enjoyed that...I also got to travel to really neat stadiums all over the country...I got to go to places I never would have otherwise and just had a lot of fun...I love football officiating and I love being on the field, I really enjoy the high of getting in the zone and calling a game, I just love that part of it.

Karla is very passionate about sports and officiating. It brings her joy when she gets to be out on the field with the players and teaching them the game, especially the young kids. She explained she also enjoys getting together with the guys after the game and “talking football.” Karla is an elementary school teacher during the day and she loves to tell her students about her officiating experiences. The kids get very excited when they see her out on the football field. She recalled:

I was working a game when one of my students from last year was looking at me and his eyes just kind of followed me, and he saw me at another game and he said “stop don’t move,” and I said why, “my mom doesn’t believe that you do this I want her to believe that I am not lying about this,” I was like ok, and we were talking and his mom came up and she was like “ahhhh you do officiate” and I was like yes... “he was telling me and I just didn’t believe him,” she was like “we need to all get out here and do this” and I was like “yes you do, come join me”...the kids have had an awesome response all of them, not just my own class ...I have come across kids that say I remember you were my substitute and you kind of start getting that rock star feeling and you get recognized wherever you go so it’s really fun.

Karla gets to be a role model to her students and others by showing them that anyone can be a football official. Her job is very important to her and she is glad she can share it with others.

Karla’s passion for officiating was also described when she explained:

I have thought about this long and hard and I would do it for free... I mean not that we get paid a whole lot of money...but if I wasn't getting paid I would still do it. I would do it just because I love it, you know, its icing on the cake just to make a few bucks.

Mary and Peggy recalled that their passion for officiating stems from the relationships and connections they have made with players, coaches, and other officials over the years. They got to see athletes grow up and develop in their sport. Mary said she enjoyed when she got to see the athletes when they were older and they remembered her and would come up and want to talk about when they used to play. Mary, Peggy, and all the participants have made friends for life by being involved in football officiating. Jill explained the excitement and passion she feels while officiating:

I love that adrenaline that you don't get from anywhere else. When you are out there officiating, lights on, big game, rivals, packed house and you know there are only five of you to run that game. You walk in with your uniform and you are on that field and stand out there with the national anthem, it's all around you it's overwhelming...so it's a high, just like playing when I was younger...the lower levels I like to help instruct and the coaches really appreciate that...kids recognize me from officiating and they come up to me when they are older and that is really neat.

Jill also had the chance to meet some of the great officials from college and the NFL when she would attend officiating camps. She enjoyed getting to learn from the best. Her biggest excitement in officiating was when she got invited to officiate a Division I college football scrimmage game. It was not just any college football team but her favorite team she had followed since she was young. She recalled:

Working the scrimmage, meeting the coach, it was the best day of my life, the best day of my life! There is nothing else I can touch being a fan and getting to work at the stadium; dressing in the locker room getting ready...I did it!! I might not have been the first female in the NFL which had been my dream, but that was my other dream. So I just love officiating and I am going to see how long I can go, see how my body handles it...We can do whatever we want to do in life, if you have a desire to do something, there is nothing stopping us...that is a blessing in itself and I am thankful.

Beth has loved the sport of football since she was a child. She started playing backyard football and flag football when she was young and that led to her getting the opportunity to play as an adult on a women's professional football team. By playing football, it led her to the officiating vocation. Her passion for officiating stems from her passion in the sport of football. Beth explained:

I loved football and I always wanted to play football...Football in general has provided me some experiences that I never ever would have had otherwise. Most of my big life experiences or things I have been through are through playing football. I was on the [Women's Football] National Team and we went to Sweden and we won the gold medal. Currently I am one of 45 women in the U.S. that can say I have a gold medal for playing tackle football. It's phenomenal, it's awesome, it may not mean much to the general population, but it's pretty cool. Just being able to play football and really if it wasn't for playing football I would have never gotten into officiating and it's so fun. It's a great sport, you are constantly working on getting better, because the rules change and you have to keep up with them... You have the potential to help young kids realize that it's not all about winning, there is sportsmanship, attitude, all

that stuff matters...I mean you do it because you love the sport, you do it because you want to have an impact on the kids even if it's only a little one, and you do it because you want to get it right, even when half of the people don't like your call, if it's right then it's ok.

From all the descriptions and accounts of the participant's experiences, one can understand the participant's love and passion for officiating and the sport of football. It is more than just a job for these women; they would not be out on the field in the hot sun, cold weather, snow, enduring the constant yelling and bickering, if they did not truly enjoy their vocation. Having a passion for officiating and for the sport of football was very eminent among all the participants in this study.

Summary

The findings of the study were presented in this chapter. In order to give context to the findings, participant profiles were provided at the beginning of the chapter. This allowed readers to gain a greater understanding of the football officials' respective career paths and experiences officiating. In presenting the study's findings, information was organized by exploring the research questions and by the following emerging themes: 1) Sense of Community and Support; 2) Varied Gender Experiences Officiating Football; and 3) Passion for Officiating and Football. Chapter five will provide an overview of the study as well as tie the findings to the theoretical framework. Relevant literature is revisited and implications and recommendations for future research are provided.

Chapter 5

Discussions and Conclusions

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the personal and work-related experiences of female football officials, including those who work in high school and college football. Much of the literature on sports officiating has dealt with the recruitment, retention, and safety of officials, therefore the specific topic of female football officials was a new area of research. Subsequently, it was important to understand the involvement of these participants, as they all have unique experiences and circumstances that have led them into this traditionally male-dominated field. The information from this study may be valuable to officiating associations and administrators in order to be more successful in their recruitment and retention of female officials, as well as add to the current literature on gender equity in regards to attitudes, perceptions, and practices in various careers.

The theoretical framework that guided the current study was through a feminist perspective. This framework was used in order to understand the nature of gender disparity and women's roles in the vocation of football officiating. Social role theory (Eagly, 1997) was also used to explore the gender roles in the male-dominated career of officiating. This theory proposes that there are societal expectations regarding the roles and behavior of men and women in society, and when these roles are not conformed to, there may be unintended consequences. In addition, the sex-matching model (Kiesler, 1975) was used in this study because it provided information regarding why women and men choose certain career paths. This model illustrated that "men and women are matched to specific jobs based on the ratio of men and women that currently occupy such positions" (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007, p.

248). This model was important when looking at the male-dominated profession of football officiating, since there are few women currently in this vocation.

Since the subject of female football officials is a new area of study, there were limited topics of literature on the specific subject. For that reason, literature was examined in various broad areas including: (a) history of women in sport; (b) women working in male-dominated careers; (c) gender roles; (d) challenging feminine ideologies; and (e) women pioneers in sports officiating. The role of women in sport has been progressively evolving ever since the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972. The opportunities for females in athletics have increased significantly, but this has not translated into high percentages of women in athletic administration positions or other sport vocations (Acosta & Carpenter, 2012). While Title IX has been influential in creating opportunities for women in sport, there have been some unintended consequences from the law as well (Messner, 1988). Male sport performance is the standard against which female performance is measured. Women may do well in “feminine” sports such as ice-skating, gymnastics, or volleyball, but if they participate in “masculine” sports such as wrestling, football, or baseball, they are seen as “biologically and physically disadvantaged” (McDonagh & Pappano, 2008, p. 40).

These gender role beliefs have an impact on the experiences of women working in male-dominated vocations such as officiating. The role of a sports official is associated with authority, control of others, and power, which are characteristics that are inconsistent with stereotypical feminine roles (Bem, 1981; Graf et al., 1999). Despite the fact that sports officiating has been shown to be a male-dominated career, there have been many influential women that have paved the way for current female officials. The participants in the current

study have proven that women have the ability and knowledge to officiate in the sport of football.

The grand tour question that guided this study was: *What are the experiences of female football officials?* This study also used sub-questions to help refine the central question which included: (a) Why did the participants enter into the vocation of officiating? (b) How do participants characterize successes and/or positive aspects in officiating? (c) How do participants characterize challenges and/or negative aspects in officiating? (d) How have the participants gained and sustained entry in the male-dominated position of officiating? (e) What are the participants' experiences being one of the few women in football officiating? (f) How has the decision to become a sports official impacted the participants' lives? and (g) How can the officiating associations and their members promote and encourage women to join the officiating profession?

Qualitative research design was applied to fully understand the personal and work related experiences of female football officials. More specifically, the study was guided by a case study methodology which served as the framework throughout the study and guided many facets of the research process. A case study was employed in this current study because the researcher was looking at participants within a "bounded system" (Yin, 2003). The bounded system for the current study was that the participants needed to be of the female gender and currently work or have worked as a football official. This bounded system was used because the participants all had to have shared the same phenomena of football officiating in order to fully describe their experiences.

Eight women who currently work or have worked as a high school or college football official participated in the study. The participants were "purposefully selected" (Creswell,

2007; Merriam, 2009) based on their gender and their experiences officiating football. The participants took part in interviews that were semi-structured in nature with open-ended questions. The interviews took place either in-person or over the phone, depending on the location of the participant. The participants also filled out a demographics form which provided information about their officiating history and personal background.

Each interview was transcribed by the researcher and transcripts were evaluated line by line. The data were organized using the computer program Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software. The data were coded using the three step process of open, axial, and selective coding (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). The data were arranged by answering the seven research questions in the study and after analyzing and reviewing all of the data, three major themes emerged in the current study including: 1) Sense of Community and Support; 2) Varied Gender Experiences Officiating Football; and 3) Passion for Officiating and Football.

Summary of Findings

Through data analysis it was discovered that each participant became a football official for various reasons, however they were all guided by the love of sports, the challenge of the game of football, helping and teaching others, and the excitement they get from being an official out on the field. These reasons aligned with a study conducted by Purdy and Snyder (1985) that was discussed in the literature review. In their study the officials went into the vocation for various reasons including: challenge of the game, the excitement, earning extra money, interest and enthusiasm, and the feeling of power and control out on the field.

The participants all shared success in their vocation which included: instructing and helping the athletes on the field, teaching sportsmanship, and creating meaningful

relationships with others. The profession provided each of the participants a challenge that they truly enjoyed. They had to study the game, attend trainings and camps, and maintain knowledge of constant rule changes.

Theme 1: Sense of Community and Support

The participants in the current study all experienced a sense of support from the other officials in their organizations. The organizations were similar to a family, in which they shared in the challenges and successes of the vocation. This type of work-place environment has been called various names including “Community of Practice” (Wenger, 1998) or a “Sense of Community” (SOC) (Chavis et al., 1986; Sarason, 1974). These communities form when the members of a group have a shared domain of interest, a sense of belonging, participate in shared activities, problem solve together, and when each member is important to one another in the group. Having a sense of community within an officiating association, can help individuals overcome some of the challenges that officials face, which is most commonly verbal abuse by spectators, players, and coaches. Having a group to discuss experiences with and give assistance helped the officials to stay in the profession for a longer period of time. There were participants in the current study that said they would have stopped officiating if it were not for the support from their fellow officials.

There are millions of athletes that play sports at various levels, but there are only a select group of people that wear the striped shirt and call themselves officials. The participants have a great sense of pride being a part of this unique group. They enjoy the comradery they have with their fellow officials and they benefit from working as a team and learning from one another. The participants all claimed that they have made lifelong friendships throughout their time as football officials.

The final description of the first theme was having a mentor guide the participants throughout their time in the officiating profession. Each participant in the study had at least one or sometimes multiple mentors that have helped them throughout their officiating career. These mentors helped the participants learn more about the game of football, gave them support, and encouraged them to keep trying even if they felt like leaving the profession. The participants felt their success in football officiating came from those relationships they built with the mentor(s) and by being a part of the community of officials. Many of the participants have now become mentors to other officials and enjoy helping the new generation of officials.

Theme 2: Varied Gender Experiences Officiating Football

Each participant entered into the vocation of officiating for various reasons. When they chose to become football officials, they were aware that there may be some gender challenges since football is a male-dominated sport. The theoretical framework for the current study was viewed through the lens of feminist theory and gender role beliefs. These beliefs are created via societal and cultural ideologies, gender stereotypes, and physical and emotional differences in men and women. The distributions of women and men into occupations are usually correlated with their gender stereotypes. Officiating has characteristics that are more in-line with stereotypical masculine qualities, so seeing a woman in this type of profession is considered out of the ordinary.

As seen in the literature review of the current study, these gender role beliefs play a part in why individuals have varied reactions to women in career roles that are usually held by men. For example, Rudman and Phelan (2010) explained that, “People form *implicit gender stereotypes*, which automatically associate men and women with stereotypic traits,

abilities, and roles...” (p. 193). Since football is usually played by male athletes it is rare to see women hold positions of employment in the sport of football. This is one example of how cultural and social stereotypes have penetrated and impacted the sport domain. The participants did their best to discredit those beliefs by learning all they could about the game of football and displaying that knowledge while officiating. The participants tried hard to not let their gender become an issue when officiating. All the participants felt that there would always be certain individuals that believed in the “good old boys network” or the belief that they do not belong in the game of football. The participants realized that this belief is common in many careers that are dominated by one gender or the other, not just officiating.

It will take gaining exposure to individuals working in non-typical careers for these beliefs to diminish. This includes the participants in the current study talking about their experiences and encouraging other women to try officiating or at least realize that it is a viable option for women. The more the topic is discussed and written about, the more it will help change our societal beliefs on gender roles in various career choices.

These gender role beliefs and ideologies are not held exclusively to male-dominated careers. They are also seen in jobs that are female-dominated as well such as secretaries, childcare, nursing, and flight attendants (Bagilhole & Cross, 2006; Kurtz, 2013). A study conducted by Bagilhole and Cross (2006) investigated ten men in the female-dominated occupations of: Nursing, Occupational Therapist, Community Care Worker, Primary Teacher, Social Worker, and Day Care Worker. The men in this study had similar feelings of enjoyment and fulfillment in their job as did the participants in the current study. Some of the male participants also experienced gender prejudice by certain individuals that did not feel their chosen occupation was “gender appropriate.” The battle is ongoing in regards to gender

and career role beliefs. It will take individuals of both genders to be more represented in non-traditional careers for these beliefs to develop and change.

As discussed in the literature review, there have been many female pioneers in the field of sports officiating (e.g., Bernice Gera, Pam Postema, Violet Palmer, and Dee Kanter). The women in this current study add to the history and accomplishments of women in this vocation. They are helping pave the way for future female football officials and other women that decide to forgo “gender appropriate” careers and choose a vocation that they have a passion for and that they truly enjoy. The current study as well as similar studies will help create more discourse on the topic, which in turn will help with the exposure of individuals working in non-typical careers.

Theme 3: Passion for Officiating and Football

The final theme in the study was the passion the individuals had for the game of football and for the officiating profession. Having “passion” in ones occupation includes two elements including: a strong liking for and enjoyment in the job and a perceived importance or significance of the job to the individual (Vallerand et al., 2003). The participants in the current study held both elements of passion for their profession of officiating.

Literature suggests companies and organizations can benefit from having passionate employees (e.g., Boyatzis et al., 2002; Moses, 2001). “One way to develop passion is to increase employees’ interest in and valuation of their jobs, which in turn can be accomplished by fostering conditions that make workers feel that their contributions matter...” (Ho, Wong, & Lee, 2011, p. 42). Previous research suggests some of these conditions include: empowering workers to make their own decisions, designing work to be meaningful and stimulating, and offering positive feedback (Ho, Wong, & Lee, 2011). With there being a

problem recruiting and retaining sport officials in all sports, supervisors and administrators in these organizations may benefit from creating a workplace that encourages and helps create “passion” in their employees. This could include officiating supervisors or managers being supportive, creating opportunities for professional development, allowing for upward mobility, offering positive feedback, and having a fair evaluation process for their officials. Passionate officials would feel a stronger sense of ownership and interest towards their work and it may help them in the many challenges that come with being a sports official and also help officials stay in the field for a longer period of time.

The participants felt a sense of pride when they were officiating football. They were able to find a way to still be a part of the game and they get a similar feeling of excitement and adrenalin that they once felt as an athlete. The participants explained that they would not be in the officiating profession if they did not thoroughly enjoy and get personal satisfaction out of officiating football. Even with all of the many challenges including threat of injury and verbal abuse, the participants still have a passion for their vocation. They hope others realize that there are many positive aspects to officiating which may help encourage more individuals to enter the profession.

Additional Analysis

After the participants were able to read the results and findings of the study, they were amazed by one another’s stories. They did not realize that other female officials were having similar issues or challenges or having great success in their field. Each participant was able to learn about one another and they realized that they were in similar positions while being one of the few women in football officiating. Since there has not been many articles written on the subject of female football officials, there is a lack of discourse on the topic. This lack of

communication and discussion could be one of the reasons that there are so few women in the field of officiating.

This brings up the issue that there may not be an available platform for these conversations to take place among female officials. Since female football officials are in the minority in most officiating associations, they may not have access to communicate with other females in their profession. The results from the current study show that by having a “sense of community” or “family” between officials, can cause an increase in the success they have and the likelihood that they will stay in the profession. There is a need for this “community” to be created amongst female football officials. By communicating with each other, they would be able to learn from one another and support each other in their chosen profession. One participant from the current study felt the need to reach out to the other participants, she explained:

I finished reading your draft and I absolutely think you got me. It was interesting to read the experiences of the other ladies and how they overlap and parallel with mine. It would be interesting to sit down face to face with all of them and bond over our common experiences. Thanks for presenting me with this opportunity. Sometimes I feel like I am alone in this and it helps to be reminded that I am not.

This opportunity to talk with one another could be accomplished by creating an online blog or website where these women would have a common place for discussions to occur. This would allow these individuals that live all over the United States to come together and have a “sense of community” with one another. This open forum may be the key to helping women face the challenges they have from being one of the few women in the male-

dominated field of football officiating. They can be role models to one another and to others interested in the field and help establish a social support system and community.

The women also explained that they learned something about themselves while participating in the study. The questions asked during the interviews made the participants reflect on their vocation and allowed them to look in-depth at their experiences as a football official. One participant explained after reading the study, “I could hear myself saying all of the words you attributed to me...your study put some of my own words back into another brain cycle to learn more about myself and who I want to be...” The study allowed the participants to do some self-reflecting and see what an amazing experience it has been working in the field of football officiating. I felt the participants were able to gain just as much out of this study as I did as the researcher. This ability to have reflection will hopefully help each participant as they continue in their vocation of football officiating.

Implications

The study’s findings have implications for various individuals including: current and aspiring female officials, coaches, players, athletic administrators, and officiating supervisors and administrators. By sharing the stories of the participants, the information will give others an insight into what it is like to be in their position.

The participants were surprised that there were approximately 180 other women that officiated high school football in the United States. The information from the study will help women that are currently officiating football because they will be able to read about what other officials’ experiences have been in the male-dominated field of football officiating. Many associations only have a few women that officiate football, so they may be able to connect with other women that are sharing similar experiences. The study will also bring

awareness to the associations that have no women officials to show that there are women having success in football officiating. There were many officials that supported the participants in their officiating endeavors, but there were also some officials that did not. By discussing the participants' experiences, it may assist in changing some of the negative perceptions of female football officials.

The current study may also have an impact on individuals considering entering into the field of officiating. Women do not see many other women officiating football, so they may not realize it is an option for them. They may choose to officiate a sport that they have played in the past instead of learning about the sport of football. By bringing awareness to aspiring officials, they will recognize that both men and women can officiate any sport; it does not have to be one that matches their gender role or abilities. The information may also give assistance to women entering any male-dominated career field.

There are many gender stereotypes that exist when it comes to women involved in the game of football. The information in this study will help spectators, players, and coaches understand what the experiences are like for current female football officials. This may help change some of the preconceived ideas that women cannot work in such a masculine sport. Having current coaches and players talk positively about having a women officiate their game may also change the opinions of others. The more the topic is discussed amongst individuals, the more it will assist in changing the social and gender role beliefs in regards to what sport occupation matches certain genders.

Each participant in the study had at least one negative experience with administrative personnel from high school, college, or other leagues when they came to a field to officiate a football game. Usually it was because these individuals were not aware that there would be a

woman as part of the officiating crew. Many administrators would panic or make a “big deal” out of the situation. They would try to find another locker room for the women to use or cause them other delays in regards to their preparation for the game. The women felt that the administrators should have discussed the situation with them first and not assume they would need a separate locker room. The officials usually had a plan worked out with their fellow officials before they got to the field. Field administrators need to plan ahead of time and talk with the officiating associations to see what the proper protocol is with women and men officials when they officiate an opposite gendered sport. This would help with the confusion and sometimes discrimination that occurs when officials work with administrators at various schools or organizations.

The last implication for the current study is to contribute information to the various officiating associations. One of the purposes of this study was to gain information that may help in the recruitment and retention of female football officials. Currently, in the vocation of sports officiating there is a problem with retaining officials. Part of this is due to the abuse that officials endure from players, coaches, and spectators (Rainey, 1995). Literature has shown there are even threats of cancelling games and leagues because of the lack of officials (Kellett & Warner, 2011; Titlebaum et al., 2009). With this being the case and since officiating is a male-dominated vocation, it is even more important to recruit more women into the profession. The participants felt if there was more exposure and information available to women, more may consider officiating football. The societal belief is still that football is a masculine sport that is played by predominately men. Due to these views, many women do not think football officiating is an option for them.

A few of the participants felt that their associations could put more effort into recruiting female officials. A few of the participant's associations currently go to local high schools and talk to the football coaches and players about officiating youth football. If predominantly boys are playing football, then information about officiating football is not getting out to the girls. The officiating associations should talk with other sports coaches and athletic directors to get both genders involved in football officiating.

The second implication for current officiating associations is the way they train and evaluate the sports officials. Two of the participants officiated football for many years in one state and then moved to another state and began officiating. They felt there was a disconnect between the state associations on how they trained and evaluated their officials. The associations made it difficult for some of the participants by making them start out at the beginning level when they moved to a new state. The women understood the need to be re-trained with the state's current football rules and regulations, but they felt they were held back from advancing. Some of the participants would have preferred their associations to have more structure and explicit steps on how to advance to the "big games" such as the state championship. They felt there was still some favoritism or unwritten rules on how officials were chosen for these games. By not allowing for fair advancement within an organization such as officiating, it can cause low morale in employees and may cause them to leave the profession. Superiors and administrators should want to encourage all officials to reach their highest potential and assist them in their advancement.

Recommendations for Future Research

While considering the valuable information garnered from this study, there are several opportunities for future research to continue exploring the lives of officials, including female

football officials. It would be beneficial to conduct a similar study with women that officiate in other male-dominated sports such as baseball or wrestling. Researchers would be able to see if the experiences of these women were similar or different than the experiences of female football officials. It would also be valuable to interview male officials that work in male-dominated sports, in order to get their viewpoint on officiating with women in those sports. There are approximately 180 women that officiate high school football in the United States and it would be beneficial to send out a survey to these other female officials to see what their experiences are like officiating football. By having a larger sample size, the results could be more generalizable.

The implications of this study have an impact on various officiating associations; therefore it would be helpful to interview the administrators in officiating associations to see how they are currently recruiting and retaining male and female sports officials. It would also be beneficial to conduct more nationwide research in order to create discourse between the various associations. The topics of “communities of practice” and “sense of communities (SOC)” were discussed in the results section of current study. By having this “community” amongst officials, it helped the participants have success in their career and stay in the profession longer. There could be some additional research using this framework to see how these communities assist women in the field of officiating and other male-dominated careers. Finally, there could be additional research on the topic of female sports officials using a different lens or theoretical framework.

Final Thoughts

Conducting this research study and exploring the experiences of female football officials has been a rewarding experience. It was extremely gratifying that the participants

were all excited that someone was interested in their career and wanted to hear “their story.” This dissertation allowed me to explore a topic of great personal interest, while it also provided valuable information to the field of officiating. By gaining a better understanding of female football officials’ experiences, we can appreciate the work they do and strive to improve practices throughout officiating. My expectation is that this study will start a new line of research and that the research will continue to have a positive impact on the experiences of these female officials for years to come. The eight participants in the study were very passionate about their job and I hope that others see what a great profession officiating can be. They all had important stories to tell and I want to thank Beth, Peggy, Karla, Robyn, Hilary, Mary, Laura, and Jill for allowing me to tell their “officiating stories.” I am pleased with the results of this study and I am excited to continue researching this topic.

The role of women in sport has been evolving over the past hundred years. There are still challenges to overcome and full equality has yet to be reached, but it is still a very exciting time for women in sport in the twenty-first century. Exciting events occurred in 2012 including: the start of the new National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL), an extended and expanded agreement between the WNBA & ESPN through 2022, the WNBA draft appeared for the first time on prime time television, and an announcement from ESPNW sponsoring the “Nine for IX” movie series about the history of women’s sport set to debut in summer, 2013. There was also national news made when a video was posted online of 9-year-old Sam Gordon playing tackle football with her local youth team in Utah. The video clip soon accumulated over 2 million views and she became a sports superstar overnight. Sam was even invited to watch the 2013 Super Bowl with the NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell (Dicker, 2013). Her national attention gave rise to girl’s involvement in the sport of football.

There is also a current wave in the feminist movement amongst women in the workplace. Much of this renewed interest was started by Sheryl Sandberg, the chief operating officer of Facebook. She wrote a book titled “Lean In” which argues that women face invisible, even subconscious, barriers in the workplace, and not just from their bosses. In her view, women are also harming themselves. Sandberg said in an interview with the New York Times, “We hold ourselves back in ways both big and small, by lacking self-confidence, by not raising our hands, and by pulling back when we should be leaning in, and the result is that men still run the world” (Kantor, 2013). Sandberg’s message is gaining momentum around the country and more women are starting to take charge of their own future by realizing their own actions dictate and have an impact on getting ahead in the business and sports world. This campaign to “Lean In” was seen in the lives of the participants in the current study. Each participant was not afraid to try a profession that was out of the ordinary for their gender and they have paved the way for future women in the officiating profession. It was a privilege to be able to share the stories of these women and I hope others can learn from their experiences.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Statistics of High School Female Football Officials

<i>States with Female High School (HS) Officials</i>	<i>Estimated # of Females</i>	<i>Estimated # of Total HS Football Officials</i>	<i>States without Female HS officials as of 06/2012</i>	<i>States that did not respond to the survey or statistics were not available as of 06/2012</i>
Alabama	15	1942	Hawaii	Arkansas
Alaska	6	127	Idaho	California
Arizona	8	750	Indiana	Delaware
Colorado	3	741	Massachusetts	Georgia
Connecticut	7	678	Minnesota	Nebraska
Florida	15	2334	Missouri	New Jersey
Illinois	13	2816	Nevada	New York
Iowa	7	1385	North Dakota	Texas
Kansas	8	1700	Rhode Island	Virginia
Louisiana	7	1085	South Dakota	Mississippi
Maine	6	240	Vermont	
Maryland	7	853	Washington	
Michigan	7	2707	Wyoming	
Montana	3	450	Kentucky	
New Hampshire	2	180		
New Mexico	5	388		
North Carolina	10	2100		
Ohio	12	3400		
Oklahoma	5	1200		
Oregon	12	773		
Pennsylvania	13	2618		
South Carolina	1	725		
Tennessee	2	1410		
Utah	1	650		
Washington DC	10	72		
West Virginia	3	760		
Wisconsin	9	2252		
Totals:	183	34,366		

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email

Dear (insert name),

My name is Heidi Nordstrom, I am a 4th year doctoral student in Sports Administration at the University of New Mexico. I have completed my coursework and I am in the process of working on my dissertation study, entitled “Behind the Stripes: An Exploration of Female Football Officials.”

For this study, I will interview fifteen women that currently work or have worked as high school or college football officials. There has been no research conducted specifically on women that officiate in the sport of football, therefore I am interested in learning about their professional and personal experiences while in this vocation.

In order to collect data for the study, I am looking to interview women that officiate football for your organization. I am hoping that you would be able to forward this email on to those individuals in your organization. Their participation would include three interviews, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. I would like to conduct one in-person interview at a location that is convenient for the participant and two additional interviews either by phone or an on-line method (e.g., Skype) approximately one week after the in-person interview. The identity of the participants will be known only by the researcher and I will create a fictitious name in order for their identity to stay anonymous. I will not include any organizational names or city/state locations. I will only use the region of the country the participants are from (e.g., Western part of the U.S.)

I would greatly appreciate your assistance in finding participants for the current study. You will find attached a letter to forward to any interested female officials. The participation by the officials is completely voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at any time. I am confident that this research will provide valuable information for current officiating associations and administrators as far as recruitment and retention of female officials, as well as assist aspiring female football officials.

If you have further questions please contact me at hnordstr@unm.edu or (***) ***-****. The participants can contact me either by phone or email if they are interested in being a part of the study. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Heidi Nordstrom

APPENDIX C

Participant Letter

Hello,

My name is Heidi Nordstrom, I am a 4th year doctoral student in Sports Administration at the University of New Mexico. I have completed my coursework and I am in the process of working on my dissertation study, entitled “Behind the Stripes: An Exploration of Female Football Officials.”

I sent an email to your officiating association and asked if this letter could be sent to current or past female football officials in the organization to see if you would be interested in participating in my current research project. Please read the details provided about the current study and if you have any further questions I would be happy to answer them.

For this study, I will interview fifteen women that currently work or have worked as high school or college football officials. There has been no research conducted specifically on women that officiate football, therefore I am interested in learning about professional and personal experiences of women in this vocation.

Your participation would include three interviews, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. I would like to conduct one in-person interview at a location that is convenient for you and two additional interviews either by phone or an on-line method (e.g., Skype) approximately one week after the in-person interview. Your identity as a participant will only be known by myself, the principle investigator, and I will create a fictitious name in order for your identity to stay anonymous. I will not include any organizational names or city/state locations. I will only use the region of the country where you officiate (e.g., Western or Eastern part of the U.S.)

The purpose of this study is to gain a holistic perspective of the experiences of female football officials working in the male-dominated career of football officiating. The benefit for your participation in this study is that your input will add to literature on females working in male-dominated careers. The information and data gathered from this study will also assist officiating associations with their recruitment and retention of female officials, as well as add to the literature on gender equity in sport.

There are minimal foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study. Information of a personal nature may be sought by the researcher, but you may opt out of questions at any time. Every effort of confidentiality will be made throughout the entire study.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. I will provide a full copy of the dissertation proposal if you would like to learn more about my study. I look forward to speaking with you about this research opportunity in the near future. I can be reached at (***) ***-**** or hnordstr@unm.edu if you have any questions on being a participant in this study.

Sincerely,

Heidi Nordstrom

APPENDIX D

The University of New Mexico Consent to Participate in Research Behind the Stripes: An Exploration of Female Football Officials Experiences

1/30/2013

Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is being conducted by the principle investigator Heidi Nordstrom, a doctoral candidate in Sport Administration from the Department of Health, Exercise and Sports Sciences at the University of New Mexico. The responsible faculty advisor for this study is Dr. John Barnes.

The purpose of this study is to understand the personal and professional experiences of women who officiate high school or college football. You are being invited to participate in this study because of your position as a current or past football official. All participants must be 18 years of age or older. This form will explain the research study, and will also explain the possible risks as well as the possible benefits to you. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. If you have any questions, please ask one of the studies investigators.

What will happen if I decide to participate?

If you agree to participate, the following things will happen:

You will be asked to take part in three interviews with the principle investigator Heidi Nordstrom. The first two interviews will take place in-person and the last one will be conducted via phone. If an in-person interview is not possible due to where you live in proximity to the principle investigator, you may be asked to participate in phone interviews only or through interviews using an on-line method such as Skype. The interviews will take place over a three week period at a time that is convenient for you (sometime between February and March, 2013). I will allow for 5-7 days between each interview in order to give you time to reflect on the interview questions and to allow the principal investigator to transcribe the interviews as well as to clarify any questions you have answered in the prior interviews.

The interviews will include a series of three semi-structured interviews (60 minutes each), and will ask questions regarding your personal and professional experiences related to your position as a football official. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable.

The interview questions are attached for you to review. The interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed by the principle investigator. The audio tapes will be kept until transcription is complete and then the tapes will be erased immediately following. There will be no identifiers in the data that link your name/identity to the data collected. A pseudonym will be used throughout the entire study. Any data will be kept in a locked office at the principle investigator home as well as on a password and firewall protected computer.

How long will I be in this study?

Participation in this study will take a total of 3 hours over a period of three weeks sometime between February and March, 2013.

What are the risks or side effects of being in this study?

There are minimal foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study. Information of a personal nature may be sought by the researcher, but you may opt out of questions at any time. There may be risks of stress, inconvenience and possible loss of privacy and confidentiality while participating in a research study. Just be aware that your identity will only be known by the principle investigator throughout the study and every effort of confidentiality will be made. There will be no link from your name to the associated data collected. Your name will be de-identified at the start by using a pseudonym or fake name throughout the entire study.

During the study, an audio recording device will be used to record what you are saying throughout the interviews. By being audio recorded there may be a higher risk to you because now your voice is on a recorded device. If at any time you do not want to be audio recorded, please let the principle investigator know. Please be aware that the only individual that will be listening to the recordings will be the principle investigator. The recordings are used so the principle investigator can focus on the interview and not on writing down everything the participants say. It also helps with data analysis at the end of the study. If at any time you would like to hear the recordings you may do so. There will be no names used on the audio device, only pseudonyms. The audio recordings of your interview will only be kept until transcription of the interview is complete. This will be within one week of the interview. Once the transcription of the interview is complete; your interview will be deleted from the hard drive of the audio recording permanently.

For more information about risks and side effects, ask the investigator.

What are the benefits to being in this study?

If you decide to participate in this study there may be no direct benefit to you, although it is anticipated that the information will be useful to you and others in the officiating and sports community.

There is currently no scholarly research on the topic of female football officials, therefore a goal of the research is to allow the participants to share their experiences so others will better understand what it is like to be a female football official. The information will also help other individuals that may be interested in becoming a football official, as well as football associations in their attempt to better recruit and retain female officials.

What other choices do I have if I do not want to be in this study?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any point during this study. There are no consequences if you choose to withdraw from this study and you can choose to allow the principle investigator to use the data collected up to that point.

How will my information be kept confidential?

Information contained in your study records is used by study staff. The University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board (IRB) that oversees human subject research and/or other entities may be permitted to access your records. There may be times when we are required by law to share your information. However, your name or any identity information will not be used in any published reports about this study.

Throughout the entire study your identity will be kept anonymous by using a pseudonym instead of your real name. There will be no written link from your name to the associated data collected. Your name will be de-identified at the start by using a pseudonym or fake name throughout the entire study. The principle investigator will be the only one that knows which pseudonym matches each participant; this information will not be stored as a written document. Your organization name, city, or state will not be used at any time throughout the study. Instead your location will be described by using a very general term such as the "Eastern or Western part of the United States". All interviews will be audio recorded with a portable audio recorder. Once the interview is over and the interviews are transcribed by the principal investigator, the recordings will be permanently deleted and destroyed. This will take place within one week of the interview taking place. All data pertaining to this study will be kept in a locked office at the University of Washington where the principal investigator is employed. The data will be kept in a locked drawer in the office with the principle investigator being the only one with access. The audio recording device will also be kept in the locked drawer in the office at the University of Washington. There will be no names used while the interview is being audio recorded. Only pseudonyms will be used, therefore there will be no link from the participant real identity to the audio recording or on any transcriptions. Once the study is complete (July 2013) all data will be shredded and destroyed.

We will take every measure possible to protect the security of all your personal information.

What are the costs of taking part in this study?

There will be no costs for you to participate in this study.

Will I be paid for taking part in this study?

There will be no compensation for participating in this current research study.

How will I know if you learn something new that may change my mind about participating?

You will be informed of any significant new findings that become available during the course of the study, such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participating in the research or new alternatives to participation that might change your mind about participating.

Can I stop being in the study once I begin?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any point in this study without consequences.

Whom can I call with questions or complaints about this study?

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints at any time about the research study, Heidi Nordstrom, or her associates will be glad to answer them at (---) --- - ---- or hnordstr@unm.edu.

If you would like to speak with someone other than the research team, you may call the UNMHSC HRPO at (505) 272-1129.

Whom can I call with questions about my rights as a research participant?

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call the UNMHSC HRPO at (505) 272-1129. The HRPO is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving human participants. For more information, you may also access the IRB website at <http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/hrrc/irbhome.shtml>.

CONSENT

You are making a decision whether to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you read the information provided. By signing this consent form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research participant.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this study and I also agree to have my interviews recorded with an audio recording device. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

Name of Adult Subject (print) Signature of Adult Subject Date

INVESTIGATOR SIGNATURE

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of her questions. I believe that she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

Name of Investigator (print) Signature of Investigator Date

APPENDIX E
Demographics Form

Name: _____

Once I have recorded the information from this form I will not keep your name as an identifier. This form will be shredded and only a pseudonym will be used for confidentiality purposes.

If you would like to choose a pseudonym or other identifier for yourself please do so on the line below. Otherwise I will choose one for you (ex. Participant A, Official #1, or fake name)

1. How would you describe yourself? (Choose one or more from the following racial groups)

- African/African-American/Black
- Asian-American/East Asian/South Asian/Southeast Asian/Asian Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/Latino/Mexican-American
- Middle Eastern/West Asian/North African
- Native American /Native Alaskan
- White/European
- Prefer Not to Answer
- Other (please specify)_____

2. Gender:

- Female Male

2. Age: _____

3. Profession other than officiating _____

4. Total years you have been a sports official_____

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol

A series of three semi-structured interviews will be used to gather data from each participant. The following questions will guide the interview sessions, although I will interject with follow-up questions depending on the flow of the conversations.

Interview one – Focused life history

- Tell me about your childhood as it relates to athletics.
- Tell me about your educational background, including your athletics experiences.
- In your previous positions in athletics, what have been your responsibilities?
- Why did you decide to pursue to be a sports official?
- What kind of preparation does it take to become an official?
 - How many hours on average, per week do you spend preparing to officiate, traveling to and from the schools, and officiating the game?
- What is your background in relation to football?
- How did you get into football officiating or officiating in a male-dominated sport?
- What are the most positive aspects to your job?
- What are some challenges to your job?
- How would you characterize your general experiences in officiating male sports?
 - Is this different than your experiences in female sports?

Interview two – Details of experiences

- How has your educational background prepared you for your career?
- What is your daytime job and how does it play a role in you being an official?
- How did your previous positions prepare you for this position?
- What is the climate like for women in this profession?
- How have male colleagues reacted to your position?
- How have players, coaches, fans etc... reacted to your position?
- To what extent do you think you are treated differently than male officials?
- What is your impression of the challenges women may face in this field?
- How does your role as a football officials affect your personal life?
- How does your personal life impact your role as a football official?
- How do you balance your professional and personal lives?
- How does the officiating environment affect your work/life balance?
- How do you make it work within your relationships/family?

Interview three – Reflection on the meaning

- What professional mentoring relationships have you had?
- How have these relationships influenced your career path?
- What do you think it means to be a female official?
 - What is your identity out on the field?
- How do you network with other female football officials?
- Why are there so few female football officials?
- What could be done to recruit more females into the profession?
- What was your reaction to having the first female in the NFL this year?
- What advice would you give young women wanting to pursue this profession?
- Where do you see yourself going from here?
- Considering our discussion, why do you feel passionate about football officiating?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences as a football official?

APPENDIX G
Participant Information

<i>Participant Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i># of Years Officiating</i>	<i>Sports Officiated</i>	<i>Current Day Job</i>	<i>Location</i>
Beth	33	5 yrs.	softball, youth, junior high, & high school football	clinical services coordinator for a non-profit organization	Western part of the United States
Hilary	52	14 yrs.	youth, high school, junior college, div. I/II/III college, Italian League, & Professional Arena League	stay-at-home mom and formally an adjunct professor	Western part of the United States
Mary	61	30 yrs. (retired)	volleyball, baseball (youth through semi-pro), softball, basketball, football (youth though semi-pro)	retired, worked in education as a school psychologist and clinical counselor	Southwest part of the United States
Laura	52	13 yrs.	youth, junior high, & high school football, women's international football league	manager of an engineering group	Southwest part of the United States
Robyn	34	12 yrs.	flag football & basketball (college intramurals), youth, junior high, & high school football	sports broadcasting	Western part of the United States
Jill	54	23 yrs.	youth & high school football, division II/III college football & high school basketball	business owner and consultant	Western part of the United States
Karla	48	18 yrs.	youth baseball (2 yrs.), youth, junior high, high school football (18. yrs)	teacher	Western part of the United States
Peggy	58	30 yrs.	ice hockey (5 yrs.), baseball (25 yrs.), basketball, soccer, football (youth, high school, men's league) 30 yrs.	author, teacher, & past sports broadcaster	Southwest part of the United States

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