To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Douglas J. Molnar entitled "'Swinging in the Breeze:' Division I Athletes' Experience of a Coaching Transition." I have examined the final paper copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

Craig A. Wrisberg
Major Professor

We have read the dissertation
And recommend its acceptance:

Leslee Fisher

Charles Thompson

Howard Pollio

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Provost and Dean
of Graduate Studies

"Swinging in the Breeze:"

Division I Athletes' Experience of a Coaching Transition

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Douglas J. Molnar

August 2002

Thesis
2002b
.M656

Copyright © by Douglas J. Molnar
All Rights Reserved

Dedication

This is dedicated to my beautiful daughter Alyssa -
always on my mind, always in my heart. I love you.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge those that truly made this dissertation a reality. Especially, Dr. Craig A. Wrisberg. He has been both a mentor and advisor who has challenged me to challenge myself as a student, consultant, and person. His encouragement and critical eye have served me well. I would also like to thank the wonderful professionals who honored me by agreeing to be on my committee: Dr. Leslee Fisher, Dr. Howard Pollio, and Dr. Charles Thompson. Your assistance, inspiration, insights, and knowledge made this possible. Without you, I would have been lost.

I would also like to thank all those who made my years at the University of Tennessee the most wonderful learning experience of my life: my "best buddy" AJ, Noah, Ash, Melinda, Teddy, Jason, Karen, Aimee, Collin, Craig, Bill, Chuck, Kelly, Brad, Ryan, Megan, Robin, Pete, Dr. Joe Whitney and all of my other friends and colleagues. A special thanks to George Watts whose support and friendship I will always cherish. I would especially like to thank Dr. Emily Roper whose friendship, love, and support helped me throughout this entire process. She challenged me. She inspired me. She made me a better person. I thank you.

I would like also like to thank those individuals who assisted me in the group analysis your insights made this a better dissertation. Finally, thanks to my co-researchers Alyssa, Jess, Larry, Mia, Preston, Perry, Rita, and Thomas your willingness, interest, and support of this project made it happen.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to achieve a rich description of Division I athletes' experience of a coaching transition. To obtain a meaningful description of this phenomenon, an existential-phenomenological dialogue was utilized. The existential-phenomenological dialogue, as Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) noted, is a method or path that seems natural to attain a proper description of the human experience. This dialogue, a second person interaction between the researcher and the co-researcher (i.e. the participant), is critical. The investigator, assumed a respectful position to the real expert, the co-researcher (Pollio, et al. 1997). The phenomenological interview utilizes a single original question directing the participant to describe his or her experience. All questions henceforth flowed from the dialogue generated by this question in an open-ended and unstructured manner. Eight athletes were interviewed with each of the interviews lasting an average of 60 minutes. Upon completion and transcription of the interviews, an analysis of the data occurred using three hermeneutic approaches (i.e., group interpretation, idiographic interpretation, and nomothetic interpretation). Utilizing a Gestalt ground/figure perspective, five major themes emerged (1) Change, (2) Expectations, (3) Bonding, (4) Acclimation or Transitional Alienation, and (5) Growth to form the figure of the thematic structure. These themes were set against the ground of performance. In addition, an existential core emerged from these dialogues. This core, the athlete-coach relationship, represented the situation or world through which the experience of a coaching transition for these individuals was lived. Follow-up interviews confirmed these themes. Results of the present study were related to coach-athlete

relationships and to issues of the phenomenological experience of the "Other" (i.e., the coach). Finally, implications for athletes, coaches, administrators, and sport psychology consultants as well as implications for future research were discussed.

Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
I	INTRODUCTION	1
	Purpose of the Study	2
	Definition of Terms	3
	Assumptions of the Study	6
	Limitations of the Study	6
	Significance of the Study	7
II	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	9
	The Nature of Existential - Phenomenology	10
	Presuppositionaless Starting Point	11
	Suspension of Natural Attitude	12
	Life World and Being-in-the-World	14
	Achievement of Knowing	15
	Intentionality	16
	Existential-Phenomenology and Sport Psychology	17
	Coach-Athlete Relationships	20
	Sports Relationships: The Coach-Athlete Dyad	21
	Transitions	33
	Coach-Athlete Relationships and Transitions	36
	Summary	37
III	METHODOLOGY	39
	Researcher as Instrument	40

Chapter **Page**

Bias Exploration and Bracketing Interview 41

Pilot Testing... 44

Co-researchers 45

Procedure..... 46

Interview Protocol 46

Data Analysis.....48

Bracketing with a Research Group..... 49
Hermeneutic Circle 50

Issues of Validity..... 52

Summary..... 54

IV DATA PRESENTATION..... 55

Co-researchers 55

Alyssa..... 55
Jess..... 57
Larry..... 58
Mia..... 59
Perry..... 59
Preston..... 60
Rita..... 61
Thomas..... 61

Thematic Structure 62

The Ground: Performance..... 65

The Existential Core: Athlete-Coach Relationship 68

Performance as a Core Component 68
Philosophy as a Core Component 70
Communication as a Core Component.... 72

Chapter **Page**

The Themes 74

Theme 1. Change 74

Shock/No Surprise 76
Relief and/or Sadness 79
Frustration of the Unknown 80

Theme 2. Bonding 81

Transfer Talk 82
Us versus Them 84
Team Unity and Friendships 86

Theme 3. Expectations 88

Winning 88
Starting 91
Playing Time 92

Theme 4. Acclimation or Alienation 93

Team Rules 94
Individual Roles 96
Transferring 100
Quitting 101
Resignation 102

Theme 5. Growth 104

Personal Growth 104
Athletic Growth 106
Spiritual Growth 107

Summary 108

V DISCUSSION, RECOMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION 109

Methodological Issues 110

Chapter **Page**

Performance as the Ground....113

The Existential Core: Athlete-Coach Relationship 114

Major Themes 116

Theme 1. Change.... 116

Shock/No Surprise.... 117
Relief and/or Sadness 118
Frustration of the Unknown 119

Theme 2. Bonding.... 122

Transfer Talk 122
Us versus Them.... 123
Team Unity and Friendships 124

Theme 3. Expectations of Performance 124

Winning.... 125
Starting.... 125
Playing Time.... 126

Theme 4. Acclimation or Alienation.... 126

Acclimation.... 127

Team Rules.... 127
Individual Roles 128

Alienation.... 129

Transferring.... 129
Quitting.... 130
Resignation.... 131

Chapter **Page**

Theme 5. Growth.....131

Personal Growth.....131
Athletic Growth.....132
Spiritual Growth.....132

Recommendations for Athletes, Coaches, Athletic Administrators and Sport Psychology Consultants.....132

Recommendations for Future Research.....134

Conclusion.....135

REFERENCES.....137

APPENDIXES.....151

Appendix A Introduction Letter.....152

Appendix B Athlete Demographic Sheet.....153

Appendix C Member Checking Letter.....154

Appendix D Informed Consent.....155

VITA.....157

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Researchers agree that the coach-athlete relationship is paramount to successful athletic performance as well as to the athlete's personal satisfaction (Butler, 1997; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996). For Jowett and Meek (2000), "the extent to which the coach and athlete influence each other and consequently performance and participation in general are fundamental issues to the coaching process" (p. 157). These fundamental issues of performance and participation, and their undeniable connection to the coaching process, have sparked a wide range of studies into the coach-athlete relationship (Blann, 1992; Greenleaf, Gould, Dieffenbach, 2001; Iso-Ahola, 1995; Vernacchia, McGuire, Reardon, & Templin, 2000). However, while the available research on coach-athlete relationships and its influence on performance and participation appears to be robust, there is a dearth of research addressing an event that occurs often in competitive sport - a coaching transition - and its impact on the athlete.

In this study, I define the purpose and scope of this investigation that was designed to describe the experience of Division I athletes going through such a transition. Next, I provide a short synopsis of the relevant literature detailing the nature of existential phenomenology and its use as an alternative paradigm in sport psychology research. I also explore the athlete-coach relationship. More specifically, I examine the available literature on coaching transitions and its potential impact on the athlete. I then present the results and the thematic structure of the experience of Division I athletes going through such a transition followed by a discussion of the results.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to achieve a rich first-person description of Division I athletes' experience of a coaching transition. To obtain a meaningful description of this phenomenon, an existential-phenomenological dialogue was utilized. The existential-phenomenological dialogue, as Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) noted, is a method or path that seems "natural" to attain a proper description of the human experience. This dialogue, a second-person interaction between the researcher and the co-participant (i.e., co-researcher), is critical, for as Valle, King, and Halling (1989) recognized, the major philosophical tenet of existential-phenomenology is that people are not viewed simply as objects in nature, but rather as a total, indissoluble unity or interrelationship of the individual and his or her world.

The paradigm of existential-phenomenology has its roots in two separate philosophies – existentialism and phenomenology. Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1938) is generally regarded as the founder of existential philosophy, whereas the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is credited as the primary proponent of phenomenology (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). For Kierkegaard, it was imperative that philosophy address the concrete existence of the individual person and attempt to elucidate the fundamental themes with which humans invariably struggle. Husserl saw phenomenology as a rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear so that one might come to an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience (Valle, et al. 1989). Initially, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and more recently Maurice Merleau-Ponty merged existentialism with phenomenology to yield the contemporary

position of existential phenomenology (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997, Valle, et al. 1989).

As Dale (1994) noted, despite an increase in the use of qualitative methodologies in sport psychology research, existential phenomenology as a research tool in the sport psychology domain has not been used to any extent. Therefore, a secondary purpose was to add further support for the use of existential phenomenological dialogue as a viable methodology for researchers in sport psychology.

Definition of Terms

Achievement of Knowing - central to phenomenology is its rigorous defense of the role of subjectivity and consciousness in all knowledge and in descriptions of the world. This achievement of knowing or knowledge is centered on the fact that subjectivity cannot be split off the natural world in which humans exist. A true achievement of knowing can only be discovered through a phenomenological discourse with the individual (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997; Valle, King, & Halling, 1989).

Being in the World – comes from the Husserlian notion of *Lebenswelt* (life world) or as Heidegger later called it "being in the world." Heidegger's view that human beings are inseparable from the world and, as such, individuals and their world co-constitute one another. Consequently, personal experience can only be understood as a co-constitution between the individual and his or her situatedness in the world. Being-in-the-world gives agency to the fact that humans are engaged in the world around them in a dynamic and shared manner (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997).

Division I - Division I member institutions represent the highest competitive level of athletics in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) system. Division I

schools have to sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women) with two team sports for each gender. There are rules concerning the minimum number of contests that must be contested against Division I opponents. Schools that sponsor football teams are classified as either Division I-A or I-AA. I-A football schools are usually fairly elaborate programs and have to meet an attendance criterion while I-AA teams do not need to meet minimum attendance requirements. Division I schools must offer a minimum number of financial aid awards for their athletics program while not exceeding a maximum number of financial aid awards for any particular sport (NCAA, 2001).

Existentialism - a philosophical attitude that stresses the individual's unique position as a self-determining agent, totally free and entirely responsible for his or her choices. Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a Danish philosopher, is most often credited with being the father of existentialism (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997; Valle, King, & Halling, 1989).

Idiographic Research - the process of examining each co-participant's interview as a case study. Each case study provides a unique description of the phenomenon and its meanings, relations, and patterns within that individual's lived experience. Qualitative researchers interested in studying the experience of an individual typically use this research approach (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997).

Intentionality - Husserl asserted that all conscious experiences are characterized by "aboutness." In other words, intentionality is the notion that consciousness is directed toward the object (Kerry & Armour, 2000). For Husserl, it did not matter whether the object of the act actually existed or not. The important point was that the object had a

meaning and a mode of being for the consciousness that correlated to the act itself (Moran, 2000). Zaner (1964) indicates that we have two poles of intentionality: the noetic (i.e., the subjective – the perceiving) and the noematic (i.e., the object - the perceived).

Nomothetic Research - a process by which the whole of the interpretation is broadened to include all interviews on the same topic. Generalizability is not the function of nomothetic descriptions. Instead, transcripts are used to improve interpretive vision and examine a more diverse set of experiences to determine how one experience resembles another in an effort to formulate a thematic description (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997).

Phenomenology – the rigorous and unbiased study of things *as they appear* so that one might come to an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997; Valle, King, & Halling, 1989).

The Other - from a phenomenological perspective "the Other" is a way in which we experience the world of other people. Others are experienced in four ways (1) the immediate world of others (called *Umwelt*), (2) the world of contemporaries (called *Mitwelt*), (3) the world of predecessors (called *Vorwelt*), and (4) the world of successors (called *Folgewelt*). We may experience and relate to the other in relation to where they are "located" (Schutz, 1967). The existential role of the other is examined through dialogue (Polio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997; Valle, King, & Halling, 1989).

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions applied to this study:

1. Existential phenomenological dialogue is a valid methodology for obtaining a rich accurate description of an athlete's experience of going through a coaching transition.

2. The personal experiences of athletes that have gone through a coaching transition are important to an understanding of the phenomenon of a coaching transition.

3. The researcher could apply a worldview that allows a first-person phenomenological understanding of co-researchers' experiences.

4. The athletes in this study were willing and able to express themselves articulately, to evoke and express inner feelings without shame or guilt, and to articulate organic experiences that accompany these feelings.

5. The athletes in this study could accurately report their feelings, perceptions, and thoughts surrounding the phenomenon of a coaching transition.

Limitations of the Study

As with any study, there were several potential limitations. First, it was possible that some athletes would have difficulty vividly recalling the experience of a coaching transition because the experience may have occurred several years prior to the study. Second, the number of athletes interviewed was small. While a small sample size may be problematic in quantitative studies, it is not seen as a limitation when conducting existential phenomenological research since the nature of such research is to formulate a thematic description of a phenomenon, not to generalize results from the sample to a larger population. Third, although precautions were taken to ensure that all relevant

themes for each athlete's experience were identified, it is possible that a complete identification of the experience was not possible. Finally, while an attempt was made to interview athletes from eight different sports, there was some difficulty in obtaining co-participants. Therefore, three of the athletes came from a track and field/cross-country background – two males and one female. However, the three did represent diverse events – one was a sprinter, one was a cross-country runner, and the third was a thrower (i.e., discus, javelin, hammer, shot).

Significance of the Study

In 1987, Martens commented on the emergence of two sport psychologies: academic sport psychology and practicing sport psychology and lamented the gap that existed between the two. As a result, Martens exhorted sport psychology researchers to embrace a new epistemology that recognized and embraced other forms of knowledge besides that obtained through the traditional scientific paradigm, thus bridging the gap between academic and practicing sport psychology. The present study represents an attempt to respond to Marten's call by embracing an epistemology that recognizes that athlete's experience as a form of knowledge that may provide insight for coaches, athletes, sport psychology consultants, and athletic administrators when dealing with athletes experiencing a coaching transition. As Ravizza (1993) noted, it is the athletes who are the real experts with the knowledge, insight and experience. Consistent with this view, the present study is the first to utilize an existential phenomenological dialogue to describe Division I athletes' experiences of a coaching transition.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Even today, some years after Martens (1987) noted the emergence of two sport psychologies, there remains a separation between what he termed academic sport psychology and practicing sport psychology. For Martens, academic sport psychology follows the traditional scientific paradigm with its generally accepted assumptions and rules regarding the nature of problems, the appropriate means of addressing those problems, and its focus on nomothetic research to generalize, theorize, and predict outcomes. Its practicing counterpart, on the other hand, uses idiographic methods to focus on the whole person, help athletes and coaches, and gain knowledge through case studies, introspectionism, observation, and clinical experience, that helps to understand the person.

Like Martens (1987), I see the schism between academic and practicing sport psychology and the need for sport psychology to embrace a new epistemology. This new epistemology recognizes and embraces other forms of knowledge besides that obtained using the traditional scientific paradigm. One such form or source of knowledge is that of the experience of the athlete from a first-person point of view. The existential phenomenological dialogue is a natural tool for gaining insight into an athlete's experience. In this section, I initially explore the nature of existential-phenomenology and demonstrate its utility for exploring human behavior and experiences of the "other." Secondly, I explore the use of qualitative methods in sport psychology, particularly, existential-phenomenology. And finally, I examine the sport literature dealing with coach-athlete relationships. With respect to the latter category, I devote particular

attention to trait theory, behavioral theory (i.e. social reinforcement and modeling) and leadership theory. Additionally, I use an inductive approach in an attempt to give "voice" to the neglected member of the coach-athlete relationship: the athlete. After establishing the dynamic nature and significance of the coach-athlete relationship, I turn to the available literature to examine athlete transitions and what and more specifically the transition in coach-athlete relationships.

The Nature of Existential-Phenomenology

The paradigm of existential-phenomenology has its roots in two separate philosophies – existentialism and phenomenology. Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1938) is generally regarded as the founder of existential philosophy, whereas the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is considered to be the primary proponent of phenomenology (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). For Kierkegaard, it was imperative that philosophy addresses the concrete existence of the individual person and attempt to elucidate the fundamental themes with which humans invariably struggle. Husserl saw phenomenology as a rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear so that one might come to an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience (Valle, et al. 1989). Initially, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and, more recently, Maurice Merleau-Ponty merged existentialism and phenomenology to yield the contemporary position of existential phenomenology (Polio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997, Valle, et al. 1989).

While Husserl is credited with giving phenomenology its distinctive philosophical approach, its foundations are rooted in the work of Franz Brentano (Dale, 1996, Kerry & Armour, 2000, Moran, 2000, Strasser, 1965). Brentano proposed a form of descriptive

psychology that "concentrated on illuminating the nature of inner self-aware acts of cognition without appealing to casual or genetic explanation" (Moran, 2000, p.8). Descriptive psychology provides clear, evident truth about these mental acts employed in the sciences of law, politics, economics, sociology, aesthetics, religion, etc (Moran, 2000, Valle, et al., 1989). Husserl further developed descriptive psychology into the most general descriptive science of consciousness for all forms of scientific knowledge (Moran, 2000). There is clear evidence to conclude that the sport sciences such as sport psychology can also benefit from this descriptive science of consciousness.

When discussing phenomenology and its application to sport psychology five critical factors that must be examined: *presuppositionless* starting point, *suspension of natural attitude*, the *life world* and *being in the world*, the *achievement of knowing*, and the structure of *intentionality* (Moran, 2000). In the following sections, I will briefly discuss each of these factors.

Presuppositionless starting point

In an attempt to "comprehend the nature of humans as embodied beings" (Kerry & Armour, 2000, p.3), Husserl stressed the importance of the presuppositionless starting point. The presuppositionless starting point takes nothing for granted. Moran (2000) describes the key to a presuppositionless starting point as the going back to the things themselves to discard "philosophical theorizing in favor of careful description of phenomena themselves, to be attentive only to what is *given* in intuition" (p.9). Moran described this intuition as "a kind of spiritual sympathy with the object of knowledge" (p.10). This does not mean that we must come to understand another's experience by being completely devoid of any knowledge or experiences of our own. Rather, Husserl

believed that "we should not assume any philosophical or scientific theory, and furthermore must avoid deductive reasoning (which presupposed logic) and mathematics as well as any other speculative theory of psychology and philosophy, in order to concentrate on describing what is given directly in intuition" (Moran, 2000, p.126).

For the sport psychologist, the presuppositionless starting point, to "comprehend the nature of humans as embodied beings" (Kerry & Armour, 2000, p.3), is essential to our understanding of the individual and his or her experience. Ravizza (1993) noted that athletes are experts in their fields and possess knowledge, insight, and experiences that can provide a wealth of information to coaches, athletes, researchers, and sport psychology consultants. This wealth of information can best be examined if it comes directly from the athlete and is not filtered through the sport psychologist/researcher's presuppositions, philosophical or scientific theories, deductive reasoning, mathematics, or speculative theory of psychology and/or philosophy.

Suspension of natural attitude

Husserl believed that our (i.e., the researchers') experiences in our ordinary life, with our concerns, assumptions, and scientific knowledge detracted from our pure consideration of the experience as given to us (Moran, 2000). To prevent this from occurring Husserl proposed the *suspension of natural attitude* meaning that the phenomenologist must suspend all scientific, philosophical, psychological, cultural theories and assumptions he or she might have about the particular issue or phenomenon being examined (Moran, 2000). This does not mean that the researcher simply negates or neglects his or her knowledge and experiences; but rather must bracket these presuppositions. In so doing, "the 'reality' of the outer world is neither confirmed nor

denied; rather it is 'bracketed' in an act of phenomenological reduction" (Koch, 1995, p. 829).

By bracketing one's presuppositions, the phenomenologist brings to light his or her assumptions and biases. This prevents the researcher from coming to erroneous conclusions about the individual phenomena being explored. It must be recognized that a total suspension of natural attitude and a complete presuppositionless starting point is impossible to achieve. However, Dale (1996) recognized that despite the futility of a presuppositionless starting point and a complete suspension of natural attitude "bracketing should be a continuous process" (p. 312).

As an example of how a sport psychologist might suspend his or her natural attitude when conducting phenomenological research let us assume a researcher is interested in studying peak performance in Olympic swimmers. The sport psychologist/researcher may have extensive knowledge of Csiksentmihalyi's (1975) research on Flow Theory and the work of Elliot and Haber (1982) who were able to peak performance in the 100 meter breast stroke by obtaining serum lactate measurements for two sub-maximal test heats at different velocities. Both references would give the sport psychologist/researcher excellent background information about the various ways peak performance might be theorized or measured. Moreover, such knowledge would undoubtedly affect the scientific, philosophical, psychological, and cultural assumptions of the phenomenologist, as would the lived experiences of the researcher. By bracketing and exploring these notions ahead of time, the researcher would acknowledge his or her presuppositions/biases, eliminate misunderstandings, and become a better

listener/interviewer due to the suspending natural attitude. It is only through bracketing that the researcher can avoid making assumptions about a subject's experience.

Life world and being-in-the-world

A third key characteristic of Husserlian phenomenology is the notion of *life world* (Lebenswelt) or, as Heidegger later called it, *being-in-the-world.* For Husserl, experience is the basis of knowledge (Kerry & Armour, 2000). According to Koch (1995), the life world is made up of what is usually taken for granted and is experienced as common sense. This common sense experience is known as the "ground." Heidegger shifted Husserl's notion of critical reflection for the study of consciousness to one of an interpretative understanding of the human existence (Hein & Austin, 2001). Being-in-the-world gives agency to the fact that humans are engaged in the world around them in a dynamic and shared manner. This holistic approach is incongruent with the Cartesian model of the subject-object/mind-body, dualistic nature of the human species. That is, "Humans can only understand the world as it is revealed and uncovered to humans with our specific forms of being in the world" (Moran, 2000, p.430).

For the sport psychologist/researcher, being-in-the-world means that the common sense experience, which is usually taken for granted, must be reexamined. In the case of the researcher interested in studying the peak performance of Olympic swimmers, presuppositions about what a peak performance is, from either an exercise science model through serum lactate measurements or from a sport psychology model through notions such as Flow Theory, must be bracketed. Secondly, the researcher must call attention to those aspects of the individual's experience that may have been neglected by empiricism,

in particular the horizons and background assumptions involved in understanding and interpreting an Olympic swimmer's peak performance.

Achievement of knowing

The fourth factor that must be examined when discussing phenomenology is the *achievement of knowing*. According to Moran (2000), a rigorous defense of the role of subjectivity and consciousness in all knowledge and in descriptions of the world is central to phenomenology. This achievement of knowing or knowledge is centered on the fact that subjectivity cannot be split away from the natural world in which humans exist. That is, "Subjectivity must be inextricably involved in the process of constituting objectivity" (Moran, 2000, p.15).

For the researcher/sport psychologist interested in studying peak performance, the achievement of knowing is crucial. Among others, Hanson and Newburg (1992) contend that sport psychology researchers should begin to place more emphasis on the subjective experiences of athletes. "Understanding naturally occurring phenomena in their naturally occurring state," comments Patton (1980, p.41), is the goal of naturalistic research. Thompson, Locander, and Pollio (1989) state that the goal of phenomenological research is to obtain a first-person description of a specified domain (i.e., experience) focusing on the participant's meaning of the experience, not on a researcher's description of overt behaviors or actions viewed from afar. From this perspective, the optimum way to describe the experience of an Olympic swimmer's peak performance is simply to have a dialogue with the swimmer. The athlete would then describe the meaning of his or her individual peak performance experience (i.e., object) from his or her subjective position within the world. The researcher would then use this information when observing the

swimmer during a peak performance, observe other overt behaviors and actions, classifying these actions and those of other Olympic swimmers, and coming to some conclusions about the nature of peak performances. Thus a true achievement of knowing is only possible through a phenomenological discourse with the individual.

Intentionality

When Husserl developed descriptive psychology into the general descriptive science of consciousness, he devoted considerable attention to the concept of intentionality (Kerry & Armour, 2000, Moran, 2000). Husserl asserted that all conscious experiences are characterized by 'aboutness.' In other words, intentionality is the notion that consciousness is directed toward the object (Kerry & Armour, 2000). For Husserl, it did not matter whether the object of the act actually existed or not. The important point was that the object had a meaning and a mode of being for the consciousness that could be correlated to the act itself (Moran, 2000).

Once again, using our Olympic swimmer as an example, the experience of a peak performance may be in relation to feeling good *about* one's performance, *about* beating an opponent, *about* winning a medal, *about* being in "the zone" or "flow," or *about* something else. It does not matter whether the zone actually exists or not. What is most important is that the individual can place a meaning and a mode of being for the conscious experience of a peak performance on the act of being in the zone.

Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) observed that human experience is a sensibly changing perspectival relatedness to the conditions, possibilities, and constraints of the world. And as such, one's experience is intensely personal and its meaning frequently changes as one describes or reflects upon it. Therefore, when exploring

human experience, it is necessary to employ a method that is appropriate to the topic and rigorous in its use (Pollio, et al., 1997). For the present study, dialogue appeared to be the most appropriate method for fostering an appropriate first-person description of the phenomenon being examined. Dialogue not only allows the individual to describe the phenomenon, but also requires the person to clarify its meaning to the researcher and possibly allows him or her to realize it for the first time during the conversation (Pollio, et al., 1997).

Characteristically, phenomenological dialogues are open-ended and unstructured in nature and usually last between half an hour to an hour or more; or whatever time is needed to explore the phenomenon in depth (Polkinghorne, 1997). The existential-phenomenological dialogue is an effective method that allows athletes to describe what their experiences are about. As Dale (1996) noted, the field of sport psychology could learn a great deal about the experience of athletes if it would allow them the opportunity to freely describe their experiences.

Existential-Phenomenology and Sport Psychology

Sport psychology is concerned with psychological factors that influence participation and performance as well as the psychological effect derived from them. Sport psychologists investigate a variety of subjects, such as skill acquisition, psychological characteristics of performance (e.g., personality, stress and anxiety, arousal, self-efficacy), motivation, goal setting, group cohesion, and many other factors related to participation in sport. Researchers in sport psychology have been encouraged to consider alternative paradigms that view the subjective experience of the athlete as a viable source of information (Dewar & Horn, 1992). Prior to that they viewed experience

has often been viewed as secondary and awarded it little attention. In recent years, however, there has been a significant increase in the number of qualitative studies being conducted, particularly those that examine the experiences of athletes (Dale, 1994; Eklund, 1996; Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1993).

In contrast to quantitative methodology, qualitative inquiry is supported by what Glesne and Peshkin (1992) refer to as the interpretivist paradigm, which "portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing" (p. 6). The assumptions of qualitative research are quite different than those of quantitative research, in that qualitative research strives to understand and interpret how participants in a social setting construct the world around them (Patton, 1990). To obtain such information, various methods are used, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and case studies.

In qualitative research one does not begin with a theory to be tested and either verified or rejected. Rather, theory may emerge during the data collection and analysis phase (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, within qualitative research, theory is built using an inductive model of thinking or logic. The researcher begins by gathering detailed information and then forms categories until a pattern or theory emerges (Patton, 1990).

The majority of studies conducted in sport psychology have been quantitative in nature, although during the past decade has witnessed a significant increase in the use of qualitative methodology within the field. Whereas early commentaries focused on asserting the worth of qualitative methodology (Locke, 1989; Martens, 1987), recent discussions have begun to critically examine the existing qualitative work and to examine

the epistemological issues that underlie various qualitative approaches (Sparkes, 1998; Strean , 1998).

As early as, 1976, Whitson espoused the phenomenological method as a potentially valuable tool for researchers in sport-related sciences, such as pedagogy, sport sociology, sport philosophy, and sport psychology. Since that time, great strides have been made in the use of a wide range of qualitative research methods (Kerry & Armour, 2000). However despite an increased acceptance of qualitative research in sport psychology, Bain (1995) noted that much of the "in-depth analysis of meaning constructed by the participants" (p. 241) during unstructured interviews was lost in the "objective stance in interpreting data" (p. 243). Bain went so far as to state that "subjective knowledge, recognized or not, is at the core of sport-related inquiry" (p. 2). And, this subjective knowledge and its meaning at the personal level can only become a shared understanding through a systematic research process.

In the twenty odd years since Whitson proposed the use of the phenomenological method as a tool for researchers in sport-related sciences, there have been but a few investigators (Dale, 1996, 2000, Kerry & Armour, 2000) who have adopted the approach. Perhaps, this is because of the fact that the philosophical constructs of phenomenology are not easily understood or are foreign to many sport psychology researchers. However, I would hope that despite this hurdle those researchers in the sport sciences in general and sport psychology in particular would take up the challenge of doing phenomenological research in order to provide the field with "deeper and fuller understanding of human existence, ourselves, and others" (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989, p.16).

Coach-Athlete Relationships

> For many, sport can, at times, be the dominant experience and activity of life, perhaps exerting greater influence even than family. It is the recognition of this level of significance in the lives of young athletes, then, that makes the role of those providing the leadership for sport so incredibly vital.
>
> Vernacchia, McGuire, & Cook (1996, p. 9).

Researchers agree that the coach-athlete relationship is paramount to the successful performance of athletes and to their personal satisfaction (Butler, 1997; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996; Smith & Smoll, 1996; Vealey, Armstrong, Comar, & Greenleaf, 1998). For Jowett and Meek (2000), "the extent to which the coach and athlete influence each other and consequently performance and participation in general are fundamental issues to the coaching process" (p. 157). These fundamental issues of performance and participation and their undeniable connection to the coaching process have sparked a wide range of studies on the topic of the coach-athlete relationship.

Recently, researchers have begun to examine the coach-athlete relationship from the athlete's perspective. For example, Greenleaf, Gould, and Dieffenbach (2001) interviewed eight United States Olympians from the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympic Games and seven U.S. athletes from the 1998 Nagano Winter Games in an effort to understand the factors that positively and/or negatively influenced their performances. More specifically, these researchers contrasted the experiences of athletes who met/exceeded performance expectations with those who failed to meet expectations. The athletes, eight who met expectations and seven who did not, represented 11 different individual sports and three team sports. Among the positive factors that emerged were "having coach contact, trust, and friendship, receiving coach feedback, the availability of one's personal coach, and the coach having a good plan" (Greenleaf, et al., p. 168). Of

the 15 athletes interviewed, 12 discussed the positive impact of their coach on their Olympic performance. One gold medalist went so far as to state, "the coaches that have been really effective with me are the ones that have been not only coaches, but good friends. Because when you spend so much time together that's the only way it can work" (Greenleaf, et al., 2001, p. 168).

However, not all of the comments by the Olympians were positive, just as all coach-athlete relationships are not positive. One athlete commented, "There was an atmosphere of stress and tension among the staff, coaching staff, and it kind of permeated the whole atmosphere where all the athletes were living" (Greenleaf et al., 2001, p. 174). Seven of the athletes cited negative performance factors related to the coaches including coach-athlete conflict, lack of access, lack of coach focus on team climate, and power conflicts (Greenleaf, et al.).

Clearly, the coach-athlete relationship is a crucial factor in performance (e.g. Vernacchia, McGuire, Reardon, & Templin, 2000). As Vernacchia, McGuire, and Cook (1996) stated, "The experiences of great and successful coaches have consistently shown that this attention to the athlete, the person, is the key to unlocking the door to athletic abilities and potentials" (p. 5). Not surprisingly, the topic of the unique relationship between coach and athlete has begun to receive attention in the research literature.

Sport Relationships: The Coach-Athlete Dyad

The importance of relationships in sport has been acknowledged since the late 1970's (Wylleman, 2000). However, Coppel (1995) and Iso-Ahola (1995) noted that in relation to athletes' quality of life, athlete relationships have been understudied. Furthermore, according to Wylleman (2000), "not withstanding its significance in the

athletic setting, the field of interpersonal relationships has remained underdeveloped as a topic in sport psychology research" (p. 555). One such relationship that has been understudied is the coach-athlete relationship.

Berger and Motl (2001) noted that primary and secondary social subdomains, such as being needed and being accepted by others, recognition, prestige, and favorable reputation, are all factors linked to the measurement of quality of life for student-athletes. Undoubtedly, the coach plays a vital role in determining whether an athlete feels needed and accepted and whether the athlete receives recognition or has a favorable reputation. The coach-athlete relationship is not only vital to the performance and participation of the athlete, but it lies at the heart of the athletic experience. For example, Parker (1993) discovered, that former NCAA Division I football players spent most of the time talking about relationships with their college coaches when she asked them to discuss their experience as a collegiate athlete.

Various theories and approaches have been used to examine the coach-athlete relationship. Some of the earliest attempts focused on trait theory (Wylleman, 2000). This research attempted to identify the traits that defined how each individual in the relationship (i.e., coach and athlete) acted toward the other (e.g., authoritative, inflexible, or manipulative). For example, Hendry (1972, 1974) described the stereotypical coach/physical educator as controlling, inflexible, domineering, and emotionally inhibited. Interestingly, Hendry (1972) also found that successful athletes had personality profiles similar to those of coaches. However, much of this research focused solely on the traits of the coach, ignoring the athlete almost completely.

Subsequent research investigated coach behaviors and athletes' perceptions of these behaviors these studies did not ignore the athlete completely, but rather focused on the coach's behaviors in response to athlete's actions. One outcome of this research was Smoll, Smith, Curtis, and Hunt's (1978) Mediational Model of Leadership (MML). This model conceptualized the coach-athlete relationship in terms of social reinforcement and modeling (Wylleman, 2000).

An important research tool that emerged with this model was Smith, Smoll, and Hunt's (1977) Coaching Behavior Assessment System (CBAS). Using the CBAS researchers could categorize coach behaviors based on their responses to the athletes. Coaching behaviors were classified as either reactive behavior (elicited) responses or spontaneous behavior (emitted) responses. Reactive responses are responses by the coach to desirable performances, mistakes, or misbehavior by the athlete and/or team while spontaneous behaviors are those initiated by the coach that are either game related or game irrelevant. Researchers that have used the CBAS to examine coach behaviors in youth sport have found that the most important determinant of the quality of participation lies in the relationship between coach and athlete (Martens, 1987; Seefeldt, & Gould, 1980; Smoll & Smith, 1989). Ultimately, coaches' behaviors are mediated by athletes' perceptions and recall of those behaviors, resulting in the athletes' evaluation of the coach.

A third line of research on the coach-athlete relationship was initiated by Chelladurai and associates, utilizing a multidimensional model of leadership (Wylleman, 2000). This model focuses on the coach as the leader, the athlete as the follower, and the athletic setting as the situation. Using this multidimensional model as a centerpiece,

Chelladurai and Saleh (1980) developed the Leadership Scale for Sports (LSS) in order to operationalize athletes' perceptions of coaches' decision-making styles. The LSS includes 40 items that assess leader behavior in coaching along five dimensions: democratic, autocratic, social support, positive feedback, and training and instruction. Research has shown that athletes' expectations of leader behavior of coaches differ by age, gender, and sport (i.e., team sport, individual sport) (Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996). For example, Chelladurai and Saleh (1978) found that males desired more autocratic leader behavior from coaches while females desired coaches to include athletes in the decision making process. Furthermore, athletes in team sports desired more training and instruction, autocratic leadership, and rewarding behavior from coaches compared to athletes in individual sports who desired leader behavior to be democratic and socially supportive. Additionally, Chelladurai and Carron (1983) found that mature athletes desired more social support and training and instructive behaviors from their coaches compared to novice athletes.

Despite the breadth and depth of the research on the coach-athlete relationship, utilizing trait, leadership, and behavioral theories, some researchers have questioned whether such relationships can be determined solely on the basis of the coach's traits and behaviors (Carron & Horne, 1977). Some have suggested that it is necessary to determine if the behavior exhibited by the coach (or athlete) is compatible with the expectations of the athlete (or coach). Using this rationale, Horne and Carron (1985) employed the LSS to measure the compatibility of coach-athlete dyads (i.e., individual relationships). In this study, athletes completed both the "perceived" and "preferred leader behavior" versions of the LSS while the coaches completed the "actual leader

behavior" version. In four of the five leadership dimensions (training, democratic, social support, and reward) coaches perceived themselves to be exhibiting more of each dimension than did their athletes. The difference between the athlete's "perceived" and "preferred" LSS scores were then examined to assess the compatibility and satisfaction of athletes with coaching behavior. The results indicated that athletes were most satisfied with coaches' training and instruction. This finding was similar to those earlier studies (Chelladurai, 1984; Chelladurai & Carron 1983; Scholten, 1978). In addition, athletes expressed more satisfaction with coaches who provided social support.

Earlier, Chelladurai (1978) had surmised that the longer athletes are involved with sport the more neglected their outside social interactions become, forcing them to look toward their teams and coaches for social support. For collegiate student-athletes it is likely that such social support is vital because of the change they experience in environment (i.e., living away from home for the first time) and the increased demands of competition (i.e., high school versus college athletics) (Horne & Carron, 1985). Never the less, these results suggest that the coach-athlete relationship to the athlete becomes more important to the athlete as their involvement in sport begins to become a key element in the their self-identity.

With a few notable exceptions (i.e., Greenleaf, Gould, & Dieffenbach, 2001; Horne & Carron, 1985), most of the research on coach-athlete relationships, particularly early research, has focused on the coach describing the relationship in terms of coaches' traits, behaviors, or leadership abilities. Wylleman (2000) points out that this focus has created the impression that the coach-athlete relationship is uni-directional (i.e., coach to

athlete) rather than bi-directional (i.e., coach to athlete, athlete to coach), thus neglecting the athlete's contribution to the dyadic nature of the relationship.

Jowett and Meek (2000) challenged this uni-directional ethos of the coach-athlete relationship with a bi-directional qualitative study of athletes and coaches who were married to each other. The interview schedule contained 85 open-ended questions, 48 pertaining to the athletic relationship and 37 relating to the marital relationship. The results, revealed that closeness (e.g., the feeling of being loved, cared for, and valued and the notion that the other can be trusted) is vital in fostering interpersonal relationships, whether they be husband-wife or coach-athlete. These findings are consistent with earlier research revealing that love and trust are critical features of positive personal and relational outcomes (Johnson-George & Swamp, 1982; Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Rubin, 1973) and that emotional closeness is a prominent feature of the coach-athlete relationship (Hellstedt, 1987; Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990; Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Tuffey, 1997). Jowett and Meek (2000) concluded that the matching coaches' and athletes' perceptions and behaviors connotes the importance of communication in high-level sport coach-athlete relationships and exemplifies the importance of viewing the coach-athlete dyad as a bi-directional relationship.

Jowett and Meek's (2000) investigation is an example of how the coach-athlete relationship can be explored as a bi-directional relationship that does not ignore the contribution of the athlete to the relationship. Another way to illustrate the contributions of the athlete to the coach-athlete relationship is to view the relationship strictly from the athlete's perspective. For example, Wrisberg (1996) utilized an inductive methodology in which he obtained athletes' quotes from other scholarly works that revealed their

perceptions of coaches and of the coach-athlete relationship. The results of this study "provide(d) an in-depth portrayal of the feelings and emotions of athletes living in a world that appears to be narrowly focused on sport and to some extent disconnected from people and other events" (p. 397).

In the following paragraphs, sample quotes from other studies are presented that illustrate various aspects of the athletes' perceptions of their experience with coaches. For example, coach-athlete expectations may not be the same. The athlete may simply be participating in a sport for fun, while the coach, faced with an administration that values winning at all costs, must win or lose her job – even if it means devaluing the athletes themselves:

> All (coach) knew how to do was bitch at us. She made us feel like we were fat...real big. She called me names and told me how mentally disabled I was. She had something for everybody—I just happened to be the retarded one in her eyes. She liked to make cracks about our bodies. We were already self-conscious about being big. So around her, we always felt so fat—just horrible and ugly...We just never felt good about ourselves and she had a lot to do with that.. (Wrisberg, Johnson, & Brooks, 2000)

> The coach I had my freshman year shook my confidence and self-esteem so much that I feel it has taken me three years to regain most of it. She continually threatened me with my scholarship, told me my friends and family disliked me, and generally made me miserable. (NCAA, 1989, p. 41)

At other times, coach-athlete relationships from the athlete's perspective can be confusing—a cross somewhere between love and hate:

> [Coach 2 had an] extremely different concept. This woman, Russian born, would place bottle caps on the bottoms of your feet, if you fell on your heels off of the balance beam, then you would have them, the Pepsi bottle caps, go into your heels. [She was] excruciating, die-hard, she was wonderful. You either love her or hate her because she made me so infuriated sometimes and because she was good and that's why I liked her. (Krane, Greenleaf, & Snow, 1997, p. 59)

And at other times, this relationship between the athlete and his or her coach can be wonderful and rewarding, leading to a bond that can last a lifetime:

> My coach definitely has been a major impact, helping me through all the tough times. He's always said that if I need him—whatever, however, whenever—to just call him and he will be there or try to do whatever he can. I trust him completely. (Wrisberg, Johnson, Brooks, 2000)

When the coach has a positive influence on the athlete, the impact can be life changing. One former Division I female student-athlete commented about the closeness she felt with her high school coach:

> I don't think, if it wasn't for her I wouldn't have went to the school I went to. I wouldn't have been somewhat enthusiastic about going to college or pursuing, you know, an athletic career in college or academics. (Jones, 1994, p. 42)

No matter what the nature of the coach-athlete relationship, many athletes quickly realize that the coach plays a pivotal role in determining who moves up the competitive ladder:

> Most athletes just get to college—they're looking to have a chance to play pros, and they're gonna do whatever they're told by the coaches and administration, and these are the ones who are really shaping that person's mind, more so than probably even their parents or anyone else. (Parker, 1993, p. 100)

> I think there's a lot of politics in football, too, as far as who the coaches put on the field, you know. Like, uh, I was behind a player who plays for [an NFL team] now, and I think he was basically all hype. And a lot of players knew that. They didn't think he was that good...It was hard for me because I thought I was every bit as good as he was...It was so hard in practice. We would make the same mistakes, but Coach Jones would bitch me out and wouldn't do anything to him. So, it was just so hard for me to sit back there and watch it. I just think football is just politics and stuff, you know what I mean? (Parker, 193, p. 101)

Some athletes feel that no matter how hard they try they are never going to get the opportunity to play because the coach has absolute power over who plays and who does not:

> The starting lineup is made before you even go to the practice field. They say you can go out there and earn a job, but it's not—it's who they want to start, who they want to pub(licize), and it's politics. The best man don't always start. (Parker, 1993, p. 101)

> They make it easier for the scholarship player to succeed than they do the walk-ons...I think it goes on all over the place over there. Coaches promise recruits things—that they will play—and then they have to stick to it somehow...I've seen a bunch of walk-ons that deserve to play and start, that didn't, because they were walk-ons. (Parker, 1993, p. 102)

Even if there is no desire to participate at the next level, some athletes will still compromise their values just for the opportunity to play:

> I remember feeling this great injustice. I didn't respect her. I felt like she was on a power trip and, so, I allowed her to have that power in order to achieve what I wanted, which was to play. I don't think she made wise decisions in certain situations, and, so, here you've got a situation where she is the absolute authority; however, in the back of our minds, or in the back of me, I'm not agreeing with what she's saying. But, you know...I wanted to play, so... (Wright, 1988, p. 118)

Playing time is not the only issue athletes perceive coaches attempt to control. One of the more common problems found in the coach-athlete relationship is when the athlete perceives the coach attempting to control all aspects of the athlete's life inside and outside of sport. For example one athlete reported that her coach was, "always watching over her" (Gould et al., 1997, p. 265) and others said, "Players feel like he's a dictator" (Parker, 1993, p. 90); "Coaches have far too many rules to allow a student-athlete to learn to become functional and well-adapted part of society (NCAA, 1989, p.12). "He was very, very domineering and very, very pushy. Extremely domineering. And he wanted to run my whole life. And there were times...in my career where the skating didn't bother me at all, it was the dominance of the coach trying to control what I ate, who I talked to" (Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991, p. 112).

The controlling nature of the coach, especially concerning food and body weight, appears to be a strain on the coach-athlete relationship, particularly from the female athlete's perspective. This conflict can take both a mental and physical toll on the athlete. Because of this conflict, some athletes even risk their own health: "I lost the meet. I hadn't lost as much weight as coach said I should. I felt so undisciplined. That's when I started using laxatives" (Ryan, 1994, p. 2). This tension can lead to a further breakdown in communication between the athlete and the coach that may even be observed by one's teammates:

> A teammate of mine said that she was nervous about her weight the whole time she was diving and she was crazy about the tension that the coach had created within her...The coach doesn't want to deal with you if you are overweight. (Blinde & Greendorfer, 1992, p. 109)

For others, the situation is very different. The trust in the coach is complete and without question: "I believe that from the moment you start feeling you can trust your coach, athletes have to say everything to him; it is not good to lie to the coach" (Jowett & Meek, 2000, p. 169). And, when this trust is well placed a healthy productive relationship can flourish: "He gives me courage that I can accomplish the unthinkable. His way of asking and supporting, with such confidence, alters what I thought unachievable to achievable" (Jowett & Meek, 2000, p. 169)

Unfortunately some athletes are, probably socialized to believe in the omniscience of the coach "authority" figure and blindly trust the coach: "The athlete cannot achieve without the coach. He advises and I deliver. The athlete has got to follow what the coach says" (Jowett & Meek, 2000, p. 169). This trust placed in coaches by athletes and parents

combined with the desire to participate and the pressure to succeed at any cost can lead to an unhealthy coach-athlete relationship:

> [Coach 1] came from a background of a football coordinator, strength and conditioning, this guy was excellent, I mean he had, he was excellent in my eyes as far as conditioning, but he was also cruel. Things I can remember him doing to us, he would make us run a mile after 6 hours of practice. If we did not complete the mile within the time he stated for us, which was basically an 8- to 10- minute mile, then we had to run another mile. We had to run 10 to 15 sets of stairs, the stairs themselves were 8 to 10 flights of stairs then run a mile...Our conditioning would be two hours after a 6 hour practice. The kids, a lot of girls besides me, would be throwing up. A lot of kids' parents would come and say 'what are you doing to our children?' A couple of children's parents, kids were taken out of it. (Krane, et al., 1997, p. 59-60)

It is a wonder that all parents do not take their children out of such abusive situations. Unfortunately, there are parents and athletes who continue to cling to the notion that coaches not only have the authority and the right to be cruel, but also must exercise this abusive power in order to produce better athletes and people:

> Coaches often emotionally abuse their players—to build them. If you can get past the abandoned feeling or feeling sorry or ashamed for things said, you will become a better player and person. Not all coaches are smart enough to know when enough has been said—luckily mine was. I would get put down and yelled at again, but I'm better for the strength she put in me. (NCAA, 1989 p. 41)

Even if the relationship between the athlete and the coach is good there still can be moments of miscommunication, uncertainty, and frustration. One such source of frustration within the coach-athlete relationship is when the expectations of the coach are different from those of the athlete:

> I was thinking, 'Coach, I've seen this kid whip some ass. I beat a kid 4-3 at Juniors and he just beat the crap out of that kid. Coach, you think this kid is a scrub and he's an ass kicker...' Just before the match I thought, 'Coach thinks I'm going to kick this kid's ass, but he is probably going to kick my ass. Coach is going to get pissed.' That was my whole attitude. (Eklund, 1996, p. 119)

It is possible that coaches do not take the time to develop a positive relationship with their athletes because they are always studying and working on the technical aspects of sport (Evans, 1995). This neglect can lead athletes to a feeling distance from the coach: "He didn't even know me...he didn't know my name. That made me feel like I couldn't go talk to him." (Parker, 1993, p. 89); "Coaches require so much of students and yet show little sensitivity to student needs outside of sports. If someone is going to control that much of your life, then they need to be more involved in the rest of it" (NCAA, 1989, p. 37); "It's all because of...not taking the time to know your people and...not taking the correct and direct action with your people. A lot of coaches don't realize it. The great ones do" (Parker, 1993, p. 90).

Often times, the business of big time athletics is a frightening wake-up call to many athletes during their first year of college who seem to be unprepared for the changes in not only the sport itself, but also in the nature of the coach-athlete relationship:

> I have found that in college, and in athletics in particular, there is a tendency to become "lost in the shuffle." Your supervisors no longer care about you and what you do as they did in high school. In football, it seems the coaches often care about you for one reason—athletic ability—and if you should lose this ability, they in turn lose interest in you. (NCAA, 1989, p. 39)

> The pressure the coaches put on us to win at times has resulted in physical violence, such as punching and slapping by the coaches. Some days the coaches make you feel as though you are part of a large herd of animals. In other words, they treat you like a piece of meat. They don't see you as a person most of the time. (NCAA, 1989, p. 39)

On some occasions athletes, parents, or administers do realize that the needs of the student-athlete are not being met, which may result in a coaching change. However, because of financial considerations, loyalty, or other reasons, a change in the coach-

athlete relationship may not be possible or feasible. The hopelessness of the situation can cause the athlete to feel anger and hostility toward the coach:

> And there were times in my career when even I'd get in the car and drive away from the rink and say the only way I can get out of this situation is if he dies. And I can't leave him because he's the best coach for me. I can't get another coach because I couldn't hurt him. I don't know if I should get another coach. Maybe if he dies or I die, I could get out of this situation. (Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991, p. 116)

Coaching changes may be beneficial or detrimental to the athlete, but no matter what the situation, the effect is likely to be a dramatic change in the quality of life for the athlete. As Vernacchia, McGuire, and Cook (1996) have noted, "for the athlete, the coach is a leader, role model, and disciplinarian. The coach may be seen as a friend, counselor, or parent substitute, perhaps as close as a member of the family. The coach is the wizard who holds the key that unlocks the magic of the athletic dreams" (p. 10). For the athlete, a change in the coach-athlete relationship, whether positive or negative, will undoubtedly have a direct affect on their lives and their self-identities.

Transitions

According to Petitpas, Champagne, Chartland, Danish, and Murphy (1997), "everyone reaches points in life when major changes occur. These points are called transitions" (p. 3). Some of these transitions are predictable or voluntary, while others are unpredictable, unforeseen, and/or forced. And, as Petitpas et al. (1997) point out, "sometimes the psychological aspects of a transition can get in the way of an athlete's career progress" (p. 3).

Lavallee and Wylleman (2000) contend that career transitions are a function of two basic factors: voluntary and involuntary. In addition, Wylleman, De Knop, Ewing,

and Cumming (2000) suggest a third dimension of career transitions—a developmental perspective. These dimensions may work alone or in concert with one another. For example, all athletes, no matter what their age, go through predictable and/or developmental transitions during their careers. These transitions follow a very natural pattern that usually coincides with the passage of time. Many are developmental in nature; however, voluntary or involuntary factors may also simultaneously be acting upon the athlete.

Examining some of the typical transitions of the child who is no longer able to play Little League Baseball after the age of 12, illustrates the nature of developmental, involuntary, and voluntary transitions. After the age of 12, the athlete must either play for a new coach on the local junior or senior high school team, in another age-appropriate youth league or retire from the sport. The athlete's departure from the Little League team and transition from one coach to another is developmental as well as involuntary. Should the athlete choose to leave the sport completely, the transition out of athletics would be voluntary. This developmental process of transition from level to level and coach to coach is inherent in the American educational and athletic system. The athlete can continue to transition to various levels of sport as long as his or her talents allow the individual to progress and the person chooses to continue. Eventually the Little Leaguer may transition into collegiate and possibly professional baseball. However, if one's talents do not allow a transition into high school, collegiate, or professional sport, the athlete might be forced out. These involuntary transitions out of sport may also be brought on by injury, deselection, or some other involuntary action. Such unpredictable transitions are known as involuntary transitions.

In the last 20 plus years, there has been considerable research in the area of career transition for athletes (e.g. Baillie, 1992; Lavallee and Wylleman, 2000; Petitpas, Champagne, Chartland, Danish, and Murphy, 1997; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1992). The majority of these studies have particularly examined career transitions out of sport for the elite athlete (e.g. Aflermann, 1995; Allison & Meyer, 1988; Baillie, 1992, 1993; Baillie & Danish, 1993; Blann, 1992; Ogilvie & Howe, 1986; Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993; Taylor & Ogilvie, 2001). However, there are other areas of athlete transition that have received some attention by researchers.

Recently, Zaichkowsky, King, and McCarthy (2000) investigated a case of forced transition involving the entire Boston University football program. In 1997, this program was suddenly and without warning terminated. Boston University, after 93 years of fielding teams, became one of only a handful of schools in the history of the NCAA to eliminate football from its intercollegiate sport opportunities. The researchers used a modified version of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993) to assess each player's athlete identity and another questionnaire designed to examine their personal football experience. Consistent with earlier research by Pearson and Petitpas (1990) the results revealed that younger players held stronger athletic identities than did older players who had already started to prepare themselves for transition out of football. However, their results do conflict with those of Chelladurai (1978), as discussed earlier, who had surmised that the longer athletes are involved with sport the more neglected their outside social interactions become. Of the 30 participants interviewed 16 transitioned to new teams with new coaches while 14 stayed at Boston University to pursue other areas outside of sport.

Several other studies were generated, due to the dissolution of football at Boston University. Nacimento, Duffy, Schwager, and Zaichkowsky (1998) evaluated the effects of the program termination on student-athlete identity and involuntary career transition. Consistent with other studies (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993; & Brewer, Van Raalte, & Petitpas, 1993; Zaichkowsky, King, McCarthy, 2000), they found that athletes with stronger athletic identity experienced more emotional confusion following the termination of their careers than did those with identities that were defined in other ways.

A follow-up study, conducted six months after program termination, involved interviews with eight players – four of whom transferred to other universities and four of whom remained at Boston University (Nacimento et al., 1998). This qualitative study elicited the athletes' opinions about the support services they received at Boston University, feelings toward the university, and identification of forced-transition issues following the termination of the program. The results indicated that all experienced a reaction of "shock" and a feeling of strong animosity toward the university administration for the termination of the program and the severing of coach-athlete relationships. Every player was forced to deal with some degree of transition. Although these studies provide insight into the effects of an involuntary transition, they offer little insight into the effects of such a transition on the coach-athlete relationship.

Coach-Athlete Relationships and Transitions

Despite the existence of literature stressing the importance of the coach-athlete relationship, few systematic attempts have been made to link transitions to the quality of Division I coach-athlete relationships. This is somewhat surprising given recent NCAA statistics (NCAA, 2000, 2001) showing the existence of over 380,000 individual coach-

athlete relationships during the 1999-2000 school year at the Division I level. And, at all levels of NCAA competition (Division I, II, and III) during the same time frame there existed over 852,000 individual coach-athlete dyads. Presently, no statistics exist on the number of NCAA coaches who retire, quit, change schools, or are dismissed annually or on the number of student-athlete who transfer within any given school year.

In the aftermath of the dismantling of the Boston University football program, one coach interviewed commented, "You are not a coach until you have been fired" (Zaichkowsky, King, & McCarthy, 2000, p. 199). If that sentiment is true, the experience of the athlete, whose relationship with his or her coach has been severed because of coach dismissal, coach retirement, voluntary coach departure, or athlete transfer is likely impacted to some extent as well.

Summary

It is clear from the available research that performance and participation in athletics is directly related to the quality of the coach-athlete relationship (Butler, 1997; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996; Smith & Smoll, 1996; Vealey, Armstrong, Comar, & Greenleaf, 1998). This relationship is one of the most important in sport and has been examined from a number of theoretical perspectives, including those of trait, behavioral, and learning theories. However, there remains a void in the literature due to a lack of examining athletes' experience of the coach-athlete relationship.

As Petitpas, Champagne, Chartland, Danish, and Murphy (1997), have noted everyone goes through major life transitions. And, it is inevitable that these transitions, particularly when they involve relationships that are vital to an individual's self-identity, will likely have a dramatic effect on that person's life. Based on the available data

suggesting that the coach-athlete relationship is the single greatest determinant of the quality of an athlete's experience (Vernacchia, McGuire, & Cook, 1996), it would be valuable to examine the nature of that experience from the ***athlete's*** perspective. That was the purpose of this study.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Despite the increase in the number of phenomenological studies in sport psychology (e.g. Dale, 1994; Inoue, 1984; Johnson, 1998; Lawrence, 2001) the majority of the research still relies on the traditional "scientific" approach and pays little attention to the personal experiences of athletes. This traditional approach seeks to gain predictive explanatory knowledge independent of the outside world with an eye towards constructing generalizations, theories, and laws (Hatch, 1985). The three criteria required for using the scientific method are as follows: 1) the phenomenon must be observable; 2) the phenomenon must be measurable; and 3) the phenomenon must lend itself to verification by other observers. These criteria suggest that human behavior that is quantifiable, observable, and open to verification are the only valid forms of scientific data (Knaack, 1984). However, some researchers studying human phenomena find this scientific view too restrictive because it essentially asks only "why" something happens, not "what" it is like or "what" is the nature of a certain phenomenon (Valle, King, Halling, 1989). Qualitative research and more specifically existential phenomenological research attempts to illuminate the meaning of the "lived" experience and understand its essence. In this chapter, the foundations of the existential phenomenological method used in the present study to describe the experience of a Division I athlete going through a coaching transition are presented. These include: a) researcher as instrument, b) bias exploration and bracketing, c) pilot testing, d) co-researchers, e) methodology and data analysis, and g) validity issues.

Researcher as Instrument

The focus of the first stage of a phenomenological research investigation is the choice of a topic of human experience that is of interest to the researcher. This is especially important because the researcher is the major instrument in the study. As Van Manen (1990) noted, "The starting point of phenomenological research is largely a matter of identifying what it is that deeply interests you or me and identifying this interest as a true phenomenon, that is, as some experience that human beings live with" (p. 40). As such, it was of important for me to gain an understanding of my own personal experience of the phenomenon of a "coaching change." The following paragraph contains a description of my past experiences of and interest in the topic of coaching changes.

I have been involved in sport and competition for as long as I can remember. I competed in a number of competitive and recreational sports --football, baseball, basketball, hockey, golf, skiing, etc. -- but my true love has always been running. I loved track and field, eventually earning a scholarship to West Virginia University. At times while competing at the collegiate level, I struggled with the "mental" aspect of the sport. This frustrated me because I always thought that I could perform at a higher level if I could just "get my head into it." After completing my collegiate career, I decided I wanted to help other athletes achieve their dreams, so I entered the coaching field. During my 14-year coaching career, I worked for five different institutions – two high schools and three universities. In fact, I worked at one university on two separate occasions each time I arrived I was taking someone else's place and each time I left someone else was taking mine. Through each of these transitions, I never thought much

about the experience of the student-athletes who were also going through the coaching transition. That is, I did not until the last time I was asked to leave a program. At this particular institution, the student-athletes expressed to me their dismay about the change and I began to wonder about their experience of the transition. All of my coaching transitions have been developmental in nature. For example, I had the same high school coach for all four years. Then I graduated and went to college where I had the same coach for four years. At both the high school and college levels my coaches had always been there for me. Since my own departure from full time coaching, I have begun to study sport psychology in earnest. Currently, I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. As a graduate student in sport psychology, I also provide sport psychology consultation for varsity track and cross-country athletes. Additionally, I work as a volunteer assistant with the men's track and cross-country teams. As a volunteer coach and as a consultant, I have conversed with several athletes who have experienced coaching changes. And, throughout all of these conversations, I have learned more about the kinds of experiences athletes have when they go through a coaching change. As a result, I began to wonder more and more about the aspects of that experience.

Bias Exploration and Bracketing Interview

As Parker (1994) noted, it is important for the qualitative researcher to explore his/her biases and assumptions prior to the start of the research process. Bracketing one's assumptions to the best of the researcher's ability is a vital aspect of qualitative research. Bracketing, as defined by Pollio, Henley and Thompson (1997), is the suspension of theoretical beliefs, preconceptions, and presuppositions. In other words, bracketing is an attempt to publicly acknowledge biases that may distort the view of the researcher. In

addition, the bracketing interview assists the researcher in identifying points of tension and conflict (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). One of the best ways for researchers to explore their biases and assumptions is through the bracketing interview. The bracketing interview allows the researcher to engage in a self-reflection of the phenomenon under investigation and to better understand the meaning of the phenomenon from the participant's perspective (Valle, et al., 1989).

Husserl (1954/1970) saw this suspension or reduction of the "natural attitude" as an impossibility. However, today's existential phenomenologist view bracketing in a different light (Dale, 1994); instead of suspending his or her own worldly knowledge, the researcher adapts a worldview that allows first-person phenomenological understanding to occur (Pollio, et al., 1997). This first-person worldview is critical to the research process because it acknowledges that the individual and the world co-constitute one another (Valle, et al., 1989). In other words, the individual and his or her experience are viewed within the context of his or her world.

The bracketing process begins with the researcher being interviewed by another qualified individual who is not involved in the study. The interviewer asks the researcher questions about the phenomenon that will be examined. The interview is then transcribed verbatim and the transcripts are analyzed to uncover any presuppositions the researcher might have. Shining light on the researcher's theoretical beliefs, preconceptions, and presuppositions allows the researcher to co-act within a dialogue with the participants he or she will be interviewing in a way that allows for an accurate first-person description of the phenomenon under investigation to occur.

In order to bring to light to my own personal biases and presuppositions, I participated in a bracketing interview with a skilled qualitative researcher not involved with the study. The interview was transcribed verbatim and analyzed. All presuppositions that emerged from the interview were thematized and journaled. I then referred to this journal throughout the research process in an attempt to remain cognizant of my presuppositions.

The major theme that emerged from my bracketing interview was my belief that the entire phenomenon of a coaching transition for Division I athlete would be linked to performance. For me, and I expected for the student-athletes who have experienced a coaching change, team and individual performance would be the most significant feature of the experience. I expected this to be more prevalent for male student-athletes than for their female counterparts. Other themes that emerged from my bracketing interview included: sadness and pain/joy, disbelief/relief, and confusion/optimism. Additionally, I thought that individual sport athletes (i.e., track, gymnastics, wrestling) and female student-athletes would have a more personal relationship with their coaches. Moreover, whether the relationship with the former coach was positive or negative, I believed that individual sport athletes and female athletes would experience a more intense range of emotions compared to team sport athletes and male athletes. Specifically, I expect that, individual sport and female student-athletes who were in a positive relationship with their former coach would experience stress, anxiety, pain, and disbelief during and after the transition while the same individuals who were in a negative relationship with their former coaches would experience relief, happiness, and optimism compared to team sport athletes and male-student athletes. Finally, I believed that the race of the coach and the

race of the student-athlete might make a difference in the student-athlete's experience of a coaching transition. I believed that the experiences of athletes who lost or gained a coach of their own race would be different from that of athletes who experienced a coaching transition to a coach of a different race.

By continually journaling and examining my presuppositions throughout the research process, I tried to maintain a respectful position to the real expert in this study, the participants, who in the remainder of this paper are referred to as the co-researchers (Pollio, et al. 1997). In this way I hope that a path toward understanding would emerge from the respect and concern of two people committed to the exploration of the life world of one of them, the co-researcher.

Pilot Testing

The aim of a pilot study is to ensure that all of the questions are asked permit pertinent issues to emerge in regards to the lived experience of a coaching transition. In the present study, I conducted a pilot interview with a 37-year old Caucasian female. This former NCAA Division I cross-country athlete had gone through four coaching transitions during her collegiate career. The purpose of the pilot interview was to reveal any need I might have to improve my interviewing and probing technique; particularly, with respect to follow-up questions I asked. My aim was to invite conversation rather than to hinder it (Parker, 1993). A second purpose was to assist me in developing or refining the major question of the study (Dale, 1994).

As a result of the pilot interview, no change to the main question of the study was required and as I had hoped, I was able to improve my interviewing technique by listening to, transcribing, reading, and then rereading through the transcripts several

times. Finally, the pilot interview helped eliminate some of the concern I had that some athletes would have difficulty vividly recalling the experience of a coaching transition because the experience may have occurred several years prior to the study. This concern was laid to rest when, the co-researcher in the pilot study, despite being 15 years removed from her collegiate career, was able to vividly and articulately recall her experience of each of her coaching transitions. In fact, during the dialogue the co-researcher commented on how she had "never really thought about the changes in that way" and as a result, she was able to put meaning to her experience for the first time.

Co-Researchers

The participants in this study, sometimes known as co-researchers in phenomenological research, were chosen specifically because they were knowledgeable, informative, and articulate about the phenomena of interest. Co-researchers were not chosen at random; but were selected in order to obtain a richly varied description of the phenomenon, not a statistical generalization (Polkinghorne, 1989). According to Patton (1980), purposeful sampling is done to increase the utility of the information provided. Co-researchers should have a variety of experiences of the same phenomenon. This is crucial because not all co-researchers will have the same figural experience of the phenomenon itself. As Dale (1996) points out, what is relevant to one person in his or her experience might not be relevant to another.

Besides experiencing the phenomenon under investigation, Van Kaam (1969) indicates that co-researchers must possess the following six characteristics: (1) the ability to express themselves articulately, (2) the ability to evoke and express inner feelings without shame or guilt, (3) the ability to articulate organic experiences that accompany

these feelings, (4) a relatively recent experience of the phenomenon under investigation, (5) a spontaneous interest in the phenomenon, and (6) the ability to articulate either verbally or in writing what he or she was experiencing when the phenomenon occurred.

Keeping the aforementioned criteria in mind, I selected co-researchers who were Division I student-athletes from a variety of sports (i.e. team, individual) and diverse with respect to gender and race. These athletes were interviewed because they had experienced going through a coaching transition during their collegiate careers and had the ability to evoke and express their feelings and thoughts about that experience in an articulate manner. Each student-athlete represented a different sport (i.e., soccer, track & field, basketball, etc.) and had experienced at least one coaching change during their collegiate career.

Procedure

I contacted each co-researcher personally and discussed the nature of the study at length. I then scheduled interviews with those who were interested in participating in the study. I asked all of the co-researchers to choose a place that they felt comfortable in for the interview. Prior to participating in the interview, co-researchers read a letter explaining the study and signed the Informed Consent form. The Informed Consent form provided a brief description of the study, a statement of confidentiality, and a statement of possible benefits for the student-athletes themselves.

Interview Protocol

As Dale (1994) noted it is of vital importance that the person being interviewed is at ease and trusts the researcher during a phenomenological dialogue. To ensure that the co-researchers in this investigation felt at ease and trusted me, they were informed that

whatever we discussed would be kept confidential and that I would not judge them or anything we discussed. At this point, each co-researcher signed the consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the study.

The phenomenological dialogues in this investigation were open-ended and unstructured in nature and lasted between 50 and 90 minutes. As such, each dialogue with the co-researchers began with the following question: "Can you tell me about your experience of going through a coaching change as a Division I athlete?" All questions henceforth flowed from the dialogue generated by this question and every effort was made to avoid leading the co-researcher in a direction they would not have gone had I not asked certain probes. The use of phenomenological dialogue allowed the co-researchers to describe their experience of a coaching transition in full, clear detail. This required the co-researchers to clarify the meaning of the experience to me. I facilitated this clarification by asking questions such as: "What was it like?", "Tell me more about that?", or "How did you feel when that happened?". It is important to note that I used the athletes' own vocabulary when asking clarifying questions.

Pollio, et al. (1997) noted that when co-researchers attempt to clarify the meaning of their experience they sometimes realize it for the first time. This occurred on several occasions, as some of the co-researchers did realize the meaning of their experience for the first time during our conversation. One athlete stated, "I had never really thought about it like that before," while another stated, "I never even realized that that was a type of transition I went through. I never thought about it before."

All of the interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. I transcribed all of the interviews myself and added any notes on mannerisms or body language when they

seemed relevant. I removed all indications of the co-researchers names and identifying features from the transcripts to insure anonymity. These transcripts were then used for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the core of phenomenological research. According to Polkinghorne (1997) the aim of this analysis is to reveal and unravel structures, logic, and interrelationships from naïve descriptions of the co-researchers. The main purpose is to derive descriptions of the essential features of the experience. Furthermore, the analysis provides a robust description and a particular structural relationship that coheres the elements into a unified experience (Polkinghorne, 1997).

A number of researchers have identified similar protocols for the analysis and interpretation of existential phenomenological data (e.g., Colaizza, 1978; Cote, Salmela, Baria, and Russell, 1993; Tesch, 1990; Van Kaam, 1969). The following is a synopsis of these protocols and the steps I utilized in the analysis of my data. The first step is to read through the transcripts several times to get a sense of the whole. After acquiring a sense of the whole, I attempted to extract significant statements that directly related to the phenomenon of the "lived" experience. From these statements, meanings began to emerge. At this time, I clustered these significant meanings into themes. It was important for me to remember at this juncture of the research protocol to review the original data must be reviewed to determine whether the clustered themes contained the necessary and sufficient constituents of the phenomenon. If necessary, themes would be added or subtracted from the preliminary description as dictated by the original data. These additions and subtractions to the description could transform the description

several times until it characterized the essential elements of the lived experience of the co-researchers. After I produced the penultimate description of the phenomenon along with a schematic of its essential structure. I contacted each co-researcher and asked them to review the description and schemata to verify its relevance to their lived experience. This involved returning to the co-researchers to ask them the following questions: "How do my descriptive results compare with your experience?" and "Have any aspects of your experience been omitted?" Relevant themes that emerged from these follow-up interviews were to added or deleted from the final description of the lived experience.

When analyzing qualitative data it is imperative that the researcher applies an interpretive framework. According to Pollio et al. (1997), the researcher's choice of framework partially specifies the methodological procedures, interpretive goals, and evaluative criteria for the study. And, as the goal of existential phenomenological research is the description of the lived experience, the two primary interruptive procedures, used for this study were bracketing with a research group and the hermeneutic circle.

Bracketing with a Research Group

As discussed earlier, the bracketing interview is a vital aspect of the existential phenomenological research methodology. Bracketing is a process by which biases and presuppositions, about the phenomenon under investigation, of the researcher can be brought out into the open and acknowledged. Pollio et al. (1997) identified three types of presuppositions that can interfere with data analysis – researchers applying his or her own standards of what is important or unimportant, judging co-researcher's reflections as illogical because they do not conform to a particular norm, or arguing that the co-

researcher is not describing the "real" experience because it does not fit an imposed theoretical framework.

In addition to the bracketing interview, Pollio et al. (1997) offers two additional bracketing procedures for overcoming the limitations of incompatible suppositions of the researcher: interpreting in the language utilized by the co-researchers and interpreting some texts with a research group. The first of these additional procedures, utilizing the co-researchers' own language, allows the researcher to avoid imposing personal meanings onto the phenomenon under investigation. Moreover, the utilization of the co-researchers own language allows the existential phenomenological researcher to produce a rich meaningful description of the lived experience as expressed by the co-researchers. The final bracketing procedure utilizes a research group consisting of the researcher and other individuals familiar with phenomenological research methodology (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1990). The research group has three main functions: 1) to look for theoretical suppositions not recognized by the primary researcher, 2) to provide a source of alternative perspectives, and 3) to provide a public test of whether an interpretation is supported by the text. Pollio et al. (1997) noted that if the group can not see textual support for an interpretation, it is reasonable to assume that the interpretation is overly abstract; however, having the support of research group for an interpretation does not guarantee its correctness. In the end, it is the co-researchers who are solely responsible the authenticity of an interpretation.

Hermeneutic Circle

Like bracketing with a research group, the hermeneutic circle is a procedure that can be utilized to help produce an accurate meaningful description of a lived experience, in this case, the experience of going through a coaching transition. Hermeneutics is the

"study of understanding, especially the tasks of understanding texts" (Palmer, 1969, p. 9). The hermeneutic circle, then, is an interpretive procedure by which there is a continuous process of relating a part of the text to the whole of the text (Bleicher, 1980). The process is circular, moving from part of the text, to the whole of the text, back to part of the text, to the whole of the text in a continuous fashion. As Pollio, et al. (1997) stated, "Thematic interpretation is a continuous process of going back and forth among various parts of the text in which earlier and later parts are continuously being re-thematized in the light of new relations provided by an unfolding descriptive understanding of the text" (p. 52). In this way, the researcher can overcome the linear nature of reading by reviewing earlier portions of the text in the context of later portions and later portions in the context of previous portions (Pollio, et al., 1997). Moreover, the researcher is able to understand any given text in terms of its relation to the whole, both preceding and following, rather than as a decontextualized thing-in-itself (Kvale, 1983; Register, & Henley, 1992).

In the present study, I utilized three hermeneutic approaches to interpret the data on coaching transitions: group interpretation, idiographic interpretation, and nomothetic interpretation. Group interpretation is the process by which a research group and the primary researcher read aloud the co-researcher's transcript. During the reading there are frequent pauses to discuss the potential meanings and possible inter-relationships among meanings within the text. By having the transcripts read aloud in a group setting, I hoped to achieve a better understanding of the data and to begin to organizing and interpreting it. As recommended by Pollio et al. (1997), after completing the interpretation of two transcripts, I attempted to interpret the remaining transcripts by myself and periodically

returned to the group with tentative idiographic descriptions. The group then critically examined my descriptions, looking for support from the data and clearness of description.

Secondly, I utilized the hermeneutic process of idiographic interpretation. Idiographic interpretation is the process of examining each individual co-researcher's transcript as a case study. Each case study provides a description of the phenomenon and its meanings, relations, and patterns within that individual's lived experience. The research group also assisted me in identifying the meaning of figural domains within each case study.

The final hermeneutic principle I utilized involved the construction of nomothetic descriptions of the phenomenon of an athlete going through a coaching transition. Nomothetic description is a process by which the whole of the interpretation is broadened to include all interviews on the same topic, and the hermeneutic circle is used to interpret each transcript in relation to all the other transcripts. Generalizability is not the function of nomothetic descriptions. Instead, an attempt is made to examine descriptions across transcripts to improve the interpretive vision and to determine how one experience resembles another. All this I did in an effort to formulate a thematic description of a Division I athlete going through a coaching transition in the co-researchers' own language.

Issues of Validity

Validity is one of the most critical components of any research investigation. In an existential phenomenological investigation, the degree of validity of the findings depends on the power of the presentation to convince the reader that the findings are accurate (Polkinghorne, 1997). Moreover, it is vital to understand that the validity of existential phenomena does not occur within an idealized natural science paradigm, but

within a judicial paradigm where "validity is placed in the realm of human practice, where absolute certainty is not a requirement... (and where) convincing evidence has (to be) marshaled in favor of the aptness of the description" (Pollio, et al. 1997, p.53). Accordingly, the criteria for the validity of an existential phenomenological investigation are whether the reader, adopting a world-view articulated by the researcher, is able to see textual evidence supporting the interpretation, and whether the goal of providing a first-person understanding has been attained.

Support for the validity of a phenomenological investigation can be evaluated in two ways: methodologically and experimentally (Pollio, et al.,1997). Methodological validity stresses rigor and appropriateness of the procedures used while experimental validity focuses on the plausibility and illumination of the research description. To ensure the validity of this study, I completed a bracketing interview and a pilot study. Additionally, as Dale (1996) suggested I kept a research journal of my thought processes, reasoning, and actions throughout the project. The journal provided me a system for reflecting on my research. I rigorously analyzed the data using the appropriate techniques of bracketing with a research group and the hermeneutic circle. To further ensure the validity of this study, I utilized the following five questions (Polkinghorne, 1997) throughout the research process:

1. Did I influence the contents of the co-researcher's descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the co-researcher's actual experience?

2. Is the transcript accurate and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation?

3. In the analysis of the transcript, were there possible conclusions other than the ones I offered that could have been derived? Have I identified these alternatives and demonstrated why they are less probable than the ones I chose.

4. Is it possible to go from the general structure description to the transcripts and to account for specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?

5. Is the structural description situation-specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations?

Summary

The goal of this investigation was to describe the experience of Division I athletes going through a coaching transition and therefore the existential phenomenological interview was considered the most appropriate research method. The dialogue of existential phenomenology gave the co-researchers the opportunity to describe their experience, clarify the meaning of their experience, and perhaps even realize part of the experience for the first time.

CHAPTER IV

Data Presentation

The goal of this investigation was to capture a comprehensive description of the experience of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I student-athletes' experience of a coaching transition. Phenomenological dialogue was utilized to secure a detailed description of the experience. In this chapter, the thematic structure of eight individuals' experience of a coaching transition is presented. Before discussing the thematic structure, I will present a brief synopsis of each individual co-researcher utilizing pseudonyms to protect their identity. These synopses are offered to assist the reader in understanding each individual and his or her experience as it was lived.

The Co-Researchers

The following synopses were developed through a questionnaire given to each co-researcher, through conversations with them, and finally through member checking. A summary of the synopses is presented in Table 1.

Alyssa

Alyssa, a 22-year old Caucasian woman, ran high school track and cross-country; however, upon her arrival on campus at a large state university in her home state she decided to try out for crew. She spent her first season bouncing between the novice team (i.e. beginner rowers) and the light-weight team (i.e., rowers weighing less than 120 pounds). She struggled not only with her role on the team, but also with her weight. During the spring of her freshman year she learned that the head coach, a female, was leaving the program along with her two assistants, a male and a female. Despite her

Table 1. Synopsis of co-researchers

ATHLETE	SPORT	NUMBER OF TRANSITIONS	GENDER	ETHNICITY
ALYSSA	CREW	5	FEMALE	CAUCASIAN
JESS	FIELD HOCKEY	1	FEMALE	CAUCASIAN
LARRY	TRACK THROWER	1	MALE	CAUCASIAN
MIA	GOLF	1	FEMALE	EUROPEAN CAUCASIAN
PERRY	FOOTBALL	9	MALE	CAUCASIAN
PRESTON	BASKETBALL	1	MALE	AFRICAN-AMERICAN
RITA	TRACK SPRINTER	2	FEMALE	JAMACIAN-CANADIAN
THOMAS	CROSS-COUNTRY	2	MALE	CAUCASIAN

writing a letter to the athletic director in support of the male assistant for the head coaching position, a new female head coach was hired and all the assistants were dismissed. During the fall of Alyssa's sophomore year, she earned a spot on the varsity-eights (i.e., the top boat in collegiate rowing). However, after disappointing winter workouts she was displaced from the top boat and spent the remainder of the season in the number-two boat. During Alyssa's junior year she was removed from the number two boat and assigned to the four-person boat. At that point, Alyssa experienced a second coaching transition when the new assistant coach, also a female, supervised her training. Alyssa decided to forego her senior year of eligibility and left the team.

Jess

The field hockey coach at the local high school was a good friend of Jess's mother. As a result, during Jess's eighth-grade year, she was asked to be the manager for the high school team. This experience peeked her interest in the sport of field hockey. The next year, as a high school freshman, she played on the junior varsity team. Following her freshman year, the coach left the program and a new high school teacher with no field hockey experience took over the program. Jess felt she was not getting enough from her high school program and eventually joined the Futures League, an Olympic developmental summer league. She continued playing in both the developmental league and the interscholastic league, honing her skills. By her senior year in high school, Jess was asked to join one of the top Olympic developmental teams in the greater Baltimore/Washington D.C. area, coached by a local university assistant coach. Jess's skills continued to grow and she eventually earned a scholarship to an eastern seaboard university. She spent three years playing at this university and

eventually earned first-team All-American honors. In addition to playing at the collegiate level, Jess participated on a regional team in a national summer league. It was during this time that she first met her current coach, who also happened to be her regional coach. After completing her junior year, she decided to transfer to her regional coach's school because, as Jess said, "I still have aspirations of getting on the U.S. team and I'm hoping she can still guide me to that. It has always been a goal of mine and it was frustrating when I was at my old school to not be able to start living that dream." During her senior campaign Jess earned second-team All-American honors. At the time of the interview, she was still practicing with her collegiate team with hopes of making the national team.

Larry

Larry participated in the sport of track and field as a thrower (i.e., shot put, discus, hammer, javelin). Despite having scholarship offers from several Division I athletic programs, Larry decided to walk-on at a major west coast university where he would red-shirt (i.e. sit out of competition his first year while still maintaining his four years of collegiate eligibility) based on the promise of a scholarship during his second season in school. However, this promise was never fulfilled and Larry decided to transfer, accepting a scholarship offer to another major university over 2000 miles away. Larry described how his father was very supportive of his desire to change coaches via a transfer, while his mother was not as understanding. As Larry noted, "She was very unhappy. She wanted to send me to the military. She scares me (laugh)." At his new institution, Larry was a three-time, all-conference, academic honor roll selection. Athletically, Larry earned three varsity letters, was a provisional NCAA Division I qualifier, and had all-time, top 10 performances in his school's history in three different

throwing events. At the time of the interview, Larry had completed his collegiate eligibility, but was still training and competing.

Mia

Mia, a golfer at a prominent Division I institution and a Caucasian international student from Europe, was recruited to play collegiately in the United States on a golf scholarship. She had won her country's championship on several occasions and had played throughout Europe, South America, and the Far East. Mia experienced a coaching transition during her sophomore season. According to Mia, the head coach was experiencing several personal problems that began to affect the golf team. After a team meeting with the athletic director, it was determined that a change was in order before the conclusion of the season. Going into the NCAA Regional and National Championships the head coach was dismissed and the assistant coach assumed the position of interim head coach. After a successful post-season, the interim head coach was officially named head coach. Mia flourished academically and athletically, earning honors as a three-time National Golf Coaches Association Academic All-American and a two-time second team all-conference selection. She completed her collegiate eligibility and graduated the spring of 2002.

Perry

Perry, a Caucasian male, was born and raised in a major city in the southern United States. Like many American youth, he participated in a number of sports growing up before gravitating toward football and wrestling. Perry enjoyed much success throughout high school, not only athletically but also academically. As a result of his success both on and off the athletic field, he was recruited by a number of Division I

institutions. He chose an Ivy League school to continue his academic and athletic endeavors in football and wrestling. Financially speaking, this was an expensive decision since Ivy League rules do not permit athletic scholarships. Perry commented that, "The school I was at was so far removed, not only physically, but also culturally from where I was...it was a different world all together." During his football career, Perry played for four different head coaches and four position coaches in a four-year period. One of the coaching changes occurred during the middle of his freshman season, while the others occurred during the off-season. Perry noted that, as a result of these coaching transitions, he was switched from an offensive player to a defensive player and back again. During these changes he played a total of seven different positions. Nevertheless, he remained at the school and on the team through it all.

Preston

Preston, an African-American basketball player, captained his college team during both his junior and senior year. Preston was a walk-on athlete (i.e., unrecruited) at a smaller state supported Division I school, who had earned a full scholarship after his first year on campus. Despite being a smaller institution, the long-time coach and the team had enjoyed a great deal of success, including five conference championships and five bids to the NCAA tournament during a six-year period. During Preston's sophomore season the team was a "Cinderella" story making it to the NCAA Sweet 16. One early morning, just as Preston was starting his junior year, the phone rang and quite unexpectedly the head coach informed him that he had taken another coaching job at a larger institution. Preston also learned that an assistant coach, already on staff and who had been an assistant for 17 years, had been named head coach. The team struggled his

final two seasons and barely finished with a .500 percent winning percentage in each. Preston's senior season concluded when his team of those seasons and was unceremoniously eliminated from their conference tournament in the first round.

Rita

Rita, a Canadian sprinter of Jamaican descent, attended a large state institution that had an outstanding record in women's NCAA track and field. Just prior to the conclusion of her freshman season, she learned that her event coach, a male who had recruited her, was taking another coaching position. The announcement that a prominent assistant coach from a nationally renowned program was accepting the position was made just prior to the NCAA Track and Field Championships. At the conclusion of her sophomore season, Rita's female head coach announced that she was leaving the university and that Rita's new sprint coach would succeed her. Despite changing events under her new coach, Rita flourished, earning multiple NCAA All-American certificates and all-conference honors. After her graduation, Rita continued under the tutelage of her coach and represented her native Canada in the Olympic Games.

Thomas

In the first two years of his Division I collegiate career as a cross-country runner, Thomas had already worked with three different coaches at two separate universities. Thomas originally enrolled at a major state university in the northeastern part of the United States near his home state. He enjoyed considerable success during his first year of Division I competition. Thomas finished as the first runner for his school in all eight races that season. On one occasion he was the overall champion while on two other occasions he finished second overall. With only the conference and the regional

championship meets left in Thomas's first full season, the coach left the university. "He left not because he went for another job somewhere or anything, but because they weren't paying him enough money and he was on welfare," said Thomas. Despite finishing the season without a true distance coach, he still earned all-conference and all-regional honors. Prior to the start of the spring semester, the university hired a new distance coach. Thomas was disappointed with the hiring of the aforementioned individual and decided to transfer to a new university. As he noted, "I thought coming here, it was going to be harder because I was further from home and in a totally different environment than what I was used to." After a slow start that was marred by eligibility problems because of his transfer, Thomas came on strong and was one of the team's top three runners in every race in which he competed. He earned all-regional honors for a second time and assisted his team in qualifying for the NCAA Cross-Country Championships. At the time of the interview, Thomas had just completed his junior year of eligibility.

Thematic Structure

The thematic structure that emerged from the eight individual phenomenological dialogues, suggested relatively uniform experiences for these co-researchers. Their descriptions of the essential features of the experience were analyzed to provide a clear description of each individual's experience as well as a broader structural description. Utilizing a Gestalt perspective, the major themes emerged against the ground of Performance, forming a figure/ground relationship. This ground of performance was represented in all of the dialogues and was the cornerstone of the co-researchers experience. The major themes that emerged from the dialogues included: (1) Change, (2) Bonding, (3) Expectations, (4) Acclimation or Alienation, and (5) Growth. Although

these themes and their corresponding sub-themes represented distinct aspects of the experience, they were all interconnected and interacting.

All of the themes shared a common bond in the nucleus of the Athlete-Coach Relationship. This existential core reflected the lived world in which the co-researchers experienced of the coaching transition. Figure 1 depicts the co-researchers' experience of going through a coaching transition with major themes unified in the existential core of the athlete-coach relationship and set against the ground of performance. However it must be noted that for some of the co-researchers a theme or one of the sub-themes of the experience may have been more figural than another.

Finally, the reader will notice a temporal flow to the experience. However, the flow of the experience is not uniform to all of the participants. While some of the co-researchers may have experienced the transition in the order as described with all of the themes being figural, others experienced a different temporal flow. It should also be noted that one or more of the themes might have been figural at once during the experience.

In the following sections, the existential ground of performance upon which the themes emerged, a description of the existential core of the experience the athlete-coach Relationship, and descriptions of each theme and their corresponding sub themes is presented. Various quotes from the existential-phenomenological dialogues are presented to illustrate and illuminate the phenomenon of a coaching transition. For the purpose of brevity and clarity, some of the co-researchers' quotes are marginally edited. However, utmost care was taken to preserve the meaning and integrity of each co-researcher's statements. The reader will notice that there are several lengthy quotes in the following

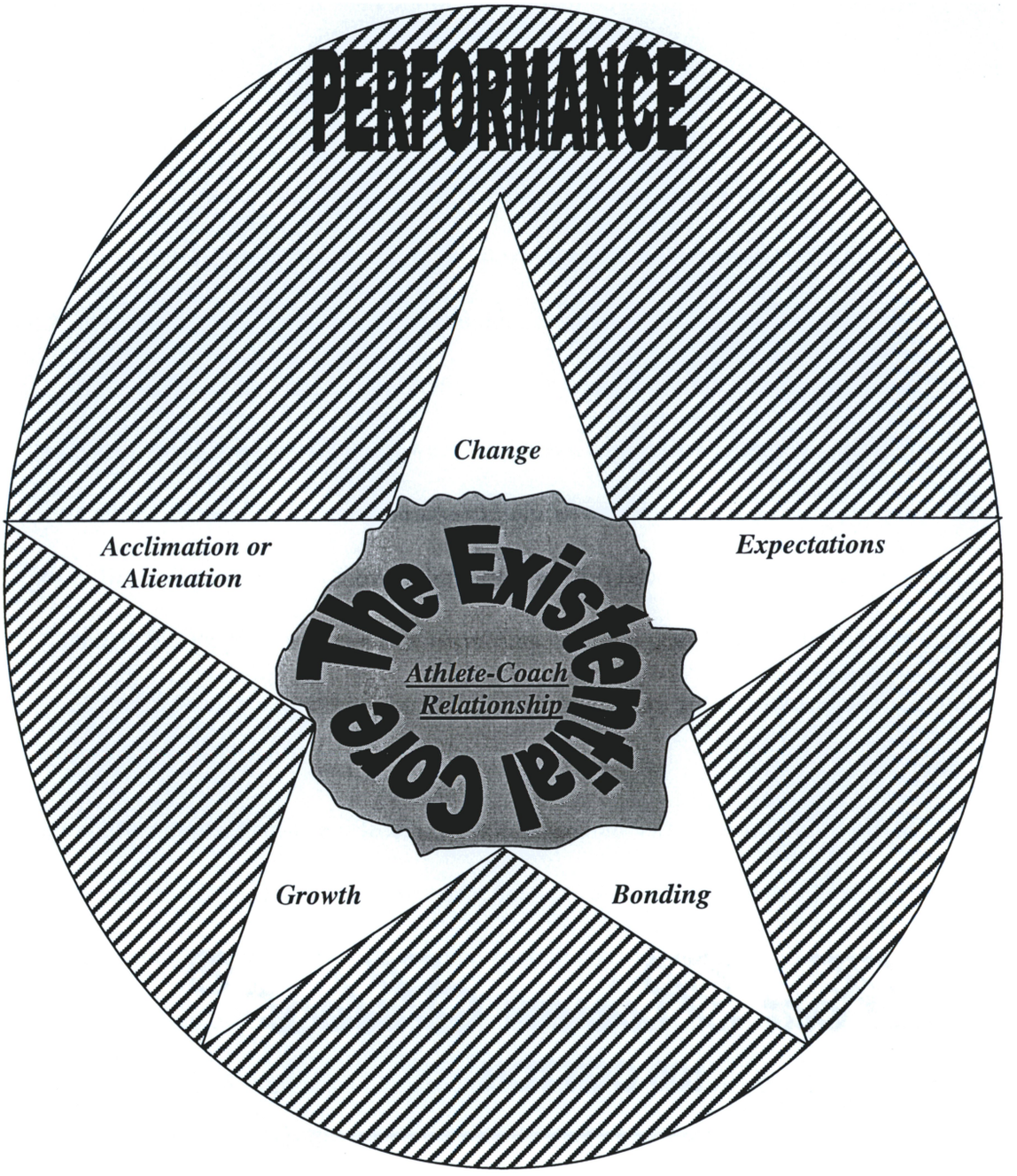

Figure 1. The existential-phenomenological representation of the experience of a coaching transition from a Gestalt ground/figure perspective.

sections. This was purposely done as a means of allowing the athlete's voice to tell his or her story in his or her own words with as little interference from the investigator as possible.

The Ground: Performance

When asked to discuss his or her experience of a going through a coaching transition every co-researcher in this study discussed the experience in terms of individual and team performance. Performance represented the fundamental context within which the lived experience of a coaching transition unfolded. Regardless of whether performance meant starting versus not starting, individual statistics or performances, playing time, team performance (i.e., winning and losing), or a combination of these standards, it had a unique meaning to each of the co-researchers. Thus the experience of a coaching-transition became figural within the context of performance.

As a red-shirted freshman, Larry was not happy with his situation at his former school, so he decided to transfer.

> I felt…that the coaches (here) actually cared more than they did at University (where) depending on whether you performed or not, you were their boy. And actually here, they were like, "Don't get down on yourself. You're going to be good later. Let it progress." Which really surprised me, because I hadn't had that before… And…so, it was a hard adjustment, but I'd say after a year and a half or two years here at New University, my parents saw how I turned things around; my grades were high, I was throwing far, and I was getting everything I needed. So, everything was much better. I mean last year I had a 12-foot improvement, which is pretty phenomenal in the discus, so I attribute that to the coaching change…(Larry – Track Thrower)

Another co-researcher, Jess had also transferred. Her decision to transfer was based primarily on performance or a lack of performance at her old school.

> (With) my old coach, Lori, at my old school we just kept going over the basics – basic passing, basic receiving, basic shooting, basic everything; instead of taking it to the next level as I wanted to. The team definitely needed to like stay at the basics, but I wanted to succeed. I wanted to go further to do past that. You know what I mean? And…it…you couldn't do that at my old school and that is why I did look for other alternatives like going to the summer league in the summer and everything like that and finding a new coach to help me live that dream or help me to go beyond. (Jess – Field Hockey)

Unlike Larry who had transferred as a red-shirted freshman, Jess did not make the change to a new coach and a new school until her senior year and, as a result, described her play as suffering due to the coaching transition. As she stated,

> Well I did want the transfer for me, so psychologically I was happy to get the change, but like playing I think I suffered. I didn't get the…because I didn't red-shirt, I didn't play up to my potential. It was my senior year and I should have been at my peak. I don't feel like I was because everything was so new. And, I think that if I was a transfer coming in as a freshman or a sophomore or even a junior maybe that would be a little different because at that time I could have time to get used to some things. (Jess - Field Hockey)

Despite having a less than perfect season after her transfer, Jess was still glad she had made the coaching transition. As she noted, "I still play with the team right now because I want to. I want to still be involved with not only in the sport, but I love her (coach's) coaching style. I love her feedback she gives me. I love everything about her…"

Unfortunately, not all of the coaching transition experiences were as successful as those of Larry and Jess. For example, Preston's experience of the transition was less successful than he had anticipated. As a result, he did not have a good performance experience.

> It just ended up being…the transition from new to old or old to new, it ended up being pretty seamless because he was already there, but it just turned out to be horrible. That is basically all I remember in a nutshell. It was just a bad dream – a bad situation. It went from real good to real bad, real quick in the first few

> months. You go from winning championships and going to the sweet sixteen to the next year barely being .500. And, the next year having a team just as good as the team that went to the sweet sixteen and not even getting past the first round of your conference tournament. Just frustrating…just frustrating, that is the best way I can sum up those two years. Frustrating, frustrating. (Preston – Basketball)

Perry provided perhaps the best example of performance as the ground of a coaching transition experience when he talked about the coaching transitions within the football program at his school.

> The party line for the administrators, quote unquote, was participation, "We are going to let our guys get out there and participate. This is what football should be like. It shouldn't be about money. It shouldn't be about television. It shouldn't be about 400,000 people trying to cram into a 60,000-seat stadium. It shouldn't be about the players getting paid. It shouldn't be about steroids. It shouldn't be about all the stuff that we associate with college football." It's funny that people say that and it's all true and nice, but Coach G left because he didn't win. Even though he had three .500 or better seasons prior to the last two seasons where we were really down. And, to this day I don't know why because athletically we were better than those teams that won (and) who had basically the same system, too. Now in the post-Coach G years, I still can't figure out why (we lost). You have to point at yourself because the system did not change, but that means I am a failure or that I couldn't get the job done when the pressure was on. But, those are obviously questions without answers. It was always something you wanted to do, something you took pride in, performance. I'm sorry, but it is true. You don't spend that much time doing something unless you wanted to do it better than half assed or just to participate. As great as it is to participate or to be out there, but please, it is 100 times better to do it and win that is just part of our existence. But, at my school, quote unquote, where athletics isn't as high of a priority of course you still wanted to win. You wanted to beat the other Ivy League schools. I mean they will all tell you that they are all on par with everyone else in the league so how do you get differentiation? If you want to take me for example, I was recruited by (five different Ivy League Schools). Why did I choose (my school)? One of the reasons I chose it was because they had the best record the year before. Sorry, I play a sport where they keep records for winning and losing for a reason. They just don't keep them to take up space in some publication. It matters…and, you wonder why you only win four games in four years. Sheer statistics will tell you that you will win more than that in four years, especially if you keep some kind of continuity…The change is going to cause as many problems as the lack of athletes, lack of recruiting, the lack of scheme, if nothing else your kids don't have to worry about stress and lack of energy from learning something new. (Perry – Football)

The Existential Core: Athlete-Coach Relationship

As themes emerged from the dialogues, a core component emerged with them. That core was the Athlete-Coach Relationship. This existential core, while maintaining a connection to the themes, was also interwoven within the ground itself. As mentioned previously, this existential core reflected the lived world in which the co-researchers experienced the coaching transition. In this section, the interrelatedness between athlete-coach relationship and *performance*, philosophy, and communication are presented.

The reader will notice that performance represented the fundamental context (i.e., the ground) within which the lived experience of a coaching transition unfolded. However, under the athlete-coach relationship *performance* refers to a component of this relationship. The component of *performance* represents a fundamental essence of the athlete-coach relationship. We can discuss performance (i.e. the ground) without discussing the athlete-coach relationship, but we cannot discuss the athlete-coach relationship without discussing *performance*.

Performance as a core component

The component of *performance* as part of the athlete-coach relationship was evidenced in the dialogue with Alyssa as she commented on her rowing performance and her relationship with her new coach.

> I was interested in seeing how people worked out and how the new coach was going to handle that. We all met down at the track for a workout and we had to wear our names in marker on the back of our t-shirts, so she could identify everybody. I was one of the best runners on the team, so from that point on she really started to like me and that was probably the first time I'd ever had a coach who liked me for my physical ability and wasn't trying to get me to change everything. They (i.e., the previous coaches) were trying to get me to lose weight and then the next week put me in a new boat. So it was really weird, I had this real negative experience with her and then a couple of weeks later she thinks I'm

> one of the best people on her team because I was a good runner and I was committed to being a good leader on the team. With the new coach there, I made it to the top varsity boat. I got to row in the top boat at the Head of the Charles, which is the most prestigious race in the world for rowing. And, I mean it was really neat that these coaches saw something in me, which the others hadn't. The other coaches just saw me as someone who could lose weight all the time. This coach could see that I had potential that I didn't even think that I had. But, the bad thing about this new coach was that she really didn't stress relationships on the team. She didn't really care to get to know us. She was very military like. She was a drill sergeant. If you were good one day, you were on her good side, but if you didn't have a good day or you had a bad time on the rowing machine or whatever, you were screwed. (Especially) for someone like me who was a very emotional athlete and sometimes wouldn't have very good days and sometimes I wasn't very consistent. So, pretty soon I lost my top spot and that was pretty hard for me because I had really grown to like the coach. But, all of a sudden when I stopped doing well she…she…she…just didn't want me to be in the top boat any anymore… I was emotionally going through a tough time. I was thinking that I was still this great person that should be in the top boat, but I no longer was. Then, the assistant, the administrative assistant, was kind of coaching me. I went four months without any real contact with the head coach. So, that was an experience where within the staff I had a transition where the head coach would no longer acknowledge me. I would walk in and not even receive a hello. The assistant coach was pretty much my main coach and that was pretty much a depressing time… I felt like the head coach never told me what I was doing that got me bumped out of the top boats and unable to have coaching by her anymore. I think that was probably the biggest let down of my athletic career ever. Your junior year when you really need to be a team leader, you get bumped down to the assistant coach because you are no good. I felt like I had been making improvements on my techniques on the rowing machine and I'd had some great personal testing times and I'd have one bad practice and then I noticed her to start to treat me differently. I would notice that and start to internalize it as if something was wrong. (Alyssa – Crew)

Thomas, also felt his relationship with his new coach suffered after his old coach left the university and his performances began to decline. Thomas would miss practices, not communicate with new coach, and even lie to him about what he was doing. Eventually, the relationship deteriorated to the point where Thomas decided to transfer.

> I had been running so well for cross and I had run well that indoor season because I think I was doing the same thing the (previous) cross-country coach had me doing. But, when outdoor season rolled around, I kind of got into his rut and went down hill. Oh that sucked. I mean I only ran one outdoor race last year and it

> was horrible. I mean maybe it was my fault because I had given up on him so soon and it was like, "I'm not going to be bothered with you". Sometimes I would go to practice and sometimes I wouldn't. It was just like I would show up go run and do whatever. You know I would not talk to him and wouldn't tell him how I felt. I would just come up with some lame ass excuse. "Where were you at practice yesterday?" "Uh I had work to do." But, I had done my own workout. It was frustrating because I wanted to blame them. I wanted to blame him just like, "You suck as a coach and that is why I'm going downhill right now." Maybe I would like to think it was a little bit of both; you do suck as a coach and maybe I am falling apart or something. But, the best situation for me was to leave and that is what I did. (Thomas – Cross-Country)

Preston did not have a friendship with his former coach, but he did respect him and as a team they did perform well, which was the bottom line for Preston. However, the same type of relationship never developed with the new coach as the team slipped in the standings to a .500 team.

> He was a tough coach, but a good coach and we won. So, that's all it basically came down to, did we win or lose? We won, so everything else you could pretty much deal with. And, our assistant coach was moved up to head coach. He was an all right man and a so-so coach. And uh…it ended up being detrimental to the team because he changed a lot of things that were good with our team. We had a lot of guys coming back, a lot of experience coming back, and he changed things basically for the sake of change just so it could be his stamp on the program. You know, if it ain't broke don't fix it was the way we looked at it. But, he decided to "fix" it anyway and he ended up messing it up a lot. The next two years that I was with him we were right around .500. We were very erratic, very inconsistent, very good one night, very bad the next. His coaching was the same way. He was not very personable with the guys the former coach brought in even though he recruited us. He didn't really like us and the guys ***he*** brought in the next two years were the guys that he played even though we were the juniors and seniors. So, the coaching changed ended up being very bad for us that had been there before with the former coach. (Preston – Basketball)

Philosophy as a core component

A second component of this core element of the athlete-coach relationship was the importance of the coach having a philosophy that met the athlete's needs. The athlete's perception was that if the coach's philosophy or style of coaching were appropriate for

him or her, the athlete would perform at a higher level and their relationship would flourish. However, should the philosophy or style be incongruent with the athlete's needs and wants, he or she would perform poorly and experience a poor athlete-coach relationship. This pairing of coaching philosophy and athlete's needs and wants as a component of the athlete-coach relationship is nicely illustrated in the following dialogue with Thomas.

> We had a good guy, a distance (coach) who had been there for two or three years and we had just gotten something going and he had to quit. Then they brought in just some guy that had no coaching experience. He had been a good distance runner in his day, but he didn't relate to us as athletes. That was kind of tough because our mentalities of running just clashed and didn't work out at all. It was just that we never saw eye-to-eye really. And, he was just all speed stuff and I'm all distance stuff and it didn't work out well at all. We never got along ever. We got along as far as me showing up at practice and kind of doing his workouts, but not so much. I would implement new things. If he wanted something done at this pace, I would adjust it and do it this kind of pace. That is as much as we got along. It was kind of like, "Hi. Bye." Stuff like that. It wasn't like the relationship I have with my coach now. It was just like, " Take me to the races and let me run." The first coach I had was kind of more like my coach now, but he didn't emphasis all the little things like I do now. He was a good coach and he knew what he was doing and you could talk to him and hang out, but other than that he was like balls to the walls running type attitude. (With him) there was a much better atmosphere, much better coach-athlete relationship than with the second coach. It was much better. (Thomas – Cross-Country)

Sometimes a new coach's philosophy would benefit the athlete during the initial stages of the transition. As Alyssa's comment illustrates, a philosophy can sometimes improve the athlete-coach relationship.

> And another thing that was different from the first coaches was that the first coaches always kind of saw me as the odd girl out because I was kind of taller. They had recruited a lot of shorter stronger athletes where as I was tall and naturally a runner and had just wanted to try rowing. I always felt like the odd person out. They wanted to have a consistent boat so that meant the shorter people on the team. And so, whenever I was in there it kind of messed up the whole dynamics, but when the new coach came in there, she was a very tall woman and really wanted tall rowers. So, she actually divided the team into tall

> people and short people and the tall people were in the top boat. That really played a big factor in me being able to be a top performer on her team. So, in that case it was an unfair advantage for me (laugh) but, (laugh) it kind of worked. With me being in that role it helped mentally prepare me for competing against high quality teams. (Alyssa – Crew)

Unfortunately, as Alyssa found out during her transitional experience, after a few recruiting classes the coach's philosophy eventually forced her out of the sport and completely changing the dynamics of the athlete-coach relationship.

> I felt our coaches were trying to eliminate the smaller athletes on the team. By my junior year I was one of the smaller people. Whereas before I was one of the taller people on the team, but over the course of two years she had recruited some huge girls. So, I think that after the summer of my junior year I was ready to quit…The thing I'd like to add is that I've had no contact with the team since I quit. I've had contact with (the assistant coach), but not the team or the head coach, which is kind of odd because of the position I am in where I want to help athletes in my career path. A part of me wants to help, but a part of me never wants to help that coach out because she never respected me or gave me the respect I deserved as an athlete. It's really interesting. It's been two years since we talked. I don't really care to go back. (Alyssa – Crew)

Communication as a core component

The third factor that related to athlete-coach relationship core was communication. While communication was not an absolute necessity for good performance it seemed to solidify or even temper the athlete-coach relationship. Rita appreciated having communication from her head coach about a new coach coming in and felt it eased some fears. "You're trying to get a feel for her (the new coach) and you're not quite sure who she is and Coach D was here…and I think she did a good job as well keeping us focused and letting us know little bits and pieces about what was going on."

When Jess went through her coaching transition she was surprised by the difference in not only the amount and type of communication that was going on, but also the relationship she could have with her coach.

> I was scared to even come into her office and even talk about anything - how I'm playing, what I'm doing in school, anything. I feared her for some reason, but as soon as I came here it was so weird to me because people would just go to (the new coach's) office and just sit there and have a normal conversation with her. And, be like normal, talk about what they were doing today or whatever. It was almost like a buddy, but different. That was so weird, so weird. It was just like cool because you could talk to your coach about anything...anything in the whole world and she is fine with it, but...I don't know, it is just very different and I'm still surprised. (Jess – Field Hockey)

During Larry's transition, communication played a key role in helping him come to understand his relationship with his new coach as well as perform at a level that he expected of himself. However, at first the transition was not that easy. "I think we were walking on eggshells trying to figure each other out. I mean it just took a little time to figure out that ok, this is what he wants and this is what I want and how to cooperate together to get me where I needed to be." This experience was very different than the one Larry had with his previous coach and the lack of communication left Larry feeling isolated.

> I was very isolated at University X. I barely knew the sprint coach. And, I spoke to the head coach maybe twice in my life. One was to say, Thanks for having me on the team." And the other was to say, "Thanks, I'm leaving the team." And, that is very different than here where I could go in daily and talk to any of the coaches. But, that may also be the structure of having the head coach as my event coach. It wasn't like going over someone's head. At University X, if I would have gone to the head coach, it would have hit the fan. Because it was like, "Deal with me face to face or get out of here." So it was very...very different...(Larry - Track)

As Mia noted, "coaches are just not teachers of golf, they are coaches. There is more to coaching than just performance." However, Mia also realized that the bottom

line in Division I athletics is more than just athlete-coach relationships; its about performance. As a result Mia was shocked when coach chose a player of lesser ability in order to give that player a chance to play in a tournament so that she "wouldn't get depressed."

> I was like, "What?!! This is college golf this isn't a psychological validation. You're a college athlete and if you don't play well, you don't go." It's good and bad in a way because when I'm in these shoes, I want them to understand it. So, it's good in this way, but I'm also realistic enough to know, if I don't play well then I don't go even though I have issues. If I can talk to them about it and they understand it and can help me get out of it, fine. If not...you know...which is fine...(Mia – Golf)

The Themes

As noted previously, the major themes that emerged from the dialogues were (1) Change, (2) Bonding, (3) Expectations, (4) Acclimation or Alienation, and (5) Growth. While distinct, these themes are also interrelated and interactive. As such, some supporting quotes or portions of the statements may appear under more than one theme or sub-theme. It should also be noted that the actual dialogues ebbed and flowed among the themes according to each co-researcher's recollection of the lived experience. The following themes are described to allow the reader to grasp the richness of the data within the context of the co-researchers' experience. A summary of the themes and sub-themes along with the ground of performance and the core of the athlete-coach relationship is depicted in Table 2.

Theme 1. Change

The first major theme in the experience of a coaching transition was Change. The theme of change is that portion of the experience that represented the time in which the actual transition of coaches took place. The timing and length of the change varied from

Table 2. Listing of ground/figure schematic themes and sub-themes

The Ground	**Performance**	
The Existential Core	**The Athlete-Coach Relationship**	
	Performance	
	Philosophy	
	Communication	
Theme 1.	**Change**	
	Shock/No Surprise	
	Relief and/or Sadness	
	Frustration of the Unknown	
Theme 2.	**Bonding**	
	Transfer Talk	
	Us versus Them	
	Team Unity and Friendships	
Theme 3.	**Expectations**	
	Winning	
	Playing Time	
	Starting	
Theme 4.	**Acclimation or**	**Alienation**
	Team Rules	Transferring
	Individual Roles	Quitting
		Resignation
Theme 5.	**Growth**	
	Personal Growth	
	Athletic Growth	
	Spiritual Growth	

co-researcher to co-researcher. The change manifested itself in a number of sub-themes, including (1) Shock or No Surprise, (2) Relief and Sadness, and (3) Frustration of the Unknown. As mentioned previously, the change is profound in nature. Several of the athletes used similar terms to describe their reactions to the coaching transition. Most had been recruited and tutored by their coaches over a number of years, beginning in the summer their junior year of high school and continues until they enroll at the university the following year. The coach who recruits an athlete is often the same individual who coaches the athlete. As a result, these athletes experienced a number of emotions when they learned of the departure of their coach.

Shock/No Surprise

In the following paragraphs several examples of athletes' reactions to the change are provided. One emotion that the athletes experienced was actually a dichotomy – shock/surprise and or no shock/no surprise. When the athletes were caught unaware of the change (i.e., transition) they reported a feeling of shock or surprise. However, when the athletes had advanced warning or they feared an imminent dismissal because of poor team performance the change came as no surprise.

As Rita described her experience of change, she noted that she was unaware that the change was to occur. "I think the main surprise was just the fact that (my coach) was leaving and none of us knew or had known about it. It just kind of came up and we were like, 'OH! OK!' (laugh)." During a subsequent coaching transition, Rita was not surprised when her new coach eventually took over the head coaching position after the head coach decided to take another position. "It was not really surprising that she left

because there was a little rumor running around that she was about to leave. We just didn't know exactly when."

Alyssa was surprised and caught off-guard when she experienced a transition within the coaching staff because she was moved from one coach to another. "I wasn't aware that on a collegiate team you could go from being coached by the head coach to the assistant and never receive any recognition. That concept never crossed my mind."

For Preston, at the end of his sophomore year there was talk of a change occurring with his coach looking for opportunities at other institutions. However, as the school year started it appeared that there would be no change. That turned out not to be the case when Preston's coach decided to accept a job opportunity at another school. In this case it was the timing of the change that surprised Preston.

> The transition was unexpected. We just had a very successful season and our coach was looking at other places to go, but nothing materialized, so we figured he was staying. Then once school was starting, he called one day, early one morning, and said he was going to be leaving. It was very, very early so I knew it wasn't a joke… I was, as a matter of fact, I was in bed. I was in bed and it was about seven o'clock. And, my coach he never used to call us - very rarely. If he called, then something was wrong because the assistants would call. I remember picking up, picking up the phone and him saying, "This is Coach X." And, I knew he wasn't playing. I knew it wasn't someone playing a joke because it was too early in the morning. He said he was leaving and I remember saying to myself, "Dang, I wasn't expecting that…" (Preston – Basketball)

As with Preston, the change for Thomas was surprising because of its timing. The change occurred during the championship portion of the cross-country season just prior to the conference and regional meets.

> It sucked. He left with two meets to go in the cross-country season. He really left in the middle of the season. We had regional meet and our conference meet basically on our own. We had the head track coach directing the cross-country team. Image a field event coach directing the cross-country team. Once he

> (distance coach) left we were like, "Well there is nothing we can do about it now." (Thomas – Cross-Country)

Perry, who went through a number of changes, wasn't surprised by the transition itself because of the team's poor performance and the anticipated retirement of one of the head coaches. However, he was surprised by its timing and the hiring of an outsider to assume the head coaching position.

> None of the (changes) were a surprise, but the first coaching change was pretty unexpected. One of the freshman coaches was an administrator too and he was talking about stepping down for years and he just chose to in the middle of the season as opposed to in November at the end of the season. So, we had a different coach for the rest of the season. They actually hired somebody from outside the school. They didn't hand it down to somebody who was there. They hired somebody from outside the school and it was very weird. We didn't even know the guy. When we first got there, one of the first things coach did was tell us he wasn't going to be there for a long time and that he wanted to get out of there as the freshman coach. The school I went to still had a freshman league. So, it wasn't an unexpected change because you knew he was going to leave after your first year, but it was even more unexpected because he left in the middle of the year. This other guy comes in and I don't know what he was thinking because he tried to change the offense mid-season. We were like, "What are you doing." Even we knew, being 19-year old kids that you don't do that and he wasn't hired the next year, which was fine. After a six-week tenure he was gone. It wasn't a surprise. (Perry – Football)

One transition was not a surprise at all for Perry because of the team's losing efforts.

> After my third season, we went 2-8 and we were brutal. And, we had been hearing stuff. At one point, let me put it this way, we hadn't won 15 in a row over two seasons and we knew it was coming. The writing was on the wall and all of that kind of stuff. He calls us in right before we all go home for Christmas and Coach Greer tells us that he is not being fired. I can still hear it to this day. "I'm not being fired. I'm not being pressured to leave. I've decided it is my time to leave. There are bigger and better opportunities for me. (This school) has served its purpose for me in my life," which is just him taking the option of retiring before he gets fired. He can leave with grace before he gets fired. It wasn't a shock, but it was like, "What now?" (Perry – Football)

Relief and/or Sadness

Several of the co-researchers experienced a sense of relief and/or sadness when the change occurred. Mia expressed this combination of emotion when discussing her experience of going through a coaching transition.

> We got called into the office again and that was when our coach was there and our coach...and I think the athletic director said, "Coach wanted to tell us something." And, that is when she resigned and she said that...she said a speech. And it was kind of sad and she started crying. And, of course we all felt bad of course (laugh) because you know we pretty much ruined her career. But, I mean...but all bad feelings we had were kind of gone. Like I think it was the best thing for us. It was bad for her, bad for us. It was bad for her reputation. It was bad for both sides. And, we knew she was miserable, too. I mean, we were mean to her at the end and I admit that. We just wouldn't talk to her. We would ignore her. We wouldn't talk to her. We just could be pretty mean. I mean at least I can be pretty mean. It was just bad really. And so, and it was a relief to everybody...you know...it was kind of sad, too...the relief was that I can stay here now and this whole thing is over. It was just going to practice and knowing she was going to be there and we didn't want her to be there anymore. We didn't want to deal with it. It was just bad. We just really didn't like golf anymore because of her. We didn't want to go to tournaments anymore. (Mia - Golf)

Alyssa experienced a sense of relief when the change finally occurred even though she had written a letter to the athletic director in an attempt to get the assistant coach hired as the head coach after her head coach had resigned.

> I don't remember the day, but he was already packing up his stuff, so there was never really a time where there was a final goodbye, so he was very upset that he didn't get the position. What they did offer him was the chance to stay as an assistant coach, but he didn't want that because he wanted to be the head coach. So, I think from that point on I don't know if I felt a sense of relief or what...(Alyssa – Crew)

For Rita, one of the coaching changes she experienced brought out a number of sad feelings. She was upset when her head coach decided to leave the team after accepting another job opportunity and felt bad that the former assistant had moved on before this opportunity had opened up.

> I felt kind of sad when Coach D was leaving. I think it came to a point where Coach D had just had enough. I felt bad because it had just happened after Mick (former assistant coach) had left. And, I felt bad because some of us were like, "Oh I wonder if Mick feels any kind of remorse because he could have had the head coach position if he had just stayed the extra year." You know a lot of wonderment went on, but nothing really concrete ever came out of any of our questions. (Rita – Track Sprinter)

Frustration of the Unknown

Another sub-theme that emerged from the co-researchers dialogue with the investigator was a Frustration of the Unknown. Whether or not the change came as a surprise, the athletes often experienced frustration surrounding the momentary instability caused by the transition. Not having a relationship with the incoming coach led to a sense of uncertainty about what was going to transpire as a result of the change. A prime example of this was Jess' experience after she had changed coaches following her transfer.

> It was frustrating. It was frustrating. It was stressful. It was all I could think about. I...I'm still upset about it because it was just in the fall. I wish so much I could have transferred sooner to get used to that because you almost get that freshman feeling when you are coming into a new environment like that. That freshman feeling is everything is new to you. Everything is...you are learning about things so you don't really you kind of...you're just getting your foot in the door. Everyone doesn't know...you are getting used to everyone and everyone doesn't know how you play. It's hard... Oh jeez...at first I was like gung ho about it. And, I was so excited to just have new everything, but then I started to have...like...it started to get in my head that, "Oh God! I'm not going to like know anybody. How is...is Kathy going to coach the same way as she did at summer league?" Thinking about that was huge. And, when I was talking to some of my teammates...well, my future teammates they were like, "Well Kathy...well Kathy yells at this and does this and Kathy does whatever." And I was like, "What? She is not like how she is in summer league? I can't believe it." So, then I was like, "Oh my God! What am I walking into?" and, so I was very surprised, but at the same time it was like good - very good. It was good...it was good for me...It was just nervousness because I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know whether it was going to be like my old school or whether it was going to be like my new school. And...I don't know. It was nervousness. It was...I was very scared, very scared to leave what I had before at my old school. I

> was about to break records at my old school and I knew by coming to my new school I wouldn't be able to break school records. You know, so that was hard, but I was kind of looking for my long-range goals. So far it has been worth it. I don't know. (Jess – Field Hockey)

Thomas expressed the nervous feeling of not knowing how he would fit in with his new coach at the new university after his transfer.

> I was kind of nervous at the beginning because I didn't know what to expect here. I was unsure of you know, you know…I knew of the coach and what he had going on here, but I didn't know how I was going to fit in or if I was going to be able to handle what he was going to have us doing or if I was going to come in and be this awesome runner – have this complete turn around. At first I was nervous…(Thomas – Cross-Country)

When discussing the experience of his numerous coaching transitions, Perry expressed how he tried to overcome the feeling of frustration and the unknown by holding onto what he knew best – playing football.

> Oh! I was lost. And, even more so for a person like me who in a place like that was trying to use football as an anchor, the problem was it was an anchor made of driftwood and it didn't anchor anything. Between having injuries and having 16 million different coaches changing all the time, there was no comfort zone, there was no resting spot, there was no place I felt at home or comfortable. It was…yuuuuck…Obviously it wasn't a fear like you would fear a shark or something, but for me it was more of an unknown. Not knowing this person. I don't know just the unknown. This is just something else that I don't know. Running the plays all day just showed me all the things about them that I don't know. It was just another thing to add to that. I would like to feel more comfortable with and I'd like to feel more of a sense of belonging. I would like to embrace and feel a part of, but I can't totally because you are not sure of what to hold on to. You don't know what to hold on to. (Perry – Football)

Theme 2. Bonding

This theme concerns the impact that the change of coaches had on restructuring one's relationships to compensate for the loss of the coach during and following the transition. In this investigation, the term bonding refers to those parts of the experience where the athlete seeks out others in an attempt to make sense of the change or for

protection from the change. The sub-themes within this theme are: Transfer Talk, Us versus Them, and Team Unity.

Transfer Talk

Transfer Talk as a sub-theme refers to conversations and plans the co-researchers had with fellow athletes, parents, friends, and or their own ideas about transferring to another school. Six of the eight co-researchers discussed the idea of transferring. Three actually transferred to another school and a fourth had a brother who transferred because of the coaching change. A seventh co-researcher took another route and transitioned completely out of sport. The transfer talk generally occurred over a short period of time, usually before the new coach arrived or shortly thereafter.

The co-researchers reflected upon the possibilities of transferring to another institution. What emerged was a pro-active response to the surprise of the coaching transition. Rita and several of her freshman teammates thought about transferring following the surprise announcement that their assistant coach Mick was leaving to take another position at another institution.

> We didn't actually know Mick was going to leave and it hit us kind of hard. And, it was kind of funny because a couple of us were ready to transfer after our freshman year... It just kind of came up and we were like, "OH, OK!" (laugh) And then, "Who are we getting?" If he's (Mick) leaving, I mean we are kind of used to him already, you know. He recruited me. He was up to Canada to see me run and everything like that. And, you kind of get used to somebody like that and once they leave everything is kind of up in the air and you are just left there hanging, not quite sure what is going on and I think that is one of the reasons why it prompted a couple of us to get ready to transfer and leave. (Rita – Track)

Mia and several of her golfing teammates had also started making plans to transfer. The main difference was that they were planning to transfer before the coaching transition occurred because they were frustrated with the head coach at the time.

> There wouldn't be the team there is now because everybody would have transferred except for me because I knew I was going to finish in four years and I didn't want to lose a year because of eligibility and transferring and all that stuff. Everybody else would have or was at least considering transferring to another school. My best friend actually had already gotten released and we were all upset... I already saw myself going to some smart academic school because I am done with golf. I don't even want to play anymore. All I care about now is that no one in Europe knows about this university, so I'm just going to go to some smart school there and forget about it. Maybe I'd go to Stanford and walk on the golf team or maybe not even play golf anymore. (Mia – Golf)

Unlike the others' experiences, Thomas actually did transfer following a less than successful first track season with a new coach.

> I don't know if I would have transferred if my original coach had stayed. I don't think it would have been worth it for me and I would have probably been the same runner that I am now if he would have still stayed around...At first I was nervous, but once I got going it was as easy as one, two, three. Once I found out that I got into the school I was gung ho. This is great, but other then that, leaving the place I had been at for two years was kind of tough, but it wasn't that tough. Leaving the teammates was tough because we were good friends. That was really the only tough thing because I sure as hell wasn't going to miss the coaching staff. I kind of missed the area because I had been there two years and had gotten very accustomed to that part of the state. The only thing I really miss is running with those guys and hanging out with them, but other than that, that was it. (Thomas – Cross-Country)

Larry put it succinctly when he described transferring to another school because of his coach's attitude and coaching philosophy, "It was like, 'My way or the highway.' So, for me it turned out to be the highway (laugh)."

Preston had the unique experience of going through the coaching transition with his younger brother, who was a red-shirt freshman at the time. While Preston was a fifth-year senior who did not have the option of transferring, his brother did. Preston and his family finally came to the decision that it was best if his brother transferred to another school where he would have the opportunity to play basketball.

> My brother also came down there to play, but he had to sit out his first year. So, the next year he was supposed to get a scholarship and that was the new coach's first year and he didn't give it to him. And I think that's when my mother started feeling that something just wasn't right. And, I'm still trying to give him the benefit of the doubt, but I still had that feeling in my stomach. As that year progressed, I really started to see what she was talking about. He just wasn't a really fair person. The city really embraced him because he had been there so long and one of his sons was disabled. He took care of him, so he looked good in the eyes of the city. Everyone thought he was a really upstanding citizen and nice man, but all of us knew he was a frickin' backstabber and he talked behind people's back. If you have something to say, just say it. You're the coach just say it. What can we do about it? And, if you really think about it, you just don't handle things that way. And I think my mom figured out really early. That was rough, really rough because he (brother) was good enough to play. He should have been playing. But, like I said coach had his own view on things. The former coach really liked my brother. He came down because I was there. I walked on there and I earned my scholarship and my brother was basically going to do the same thing. He ended up having to sit that year and the next year he was going to get his scholarship. Then, when coach left, the new coach didn't give it to him. So, that was tough to watch him have to go through; the way he had to practice, the way coach handled him practicing. It was kind of like he didn't want him to be there. He played well. I remember being there at practice and he'd make a big shot or something and coach would turn his head like he didn't see it. You know, just...I mean come on man...***come on!!!*** Just stuff like that. I mean immaturity - high school stuff. You'd think a grown man doing this and what we never understood was that these were guys who could help you win. We're the guys who are going to help you keep your job. Why would you turn your head like you didn't see it – a good play? So, that went on a year before he left. My brother left. It wasn't going to be good for him to stay for four years. He didn't really want to leave, but I knew and my mom and dad knew that if he was going to play he had to get out of here. I hated that he had to go, but I wanted him to leave because he wasn't going to get to play there. He (coach) wasn't going to be good for him, so he had to get on out of there and go somewhere where he was going to get a chance to play. Play college ball; get a good opportunity to play. And, that is what he ended up doing. (Preston – Basketball)

Us versus Them

The next sub-theme to emerge from the bonding theme was an "Us versus Them" attitude the athletes had about the coaching regime. For these co-researchers this attitude promoted a need to fight back against this foreign entity and manifested itself in negative actions against the coaches. The athletes told a number of stories in which there was a

sense of us (the athletes) versus them (the coaches), due to the lack of a positive athlete-coach relationship. Mia exemplified this conflict when discussing her personal actions and the actions of her teammates toward the coach.

> At the end, we didn't want to play well, because it would be her success in a way. We knew that we were her team. We were like, "I don't even want to win this tournament because she will have all the success and she'll get and all this stuff." So, we really didn't care. We were not proud to be part of the team or to play under her. We almost (laugh)...when it got so bad, we almost played bad on purpose (laugh). When she told me to do something, I would just pick the opposite club just to not do what she told me because we were just so sick of it. It was just such a mess. It was bad...we trashed talked her at the end. When we played badly it was kind of like the blame game. We all blamed her. The only good thing about it was that it really bonded us as a team. It was us against her. And that was a good thing in a way because I remember my freshmen year we had a Swedish player, she was a senior, and a sophomore or a junior from Hawaii and they were really close because that year I came we only had two players and four new players; three freshmen and a transfer. And we were the new comers, all separated from the old players. We didn't know why and we knew that our coach didn't get along with the senior. And we were like, "We didn't get it." And, finally we got what it was all about and we heard all the stories. But it separated our team because we all liked our coach at first and the team was kind of split up our freshman year, but then the second year we all realized how bad of a coach she was. We started not liking her and our team kind of bonded. So, that was a good thing. (Mia – Golf)

Thomas and his teammates also bonded together against the new coaching staff when their philosophy did not match Thomas's own or his teammates and as a result their performances began to suffer.

> During cross we were kind of close because we had all been running so well and the coach for whatever reason just brought us close together. We would meet on days and go for a run and everyone was all happy and blah, blah, blah during cross-country, but once he left we made a mockery out of the coaching staff. We were just like making fun of coaches right to their faces. Everyone didn't fall apart together, but we just kind of huddled together as a group and just started. It was fun, but at the same time it probably wasn't the best way to go about it. They were trying their best and we were just ragging on them the whole time (laugh). We kind of grouped up together. I guess we huddled up as a group and it was a little boys club or something like that. We ended up ganging up on the coaches. It was nice because of all the teammates, but obviously it wasn't the best way to

> handle it…It was cool because we were kind of rebellious. It was, "Awe screw it! We're not going to do what you want us to do" type of thing. That was just the way we went about it. (Thomas – Cross-Country)

Team Unity and Friendships

Team Unity, unlike the sub-theme of Us versus Them, manifested itself in a positive bonding of teammates, friends, and/or family as a result of the transition. For example, Rita and her track teammates used bonding in a positive manner. It was a time for athletes to rally together and perform well despite the distraction of the impending coaching transition.

> We knew what we wanted to do as a group and as a team and that kind of helped us with some kind of unity. We all didn't get along, but we made sure the stick got around or that every person ran the split that that person wanted to run type deal. We worked hard on getting that together and it's kind of difficult though because there is always something going on in one of our lives and in females' lives in general. There is always something going on and it was a time for us to rally together. We have to run right now so we really can't worry about that. (Rita – Track Sprinter)

Preston and his senior teammates bonded together for therapeutic needs.

> It was complicated because we all…we all worked so hard for that last year and we knew we should have been playing. It was good in the fact that we were all there together so we could encourage one another then again it was bad because we were all so close. I'd get in to play and I'd have a good night, then your senior teammates would be happy. They would be happy, but they were upset because they weren't getting a shot at playing. So it was the same way for me. I would be watching and one of them would have a great game and I'd be like, "Good, I'm glad you're doing that, but dang I want to be in there at the same time." So, it was always just a tug of war between yourself because you know you are not supposed to ever think I'm supposed to be in there instead of him because he worked hard to get in there, too. So, it was really out of all of our hands because we had no say so. I guess it was just complicated. But, it was all right because we were sticking together and everybody felt the same way. And we would have little team meetings because three of us were roommates that year and we used to all go eat and discuss it…the meetings were just catharsis is all. One night I would be trying to counsel one of my teammates on how he should handle this and then the next night I'd be cussing the coach out for the same thing or stuff that I was

> counseling him yesterday. And he'd be doing the same thing today for me. (Preston – Basketball)

Because of the constant coaching transitions going on in the football program at Perry's institution, he used bonding not only as a means of promoting having team unity, but also to make other friends in order to help stabilize his place within his lived world.

> All my friends were either athletes or people that I worked with and a very few were just pure students. I can think of maybe three that were friends because they were close to where I lived or that they were in classes that I chose in my major…I think these friendships were strengthened by the transitions just simply because all you had was just each other. It was consistent. Nothing else was common. And of course, that was all you really had to begin with. It's when you don't have a coach to focus on that you build those bridges (i.e., friendships) to hold yourself in place so you don't drift… Well, it got to be a joke for us. It kind of bonded us together, which it did because every time we had another coaching change it was, "Here we go." For those few fifth-year guys that were staying, the joke was who was going to be you guys' coach next year? It was getting old, especially since we were 2-8 his first year. The joke then was, "You're going to get a new coach next year." (Perry – Football)

Thomas actually bonded with people outside the university setting as well as with his teammates. He even used some of these individuals as surrogate coaches to replace his original coach. And despite the difficulties he faced during the coaching transition, Thomas managed to find solace and even prosper.

> It wasn't that bad because I had some friends I could talk to. I had some friends come in and replace the old coach; some friends that I could talk to all the time. They were friends that were friends of friends, some running buddies that I had. I would just call them up and talk to them. I would call them up or e-mail them just to get workouts from them. It wasn't as hard as it sounded because when the first coach left I had some other people I could talk to. It wasn't that hard. I mean it would have been easier if they were there because calling them up or e-mail isn't really the best, but it worked for a while. They were pro guys. They would help me out. They would call me up and encourage me, so it wasn't that bad. I would never go to the second coach and it didn't phase me in the least. So, it was easy. It wasn't that bad. And, we had the teammates that we relied on because we did our ragging of the coaching staff everyday. It was good to have them around everyday because if I didn't it would have been pretty bad. You know, if I had

> just been by myself or I had to rely just on myself, it would have been pretty crappy. But it was pretty good. (Thomas – Cross-Country)

Theme 3. Expectations

The theme of Expectations refers to the situation in which the co-researchers experienced an awakening or a rebirth of performance expectations. These expectations manifested themselves in every co-researcher's dialogue. Once it became obvious that a transition was to occur there was the perception that the transition, whether the co-researcher concurred with the change or not, would bring forth a positive influence on their individual and team performances. The three sub-themes that comprised the Expectations theme were (1) Winning (i.e., performing at a higher level individually or as a team), (2) Playing Time, and (3) Starting. However, for each of the co-researcher in this investigation, expectations exceeded the reality of their performances.

Winning

This sub-theme concerns the notion that with the transition there was an opportunity to perform at a higher level than the athletes had achieved with the previous coach. The new coach's record of success sometimes inspired these cognitions. The dialogue with Alyssa is a prime example of how this group of co-researchers expected not only the team's performance to improve, but also their own based, upon the credentials of the incoming coaches.

> I knew that coming in that our team was probably the lowest of all of the women's sports here and I was sick of being the lowest team. And, I was sick of being the lowest person on the lowest team, here (laugh). I wanted to at least be one of the better people on the lowest team and so I thought that at least we have a coach coming in that had experience with the national teams and with some Junior Olympic Teams. I thought that could help our team and me as a rower. I think the expectations were that our team would become very well respected. I just had this impression of this new coach coming in and we were going to have

> these awesome facilities and they would revamp this whole program. And, make us respected in the weight room and the training room, you know, where basketball players had been the team to work with and the ones that got first service and all that. I just had this expectation that we were powerful and no longer laughed at. (Alyssa – Crew)

Jess, who transferred because she felt her old coach was not helping her meet her performance expectations, also expected an increase in performance based upon the coaching transition.

> I had high expectations just to succeed and do well just from my old school where I was succeeding and doing well there. I was getting first-team All-American, first-team all-conference, and awards like high scorer on the team. But, coming here and not knowing if you are going to do well it was hard because I had my expectations to be high scorer of the team and I want to do this and to do that... Compared to my old school where we were unsuccessful, I felt like she didn't know what to do with me. She really didn't guide me in the direction I wanted to go in. I still feel like even though I'm finished right now that my coach here is still guiding me. I still have hope of playing right now to play with the U.S. team. So, that is another reason while I'm still playing with her. That is why she is still my coach. I had expectations of so much. I still have aspirations of getting on the U.S. team and I'm hoping she can still guide me to that. (Jess – Field Hockey)

As with Mia and Jess, Rita also had expectations of performing at a higher standard based upon the resume of the incoming coach.

> It was kind of funny because a couple of us were ready to transfer after our freshman year. We heard that we had a new coach coming in from Nationally Ranked University and we knew the school's reputation for track championships because we see them all the time so we knew what they were doing. And, with that we were like, "OK, let's see what happens here. Let's try and see what this new coach brings and kind of see what goes on from there?" But, it was kind of a surprise and also excitement because of just her track record and the things she had done so, kind of a mixture of both. I don't know if it was so much surprise as it was excitement...I came in as a freshman running 24.1 and under Mick I ran like a 23.4. And, that was a big improvement for me, so I thought with the new coach coming in and the fact that she did this and that at her old school so...***Oh yeah!!!*** I should be able to roll out with her being here. (Rita – Track Sprinter)

Despite a poor team showing during his junior season under the new coach, Preston still had high expectations for his senior season. Not only did he expect to start

his senior season he also expected his team to return to the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament after a year's absence.

> The junior year was really up and down and there wasn't much you could do about it. But, we could let that slide because we all had one more season to go. The senior year we're trying to get back to the dance now. We had a good team…a very good team and we expected to make it – win the conference. (Preston – Basketball)

Larry also had high expectations after leaving his previous coach and enrolling at a different institution. Initially, he performed at lower than his expectations. However, unlike Preston (i.e., an upperclassman), Larry had three years to adjust to the transition and eventually did meet some of his expectations.

> I came in and I was supposed to be the top dog coming in, but it didn't pan out for a few years. But, I mean I worked myself to the top my senior year and I had a good year… I came in on scholarship at a high level and when I didn't have a good year it was dropped way down. But, I knew what I had to do to get the job done. (Larry – Track Thrower)

Mia also knew how she wanted to perform immediately after the coaching transition, but her high expectations were initially frustrated. Fortunately for her, her teammates played well enough to give her the opportunity to perform up to her expectations at the NCAA Women's Golf Championship.

> Well, she was gone so then we had two tournaments to play, which were the most important tournaments of the season and we were really excited...I remember that our assistant coach was our interim head coach going into the post season to regionals and nationals. At regionals, I played terrible. It was one of the worst tournaments that year, but I think I wanted to play really well, too badly, because we had the new coach. I was like "this is awesome." I just wanted to play so well, but actually the team played well and at nationals I kind of played well, too. Even other coaches told our coach, especially at nationals, that it seemed like there was a big cloud gone from our head and we seemed a lot more carefree…it was like finally we don't have any excuses to play bad. (Mia – Golf)

Even Thomas, who disagreed with the university's choice of a replacement for his coach and eventually was belligerent to him, momentarily expected his performance to improve. But, such was not the case and, in fact Thomas experienced a decrease in performance.

> During that time between then (November) and indoor season they had been looking around. I thought they had interviewed two good guys because they were distance guys, but they had settled on this one 1500m guy that had gone to Big East University. At first, I thought maybe this could work out. You know it sounded like we were on the same line the first day I met him. You know it sounds like he could work out for me and blah blah ba blah...but, a few weeks into it I was already given up on the guy. I was like "screw this" I'm going to do my own thing. I was disappointed. I was upset because I had been running so well for cross and I had run well that indoor season because I think I was doing the same thing the (previous) cross-country coach had me doing. But, when outdoor season rolled around I kind of got into his rut and went down hill. (Thomas – Cross-Country)

Starting

Starting as a sub-theme represents the notion that with the transition there was an opportunity to become a starter under the new coach. However, the opposite was also true in that starters could lose their starting positions under the new coach. Alyssa experienced both during the first year of the transition. She had expectations of was moved into the varsity-eights boat during the fall of the first season with the new coach, but lost her starting position the following spring.

> I was very mad at the head coach. She had been the one that had seen something in me that I hadn't even seen and given me all those incredible opportunities (to start). Yes, I had worked really hard for them, but she was the one in control of the boat placements (starting) and she had put me in the top boats all during the sophomore year leading up to that Christmas trip. When I got back it wasn't good. So, the rest of my sophomore year I was still on varsity and still coached by her, but in the second boat, not doing very well...In the spring semester my junior year when I came into the boat house one day, I saw that I was no longer in the number two boat...the way they had it was a board with little sticks (representing the starting line-ups) that the coaches can just move around...all the

> varsity was over here with the little pegs in it and I was over there somewhere with my name in the four-person boat, which is pretty much the most depressing thing you can be in. I was used to having my name in the very top one. (Alyssa - Crew)

Playing Time

Playing time as a sub-theme manifests itself in the notion that the co-researchers could increase or decrease their playing time under the new coaching regime. This was particularly salient for athletes in team sports. For example, Preston's senior season was not like anything he was expecting. As a junior, he had started every game and averaged just over 30 minutes of playing time per 40-minute game. However, as a senior he was moved to a new position and regulated to coming off the bench as a substitute with decreased playing time.

> The senior season was totally nothing we were expecting. All the guys that were supposed to be playing were not and the guys that were supposed to be our back-ups were playing. It just wasn't how it was supposed to be.... I can't believe that the guy that started over me and my roommate, we were both shooting guards, so had he started, I wouldn't of had any problems because he had worked just as hard as I had over the summer. He felt the same way, as long as one of us started, we knew that both of us were going to get to play. But he went over both of us and started a freshman who had been hurt the entire preseason. So, why are you going to start him when both of us have been practicing the whole time and we can beat him into the ground just like that? And, you know it, but you're going to start him anyway. So, that is a slap in the face...I didn't start one game the entire season and I averaged something like 30-32 minutes per game as a junior and went to like 14 per game or 15 my senior year for no legitimate, no legitimate reason...To then move me to back up point knowing that I was playing the best that I had ever played that never sat well and will never sit well as long as I live. So, we didn't see eye-to-eye. I thought the coach played favorites. I don't think he did what it takes to win ball games and that's what it comes down to. (Preston – Basketball)

Alyssa also was frustrated when her rowing time was cut to almost nothing and she was forced to sit in the coach's boat (i.e., launch) and watch her teammates compete and practice.

> I was a scholarship athlete and I felt I put in three years of very hard work and now here I am being put into the lowest boat. And then sometimes I wouldn't even be rowing. I would just be in the coach's launch riding around with the coach and that is pretty much the most degrading thing. It's like you are no good to row today. You have to sit in the launch and watch me coach. Being in the varsity coach's launch is one thing, being in the assistant's launch is the worst. (Alyssa - Crew)

Theme 4. Acclimation or Alienation

The co-themes of Acclimation and Alienation represent the portion of the lived experience in which the athletes faced a choice of either acclimating to the coaching transition or alienating the reconstituted athlete-coach existential core. Two sub-themes emerged from the dialogues that supported the co-theme of Acclimation: (1) Team Rules and (2) Individual Roles, while three sub-themes emerged for the co-theme of Alienation: (1) Transferring, (2) Quitting, and (3) Resignation. The athletes in this investigation faced many unique situations in which differences in coaches' philosophies, attitudes, communication styles, and personalities affected team rules and the roles individuals played on their teams.

All of the co-researchers used their original coach as a watermark to compare the subsequent coach's rules and roles. For those co-researchers who experienced multiple coaching transitions, additional coaches and their respective rules and roles become an added benchmark for evaluating the next coach. The co-researcher viewed many of these changes as barriers or obstacles that were beyond their control. Oftentimes, this caused them frustration, confusion, and anger. Some athletes choose to alienate themselves from the situation rather than acclimate to the myriad of changes.

Team Rules

The sub-theme of rules refers to the written and unwritten rules imposed by the new coaching regime. Oftentimes these rules varied greatly from those of the previous coaching staff. Conflict was often a consequence of these differences. For example, Preston described how the new coaching staff caused confusion and anger among the upperclassmen on the team by changing the unwritten rules established by the previous coach.

> He let them slide on so many different things that as players we're telling them something different. We're used to the old school. New school is telling you, "You all can do this." But, we're the ones that play. We know that you can't do this and get away with this. He should have known, but I don't know why he let you slide like this. Then as the season progressed, you could see that they weren't improving like they should have as freshmen. They weren't improving. He'd try telling them something and they would back talk to him or say something under their breath. Stuff that you never did a year ago. And, as players you know we're not used to that. We are conditioned the other way where if you say something back we're going to get on you, too. Now, they are talking back to us. When I was a freshman, you wouldn't dare see me talking back to an upperclassman. (Preston – Basketball)

Rita had to overcome a number of written and unwritten rule changes when her sprint coach left and was replaced. Her previous coach had established times for when practice started and the duration of these practices, while the new coach was much more lassie faire about such time management issues. This drastic change in policy caused conflict between Rita and her coach.

> With Mick, we had the workout sheets, and he was always out there. If practice was at four o'clock, he was out there at four o'clock. If we were late, we were the ones that got sent home. Then when the new coach came in she was on time for everything at first. She was out there all the time, but as we got into the program and understanding different things she wanted us to do, she was there less and less and during the warm-ups it would be just us there. Then after awhile, we ended up waiting for her to come out and then it started to get frustrating for us. So, we had a couple of meetings about her being out there on time…That's the main

> thing I remember from the transition because we didn't have to do that with Mick. Mick was always out there. Things were set-up, practice, two hours, and gone. With our new coach, you're probably waiting about an hour before you start the workout (laugh)... Yes, that was a big difference. For someone like myself who is organized you say, "Be out here at two." I'm out here at two. You know, that was kind of hard for me. Mick was always on time and I didn't have to worry about anything. I always got out on time and I got to do what I needed to do. And, when the new coach came in it was like, "What time are we practicing?" You know we're out here and she's not here. And, I have to say it started to get to be a nuisance because like we are ready to go and we have no coach (laugh). So you had to wait; you couldn't go anywhere. I think that was a big issue – big time. (Rita – Track Sprinter)

The following season Rita's head coach moved on and the new assistant moved up to the head coaching position. This move brought about further changes in team rules.

> Along those same lines of time management, I think it was the time when she was named head coach when Coach D stepped down. Because Coach D was always set in her ways and because she was here for however long we had set rules. We got used to Coach D and her rules and how things are supposed to be done and how to dress on team trips and plane trips and whatever. And, we were excited for the new coach too because at that time we got used to her and we got to respect her and she respected us. So, we ended up having a good friendship type of deal with her, which worked out well for me personally and I think for the other girls. But, as she took that position it ultimately came with more responsibility, which became more paperwork, which means she comes even later to practice (laugh). That was an interesting change. (Rita – Track Sprinter)

Several athletes described these rule changes as a way coaches had of "putting their stamp on the program." In other words, it was a way for the new coach to establish his or her identity and control over both the team as a whole and the individual athletes. As Perry and Preston described during their dialogues sometimes these changes were too much and too fast and did not appear to be appropriate.

> I just couldn't believe that they would hire someone from the outside and that he was so inept enough that he could try to make so many changes. I can understand coming into a place and wanting to put your stamp on it and wanting to start doing things your way, but not mid-season. You just kind of go with the flow and whatever happens you can't be blamed for. It's not your players and it's not your system. So, it's a little bit different. He tried to pull on the reigns; too much...He

> wasn't hired the next year, which was fine. After a six-week tenure he was gone. (Perry - Football)

> It ended up being detrimental to the team because he changed a lot of things that were good with our team. We had a lot of guys coming back, a lot of experience coming back and he changed things basically for the sake of change just so it could be his stamp on the program. You know, "if it ain't broke don't fix it" was the way we looked at it. But, he decided to "fix" it anyway and he ended up messing it up a lot. The next two years that I was with him we were right around .500. We were very erratic, very inconsistent, very good one night, very bad the next. His coaching was the same way. (Preston – Basketball)

At other times these coaches' "stamps" or "identification tags" were petty to the point of even changing the team's uniforms, as Perry aptly pointed out.

> The uniforms also changed and we went from ugly to really ugly my senior year when we looked like little gingerbread men. We were brown from head to toe including the socks and shoes I might add. Yes, brown shoes. You usually see black or white shoes. You don't see that anywhere - brown shoes with brown socks, brown shirts, brown pants, and brown helmets. Gingerbread men was nice compared to what else they called us, too…that was his way of putting his stamp on the team. (Perry – Football)

Individual Roles

This sub-theme refers to the role that individuals filled within the team structure. The co-researchers described a number of different roles that they filled as well as roles that coaches filled. During every athlete's dialogue, the sub-theme of roles emerged in one form or another. Most talked about their roles changing within the team structure as a result of a change in coaches and the incoming coach's philosophy.

As frustrating and confusing as some of the rule changes were for the co-researchers, this was minor compared to the frustration and anger several of them felt when the new coaches altered their roles on the team. Many of the alterations they described came in the form of being moved to another position (e.g., moving from the fullback position on offense to the linebacker position on defense).

Perry experienced just such a change during one of the many transitions he experienced. In fact, Perry changed positions numerous times following the hiring of the several different head coaches, various assistant coaches, and two offensive coordinators.

> Here I am for four years fluttering in the breeze emotionally, socially, and everything else and the one thing that is quote unquote solid in my life is fluctuating, too. Due to the coaching changes I have played seven different positions in four years. It didn't help that I was injured, but you can't blame that on the coaching changes. But, the positions you, yeah, you sure can. I learned three offensive systems and one defensive system. And, on defense I learned only one new system, but I played there only one year. Had I played more years on defense, I would have learned more...He ended up hiring a new offensive coach and that was in a way another transition because he put in another totally different offensive system where we went from a power team to a more side to side throwing system. And, at my position at that time, I was playing offense and my position really didn't fit the system, so the coaching change really did make a big difference to me... I went from fullback to linebacker, to nose guard, to defensive end. I played four positions my sophomore year... Right before the offensive coordinator change we knew he was changing the offense, that was a little scary for us because we didn't know what the system was going to be and we were all up in the air on where we were going to be. So, for about a month or two months including some time I was at home that year, I thought about it for a lot. I was like, "Shit, what am I going to do?" I had just finished a season where I played four different positions. I can't do this again. I can't...(Perry – Football)

At times, these role changes were the result of a new coach's philosophy or system. These new roles affected the athletes' playing time, whether they started or not, and even if they stayed with the team. This aspect of the lived experience for these athletes was particularly tough on Perry as he faced the continuous coaching carousel.

> And, by my junior year they said they wanted me to go back to full back, but we really don't have a position for a full back. Instead we have a system that has a single back and split back system, wing back systems. We don't have a true I-formation or a wishbone style system where you have a true quote unquote true fullback, so I'm on the sidelines dying. (Perry – Football)

Preston also faced this same difficult situation.

> When the new coach got bumped up I was the team captain my junior year and my senior year. My junior year I started every game and we had a rough season. I

> blamed a lot of that season on him and myself. It was about 50/50 because I was letting my leadership responsibilities affect how I was playing. Also, the way he coached, which was moving me from position to position because we really didn't have much size. I would play the two guard one night and the four or five the next night. We might have a guy get in foul trouble and I'm always the one having to fill the spot. I thought that affected me a lot, too. We sat down at the end of that year and discussed it and I said I didn't blame him I blame myself. And, he said he blamed himself. So, I thought going into the next year that we had an understanding that wasn't going to happen this year and everything was going to be all right. But, I also wanted to take it to the next level and I thought if I had a good year I would have a legitimate shot (at the professional level) especially being a shooting guard. And, then the next year he moved me from shooting guard, which I had started at the last two years, to back-up point guard. And we never, ***EVER, EVER***, saw eye-to-eye on that. I could have played point, if he was going to let me play. There was no doubt that I was going to be the back up because the point guard had started at the point ever since he got there. Like I pretty much started at two. Now I'm going to be his back up even though I think I was better than him. I never had a legitimate shot at playing. And, he moved his boy, one of the freshmen he had brought in the year before, up to my spot, so really he stepped over me. He stepped over another senior who was a shooting guard another very good one also. But from the beginning of that season on out we never saw eye-to-eye... You can still probably hear the frustration in my voice now. The frustration has lasted from when that season started until I just decided to hang it up and forget about it. It's been that way ever since. (Preston – Basketball)

Rita was also asked to change roles by her new coach. However, unlike Preston and Perry who saw the moves as a negative, Rita saw it as an opportunity to help her team.

> Because I was considered one of the outstanding freshmen and to come back my sophomore year and to not really give like I should be able to that kind of made it really rough for me. And, junior year we just totally left the 200m all together and I ended up doing the 400m hurdles and it was kind of like, "OK, well you have to do what you can for the team." You know, getting points for the team type of deal. It was kind of rough. The switch to the 400m hurdles that was a switch I was not really trying to make. But, just by workouts were doing hurdle mobility, circuits or any kind of workouts I had shown the new coach that I had the ability to do hurdle workouts and not have much of an issue with doing it. I started running it and I was like, "OK, I don't really like running the 400 to begin with and you are going to put ten obstacles in my way (laugh). But, I went ahead and did it because at that point it was about the team and it was about points. We had a 400m hurdler on the team and at that point in time she was injured so I stepped

> up and actually did the event and went to the conference championship and scored for the team. It was a fulfilling moment. (Rita – Track Sprinter)

Jess was not asked to change positions, but what did change for her was her role as a team leader. She was jolted by the change in roles she faced. However, this role change did not originate with her new field hockey coaches, but with the training staff at her new school.

> I was you know the oldest at my old school and transferring in to a program after having expectations at my old school like being expected to carry the team and have all those leadership roles – becoming a captain and everything like that and then all of a sudden going to my new school and going to the bottom of the ladder. That was just hard. I still remember an experience coming here in the training room and it was kind of like seniority gets their physicals first. It is kind of a stupid little thing, but it is something that still sticks in my mind. All the seniors get to come and all my senior friends now were like, "Oh come on Jess. You are involved, too even though you are a transfer. It is fine." And, so the whole team was totally very positive with me and they weren't like, "How are you? And, you're brand new, how are you going to get up there?" The team was still behind me, but all the trainers were like, "No, you're new, so you need to go behind even all the freshman." So, I was like the last person to get (my physical). That is still hard because it gets in your head. You're like, "Alright, well OK then how are my coaches going to act if all of the authority figures are like, 'You are at the bottom of the ladder now,' when you should be at the top.'" That is like frustrating. It was a shocker actually. It was a shocker, but it wasn't a shocker because I had expected that, but I really didn't think how I would feel about that. It wasn't reality. I don't know. It wasn't reality. When it was happening, I was just like, "Oh my God! What did I do here?" It was just like, "I can't believe I left everything," – all my friends, all my teammates, how everybody portrayed me, and everything like that. (Jess – Field Hockey)

The experience for Mia was unique compared to that of Perry, Preston, Rita, or Jess. Whereas their roles changed when a new coach arrived, Mia's did not; however, the role of her former assistant coach changed when she transitioned into the head coaching position. Mia saw this as a difficult adjustment for her coach.

> Since, she was our assistant coach it really wasn't a big change. At the beginning she was really scared to piss us off and she is still that way because since she was there with our old coach she just really wanted to be a good coach and make

> things right. She had a hard time making us do things she knew we didn't like, but were necessary. But, I think finally it turned out all OK. It was just at the beginning in a sense we could boss her around. I talked with our sport psychologist about that and I said I wished Mary had more confidence in herself because she is a good coach because we all wanted her as a coach, but it seemed like because we had all been so miserable that she wanted it to be perfect for everybody. I don't know why it got better, but I guess she got more confidence in herself. It was a difficult role for her to be the coach now instead of the assistant coach. Now the assistant coach is kind of lucky because you're the coach, but you're really close to the players, I think because you are younger than the head coach usually and you are the assistant you don't have 100 percent of the responsibility of everything. She could say yes to stuff, but if the head coach said no, like if we took off from practice once because we had to study. She could say yes, but it was up to the head coach to say no. The roles then changed because she was the final person and I think she had a hard time at the beginning with that. (Mia – Golf)

Alienation as a co-theme with Acclimation refers to a coping mechanism employed by the athlete to come to terms with the coaching transition and its impact on the new athlete-coach relationship. Alienation represents a major breakdown in the bond between the athlete and the coach whereby the athlete chooses one of three strategies to separate him or herself from the coach, either physically (i.e., transferring or quitting) or socially, mentally, or athletically (i.e., resignation). The starting point of the process and the length of this process, are uncertain. For some of the co-researchers, the process of alienation began soon after the transition was announced and lasted for a very short period of time. For others, it was a process that lasted a number of years due to continuous transitions.

Transferring

The sub-theme of transferring refers to the portion of the experience wherein an individual decides he or she cannot acclimate to the coaching change and opts out of the athlete-coach relationship by leaving school for a new institution and a new coach.

Thomas was not happy with the replacement that the university chose for his departed coach but, as he noted, "At first I thought maybe it could workout. It sounded like we were on the same line the first day I met him." However, as previously noted, Thomas' expectations of performance were not being met and things quickly went bad for him. As he noted, "a few weeks into it and I had already given up on the guy. I was like 'screw this I'm doing my own thing.'" By the end of the end of the season, Thomas had finally decided that he could not acclimate to the new coach, "he was all speed stuff and I'm all distance and it did not work out." So, Thomas chose to transfer, "The best situation for me was to leave and that is what I did."

Quitting

Like the sub-theme transferring, quitting also refers to the portion of the experience wherein an individual decides he or she cannot acclimate to the coaching change and opts out of the athlete-coach relationship. However, in quitting the team the individual chooses to stay at his or her school, but is no longer associated with the coach or the program. For Alyssa, the change in coaches brought a change in rules, roles, and expectations for her and her teammates. As noted earlier, Alyssa, at first thrived in this new environment where her height was no longer seen by the coaches as a disadvantage, but as an advantage. However, this advantage dissipated after a few new recruiting classes arrived. At the end of Alyssa's junior year she saw the writing on the wall and finally conceded that she could no longer meet the rules and roles set down by the new coaching staff.

> The old coaches were like parents and the new coach was a drill sergeant. With the parents, it was OK that I wasn't in the boat because with mom and dad that's what mom and dad wanted. They don't want me in the boat. When the new coach

> came in it was like I was no good, if I'm not in the top boat because the coach said so. It's not something that I could improve upon. It felt that once I was no good, it was something that I couldn't improve on. I just didn't have any hope of improving. But, with the old coaches I always felt that there was always like some way for me to get back into it. Kind of like how parents will forgive their children. I can think of my freshman year and how much they reminded me of how much I remember being parented as a kid. It was definitely as if I trusted them. Whereas my sophomore year rolled around I started doubting my coaches' decisions. "Why is she doing that? Why is she taking me out of the boat?" I'm not that bad." So, I always considered her to be a drill sergeant. (laugh) It was terrible (laugh) and that is why I ended up leaving after my junior year because she had requirements for the team that if you did not make those requirements that you couldn't be on the team any more. It was not like they were by no means easy requirements. With me being an experienced athlete, they were not requirements that should be expected of an athlete when you are coming off an off-season. Because even when you are coming off an off-season you don't train like you are in-season. She expected us to be peaking right when we came in and the trial times were expected to be the best – even better than last year. It was so regimented and the system didn't leave any room for error where my freshmen year they understood that next week I could be better. I could lose a few pounds and be back in the boat again. Again, that was a very negative experience, but at least I felt I was in more control of my weight than when I wasn't in control of my times. That was just something that I wasn't prepared to deal with. Starting my junior year, I just started to feel that I didn't want to be on the team any more. I had wanted to be on the team and I had trained so hard, but even these times were not feasible for myself and these were times that were set up for everybody. No matter if you were 5-8, 140 pounds like I was or 6-1 and 180. And, those two people have very different performance styles or times with of course the taller stronger athlete being the more powerful faster athlete. I felt our coaches were trying to eliminate the smaller athletes on the team. By my junior year I was one of the smaller people. Whereas before I was one of the taller people on the team, but over the course of two years she had recruited some huge girls. So, I think that after the summer of my junior year I was ready to quit. (Alyssa – Crew)

Resignation

For other co-researchers, the option to transfer or quit was not feasible because of NCAA regulations, financial obligations, or by choice. As a result, they chose another coping mechanism to deal with the coaching change – resignation. The sub-theme Resignation represents an athlete's method of dealing with an unsatisfactory athlete-coach relationship. Some co-researchers simply did not fully acclimate themselves to the

situation because of multiple changes or because of incompatibility with the new coach. As a result, they chose to resign themselves to their fate.

This was particularly true for Perry who played seven different positions on the football field and experienced four head coaching changes, four position-coaching changes, and two offensive and one defensive coordinator change.

> We hadn't won 15 in a row over two seasons and we knew it was coming. The writing was on the wall and all of that kind of stuff...it wasn't a shock, but it was like, "What now?" Now you're talking about all the assistants too because they are just as important as the head coach maybe even more important because you usually have even more interaction with your position coach than you do with the head coach. So, when you lose the head you tend to lose a lot of the assistants as well. So, you are talking about a group of men that was going to be gone. And what changes they had made are also going to be gone. Here you go, you've made changes for a four-month period of your life and instead of having conformity to look forward to, it is probably going to change again. At first we thought the offensive coordinator was going to stay and he was going to get the job, but then he didn't and we didn't know that. In March, about spring break was when we found out about it... Well, it got to be a joke for us. Here we go again... You know there is always an undercurrent of we were playing bad and there was a press conference for each of the changes. We all knew ahead of time. It was just a matter of, if it was going to happen before Christmas or when we get back. So, we had that meeting and we all went, "Ah, this is it." It wasn't a big thing for us at that point because we knew he was gone. In a way it was kind of like, "Oh well." (Perry – Football)

For the first year and a half, Preston attempted to acclimate himself to the roles and rules that his new coach had established, but about a third of the way through his senior season he finally capitulated and resigned himself to the athletic lot of his final collegiate season. However, despite his resignation to this fate, Preston had a positive outlook whenever he got into a game.

> We played Instate Rival University, and I'm from there. So, I had a lot of people coming and I expected to start and he didn't even give me the start then. So, I was like all right. I ended up having a really good game. I scored about 18 points or so in about that amount of minutes and I didn't play an entire half and after that game I went to talk to him. And, that was our first conversation since all this stuff

> about me being a point guard and stuff, so we talked and you know I said, "Coach I'm not comfortable with this and I'm trying to play and be unselfish and do what is best for the team, but doing what is best for the team obviously isn't working. You know, I have the experience. I've played in big games and the guys you have in there don't even want to lead this team. And, the guys that do are on the bench." He just took that as an insult. He took that as if I was questioning his authority and from that day on the season went down hill because he thought I was questioning his authority...I'd say about 10 games in...maybe a little more...we threw in the towel. When we got our chance to play, we were going to play. I think that was one good thing about our senior year toward the end of the season we all had that on our mind. All the pressure that we felt, throw it away. Don't worry about what he is saying. Don't worry about what different coaches are saying when you get in the game. Just play. Do what you do. You know, don't worry about any plays. We're calling the shots when we get in this game, but as the season progressed (we found out that) you had better listen because if you didn't you didn't know when you were going to get in. So, you're kind of tight and you were afraid to make a mistake because you would be pulled from the game, But after we saw how this was going to go down we went right back to where we started, which was when I get in I'm shooting. I'm shooting, if I miss I'm coming out and if I don't shoot I'm coming out, so let's make things happen. And, that was good because that is how you are supposed to play. (Preston – Basketball)

Theme 5. Growth

Over time the co-researchers felt that they had overcome many of the barriers or obstacles presented by the transition itself and actually learned something from the experience. This learning is represented by the theme of Growth. There were three sub-themes that comprised the growth theme: (1) Personal Growth, (2) Athletic Growth, and (3) Spiritual Growth.

Personal Growth

The sub-theme of Personal Growth represents the portion of the experience of a coaching transition for this group of co-researchers where an individual experiences a change in attitude or behavior as a result of the change. A number of the co-researchers experienced personal growth as a result of the coaching change, while others saw growth

in their teammates or the coaches themselves. For example, Mia described the changes in Suzy, the number one player on her team, as a result of the coaching transition. After the transition, Mia perceived Suzy to be more of a team player.

> With our new coach, she knows some of us won't turn pro and she knows school is more important. She's married and had two kids and golf is not all her life. She's been on tour, but she knows that there are other things in life. But, the old coach wasn't like that. Golf was all she cared about. It seemed like, if you were a good athlete you had the excuse of not having to be a good person. She would let Suzy do a lot of stuff that others couldn't have done. If we had a morning workout, she (coach) would let her get out of it. And, we all knew about it. She had her favorites...(With the new coach) Suzy didn't get as much attention as before. And I think that she was more one of us rather than "that's our number one." And, so I think that was another thing, over the years Suzy changed a lot she was more of a team player. (Mia - Golf)

As a result of the transition, Mia also noticed that she and her teammates really learned to appreciate the situation they were in at their university and learned that they were in charge of their own destiny.

> We were really happy to be back here. What we realized after the coaching transition, it was actually cool, was that we were lucky to be here. Because when we were looking at transferring schools, we were like, "I don't even know where I'd like to go to because athletic-wise it's just perfect here." And, so that was another thing, when we finally got another new coach, it was like finally we don't have any excuses to play bad. It is really us and what we get out of it and take advantage of this situation. We were really excited for that new year because of having a new coach.(Mia - Golf)

Larry described his own personal growth as a result of the coaching transition. More specifically, he learned to deal with his coaches on his own and not through his family. Larry further described how the transition resulted in his "growing up."

> I learned from that the family doesn't need to be a part of this. It also helped me with being able to go up to the coach and say, "You know this is what I need today. This is what's going on with me so deal with it." It was also a good learning process. I didn't feel like I was getting that at University X...My family saw a change in my attitude, my demeanor, I just wasn't happy whereas here, I control my own destiny. I like to control my own destiny. And that worked out

> well for my psyche, for everything physiologically, my whole aura, everything. So, that was also a good change. I know my parents do miss me and I have a younger sibling. And, she misses me, too. So, I hope to get back to the west coast again soon. But, I think it has been good for me to get away from home and not have Mom and Dad around and really grow up. And that's important and I think that (the transition) also helped me learn to handle things on my own. (Larry – Track Thrower)

Thomas also experienced a sense of personal growth and maturity when he was during the first coaching transition. As has been mentioned on a number of occasions, Thomas and his teammates ended up "ganging up on the coaches." As he talked about the situation he noted, "Obviously it wasn't the best way to handle it. You know if I look back on it now, I think I should have been, you know, more responsible or something. You know, more adult like instead of acting like such a child, but that was the way I handled."

Athletic Growth

The sub-theme Athletic Growth represents that facet of the coaching transition experience for these individuals where they underwent an attitude or behavior change that they felt helped them develop athletically. For instance, Rita maintained that she and her teammates experienced growth as a result of the coaching transition.

> As the new coach started to come in, she wasn't around as much for warm-ups so you start relying on your teammates. And I think that is why I'm always saying we and us and all that kind of stuff because that's all we had. The only time we saw her was after the races and she would tell us what we did, what we didn't do right, and we'd look at film. And, that was it so we had to pull on each other's strengths. I think that with her not being around it allowed us to grow, especially to grow and develop and to learn to better communicate with the athletes on the 4 x 1 or 4 x 4 or whatever relay we happened to be doing or even individually…I think that had a lot to do with the transition period as to learn and grow together as a team. (Rita – Track Sprinter)

Additionally, Rita expressed that she personally had grown athletically as a result of the coaching transition.

> It was kind of difficult, but in a way it was kind of good now that I look back at it because in a sense because it helped me grow. It helped me grow and learn what it is I need to do to take care of my business and I was able to give my coach better feedback because I took care of it myself. I was able to say, "this part, this block, that part didn't feel right," or "during my warm-up I didn't feel really good." And, so kind of having someone not there really helped me grow and learn more about myself, and what my body needs. (Rita – Track Sprinter)

Jess, like Rita, felt as though she too improved athletically; however, she didn't feel that way at the beginning of the season. In fact, she felt that she was not playing up to her potential and was a "mental case" for most of her senior season. But, she started to, "gradually get out of it toward the end of the season." Jess discussed how she developed as a player even after her senior season was complete, "Now when I play, I don't have a care in the world about anything. Before, there was so many other things coming into play about the whole leadership thing, acceptance, new coach, new techniques." Jess explained that she felt she was still growing under her new coach, "I still feel like, even though I am finished right now, that my coach here is still guiding me."

Spiritual Growth

Only Perry mentioned the sub-theme of Spiritual Growth during the dialogue. Spiritual growth represents the part of the lived experience of a coaching transition where an individual finds meaning spiritually, mystically, or religiously.

> Football and athletics period had always been a comfort zone for me. Not physically obviously, but in my head it was like, "This is nice. I like this. I belong here. This is part of who I am, what I am and what I like about life as we know it quote unquote." And without that comfort zone it made it tougher. It really did. I think because of that I developed some really intense friendships because they

> became the anchor that football could not. I think because of it I grew spiritually because it became a comfort that football never was. In the long run it was a great thing for me, but not saying that it couldn't have happened to me if I'd of had just one coach, but maybe this speeded up the process. (Perry – Football)

Summary

The thematic structure of the experience of a coaching transition for this group of Division I athletes was a relatively uniform experience. This experience emerged against the ground of Performance and included the following major themes: (1) Change, (2) Bonding, (3) Expectations, (4) Acclimation or Alienation, and (5) Growth. Although these themes and their corresponding sub-themes represented distinct aspects of the experience, they were all interconnected and interacting. All of the themes shared a common bond in the existential core of the Athlete-Coach Relationship. This core reflected the lived world in which the co-researchers experienced the coaching transition.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The primary goal of this investigation was to provide a detailed description of NCAA Division I student-athletes' experience of going through a coaching transition during their collegiate career. A key component of this description, illustrated in the previous chapter, was a thematic structure. This thematic structure emerged from the dialogues and represents this particular group of individuals' experience of a coaching transition. Utilizing a Gestalt ground/figure perspective, five major themes, (1) Change, (2) Expectations, (3) Bonding, (4) Acclimation or Alienation, and (5) Growth, emerged to form the figure of the structure. This figure was set against the ground of performance. In addition, an existential core emerged that had as its thematic structure the athlete-coach relationship, representing the situation or world through which the experience of a coaching transition was lived by the athletes.

This chapter begins with a discussion of methodological issues involved in this existential phenomenological investigation. Next, performance as the ground of the coaching transition experience is discussed. Following this is a discussion of the existential core, with emphasis given to the existential concept of the "Other." The resulting themes and sub-themes of this study are then related to the existing literature on transitions. Next, the limitations of this study are discussed and implications of this existential phenomenological examination for coaches, athletic administrators, and sport psychology consultants are suggested. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research and a concluding statement.

Methodological Issues

Existential-phenomenological research is designed to illuminate the meaning of the "lived" experience and, as such, researchers who are really interested in a particular phenomenon must allow the individual, whose experience is under investigation, to describe it as he or she lived it. As I argued in Chapter III, the most appropriate method for illuminating the meaning of the lived experience of a coaching transition is through direct dialogue with those who have experienced just such a transition.

A wide range of participants was selected in order to obtain a richly varied description of this phenomenon. The individuals chosen for this inquiry were not sampled at random, but rather were selected because they were knowledgeable, informed, and could articulate their experience of going through a coaching transition. All of the co-researchers proved to be extremely passionate, articulate, and expressive during the dialogues as they recounted their experiences in story or narrative form. Their passion and expressiveness were most likely due to the fact that the coaching transition was extremely meaningful to them.

An example of this passion was evidenced by one of the participants who, near the conclusion of the dialogue, lamented, "Just frustrating...***just frustrating!!!*** That is the best way I can sum up those two years – frustrating, frustrating...Please send this dissertation to him(the coach)," Even more poignant is the fact that this athlete had graduated from school nearly two years earlier.

Throughout this investigation the "participants" are referred to as co-researchers. This is due to the fact that co-researchers are the true experts of their experience. And, as such, every effort was made during the dialogues them to dictate the direction of the

conversation as he or she saw fit. This required an effort on my part to suspend my theoretical beliefs, preconceptions and presuppositions; to remove, as much as possible, personal biases that may distorted my approach to the interviews, and allow the co-researchers' voices to be heard. To uncover these biases, I initially participated in a bracketing interview. This interview allowed me to engage in self-reflection about the phenomenon under investigation and to better understand its possible meanings from the my own perspective. All presuppositions that emerged from the bracketing interview were thematized and journaled. I then referred to this journal throughout the research process in order to remain cognizant of my own presuppositions about the experience of a coaching transition for a NCAA Division I athlete. I also conducted a pilot interview designed to improve my interviewing and probing technique and to assist me in the developing of the major interview question.

After conducting and transcribing the seven interviews, I analyzed the data using three hermeneutic approaches group interpretation, idiographic interpretation, and nomothetic interpretation. During the group interpretation I worked with an interpretive research group, reading aloud the first co-researcher's transcript. During this reading, there were frequent pauses for group members to discuss the potential meanings and possible inter-relationships among meanings within the text. After completing our interpretation of two transcripts in this fashion, I proceeded to interpret the remaining transcripts by myself. However, I returned to the group with tentative idiographic descriptions to seek critical examination of these descriptions.

In this investigation, I developed idiographic interpretations for each interview. Idiographic interpretation involves treating each individual co-researcher's transcript as a

case study. Each case study provides a description of the phenomenon and its meanings, relations, and patterns for that specific individual's lived experience. Members of the interpretive research group also provided additional assistance in identifying the meaning of figural domains within several case studies.

The final step in the data analysis was the construction of a nomothetic description. A nomothetic description is a process by which the whole of the interpretation is utilized to broaden the analysis to include all interviews through a continuous process of relating part of the text.

An eighth co-researcher was then interviewed and the dialogue, as before, was transcribed verbatim. An analysis was then conducted using the same method as previously described (i.e., idiographic and nomothetic interpretations). With no new or additional themes emerging from the final interview and analysis, it was determined that no additional interviews were needed to complete the description for this group of co-researchers. After adding the final analysis to the others in a nomothetic interpretation, a final thematic diagram was produced (see Figure 1) representing this group of Division I athletes' experience of going through a coaching transition.

I returned to each of the co-researchers with what I thought was the experience of a coaching transition and asked them if it truly represented or captured their experience of a coaching transition. As stated before, the co-researchers are the real experts and returning to them for a final approval of the findings was critical to the investigation. All of the co-researchers confirmed that the analysis was complete and that it represented an accurate portrayal of their experience of going through a coaching transition. However,

as was expected, some of the participants pointed out that certain aspects of the thematic structure were more salient to their experience than others.

The purpose of this study was to achieve a rich description of Division I athletes' experience of a coaching transition. The existential-phenomenological dialogue, as Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) noted, is the method or path that seems natural to attain a proper description of this human experience. By using this approach, I believe I obtained a meaningful description of the phenomenon of interest.

Performance as the Ground

The Gestalt perspective used in this investigation required an emphasis on the context in which the experience of a coaching transition is lived. As such, the experience was structured using ground/figure principles. As Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (1997) noted, for the most part the ground is "silent" and the person is "rarely focally aware" of it. Even though the ground at times may be silent or non-figural to the individual, it is still structured and part of the overall organization from which the figure must emerge. It should also be noted that the ground, although structured, is fluid and not a " static representation independent of its lived context, (Pollio, et al., 1997). In other words, the ground at times can and does become figural.

In utilizing this perspective, the co-researchers' experience of a coaching transition emerged against the ground of performance. This ground, as exposed by each athlete during the dialogues, appeared in each of the idiographic analyses. Thus performance was established as the underlying context in which the phenomenon of a coaching transition is encompassed.

All of the co-researchers discussed performance in terms of either team or individual achievements. However, each individual participant revealed this ground in his or her own unique way. For example, one athlete used "starting" and "minutes played" while another used whether or not she was in the "top boat", and still another used "time and place" to describe performance.

As stated earlier, the ground from a Gestalt perspective is dynamic and fluid. At times, the ground did become figural during the course of the experience of a coaching transition. The results suggest that performance became figural when performance was poor (i.e. losing). It should be noted that the co-researchers described performance as an outcome, in other words, a precise, quantitative assessment of ability. This assessment may or may not accurately reflect the more abstract, qualitative assessment that is referred to as skill which is an underlying capability or potential to perform at a certain level (Lee, Chamberlin, & Hodges, 2001).

The Existential Core: The Athlete-Coach Relationship

The core of the co-researchers' experience was their relationship to the coach. Perhaps the reader has noted that this relationship is classified as an athlete-coach relationship rather than the more traditional coach-athlete relationship (Carron & Horne, 1977; Horne & Carron, 1985; Jowett & Meek, 2000; Salminen & Liukkonen, 1996; Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Tuffey, 1997). I had two reasons for doing this. The first was to denote the athlete as the key figure in this investigation and it was his or her relationship with the coach that was of primary interest. Second, it was an attempt to challenge the uni-directional ethos of the coach-athlete relationship. By characterizing the relationship as bi-directional, with the athlete acting upon the coach as well as the

coach acting up the athlete, I meant to give the athlete "voice" for it is they who are the experts when it comes to their lived experiences of a coaching transition.

When discussing the experience of a coaching transition with the co-researchers in this investigation, the notion of an athlete-coach relationship emerged. By the very nature of collegiate athletics, it was inevitable that this would happen. It was also obvious that each co-researcher had a very unique lived experience of a coaching transition.

Initially I believed that the athlete-coach relationship might be an emerging theme. However, after reading, transcribing, rereading, rereading again, thematizing, rereading once again, rethematizing, and then reading through the dialogues a minimum of two additional times, I discovered that this potential theme only led to a vague description of the athlete-coach relationship. I then recognized that these reflections were not emerging as a theme, but rather that they provided the core condition under which the athletes experienced the coaching transition.

Co-researchers described the essence of the athlete-coach relationship within the dialogue. They expressed the essence of this relationship through their emotions, thoughts, and feelings about their performances and through what they thought were their coaches' feelings, thoughts, and emotions about those performances. Additionally, their ability to adapt to the philosophy of the coach and their ability to communicate with the coach also seemed paramount to the relationship. The essence of this relationship was not merely a point of reference but rather a living entity continually evolving. The components that made up this core varied from dialogue to dialogue as well as within

each dialogue; as a result, I packaged these identities into the core of the coaching transition experience as the athlete-coach relationship.

From the emerging themes, it became obvious that the athlete-coach relationship was interconnected with the themes themselves, while also maintaining a connection to the ground. As previously stated in Chapter IV, components of this core can be detected in the thematic descriptions. The existential core, as illustrated in Figure 1, is surrounded by the five major themes and cast against the ground of performance. The core itself is represented by an asymmetrical figure in order to capture the ebb and flow of the athlete-coach relationship.

Major Themes

Five major themes, (1) Change, (2) Bonding, (3) Expectations, (4) Acclimation or Alienation, and finally (5) Growth, emerged against the ground of Performance, thus forming a figure/ground relationship. In this section, I will discuss each of the themes and their respective sub-themes in relation to the existing literature in sport psychology. However, I must reiterate that although these themes and their corresponding sub-themes represent distinct aspects of the experience, they are all interconnected and interacting.

Theme 1. Change

Change is the first major theme that comprised co-researchers' experiences of a coaching transition. The theme of transitional change was manifested in the portion of the experience when the co-researchers experienced the transition itself. Thus, transitional change marked the beginning of the coaching transition experience.

When asked about their experience of going through a coaching transition, all of the participants discussed the Change in one form or another. However, the timing and

the length of this portion of the experience varied from athlete to athlete. For some, the start of the transitional change became figural before the actual change occurred, as rumors swirled around the team about the possibility of a coaching transition occurring. For others the change became figural quite suddenly and unexpectedly as the transition occurred with sudden swiftness. The length of this portion of the experience also varied from individual to individual. For some it lasted as little as a week, while for others represented a reoccurring event that lasted as long as four years because of continuous coaching changes.

The occurrence of the change resulted in a number of emotions for the co-researchers in this investigation, including shock, surprise, relief, sadness, and frustration. These emotions manifested themselves in three sub-themes: (1) Shock or No Surprise, (2) Relief and Sadness, and (3) Frustration of The Unknown.

Shock or No Surprise

As previously discussed, the athletes in this phenomenological investigation experienced shock or no surprise as the result of the transitional change. In the thematic structure of the experience of a coaching change, the transitional change was the first feature that athletes experienced. Half of the co-researchers experienced a single change while the other half experienced more than one change, including one participant who experienced a total of nine changes. This transitional change either completely caught the athlete off-guard, coming as a shock, or it was no surprise at all; as one athlete noted, "the writing was on the wall." Five of the eight co-researchers experienced the sub-theme of shock at sometime during their collegiate experience as a result of a coaching change(s). This experience of shock was consistent with the findings of Nacimento,

Duffy, Schwager, and Zaichkowsky (1998) who found that players at Boston University were "shocked" by the termination of their coaches and football program. Additionally, six of the eight also were not surprised by at least one of the change(s) during their careers.

Relief and/or Sadness

The next sub-theme was Relief and/or Sadness. As the co-researchers were experiencing the coaching transition, they often described a sense of relief that it had occurred. This relief was particularly salient for those athletes whose relationship with the coach was unhealthy (e.g., lack of communication or eating disorders), one-sided (e.g., coach viewed as dictator), and/or when team or individual athletic performance expectations were not being met.

On the surface, it might appear that feelings of relief and sadness about a coach leaving are incongruent emotions and that these polar opposites could not co-exist. However, this was not the case for these individuals. Several of them, in fact, experienced this dichotomy of emotions, including those who had had an unhealthy relationship with their coach. For example, Mia, who said that she, "almost played bad on purpose" so the coach would not get the credit, admitted that "it was kind of sad," but that it was also a "relief to everyone." That was also the case for Alyssa who "wanted them all to go because (she) was mad at them for what they had done to her body and the way they made (her) feel about (her)self," yet felt "sad" that they were being forced out and even wrote a letter to the athletic director in support of those coaches.

The sense of relief was more figural for those co-researchers who had a sense that a coaching change was imminent. These individuals had either heard rumors that their

coach was leaving or had expected the change because of the team's poor performance (i.e., losing). "We had lost 15 or 16 in a row," said Perry, "the anxious part was the first five or six games of the (second season) when we kept losing...But, by the end of the season it wasn't a big deal."

For those pro-active individuals whose decision to transfer was the result of a coaching transition experience, this sense of relief tended to be mixed with the sadness that came from missing friends and former teammates.

Frustration of the Unknown

The third sub-theme of transitional change is Frustration of the Unknown. As previously mentioned, a portion of the experience of a coaching transition was the transitory state between when the transition was announced and when acclimation or alienation occurred. During this phase of the experience the athletes were unsure of their future relationship with the incoming coach, what roles they would be expected to play, and/or what rules would be instituted. This unknowingness was often accompanied by frustration.

The sense of the unknown was much more figural for those individuals who had no prior relationship with the incoming coach. They were forced to deal with numerous changes. In addition to having to develop a relationship with the new coach and his or her personality and communication style, they also had to learn a new coaching philosophy and its accompanying roles, rules, and particular intricacies. For one athlete it was as if she had to learn to read and comprehend a whole new.

> I think the most difficult thing was the workouts. Trying to understand the workouts because you are with one coach for a year. You've gotten used to the abbreviations that they use and how they want you to do certain things. And,

> when the new coach came in it took us a long time to understand the workout because we couldn't understand what the workout was supposed to be. She came in with her own abbreviations for different things and I think that monopolized a lot of our time just figuring out exactly what we were supposed to do for the workout. (Rita – track & field)

Rita went on to describe how the time spent just trying to figure out what the coach wanted done and the coach's philosophy on time management frustrated her. "We got used to it, but it (coach's philosophy and approach) was a big one during the transition and we had some issues with that."

Those individuals who had a prior relationship with the coach (e.g., an assistant coach replacing a head coach) described experiencing the least amount of uncertainty and felt that the actual transition went fairly smoothly. One athlete noted that the transition "ended up being pretty seamless because he was already there," while another noted that, "since she was our assistant coach it really wasn't a big change." However, a prior relationship did not exempt athletes from finding out they really did not necessarily know the person as well as they thought they had. For example, Preston's situation, despite being "seamless" at first because of the prior relationship, became just as frustrating as if it were a completely new coach when things started changing. "I was happy he got a shot, but like I said, I always had a funny feeling that I could never put my hand on what it was and over the next two years I saw what it was. He was totally nothing he stood for."

Even those individuals, who actively sought out other coaches and eventually transferred, were subject to uncertainty and frustration. All three individuals who experienced a coaching change via a transfer described this experience, albeit each was unique. As noted in Chapter IV, Jess's transfer resulted in not knowing exactly what to

expect from her coach and ended up frustrated about a sub par performance her senior season. Thomas described his experience as a nervous feeling of not knowing whether he would fit in with his new team along with the frustration of losing contact with former teammates and having to train on his own over the summer. Larry described his as "friction everywhere" and "having to walk on eggshells," in the early going of his transfer.

One of the most surprising findings among this group of co-researchers was absence of a strong personal bond with the previous coach including those athletes whose coach was dismissed or left on their his or her own accord and who was a person they liked. The athletes that did experience some concern that their coach had left unexpectedly expressed their concern within the context of performance (i.e., How is this coach's departure going to affect my performance?). On one hand, the athletes' concern for the coach leaving suggests support for Vernacchia, McGuire, and Cook's (1996) assertion that athletes believe that "the coach is the wizard who holds the key that unlocks the magic of the athletic dreams," (p. 10). But at the same time, it fails to fully support the notion that emotional closeness is paramount to the coach-athlete relationship as suggested in the previous literature (Hellstedt, 1987; Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990; Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Tuffey, 1997). For this particular group of Division I athletes, the athlete-coach emotional closeness appeared to be primarily contingent upon performance. Alyssa, for example, was one athlete who indicated, at first she really like the new coach because she had "seen something in me, which others hadn't," but after being demoted by the same coach it was, "pretty hard for me because I had really grown to like the coach."

Theme 2. Bonding

The next major theme to emerge from this investigation was Transitional Bonding. Transitional bonding as defined in this investigation is that portion of the athletes' experience when they sought out others in an attempt to make sense of their changing world or as a form of protection against the change. During this period individuals constructed new relationships and/or reconfigured or strengthened old ones with people other than the coach in order to compensate for the loss of a coach. The three sub-themes comprising transitional bonding included: (1) Transfer Talk, (2) Us versus Them, and (3) Team Unity and Friendships.

The co-researchers' attempts at bonding, seemed to correspond to the trend reported by Scholten (1978) and Chelladurai (1984) that the longer athletes participated in sport the more they desired social support. The available literature also suggests that athletes are likely to look to their teammates or their coach for social support, rather than seeking ignoring social interactions outside their sport (Chelladurai, 1978). Thus, it was not surprising that these co-researchers described looking toward their teammates for social support when their coach was no longer available.

Transfer Talk

One of the ways these participants looked toward their teammates was through Transfer Talk. Transfer talk refers to the athlete's intention to transfer to another institution upon learning of the coaching transition. Athletes discussed transfer plans with parents and friends, but most of all with teammates. Six of the eight co-researchers experienced transfer talk. Three individuals actually followed through and transferred,

one had a brother who transferred, and a seventh transitioned out of sport (i.e., quit the team).

This transfer talk seemed to be a pro-active behavior co-researchers used in an attempt to take control of their lives. Because of the unexpectedness of the coaching change, transferring was one of way the athletes could express their opinion of the coaching transition or of the performance of the coach. Two of the three individuals that transferred, did so for performance reasons. The third also transferred for performance reasons, but only after his initial experience of the new coach made him feel that the coach could not prepare him to perform at the level he expected.

Us versus Them

The second sub-theme to emerge from the bonding theme was an Us versus Them attitude. This attitude carried a negative connotation due to its confrontational nature. It was manifested in negative or subversive actions exhibited by the co-researchers toward their coaches. For some of the co-researchers, the us versus them scenario was the next logical step after contemplating transferring. During this portion of the transition experience, the athletes truly bonded together. The us versus them sub-theme represented everything from "making fun of the coaches to their faces" to "almost play(ing) bad on purpose." These types of acts were designed to communicate the athletes' displeasure with the situation in which they found themselves. Co-researchers reported feelings of anger, frustration, disbelief, and confusion. As they became more and more frustrated with their situation, the resistance to the threat through an us versus them confrontation increased. In some ways it was not surprising that the athletes acted out in such a manner

due to the fact that they had little to no input in the hiring process for a new coach.

Team Unity and Friendships

The final sub-theme to materialize under the theme of transitional bonding was Team Unity and Friendship. In contrast to the us versus them sub-theme, team unity and friendships represented the cooperative or positive aspects of bonding that emerged during the experience of a coaching transition.

Team unity and friendships was a figural part of the experience for all of the co-researchers in this investigation. All athletes reached out to others in an attempt to make sense of the change that was taking place. For some, the most important thing was to perform better. As Rita noted, "We have to run right now so we really can't worry about that (the coaching change)." For others it was a way to feel better about the situation they found themselves in. That was especially true in the case of Preston who said that, "It was all right because we were sticking together and everybody felt the same way...We used to all go out and eat and discuss it...the meetings were just catharsis is all."

Two of the co-researchers described looking to others as well as to their teammates in an attempt to stabilize their situations. Perry felt that his friendships were "strengthened by the transitions" because "when you don't have a coach to focus on, that you build those bridges (i.e., friendships) to hold yourself in place." For Thomas, it came back to performance as he sought out friends and professional runners to help him deal with the coaching transition.

Theme 3. Expectations of Performance

The next major theme to surface from the dialogues was Transitional Expectations. As previously explained, transitional expectations refers to the portion of

the experience of a coaching change that awakens athletes' expectations of increased performance on an individual and/or team level. All of the athletes in the investigation described having expectations of increased performance. Such expectations are not surprising in light of the importance that athletes typically place upon performance. Chelladurai and Carron (1983) found that university level athletes perceived as critical. This is likely due to the athletes' expectations that better training and instruction lead to better performances (i.e., winning).

Co-researchers expectations fell into three sub-themes or categories of performance - (1) Winning, (2) Increased Playing Time, and (3) Starting. Most of these expectations were based upon the previous accolades athletes heard about the incoming coach. For this group of athletes, such accolades included coaching championship teams at other institutions, playing professionally, and/or coaching professionally.

Winning

All of the athletes hoped that their new coaches would "take them to the next level." Their expectations were not surprising considering that the co-researchers were or had been Division I athletes who were used to performing at a high level and expected to see continual improvements in their performances. For most, winning performances were paramount to their experience of a coaching transition.

Starting

Several of the athletes reported that they had expectations of starting as a result of the coaching transition. This appeared to be much more germane to those co-researchers who were involved in team sports (i.e., basketball, crew, field hockey and football). However two of the individual sport athletes (i.e., cross country and golf) also spoke of

having the opportunity to start, but at a much less figural level than that experienced by team sport athletes.

Playing Time

As with starting, playing time (i.e., the minutes played or the number of plays played) was more relevant to those individuals in team sports than to athletes in individual sports. This is probably due to the fact that playing time, as with starting, is seen as more of a status symbol for team sports. As Coakley (1998) noted, among children status on organized teams is largely dependent upon the coaches' assessment of players' physical skills and value to the team (i.e. starters are often viewed as more valuable than non-starters). In addition, playing time is related to youths' reputations among peers and they are likely to be disappointed when they do not get the playing time they want.

Theme 4. Acclimation or Alienation

The co-themes of Acclimation and Alienation refer to the portion of the lived experience of a coaching transition in which the co-researcher is faced with the proposition of acclimating to the new coach and his or her rules and roles or abandoning the new athlete-coach relationship. Two sub-themes manifested themselves within the theme of transitional acclimation: Team Rules and Individual Roles. Within the co-theme of alienation, three sub-themes emerged: Transferring, Quitting, and Resignation.

As previously noted in Chapter IV, the co-researchers used their former coaches as benchmarks for analyzing the new coaches and their rules and roles. From a phenomenological perspective, this makes sense as the world of others, or as Schutz (1967) termed *Umwelt*, acts as the ground against which new relationships become

figural. These comparisons permitted judgments of the quality of the coach's philosophy (i.e., rules and roles). If the athlete accepted these rules and roles, acclimation occurred. On the other hand, if the athlete failed to accept the coach's philosophy then alienation was the outcome.

Acclimation

The length and timing of the transitional acclimation varied from co-researcher to co-researcher in this investigation. For some individuals, the acclimation process was described as being relatively short. This was particularly true for those individuals who had had a positive relationship with the incoming coach or who had transferred. These individual were already familiar with the coach and cognizant of his or her expectations. As a result, the transitional acclimation was relatively easy compared to that of those co-researchers who did not have a prior relationship with the coach.

Team Rules

The first sub-theme of acclimation was team rules. All of the individuals in this investigation reported that they had experienced a period of adjustment that required them to discover, learn, and accept a new set of rules. The athletes reported that it was frustrating and disconcerting trying to adjust to all of the changes. This was particularly true when the rules were unwritten.

Many of the incoming coaches instituted unwritten rules that were in direct contrast to the unwritten rules of the previous coach. This conflict often caused much dissent among the veteran members of the team. For example, one athlete commented that he knew his old coach would have "lit him (a new freshman) up" for doing something that the older teammates thought was ridiculous. But, "he thought it was a

joke and the coach took his side. He (the coach) really didn't say much about it and didn't really care."

Individual Roles

The second sub-theme of acclimation was individual roles. In this investigation roles were defined as the place or position that an individual filled on the team (e.g., team captain, starting quarterback, first person off the bench, etc.) Many of the athletes had roles that were established previously. For these individuals, the longer their roles had been established, the harder it was for them to adjust to changes.

One of the most difficult changes to adjust to during the transition was when a new coach moved the athlete to a new or unfamiliar position on the team. For some athletes this meant moving to a new position (i.e., shooting guard to point guard in basketball), changing from offense to defense (i.e., fullback to linebacker in football), or learning a new event (i.e., moving from the 200m dash to the 400m hurdles in track). These moves caused confusion, stress, anger, and frustration. For example, one athlete said, "It got uncomfortable because he had so many of us up in the air about where we were going to play, what people were going to be playing, what position we were going to be playing...when really it shouldn't have been an issue."

The athletes were not the only ones who had to acclimate to new roles. Coaches were also required to do so as a result of the coaching transition. This was particularly salient for those athletes who witnessed the assistant coach getting elevated to the head coaching position during the transition. These co-researchers described how part of the transition experience involved having to adjust to the (former assistant) coach's new role as head coach. This involved the realization that the former assistant had new

responsibilities as the head coach and was ultimately in charge of the team. Thus, the coach could no longer be viewed as a friend, as was the case when she was an assistant coach.

Alienation

Wojtyła, in a paper presented at the Fourth International Phenomenology Conference in 1975, described alienation as follows:

> Alienation is nothing else, but the contradiction of participation, the weakening or simply the annihilation of the possibility to experience another human being as the "other I," and through a certain deformation of the scheme "I-other." As much as the various "negative" feelings or attitudes to some extent verify the ability to participate in the humanity of the "other," so much so alienation finds itself beyond the scope of verification. Alienation denotes such a situation in a human being, such state, in which he is not capable to experience another human being as the "other I." The reasons for it may be many and very complicated…

In this investigation, several of the co-researchers were not able to acclimate to the coaching transition and as a result they alienated themselves from the "other I" in the athlete-coach relationship – the coach. It was inevitable that some of the co-researchers would move toward alienation as a coping mechanism for resolving conflict within the athlete-coach relationship. Three sub-themes emerged from the dialogues that represented the various categories of alienation: Transferring, Quitting, and Resignation.

Transferring

Transferring refers to the portion of the co-theme of alienation where the athlete becomes determined that he or she will no longer accept the athlete-coach relationship as it was configured and leaves for a new coach at a new institution. Transferring is the easiest and most direct path athletes have to take to control of the person who coaches them.

As previously noted, seven of the eight co-researchers engaged in transfer talk sometime during the transition experience, but only three actually ended up transferring. It should also be noted that one of the individuals, a fifth-year senior who did not transfer, was prevented from doing so by NCAA rules. However, his brother, who was eligible at the same institution, was encouraged by the co-researcher and his family to do so.

These athletes stated that performance was the primary motivating factor in their decision to transfer to another institution. Thus, they felt that there was a direct link between their relationship with their coach and their performance. For example, one athlete stated that her old coach wasn't "taking it to the next level," while another said that he didn't fit the coach's "cookie cutter style." In both cases the athletes felt that the outlook for improved performance under the incoming coach was limited. Another athlete thought of his former coach as the "backbone" to his success. And, when his performance deteriorated after his coach was replaced, he decided to transfer.

Quitting

The second sub-theme to emerge with the co-theme of alienation was Quitting. Like transferring, quitting represented a complete annihilation of the coach-athlete relationship and a rejection of the opportunity to experience the "other I (i.e., the coach)." Quitting or transitioning out of the sport was another strategy athletes utilized to deal with the unfavorable transition. However, only one co-researcher, Alyssa, chose this strategy in dealing with the transition. It was not an easy decision for her and she spent a great deal of time contemplating her decision before deciding to leave the sport and have nothing to do with her coach.

Resignation

The final form of alienation was resignation. Resignation was the final coping mechanism athletes utilized to deal with coaching transitions. This sub-theme represents the co-researcher's inability to fully acclimate to the new coach and his or her rules and roles yet accepting his or her fate. In this situation, the athlete for whatever reason did not or could not take a more pro-active means (i.e., transferring or quitting) of dealing with a less than ideal athlete-coach relationship. Resignation was evidenced by statements such as, "here we go again," "it got to be a joke," "we threw in the towel," and "there really wasn't much we could do about it." In this scenario, athletes simply chose to play out the season or their career.

Theme 5. Growth

The fifth and final major theme to emerge from the experience of going through a coaching transfer for this particular group of Division I athletes was Growth. Growth, in this investigation, was defined as the process by which, as a direct result of the coaching transition, the co-researcher learned something or took something positive from the experience. The athletes in this study felt that they had grown in one or more of the following ways: personally, athletically, or spiritually. These three types of growth were categorized as sub-themes within the theme of growth.

Personal Growth

Personal growth was defined as the portion of the coaching transition experience where the individual experiences a change in attitude or behavior resulting in a positive life change. Personal growth manifested itself in the form of "becoming a team player," "growing up," or just learning to be appreciative and "happy" of what one has.

Athletic Growth

The sub-theme athletic growth related athletic improvements that occurred as a result of the coaching transition. Athletic growth was the most figural of the growth sub-themes for this group of co-researchers. Of the seven individuals who described growth as being part of their experience, five experienced athletic growth. This type of growth manifested itself in terms of increased mental toughness or strength as a result of going through the transition. As one athlete noted, "We had to pull on each other's strengths...to grow and develop and to learn to better communicate."

Spiritual Growth

One athlete mentioned spiritual growth as the result of the coaching transition. This individual saw himself developing spiritually because he felt that he could no longer depend upon his coaches for support due to the constant changes going on in the athletic program. This was an interesting finding because it has been thought that the longer the athlete participates in sport the less important became the outside social interactions (Chelladurai, 1978). In the case of one individual, the unstable coaching situation prompted him to look outside the athletic world for social support.

Recommendations for Athletes, Coaches, Athletic Administrators, and Sport Psychology Consultants

The purpose of an existential-phenomenological investigation is to develop a rich description of a particular group's experience of a lived phenomenon rather than to generalize the results to other athletes. However, as Ravizza (1993) has noted, it is the athletes who are the real experts with knowledge, insight and experience and it is from

these athletes that sport psychologists can reap the benefits of those experiences, insights, and knowledge to assist other athletes undergoing a coaching transition.

From the descriptions provided by the athletes in the present study, it is apparent that there are numerous issues that arise for individuals who experience a coaching transition. Athletes deal with a number of emotions, including fear, anger, frustration, sadness, and confusion. This is true even if the athlete initiates the transition by transferring to another university. Coaches, administrators, and consultants (i.e., the athletic hierarchy) must be prepared to help athletes with the mental challenges that accompany a coaching transition.

The athletic hierarchy must realize that transitional change may be more difficult for more experienced athletes (i.e., juniors and seniors) or for athletes who have had the same coach for a number of years. Coaches and administrators can ease some of athletes' frustrations and fears by providing them with essential information as soon as possible. This could include copies of the incoming coach's resume, synopses and status reports from administrators of any ongoing searchers, or even just assurances that athletes' welfare will be considered throughout the hiring process. To assure the latter, administrators could include one or more athletes as part of the search committee. And finally, the athletic hierarchy, and especially administrators, needs to recognize that the adjustment period can be a difficult road for both the athlete and the coach and that it is important to give voice to athletes during the process.

Athletes going through a coaching transition can help themselves by reaching out to teammates and others outside of the athletic arena, including friends, family, sport

psychology consultants, and even spiritual leaders. By doing so, individuals can find assistance in dealing with a situation they have little control over.

It also needs to be mentioned that based on the experiences of this group of athletes, the expectations of other athletes going through a transition may be unrealistically high when anticipating future performances based upon the arrival of an incoming coach. It is the job of coaches, athletic administrators, and sport psychology consultants to temper those expectations to an appropriate level.

The importance and nature of being able to concentrate and control distractions has been examined by a number of researchers (Boutcher, 1993; Nideffer & Sagal, 1998; Orlick, 1992; Orlick & Partington, 1988). The coaching transition is obviously a traumatic event that for some of the athletes became a distraction, which would not allow them to perform up to their expectations. As Boutcher (1993) and Orlick (1993) noted, athletes must be able to refocus their attention when distracted by internal or external stimuli if they are to be successful. Unfortunately, distraction control or refocusing is often an underutilized by high-performance athletes (Orlick, 1996). As such, it is vital for sport psychology consultants and coaches to help athletes remain focused throughout the coaching transition.

Recommendations for Future Research

As stated on a number of occasions throughout this work, the purpose of this study was to provide the reader with an understanding and a rich description of the lived experience of a coaching transition from a group of Division I athletes' perspective.

The descriptions provided by the co-researchers in this investigation suggests that performance for Division I athletes is a more integral component to the athlete-coach

relationship than is currently recognized in the literature. Thus, further investigation of this issue is warranted. Research is also needed to describe the experience of a coaching transition from coaches' perspective. The existential-phenomenological dialogue appears to be an excellent qualitative tool for such an investigation. And finally, research is needed to determine way to achieve coaching transitions that are less traumatic for athletes.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be suggested that athletes' experience of a coaching transaction is a very personal, emotional, and traumatic event in the life of a NCAA Division I athlete. Performance was an integral part of this experience and was the ground upon which the themes were cast to form a Gestalt ground/figure relationship. A unique aspect of these athletes' experience was the emergence of an existential core: the Athlete-Coach Relationship. This relationship reflected the lived world in which the co-researchers experienced of the coaching transition. It was "the Other" (i.e. the coach) whom they viewed as controlling their athletic lives as well as their performances.

The results of this investigation also suggests that sport psychology researchers might want to consider using phenomenological dialogue as a method for learning more about athletes and coaches. The athletes and the coaches are the true experts of their lived experiences and as Dale (1994) noted, there is a real possibility of gaining insight into their success by listening to and learning from them.

REFERENCES

References

Aflermann, D. (1995). Career transitions of elite athlete: Drop-out and retirement. In R. Vanfraechem-Raway & Y. Vanden Auweele (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 9th European Congress of Sport Psychology* (pp. 828-833). Brussels: European Federation of Sport Psychology.

Allison, M.T. & Meyer, C. (1988). Career problems and retirement among elite athletes: female tennis professional. *Sociology of Sport Journal, 5,* 212-222.

Baillie, P.H.F. (1992). *Career transitions in elite and professional athletes: Three case studies of preparation and adjustment to retirement from competitive sport.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Virginia Commonwealth University, USA.

Baillie, P.H.F. (1993). Understanding retirement from sports: Therapeutic ideas for helping athletes in transition. *Counseling Psychologist, 21,* 399-410.

Baillie, P.H.F., & Danish, S. J. (1992). Understanding the career transition of athletes. *The Counseling Psychologist, 21,* 410-431.

Bain, L.L. (1995). Mindfulness and subjective knowledge. *Quest, 47,* 238-253.

Bleicher, J. (1980). *Contemporary hermeneutics.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Berger, B.G. & Motl, R. (2001). Physical activity and quality of life. In, Singer, R.N., Hausenblas, H.A., & Janelle, C.M. (Eds.), *Handbook of sport psychology* (pp.636-671). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Blann, F.W. (1992). Coaches' role in player development. *Journal of Applied Research in Coaching and Athletics, 7,* 62-76.

Blinde, E.M., Greendorfer, S.L., (1992). A reconceptualization of the process of leaving the role of competitive athlete. *International Review of Sport Sociology, 20,* 87-94.

Boutcher, S.H. (1993). Attention and athletic performance: Anintegrated approach. In T.S. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (pp. 251-265). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.

Brewer, B.W., Van Raalte, J.L., & Linder, D.E. (1993). Athletic injury: Hercules' muscles or Achilles' heel? *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 24,* 237-254.

Brewer, B.W., Van Raalte, J.L., & Petitpas. (2000). Self-identity issues in sport career transitions. In. D. Lavallee, & P. Wylleman (Eds.), *Career transitions in sport: International perspectives* (pp. 29-48). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Technology, Inc.

Butler, R. (1997). *Sport psychology in performance.* Butterworth, Oxford: Heinemenan.

Carron, A.V., & Horne, T. (1977). Compatibility in coach-athlete relationships. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 7,* 137-149.

Chelladurai, P., (1978). *A multidimensional model of leadership.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario.

Chelladurai, P. (1984). Discrepancy between preferences and perceptions of leadership behavior and satisfaction of athletes in various sports. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 6,* 27-41.

Chelladurai, P. & Carron, A.V. (1983). Athletic maturity and preferred leadership. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 5,* 371-380.

Chelladurai, P. & Saleh, S.D. (1980). Dimensions of leader behavior in sports: Development of a leadership scale. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 2,* 34-45.

Colaizzi, P. (1978). *Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Coakley, J.J. (1998). *Sport in society: Issues and controversies.* New York: Irwin McGraw-Hill

Coppel, D.B. (1995). Relationship issues in sport: A marital therapy model. In S.M. Murphy (Ed.), *Sport psychology interventions* (pp.193-204). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Cote, J., Salmela, J., Baria, A., & Russell, S. (1993). Organizing and interpreting unstructured qualitative data. *The Sport Psychologist, 7,* 127-137.

Csiksentmihalyi, M. (1975). *Beyond boredom and anxiety.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dale, G.A. (1996). Existential phenomenology: Emphasizing the experience of the athlete in sport psychology research. *The Sport Psychologist, 10,* 307-310.

Dale, G.A. (1994). *The experience of elite decathlon participants during their most memorable performance: Overcoming the distractions.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, G. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research.* London: Sage

Dewar, A., & Horn, T., (1992). A critical analysis of knowledge construction in sport psychology. In T. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (pp. 13-22). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers.

Eklund, R.C. (1996). Preparing to compete: A season-long investigation with collegiate wrestlers. *The Sport Psychologist, 10,* 111-131.

Evans, (1995). Five steps to a positive coach-player relationship. *Scholastic Coach & Athletic Director,* 86-87.

Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago: Aldine.

Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Gould, D., Eklund, R.C., Jackson. S. (1993). Cpoing strategies used by U.S. Olympic wrestlers. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 64,* 83-93.

Gould, D., Tuffey, S., Udry, E., Loehr, J. (1997). Burnout in competitive junior tennis players: III. Individual differences in the burnout experience. *The Sport Psycholigist, 11,* 257-276.

Greenleaf, C., Gould, D., & Dieffenbach, K. (2001). Factors influencing Olympic performance: Interviews with Atlanta and Nagano U.S. Olympians. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 13,* 154-184.

Hanson, T., & Newburg, D. (1992). Naturalistic inquiry as a paradigm for doing applied performance enhancement. *Contemporary thought on performance enhancement, 1* (1), 26-40.

Hatch, J.A. (1985). The quantoids versus the smooshes: Struggling with methodological rapproachment. *Issues in Education, III* (2), 158-167.

Hein, S.F., & Austin, W.J. (2001). Empirical and hermeneutic approaches to phenomenological research in psychology: A comparison. *Psychological methods, 6* (1), 3-17.

Hellstedt, J.C., (1987). The coach/parent/athlete relationship. *The Sport Psychologist, 1,* 151-160.

Hendry, L.B. (1974). Coaches and teachers of physical education: A comparison of the personality dimensions underlying their social orientation. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 5,* 40-53.

Hendry, L.B. (1972). The coaching stereotype. In H.T.A. Whiting (Ed.), *Readings in sports psychology.* London: Kempton, 1972.

Horne, T. & Carron, A.V., (1985). Compatibility in coach-athlete relationships. *Journal of Sport Psychology, 7,* 137-149.

Inoue, S. (1984). A phenomenological approach to the sport experience. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 45,* 1683. (University Microfilms No. 8418954).

Iso-Ahola, S.E. (1995). Intrapersonal and interpersonal factors in athletic performance. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports, 5,* 191-199.

Johnson, M.S. (1998). *The athlete's experience of being coached: An existential-phenomenological investigation.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Johnson-George, C., & Swap, W.C., (1982). Measurement of specific interpersonal trust: Construction and validation of a scale to assess trust in a specific other. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 43,* 1306-1317.

Jones, D.R. (1994). *Perceived quality of life of former African-American female athletes.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Jowett, S. & Meek, G.A. (2000). The coach-athlete relationship in married couples: An exploratory content analysis. *The Sport Psychologist, 14* (2), 157-175.

Kenow, L. & Williams, J.M. (1999). Coach-athlete compatibility and athlete's perception on coaching behaviors. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 22* (2), 251-259.

Kerry, D.S., & Armour, K.M. (2000). Sport sciences and the promise of phenomenology: Philosophy, method, and insight. *Quest, 52,* 1-17.

Knaack, P. (1984). Phenomenological research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 6,* 107-114.

Koch, T. (1995). Interpretive approaches in nursing research: The influences of Husserl and Heidegger. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 21,* 827-836.

Krane, V., Greenleaf, C.A., & Snow, J. (1997). Reaching for gold and the price of glory: A motivational case study of an elite gymnast. *The Sport Psychologist, 11*, 53-71.

Kvale, S. (1983). The qualitative research interview: A phenomenological and a hermeneutical mode of understanding. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 14,* 171-196.

Larzelere, R.E., & Huston, T.L. (1987). The dyadic trust scale: Toward understanding interpersonal trust in close relationships. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42,* 595-604.

Lavallee, D., & Wylleman, P. (Eds). (2000). *Career transitions in sport: International perspectives.* Morgantown, WV: Fitness Technology, Inc.

Lawrence, S.M. (2001). *The African-American athlete's experience of race in sport: An existential-phenomenological investigation.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Lee, T.D., Chamberlin, C.J., & Hodges, N.J. (2001). Practice. In R.N. Singer, H.A. Hausenblas, & C.M. Janelle (Eds.), *Handbook of Sport Psychology* (115-143). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Locke, L. F. (1989). Qualitative research as a form of scientific inquiry in sport and physical education. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 60,* (1), 1-20.

Martens, R. (1987). Science, knowledge, and sport psychology. *The Sport Psychologist, 1* (1), 29-55.

Moran, D. (2000). *Introduction to phenomenology.* New York: Routledge.

Nacimento, A., Duffy, D., Schwager, E., & Zaichkowsky, L. (1998). The end of an era: The forced transition of Boston University football players. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 10,* (Suppl. 109), 27-39.

NCAA, (1989). *Report No. 6: Comments from Students in the 1987-88 National Study of Intercollegiate Athletics.* Palo Alto, CA: Center for the Study of Athletics American Institutes for Research.

NCAA, (2000). *1999-00 Race Demographics of NCAA Member Institutions' Athletic Personnel.* Indianapolis, IN: NCAA.

NCAA, (2001). *2001-2002 NCAA Division I Manual.* Indianapolis, IN: NCAA.

NCAA, (2001). *1982-00 Participation Statistics Report.* Indianapolis, IN: NCAA.

Nideffer, R.M. & Sagal, M. (1998). Concentration and attention control. In J.M. Williams (Ed.), *Applied sport psychology: Personal growth to peak performance* (3rd ed., pp.296-315). Mountainview, CA: Mayfield.

Ogilvie, B.C., & Howe, M. (1986). The trauma of termination for athletics. In J.M. Williams (Ed.), *Applied sport psychology: Personal growth to peak performance* (pp.365-382). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield.

Ogilvie, B.C., & Taylor, J. (1993). Career termination in sports: When the dream dies. In J.M. Williams (Ed.), *Applied sport psychology: Personal growth to peak performance* (pp.356-365). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield.

Orlick, T. (1992). The psychology of personal excellence. *Contemporary Thought on Performance Enhancement, I* (pp. 109-122).

Orlick, T. (1996). The wheel of excellence. *Journal of Performance Education, 1,* 3-18.

Orlick, T., & Partington, J. (1988). Mental links to Excellence. *The Sport Psychologist, 2,* 105-130.

Palmer, R.E. (1969). *Hermeneutics: Interpretation theory in Schleirmacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Patton, M.Q. (1980). *Qualitative evaluation methods.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Parker, K. (1993). *Betwixt and between: The liminality of the former college football player.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Pearson, R.E., & Petitpas, A. (1990). Transitions of athletes: Developmental and preventive perspectives. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 69* (1), 7-10.

Petitpas, A., Champagne, D., Chatrand, J., Danish, S., & Murphy, S. (1997). *Athlete's guide to career planning: Keys to success from playing field to professional life.* Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Polkinghorne, D.E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R.S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential phenomenology perspectives in psychology: Exploring the breadth of human experience.* (pp.41-60). New York: Plenum Press.

Pollio, H., Henley, T., & Thompson, C. (1997). *The phenomenology of everyday life.* UK, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ravizza, K. (1993). An interview with Peter Vidmar, member of the 1994 Olympic gymnastics team. Contemporary Thought on Performance Enhancement, 2 (2), 93-100.

Rubin, Z., (1973). *Liking and living: An invitation to social psychology.* New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Ryan, J. (1994). *Performance team protocol.* Austin, TX: University of Texas, Women's Athletics.

Salminen, S. & Liukkonen, J. (1996). Coach-athlete relationship and coaching behavior in training sessions. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 27,* 59-67.

Sarason, I.G., Sarason, B.R., & Pierce, G.R. (1990). Social support, personality and performance. *Applied Sport Psychology, 2,* 117-127.

Scanlan, T.K., Stein, G.L., Ravizza, K. (1991). An in-depth study of former elite figure skaters: III. Sources of stress. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 13,* 103-120.

Scholten, P.P.M. (1978). *Perceived and expected behavior of coaches as assessed by athletes.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Schutz, A. (1967). *The phenomenology of the social world.* G. Walsh & F. Lehnert, Trans.) Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press.

Seefeldt, V., & Gould, D. (1980). *Physical and psychological effects of athletic competition on children and youth.* Washington D.C: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education.

Smith, R.E., & Smoll, F.L. (1989). Leadership behaviors in sport: A theoretical model and research paradigm. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 19,* 1522-1551.

Smith, R.E., & Smoll, F.L. (1996). The coach as a focus of research and interventions in youth sports. In F.L. Smoll & R.E. (Eds.), *Children and youth in sport: A biopsychosocial perspective* (pp. 125-141). Madison, WI: Brown & Benchmark.

Smith, R.E., Smoll, F.L., & Hunt, E. (1977). A system for the behavioral assessment of athletic coaches. *Research Quarterly, 48,* 401-407.

Smith, R.E., Smoll, F.L., Hunt, E., Curtis, B. (1978). Toward a mediational model of coach-player relationships. *Research Quarterly, 49,* 529-541.

Sparkes, A. C. (1998). Validity in qualitative inquiry and the problem of criteria: Implications for sport psychology. *The Sport Psychologist, 12,* 363-386.

Strasser, S. (1965). Phenomenologies and psychologies. *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, 5,* 80-105.

Strean, W. B. (1998). Possibilities for qualitative research in sport psychology. *The SportPsychologist, 12,* 334-346.

Taylor, J. & Ogilvie, B.C. (2001). Career termination among elite athletes. In, Singer, R.N., Hausenblas, H.A., & Janelle, C.M. (Eds.), *Handbook of sport psychology* (pp. 672-691). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research analysis types and software tools.* New York: Falmer Press.

Thompson, C.J., Locander, W.B., & Pollio, H. R. (1990). Putting the consumer experience back into consumer research: The philosophy and method of existential-phenomenology. *Journal of Consumer Research, 16,* 133-146.

Udry, E., Gould, D., Bridges, D., & Tuffey, S. (1997). People helping people? Examining the social ties of athletics coping with burnout and injury stress. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 19,* 368-395.

Valle, R., King, M., & Halling, S. (1989). An introduction to existential-phenomenological thought in psychology. In R.S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential Phenomenology Perspectives in Psychology: Exploring the Breadth of Human Experience.* (pp.3-16). New York: Plenum Press.

Van Kaam, A. (1969). Existential foundation of psychology. New York: Image Books.

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Vealey, R.S., Armstrong, L., Comar, W., & Greenleaf C. (1998). Influence of perceived coaching behaviors on burn out and competitive anxiety in female college athletes. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology, 10,* 297-318.

Vernacchia, R., McGuire, R., & Cook, D. (1996). *Coaching Mental Excellence.* Portola Valley, CA: Warde Publishers, Inc.

Vernacchia, R.A., McGuire, R.T., Reardon, J.P., & Templin, D.P. (2000). Psychosocial characteristics of Olympic track and field athletes. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 31,* 5-23.

Whitson, D. (1976). Method in sport sociology: The potential of a phenomenological contribution. *International Review of Sport Sociology, 11,* 53-68

Wojtyla, K.K. (1977). Participation or alienation. In A.T. Tymiemicka (Ed.), *International Phenomenology Conference: Vol. 6. The self and the other: The irreducible element of man.* Boston: Reidel.

Wright, D.L. (1988). *The relationship between women athletes' ways of knowing and moral reasoning about authority/power in daily life and sport.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Wrisberg, C. (1996). Quality of life for male and female athletes. *Quest, 48,* 392-408.

Wrisberg, C., Johnson, M., & Brooks, G.D. (in press). In, Kellmann, M. (Ed.), *Optimal recovery: Preventing underperformance in athletes.* Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Wylleman, P. (2000). Interpersonal relationships in sport: Uncharted territory in sport psychology research. *International Journal Sport Psychology, 31,* 555-572.

Wylleman, P., De Knop, P., Ewing, & Cumming, (2000). Transitions in youth sports: A developmental perspective on parental involvement. In. D. Lavallee, & P. Wylleman (Eds.), *Career transitions in sport: International perspectives.* Morgantown, WV: Fitness Technology, Inc.

Zaichkowsky, L. King, E. & McCarthy, J. (2000). The end of an era: The case of forced transition involving Boston University Football. In. D. Lavallee, & P. Wylleman (Eds.), *Career transitions in sport: International perspectives.* Morgantown, WV: Fitness Technology, Inc.

Zaner, R. M. (1964). *The problem of embodiment.* The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff

APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Introduction Letter

Dear Athlete:

I am currently a doctoral student in Sport Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I am also a volunteer coach and a sport psychology consultant with the men's track & filed and cross-country teams at UT.

During my career as a coach and sport psychology consultant, I have had the opportunity to talk to athletes about their experience of a coaching transition. I have noticed that coaches and athletic administrators often ignore the experience of a coaching transition from an athlete's perspective. This area of research in the sport psychology literature is also scarce. As a result, I would like to help athletes, coaches, and athletic administrators as well as sport psychology consultants to be able to deal with these transitions in the most effective manner as possible. One of the most important sources of information about coaching transitions, and oftentimes the most overlooked, is the experience of athletes. Moreover, I would like to interview athletes, such as you, to talk about their experience of a coaching transition. This research will be the emphasis of my doctoral dissertation.

Should you agree to participate, please fill out the enclosed information sheet and I will contact you at a later date to schedule a time and a place for the interview. The interview will last approximately between an hour and an hour and a half; it will involve having you answer some demographic questions as well as a few open-ended questions about your experience of a coaching transition. You will have access to the results of your interview and you may even gain some insight into your experience of a coaching transition. All results will be confidential and every precaution will be taken to maintain your anonymity. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Molnar

Appendix B

Athlete Participation and Demographic Sheet

Name _____ Sex: M_____F_____

Address_____

Phone Number (_____)_____ E-mail Address _____

Year in School _____ Sport _____

Positions Played _____

Starter: Yes _____ No _____ Varsity Letters Earned _____

Number of Head Coach Transition(s) _____

Years of Transition(s) _____

Number of Assistant Coach Transition(s) _____

Years of Transition(s) _____

Ethnicity or Race _____

Athletic Awards and Honors _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix C

Member Checking Letter

Dear Athlete:

I hope this letter finds you well in both your athletic and academic endeavors. As I mentioned in our interview earlier this year, when I completed my initial examination of your transcript I would be contacting you to read it and provide any comments that would make the description of your experience more detailed and accurate. That time has arrived. Please read the paper as soon as possible and write your comments directly on it.

I have included a self-addressed stamped envelope for you to return your comments to me. Thank you once again for helping me with this project because without you there would be no project. Once again, please return your comments as quickly as possible and thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Molnar

Appendix D

Informed Consent

This is a research study of Division I athletes' experiences of a coaching transition and is partial fulfillment of Ph.D. in Education requirements for Douglas J. Molnar. During this interview, I will be asked to talk about my experience of going through a coaching change. The interview will be open-ended and informal in nature and last approximately one to one and a half hours. The interview will be audio taped, transcribed, and transformed into thematic categories for research purposes. Whatever I say will be kept strictly confidential and used for research purposes only. Only members of the research team will have access to the transcripts. All results will be confidential and every precaution will be taken to maintain my anonymity and my name will not be used in any publication without my consent.

In addition to the initial interview, I agree to review the initial description of my experience and offer comments to help produce a more detailed and accurate description of it. Furthermore, the audio taped interview will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the office of the principal investigator until August 2002 to allow adequate time for interview transcription, after which it will be destroyed. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions concerning this study and I have been informed that I may ask questions at anytime during the study. I have been told that I may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty.

I, _____ (print name), understand that my participation in this study is strictly voluntary and I may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty or prejudice. In addition, I may obtain information about the study results in a later meeting.

Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

Vita

Douglas John Molnar was born in Lorain, Ohio on April 27, 1964. He attended elementary and junior high school at Lorain St. Peter School before matriculating at Lorain Admiral King High School in 1982. He received a bachelor degree in Business Administration from West Virginia University before earning a Masters of Business Administration Degree at WVU in 1987. From September 1987 through 1989 Douglas worked for the Sears and Roebuck Company and the Lorain City Schools. Additionally, he began working with the track & field and cross-country teams at Lorain Clearview before moving to a similar position at Lorain Admiral King High School. In 1991, he started on a Masters of Arts in Physical Education at Kent State University. While at Kent State, he was employed as a graduate assistant with the men's and women's track and cross-country teams. After graduating from Kent in the spring of 1993, he worked as a sports journalist and began working with the distance runners at Oberlin College. The following spring he was asked to rejoin the staff at Kent State University as the head men's cross-country coach and as an assistant with the men and women's track & field teams. In 1996, he left Kent to take a position as a Human Resources Specialist at 84 Lumber. In August of 1999, Doug entered the University of Tennessee, Knoxville as a doctoral student in Sport Psychology. In September of that year, he began to work with the women's cross-country program and in January 2000 he took over as the interim head women's cross-country coach and assistant track coach. In August, he moved over to the men's program, which won two NCAA Division I Track & Field Championships during his tenure as a volunteer coach and sport psychology consultant. He will receive his Doctor of Philosophy degree with an emphasis in Sport Psychology in August 2002.

5179 3770 1
09/24/02 MAB