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## The Relationship Between Self-Esteem, Locus of Control, and Gender Among College Athletes

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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-ESTEEM, LOCUS  
OF CONTROL, AND GENDER AMONG  
COLLEGE ATHLETES**

**RHONDA J. KANE, B.S.**

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate  
School of Lindenwood College in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Art  
1999

## **ABSTRACT**

Studies have shown that female athletes can have lower self-esteem than male athletes as they deal with the challenges and issues that arise as they progress through adolescence and become young adults. Researchers have implicated the gender socialization process which places the role of the female athlete in direct conflict with traditional female roles. This casual-comparative study examined differences in self-esteem and locus of control between female athletes and male athletes. Forty-three females and thirty-two males completed the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and the Levenson Locus of Control, I, P & C Scales. The results suggest the self-esteem of female college athletes is lower than male college athletes and the locus of control of females is less internal than that of male athletes.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the last 30 years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of females playing collegiate sports. More females have gained access to the college playing field because of changes in the law and feminist demands for equality in the traditionally male dominated sports world (Cahn, 1994). Opportunities for increased participation for females have been enhanced by earlier and better coaching, expanded programs, increase in college scholarships, and the development of positive female athletic role models (Messner, 1993).

As a result of the opportunities and increase in numbers of females participating in sports, research is needed to examine the issues surrounding this participation. In particular, research is needed to examine, understand, and address the gender differences and implications for female collegiate athletes (Krane, 1994; Howard, 1993; Block & Robins, 1993; Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993; Brandon, 1992; and Zimmerman & Reavil, 1998).

Even though the number of females in athletics has grown and is a source of optimism, the way is still being blocked for many female collegiate athletes. Zimmerman and Reavil (1998) described female athletes as inheriting a cultural legacy of bias, prejudice, stereotypes, and outdated attitudes. These factors cut short the dreams and opportunities for female athletes because female athleticism is seen as less important than male athleticism.

Due to this cultural influence female college athletes face numerous unique challenges and issues that separate them from male college athletes, which need to be investigated (Chartrand & Lent, 1987).



For example, previous research suggests socialization into sports for females is in conflict with sex-role socialization. This perceived incompatibility between femininity and playing sports becomes evident in adolescence and continues into later adolescence and early adulthood, the college age years (Engel, 1994). This is when female athletes are developing their self-concept, self-esteem, perception of whether they control their own lives, and feelings of competence and worthiness as a female in our society. It is during this developmental process that female athletes can be negatively impacted by challenges of playing sports. The implications for female athletes can include performance and success issues with athletics and academics.

The socialization issues and the cultural legacy female athletes inherit predispose them to challenges and issues including eating disorders and other negative coping mechanisms, higher drop-out rates from sports, stigmatization, discrimination, lower self-esteem, gender role confusion, confidence issues, a lack of internalizing abilities, and developmental difficulties. These challenges can affect the female athlete's self-esteem, locus of control, and development as a competent individual (Krane, 1994; Engel, 1994). Miller and Wooten (1995) advocate further research and state that the academic, social, and personal development of student athletes is a concern for coaches, athletic support staff, and counselors.

Self-esteem is seen as an important issue for college student-athletes and is impacted by gender issues either positively or negatively (Block & Robin, 1993). Branden (1992) describes "self-esteem as the experience that we are appropriate to life and to the requirements of life. Self-esteem is confidence in our ability to think and to cope with the basic challenges of life and our confidence in our right to be happy, the

feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and wants, and to enjoy the fruits of our efforts” (p.18).

Whether the attitudes, behaviors, values, and skills acquired by females through their sports participation has positive or negative influences on their self-esteem and identity is a topic discussed by many professionals (Danish, Petitipas & Hale, 1993). The research of previous studies show the self-esteem of female athletes becomes lower as the athlete progresses through adolescence and into young adulthood while the self-esteem of male athletes stays the same or increases (Zimmerman & Reavil, 1998; Blyth, Simmons & Carlton-Ford, 1983).

Locus of control is described by Burke and Straub (1976) as the way an individual perceives reinforcements received, with an internal locus of control being the belief rewards obtained are due largely to their own effort. An external locus of control is the feeling that reinforcements given are due to factors outside themselves, luck, chance or others. Even though locus of control has been researched in many studies, research is needed on athletes, due to the impact locus of control can have on behavior and self-esteem (Burke & Straub). Female college athletes who have an internal locus of control believe they can affect their own lives and believe their rewards are a result of their own efforts. These athletes will be better able to deal with the challenges of being a female college athlete and will have a higher self-esteem.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship of self-esteem, locus of control, and gender among a sample of college athletes. The following question was posed: Is there a difference in the self-esteem and locus of control between female college athletes and male college athletes? In order to address this question, the following



hypotheses were tested: (i) There was a significant difference in self-esteem between female college athletes and male college athletes, (ii) there was a significant difference in the locus of control between female college athletes and male college athletes, and (iii) there was a significant difference in the degree of relationship between self-esteem and locus of control between female college athletes and male college athletes.

Self-esteem and locus of control was measured by the Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) developed by Coopersmith and the I, P & C Scale, developed by Levenson respectively.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Sports Psychology

Sports psychology is a discipline within the field of psychology which focuses on the use of sports to “promote human development and competence through the lifespan” (Lent, 1993, p. 358) and addresses “performance enhancement, life skills, clinical and counseling interventions, and rehabilitation” (Petrie, Diehl & Watkins, 1995, p.535). Sports psychology issues are the focus for many research studies due to the importance our culture gives to sports (Petrie, Diehl & Watkins).

Our culture places a high value on sports which significantly impacts all areas of society. Sports contribute to the development of one’s identity, self-esteem, and feelings of competence (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993; Howard, 1993). The question debated in research studies is whether the attitudes, behaviors, and values attained through sports are negative or positive, especially as the athlete progresses into more competitive arena’s such as college athletics (Danish, Petitpas & Hale).

Howard (1993) discusses the enormous good that can be achieved in college sports participation but acknowledges the abuses which also occur, including injuries, death, sexism, racism, homophobia, stereotyping and elitism. Studies recommend the aid of sports psychologists to help overcome the negative effects of sports and to assist in promoting a healthy development of character. The student-athlete can be assisted in investigating self-esteem, self-worth, human relationships, and the meaning of winning and losing (Chandler & Goldberg, 1990).

Howard (1993) lists the following assumptions used by sports psychologists when assisting college student-athletes. The student athlete



is a student first, an athlete second. Universities must avoid preferential treatment of athletes and avoid profiting from the athletes without promoting personal and educational development. The values which direct the athletic program must be the same as those which guide academics. Sports should be viewed as an important part of life skills training. Finally, sport psychologists at the university must use a variety of theories, skills, and programs to help the student-athlete develop educational and personal goals.

Sports counselors on university campuses can assist student-athletes in a variety of ways with the challenges and issues associated with college sports participation. The development of programs, classes, workshops and counseling strategies are needed to assist with the academic, personal, athletic, and career concerns of the student-athlete. Assistance academically can include working with professors, developing time management skills, developing study skills, reviewing progress, assigning tutors, course scheduling and monitoring eligibility (Gabbard & Halischak, 1993).

Sports psychology can also help the student-athlete with personal concerns including: goal setting, decision-making, stress management, alcohol and drug education, emotional health, and retirement from sports (Miller & Wooten, 1995). The student-athlete can be assisted with self-esteem building, anxiety, anger control, concentration, motivation, and developmental issues (Gabbard & Halischak, 1993). The student-athlete often lacks career development due to demands and busy schedules. The sports psychologist can address career issues, train in career explorations, and help the athlete choose a major (Gabbard & Halischak).

Parham (1993) describes sports psychology as contributing the following services to student-athletes: effectively meeting mental and health needs, individual counseling, expertise in performance enhancement, group intervention for personal matters, consultation to provide insight and advice for team issues, and research talents. This study calls for increased study of 1990's college student-athletes to understand this special population and their complex issues in a changing world (Parham).

An important issue confronting sports psychologists, discussed by Hill (1993), is dealing effectively with the multiculturalism of athletes. When working with college athletes it is important to understand the issues facing minority athletes, which can affect their self-esteem. These include different world views, understanding stages of racial identity development, attitudes and behaviors, the shortage of role models, special challenges of minority female athletes, and recognizing the inconsistencies between reality and interventions used with minority athletes (Hill).

The sports psychology field has been impacted by two significant models of theory. The first theory is the Life Development Intervention (LDI) which focuses on the athletes' life span of human development. This theory developed by Danish advocates sports are closely related to all other life domains (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993). The focus of the LDI model is a psychoeducational framework used to enhance athletic and personal development. It also focuses on the individual as a person, not only as an athlete and on the changing needs of the person over time (Chartrand & Lent, 1987).

The major assumption of the LDI model is for emphasis to be on understanding growth and change biologically, socially, and psychologically (Danish, Petitpas, & Hale, 1993). The social and cultural



norms, life stages, and athletic environments are important to examine. The goal is prevention by teaching life skills, self-reliance, life planning, competence building, and effective coping skills (Chartrand & Lent, 1987).

The LDI model helps the student-athlete to deal with critical life events faced during sports participation in a positive and healthy manner. The critical life events include the athletic transition to a higher level of competition, coping with injuries, changes in team makeup (due to graduation, transfer and attrition), changes in coaching, and retirement (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993). The impact of these life events on the self-esteem of the student-athlete will depend on the resources and coping skills the student-athlete has developed. The sports psychologist can assist students in acquiring and understanding these skills.

The second theoretical perspective commonly used by sports psychology is the feminist theory. This theory is used as an alternative to the traditional scientific, male oriented model. The traditional model is sexist and is based primarily on research done on men which assumes what is true for males can be generalized to females (Krane, 1994). The feminist theory holds a broader perspective and allows for the development of effective sports psychology interventions which are better suited for the issues of the female athlete.

Krane (1994) describes the feminist perspective in sports psychology as having the following tenements. Feminism acknowledges female experience as differing from male experience and gender bias is the center focus. The theory seeks to understand the female athlete experience and acknowledges the lesser status of females in sports. The female athletes' standpoint is expressed through sports and the social constraints are acknowledged. The feminist perspective describes how the male and

female socialization experience in sports is different and this difference results in a lack of equity in sport opportunities. Studies have found the female athlete is perceived as socially different and is impacted by many stereotypes which guarantee a different experience for female athletes (Krane, 1994).

Ryckman and Hamel (1992) agree with the previous research and have advocated examining the gender differences in sports and the impact on female athletes at different age levels especially late adolescence and early adulthood.

#### Developmental Issues for College Athletes

Adolescents must cope with expectations and pressures as they move into young adulthood. Many different and deeper peer relationships are being formed. How the adolescent deals with these pressures can be positive or negative and can have long term consequences. Block and Robins (1993) discuss adolescence as a "period marked by rapid maturational changes, shifting societal expectations, conflicting role demands, and increasingly complex relations with the opposite sex" (p. 909). The cultural and societal roles interact with the adolescent, family experience, and peer relationships to influence the complex process of developing a sense of self and self-esteem and transitioning into adulthood.

In adolescence there is a developmental shift to pursuing a personal identity search (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993). Sports can interfere with this opportunity for exploration and development and can greatly impact the psychosocial development of the student-athlete (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995). The time a student is in college, late adolescence to early adulthood, is described by Chickering (1969) and Parham (1993) as a time



when a number of developmental tasks must be confronted. These include achieving competence, managing emotions, becoming autonomous, establishing relationships, developing more mature interpersonal relationships, clarifying purpose, and developing integrity. The focus is on expanding life experiences.

Goldberg and Chandler (1995) state that the developmental issues of athletes are unique and include identity formation, becoming personally competent, developing interpersonal relationships, and planning for the future. The student-athlete is facing new and conflicting roles while trying to balance the time and energy required of sports participation. This conflict can limit the opportunities for the student-athlete to explore educational and social experiences.

The female student-athlete also has to deal with the conflicting messages and expectations of the dual role of athlete and being female. The female student-athlete forms an identity and self-esteem based on how adequately the role conflicts are resolved (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995). The limited feedback about social strengths and weaknesses narrows the positive development of self-esteem for the female student-athlete (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1993; Lessee, 1998). Alder and Alder (1991) examine the outcomes of these role conflicts and believe damage is done to the student-athletes' self-esteem when the athletic role becomes dominant and the other role options and developmental tasks aren't completed.

The developmental issue of personal competence can be negatively affected when the focus is on rewards based on athletic performance and competence which leads to an external locus of control (Hayfield & Sultan, 1987). The development of an external locus of control in a student-athlete can lead to a failure to develop adequate coping skills,

difficulty in making decisions for fear of being wrong, difficulty in pleasing others, the tendency to attribute success to chance rather than to personal skill or initiative, and the reliance on external reinforces to feel competent (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995).

The development of positive interpersonal behaviors and successful relationships can be a difficult developmental task for the student-athlete. The student-athlete must be able to perform in many settings and meet different demands and expectations of coaches, teachers, counselors, peers, teammates, and families. The student-athlete must develop many different behaviors to cope effectively. The focus on sports and athletic goals limit the time needed to develop interpersonal behaviors and to establish successful relationships (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995).

The developmental issue of future planning is challenging for male and female college athletes. The opportunities beyond collegiate sports are often unrealistic and nonexistent for females. The student-athlete has problems identifying alternative educational and career goals and developing appropriate strategies to deal with the transition from college to beyond (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995).

#### Gender Issues for Female Athletes

Female athletes are playing sports in growing numbers, creating an awareness that sports can be empowering and positive for females. The number of females participating in sports has doubled (Cahn, 1994). But the way to full athletic participation and the rewards which follow are still being blocked for young female athletes (Krane, 1994). Female involvement in competitive sports poses a serious challenge to the



“maleness” of sports and undermines the notion sports belong to men (Cahn).

Many studies have shown that starting at an early age females are affected by stereotypes and biases. The studies have shown that girls see themselves to be less athletic than boys (Zimmerman & Reavil, 1998; Cahn, 1994). In the cradle girls are pushed away from athletics by comments on their delicateness, cuteness, and softness, while boys are described as being strong, alert and coordinated.

Zimmerman and Reavil (1998) discuss how girls are socialized differently at an early age. Fathers have more physical contact with boys and rescue girls more which deprives them of confidence. Parents give toys to girls that are passive and fit traditional female roles (e.g. dolls, shopping, make-up, clothes). Boys are encouraged and allowed to play outside more, climbing and running, while girls play inside. Girls wear delicate colors such as pink and yellow while boys wear blue and green. Boys wear athletic and sports clothing while girls are dressed in dresses. Boys are prepared early by instruction in motor building skills such as throwing, catching, and kicking. This ensures their enjoyment and success in sports while girls are more likely to quit due to frustration and a lack of confidence and success. It is difficult for girls to be successful in sports without the preparation and basic athletic skills, that are routinely taught to boys (Zimmerman & Reavil).

In a study by Krane (1988), gender differences were found among athletes beginning at a young age, which showed the athletic role for males was equal to greater status in schools. The author cited studies which show high school males achieve status primarily through athletic involvement, more than through leadership and academics, while females

get little attention and are seriously stigmatized if they participate in sports. The roles which give females greater status were traditional ones, "cheerleader" or "academic leader". A study by Sutor and Reavis (1995) found boys acquire prestige through sports and school achievement while girls acquire prestige through physical appearance, sociability, and school achievement.

Methany (1967) found sports for females were acceptable or unacceptable based on whether it conformed to a traditional feminine image. The sport was inappropriate for females if it requires the female to try to subdue opponents in face-to-face bodily contact. The sport was appropriate for females if the body moved aesthetically, light instruments were used and there was no bodily contact (e.g. golf, tennis, volleyball).

The cultural notion that the male sport experience is considered "real" and the norm, while the female sport experience is discounted or nonexistent, is deeply ingrained in our society. The female athlete is participating in a male model of sports and in a masculine domain which is characterized as a hierarchical and elitist system (Krane, 1994).

This strongly discourages the female athlete from participating in sports.

The media also continues to discourage females from playing sports. Messner (1993) believed the under coverage of women's events contributes to the lack of attention and recognition deserving of female athletes. In his study, Messner analyzed and compared the use of language in TV sports commentary. His findings showed gender differences constantly, both verbally and with graphics. The female athletes were referred to as "girls" and "young ladies", while male athletes were referred to as "men" always. The mens' games were considered universal and



normal, while the womens' games were referred to as "other, derivative and by implication, inferior to men" (p. 127).

Zimmerman and Reavil (1998) cited studies and reported findings which indicate young female athletes lose something of themselves as they become young adults. The females were found to experience a larger drop in self-esteem than young male athletes. Their results showed females were "more likely to lose interest in activities that challenge them and less likely to believe in their own abilities" (p. ix).

Krane (1994) cited research which supported her findings that gender difference beliefs affect the experience of female athletes. Since they are expected to be less skilled than male athletes at sports, females are not given adequate instruction to develop skills, have fewer performance gains, and so perpetuate the belief that females have lesser athletic ability than men. Krane also found that the societal ideals of how males and females should be overlapped with what is socially acceptable sports behavior for males and females. Society expects that boys will participate in sports and they are then taught the needed skills and "masculine" behaviors. Females are expected to avoid "masculine" sports, are called "tomboys" when playing sports, and are expected to outgrow this phase or risk being labeled "masculine".

Beall and Sternberg (1993) describe cultural attributes given to males as being valued more and considered superior and more admirable for humans to have than qualities seen as feminine. Kane (1988) cites the example of a female softball player in a recent TV beer commercial. She looks into the camera and says, "When I'm out there on the field, I'm a ballplayer, not a lady" (p. 263). While there is a positive aspect to seeing a

female athlete on TV, it shows that the softball player clearly and unfortunately separates her femininity from the athletic role.

Engel (1994) studied gender differences and found evidence to suggest that socialization into sports is in conflict with sex-role socialization. Studies show this incompatibility between femininity and sports is acute in adolescence when girls identify with and become linked to femininity. Leaman (1984) explains socialization factors further, "A girl who continues to be committed to sports through adolescence may well find herself a victim of role conflict. If she accepts the social definition of femininity she will have the problem of reconciling her sporting behavior, with its accompanying characteristics of aggression, competitiveness, independence, competence, strength, and expertise with a very different set of social expectations of her as a young woman" (p.110).

Ryckman and Hamel (1992) studied the socialization process and the intrapersonal motivational variable of female athletes involved in team sports. The findings revealed that the primary motive for adolescent female athletes to participate in sports is the need for affiliation, motives include a need for status, team spirit, friendship, fitness, fun, and skill development. This author also cited and discussed several studies done by feminist scholars which have maintained that the socialization process shapes the male and female athletes experience differently. They also found that the sense of self and self-esteem is organized around cultural norms and that peer affiliation is more important to females than males. This study found results consistent with previous research and concluded that girls involved in sports are more achievement oriented, affiliation driven, and sought to develop their personal and social selves.



A study done by Engel (1994) surveyed patterns of socialization and levels of sport participation in 200 young female athletes, ages 12-16. She concluded that levels of sports participation of female athletes decreased by late adolescence. The evidence supported earlier findings that "pressures of socialization for young women to conform to a male defined concept of femininity may contribute to a decrease in sport participation across age" (p. 15). A young female athlete who continues sports into later adolescence is representing a threat to the social power relationship between males and females and is breaking away from male defined notions of femininity.

#### Challenges for Female College Athletes

Male and female student-athletes encounter many challenges, due to college sports participation, that are unique to their situation. According to Parham (1993), student-athletes are socialized in an environment that presents special challenges in addition to normal college issues. The first challenge is in academics where student athletes are trying to balance school and athletic requirements. Student-athletes have to go to practice, attend class, travel, and study.

The second challenge discussed by Parham is the time issue. The student-athlete often has no time left after athletics and academics for social, leisure, and financial pursuits. This can create loneliness and a lack of contact with the campus community, as well as money problems due to lack of time to work. The third challenge for the student-athlete is coping with success or the lack of it. Many talented student-athletes pressure themselves to maintain top performance levels and meet expectations of coaches, teammates, communities, and families. The athletes can

experience a fear of failure, frustration, helplessness, and a feeling of being overwhelmed if they are unable to meet the expectations.

The fourth challenge encountered by student-athletes is health and injury issues. Approximately half of college athletes will experience an injury. The athletes have invested time and energy to stay healthy and they can become very distressed and anxious when injured. Coaches can pressure athletes to rush back to the game and to ignore physical problems. The student-athletes can be worried and stressed over the possibility of not returning to their sport or not being able to return to their previous performance level.

The fifth challenge confronting student-athletes is the retirement issue. The end of the athletic career can be very difficult for student-athletes who can feel loss, fear, anxiety, anger, disbelief, denial, sadness, and resentment (Baillie, 1993; Lent, 1993). The student-athlete often needs help from a sports psychologist to come to terms with how intimately connected they have been to the world of athletics and how their investment in sports satisfied many basic human needs such as success, approval, validation, recognition, and belonging (Parham, 1993).

The student-athlete can experience a variety of behaviors in response to these special challenges. The behaviors include alcohol and drug use, sexual promiscuity, discipline, mood swings, and appearance alterations (Sharkin, 1997). The way the student-athlete responds and copes with the demands of college sports participation depends on individual style, personality, interpretations, and past methods of coping.

Parham (1993) discusses the self-esteem of the student-athlete as being a key variable in how the challenges will positively or negatively affect the athlete. The student-athlete with a higher self-esteem will be



involved in more self-care, look for the good in situations, adapt easier to new situations, be less likely to personalize problems and challenges, be more confident in their abilities and talents, and will focus on discovering healthier ways to respond. Student-athletes with a low self-esteem will be self-critical, self-doubting, use hesitant decision making, obsess over problems, and look for reasons why they are unable to tackle current challenges.

Zimmerman and Reavil (1998) advocate that there are gender differences in how male and female athletes respond to the kinds of challenges described above. Female athletes are at risk of using negative coping techniques to help them deal with special challenges which can lead to alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, depression, suicide, and sexually transmitted diseases. These problems can contribute to a lower self-esteem in female athletes.

Parham (1993) also found gender differences in how female athletes deal with the challenges of college athletics. This study explains how female athletes are dealing with sexism, myths, prejudices, biases, and institutional oppression. She also found that men hold the majority of coaching jobs, administration jobs, and positions of authority in female athletics, instead of females.

There are still many gender differences and inequalities between male and female athletes. The inequalities for female athletes include: the number of sports available for females are less than for males, smaller and less developed locker rooms, older or no uniforms, less convenient practice times, worse practice and playing fields, worse game schedules, less number of games, less convenient transportation, minimal attendance and support from the college, less scholarship money, minimal sports coverage

of female sports (95% of coverage being for male sports), lack of female role models, male coaches for both female and male athletes and a higher dropout rate from sports for females (Zimmerman & Reavil, 1998).

A unique challenge facing college female athletes is the prevalence of eating disorders. Female athletes have been identified in several studies as having dramatic increases in eating disorders. This is the result of the societal ideal of slimness for women and gender-role socialization that pushes females to follow traditional feminine gender norms (Krane, 1994; Taub & Blinde, 1992 & 1994; Skowron & Friedlander, 1994). The most vulnerable age is 16 through the early 20's, which places the college age female at great risk for eating disorders (Taub & Blinde). Taub and Blinde discussed several factors that account for this risk. The factors include pressure to reduce body size for competition, personal characteristics of the athlete, and emphasis on the body to be thin, competitive, attractive, and perfect.

Studies have found college age female athletes are in the process of facing an important developmental task- achieving autonomy and differentiation from family and peers through sports. This creates a preoccupation with weight, body dissatisfaction, and pursuit of excellence that doesn't necessarily become psychopathological if proper awareness, coaching, support, and prevention is available (Skowron & Friedlander, 1994; Horsley, 1995).

Cultural issues including stereotypes and biases create special challenges for female college athletes. The behavior that is considered normal by society creates problems for females. "Real" athletics are considered masculine and men dominate the playing field. Athletic qualities are actually qualities attributed to men such as aggression, competitiveness,



strength, power, and speed. Sports provide an arena for young men to develop these qualities and move into manhood (Cahn, 1994). When young women try to break into this arena they are met with stereotypes, biases, and are labeled "mannish" or "tomboy".

Cahn (1994) cites the example of Nauratilova who was too good at tennis and was called names and accused of being abnormal. She was accused of using science and drugs to enhance her performance and of having a chromosome defect. America couldn't "separate the concept of athletic superiority from its cultural affiliation with masculine sports and the male body" (p. 62).

The biases seen in the sports world allow sexist values and view women as second class athletes. Sports leaders, corporate sponsors, and the media try to regulate women athlete's bodies, outward appearance and sexuality (Cahn, 1994). Research into the college female athletes experience is needed to openly examine the gender differences, biases, stereotypes, and challenges which may limit the full success of the college female athlete (Bredemeier, Desertrain, Fisher, Getty, Slocum, Stephens & Warren, 1991; Krane, 1994).

Sexism and discrimination create challenges for female college athletes which can greatly impact their sense of self and their success. The success of females in athletics blurs the sexual and gender categories, causing journalists, educators, sports officials, and social commentators to deal with the question of power between men and women (Cahn, 1994). Our culture believes exceptional athletic ability and interest signals "unladylike" lesbianism, which is a societal taboo and encourages homophobia and discrimination against female athletes (Zimmerman & Reavil, 1998).

Blinde and Taub (1992) discuss in their article the intense socialization factors and stigmatization involved in labeling female athletes as lesbians. According to these authors, labeling female athletes as lesbians serves to discourage their participation in sports and so preserves the power dynamics that exist between males and females. The effects of stigmatization on female athletes include compromising the well-being of female athletes and discouraging the development of support among the athletes. In a study of 24 participants, Blinde and Taub reported the females attempted to deal with stigmatization by restricting social connections to other athletes, withholding information about athletics from strangers, and calling attention to their femininity with dress and make-up. The reactions of the participants to stigmatization ranged from internalized self-loathing, to refusing to support any female athlete who was possibly a lesbian, to feeling mentally stronger and more independent due to dealing effectively with the adversity.

Cahn (1994) sums up this issue, "all women in sport had to reckon with the power of the surrounding culture to stigmatize skilled female athletes. Images of mannishness, lesbianism, ugliness and biological abnormality circulated through society, posing barriers to female athletic participation and placing an especially heavy burden on women whose very excellence evoked the nastiest kinds of accusation" (p. 243).

Female college athletes continue to participate in sports in growing numbers in spite of the constraints and challenges. They are relying on the support of friends, families, sports psychologists, and the women who came before. Sports psychologists are helping female college athletes learn a variety of prosocial skills, such as coping with stress, decision making, assertiveness, relaxation, asking for help, displaying self-control,



responding to set-backs and failures, developing positive relationships, goal setting, alternatives to aggression, and cultural understanding (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995). These skills can help the female student-athlete to experience enhanced levels of self-esteem.

### Self-Esteem Issues

Coopersmith (1981) defined self-esteem as a personal judgment and attitude of worthiness held by an individual. Pelham and Swann (1989) describe self-esteem as a specific self-view, including concepts of strengths and weaknesses. This model suggests that affective and cognitive variables contribute to the self-esteem of an individual at various points in life. The affective environment, whether friendly and satisfying or not, can create feelings of worthiness or unworthiness.

The self-view is linked to individual values and goals. Those values identified as being the most important will strongly influence the self-esteem. Self-esteem varies over the life span and is derived largely from the social experience (Small, Smith, Barnett & Everett, 1993). For example, the female athlete, depending on what messages society gives about her worthiness and value at sports and how important sports are to her, will have her self-esteem and self-view either positively or negatively affected.

Branden (1992) describes individuals with high self-esteem as being equipped to cope with adversity in sports and being more ambitious. They can set and reach demanding goals and having healthy relationships. Individuals with low self-esteem seek safety and undemanding goals and are less likely to achieve. Self-esteem is divided into two parts: a sense of self-efficacy and a sense of personal worth. Self-efficacy is confidence in

the ability to think, judge, choose, understand, and to have a sense of control over life (internal locus of control). Personal worth is the assurance of value, an affirmative attitude toward the right to live and be happy, to meet needs and to achieve and succeed (Branden).

Studies show self-esteem increases with age in adolescence in general. A decrease in self-esteem will occur if the individual experiences a change in the social environment that prevents the normal development of a positive self-esteem (McCarthy & Hage, 1982; Branden, 1992; O'Malley & Bachman, 1983). Hines and Groves (1989) describe self-esteem as a personal judgment of "worthiness" expressed in attitudes the individual holds about self. Individuals seldom perform beyond the limits of their self-esteem. Hines and Groves advocate research involving self-esteem and sports due to the impact self-esteem can have on performance and success.

A study by Salokun (1994) on 144 males and 144 females, ages 12 to 18, found a positive relationship between personal and social adjustment and athletic success. There was also a positive correlation between gain in sports skill and an increase in self-esteem scores. When approval was received there was an increase in positive feelings about self and consistent winners scored higher on self-concept than consistent losers. The study found a relationship between sports participation and changes in self-concept and self-esteem. The conclusion reached was that sports offer a variety of situations for acquiring good feelings, personal competence, and a sense of achievement if the athletes' feel worthy and successful.

In a study done by Block and Robins (1993), self-esteem and gender differences were examined longitudinally in males and females, ages 14 through 23. Discussed were the characteristics underlying individual differences in self-esteem change in males which differed from those in



females. They found that as adolescents increase in age, the self-esteem of females decreased and the self-esteem levels of males increased. Other gender differences found were that females with high self-esteem emphasize interpersonal connectedness and were warm and talkative, while males with high self-esteem were unemotional, uninvolved and independent. These authors speculated that the cause of these findings may be related to the different socialization experiences. The socialization process for males encourages a broadening of opportunity and experience while for females options for experience and autonomy are constrained.

Other studies report finding similar results, that boys self-esteem increased through adolescence while girls self-esteem decreased, with the difference growing larger by late adolescence (Brage & Meredith, 1993; Wood, Becker & Thompson, 1996). In many studies examining gender and self-esteem, not only was there found to be a decrease in self-esteem for adolescent girls while that of boys increased, there was also a decrease in the self-image and self-confidence of female adolescents compared to that of male adolescents. Female adolescents also were found to have lower expectations of their athletic abilities and more internally attributed failures and more externally attributed successes than male adolescents (American Association for University Women, 1991; Dweck, 1986; Erkert, 1983; Stipek, 1984).

These findings on gender differences and self-esteem are critical given the importance of self-esteem to life satisfaction and healthy adolescent development (Huebner, 1991). In a study done by Kaufman, Brown, Graves, Henderson and Revolinski (1993), 622 adolescents, ages 12 through 20 completed the "Things That Worry Me" questionnaire. These authors advocate, "one of the most crucial tasks of adolescence is

the development of an individual's self-image or self-esteem. Study findings support this notion and underscore the tenuousness of this process" (p.13). The answers to the questionnaire reflected the importance of self-esteem related issues to adolescent development with subjects being concerned over recognition in school, popularity with classmates and being worried about how others viewed them.

In an article on resiliency in male and female adolescents, Turner, Norman and Zunz (1995) reported self-esteem and self-efficacy are important factors in resiliency. They defined resiliency as "...the ability to bounce back or cope well in the face of adversity..."(p.25). The authors reported that during adolescence the self-esteem of females drops. They suggested that adolescent females become unsure of themselves and their abilities and that they are less likely to cope due to traditional gender roles and expectations for females. Females are encouraged to be dependent and autonomy is discouraged. Turner, Norman and Zunz cited studies that found higher self-esteem in adolescent females who participated in sports versus those who did not. These authors advocated encouraging enhancement of self-esteem and resiliency for adolescent females by allowing them to develop masculine and feminine traits and being allowed to be feminine and athletic at the same time.

Hines and Groves (1989) studied the gender factors important in developing a positive self-esteem in female athletes. They found that the social aspects of peer interaction, parental influence, and their coaches' assessment of ability and intention of participation are the most important factors contributing to a female athletes' self-esteem. They advocate the further study of gender issues with athletes and education for parents and



coaches on the importance their interactions with female athletes have on developing self-esteem.

Self-esteem is a critical issue to study and understand because of the many choices and options available to female athletes. Individuals need a higher level of self-esteem to cope with demands of higher education, rapid change, and higher levels of competitiveness. In summary, Branden (1992) wrote, "We have reached a moment in history when self-esteem, which has always been a supremely important psychological need, has become a supremely important economic need, an attribute imperative for adaptiveness to an increasingly complex, challenging and competitive world"(p.11). This is especially true for athletes, because today's competitive female athlete needs to have self-reliance, personal autonomy, self-trust, internal locus of control, initiative, and a high self-esteem to be able to deal with dual roles and challenges of sports participation (Branden, 1992).

Many studies call for extensive research to develop a better understanding of student-athlete development, obstacles to optimal adjustment, and effective means for enhancing development of self-esteem (Goldberg & Chandler, 1995; Small, Smith, Barnett & Everett, 1993; Chartrand & Lent, 1987). Block and Robins (1993) advocate future research to clarify gender differences of male and female athletes and to examine self-esteem in the college age athlete.

#### Locus of Control Issues

Locus of control is the basis by which individuals attribute the causes of life events (Granito & Carlton, 1993). It is a concept that can be used to understand the challenges of the female athlete. Horsley (1995)

describes locus of control in terms of internal and external. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe they have control over the outcomes of their life. They attribute problem solving, experiences, successes, and rewards received to their own efforts and abilities. Individuals with an external locus of control believe factors beyond their control determine what happens in life.

Student-athletes with an external locus of control attribute their athletic success to luck or poor performance and don't give credit to their own skills and effort. These student-athletes are more likely to be influenced by the behaviors of others and have little confidence in their ability to influence how they feel and behave (Horsley, 1995). For example, the student-athlete with an external locus of control will blame not playing well on the coach not allowing enough time for warm-ups and will not look for solutions to playing better. This lack of control greatly impacts how the student-athlete deals with the stresses of college athletics (Horsley, Granito & Carlton, 1993; McWhirter, 1997).

Student-athletes with an internal locus of control are goal directed, well organized, adapt quickly, and take charge of factors within their control (Horsley, 1995). For example, this student-athlete will reassure themselves, relax, not worry, and will look for solutions. Horsley describes how student-athletes who have an external orientation will have problems with self-confidence and self-esteem which will greatly impact athletic performance, such as dealing with injuries, stress, and traveling.

Levenson (1973) believed an internal orientation increases motivation to continue an activity while an external orientation decreases motivation. This is due to the belief that there is little that can be done to influence the outcome. Levenson also proposes distinguishing between



two types of external orientations, those who believe luck and fate control what happens and those who believe powerful others are in control. Those who believe powerful others are in control may have the motivation to succeed as do internals and are different from the first type of externals.

Hendy and Boyer (1995) discussed gender differences found in previous research on locus of control of female athletes. They found that young female athletes often attributed success to external, uncontrollable factors such as luck and social support. But young male athletes often attribute success in athletics to controllable and internal factors, such as ability and effort (Duncan & McAuley, 1987; Greenberg, Pyszcznski & Solomon, 1982).

The relationship between locus of control, team satisfaction, and job satisfaction was studied by Granito and Carlton (1993). This study discussed how jobs and team sports share many of the same elements such as directing and evaluating, working closely with others, and performing to a specific standard. The results suggested that individuals with an internal locus of control may be more satisfied on the job and on sports teams and individuals with an external locus of control were less satisfied. Granito and Carlton also assessed the relationship between locus of control and college athletic satisfaction with 91 female college volleyball players. The Levenson IPC Scale was given to measure locus of control and the Sports Satisfaction Scale measured satisfaction of the players. The results suggested no significant correlation between locus of control and player satisfaction, but this study cited other studies which did show a relationship. The explanation by the authors suggested that the satisfaction scale failed to account for all aspects of player satisfaction. This study recommended future research studies on locus of control within sports

settings to measure this dimension with success, satisfaction and self-esteem of female college athletes.

The relationship between the locus of control and success in athletics was studied by Burke and Straub (1976). The subjects were 50 adolescent female and 39 adolescent male competitive swimmers from 14 states. This study discussed that there are more than 600 articles published about locus of control but few studies have been conducted involving athletes and locus of control. Locus of control is important to study because it is an important determinant of behavior which influences how successful athletes may be in sports.

Burke and Straub (1976) found no significant gender differences in the locus of control of female swimmers versus male swimmers, which was consistent with the findings of other studies. The results showed that the adolescent swimmers regardless of gender, were internal in their perceptions of reinforcement. Burke and Straub (1976) stated "...they seem to be integrated individuals who believe that they are capable of shaping their own destiny" (p.106). These authors advocate future research to study locus of control and other psychological attitudes which impact the success, self-esteem and motivation of athletes, especially college age athletes.

These findings were also supported by Kulcarni (1983), who also found that those with an internal orientation who expected that their performance would be rewarded by gratification would be more satisfied with their performance. This author also believed the locus of control construct would be useful in understanding individual differences in other arenas, such as sports. Kasperson (1982) reported that individuals who



were internally oriented were more positive than those who were externally oriented.

McWhirter (1997) examined the relationship between loneliness, self-esteem and gender among college students. As college students were emerging from adolescence, they were struggling between establishing intimacy and being isolated from others. A key cognitive factor found to be associated with loneliness was locus of control, which along with self-esteem were important issues for college students. This study described the self-esteem of college students as a pattern of beliefs possessed regarding self-worth which was based on the perception of experience and feedback from others. The results showed a correlation between self-esteem and loneliness, with gender affects. The study also suggested investigation into the relationship of gender, self-esteem and locus of control of college students.

Self-esteem is affected by mental operations, not external successes or failures. If the student-athlete judges self by factors outside of their control, the self-esteem is in jeopardy. If the student-athlete believes that their choices are in their own control and not in the control of powerful others or luck, the impact on the self-esteem is positive (Weiner, 1985; Branden, 1992). An internal locus of control in conjunction with a high self-esteem encourages self-expression, self-assertion, self-acceptance, and self-responsibility for choices and actions. It can be the chief casual agent in life and behavior (Branden).

This study acknowledges the authors who suggested further research into the issues of female athletes. Research has been recommended to investigate self-esteem, gender, locus of control and other variables affecting female athletes of different ages. The primary purpose

of this study was to combine these variables in a study to investigate the relationship between gender, self-esteem and locus of control in female college athletes. The following hypotheses were tested: (i) There was a significant difference in the self-esteem between female college athletes and male college athletes, (ii) there was a significant difference in the locus of control between female college athletes and male college athletes, and (iii) there was a significant difference in the degree of relationship between self-esteem and locus of control between female college athletes and male college athletes.



## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### Participants

The participants in this study were 75 college athletes who participated in organized sports at Truman State University, in Kirksville, Missouri. The student athletes came from a variety of sports including basketball, soccer, softball, rugby, wrestling, football, and baseball. Truman State has a population of approximately 6500 students and is a University in a small, rural, Midwestern town. While Truman State has a variety of different cultures and races attending, it is predominantly white middle class students. Truman is comprised of different social economic classes due to scholarships available to students and athletes. It is also a very affordable education, with tuition being \$8,000 per year. The educational requirements are quite stringent, requiring an ACT score of 26 for acceptance.

The sample for this study was drawn from various sports teams participating at Truman State. The sample was one of convenience and volunteers. There were 32 male athletes and 43 female athletes who participated in the study. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 22. The mean age for female athletes was 19.65 (SD= 1.09) and the mean age for male athletes was 20.44 (SD= 1.34).

There were representatives from the four classes with 26.7% freshman, 22.6% sophomores, 38.7% juniors, and 12.0% seniors. In terms of gender breakdown by college year, there were 15 female and 5 male freshman, 9 female and 8 male sophomores, 17 female and 12 male juniors, and 2 female and 7 male senior athletes. With regard to race and ethnicity, sixty eight of the participants were Caucasians, two were

biracial, two were African American, one was Asian, and two were from other ethnic groups. The mean number of years of participating in sports was 12.6 for female athletes and 13.7 for male athletes.

The possible sources of sampling biases which could affect the study include the type of sports available to be studied in the spring, and the voluntary sampling method used, with the coaches first volunteering their teams to participate and then student athletes volunteering to complete the study. There was not an equal number of athletes represented by gender. There was also not the same number of athletes participating from each sport though an effort was made to try to balance the type of sports per gender.

The sample could be biased because the University gives limited access to certain SES groups, and does not enroll average or below average students. While an attempt was made to include other ethnic groups, this has only been minimally successful. This was affected by the location of the college, being in a small, rural, Midwestern town, and by the stringent academic criteria. This study was only done at one University, which is a concern for bias and caution needs to be used when generalizing to other college populations.

### Instruments

The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI), (1975) was used to measure the self-esteem of the participants. This assessment tool was designed to measure evaluative attitudes toward the self in social, academic, family and personal area of experience. The term "self-esteem" refers to the evaluation a person makes of self and the degree to which one believes self is competent, successful, significant, and worthy.



The SEI was developed based on the belief that self-esteem is significantly associated with personal satisfaction and competency. The instrument was developed because of the need for a reliable, valid measure of self-esteem.

The SEI Adult Form is used with persons 16 and older, and consists of 25 items adapted from the School Short Form. The correlation between the School Short Form and the Adult Form exceeds .80 for three samples of high school and college students ( $N=647$ ). The test asks questions relating to specific behaviors to which self-esteem is related and in the way it contributes to personality. The subject marks one of two boxes, like me or unlike me.

The SEI can be used with groups or individuals. The administration time rarely exceeds ten minutes. During administration, introductory or explanatory remarks are kept to a minimum and the words self-esteem or self-concept are avoided in order to prevent biased responses. It is a self-report test.

The SEI can be scored in a few minutes using a scoring key. The number of responses which agree with the scoring key are totaled and multiplied by four. This results in a maximum score of 100. This allows the results to be compared across different forms. The high scores correspond to high self-esteem. In most studies, the distributions of SEI scores have been negatively skewed in the direction of high self-esteem, suggesting the majority of subjects do report a high degree of self-esteem. In several studies the mean ranges from 70 to 80 with a SD of 11 to 13.

The SEI was administered and normed with 266 college students at a state university in North Carolina. Means, SD's and reliability coefficients ranging from .78 to .85 were given. The SEI has been administered to ten's of thousands of subjects from all socioeconomic

ranges and has many ethnic groups represented. There have been over 100 studies conducted and there is evidence of both reliability and validity for the SEI.

The internal consistency of the SEI was found to be adequate by Spatz and Johnson (1973). Obtained coefficients were .86 for grade 9 and .80 for grade 12, with a population of 600 students. Kimball (1972) administered the SEI to 7600 public school children and found the coefficients to range from .87 to .92. The adult form was given to 103 college students by Bedeian, Geagud and Zmud (1977) who found coefficients of .74 for males and .71 for females. Crandall (1971) found the short form inter-item correlations to be low for college students. The average correlation was .13 for 453 college students.

Studies on the SEI provided confirmation of construct validity of the subscales. Concurrent validity studies were conducted by Simon and Simon (1975). The SEI was correlated with the SRA Achievement Series, obtaining a coefficient of .33 and the Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Test, obtaining a coefficient of .30. Authors suggest this data proved concurrent validity for the SEI. The SEI scores were also found to be significantly related to reading achievement, creativity, academic achievement, resistance to group pressures, willingness to express unpopular opinions, perceptual constancy, perceived popularity, general anxiety, selection of different tasks, and effective communication between parents and youth.

The Levenson Locus of Control Scale, I, P & C (1973) was used to measure the locus of control of the participants. The I, P & C scales were developed as an extension of and as a conceptually cleaner instrument than Rotter's I-E scale. Rotter's (1966) Internal-External (I-E) scale measures the extent to which people believe they exercise control over their lives



(internally controlled) or the degree to which they feel their destinies are beyond their own control and are determined by external controls.

Researchers (Joe, 1971; Lefcourt, 1972) suggested the revision of Rotter's scale to increase validity and to explain some of the inconsistencies found in previous research relating locus of control to behavior.

In response, Levenson developed three new subscales, Internal, Powerful Others, and Chance to measure the internal locus of control (Internal) and the external locus of control which is divided into two subscales: (i) Powerful Others and (ii) Chance.

The rationale for the change was suggested because people who believe that the world is unordered (chance) would behave and think differently from people who believe the world is ordered but that powerful others are in control. Also it is expected that a person who believes chance is in control is cognitively and behaviorally different from one who feels he himself is not in control (internal locus of control). A study was undertaken to examine the validity of separating Rotter's conceptually, unidimensional I-E scale into three dimensions, I, P & C in order to understand more fully the relationship between involvement and expectation for control.

The I, P & C scales consist of eight items each measured by a six point Likert scale with one being strongly agree to six being strongly disagree. The scale results in a range of 0 to 48 for each scale. These are presented to the subjects in a unified attitude scale of a total of 24 items. The scales are comprised of several items adapted from Rotter's I-E scale and a set of statements written specifically for the new scales. The three scales are statistically independent of one another. The statements are phrased so to pertain only to the subject completing the scale. The items measure the degree to which an individual feels he has control over what

happens to him, not what he feels is the case for "people in general". This scale can be used with both male or female adults.

There is no special training needed for administering the test. There is no mention of what the letters I, P & C mean so not to bias the respondents. The test is scored by dividing items into three categories, I, P and C. The scores of each are totaled and low scores on a particular scale indicate a high degree of presence of the attitude being measured. For example, low scores on P means the subject feels powerful others are in control. The low scores on the subscale I means the subject believes he has internal control over life and low scores in the subscale C mean the subject believes things happen due to chance.

There were two studies conducted to test the validity of the separation of locus of control in the I, P & C scales. The first study focused on involvement and control expectancies and the second focused on the factor structure of the new scales, showing the items on the scales clustering into the dimensions of internal, powerful others and chance.

The I, P & C was normed during the first study on 96 randomly selected male and female adults in a Southwestern metro area. The item analysis on several pretests indicated all of the items significantly distinguished between high and low scorers for each of the three scales. There was also a correlation between the Marlowe-Crown Social Desirability Scale (1964) and each item, with all items being near 0.00, and the highest being at 0.19. Each item correlated to the total scale score and showed high consistency. Internal consistency estimates were moderately high and compared favorably with Rotter's (1966) I-E scale.

Reliability has been found to be 0.64 for the I scale, 0.77 for the P scale, and 0.78 for the C scale. The split half reliability coefficients were



0.62 for the I scale, 0.66 for the P scale, and 0.64 for the C scale. The test-retest reliability coefficients for the subscales were 0.64, 0.74, and 0.78 respectively. The P and C scales correlated moderately with each other (0.59) and both related to the I scale only slightly (0.14 and 0.17 respectively).

The second study to test the reliability and validity of the I, P and C scales was administered to 329 male undergraduate students enrolled during an introductory chemistry class at Texas A & M University. The responses to the twenty four items were subjected to a factor analysis using Kaiser's (1958) Varimax method. The test yielded seven factors accounting for a total of 52.3% of the variance. The P factor accounted for 16.8% of the variance, I accounts for 9.7% and the C factor accounts for 6.4% of the variance. It was also proven there was no overlap of the items on the I, P & C factors. This test showed conceptually and empirically that dividing the expectancies for control does add a useful dimension to the locus of control test.

### Procedures

This causal-comparative research study attempted to determine if gender may be a factor contributing to a significant difference in the self-esteem and locus of control of college athletes. There were two groups, male and female college athletes. The dependent variables examined were self-esteem and locus of control and the researcher was looking to see if gender affected the self-esteem and locus of control in college athletes.

The sample for this study was drawn from various competitive sports teams at Truman State University. During the spring semester,

March 1999, coaches of various athletic teams were approached for permission to administer the test instruments. There were nine teams who volunteered to participate, including four female teams: softball, basketball, soccer and rugby and five male teams: baseball, basketball, soccer, football, and wrestling.

The student athletes were approached at the end or beginning of their practices and were sought as volunteers to participate in a study examining factors related to collegiate sports participation. The students were guaranteed confidentiality and no names were requested. The student athletes were then given a packet containing a cover letter of introduction, a consent form, a demographic sheet, two instruments, the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) and the Levenson Locus of Control (I, P & C) and several adjunct open-ended questions to answer concerning collegiate athletic experience. There were 43 female athletes and 32 male athletes who voluntarily completed and returned the questionnaires to the researcher during the same practice.

The data collected from the study was examined and analyzed by running T tests, to test for significant difference between the two groups, on self-esteem and locus of control. A third hypothesis was tested by running separate correlations between self-esteem and locus of control to see if there were differences in the relationship between the two variables for male and female athletes.



## CHAPTER IV

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and T-tests, by gender, of self-esteem and locus of control scores.

Table 1 Self-Esteem and Locus of Control Statistics

	Gender	Mean	SD	t	p
Self-Esteem Score	Female (n=43)	81.02	11.65	-2.612	.011*
	Male (n=32)	87.00	6.51		
Internal Locus of Control Score	Female (n=43)	22.81	3.91	2.351	.021*
	Male (n=32)	20.56	4.35		
Powerful Others Locus of Control	Female (n=43)	33.53	4.90	1.414	.162
	Male (n=32)	31.84	5.41		
Chance Locus of Control Score	Female (n=43)	33.67	4.67	.321	.749
	Male (n=32)	33.28	5.92		

\*  $p < 0.05$

The scores on the SEI can reach a top score of 100, with a higher score indicating a higher self-esteem. Both samples tested scored relatively high with the female athlete mean score being 81.02 and the male athlete mean score being 87.00. The sample of male athletes scored significantly higher on the average than the female athletes.

The I, P, and C scale has three separate scores per subject. The lowest score indicates the locus of control orientation- being internal or

external (i) powerful others or (ii) chance. As seen from Table 1 both male and female athletes had lower scores on the Internal Locus of Control Scale than on the Chance or Powerful Others Scale. This indicates the sample of male and female athletes had a perceived internal belief that rewards obtained are due to their own efforts, not that of chance or powerful others.

The hypothesis that there is a difference in the self-esteem between male and female collegiate athletes was tested using an independent T-test. The results, from Table 1, suggested a significant difference in the self-esteem of female and male athletes ( $t=-2.612$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The female athletes had significantly lower self-esteem scores than male athletes.

The hypothesis that there is a difference in the locus of control between male and female college athletes was tested using an independent T-test. The results, from Table 1, suggested a significant difference in the internal locus of control scores of female and male athletes ( $t=2.351$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The female athletes had a significantly lower internal locus of control than male athletes. In terms of the Powerful Others and Chance Scales there were no significant differences.

The hypothesis that there was a significant correlation in the degree of relationship between the self-esteem and locus of control between female college athletes and male college athletes was tested using the Pearson Correlation. The results are seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Correlation's for Self-Esteem and Levenson's 3 Subscales, for male and female athletes



		Internal	Powerful Others	Chance
Self-Esteem:	Male	.048	.326	.460*
	Female	-.107	.285	.255

\*  $p < 0.05$

As seen in Table 2 there was no significant relationships except between the self-esteem and chance of male athletes. There was a significant, positive correlation between the self-esteem and chance for males ( $t=.460, p < 0.05$ ). The results suggest for male athletes that a higher self-esteem results in a lower belief in chance being responsible for effort. Scatterplots of the correlation variables can be viewed in Appendix F.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that, in this sample, there was a significant difference in the self-esteem of female college athletes and the self-esteem of male college athletes. This supports the hypothesis regarding the difference in self-esteem by gender. These findings are consistent with the results of previous studies which indicated the self-esteem of adolescent female athletes is lower than the self-esteem of adolescent male athletes (Zimmerman & Reavil, 1998; Blyth, Simmons & Carlton-Ford, 1983; Brage & Meredith, 1993; Wood, Becker & Thompson, 1996; Block & Robbins, 1993).

As previous research suggests, young female athletes encounter many unique challenges and issues which can negatively affect their self-esteem (Zimmerman & Reavil, 1998; Krane, 1994; Chartrand & Lent, 1987; Block & Robbins, 1993; Taub & Blinde, 1994; Cahn, 1994). This could account for the difference found by this study in the self-esteem of female athletes and that of male athletes.

The lower self-esteem of female college athletes found in this study could be explained by the conflict between gender role socialization and the role of being a female athlete in a male dominated sports world. This conflict was cited in previous studies as having a negative impact on the social environment and development of female athletes (Cahn, 1994; Blinde & Taub, 1992; McCarthy & Hage, 1982; Zimmerman & Reavil, 1998; Parham, 1993). The lower self-esteem of female college athletes can greatly affect their performance, personal development, accomplishments, and ability to cope with the numerous challenges facing them.



The hypotheses which tested the locus of control of college athletes was also supported by the findings of this study. Female college athletes were found to have a less internal locus of control than male college athletes. Previous research found that an internal locus of control is important to development of a positive self-esteem (McWhirter, 1997; Weiner, 1985; Branden, 1992). An internal locus of control is also important for female college athletes to have because it leads to a belief they have control over the events in their life. This can lead to greater achievement, better performance, and greater confidence in ability (Horsley, 1995; Blinde & Straub, 1976; Kulcarni, 1983). An internal locus of control also leads to female athletes dealing more effectively and positively with the special challenges and issues experienced while being a female athlete (Granito & Carlton, 1993; Horsley, 1995; Hayfield & Sultan, 1987).

The relationship between self-esteem and locus of control of female college athletes and male college athletes was examined. The findings showed little correlation between these variables. The one relationship found was between the self-esteem and chance locus of control for male college athletes. The relationship showed the higher the self-esteem of male college athletes, the lower the belief in chance affecting the outcomes of choices made. A male college athlete with a lower self-esteem will worry and attribute chance to the outcome of events. This athlete would benefit from counseling in self-esteem and confidence issues.

This study did not show a relationship between the lower self-esteem of female athletes and the lower internal locus of control. This may have occurred due to non-random sampling and the fact while locus of

control was less internal for females than males, it was still internal by orientation.

The additional questions asked of the male and female athletes showed the following results. Many female athletes cited the "love to play" as the reason they chose to play college sports. Many male athletes cited scholarships as the reason they play. Many more female athletes cited the personal benefits of participating in college sports as being for friendship and fitness, while male athletes cited time management and several various reasons for participation. Female athletes reported personal hardships as being less time to study, fatigue and no social time, while male athletes reported missing class, and less time for other activities. Both male and female athletes cite work ethic and dedication as the main factors contributing to their success in college sports. The male athletes reported continuing sports after college in terms of coaching, and professional play, while female athletes reported leisurely play and coaching as the only ways to stay involved in sports after college.

### Implications

An understanding of sports psychology can help coaches working with college athletes. They would benefit from an understanding of the special challenges and issues female athletes experience. An understanding of the effects of gender socialization and the conflicting roles would help them in their work with female college athletes. The literature reviewed and the results of this study emphasize the importance of assisting female athletes develop a healthy self-esteem and the characteristics which accompany it. This can be accomplished by helping female athletes deal



with the biases, stereotypes, discrimination and other issues confronting them.

Coaches can help their female athletes by assisting them in understanding and dealing with these special issues. Strategies to counteract gender issues and positive coaching can assist female athletes to perform and develop to their highest potential possible and will help them become healthy, happy, and successful in all areas of their lives.

### Limitations

An area of weakness which exists in this study was the non-random volunteer sample. The subjects volunteered to participate and their coaches volunteered to allow the teams to participate. The subjects were from similar backgrounds in regard to race, socioeconomic status, and educational accomplishment. There was a smaller sample of males than females which could have affected the study by limiting statistical power. A larger, random sample may have produced different results. This study has limited generalizability due to the sample being exclusively students from one University. Caution will be needed if the findings are to be generalized to all student-athletes.

A potential threat to validity includes experimenter effects such as the students being affected by the researcher's personal traits such as sex and age. The athletes could have been irritated due to the time constraints and answered the questions quickly to get finished. Though the researcher did not observe this to be true, several student-athletes completed the questionnaire quickly.

This study is also vulnerable to the Hawthorne effect, since the knowledge of being in a study could have affected the way the students

filled out their questionnaires. The students may have been concerned with answering the questionnaire in a socially desirable manner to please the coach or the University. The self-reporting aspect of this study could also affect the results due to biased reports.

### Recommendations

Many of the authors cited recommended further study into the impact of gender role socialization on female athletes. A better understanding of the impact and issues involved would enable sports psychologists to assist female athletes to overcome any negative impact of sports on future development. Feminist researchers recommend studies on adolescents and college athletes to understand how the self-esteem and sense of self is affected. Programs need to be developed to assist in the development of a strong self-esteem in earlier adolescence so to assist college age female athletes in dealing with the many challenges and issues they will face. This will lead to better performance, higher achievement, and happier, healthier female athletes.

Krane (1994) suggests qualitative, longitudinal research methodology to examine the female experience and other variables to be researched. She also stresses the importance of gender issues being the central issue investigated.

In this study, additional data may have been helpful in understanding self-esteem as it relates to gender. Self-esteem scores of non-participants in sports of both genders may have yielded a better understanding of the relationship of these variables. This author emphasizes the importance of a full understanding of the processes and impact of sports and gender on the self-esteem and development of female



athletes to improve theory, research, and practice of future sports psychology. It is also suggested that female athletes continue to demand understanding, equality, and opportunity in athletics and take their deserved place in society and in the sports world without the loss of self-esteem.

## Appendix A

## Cover Letter

Dear Student Athlete:

I am a student enrolled at Lindenwood University in the Master's level Professional Counseling Program.

I am studying variables which may be related to collegiate sports participation.

I would like your permission to administer the attached inventories. I would also like for you to provide me with some basic demographic information. Please sign the attached consent form. All responses are kept confidential; no individual will be identified. Results of my research will be available upon request. Results will be reported as group data, not as individual data.

Thank you for assisting me in this project.

Rhonda Kane

16577 Carriage View Court

Wildwood, MO 63040



**Appendix B**  
**Permission Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give my permission for the information from the attached inventories to be used in the research project designed to examine variables which may be related to collegiate sports participation. I understand that the responses of all participants will be held in strictest confidence.

Sign \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C  
Demographics Form

Age : \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: M F

Year currently enrolled in:

Senior \_\_\_\_\_ Junior \_\_\_\_\_ Sophomore \_\_\_\_\_ Freshman \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic/Cultural Background:

African American \_\_\_\_\_ Asian American \_\_\_\_\_

Latina/Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_ Biracial/Multiracial \_\_\_\_\_

Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_ Native American \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years of sports participation: \_\_\_\_\_

Competitive sport competing in at college: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years competing at college: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix D

### Coopersmith Inventory

- | Like<br>Me               | Unlike<br>Me             |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Things usually don't bother me.                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. I find it very hard to talk in front of a group.             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. There are lots of things about myself I'd change if I could. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. I can make up my mind without too much trouble.              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. I'm a lot of fun to be with.                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. I get upset easily at home.                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. It takes me a long time to get used to anything new.         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. I'm popular with persons my own age.                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. My family usually considers my feelings.                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. I give in very easily.                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. My family expects too much of me.                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. It's pretty tough to be me.                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. Things are all mixed up in my life.                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. People usually follow my ideas.                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. I have a low opinion of myself.                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. There are many times when I would like to leave home.       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 17. I often feel upset with my work.                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 18. I'm not as nice looking as most people.                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 19. If I have something to say, I usually say it.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 20. My family understands me.                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 21. Most people are better liked than I am.                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 22. I usually feel as if my family is pushing me.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 23. I often get discouraged with what I am doing.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 24. I often wish I were someone else.                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 25. I can't be depended on.                                     |

## I, P and C Scale

This scale consists of sentences describing feelings and thoughts. Read each item and circle the number which best describes how you feel about the statement.

1=Strongly agree 2=Agree 3=Somewhat agree 4=Somewhat disagree 5=Disagree 6=Strongly disagree

1. Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
2. To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
3. I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
4. Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on how good a car driver I am.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
5. When I make plans I am almost certain to make them work.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
6. Often there is no chance of protecting my personal interest from bad luck.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
7. When I get what I want, it's usually because I am lucky.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
8. Although I might have good ability, I will not be given leadership responsibility without appealing to those in positions of power.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
9. How many friends I have depends upon how nice a person I am.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
10. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.  
1            2            3            4            5            6



11. My life is chiefly controlled by powerful others.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
12. Whether or not I get into a car accident is mostly a matter of luck.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
13. People like myself have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong interest groups.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
14. It's not always wise for me to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
15. Getting what I want requires pleasing those above me.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
16. Whether or not I get to be a leader depends on whether I am lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
17. If important people were to decide they didn't like me, I probably wouldn't make many friends.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
18. I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
19. I am usually unable to protect my personal interests.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
20. Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly upon the other driver.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
21. When I get what I want, it's usually because I work hard for it.  
1            2            3            4            5            6
22. In order to have my plans work, I make sure they fit in with the desires of people who have power over me.  
1            2            3            4            5            6

23. My life is determined by my own actions.

1            2            3            4            5            6

24. It's chiefly a matter of fate whether or not I have a few friends  
or many friends.

1            2            3            4            5            6



## Appendix E

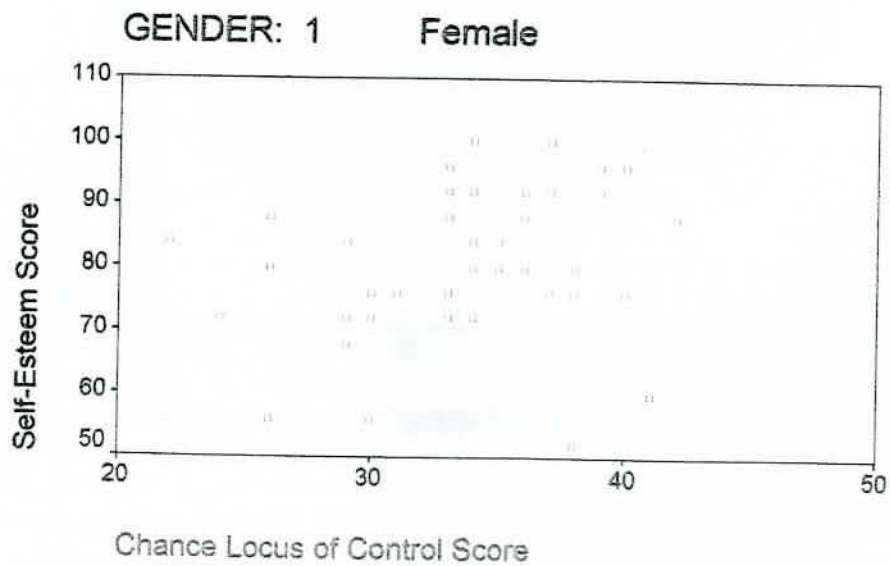
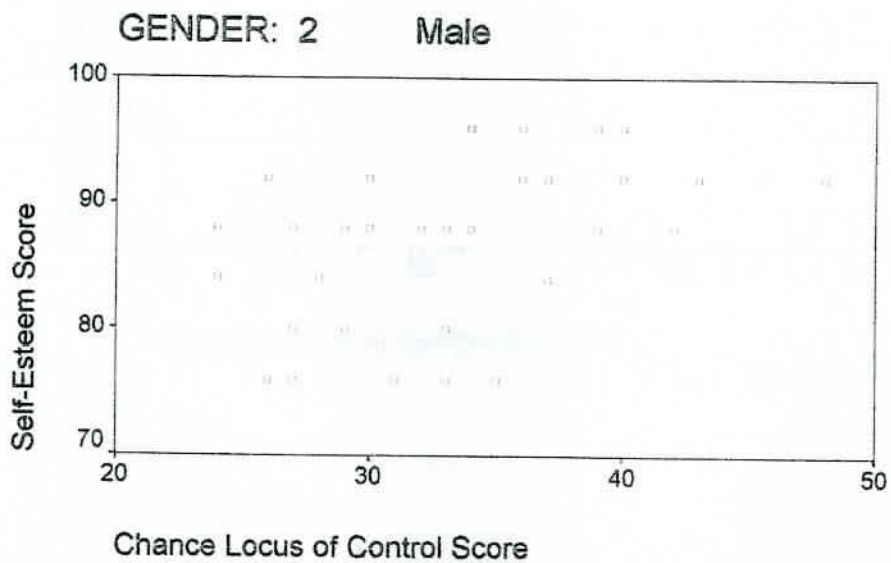
## Questions

1. What were some of the factors contributing to your choice to play collegiate sports?
2. What do you believe are the personal benefits that accompany participating in collegiate sports?
3. What do you believe are the personal hardships that accompany participating in collegiate sports?
4. What factors do you believe contribute to your success in collegiate sports?
5. What, if any, plans do you have for continuing athletic participation after college?

## Appendix F

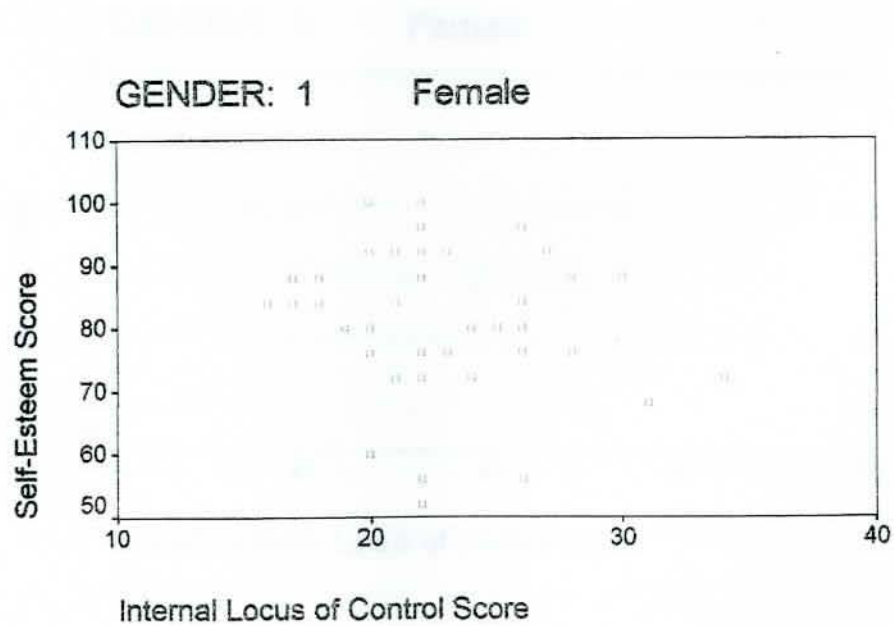
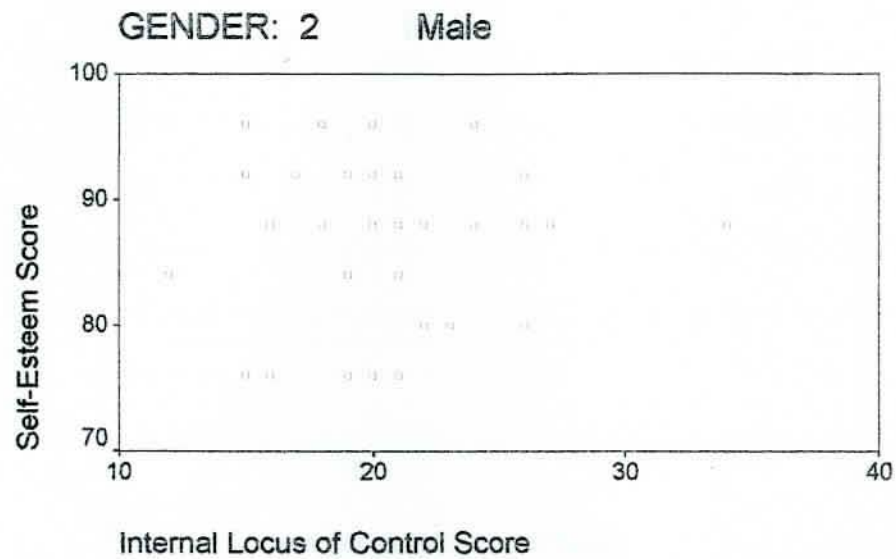
## Scatterplots

## Scatterplots of Chance Locus of Control and Self-Esteem

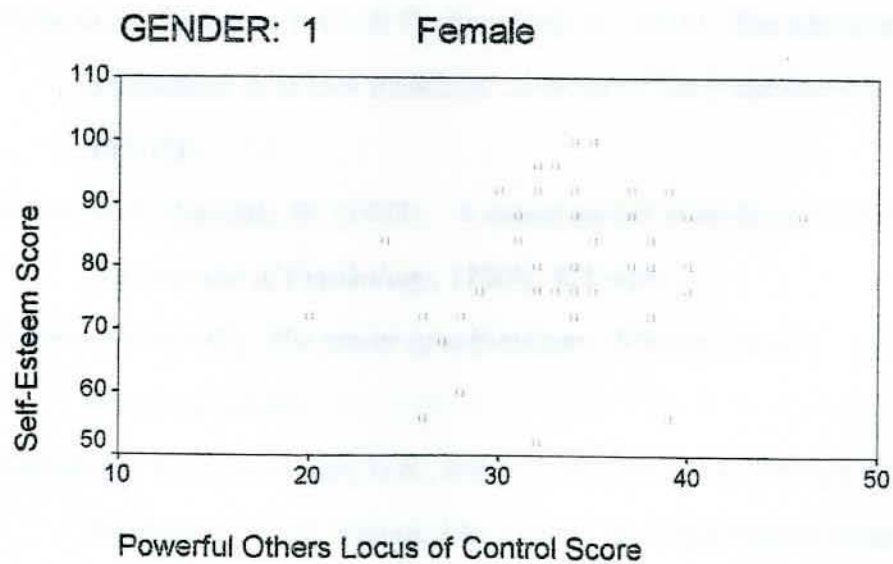
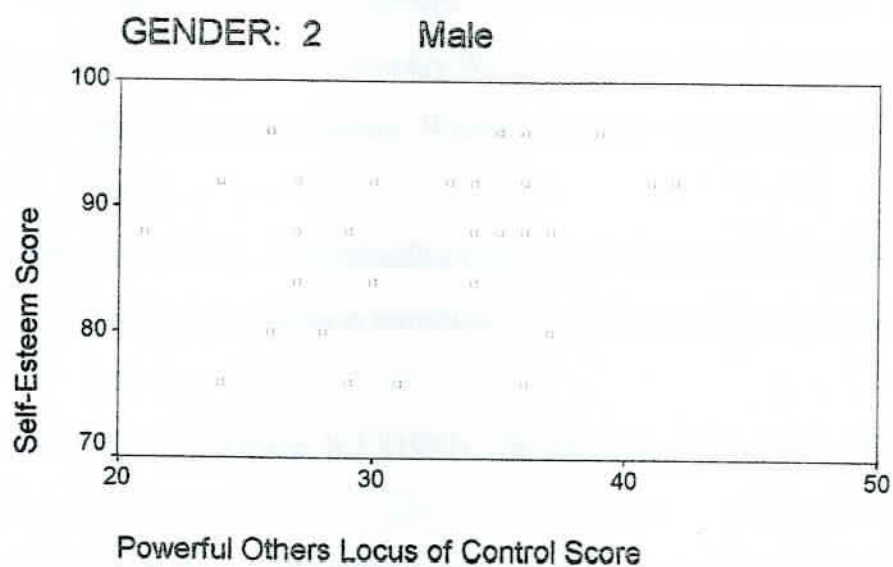




## Scatterplots of Internal Locus of Control and Self-Esteem



## Scatterplots of Powerful Others Locus of Control and Self-Esteem



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