

**Female Coaches and a Winning Team Culture in NCAA Division I Field Hockey:
Perspectives of Current and Former Athletes**

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Abstract:

Introduction: According to self-determination theory, individuals have a need to feel: (a) competent, (b) relatedness, or a sense of belongingness or connections with others, and (c) autonomy, or independence in making decisions (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Self-determination theory has been shown to be an important factor in coaching success and how coaches create a winning culture (Gilbert, Robbins, Gilbert, & Ruser, 2017; Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016; Mallett, 2005; Vallée & Bloom; 2016). Athletes are a prime beneficiary of a winning team culture, but not much is known about their experiences as it relates to this phenomenon. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to explore how successful NCAA Division I field hockey coaches create a winning team culture from the perspective of their current and former athletes.

Methods: Nine athletes (four current and five former) participated in semi-structured interviews 45-70 minutes in length. Verbatim transcription yielded 131 pages of single-spaced text, which was managed via the qualitative software, N.Vivo. Beginning data analysis involved independently reading the interview transcripts and looking for raw data themes. Content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was then performed resulting in three higher order themes (and several lower order themes): Competence (assumptions about hockey IQ, authenticity, coach-athlete partnership, defined expectations, film review, game reflection, give up, inconsistent feedback, leadership mindset, maximize players, questioning/lack of praise, team first), Relatedness (camaraderie, coach emotion overwhelms, connection during recruiting, know and treat players as individuals, team bigger than one player, team bonding activities), and Autonomy (common sense approach, conversation-athletes provide input, Fit for 90 app, independent athlete check-ins, leaning on athletes, talking at players). Though the athletes discussed several strategies used by the coaches to create a winning team culture, the athletes also recognized that the coaches engaged in many behaviors that had the opposite effect. These negative lower order themes are italicized in the previous list.

Conclusion: The next steps in terms of this project include conducting interrater reliability tests and drafting the manuscript. The goal for manuscript submission is August 31, 2018. It is anticipated that the manuscript will provide a more comprehensive portrait of how successful coaches create winning team cultures in high performance sport. This information will be pertinent to coaches, Athletic Directors, coaching scientists, and sport psychology professionals from both a theoretical and applied perspective.