TEAM LEADERSHIP SELECTION PREFERENCES IN STUDENT-ATHLETES

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A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
In Kinesiology

April 2011
TEAM LEADERSHIP SELECTION PREFERENCES IN STUDENT-ATHLETES

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

TEAM LEADERSHIP SELECTION PREFERENCES IN STUDENT-ATHLETES

Daniel S. Noel

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study was to determine the perception and preferences of athletes on independent sport teams regarding team leadership selection in hopes of making team leadership selection in sports an educated decision. A secondary purpose was to develop a questionnaire that effectively facilitated the gathering of this information. METHODOLOGY: 37 DII track and field athletes completed an online qualitative survey designed by the researcher regarding their preferences toward team leadership selection. The researcher used an open coding method to separate data into categories, themes, and sub-themes. RESULTS: Four main categories emerged from coding: (a) call for election, which included support for democratic participation; (b) call for appointment, which included support of an autocratic method of selection; (c) indifference to method, which included statements neither in favor of nor opposed to either decision-making style; and (d) other, which included statements unrelated to the previous categories that still pertained to the purpose of the study. DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION: As participants expressed opinions in support of and in opposition to team leadership selection by election and by appointment, the researcher recommends that a consultative method of team leadership selection will give coaches the best chance of optimizing athlete satisfaction by catering to all student-athlete preferences while neglecting none.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In acknowledgement of their immeasurable support, I would like to thank the following people and parties:

1. Dr. Richard Stull, Dr. Sheila Kelly, and Dr. Craig Riordan for their mentorship and their openness to exploration.
2. My athletes for their patience and their understanding of my many scattered moments.
3. My friends and family for their listening ears and loving hearts.
4. My future-baby-mamma for her ever-present inspiration.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Throughout my life in sports, from bunch-ball soccer to collegiate track and field, my coaches dictated the team leadership selection process. Whether they appointed the leading scorer, star pitcher, obnoxious son, or inspirational workhorse, the coaches of my teams made the decisions regarding team leadership selection while we athletes followed.

In the fall of my third year of college, having been appointed team captain by my track coach, I enthusiastically announced my new position to a friend on the women’s water polo team. Upon hearing the details of the selection process (i.e., coach contact athlete, coach meet with athlete, coach appoint athlete) she scoffed in disbelief, implying that a similar process would never work on her team. She then detailed the election process her team followed to decide their team captain: team meet together, team make decision, coach deal with it. She went on to explain the delicate balance the team captains were responsible for keeping with a coach they all admired as a strategist, but struggled with as a mentor. Their team captain was carefully selected as someone whom the athletes respected, but, more importantly, someone with the courage to stand up and express the views of her fellow team-members. For this very reason, this individual was often the person the coach would have been least likely to appoint. Without these elections, her team, she insisted, would crumble. Hence, though autocracy thrived on my track and field team, it seemed democracy kept her team together.
From the ingrained image of a dictatorial old-school coach on our national sports consciousness to the militaristic chanting of lunchtime spin-class instructors, sports often function as an autocracy. For example, despite the preference of some athletes for a task-skilled team leader, team leader selection is often coach-appointed and based on skill level and seniority (Tropp & Landers, 1979). The qualities upon which leadership selection is based is just one example of the many possible disconnects between the preferences of athletes and the perception of coaches regarding team leadership, highlighting the negative effect those disconnects can have on team dynamics (Glenn & Horn, 1993). Although evidence that questions the effectiveness of coach-appointed team leaders, many coaches continue to exert full authority over the leadership selection process, perhaps because of how highly influential team leadership decisions are (Kenow & Williams, 1999). After all, should team leadership selection be left to what could amount to homecoming ballots? Is team leadership at risk to be corrupted by popularity? Should such an influential decision be left to the whim of the masses, or rather be granted to the will of the monarchy?

However teams select their leaders, a fundamentally important goal remains: athlete satisfaction. The congruence hypothesis suggests that to effectively increase athlete satisfaction, behaviors athletes perceive a coach as exhibiting must match with the behaviors athletes prefer in their team environment (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995). Sports leadership pioneers Smoll and Smith (1989) second the importance of athlete perception, stating that “leadership effectiveness resides both in the behaviors of the leader and the eyes of the beholder” (p. 1544). However, despite the importance of team leadership,
research regarding the preferences of athletes toward either an autocratic or democratic method of team leadership selection (appointment being autocratic, or decided by the authority, and election being democratic, or decided by the group) is inconclusive. Studying university-level basketball players, Chelludurai, Haggerty and Baxter (1989) stated that athletes preferred an autocratic decision making style, while Weiss and Friedrichs (1986) found the opposite among a similar group of university-level basketball players, claiming that a democratic approach by coaches resulted in increased satisfaction among athletes. As will be discussed later, although the quality of the decision may factor into the equation, numerous other variables, including gender (Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson, 2004; Chelludurai & Saleh, 1978), or task dependence (Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984), may be the true determinant. Considering the bearing that these many variables can have upon athlete perception, which so heavily effects athlete satisfaction, support for either team leadership selection by appointment or election merits further exploration.

Thus, though athlete satisfaction may depend heavily on athlete perception matching athlete preference, research regarding specific preferences toward autocratic and democratic decision-making styles conflicts. Without concrete evidence for one leadership style over another, one cannot effectively gauge the preferences of athletes toward the team leadership selection process, a process integral to team leadership. Although preferences provided directly from athletes themselves relating to the team leadership selection process would elucidate these concerns, those preferences remain unknown.
The Need for Qualitative Inquiry

Despite the complicated depth of questions surrounding the coach-athlete dyad, qualitative methodology has been under-utilized in the field of sport psychology (Poczwardowski, Barott, & Jowett, 2006). Though quantitative methods may identify trends within the field, qualitative methods could more effectively unravel the interpersonal dynamics of the coach-athlete relationship, making a qualitative approach the next logical research step for such a complex topic (Loughead & Hardy, 2005; Poczwardowski, Barott, & Jowett, 2006). As this literature review will show, though ample quantitative research exists on the topic of sports leadership, little consensus exists from one study to the next. Thus, the use of qualitative methods presents a viable alternative for greater insight into the preferences of athletes regarding team leadership selection.

Overview of Leadership in Sports

From providing on-the-field guidance to off-the-field support, team leaders perform an essential role in sports. However, despite the potential influence team leaders have on factors such as performance, team cohesion, and athlete satisfaction, mixed results in the current literature make it unclear how to best facilitate leadership selection in a sporting context. In sports, leadership can be characterized as inspiring acts or behaviors that encourage others to outperform expectations, thereby contributing to the greater good of the team (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). This ability to transcend expectations can positively affect not only team performance, but also athlete satisfaction. For example, a leader that inspires his or her teammates to play tougher
defense at the end of a basketball game not only increases the likelihood of team success, but also betters the chances that his or her teammates will feel satisfied with their effort, win or lose. This potential to impact athlete satisfaction attests to the influence team leadership has on both the success of the team and the fullness of the overall experience. Although the study of leadership can follow several routes, most notably in the direction of leadership effectiveness or leadership organization, one critical component largely neglected within leadership research is how team leaders are selected.

**Conceptual Model of Sports Leadership**

A majority of research on sports leadership centers on coaches and their role as leaders for their teams. Chelladurai and Carron (1978) developed the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML) to categorize the leadership behaviors of coaches in sport. The MML evaluates three layers of leadership: antecedents of leadership behavior, leader behaviors themselves, and consequences of leadership behaviors. These layers break down further into actual coaching behaviors, preferred coaching behaviors, and appropriate leadership behaviors (Chelladurai & Carron, 1978). Though useful for the examination of coaching leadership, the MML does not directly evaluate team leadership or its selection process. In addition to the MML, the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) investigates five different aspects of leadership in sports: positive feedback, social support, training and instruction, autocratic behavior, and democratic behavior (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). This researcher will focus predominantly on the last two aspects of the LSS, autocratic and democratic behavior, as they most readily apply to the preferences of athletes toward team leadership selection.
Decision Making Style: Autocratic vs. Democratic

While one might easily visualize an autocratic coach, imagining a democratic one may prove more difficult. In their classic work developing the LSS, Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) define democratic behavior by coaches as “the extent to which the coach permits participation by the athletes in decision making”, and autocratic behavior as “the extent to which a coach keeps apart from the athletes and stresses his or her authority in dealing with them” (p. 41). Following the latter definition, the autonomous appointment of an individual to a leadership position on a team would constitute an autocratic decision; in contrast, a team-elected selection process would represent a democratic decision. Granted, team leadership selection processes cannot be polarized into only these two distinct categories. Varying degrees of autocracy would exist depending on whether or not a team-involved nomination or feedback process precedes the appointment. Elections too could fluctuate in the degree to which they are fully democratic based on whether coaches place any mandates or constraints upon the selection process.

The continuum of leadership decision methods, developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973), readily adapts to the varying degrees of participation possible in the selection of team leadership. This taxonomy separates decision methods into five categories, including two processes involving autocratic decision making, two processes involving consultative decision making, and, the fifth process, democratic decision making (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). These five levels help weigh the different amounts of input team members could have upon the decision of team leadership, ranging from no input to complete control over the process (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Any constraints a coach
might place on the appointment process, such as specific qualifications required for selection or self-empowerment with ability to veto team decisions, would affect where the process fell on the decision-making scale.

Considering the applicability of the dichotomy of autocratic and democratic decision making to team leadership selection, exploring athlete preferences toward each style becomes significant. However, as numerous variables might alter the preference for one decision style over another, the impact of decision-making on team satisfaction may depend on specific population preferences (Weiss & Frierichs, 1986). For example, studies of university basketball players have presented conflicting evidence for the preference toward one decision style or the other (Chelladurai, Haggerty, & Baxter, 1989; Weiss & Frierichs, 1986). Chelladurai, Haggerty, and Baxter (1989) held that athletes generally preferred autocratic decision-making while Weiss and Frierichs (1986) stated that a democratic decision-making style produces more satisfied athletes.

Gender may also heavily influence decision-making preference. Some evidence suggests males show a greater preference for autocratic behavior than females (Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson, 2004; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1978). Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) even call the adoption of a different decision making style based on the gender of the team a “necessity” (p. 91). Despite these affirmations, not all research on decision-making preference and gender reveals a difference in preferences (Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984).

In addition to gender, preferences of athletes may also fluctuate based on task dependence (Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson, 2004; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984). Task
dependence refers to whether an athlete participates in an independent or interdependent sport. Individual sports, such as track and field or swimming, fall under the umbrella of independent. Conversely, team sports, such as volleyball or soccer, are classified as interdependent. Taking these distinctions into account, independent, or individual, sport athletes have been shown to exhibit a notably higher preference for democratic leader behavior than interdependent sport athletes (Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson, 2004; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984).

Based on existing research on autocratic and democratic behavior preferences among athletes, several variables arise that may affect athlete preference. These possible variables include age, maturity, skill level, gender, and task dependence (Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson, 2004; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1979; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984; Weiss & Frierichs, 1986). Assuming the construct of autocratic behavior representing team leadership appointment and democratic behavior representing election, the study of athlete preferences in these regards has significant ramifications for the method of team leadership selection used by coaches.

**Team Leadership Selection: Appointment vs. Election**

Though no concrete conclusions arise from studies on the general preferences of athletes toward autocratic and democratic behavior, specific findings related to team leadership and team leadership selection provide valuable insight. Glenn and Horn (1993) note a discrepancy between leadership ability as perceived by coaches and as perceived by athletes, explaining that coaches appear to choose leadership based strictly on playing ability, whereas team members factored in other variables, such as psychological
characteristics. This low correlation between coach perception and athlete perception extended to self-ratings as well, meaning that coach perceptions of leadership ability did not correspond to athletes’ ratings of their own capacity to lead, suggesting an inability of coaches to assess the psychological profile of their athletes (Glenn & Horn, 1993). In teams using an election process, outstanding leadership ability appears to outweigh outstanding playing ability as well, illustrated by evidence that athletes will not necessarily elect a high-caliber player unless he or she met the team’s additional needs for leadership (Tropp & Landers, 1979). Thus, despite a majority of team leadership selection being made by appointment, the disconnect between coach perception of team leadership and the dissimilar perception of athletes questions the ability of coaches to appoint leaders preferred by their athletes (Glenn & Horn, 1993; Tropp & Landers, 1979).

More recent researchers on the topic of leadership selection have continued to question the validity of appointment as a method of team leader selection. Loughead, Hardy, and Eys (2006) implied that coaches simply are not capable of being so in tune with their athletes as to understand the intricacies of their desires and expectations for leadership. Eys, Loughead, and Hardy (2007) agreed, asserting that a delicate balance between task and social aspects of team leadership must be exhibited by effective team leaders, a balance, they insinuate, only assessable by team members. Moreover, in their attempt to identify leaders, coaches may project leadership upon high-caliber athletes who do not necessarily meet the additional leadership needs called for by their peers (Glenn & Horn, 1993; Loughead, Hardy, & Eys, 2006).
Aside from the potential drawbacks of appointment, elections as a mode of leadership selection may benefit teams simply by empowering athletes and increasing the amount of opportunities for participation (Bartram & Casimir, 2006). Bartram and Casimir (2006) stressed the importance of trust in the relationship between leader and follower, complementing Kenow and Williams (1999), who argued that trust in the coach-athlete relationship could be enhanced through more involvement on the part of the athlete in decision-making processes. A positive approach to the coach-athlete relationship, which could presumably be measured based on the degree of trust between coach and athlete, also impacts team success and athlete satisfaction (Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1979). Presumably a coach could choose to demonstrate trust to his or her athletes by empowering them to select team leadership themselves. On the other hand, being such a high quality decision, coaches might be motivated to hold the reigns themselves.

The Congruence Hypothesis: Preference, Perception and Athlete Satisfaction

The importance of these leadership decisions are further highlighted by the impact they can have on athlete satisfaction. In 1971, Yukl (1971) proposed a discrepancy model of leadership behavior, hypothesizing that “subordinate satisfaction with the leader is a function of the discrepancy between actual leader behaviors and the behavior preferences of subordinates” (p. 422). Chelladurai (1978) adapted this model into the congruence hypothesis, conjecturing that athlete satisfaction would be highest when athlete perception was congruent with athlete preference. In later work, Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) examined the congruence hypothesis in relation to autocratic and democratic behavior, concluding that coaches should match their own behavior to the decision-
making preference of their athletes, thereby increasing satisfaction. Therefore, to create
the most satisfied team atmosphere possible, coaches presumably need to have a priori
understanding of the preferences of their athletes.

In a prior study of preference and perception across a variety of sports,
Chelladurai (1984) indicated that, in the case of autocratic and democratic behavior, the
higher the correlation between perception and preference, the more satisfied the athlete.
Most importantly, in regards to autocratic behavior, precision in matching perception to
preference was critical, as deviation in either direction (too much autocratic behavior or
too little) resulted in a decline in satisfaction (Chelladurai, 1984). Democratic behavior,
on the other hand, exhibited a linear relationship: the greater the perception of democratic
behavior relative to the preference for it, the higher the satisfaction (Chelladurai, 1984).
Given its bearing on satisfaction, the subtle balance of congruence between perception
and preference gives reason to solicit specific preferences directly from athletes.
Chelladurai’s (1984) participant sample included both genders and a diverse range of
teams (i.e., basketball, wrestling, and track and field), suggesting that despite difference
in gender and task dependence, the congruence hypothesis was predictive across all three
sports.

The congruence hypothesis has also been applied and tested to team cohesion.
Shields, Gardner, Bredemeier, and Bostro (1997) tested the congruence of perceived and
preferred amounts of the dimensions of the LSS as well as the relationship between
congruence and team cohesion, stating that team cohesion was highest when perceived
amounts of autocratic and democratic behavior matched preferred amounts of each
behavior. Still, while important to know that the congruence hypothesis holds when applied to team cohesion, uncovering what autocratic and democratic behaviors are preferred, so that they may be matched, still remains. As previously alluded to, Smoll and Smith (1989) refer to the “eyes of the beholder” (p. 1544) when referencing the importance of athlete perception in leadership effectiveness. Coaches, presumably hoping to be effective leaders themselves, must then factor in the perception of their athletes when establishing their method of leadership selection.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine and describe the perception and preferences of athletes on independent sport teams regarding team leadership selection. A secondary purpose was to develop a questionnaire that effectively facilitates the gathering of this information. In whole, the purpose of this study was to make the process of team leadership selection an educated decision for coaches, so that they might better facilitate satisfaction among their athletes.
CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Participants

Participants were thirty-seven current track and field athletes (11 male, 26 female) competing at the NCAA Division II level in southern California. All participants were members of the same track and field team, but had different coaches depending on their discipline. The number of participants in each discipline included: 18 distance runners, 11 sprinters/hurdlers, 6 jumpers, and 2 throwers. Experience level with their current team ranged from under one year (12 participants), between one and two years (9 participants), between two and three years (7 participants), between three and four years (8 participants) and over four years (1 participant). All but 3 of the participants had previously held a leadership position on a sports team. Leadership selection varied by discipline; 24 of the participants identified appointment as the method of selection, and 8 participants identified election. Of the remaining participants, 2 commented that they were not sure of the process, 1 identified the selection process as a mix of election and appointment, and 1 skipped the question. During the four years of competition preceding the study, the women’s team won three conference championships and finished second once, and also finished as high as third at the national level. During the same time span, the men’s team’s highest finish was second place at their conference championship.
Instrumentation and Procedure

For ease of communication, the study’s population derived from the track and field team the researcher competed for as an undergraduate. The researcher initially contacted 96 individuals with the opportunity to participate in the study. To allow for the richest data set possible, all members of the track and field team regardless of event group or years of membership were invited to take part. First, the researcher contacted the head coaches for track and field to obtain approval of their athletes’ involvement. Once approved by the head coaches, the researcher contacted the coaches via e-mail with instructions for the survey and a direct link to the web address of the survey (Appendix A); the coaches then forwarded this information to all their athletes. Survey instructions included a description of the minimal foreseeable risks associated with the study. Those risks related to the time commitment involved, as well as the possibility of experiencing negative memories (e.g., resentment at having been passed over for a leadership position) or uncomfortable emotions (e.g., angst deciding between answering honestly and maintaining loyalty to a coach). Benefits included informing the coaching community of the preferences of student-athletes in the hope that coaches will then strive to meet those preferences.

Instrumentation consisted of an online qualitative survey designed by the researcher (Appendix C). The survey was designed with help from the researcher’s thesis committee and qualitative advisor, as well as from coaches within the Humboldt State athletic department who contributed their thoughts and opinions on what questions they thought would most effectively facilitate responses from their own athletes. The survey
included a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Initial multiple-choice questions served to gather demographic data, such as the participants’ years of experience with their current team as well as their gender and event group. Open-ended questions centered upon describing the feelings of participants toward current leadership selection processes, in addition to questions regarding what aspects of the process underlie those feelings. Open-ended questions often followed a multiple-choice question designed to facilitate thought and reflection about the topic. The researcher worked with a qualitative advisor to optimally limit the number of open-ended questions with the aim of reducing repetition in answers and keeping the full attention of the participants. As recommended by Glesne (2006) for qualitative inquiry, initial questions included warm-up questions, or those questions meant to make the participant comfortable with the question format and the manageability of the survey. Warm-up questions were also designed with the hope of piquing the interest of the participants, thereby increasing the likelihood of fuller, richer open-ended answers later in the survey. Special consideration was given to the ordering of the questions as well, starting first with multiple-choice questions about the general topic of leadership before asking open-ended questions specifically pertaining to the method of team leadership selection (Glesne, 2006). The purpose of this format was to facilitate thoughts on leadership in general before asking more probing questions regarding team leadership selection. The survey was continually revised until the researcher, researcher’s thesis committee, and researcher’s qualitative advisor agreed its scope matched the purpose of the study. To increase validity, the survey also included instructions defining any key terms used in the survey that
participants may not have understood.

Permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought and granted prior to contacting the participants (Appendix B). The researcher provided the participants with a two-week time window to complete the survey, during which the researcher sent an e-mail reminder to all participants with one week remaining and again with two days remaining. The head coach of the women’s team also sent an unsolicited e-mail encouraging all team members to participate. This two-week window was decided upon by the researcher and qualitative advisor to give participants adequate time to complete the survey while also conveying a sense of urgency with the hopes of encouraging more participation. Completion of the survey was expected to take approximately 10-15 minutes. Of the initial 96 individuals contacted, 37 completed the survey.

Consent to participate in the study was implied through the participants’ willingness to go online and complete the survey. Survey instructions sent in the introductory e-mail and included in the first question of the survey explained that participation was entirely voluntary and that participants could cease involvement at any time without consequence. Survey instructions attached to the first survey question also included a yes/no checkbox asking participants if they understood the instructions. Anonymity was protected through the use of the online survey service, SurveyMonkey. Participants were not asked for any personal information and at no point did the researcher have access to such information.
Data Analysis

Upon completion of survey collection, data from all participants was exported as one whole document and examined question-by-question, rather than survey-by-survey. Due to the low number of responses among some of the event disciplines within the survey population, a question-by-question analysis was deemed preferable to protect the anonymity of participants. For example, should the researcher have analyzed a survey completed by a female sprinter with two years of experience on the team, the likelihood of being able to identify that athlete would have been high considering the researcher’s intimate knowledge of the team as a former member and current rival coach. Considering the threat of identification and researcher bias, as well as the new line of the study, the researcher concluded that a question-by-question breadth analysis of the data was more appropriate than a survey-by-survey depth analysis (Glesne, 2006).

Open coding was initially used for data analysis, during which the survey data was read and the main point of each answer was identified by the researcher, underlined and given a short label. Short labels were then compared, matched, and consolidated when possible within the researcher’s codebook (Appendix D). This process resulted in the identification of numerous common themes among answers. Placed in the context of the purpose of the study, distinct over-arching categories emerged from these themes, creating a two-level dichotomy of categories and themes. Themes were then re-examined and analyzed for further classification, resulting on occasion in a third level of analysis, sub-themes. Statements that pertained to more than one theme were labeled under both. All categories, themes, and sub-themes were the creation of the researcher. When
appropriate, participants’ own verbiage was used to title categories, themes, and sub-themes, particularly when certain words or phrases appeared in high frequencies. In other cases, the researcher used his own wording to group ideas under a common umbrella title. Questions, such as warm-up questions, that did not pertain to the purpose of the study were withdrawn from analysis.

**Issues of Trustworthiness**

The researcher originally intended to meet with the participating team to clarify any questions the participants may have had and assure the participants of the anonymity of their responses; however, given the complications of scheduling a meeting for all their athletes of different event groups, the head coaches requested instead that communication be limited to e-mail. The introductory e-mail did serve to stress the importance of the project and encourage participation, as well as alert participants to any possible risks or benefits of their participation. In this first communication, the aims and purpose of the study were also clearly delineated with the intention of creating a trusting and honest researcher-participant relationship (Jowett, 2003). Trustworthiness was also enhanced by the researcher’s role as a coach in the same sport and connection to the team surveyed; this connection gave the researcher unique knowledge of the jargon, environment and interactions between team members and coaches on the participating team (Dupuis, Bloom, & Loughead, 2006). One member check was built into the online survey, allowing participants to review and confirm all of their answers before submission. Additionally, one open-ended question at the end of the survey allowed participants to
add any information they felt was relevant to the topic that had not been solicited in the previous questions.

Although the researcher strove to approach the data with an open mindset, his experience as a leader, history with the participating team, and current role as a coach may have impacted data analysis. The researcher had been named team captain at multiple levels of competition and in different sports, including one year as team captain on his collegiate track and field team. In all these instances, the researcher was appointed to this position. The researcher’s close relationship with the coaching staff of the participating team may also have affected his view of the data. In addition, although no years of competition overall existed between participants and the researcher, the researcher did spend one year as a volunteer assistant coach with the participating team, during which participants currently in their fourth year with the team would have been in their first. Lastly, the researcher’s current role as an assistant track and field coach may have impacted his views on the topic of team leadership selection. In his first year in his current position, the researcher appointed team leaders for his team. In his second year, during which he was completing the research presented here, the researcher did not appoint team leaders, nor did he facilitate an election process.

**Limitations**

The following limitations are noted as they may have affected the outcome of this study:

1) The participants surveyed belong to the researcher’s former team.

   Although no overlapping years of competition existed between current
team members and the researcher, many team members had knowledge of the researcher and his previous role on the team.

2) Participants were aware of the researcher’s current role as a coach for a rival conference team. Competitive rivalry could have spurred some participants to approach the survey with more bias than they would have otherwise.

3) Participants were aware that their current coaches and the researcher maintain close contact and communicate frequently, possibly affecting the willingness of participants to divulge information that they perceived may offend their coaches.

4) The researcher was unable to meet with the participants in person to assure the anonymity of their responses, perhaps reducing their readiness to answer questions openly and honestly.

**Delimitations**

The following delimitations are noted as they may have affected the outcome of this study:

1) Only track and field athletes competing at the NCAA Division II level participated.

2) Due to the nature of the sport of track and field, collected data was limited to independent sport athletes.

3) The final participant population was composed of 37 athletes.
4) Of the respondents, 70% were female. Additionally, the low number of male participants in the study (n=11) did not allow for comparison across genders.

5) Uneven distribution of responses from different event groups and the threat of participant identification prevented comparison across different track and field disciplines.

6) Of the respondents, 32% were in their first year with the team.

7) Of the participants, 92% had previously held a leadership position on a sports team.
CHAPTER THREE

Results

Four distinct categories emerged from data analysis: call for election, call for appointment, indifference to method, and other. Each of these categories further divided into three to four themes. When appropriate, themes were further classified into sub-themes. The number of statements coded into each category is presented in Table 1. Each category, as well as theme and sub-theme, will be explained in the following section. Textual examples extracted from survey data will be provided within each grouping to differentiate between similar themes and to enrich understanding. For ease of understanding, minor errors in spelling and grammar have been corrected when they did not affect the meaning of a statement. Words or phrases have also been included in brackets to clarify meaning where appropriate. Finally, [coach] has been inserted in lieu of gendered pronouns to avoid gender identification of coaches.

Call For Election

“I would like to be able to have a say in the process since I am the one being led.”

The category call for election referred to statements in favor of an electoral process as the method of team leadership selection. These statements ranged from direct calls for an electoral process to subtle suggestions that a system with more athlete involvement would be preferable. Three themes emerged from within this category: I trust my team, empower those impacted, and sports politics.
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I trust my team. The theme of I trust my team encompassed both inherent and earned trust in teammates to make good decisions. Trust in teammates derived from analytical bases as well as from intangible assumptions.

The first sub-theme to emerge within I trust my team was daily interactions. This sub-theme focused on the trust of fellow athletes as good decision makers based on their knowledge of who among teammates would make a strong leader. According to participants, team members gain this knowledge during constant team interactions both on and off the track. As described by one participant: “My teammates could definitely pick a leader because we spend so much time together and truly get to know one another. They see what happens in front of coach as well as when [coach] isn't there.”

Participants concluded that these countless interactions reveal who possesses strong leadership qualities, giving team members a foundation on which to make their selection of a team leader. As phrased by one participant, athletes identify team leaders whether or not those athletes hold any power over their selection: “I trust my teammates to make leadership decisions because they see who the natural leaders are everyday in practice. They know whom they want to lead…”

Another sub-theme to surface within I trust my team was belief in teammates. Rather than being grounded in concrete shared knowledge or daily interactions, participants instead deferred to trust in the personal qualities of their teammates: “I believe my teammates are mature enough to choose someone not based on popularity, but rather leadership qualities, like work ethic or communication skills.” Participants also
expressed a faith in their teammates to value the importance of their decision. Additionally, participants used the experience of their teammates to justify their belief in their teammates, suggesting that experience translated to decision-making ability: “They are experienced in the sport and are familiar with such decisions so I trust their actions.”

The final sub-theme within *I trust my team* was *common goal*. This sub-theme issued from the logical argument that all team members had the common goal of developing a successful team, and would thus make appropriate decisions to reach that goal. As one participant noted: “My teammates put the well-being of the team first, which helps me trust them to make good decisions.” More than just having a common goal, participants presumed their teammates understood the implications of their decisions: “I trust my teammates because they are fully aware that their decisions affect the whole team not just themselves so they must make decisions wisely.” This sub-theme carried with it the assumption that team members not only knew what decision would be best for the team, but also comprehended the ramifications of a poor choice in selection.

**Empower those impacted.** The theme of *empower those impacted* emerged from the idea that, as athletes are the ones who are most impacted by leadership decisions, athletes should have input in which leaders are chosen. This line of thought derived both from a belief in the judicial abilities of teammates and from testimony that more involvement from athletes would translate into more satisfaction with team leaders.

The first sub-theme within this category was *best judges*. Similar to the sub-theme of *daily interactions* under *I trust my team*, these statements lauded the ability of teammates to judge leadership: “[My teammates] experience the captains first hand
everyday and I believe that makes them better able to judge who is best fit for the job.”

*Best judges* was distinct from the sub-theme *daily interactions* in that participants stressed the judicial power athletes are entitled to based on the evidence their daily interactions provide them. Daily interactions were thus purported as evidence to base the judicial discretion of teammates upon. Participants also pointed out the direct relationship between an electoral system and team respect. As one participant wrote: “If a person is elected, he/she *must* have proven to the team that he/she is capable of the responsibility of being team captain.”

Within the next sub-theme, *voice*, participants again highlighted the benefit of increasing team member investment in a leader through empowerment. According to participants, having more power within the process translated to more respect for the outcome: “I would respect an elected leader because I knew I had a vote in electing him/her.” Most importantly, one participant points out that the outcome did not necessarily need to be a team member’s desired outcome, nor would the process have to be fully democratic, for team member participation to be successful:

I think that for the well being of the team, it might be nice to have personal talks with each individual to make sure they feel like their opinion and feelings in the selection process are valued. I think this inclusion would help team members unite behind someone, even if it is someone they wouldn't have picked, because they would feel like the majority want that person.

The last sub-theme in this category, *satisfied*, included participants currently involved in an electoral selection process that were happy with the results. Succinctly summarized by one participant: “I get a vote. Don't need anything more or less.”
Sports Politics. The theme of sports politics revolved around suspicion that, due to the closeness of coach-athlete relationships, a coach would not exercise impartiality in the appointment of a team leader. Reasons for suspicion varied from accusations of coaching bias to an inaccurate assessment by coaches of desirable leadership qualities.

The predominant sub-theme within sports politics was coach bias. Participants based their skepticism of an appointment process on their doubt in their coaches’ ability to impartially decide on a leader. One participant did not blame the coach, but rather discussed this phenomenon as a byproduct of the coach’s humanity:

Coaches almost always will have favorites, and those favorites will gain most of the coach's attention during workouts and training; and those favorites will thus usually be a strong candidate for being appointed a team leader.

Participants expressed further concern that coaching bias would prevent the selection of a leader that would fulfill the team’s needs. One participant expressed this from a pragmatic standpoint: “Currently I believe the coach's selection was based more on relationship than on usefulness.”

General coaching bias was not the only concern of participants, as they also noted their worry that even from an unbiased perspective, coaches may select leaders based on a different rubric than participants would use. In the sub-theme talent does not translate, participants expressed their feelings that selections based on talent overshadow true leadership: “Sometimes the best leaders are looked over simply because the chosen captain is more athletic or has a better relationship with the coach.” Though this comment mixed coaching bias with different preferences in leadership qualities, other participants merely pointed out the lack of direct translation between talent and leadership: “Just
because someone is really good at whatever sport they do doesn't necessarily mean they
should be the leader.”

The final reason cited for an electoral process rather than an appointment process
was limited coach perspective. Participants conveyed that, despite a coach’s best
intentions, they may be unable to assess the status and needs of the team: “Sometimes
coaches do not have a good understanding of team dynamic and choose a person not
fitting for the job.” Statements in this sub-theme hinged on the suggestion that regardless
of how close a coach may perceive him or herself to be to the team, he or she still holds a
limited perspective when compared to team members. As one athlete concluded: “I feel
like the coach has a limited view of the relationships on the team.”

Call For Appointment

“My coach never makes bad decisions. [Coach] knows the team better than anyone,
especially being an outsider looking in.”

The category call for appointment referred to statements in favor of an
appointment process as the method of team leadership selection. These statements
showed strong support for the coach as the ultimate decision maker, in addition to
hesitation on the part of participants to empower their teammates due to the social
implications involved. Three themes emerged from within this category: I trust my coach,
sport contract, and drama.

I trust my coach. In many ways similar to its counter-theme, I trust my team,
statements within I trust my coach advocated for the coach as decision maker and
appointment as the method of team leadership selection. Many of the reasons mentioned
by participants for their trust of their coach oppose the arguments listed by other participants for why they would prefer an electoral system.

The first sub-theme under *I trust my coach, unbiased*, directly contradicts the sub-theme of *coach bias* from the previous section. Instead of depicting their coach as a bias party swayed by relationships with athletes, participants described their coaches as impartial, making their coaches the only ones capable of coming to a fair leadership decision: “My coach picks the captains and I think that it is best because [coach] can take personal relationships amongst the team into account without being personally emotionally involved.” Unlike statements made under *I trust my team* calling for an electoral process because of the close ties between athletes, *I trust my coach* makes a case for appointment based on the coach’s ability to objectively assess leadership ability.

According to some participants, their coaches’ detachment from the team makes them more, rather than less, qualified to make decisions concerning leadership:

> The team often cannot make the choices that a coach can. I feel like the team would choose a senior over a better suited younger captain in order to avoid slighting them, whereas a coach should be able to properly handle the situation.

Though participants stressed their coaches’ unique position as separate from the team, *omniscient* was the most effusive sub-theme to emerge in this category. *Omniscient* included descriptions by participants testifying to their coaches’ ability to perceive and synthesize more information than would appear readily available to them. One participant explained this multi-layered ability of his or her coach to address the multitudinous demands of leadership: “I truly believe that the coach took the social implications of [the]
decision into account, along with the potential for growth of the chosen leader, as well as their leadership ability and physical dominance.”

The all-seeing ability described by participants extended beyond objectivity, depending on knowledge as well. One participant describes how the blend of objectively and knowledge combine to make their coach the ideal decision-maker: “I think the coach sees the entire team from an outside perspective, and [coach] knows how some people are natural leaders by example. [Coach] is able to see how the whole team fits together…” In complete contrast to statements made by some participants about the limited perspective of their coach, some athletes insisted their coach had greater perspective than the athletes. As one participant phrased this sentiment: “The coach is the head of the team and often sees what is going on with the team more than the actual athletes do. So I trust my coach will make the best decision since [my coach] has a greater perspective than I do.”

While some participants asserted the powers of their coaches to see all, other simply deferred to their coaches based on all their coaches had seen. In the sub-theme defer, participants explained that their coaches’ experience in their position qualified them for the burden of leadership selection: “I trust my coach to make great decisions. [Coach’s] experience far outweighs my own; my say isn't necessary.” Though experience was one factor involved in deferment, athletes also conveyed nonchalance toward the situation, deferring without reason other than trust and respect: “I feel fine with not being involved. I trust and respect my coaches' decision.”

**Sport Contract.** Taking on a stronger theme than trust, *sport contract* illustrated the athlete’s acknowledgement of the coach as the ultimate authority figure in the coach-
team relationship. Participants spoke of the coach’s authority as being without question
and as integral to sports participation.

Often, participants described their coach as the ultimate authority, giving rise to
the name of this sub-theme. Within ultimate authority, participants endorsed their coaches’
role as decision-maker without bitterness: “They already have control of the decision, and
I feel they deserve that control.” Descriptions such as this one embraced the authoritarian
role of the coach and encouraged appointment as a logical extension of that role. Even
athletes already involved in the leadership selection process endorsed their coach as the
ultimate decider of team leadership: “I like being [able] to put in my opinion, but I don't
think my opinion, or any team member's individual opinion, is as important as the coach
opinion.”

Participants also explained that their membership on the team involved their
implied consent toward whatever leadership decisions were made, in spite of how they
were made. In this systematic discussion of the sub-theme implied consent, one
participant explains why both appointed and elected team leaders mandate support:

So if a team member is appointed, the coach made the decision, I have chosen to
go along with it by being on the team. If that person is elected, then the team
wanted that person to lead and I will respect that person and I am obligated to
support them by being on this team.

Though some participants equated implied consent to the process of leadership
selection regardless of method, most associated it with their coaches. One participant
even explained that coach-support was unconditional, regardless of satisfaction: “Yes [I
trust my coach to make decisions] because [coach] is my coach. That doesn't mean I
always agree with them though."

**Drama.** Of the reasons listed opposing an electoral process, and thereby supporting an appointed one, concerns of team drama and social unrest permeated the theme of *drama*. Athletes continually conveyed their skepticism that their teammates would put aside issues of popularity and friendship to instead make leadership decisions based on strong leadership qualities.

The concern most frequently mentioned within *drama* was that the threat and pressure of popular ties would affect an electoral vote. Within the sub-theme *popularity contest*, athletes detailed the many reasons why they would not trust their teammates with team leadership selection despite the best intentions of their peers: “Although I trust my teammates, I think that personal relationships and favoritism could result in a choice that is not necessarily the best pick.” Though some respondents voiced subtle concerns, others were more transparent in their doubts. As written by one athlete: “I don't think that electing a team leader is the best way to go because it can easily turn into a popularity contest.” However, skepticism of an electoral process did not necessarily mean general mistrust of teammates. Rather, as one participant stressed, it was within the specific context of team leadership that decision-making power became dangerous:

I feel my teammates would make decisions for the wrong reasons. I feel that they would make important decisions based on who their friends are, not who is the best leader. For me, it would feel like we are back in high school voting for ASB.

In addition to popularity, *dissension* also arose as a sub-theme within the *drama* category. *Dissension* included fears expressed by participants that team leadership would suffer without the stamp of authority from the coach. One participant explained that trust
of teammates did not translate to endorsing election as a method of selection: “I trust their decisions for team leadership, but I think the relationship between the leaders and the team would be more contested and less respected if the leaders were elected.”

The value of coach objectivity appeared again within dissension. Athletes noted that though an appointment by a coach might not be agreed with, it would be respected; on the other hand, an unwanted elected leader might not be respected in the same way. As one participant summarized: “I feel that if the team were to choose, there would always be someone who wasn't happy with the choice and that may create drama. If the coach chooses, then that eliminates any possible trouble.”

Paired with concerns over dissension was the sub-theme, saving face. Saving face referred to protecting the ego of athletes who might be offended if not chosen through an electoral process. Within this sub-theme, participants identified the coach as able to make decisions athletes would be unable to make due to popular ties. In addition there may be a different outcome of an athlete not being selected by team members versus not being selected by a coach. According to one athlete: “The coach knows what [the coach is] doing. It takes less time to decide and doesn't make people feel less wanted by the team if they were to not get picked as captain through voting.” In the words of participants, the position of authority afforded the coaches gave them justification to make whatever decision they saw fit. On the other hand, in an electoral process, similar decisions might strain relationships among teammates. For this reason, many participants found an authoritative appointment process preferable: “I like this system, where the coaches appoint captains. It keeps the drama level down because the authority figures appointed
this person.”

**Indifference to Method**

“If a captain is appointed a position, I respect that and expect them to lead appropriately; the same goes for someone elected.”

The category *indifference to method* referred to statements neither in favor of, nor opposed to, an electoral or appointed team leadership selection process. In general, statements in this category saw the method of selection as inconsequential, instead citing the importance of leadership quality, or pointing out that both methods arrived at the same outcome. Three themes emerged from within this category: *predetermination, action over selection, and indifference.*

**Predetermination.** Though many participants voiced avid support for or opposition against an electoral or appointed system, some simply assumed both methods were different paths to the same destination. In the theme *predetermination,* participants did not stress over the method of selection as they felt the outcome was already decided: “In most cases, the coach usually has the same opinion as the team.” One participant explained this trend as the byproduct of similar sets of leadership values between athletes and coaches: “Either way I feel the decision to appoint or elect a team leader oftentimes will lead to the same person being selected because of the characteristics that both coaches and athletes look for in a leader.”

**Action over selection.** Unlike *predetermination,* within which athletes assumed the same leader would be decided upon using either method, under *action over selection,* participants stated that respect for leadership is not unconditional, but rather contingent
on the actions of the leader. Quality of leadership arose as a topic of discussion. As this participant writes, respect depended on leadership skills rather than mere selection:

“Respect for a team leader is earned more by their quality of leadership than the method in which they attained that position.” Other participants expressed the same disregard for method, focusing instead on the leader’s actions once in their role. As one participant stated: “I respect them if they are a good leader regardless of how they became one.”

Apart from demanding quality leadership, one participant also pointed out that, just as a title does not deserve unconditional respect, leadership does not necessitate a title:

I feel like when a leader is chosen that people don't really respect, others step up and lead anyways. So in a way it kind of naturally evolves. Just because one person has a title doesn't mean that people will regard them as a leader, and vice versa if they don't have a title and do possess leadership qualities.

**Indifference.** Participants also conveyed general indifference to method in a more positive manner. In the theme *indifference*, some participants saw positives in both methods of selection:

If the team leader is elected by the team it means that the team sees the quality that this person has to be a leader. If the team leader is appointed it means the coach sees an individual that can fill in the gaps in a team and acts like a representative between the coach and the rest of the team.

Indifference in this case did not amount to apathy. Rather, participant believed both methods of selection benefited the team: “I believe that coaches have strong faith in the athletes they pick and athletes pick a person who they look up to, which both are equally admirable.”
**Other**

As opposed to indifference, the category *other* referred to opinionated statements about team leadership selection that related to the purpose of the study. These statements critically looked at other factors involved in the process of team leadership selection other than pure electoral or authoritative power, and showed preference toward a dynamic selection process, rather than indifference toward one process over another. Four themes emerged from within this category: *laissez-faire, balance, situational,* and *continuum.*

**Laissez-faire.** The first theme to emerge outside of method of selection was *laissez-faire.* *Laissez-faire* included an open-ended style of leadership decision-making where no formal decision or distinction was made. This theme was mentioned most specifically twice, both times by athletes alluding to leadership practices within their previous high school program. The first participant described his or her own decision to step into the vacant team leader role: “I just assumed the role of leader. Making sure people did the workout, motivating people in competition, coaches gifts, etc.”

In comparison, the other participant to allude to a laissez-faire leadership style explained that the coach specifically structured the program in that way. That participant reflected with discontent on that coach’s decision:

> Our coach told us that he wanted everyone to feel like they needed to contribute and care for the team. I don't think this worked very well.... we felt like no one was a captain, and that the coach was taking advantage of the situation to just ask anyone to do anything for him at anytime.
**Balance.** Another theme that arose in the *other* category was *balance*. Statements in the *balance* theme identified a desire to have neither an appointment nor an electoral process, but rather a balance between involvement by the coaches and the athletes. As one participant wrote: “It would be nice to have a balance between coach and team opinions in selection.”

**Situational.** Participants also described the situational nature of leadership decisions, drawing on their experience to justify their lack of commitment to one particular method over another. One athlete summarized the theme of *situational* in this statement: “…it depends on the situations. Elected leaders can be great choices as well as poor ones, and the same goes for appointments. It depends on the circumstances around the team and coach.”

Due to the situational nature of team leadership selection, another participant called for team by team inquiry, rather than a flat answer: “This topic absolutely needs to be addressed to each team/school to assess what type of team selection process they feel would be most effective and fair.”

**Continuum.** The last theme under *other, continuum*, described a continuum of involvement by the coaches and athletes. In one instance, this continuum placed more value in the hands of the coach: “I feel comfortable voting for who I want to lead and having the coach approve of the decision; the team needs to be involved but the coach is the ultimate authority.”

In another instance, the continuum of involvement was instead delineated by team experience: “Since I am an underclassman, I do not feel like I need involvement in the
selection process. Starting junior and senior year though, I feel like there should be more involvement.”
CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

The focus of this study was to determine the preferences of student-athletes regarding team leadership selection. Overall, four main categories emerged from data analysis, namely call for election, call for appointment, indifference to method, and other. These categories will be discussed as they relate to one another, as well as how they relate to pertinent research in the field of sports leadership.

*Call for election* included statements made by athletes that favored democratic involvement by themselves and their peers. These statements ranged in strength from calls for complete control over the selection process to calls for a layer of electoral involvement within the selection process as a whole. Among all comments within this category, three major reasons for their support of a democratic system arose. Firstly, within the theme of *I trust my team*, athletes stated that, based on their experiences with and knowledge of their teammates, they would trust fellow team members with a highly influential decision such as selecting a team leader. Secondly, under *empower those impacted*, participants conveyed their belief that student-athletes, as the individuals most impacted by decisions of sports leadership, are most entitled to decision-making power. Lastly, *sports politics* encompassed statements by participants that questioned the validity of leadership decisions made by the coaching staff for reasons of bias and differing perspectives. Across all three themes, athletes voiced their desire for a leadership
selection method that involved their participation, whether because they trusted themselves to make those decisions, because they believed they had earned the right to make those decisions, or because they questioned the rational of other parties making those decisions for them.

In opposition to the previous category, *call for appointment* encompassed statements by participants embracing an autocratic method of team leadership selection. These affirmations included both trust in the coach as the ultimate and rightful authority over such decisions, as well as concrete and strongly-voiced concerns about putting the decision of team leadership in the hands of team members. The first theme of *I trust my coach* included statements testifying to the coaches’ ability to objectively and knowledgably make the most effective team leadership decisions. *Sport contract* supported these trusting sentiments, but focused more on an implied obligation to follow the ruling of the coach as the ultimate authority figure within the coach-athlete dyad. The last theme, *drama*, concerned about the social dangers of an electoral process, endorsed an autocratic system by default rather than by desire. Within each theme, participants clearly conveyed their support of selection by appointment.

Another category to arise within the study was *indifference to method*. Statements by participants within this category showed neither a preference for electoral power, nor for appointed positions. Still, participants did not convey apathy toward the process; instead, participants claimed that their feelings toward team leadership relied on the end result—the team leader him or herself—rather than upon the process by which the leaders was selected.
Finally, other referred to themes relevant to the topic of the study that did not cleanly fit within any of the above categories. Generally, statements within this category called for a hybrid of an electoral or appointed method. Balance focused on a blend of democratic and autocratic processes, allowing involvement by athletes but not relying on it; situational included statements insisting that each situation would mandate different needs; and continuum called for a spectrum of decision power divided between coach and athlete, or based on team member experience.

Results of this study offered contrasting stances on the preferences of student-athletes for democratic or autocratic decision-making in regards to team leadership selection. As was laid out in the review of literature, an electoral team leadership selection method would constitute democratic decision-making. Numerous participants offered support for an electoral system on the basis of team trust and the threat of coaching bias. These findings agree with previous research on the preferences of independent sport athletes, which held that independent sport athletes would prefer democratic decision making over autocratic decision making (Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson, 2004; Terry, 1984; Terry & Howe, 1984). However, as a qualitative inquiry into the subject, this study aimed to understand the reasons behind athlete preferences in addition to identifying the preferences themselves. To this aim, participant reports under the sub-theme of sports politics supported previous findings that there may be a discrepancy between the perspective of athletes and the perspective of their coaches pertaining to team leadership (Glenn & Horn, 1993). Moreover, the qualitative, self-reported nature of this study showed not only that a disconnect may exist between coach
and athlete perspective, but also that student-athletes had an awareness of that disconnect. Such a disconnect could feasibly impact trust and satisfaction with a coach-athlete relationship.

In addition to a discrepancy between opinions on suitable leadership, participants also called for an electoral system based on their worry their coaches are basing opinions on a limited perspective. Student-athletes implied that it may be impossible for coaches to ever gain the unique perspective student-athletes arrive at through their constant daily interactions with their fellow team members both during and after practice. In support of Loughead, Hardy, and Eys (2006), participants noted that only team members possess the unique knowledge of their teammates required to make appropriate leadership decisions. If only team members are capable of assessing leadership ability in relation to the team, coaches would then have a limited perspective when it comes to making such decisions (Loughead, Hardy, & Eys, 2006). Thus, for reasons of unique athlete experience and limited coach perspective, participants suggested that an electoral method of selection would produce the most effective leaders as well as the most satisfied student-athlete population.

Still, not all participants agreed that their coach exhibited a lack of perspective in regards to decisions of team leadership. Quite to the contrary, within the sub-theme omniscient under I trust my coach within call for appointment, athletes passionately testified to their coaches’ unique abilities to assess the team, asserting that only the coach had the ability to accurately decide who should lead. Athletes once again pointed out a discrepancy between the perspectives of athletes and their coaches; however, unlike
statements calling for electoral power, these participants cited the coach as being more knowledgeable. Participants alluded to this difference in assessment-ability between coaches and athletes as a positive coaching attribute, rather than as the negative it is made out to be in Glenn and Horn (1993). In addition to a coach’s all-seeing perspective, participants also cited coaching experience to justify their support of an appointment process. Participants stated that, though lacking the constant daily interactions team members might have with potential leaders, the wealth of experience coaches have entitles them to make leadership decisions over less experienced team members. This sentiment supports the notion that a high-impact decision such as team leadership should be left to those in the position of authority (Kenow & Williams, 1999).

Despite the experience level of coaches, some participants still conveyed their concern that their coaches would not make ideal leadership decisions due to their partiality toward certain athletes. Under the sub-themes coach bias and talent doesn’t translate, participants voiced support for Tropp and Landers (1979), detailing their concern that leadership decisions by coaches might reflect attributes other than leadership ability. The most urgent concern for participants was that a high-caliber athlete, or an athlete with a close personal relationship to the coach, may be appointed team leader despite lacking needed leadership skills. Some participants indicated that talent level and a close personal relationship between coach and athlete might be interrelated as well, making the possibility of appointment all the more likely. Thus, echoing the assertions of Eys, Loughead, and Hardy (2007), many participants agreed that only team members
possess the ability to assess which team members hold the appropriate skill set to be team leaders, calling for an electoral process judged by student-athletes.

Though athletes might have unique perspective as to what leadership qualities they desire in a leader, many participants suggest that social pressures might prevent that perspective from being voiced in an electoral process. The most consistent concern among student-athletes opposing an electoral method of team leadership selection was team drama. Participants calling for an appointment process regularly questioned the ability of their teammates to set aside social ties in favor of selecting the best possible team leader. Participants expressed fear that an electoral process would result in a popularity contest, rather than an evaluation of team leadership needs. Therefore, though an electoral system may provide athletes with the ability to exercise the unique perspective touted by Gleen and Horn (1993) and Tropp and Landers (1997), social allegiances might prevent these perspectives from ever making an impact.

As an alternative to the potential team drama an election may create, many participants supported their coach as the decision-making power and an appointed leadership selection method based on their coach’s unbiased perspective. In direct contradiction to their teammates that labeled coaches as potentially bias, participants held that their coach held the best position from which to select a leader because he/she did not have any social ties preventing him or her from making a leadership decision based on quality of leadership. In addition to the unbiased perspective of their coach, participants also identified their coach as the implied ultimate authority in team decisions, making it possible for him or her to making difficult leadership decisions that athletes
may be unprepared to make due to the close relationships they possess with teammates. Athletes also identified the coaches’ position as ultimate authority as a mode of preventing dissension among team members: though individuals might not support the leadership decision of a coach, participants felt that they would not openly oppose it; on the other hand, participants felt that teammates would be more likely to oppose an elected decision, causing dissent and unrest within the team.

The strong contrasts between opinions in this study highlight what might be the most pertinent sub-theme to the topic: situational. Participants themselves suggested that issues of team leadership selection might be so situational that the best method of leadership selection could shift depending on which group of athletes it impacts. For example, while an authoritative, autocratic decision might work best for an inexperienced collegiate team, a team made up of highly-experienced senior members might benefit from a consultative or electoral process. Participants also noted that a spectrum of involvement based on seniority such as the one just mentioned might be preferable. A balance then of autocratic and democratic processes might be most appropriate depending on the demographics of the particular team in question. As participants stated, each team will be different in its team dynamics, meaning a concrete answer to the question of preferred leadership method might not exist. This would explain why two similar populations of university basketball players would have different autocratic versus democratic preferences (Chelladurai, Haggerty, & Baxter, 1989; Weiss & Frierichs, 1986).
Though method preference may be situational, the end result of the process may matter more to athletes than the means of getting there. In the category *indifference to method*, participants suggested that the quality of the selected leader superseded the method by which he or she was selected. Participants would then prefer an effective appointment method to an unproductive electoral one, with the opposite being true as well. Considering these results, a balanced approach that adjusts to each team’s dynamics in order to find the best leader might be preferable to one cemented method that might restrict the pool of possible leaders whether due to coaching bias or social ties among athletes.

Taking into account the congruence hypothesis, a balance or hybrid of methods may be the most appropriate way of increasing athlete satisfaction. The congruence hypothesis states that athletes will exhibit increased satisfaction when their perception matches their preferences (Chelladurai, 1978; Chelladurai, 1984). However, participants within this study expressed preferences for an electoral system as well as an appointed one. Thus, should a coach strive to match the preference of one athlete for an electoral process, so that athlete perceives his or her preference as having been met and is thereby more satisfied, it would necessitate that coach neglects the preference of another athlete. Numerous participants acknowledge this dilemma to a degree within the *other* category. The themes *balance*, *continuum*, and *situational* all suggest that a firm commitment to either side of the decision-making spectrum may not be as successful as a more fluid approach that incorporates elements from both methods. Coaches should then consider a
mixed approach if determined to increase the number of their athletes who perceives their preferences as being met.

The secondary purpose of this study was to develop a questionnaire that effectively gathered information regarding student-athlete preferences toward team leadership selection. The questionnaire was successful in encouraging thorough text responses from participants. Though some participants noted that questions felt redundant, each open-ended question still provided valuable data for analysis and thus would appear worthy of inclusion in future questionnaires. Although this study only analyzed data from open-ended questions, multiple-choice questions may have been responsible for provoking thoughts and ideas that strengthened open-ended responses, and thus would appear worthy of future inclusion as well. A comparable study utilizing the same questionnaire would assist in confirming the usefulness of the questionnaire in gathering the intended data.

Implications

According to the results of this study, no singular preference among student-athletes exists for team leadership selection method. This revelation is not surprising considering the diversity found among student-athlete populations. Like any social grouping, it is extremely unlikely to find complete agreement on any one item, particularly on one as potentially important as team leadership. How then does one best facilitate satisfaction? A consultative approach may provide the answer. A consultative process, as described by Vroom and Yetton (1973), can involve either individual or group conferencing. Vroom and Yetton (1973) explain an individual consultation process as
follows: “You share the problem with the relevant subordinates individually, getting their ideas and suggestions without bringing them together as a group. Then you make the decision, which may or may not reflect your subordinates’ influence” (p. 13). In contrast, Vroom and Yetton (1973) suggest that a group consultation process would involve meeting as a group and “obtaining collective ideas and suggestions” prior to a decision by the authority figure (p.13). Coaches should be cautious when employing a group consultative method, as the same social pressures at work in an electoral process may arise. Nonetheless, by instituting a consultative approach, employing both democratic and autocratic decision-making, coaches maximize their likelihood of matching as many athlete preferences as possible, thereby optimally increasing satisfaction among the whole of their team. Additionally, by consulting with athletes and allowing them to voice their opinions and perspectives, coaches gain the knowledge they would otherwise lack concerning the leadership preferences of their athletes (Glenn & Horn, 1993). For example, though a coach may identify a high-caliber player as a potential leader, he or she may learn after consulting with team members that the player in question would not suit the team’s leadership needs. In this way, coaches gain critical insight into the perspectives of their athletes, enhancing their own perspective and making them competent of assessing team leadership needs as only their athletes would have been previously capable (Eys, Loughead, & Hardy, 2006). Couple this newfound knowledge with the omniscient perspective of coaches referenced by participants, and one has the best possible opportunity to select a leader who will satisfy the team.
In addition to giving coaches perspective they would otherwise lack, a consultative process would help reduce the chance of dissension and drama among team members. Within this study, participant responses consistently alluded to the double-edged sword of electoral selection: though athletes might be the best and most knowledgeable judges of team leadership, their position as team members with social ties to potential leaders compromises their ability to impartially elect a leader. Coaches, however, being removed from these social ties, have the potential to appoint a leader without threat of bias. Even if coaches exhibit a strong bias toward athletes whom they have a strong personal relationship with, or exceptionally talented athletes, the consultative process would enlighten them as to whether or not those individuals possessed the required leadership skills according to their teammates. Thus, armed with their team’s inside perspective, coaches would be able to make an educated decision without risking the drama and dissension participants feared would arise from an electoral process.

A consultative method of team leadership selection would also perform the rare double-duty of enhancing athlete trust in their coaches while also maintaining the coach’s position as the ultimate authority within the coach-athlete relationship. According to Bartram and Casimir (2006), giving athletes more opportunities for participation, such as through a consultative process, would make them feel empowered. Additionally, the consultative process would convey the coach’s trust in his or her athletes’ opinions, enhancing trust in the coach-athlete dyad (Kenow & Williams, 1999). Though trust would be enhanced, in a consultative process in which the coach was still the final
decision-maker, the coach’s position as the ultimate authority would not be compromised. Therefore, a consultative process would enhance coach perspective, minimize team dissension, enhance trust in the coach-athlete relationship, and secure the coach’s position as ultimate authority, all while optimally increasing student-athlete satisfaction.

**Future Research**

The delimitations and limitations of this study only further highlight the need for greater qualitative inquiry in the field of sports psychology. To elicit a deeper understanding of student-athlete preferences, a qualitative approach utilizing in-person interviews should be considered. Though this study sheds a narrow ray of light on the topic of student-athlete preference regarding team leadership selection, in-person interviews would allow for further probing and a more intricate understanding of these preferences.

Filtering interview or questionnaire responses based on preferences may prove insightful as well. This study depended on the open-ended answers of student-athletes as the chief source of data; however, responses were not filtered in order to examine how preferences might differ for different sets of athletes, such as those that value input in the team leadership selection process versus those who do not. A study using the same questionnaire or one similar that uses such filtering techniques may arrive at more concrete conclusions.

In addition to a deeper qualitative approach, numerous other student-athlete populations might be examined. A more evenly distributed population of males and
females would allow for a comparison between genders, one of the primary variables examined in the literature pertaining to autocratic versus democratic preferences. To further complement the existing literature, research on interdependent as well as individual sports would provide data on possible differences in preference due to task dependence. A qualitative examination of the preferences of coaches toward team leadership selection method, as well as the reasoning behind their own methodology, might also prove a valuable addition to current research. Comparison across numerous other variables, such as nationality, geographical region, age, competitive level, team success, and coach experience merit future study as well. A complete, thorough understanding of the topic would require analysis across all these variables.

**Conclusion**

Despite the limitations and delimitations of this study, the results do offer interesting insight into the preferences of student-athletes regarding team leadership selection. Within this particular context, participants showed preferences for and against both proposed methods of team leadership selection. Participants calling for an electoral method lauded the decision-making ability of their teammates, and warned of the potential bias coaches may exhibit. On the other hand, participants calling for appointment praised the unique perspective of their coach, and expressed concern that social pressures would corrupt an electoral process. Although seemingly contradictory in nature, the results do hint to the potential success of a consultative system. A consultative selection process, one allowing for student-athlete participation while not compromising the coach’s position of authority, accentuates the positives and avoids the negatives of
both an electoral and appointed method of selection. Through consultation with their athletes, coaches might gain perspective regarding potential leaders otherwise unknown to them, such as whether a talented athlete also fits the leadership needs of his or her teammates. Consultation also shows a degree of trust in team members, strengthening the coach-athlete relationship and enhancing team member investment in the final decision. At the same time, a consultative method of selection minimizes the threat social obligations within the team would have upon an election, allowing athlete input without depending on athletes to overcome the temptation of peer pressure. Most importantly, by blending elements of democratic and autocratic processes, a consultative method of selection gives coaches the best chance of optimizing athlete satisfaction by catering to all student-athlete preferences while neglecting none.

The reader should keep in mind that these conclusions draw upon the results of a relatively skewed sample. An exploration of this topic with a different population, particularly one composed of adequate amounts of males and females or one drawn from a different sport, may yield different results. A deeper qualitative inquiry utilizing in-person interview may also differ in its findings. For instance, an expanded study may show that within a trusting coach-athlete relationship, student-athletes prefer their coach in the role of the philosopher king, insightfully dictating team leadership selection vis-à-vis Plato. Or perhaps student-athletes will prefer to overcome the collective action problem of democratic involvement and vote their conscience honestly and without reservation. A myriad of possibilities exists; only further qualitative inquiry will provide the answers.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix A: Initial E-mail Contact
Members of the [blank] Track and Field Team,

My name is Daniel Noel and, in addition to being a former [blank], I am a graduate student in Kinesiology and assistant track coach at Humboldt State University. I am currently conducting research for my thesis on the topic of team leadership selection in sports, and your coaches have allowed me to contact you and ask for your participation. To collect data, I have developed a survey asking about your preferences toward team leadership selection. The aim of the survey is to gain an in-depth understanding of how student-athletes feel about this process, information useful to coaches when deciding how to select team leaders on their teams.

Please be assured that your answers will be kept completely anonymous and no personal information will be accessible to the researcher, nor will it be associated with any of the results. With this in mind, please answer honestly and to the fullest of your ability, particularly when filling in any of the text boxes. The richer and fuller your answers are, the better.

To access the survey, please click on the link below. The survey should take only 10-15 minutes of your time to complete and will be available online for the next two weeks. Your participation is optional and you may discontinue the survey at any point should you choose to. If you are under the age of 18, please refrain from participating. Thank you for your willingness to assist in my research and best of luck to all of you this upcoming season. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best,
Daniel Noel, CSCS
Graduate Candidate, MS Kinesiology
Assistant Track and Field Coach
Humboldt State University
dsn8@humboldt.edu
Office: (707)826-5954
Cell: (707)529-3007
Appendix B: Qualitative Survey
Survey Instructions: The following survey is designed to ask about your preferences and feelings toward how team leaders (i.e. team captains) are selected on your team. Two specific styles of selection will be addressed, election and appointment. Election refers to a selection process facilitated by the athletes. Appointment refers to a selection process decided by the coach. Please answer all questions as honestly as you can and provide as much detail in the accompanying text boxes as possible. Your answers will help inform the coaching community of the preferences of athletes, with the aim of creating a more satisfying athletic environment. Your answers will be kept completely anonymous and at no time will your personal information be accessible to the researcher. Participation in this survey is optional, and if at any time you wish to discontinue you may do so. Thank you for your participation and please remember to answer as honestly as possible.

Survey Questions:

1. Are you male or female?
   - [ ] Male
   - [ ] Female

2. What event group do you identify yourself with?
   - [ ] Distance
   - [ ] Throws
   - [ ] Sprints/Hurdles
   - [ ] Jumps

3. How long have you been with your current team? (Check one.)
   - [ ] Under 1 year
   - [ ] between 1 and 2 years
   - [ ] between 2 and 3 years
   - [ ] between 3 and 4 years
   - [ ] over 4 years

4. What qualities do you prefer having in a team leader? (Check all that apply.)
   - [ ] Strong communication skills
   - [ ] Ability to motivate team members
   - [ ] Ability to advocate for the team
   - [ ] Easily approachable by team members
   - [ ] Appropriate level of maturity
   - [ ] Ability to support team members socially
   - [ ] Ability to lead by example
   - [ ] Impressive physical stature
   - [ ] Other – please add additional qualities in the comment box below.

5. Have you ever held a leadership position on a sports team?
6. If yes, were you elected or appointed to your position?
   - ◯ Elected
   - ◯ Appointed
   - ◯ None of the above – please explain this in the comment box below.

7. Select the characteristic that you think is the most frequent reason team leaders are selected.
   - ◯ They are more experienced team members.
   - ◯ They are top team performers.
   - ◯ They are popular among teammates.
   - ◯ They have a strong relationship with coaches.
   - ◯ They possess all the characteristics listed above.
   - ◯ Other – please explain this in the comment box provided below.

8. Do you have more respect for a team leader appointed by the coach or one elected by the team?
   - ◯ I have more respect for a team leader appointed by the coach.
   - ◯ I have more respect for a team leader elected by the team.
   - ◯ I have the same respect for a team leader who is appointed by the coach or elected by the team.

9. Please explain your answer to the previous question.

10. In your experience, how have team leaders been decided on for your current team?
    - ◯ Elected by the team
    - ◯ Appointed by the coach
    - ◯ Other process – please describe that process in the text box below

11. If in your experience the coach appointed team leaders, did the coach seek input from the athletes on the team in that decision?
    - ◯ Yes
    - ◯ No

12. If in your experience the team elected the team leaders, did they seek input from the coach in that decision?
    - ◯ Yes
    - ◯ No
13. How involved do you feel in the leadership selection process?
   ☐ Not at all involved
   ☐ Somewhat involved
   ☐ Very involved

14. If you marked *somewhat* or *very involved*, do you value your involvement in the leadership selection process?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

15. If you marked *not at all involved*, how do you feel about not being involved in the leadership selection process? Please comment below.

16. How involved is the coach in the team leadership selection process?
   ☐ Not at all involved
   ☐ Somewhat involved
   ☐ Very involved

17. Do you value your coach’s involvement?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

18. Would you prefer to have more, less, or the same level of involvement in the leadership selection process?
   ☐ More
   ☐ Less
   ☐ The same

19. Please explain your answer to the previous question.

20. Would you prefer your coach to exhibit more, less, or the same level of involvement?
   ☐ More
   ☐ Less
   ☐ The same

21. Please explain your answer to the previous question.
22. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your coach?
   [ ] Very satisfied
   [ ] Somewhat satisfied
   [ ] Not satisfied

23. Do you trust your coach to make team leadership decisions?
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No

24. Please explain your answer to the previous question.

25. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your teammates?
   [ ] Very satisfied
   [ ] Somewhat satisfied
   [ ] Not satisfied

26. Do you trust your teammates to make team leadership decisions?
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No

27. Please explain your answer to the previous question.

28. How satisfied are you with your team leadership selection process?
   [ ] Very satisfied
   [ ] Somewhat satisfied
   [ ] Not satisfied

29. Do you think your team leadership selection process is effective?
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No

30. Do you think your team leadership selection process is fair?
   [ ] Yes
   [ ] No

31. How well are leadership decisions on your team explained to you?
   [ ] Very well explained – I completely understand how the decisions are made.
   [ ] Somewhat explained – I understand some aspects of the process but not all of them.
   [ ] Not explained/poorly explained – I don’t understand the process at all.
32. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding team leadership selection?
Appendix C: IRB Approval
MEMORANDUM

DATE: 12/14/2010

TO: Daniel Noel
    Richard Stull

FROM: Thomas "TK" Koesterer, Chair
       Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

SUBJECT: Your Proposal: "Team Leadership Selection Preferences in Student-Athletes", Approval #10-148

Thank you for submitting your proposal, "Team Leadership Selection Preferences in Student-Athletes" to the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. Since your survey presents no more than minimal risk, information obtained cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and any disclosure of responses outside the research will not reasonably place subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing, employability, or reputation, your proposal can be considered Exempt. Please note that survey and interview procedures involving children are not exempt from federal regulation. If your research subjects will include children (persons under 18 years of age) your proposal will require further board review.

Humboldt State University's Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research requires that all human subjects' research be submitted to this Committee for review before initiating any research. Research determined to be considered Exempt by the Committee shall be retained for at least 3 years.

If your research plan is altered in any way, please notify this office according to the policies established for Humboldt State University. Additionally, should you as the investigator or any of your subjects experience any problems which involve an undescribed element of risk (adverse events in regulatory terms), please immediately inform the IRB of the circumstances.

Thank you for your careful attention to the protection of the human subjects in your research.
Appendix D: Code Book
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORIES/Themes</th>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Question #/Sub-theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CALL FOR ELECT</td>
<td>I Trust My Team</td>
<td>Q28 Daily Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My teammates could definitely pick a leader because we spend so much time together and truly get to know one another. They see what happens in front of coach as well as when he isn't there.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We should know who is a positive influence.</td>
<td>Q28 Daily Interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I believe my teammates are mature enough to choose someone not based on popularity, but rather leadership qualities, like work ethic or communication skills.</td>
<td>Q28 Belief in teammates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My teammates put the well-being of the team first, which helps me trust them to make good decisions.</td>
<td>Q28 Common Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They are experienced in the sport and are familiar with such decisions so I trust their actions.</td>
<td>Q28 Belief in teammates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I trust my teammates to make leadership decisions because they see who the natural leaders are everyday in practice. They know who they want to lead--someone who is trustworthy, hardworking, and motivating--and since they want the whole team to become better each season, they</td>
<td>Q28 Daily Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10 Best Judges</td>
<td>Q28 Common Goal</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Empower Those Impacted</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If a person is elected, he/she must have proven to the team that he/she is capable of the responsibility of being team captain.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Team leaders are the people who set an example for their teammates, especially the younger athletes on the team. They should be people who actually have the respect of their teammates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This way the athletes have a say in the process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If leaders are elected by the team, it shows that they are doing something right on the team and in their sport. I would respect an elected leader because I knew I had a vote in electing him/her.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like more involvement by athletes then there currently is</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I would like to be able to have a say in the process</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Since I am the one being lead.</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I get a vote. Don't need anything more or less.</td>
<td>Q20 Satisfied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that for the well being of the team, it might be nice to have personal talks with each individual to make sure they feel like their opinion and feelings in the selection process are valued. I think this inclusion would help team members unite behind someone, even if it is someone they wouldn't have picked, because they would feel like the majority want that person.</td>
<td>Q20 Voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We elected so I voted. I believe it has worked well for our team the last few times.</td>
<td>Q20 Satisfied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It may not hurt to ask some athletes opinion, but so far so good.</td>
<td>Q22 Voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They experience the captains first hand everyday and I believe that makes them better able to judge who is best fit for the job.</td>
<td>Q28 Best Judges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it can be very difficult for coaches to alone chose leaders for a team because the leaders need to be respected by their teammates as well.</td>
<td>Q33 Best Judges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Politics</td>
<td>Sometimes when appointed by coaches it is because they are the closest to the</td>
<td>Q8 Coach Bias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
coach. But hopefully they are selected because of their ability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Team Captain should be one worthy of gaining the respect of his/her teammates, not just one who was a coach's favorite, or one who was just outwardly 'social' and loud. It is the team itself who interacts with each other most often, both at practice and out. Coaches often only see statistics, numbers, or only interact most with the people that they themselves have particular interest in.</th>
<th>Q10 Coach Bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If a captain is appointed a position, I respect that and expect them to lead appropriately; the same goes for someone elected. Assuming they weren't unfairly dubbed captain (sports politics, etc) and they have the qualities of a good leader, they have my respect.</td>
<td>Q10 Sport Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the other hand, if some people feel that the coach is unfair in decisions, treatment, etc. then the appointed leader might not be respected by the whole team (if the coach merely chooses someone who always agrees with him/her or if the leader is just the fastest.</td>
<td>Q10 Coach Bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10 Coach Bias/Talent Doesn’t Translate</td>
<td>If appointed by coaches, it may be political. Sometimes the best leaders are looked over simply because the chosen captain is more athletic or has a better relationship with the coach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20 Talent Doesn’t Translate</td>
<td>just because someone is really good at whatever sport they do doesn't necessarily mean they should be the leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22 Coach Bias</td>
<td>Currently I believe the coach's selection was based more on relationship than on usefulness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22 Limited Perspective</td>
<td>I fell like the coach has a limited view of the relationships on the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22 Coach Bias</td>
<td>Coaches almost always will have favorites, and those favorites will gain most of the coach's attention during workouts and training; and those favorites will thus usually be a strong candidate for being appointed a team leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10 Limited Perspective</td>
<td>I feel like it is the team who will be looking up for guidance from the individual leader, the coach can't just decide that he wants only one specific leader on his team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10 Limited Perspective</td>
<td>Also, teammates who choose their captain usually choose someone they respect. It may not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
always be the case if the coach appoints someone.

However, sometimes coaches do not have a good understanding of team dynamic and choose a person not fitting for the job. | Q10 Limited Perspective

**CALL FOR APPOINT**

| I Trust My Coach | coaches know what qualities a leader should have. so they will base there decision on the athletes ability rather than an athlete's popularity | Q10 Unbiased |

| I feel that if the team were to choose, there would always be someone who wasn't happy with the choice and that may create drama. If the coach chooses, then that eliminates any possible trouble. Plus, the coaches usually have the best judge of character for a leader, while the athletes may just choose who is popular. | Q10 Unbiased |

| The coaches have a good grasp on the leaders and it is nice to just know who is captain right away and that they will be good from the get go. | Q11 Defer |

<p>| I truly believe that the coach took the social implications of her decision into account, along with the potential for growth of the chosen leader, as well as their leadership ability and physical dominance. | Q11 Omniscient |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q16 Defer</th>
<th>I feel like it [appointment] is what's best for the coach and the team leader position. I trust the coaches' judgements.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q16 Defer</td>
<td>I think the coach knows who leads well so I'm still happy with the decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16 Defer</td>
<td>I trust my coach to make great decisions. Her experience far outweighs my own; my say isn't necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16 Defer</td>
<td>I feel fine with not being involved. I trust and respect my coaches' decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16 Defer</td>
<td>I put my full faith in the coaches to decide who is &quot;leading&quot; our team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16 Defer</td>
<td>I trust the coaches because they've been here a while and they know us the best and how we perform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20 Unbiased</td>
<td>It makes the most sense to have the coach select the team captain, having the girls do it could easily lead to catty-ness amongst the girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Source</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>my opinion into account, although she never really talked to me about it. I think that she keeps her eyes and ears open and in general does not make poor choices in captains.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i completely trust coaches judgment.</td>
<td>Q20 Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the coach knows best</td>
<td>Q20 Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My coach selects the official leaders, and does it well.</td>
<td>Q20 Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Again, I trust and respect my coaches' decision, and it is not my decision to be made.</td>
<td>Q20 Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My coach picks the captains and I think that it is best because she can take personal relationships amongst the team into account without being personally emotionally involved.</td>
<td>Q22 Unbiased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust my coach.</td>
<td>Q25 Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my coach has enough experience to know how to choose leaders as he is a leader of the team himself.</td>
<td>Q25 Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can trust good coaches to do their job well.</td>
<td>Q25 Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust him to make the decision of a team captain who is not only a good athlete but has a respect on the team.</td>
<td>Q25 Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they know what they are doing</td>
<td>Q25 Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like he knows our teammates very well, who</td>
<td>Q25 Omniscient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Q25 Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>can handle what responsibilities and who seems to have influence on other teammates.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't ever feel I need to question their decisions mostly because they are completely committed to the team.</td>
<td>Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that he would make the best decision for the team.</td>
<td>Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He knows what people are capable of.</td>
<td>Omniscient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My coach never makes bad decisions. She knows the team better than anyone, especially being an outsider looking in.</td>
<td>Omniscient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think the coach sees the entire team from an outside perspective, and he knows how some people are natural leaders by example. He is able to see how the whole team fits together and make his decisions regarding leaders on his observations and/or conversations.</td>
<td>Omniscient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach knows best.</td>
<td>Defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The coach is the head of the team and often sees what is going on with the team more than the actual athletes do. So I trust my coach will make the best decision since she has a greater perspective than I do</td>
<td>Omniscient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My coach understands team dynamics and what it takes</td>
<td>Omniscient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My coaches have been coaching track for much longer than I've been running (not to mention they were better athletes than I am). With that experience, I trust their decisions on team leadership.

My coaches have been coaching track for much longer than I've been running (not to mention they were better athletes than I am). With that experience, I trust their decisions on team leadership.

they know how we perform the best, so I can trust that whoever they choose is someone worthy of the spot.

they've been here longer so they have experience

The team often cannot make the choices that a coach can. I feel like the team would choose a senior over a better suited younger captain in order to avoid slighting them, whereas a coach should be able to properly handle the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q25 Defer</th>
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</thead>
</table>

So if a team member is appointed, the coach made the decision, I have chosen to go along with it by being on the team. If that person is elected, then the team wanted that person to lead and I will respect that person and I am obligated to support them by being on this team.

So if a team member is appointed, the coach made the decision, I have chosen to go along with it by being on the team. If that person is elected, then the team wanted that person to lead and I will respect that person and I am obligated to support them by being on this team.

I like being to put in my opinion, but I don't think my opinion, or any team member's individual opinion, is as important as

| Q25 Defer |

| Q28 Defer |

| Q28 Unbiased |

| Q10 Implied Consent |

<p>| Q20 Ultimate Authority |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the coach opinion.</th>
<th>Q20 Ultimate Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Again, I trust and respect my coaches' decision, and it is not my decision to be made.</td>
<td>Q20 Ultimate Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this system, where the coaches appoint captains. It keeps the drama level down because the authority figures appointed this person.</td>
<td>Q20 Ultimate Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The coach should still have say in the final decision and his/her opinion should weight the most heavily.</td>
<td>Q22 Ultimate Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches have the largest impact since team members listen to them.</td>
<td>Q22 Ult Auth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He allows us to vote but has the final say in the decision.</td>
<td>Q22Ult Auth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They already have control of the decision, and I feel they deserve that control.</td>
<td>Q22 Ult Auth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes [I trust my coach to make decisions] because he is my coach. That doesn't mean I always agree with them though</td>
<td>Q25 Implied Consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My coaches are very friendly but still hold onto their authority, which is probably a big reason why the team is so successful.</td>
<td>Q25 Ult Auth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order for the team and the coach to be on the same page, I think it is important that the coach has the last authority but also that the team has input in the leadership selection process.</td>
<td>Q25 Ult Auth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama/Popular Bias</td>
<td>I trust them to make the decision but I don't think they should. I think it is the coach's responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coaches know what qualities a leader should have. so they will base there decision on the athletes ability rather than an athlete's popularity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>However, being elected could easily become a popularity contest, whereas if a coach selected the captain, popularity wouldn't be taken as much into account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel that if the team were to choose, there would always be someone who wasn't happy with the choice and that may create drama. If the coach chooses, then that eliminates any possible trouble. Plus, the coaches usually have the best judge of character for a leader, while the athletes may just choose who is popular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The captains that are appointed seem to have better leadership skills than elected due to them being the nicest or most popular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>However, if the leader is elected just based on performance and/or class, then I don't know if I would respect</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>him/her as much as someone who was hard-working, leads by example, etc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If elected by athletes, it appears to be a popularity contest (i.e. who will be my friend).</strong></td>
<td>Q10 Pop Contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>It depends on the person who is appointed. I would say I respect the person chosen by their teammates but in some cases this becomes a popularity contest and that leader is not the best one.</strong></td>
<td>Q10 Pop Contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>the leader were elected by the team, not everyone will have voted for him or her, so respect from the entire wouldn't necessarily exist.</strong></td>
<td>Q10 Dissension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>It makes the most sense to have the coach select the team captain, having the girls do it could easily lead to catty-ness amongst the girls.</strong></td>
<td>Q20 Dissension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I don't think that electing a team leader is the best way to go because it can easily turn into a popularity contest.</strong></td>
<td>Q20 Pop Contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I like this system, where the coaches appoint captains. It keeps the drama level down because the authority figures appointed this person.</strong></td>
<td>Q20 Dissension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The coach knows what she's doing. It takes less time to decide and doesn't make</strong></td>
<td>Q22 Saves Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>people feel less wanted by the team if they were to not get picked as captain through voting.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I feel my teammates would make decisions for the wrong reasons. I feel that they would make important decisions based on who their friends are, not who is the best leader. For me, it would feel like we are back in high school voting for ASB.</strong></td>
<td>Q28 Pop Contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Although I trust my teammates, I think that personal relationships and favoritism could result in a choice that is not necessarily the best pick.</strong></td>
<td>Q28 Pop Contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I feel like some people will pick people based on who they like, instead of who would do the best job</strong></td>
<td>Q28 Pop Contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I trust MOST of my teammates. I feel like there are a few cliquish athletes on the team that would vote for a specific person they liked, not necessarily someone they felt would lead well.</strong></td>
<td>Q28 Pop Contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>i feel like a leader chosen by our team would be heavily based on whose the fastest or whose the most social. i understand that that can sometimes be important but it's not always black and white</strong></td>
<td>Q28 Pop Contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28 Dissension</td>
<td>My teammates understand the team dynamic however there is also bias towards certain people and competition among each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q28 Dissension</td>
<td>I trust their decisions for team leadership, but I think the relationship between the leaders and the team would be more contested and less respected if the leaders were elected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16 Action over Selection</td>
<td>INDIFFERENCE TO METHOD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20 Action over Selection</td>
<td>If you really have a problem, you can still be a leader without the title.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q33 Action over Selection</td>
<td>I feel like when a leader is chosen that people don't really respect, others step up and lead anyways. So in a way it kind of naturally evolves. Just because one person has a title doesn't mean that people will regard them as a leader, and vice versa if they don't have a title and do possess leadership qualities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10 Action over Selection</td>
<td>I respect them if they are a good leader regardless of...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
how they became one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Either way I feel the decision to appoint or elect a team leader often times will lead to the same person being selected because of the characteristics that both coaches and athletes look for in a leader.</th>
<th>Q10 Predetermination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect for a team leader is earned more by their quality of leadership than the method in which they attained that position.</td>
<td>Q10 Action over Selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In most cases, the coach usually has the same opinion as the team.</td>
<td>Q10 Predetermination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a captain is appointed a position, I respect that and expect them to lead appropriately; the same goes for someone elected.</td>
<td>Q10 Indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that coaches have strong faith in the athletes they pick and athletes pick a person who they look up to, which both are equally admirable.</td>
<td>Q10 Indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the team leader is elected by the team it means that the team sees the quality that this person has to be a leader. If the team leader is appointed it means the coach sees an individual that can fill in the gaps in a team and acts like a representative between the coach and the rest of the team</td>
<td>Q10 Indifference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So if a team member is appointed, the coach made</td>
<td>Q10 Indifference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the decision, I have chosen to go along with it by being on the team. If that person is elected, then the team wanted that person to lead and I will respect that person and I am obligated to support them by being on this team.  

for the most part the coach and the team are on the same page. | Q20 Predetermination
---|---
The team/coaches picked great captains for this season, so I trust how the system works right now. | Q22 Indifference

Since the leaders are great this year, I don't see a reason they should make changes. | Q22 Indifference

OTHER | I chose the same level of respect, although I mean it more in the sense that it depends on the situations. Elected leaders can be great choices as well as poor ones, and the same goes for appointments. It depends on the circumstances around the team and coach.

Since I am an underclassman, I do not feel like I need involvement in the selection process. Starting junior and senior year though, I feel like there should be more involvement. | Q10 Continuum

It would be nice to have a balance between coach and team opinions in selection. | Q16 Balance

i wish we could talk about | Q20 Continuum
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q20 Balance</td>
<td>I think there needs to be a balance of coach/team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q22 Situational</td>
<td>This topic absolutely needs to be addressed to each team/school to assess what type of team selection process they feel would be most effective and fair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>I feel comfortable voting for who I want to lead and having the coach approve of the decision; the team needs to be involved but the coach is the ultimate authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuum</td>
<td>I like that my coach lets us have say, but he has the final decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7 LF</td>
<td>I just assumed the role of leader. Making sure people did the workout, motivating people in competition, coaches gifts, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7 LF</td>
<td>I sort of earned the respect of my teammates through my hard-working mentality every day…there was a sense of agreement amongst the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10 LF</td>
<td>Our coach told us that he wanted everyone to feel like they...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
needed to contribute and care for the team. I don't think this worked very well.... we felt like no one was a captain, and that the coach was taking advantage of the situation to just ask anyone to do anything for him at anytime.