To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Tanya Raquel Prewitt entitled "Dads Matter: A Phenomenological Exploration of Fathers' Influence on Collegiate Female Athletes' Sport Experience." I have examined the final paper copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Sport Studies.

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Dads Matter: A Phenomenological Exploration of Father's Influence on Collegiate Female Athletes' Sport Experience

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Tanya Raquel Prewitt
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DEDICATION

First and foremost, this thesis is dedicated to all female athletes and their fathers. I hope that your shared sport experiences can bring a deeper understanding between you. More than anything else, I hope that you have a positive shared experience in sport that nurtures a lifelong relationship of encouragement, communication and love.

I also dedicate this to Mom and Dad. You have believed in me when I have been too naïve to see my own possibilities. Without you I would be nothing and because of you I have the courage to pursue all of my wildest dreams. I am forever grateful to have been raised in a loving home where encouragement and inspiration has always been common place. I love you!

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ABSTRACT

Female sport history, stereotypes of female athletes, and the socialization of females in sport that currently influence female athletes cannot be disregarded when attempting to understand the psychology of the female sport participant (Brustad, 2002). Additionally, reciprocal relationships between men's and women's lives need to be examined in sport studies and in all fields, even though few have been conducted (McKay, Messner, & Sabo, 2000). Furthermore, little empirical research has been done on the father-daughter relationship, and, in particular, its influence on girls' and women's experiences in sport. Therefore, the purpose of this project was aimed at exploring female collegiate athletes' experience of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers. To accomplish this purpose, eight NCAA Division I female collegiate athletes were engaged in a phenomenological dialogue in which they were given the freedom to unravel the meaning of their experience in their own words (Valle & Halling, 1989). The interview transcripts were analyzed, allowing meaning units and themes to emerge from the quotes. The final thematic structure suggests that these female athletes' fathers' involvement in their athletic career encompasses the following: *Social Support through the Sport Process, Father as Coach, Mom as Emotional Connection, Relationship Revolves around Sport, and Dad as Motivator.* A narrative told by Ruth, a composite figure that represents the co-participants in this study, gives a sense of the whole of the phenomenon of fathers' involvement in female athletes' sport experience. The interviews revealed that sport can provide fathers with a means of getting involved in and forming a relationship with their daughters, a relationship that their daughters long to have. Moreover, the father-daughter "sport relationship" would be more powerful if it were paired with a strong emotional connection outside of athletics that these female athletes said was missing in their relationship with their dads.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

When I was successful in youth sports, people told my father that he was lucky to have a child like me. When my children were successful, people told me that I must be proud of them and their achievements. Today, when sons and daughters excel in sports, their success is directly attributed to parents, especially fathers.

Jay Coakley (2006)

Fathers are a fascinating component of many American families. Some fathers play an active role while others take a more passive responsibility in the raising of their children. Fathers can be disciplinarians or sit on the sidelines and leave the raising of their children to mothers or other significant adults in children's lives. This can be traced back to the history of fathers in the family unit.

An area of growing interest to family studies researchers is the changing role of fathers and the desire to support father involvement as a way to enhance children's health and well-being. Along with the increased interest in father involvement are the efforts of a number of parenting programs, family resource centers and early intervention programs extending existing programs for parents to include fathers and to develop new programs, activities, and informational support just for fathers (Bolte, Devault, St. Denis, & Gaudet, 2003). Media outlets are also presenting more positive examples of fathers actively engaged with their children. These observations indicate that there is an increased interest in supporting fathers in playing a positive and active role in their children's lives.

During early eras, fathers acted as the hunters and gatherers in many societies while mothers were the nurturers for the children (Coakley, 2006). As civilization progressed – particularly during the industrial revolution - a "typical" father became the primary breadwinner while a "typical" mother stayed home with the children (Gavanas,

2003). However, after both World War II and the Women's movement of the 1960's and 1970's, women increasingly entered the workforce and fathers were no longer the only source of income for the family. It appears that the role of "father" in the U.S. family is continually changing; what it means to be a "dad" today will probably not be what it means to be a "dad" for the next generation.

Brief Personal History

It is especially interesting to examine the role of fathers in the lives of their daughters. Every girl born into this world has a biological father, but not every girl has what we might call a "dad" as described above. Yet, through socialization, the longing of most little girls is that they will always have a "daddy" who loves them. Unfortunately, some girls have this and others do not. I was and am fortunate to have a father who has loved and supported me from the day I was born. Our father-daughter relationship/friendship has evolved and changed over the years. He has made a profound impact on my life.

Dad played an active role in raising me. He disciplined, scolded and praised me, protected me from harm and set me free to take chances, and balanced the fine line of providing for me without spoiling or sheltering me. Most of all, Dad has always been there to support and believe in me. I think about my memories with my father as cherished ones, especially those involving sports. There were times when we disagreed and did not see eye-to-eye, but there were many more times when sport was a time of bonding for us. I have vivid memories of being a little toddler and my sister and me piling up on Dad and wrestling with him. As I grew older, my Dad played catch with me, we shot baskets together, played countless games of one-on-one, went running together

and he always encouraged me to be involved in sports. We grew close through our shared athletic experiences and enjoying my alone time with Dad. Dad took me to camps, tournaments, sporting events, and was my basketball coach for many years. Our shared memories are some of the most treasured memories I will forever carry with me through life.

Through our close relationship, I gained confidence in myself. There were numerous times when my father believed in me more than I believed in myself; because of this, I found success after stumbling many times. I have often found myself wondering, "What role do other girls' fathers play in their sport experiences and in their lives in general?" "Does sport cause father-daughter relationships to flourish or dissipate because of expectations and pressures fathers put on their daughters?" " Do daughters want more from their fathers in terms of their sport experience, feeling perhaps that fathers do not care about their athletic success because they are 'girls'?"

Statement of the Problem

The father-daughter relationship is interesting and complex. However, little research has been done on: (a) the father-daughter relationship in general; (b) the father's influence on his daughter's sport experience; and (c) the daughter's perceptions of her father's involvement in her athletic endeavors. In fact, most studies investigating parental involvement in sport are not exclusive to the father-daughter relationship at all (e.g. Brustad, 1993; 1996; Cote, 1999). Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to ascertain daughters' perceptions of their fathers' influence on their sport experience by interviewing young women themselves.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore daughters' perceptions of their father's role in their athletic careers. I was especially interested in understanding how college-aged women perceive their father's influence in their athletic experiences. To accomplish this purpose, I utilized a phenomenological interview approach to obtain the information from the young women in their own words.

Significance of the Study

First of all, sport psychology research is just beginning to examine athletes' experiences from their own perspective (Strean, 1998). It is important to study and understand how athletes perceive their experiences and relationships with others involved in their athletic careers. Fathers can play a significant role in the sport experiences and athletic careers of their children. More specifically, reciprocal relationships between men's and women's lives need to be examined in sport studies and in all fields, even though few have been conducted (McKay, Messner, & Sabo, 2000). Little empirical research has been done on the father-daughter relationship, and, in particular, its influence on girls' and women's experiences in sport. Therefore, in the current research project, I attempted to engage young women athletes in dialogue to capture the essence of their perceptions of their father's influence on their athletic careers. I also hoped that the interviews would provide the young women athletes with an opportunity to reflect on how their fathers' influenced their sport experience.

Feminist Research

Feminism is a term that is hard to define concisely and means extremely different things to different people. In fact, no one school of feminist thought exists (Messner & Sabo, 1990). Feminists view gender as being socially constructed and because of this, gender defines and distinguishes females from males, which results in unequal power relations. Feminist work focuses on the study of gender and power dynamics, considering gender as a key area of overall identity and a determinant of behavior (Messner & Sabo, 1990). As Horkheimer (1972) suggests, when doing feminist research one is never satisfied with merely increasing knowledge. Feminist work attempts to confront injustices and oppression within a society by placing women front and center in the research process. Participants in feminist research (e.g., "co-participants") are regarded as the experts. As Krane (1994) explains, "...to do feminist research is to acknowledge and embrace the experiences of females" (p. 398).

Feminist scholarship is expanding to a variety of disciplines. However, sport has been resistant to feminism and remains a highly conservative field. Thus, it is not surprising that feminist analysis of sport has had a short history. Feminist sport researchers explore women's lived experiences in sport and physical activity (see the 2001 special issue of The Sport Psychologist with articles by Gill, 2001; Krane, 2001). Also, the feminist sport researcher is aware that the conservative culture of sport creates the impression that social change is impossible and an unavoidable component of sport (Barber & Krane, 2003).

When studying feminist research in sport psychology, a distinction between categorical and relational research needs to be made. Categorical research focuses on

specific sex differences, whereas relational research is based on the assumption that sporting practices are produced historically, socially constructed, and culturally defined to serve the interests and needs of powerful groups in society (Hall, 2001). Hall (2001) also addressed the lack of relational research in sport psychology. Gill (2001) proposed that feminist sport psychology researchers adopt a "true social-psychological perspective" and follow three steps for attaining a feminist approach in sport psychology research: (1) increase awareness of gender scholarship and valuing of the female experience, (2) incorporate feminist scholarship about gender, and (3) translate gender scholarship into feminist sport psychology practice. This study is informed by a feminist theoretical orientation.

Limitations of the Study

The following are limitations of the current study:

1. The results are limited to the ability of the co-participants in the study to accurately articulate their thoughts and experiences.
2. Qualitative interviews only involve experiences of the co-participants; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other female athletes.
3. It was impossible to guarantee that each co-participant would respond honestly to the questions presented.

Delimitations of the Study

The following are delimitations of the current study:

1. Only female athletes were interviewed.
2. Only Division I collegiate athletes were interviewed.
3. Only women from families including a biological father were interviewed.

4. Unfortunately, only women who described themselves as having a traditional, heterosexual family background were interviewed; therefore, the results cannot be applied to female athletes from other family backgrounds.

Assumptions of the Study

Phenomenology holds that people have a subjective experience and personal view of not only the world, but themselves (Vealey, 2002). In other words, people's viewpoints are based on what they experience. Behavior is determined by the individual's belief of self and environment rather than being a predetermined response to external events (Vealey, 2002).

Consequently, the assumptions of the study are:

1. There is an essence to female athletes' experience of having their fathers influence their athletic careers.
2. The essence of female athletes' experiences of having their fathers involved in their athletic career can be grasped and described by examining their interpretation of the phenomenon.
3. The co-participants would, to the best of their ability and memory, report their perceptions and feelings about their experience.
4. Women as a group share a common, but varied, oppression depending on race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and ability and these identities intersect with one another.
5. I would be able to effectively understand and convey the feelings and perceptions of the co-participants' experiences.

Definitions of Terms

ADOLESCENCE: The period of biological, cognitive, and psychosocial transition from childhood to adulthood, usually lasting a decade (Berger, 2000).

ATHLETE: An individual who participates in sport (Coakley, 2004).

AUTHORITARIAN PARENTING: A style of child rearing in which standards for proper behavior are high, misconduct is strictly punished, and parent-child communication is low (Berger, 2000).

AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING: A style of child rearing in which the parents set limits and provide guidance but are willing to listen to the child's ideas and make compromises (Berger, 2000).

BIOLOGICAL PARENT: The birth mother or father of the child rather than the adoptive or foster parent or the stepparent (Berger, 2000).

CULTURE: The set of shared values, assumptions, customs, and physical objects that are maintained by a group of people in a specific setting (a society) as a design for living daily life (Berger, 2000).

DAD: Informal word for father, often used by children (Berger, 2000).

DAUGHTER: A female offspring, a female descent, or a woman considered as if in a relationship of child to her parent (Berger, 2000).

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: The ability to turn to others for comfort and security during times of stress, so that a person may feel cared for (Cutrona & Russell, 1990).

FATHER: A male biological parent, a child's male ancestor (Berger, 2000).

FEMINISM: A perspective that attempts to not only understand, but also eliminate the oppression of women through theory development and practices directed towards social change (hooks, 1984).

FEMINIST RESEARCH: A type of investigation that brings women's experiences from marginalized status to the center (hooks, 1984).

FEMINIST THEORY: Feminist theory focuses on power relations, but, more importantly on understanding gender-related patterns of influence and relational patterns that exist in society (Brustad, 2002).

GENDER ROLE: Roles assigned by society that define what clothing, behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and relationships are considered appropriate and inappropriate for members of a given sex (Bisexual Resource Center, 2001).

GOAL OF PHENOMENOLOGY: The goal of phenomenology is to derive the essence, structure and form of human experience and/or behavior through the use of descriptive techniques such as reflections, interviews, and the analysis of written statements. The phenomenologist focuses on the unity of the individual and his or her world (Valle & Halling, 1989).

IDEOLOGY: A set of interrelated ideas that people use to give meaning to and make sense of the world. Ideologies embody the principles, viewpoints, and orientations that underlie our feelings, actions and thoughts (Coakley, 2004).

INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETE: An individual engaged in school-sponsored intercollegiate athletic activity for which he or she had been recruited (NCAA, 2007).

PATRIARCHY: "The manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over

women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general," (Lerner, 1986, p. 239).

SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY: A theory which holds that human development results from the dynamic interaction between developing persons and the surrounding culture, primarily as expressed by the parents and other significant adults who transmit it (Berger, 2000).

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS: Aspects of the social world that are created by people as they live their lives and interact with one another in connection with social, political, and economic processes in their society (Coakley, 2004).

SPORT: Institutionalized and competitive activities that involve rigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by participants who are motivated by external and internal rewards (Coakley, 2004).

STUDENT-ATHLETE: "A student that was recruited or walked onto an intercollegiate athletics team in order to participate in a particular sport," (Ross, 2006, p. 32).

TANGIBLE SUPPORT: Concrete assistance given to a person to help him or her cope with a stressful event (Cutrona & Russell, 1990).

TRADITIONAL FAMILY: A family consisting of heterosexual two parents - a mother and father - and their mutual biological children (Berger, 2000).

WHITE PRIVILEGE: A notion referring to unearned racial privilege that those in power – e.g., whites – are carefully taught not to recognize. It is an invisible package of unearned privileges that can be cashed in each day (McIntosh, 1999).

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It cannot be denied that parents play a vital role in the development of their child athletes' lives. Sport researchers have studied the influence parents have on youth sport and have been fascinated with how the sport parental role changes over time. The following review of literature is divided into four sections: (a) models of individual sport development/socialization; (b) the history of the father's role in sport; (c) the history of the father's role in youth sport; and (d) the father-daughter relationship.

Models of Sport Development/Socialization

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, Hellstedt's (1987) continuum of parental involvement and Cote's (1999) model of sport development, are the major theories discussed next. Youth sport participation has become a socialization process in which the majority of parents have influence over and sometimes even control. Loy, Kenyon, and McPherson (1981) describe three elements that take part in the socialization process. These are: Personal attributes, significant others, and socialization situations. Each of these contributes to role learning. Therefore, it is important to have a specific context in which to develop successful athletes, and parents play a key role in the process of developing such a context. Loy, Kenyon, and McPherson (1981) developed their socialization process around Bronfenbrenner's (1979) developmental theory. Bronfenbrenner's model (1979) has four levels. The first level – *the macro-level* - includes societal structures such as culture and politics. The second level - *the exo-level* - refers to environmental factors. The third level - *the meso-level* - reflects the local environment in which the individual is a part. The fourth level - *the micro-level* -

contains the individual's immediate environment. For example, the athlete's family, coaches, neighbors, friends, and teammates would all be part of the micro-level. When using this framework to understand the development of athletes, one can see that the athlete experience is a socialization process that parents can control and exert influence in addition to being extremely interactive. For instance, while the parents are a major part of the micro-level of their child (e.g., his or her immediate environment), the parents also influence what city the child lives in or school the child goes to, which are part of the meso-level.

Parents are an extremely powerful factor in the quality of the experience that youth have in athletics. They can be either positive or negative influences. Hellstedt (1987) conceptualizes parents' involvement in their children's participation in sport on a continuum from under-involved, to moderately-involved, to over-involved. He explains that an under-involved parent is one who does not attend athletic events and is complacent and indifferent when it comes to his or her child's athletic experience. In contrast, the over-involved parent is the parent who pushes her child to participate in sport, placing pressure to not only participate but succeed. Lastly, the moderately - involved parent is the one who encourages his or her child to participate, giving appropriate amounts of guidance and advice. The moderately-involved parent has children who tend to enjoy and succeed in sport the most (Hellstedt, 1987). In fact, several studies have shown a positive relationship between appropriate parental expectations and children's enjoyment and success in sport. However, other studies have revealed that parental expectations can become a source of pressure and stress for the child athlete (Brustad, 1988; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1989).

Carlson (1988) studied the process of socialization as it relates to the development of elite tennis players. Ten elite tennis players and ten members of a control group of non-elite athletes were interviewed along with the elite players' coaches and parents. Findings indicated that the control group of athletes was influenced by their families to begin playing tennis to a greater extent than were the elite players. The results also indicated that players experienced their parents' support differently, with the elite players remembering less pressure and demands for success than the non-elite players (Carlson, 1988).

Cote (1999) describes the influence parents play in each stage of his Model of Sport Development. There are three stages spanning a child's age range of 6-15 years. The first stage of sport involvement is *the sampling years,* which take place from 6 to 13 years of age. During these years, parents are responsible for getting their children interested in sport. The main emphasis for the children is to have fun in sport.

The second stage is *the specializing years*, which take place from 13 to 15 years of age. During this stage, athletes decrease their involvement in other activities and skill development becomes more important. Cote (1999) found that during this stage, school was the priority in all the families studied and the parents of the athlete did not expect their children to have a part-time job like many of their school cohorts. Cote (1999) also found that children who achieve a high level of performance in athletics have parents who have high athletic expectations for them. Also, during these years, parents begin making a financial and time commitment to their child-athlete. During the specializing years, it is not uncommon for one or both parents to become more involved in their child's sport experience (Cote, 1999).

The third and final stage is *the investment years,* which take place from 15 years of age and beyond. During the investment years, the athlete increases his or her commitment to the sport; intensity of practice also increases dramatically. Cote (1999) found that during the investment years parents provide their child-athlete with advice regarding their future in sport. Parents are not typically involved with instruction or coaching in their child's sport, but are involved in roles that facilitate their child's athletic participation. Additionally, parents help athletes deal effectively with injury, pressure, failures and loss of interest, which can occur during the investment years; this support is an important factor in athletes' abilities to overcome setbacks (Cote, 1999). This high level of emotional support provided in times of stress is an important role of parents during the investment years. In summary, Cote's model demonstrates that parents play a very active and influential role in the sporting lives of their children.

Athletes experience many highs and lows throughout their careers and are in need of social support. For many athletes, this social support comes from their parents. Athletes' ability to perceive and use available sources of social support helps them overcome obstacles and develop resiliency. Athletes benefit from three different types of social support: Emotional, informational, and tangible (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). The most important providers of social support are parents, but the support functions fulfilled by mothers and fathers differ. More specifically, research has revealed that, in general, the father plays the most important role in providing advice to the child-athlete. However, both parents provide tangible support primarily in the form of travel and financial backing (Holt & Dunn, 2004).

How do parents influence their children positively through sport? Power and Woogler (1994) conducted research on the effect of parenting practices on swimmers' competitive experiences. Their research suggests that parental support is positively correlated with children's enjoyment of and enthusiasm for sport to the extent that the more encouragement parents give their children, the greater perceived physical competence the children have (Brustad, 1993). In addition, children's levels of participation in physical activity are strongly related to parental expectations and beliefs about their children's physical competence (Brustad, 1996; Kimiecik, Horn, & Shurin, 1996). Therefore, when parents support and believe in their children they provide the foundation for children to have an enjoyable and successful experience in sport. In addition, as children grow older, parental support can act as a buffer that alleviates stress children may have due to their athletic involvement (Van Yoeren, 1995).

Since parents play a vital role in the development of athletes, it is important to study the way in which athletes perceive their parents' involvement. Many studies reveal the relevance of parents in children's athletic experiences; however, few have attempted to study individual parents or the family dynamic and its impact on children's participation in sport. In other words, theories of parental influence in sport are useful but they are not based on in-depth analyses of experiences of various family members (Cote, 1999).

Children who experience success or high levels of sport achievement are often highly visible in the media and can symbolize proof of the moral worth of their parent(s). In other words, if the child succeeds, it is believed that the parents have met the expectations of being "good" parents (Coakley, 2006). Parents also blame themselves

when their children do not meet or surpass expectations. At the same time, when their children develop beyond what was expected, parents often feel they deserve the credit (Coakley, 2006). For these reasons among others, parents invest time, money, and energy into the athletic careers of their children. To better understand a father's role in youth sport, it is important to examine the history of fathers in sport.

History of Fathers in Sport

Twentieth century fathers were seen as the breadwinners of most "traditional" families (Coakley, 2006). The power of the father in this type of family structure was dependent upon his income and also the ideology of male supremacy. However, such ideology has slowly been eroded because of the economic necessity of two incomes and changing social mores. After World War II, the social and economic reality of many families led to an increasing number of women having to seek full-time employment (Coakley, 2006). In the mid-1960s, the women's movement and feminism challenged the ideology of male supremacy. Also, traditional cultural foundations of a father's power and authority were undermined. Thus, as the foundation of fathers' power and authority eroded, more mothers became breadwinners. These changes left fatherhood in a social and cultural limbo (Coakley, 2006).

Sport helps explain part of this history. In the daily operations of schools and churches, many fathers continue to feel out of place, even though the culture says they should be a part of those institutions. Sport, however, provides fathers with a "safe" context in which they can be involved in their children's lives without challenging dominant gender ideology (Coakley, 2006). In the sport arena, fatherhood seems manly and appealing and motherhood can be differentiated from it (Gavannas, 2003). Further,

youth sport is a context that has been controlled and organized by men in ways that reaffirm traditional gender ideology while at the same time providing fathers with the ability to meet the expectations of involvement in their children's lives. Youth sport offer fathers a wide range of parenting opportunities, so it is not surprising that many fathers feel comfortable using sport as a site to be involved with their children (Coakley, 2006).

Interestingly, in our society, we chastise fathers because they are not more involved with their children, and at the same time promote beliefs that make it hard for many fathers to be as close to their children as the children are to their mothers. Such beliefs include men being inferior to women when it comes to caring for and raising children and fathers being less committed to raising and supporting their children emotionally than women (Neilsen, 1999). We seem to accept the notion that men are genetically inferior to women as parents (Farrel, 1994). However, this assumption is not supported by the research. First of all, most of what women demonstrate as mothers is not instinctive but learned (Blakely, 1994). Many fathers resent having to work long hours and the demands of jobs that keep them away from their children (Barnett & Rivers, 1996). Lastly, when fathers spend equal time with their children and do not have to shoulder the family's financial burdens alone, fathers are generally just as nurturing and involved with their children as mothers. Thus, although fathers interact differently with their children, they are not inferior parents (Barnett & Rivers, 1996). All in all, how fathers and mothers relate to their children is heavily influenced by what their particular society and culture at a particular time in history taught them (Coontz, 1997). Our

society has taught fathers that mothers play a superior role in the parenting of children. However, through sport, men can get more involved in their children's lives.

Fathers' Role in Youth Sport

Fatherhood and the involvement of fathers in "traditional" family life has been given little attention by social scientists (Coakley, 2006). The majority of sport studies have focused on parental involvement as a whole. Parenting is the context in which gender relations and roles are played out by many men and women at some time in their lives. The backgrounds, social classes, and cultural identities of fathers are diverse, which makes identifying one ideal model of fatherhood impossible (Kay, 2006).

The circumstances surrounding fatherhood are very complex and contradictory, making it unclear what role fathers play or should play in U.S. society. Conceptions of modern fatherhood view increased involvement with children as the key component of being a good father (Kay, 2006). Fathers who do not actively promote the interests of their children are seen as not meeting the standards that current American society defines as good parenting. Fathers are expected to actively advocate for their children's successes. Also, fathers are expected to support and guide their children as they learn to play sports (Coakley, 2006).

Parents deliberately use leisure activities to pursue such goals. This purposive leisure is a means of contributing to the family's functioning and achieving beneficial outcomes for their children (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Parents also regard after-school activities as useful tools in the moral, personal, and social development of their children (Dunn, Kinney, & Hofferth, 2003). Since good fathers today are viewed as those who spend time with and want purposive leisure for their children, sport is a primary site

through which fathers can pursue involvement with their children. This research on fathering provides a unique opportunity for deconstructing the gendered father-daughter relationship, a gendered relationship through which men and women are inevitably linked (Kay, 2006).

The Father-Daughter Relationship

In the psychology field, Freud was one of the first to theorize the father-daughter relationship. Freud (1940) described *the electra complex* that young girls have for their fathers. Freud (1940) postulated that young girls - by the age of 5 years - become disappointed by their mothers. They feel deprived because their mothers no longer give them the constant love and care that they received as a baby. Freud goes onto state that little girls recover their feminine pride when they begin to appreciate the attention they receive from their fathers. In this way, the daughter discovers that she lacks sole rights to her father. She realizes that she cannot, after all, marry Daddy, nor can she cuddle or hug him as much as she would like. However, Mommy is able to do these things, so the mother becomes the rival for Daddy's affections. As a result, Freud (1940) suggests that throughout the daughter's life she is continuously longing and striving for the affection of her father. This longing later surfaces in relationships with men who could be mates. More recent studies conducted with adolescent girls reveal that the majority of girls describe their relationships with their fathers as "distant," "lacking emotional content," and "uncomfortable and withdrawn," (Youniss & Smollar, 1985, p. 91). In general, adolescents tend to have emotionally neutral relationships with their fathers (Steinberg, 1990).

Contrary to Freud, Chodorow - a feminist sociologist - claims that a child forms its ego in reaction to the dominating mother figure (1978). The male child forms this sense of independent agency easily, identifying with the agency and freedom of the father and imitating his possessive interest in the mother or wife. However, this task is not as simple for the female child. The mother identifies with her daughter more strongly, and the daughter attempts to make the father her new love object, but does not want to let go of her intense bond with mom. Chodorow (1978) claims that male children typically experience love as a dyadic relationship, whereas daughters are caught in a triangle where the ego is pulled between love for the father, love of the mother, and concern and worry over the relationship of the father to the mother.

Ultimately, Chodorow claims that a girl does not completely reject her mother in favor of men, but continues her relationship of dependence upon and attachment to her (1978). In addition, the daughter ascertains that the strength and quality of her relationship to her father depends on the strength and quality of her relationship with her mother. Not only that, she grows up with an ongoing preoccupation with relationships.

Gilligan, also a feminist researcher, maintains that women must learn to tend to not only their own interests, but the interests of others and, therefore, experience the complexities of relationships. Gilligan (1982) suggests that women have differing moral and psychological tendencies than men and believes that men think in terms of rules and justice, whereas women are more inclined to think in terms of caring and relationships. She further posits that men have a moral justice outlook and women have traditionally been taught a different kind of moral outlook that emphasizes solidarity, community, and caring about relationships. This alternative view of morality – the care perspective that

some women exhibit - has been trivialized because it is related to women who are traditionally in positions of limited power and influence (Gilligan, 1982).

Missing in the literature are narrative accounts of the ways in which girls perceive their relationships with their fathers. Way and Gillman (2000) were two of the first researchers to study early adolescent girls' perceptions of their fathers. Specifically, they conducted semi-structured interviews with girls from low-income families and who represented ethnic minorities. Participants were asked about their relationship with their fathers. Four themes emerged from the interviews. First, the girls had or expected to have activity-oriented relationships with their fathers. Second, the girls said they wanted more from their fathers. Third, the girls perceived their fathers as being overprotective. And fourth, the girls protected their fathers. In addition, these girls were not less engaged with their fathers than with their mothers; however, they were engaged in different ways. They talked about doing things or wanting to do things with their fathers, especially wanting activity-oriented relationships with their fathers. These were the types of relationships they had and seemed to enjoy. Conversely, when the girls spoke about their mothers they talked about wanting to talk with their mothers (Way & Gilman, 2000). These results certainly conform to gender expectations for each family member: the father, the mother, and the daughter.

Neilsen (2006) conducted a 15-year longitudinal study investigating college daughters' relationships with their fathers. The data for the study were collected from 423 female students enrolled in a father-daughter relationship course at a private university in the southeast. The consisted of a composite of information from papers and questionnaires. The results of the study revealed that the majority of the women felt they

had a loving relationship with their fathers. However, the vast majority claimed that their relationship with their mother was more communicative, emotionally intimate, and comfortable. Furthermore, the women felt that mothers and daughters were more involved in one another's lives than were fathers and daughters. Eighty percent of the daughters said they spent more time talking to and being with their mothers than with their fathers. Also, eighty percent of the college women wanted to communicate more comfortably, more honestly, and more personally with their fathers and to get to know one another better. Lastly, more than half of the participants claimed they wished they could spend more time alone with their father without other family members around and wished they could talk more comfortably with their fathers about personal things (Neilsen, 2006). One of the limitations of the study is that all of the participants were mostly Caucasian women attending a private university and taking a college course in the father-daughter relationship. It is possible that the women enrolled in the course were women who were looking for more from their fathers and their relationship with them and had a heightened interest in learning more about the father-daughter relationship. Therefore, results may not be representative of all college-aged daughters. Regardless, the research reveals that these women wanted more from their relationships with their fathers.

In regards to athletics, sport research demonstrates that fathers spend more time with their sons than with their daughters in that they are more likely to be involved in their sons' sport participation than their daughters' (Lundberg & Rose, 2002). However, fathers can play an active role in the sport participation of their daughters. Generally, fathers spend more time with their daughters in sport today than they did in the past

because girls have more opportunities than the generations before them. Due to their fathers' and other significant others' interest and involvement, women have become great athletes in the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

There are many factors that play a role in athletes' sport achievement. Thus, it is important to identify significant others' investments and involvement in an athlete's life. According to Kay (2006), there is a need for research that focuses on fatherhood in the realm of sport studies. When looking specifically at girls and women and the role fathers play in their lives, very little research has been done. The research that has been conducted reveals that daughters seem to want more from their dads (Way & Gillman, 2000; Nielsen, 2006). Understanding the experience of female athletes and the potential impact of the father-daughter relationship on their sport experience can facilitate an increased understanding of the reciprocal and inevitable nature of this relationship and how it can be enhanced through shared athletic experiences. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology used in the current study to attain knowledge on the influence of the father-daughter relationship on female's experience in their athletic careers.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodological aspects of the study are discussed. These include: (a) the researcher as instrument; (b) the co-participants; (c) epistemology; (d) ontology; (e) the bias statement; (f) the bracketing interview; (g) cross-cultural research; (h) the pilot interview; (i) the phenomenological interview; (j) description of co-participants; and (k) the procedures for the data analysis.

The Researcher as Instrument

The researcher cannot be separated from the study when conducting qualitative research. To provide participants with as much room as possible in assisting me in interpreting their experiences, it is important to allow the participants to tell the me what they think I need to know. Thus, the course of dialogue was jointly set by the participant and myself. The participant was the expert on her experience and my desire was to learn about it from her through our dialogue. My role was to ensure the participants' experiences were discussed in sufficient detail and to seek clarification if anything discussed was not understood fully (Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

Co-Participants

In phenomenological studies, the participants discuss their experiences and are an integral component of the research being conducted. The participants are the experts on the research question (Polkinghorne, 1989). As in any ongoing dialogue, the participant and the researcher may come to learn something new about the phenomenon, themselves, or both. For this reason, participants in phenomenological studies are called "co-participants," since both the participant and researcher are gaining from the experience of

the interview (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Therefore, the female athletes who participated in this study are here after referred to as "co-participants."

Epistemology

My epistemological approach is eclectic. I take both a hermeneutic and feminist approach. The hermeneutic approach takes the standpoint that human behavior is influenced by the individual's perception of the environment and the meaning of those social contexts. Therefore, it is believed that human behavior is related to the context-specific meanings people come across and that have been formed due to personal experiences and subjective appraisals (Brustad, 2002). From the hermeneutic perspective, we make meaning of the world through our experiences and interactions with others. According to the hermeneutic approach, language is the most effective way to develop and convey this meaning to others. Thus, the phenomenological interview is a proper research method to utilize when conducting research using a hermeneutic approach.

The feminist approach focuses on power relations, but, more importantly on understanding gender-related patterns of influence and relational patterns that exist in society. In the framework of sport psychology, the feminist researcher believes that it is impossible to understand the psychology of the female sport participant while disregarding female sport history, stereotypes of female athletes, and the socialization of females in sport that currently influence female athletes (Brustad, 2002). I believe that knowledge should benefit and transform society and that research should be conducted with the hope that the contribution of such knowledge will better society. As a radical feminist, I believe that the social meaning of women's bodies such as being seen as a

natural mother and sex object are responsible for the oppression of women. In my opinion, this ideology trivializes women when they exceed such boundaries. More specifically, I believe patriarchal societies privilege men and legitimize male domination over women (Costa & Guthrie, 1994).

Ontology

In phenomenology, it is assumed that human life existed before the researcher did and that it will be there after the researcher departs the world. Therefore, in phenomenology, the researcher must temporarily set aside his or her beliefs in reality. Ontological judgments regarding the essence of life are also postponed during the research project so that the researcher can study the ways in which the co-participants experience their realities and exist independent of the world around them (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000).

Bias Statement

Without some personal interest in the research being conducted, a researcher could not follow through in completing or even beginning a research project (Colaizzi, 1978). My personal bias is that fathers tend to be extremely influential in their daughters' athletic careers. My presumption is that sports have brought female athletes closer to their fathers if they have a healthy relationship with their fathers in general, rather than distancing them from one another. Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Gadamer (1975) noted that it is not possible, or even desirable, for a researcher to be completely free of biases. My biases, which were further revealed in the bracketing interview, were temporarily suspended, not banished; I repeatedly brought them into awareness throughout the study.

I asked myself, "Why I am involved in this phenomenon?," "What do I believe?," and "Are my biases staying out of the interview process?"

Bracketing Interview

Every stage of qualitative research depends on the skills, training, insights, and interpretive lens of the researcher. However, the information the researcher "knows" does not need to be problematic in the phenomenological paradigm. To ensure the researcher's openness to unanticipated aspects of the phenomenon, a bracketing interview is conducted prior to beginning any phenomenological study (Pollio, Henley & Thompson, 1997).

Bracketing in phenomenological studies, as defined by Thomas & Pollio (2002), is an activity in which the researcher tries to set aside theories, knowledge, and assumptions that he or she has regarding the phenomenon of interest. It is also a process of identifying and sensitizing one's prejudices and biases that may distort one's view of the phenomenon. Prior to conducting the interviews with co-participants, I was interviewed by a sport psychology Ph.D. student experienced in conducting phenomenological research. The bracketing interview involved demographic questions (see Appendix A) as well as the main phenomenological question, *"When you think about your experience of your father's influence on your athletic career, what stands out for you?"* The bracketing interview allowed me to become more aware of my own experience which could lead to biased or leading questions and to help me realize that I am not free from my own perspective. The bracketing interview was audiotaped, transcribed, and then thematized.

From the bracketing interview it became clear that my relationship with my father has been enhanced because of our shared sport interests and experiences. It was evident that sport helped me feel connected to my Dad and established the foundation for an open and respectful relationship as I grew to be a young woman and as I continue to mature throughout adulthood. Results from the bracketing interview revealed that I expected the female athletes to discuss the encouragement and/or pressure that their fathers provided in not only their athletic career, but life in general. Even more specifically, the bracketing interview revealed that I believed that athletics is the groundwork for the majority of relationships between female athletes and their fathers.

During my bracketing interview, I addressed the fact that the female athletes may not come from a traditional family background (as I did) and may not come from a secure home life. I realized that when conducting the interviews it would be important for me to be sensitive to the differences in backgrounds of the co-participants. Also, I expressed my realization that it was possible that female-athletes who had a negative experience of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers may not volunteer to participate in my study and therefore, I may only be interviewing women who had a positive experience.

Lastly, it was apparent that I am adamant that fathers and daughters from all walks of life want desperately to be close, but are not always certain how to build a close bond. My bracketing interview suggested that it is my opinion that sports and physical activity is a great starting point for nurturing a secure and healthy father-daughter relationship.

Cross–Cultural Research

I am aware that some shared experience may occur from being a woman and that "woman" is a socially constructed category. However, all women do not share the same experience. The social contexts within which we live and make sense of the world differ greatly between different groupings of women. Thus, all women do not share the same reality. With this in mind, it was important that I, as a feminist researcher, recognize the limited focus of much feminist work centered around college-educated, middle and upper class, Caucasian, heterosexual women (Hall and Sandler, 1996). As Hall (2001) points out, while a feminist preoccupation with gender exists, it often minimizes race and cultural differences between women. Thus, the marginalization of women of color is perpetuated.

African-American women are underrepresented in research on sport and face daily stereotypes, such as the matriarchy myth, the athletic superiority myth, and the intellectual inferiority myth (Breuning, 2005). Thus, while the main focus of my study was not the experience of race and how it intersects with female athletes' experience of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers, it was important for me to be sensitive and aware of cultural experiences because race plays a key role in the lives of African-American athletes (Lawrence, 2005).

For all of these reasons, it was important for me to be aware of the dynamic between being a Caucasian and interviewing African-American female athletes. I had to be aware of the white privilege that our society has carefully taught me not to recognize and understand how this privilege and unearned power could influence the interview process (McIntosh, 1989).

Pilot Interview

Prior to beginning the interviews with the co-participants of the study, I conducted a pilot interview with a soccer player at a Division I program. The interviewee was a junior soccer player who had been involved in sport since she was four years old. Her father had been her youth league soccer coach and she described herself as being raised in a traditional family, with both parents still being married. The interview was audio-taped and transcribed.

The interview served multiple purposes. First, it allowed me to see if the question I asked would promote dialogue regarding the athletes' experiences of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers. Secondly, it gave me the opportunity to practice using appropriate probing questions and discover which questions may be most beneficial in getting the athletes to talk about their experiences. Finally, it allowed me to become comfortable with the audio-recorder and the interview process in general.

As a result of the pilot interview, I changed the order in which I asked the general phenomenological question and the demographic questions (see Appendix B). In the pilot interview, I asked the demographic questions first and then the general question. I found that once all the background questions were answered and the co-participant was asked the general question she continually referred back to responses from the demographic questions. It was my feeling that many of the responses to the demographic questions could be provided during the phenomenological interview. Therefore, I decided to ask the general phenomenological question first and the demographic questions at the end (if co-participants did not address them). The pilot study was thematized and results are included in Chapter Four along with those of the main study co-participants.

The Phenomenological Interview

Phenomenological research is meant to explore the nature of the lived phenomenon of the individual (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). More specifically, it provides "a deeper and clearer understanding of what it is like to experience something," (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 58). A deeper understanding of athletes' experiences can be helpful to everyone interested in athletes' lives.

When conducting qualitative research, questions can form the answers obtained when interviewing. In phenomenological interviews, the flow of dialogue is established by the co-participant being interviewed. Phenomenological approaches focus on individuals' subjective experience and personal views of the world and self (Kvale, 1983). I attempted to capture the depth and uniqueness of each co-participant's experience and understand the different ways in which she made sense of her experiences. The interview and general research question was the major way I gained understanding of the co-participants' experiences (Kvale, 1983).

There are five characteristics of a phenomenological research question: 1) it attempts to reveal the essence of an experience; 2) it attempts to qualitatively address experience; 3) the question completely and fervently engages the co-participant; 4) it is descriptive in nature; and 5) it is illuminated through descriptions of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). Using these principles, the question the co-participants were asked in the present study was: *"When you think about your experience of your father's influence on your athletic career, what stands out for you?"*

Interview Protocol

The sample selection is purposeful (Thomas and Polio, 2002) when doing phenomenological interviewing in order to obtain participants who meet the criteria of the study. With the assistance of acquaintances I have associated with a women's basketball team, I personally contacted two co-participants, determined if they were qualified for the study, and then scheduled an interview with them at a time and location of their choice. Another co-participant volunteered to participate in the study after talking with teammates who had already participated. The coach scheduled a time and place for the interview during which both the female athlete and I were available. Then, due to the schedule of the women's basketball team and the remaining athletes' interest in participating in the study, and with the permission of my committee, the pool of co-participants became all female collegiate athletes. The remaining co-participants were identified through personal acquaintances, and then contacted by telephone. Together, we scheduled a place and time for the interview that was convenient.

All co-participants participated in the study on a volunteer basis. Before each interview began, I explained the purpose and procedures of the study and asked the co-participant to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A). I told each co-participant that her real name would not be linked to the study and gave her the opportunity to choose a pseudonym. When a pseudonym was not chosen by the co-participant, I chose one for her. I informed each co-participant that she could withdraw from the study at any time and that her interview would remain confidential. Demographic questions, referred to as "background questions" were asked at the end of the interview in order to gain

additional insight about the co-participant's personal history (see Appendix B). Each interview was audio-recorded and then transcribed.

Description of Co-Participants

There are two primary criteria for eligibility in a phenomenological study. First, the co-participants must have had experienced the phenomenon of interest. Secondly, the co-participants must be willing to talk about their experiences with the interviewer (Polkinghorne, 1989). The co-participants for this study were eight female collegiate athletes on scholarship. All of the co-participants indicated they had a relationship with their father. Informed consent was obtained by each co-participant using informed consent forms approved by the Institutional Review Board of the university.

Five co-participants were African-American, two were Caucasian and one was Bi-racial. The co-participants ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-two years. On average, they had been involved in sport since they were five years old. All of the women were raised in traditional, heterosexual family structures. All of the interviews were conducted over a four month span and ranged from nineteen to fifty-three minutes long. A brief description is given in the following paragraphs and in Table 1.

- Bree was a soccer player. She was the co-participant for the pilot interview. From my perspective, she seemed outgoing and extremely positive. She described herself as "spoiled by Dad," being raised in a traditional family and as being African-American. Her father had been her coach when she played youth soccer. She gave the following definition of "father":

> I always think a father-daughter relationship is special. Obviously, you're close with your mom. But my father-daughter relationship is special to me because a lot of people don't, well a big portion of people don't always grow up with a father and a mother in the household. So, I think when you do have that father-daughter relationship, the father and the child is really special because fathers have a different view and you do different things with your dad than you do with your mom.

- *Chaz* was a basketball player. From my perspective, she seemed to have a contagious upbeat personality calling herself "a jokester." She described herself as being raised in a traditional family and as being African-American. Her father had been her basketball coach in the past. She gave the following definition of "father":

  > To me, my Dad defined it as you know just being there and being supportive and letting me kind of choose which way I wanted to go in life but being the guidance figure. Not letting me you know veer from my path once I had a set mindset of what I wanted to do.

- *Beyonce* was a basketball player and from my perspective had a bubbly and warm personality. Beyonce described herself as coming from a traditional family and as being interracial. Her father had been her basketball coach up until coming to college. When asked what her definition of "father" was, she responded:

  > Wow. I think head of the household, the strong one of the house, the one who is the protector of the family. I think the provider. That's how I look at my Dad, like the stronghold that keeps everything together in the household.

- *Grace* was a basketball player and from my perspective was a reserved yet witty individual. She described herself as coming from a traditional family and being Caucasian. Her father had been her basketball coach in

the past throughout her life. When asked to define "father", she responded with the following:

> Abba! (Laughs). Umm…how would I define father? A male, a strong leader of a family setting who does his best to provide for his family and doing whatever is necessary to do that. He loves his family unconditionally.

- *Jackie* was a swimmer who "adores her father." She described herself as coming from a traditional family and being Caucasian. Her father had been her soccer coach in the past but as she stated, "He started coaching us when we were little but I think he saw how much pressure coaches put on their own kids so he didn't coach us after that growing up." When I asked her to define father, she said, "Your guardian. My father is a strong, smart, amazing man. He's the caretaker. He's the one who loves you always."
- *Natasha* was a track athlete and from my perspective seemed shy but had a dynamic presence. Natasha described herself as coming from a traditional family and being African–American. Her father had never been her coach. She defined "father" as, "someone who protects you because he's always there. He's a supporter I guess. He's a very loving person."
- *Tiffany* was a softball player and claimed to be "shy" but she was very articulate in her interview. During her interview she routinely referred to her father as "Daddy." Tiffany described herself as coming from a traditional family and being African – American. Her father was her

coach throughout her entire childhood. When asked to define father, she responded:

> I would say supportive, always there. Loving like I can tell my Dad anything like I probably wouldn't tell him everything but I don't like have that block that a lot of girls have with their dads. I feel like I could go to him for anything and tell him everything and he'll just be like, ok. Even if he doesn't agree with it, he'll tell me because we have an open relationship but there's no block.

- *Gabrielle* was a volleyball player and from my perspective seemed very confident and outgoing. She was a self-proclaimed "daddy's girl." She described herself as coming from a traditional family and being African-American. Her father had never been her sport coach but he has been a basketball coach for over twenty-two years. The following was her definition of father:

> My father to me is a man of God, a strong man of God, who has always been there for me and will always be there for me forever. Whenever I'm in trouble or whenever I need someone I'm always going to go to God but I'll always know that my Dad's there, too. And umm…I mean like he's my coach in life, he can fix anything, he is my father, I love him to death and umm...he's everything.

Data Analysis

Following the interviews, I wrote field notes regarding the experience and the perception I had of each co-participant. Next, I listened to each interview one time to get a sense of the whole. Then, I transcribed all of the interviews verbatim for contextual analysis. Existential-phenomenological interpretation is rooted in a continuous process of relating parts of the text to the whole; thus, all the individual passages are understood in terms of their contribution to the larger whole (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). I then read through the transcripts to familiarize myself with the data. Next, I read through the

transcripts writing my notes in the margins and looking for patterns in the interviews. I then systematically color-coded the text and my notes to identify meaning units concerning a certain topic. After doing this, I read through the interview one more time to ensure my initial coding was accurate and consistent. I received assistance in thematizing two of the interviews from a graduate student who was my interpretative research partner in another research group familiar with thematizing. The graduate student signed a confidentiality agreement statement (see Appendix C). The function of the interpretative partner is to provide critical assessment of the text (Pollio et al., 1997). More or less, my interpretative research partner assisted me in focusing solely on one specific aspect of the transcript instead of looking at the whole.

Next, I typed up the themes depicted from each interview and e-mailed each co-participant her themes to verify that her thoughts were captured accurately and to ensure that the themes depicted her experience of her father's involvement in her athletic career. The act of giving back the findings to the co-participants recognizes the reciprocity that is innate in qualitative research (Lather, 1991) and serves as a trustworthy check of the data. Two co-participants responded by adding additional information regarding their relationship with their father. An example was Tiffany's additional comment, "One other thing is that I think I was closer to my dad than my other sisters even though all of us have our own little way with Daddy. But, I think that because I was with him the whole time because he was my coach since I was in tee ball, I was closer to him than my other sisters. He didn't really play that much with them but Daddy was my coach all the way through."

After receiving confirmation from the co-participants that their experiences were captured accurately, I compared and contrasted themes across co-participants. After that, I discussed my themes with my interpretative research partner. Together, we discussed our impressions of the major themes. Different themes and sub-themes were rearranged and sometimes removed until we achieved consensus, with my view serving as the final one in cases where I could shed some light on what occurred in the interviews. The thematic representation of the female athletes' experience of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers is summarized in Chapter 4.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Name	Sport	Race	Family Structure	Father Has Been Coach	Years Involved in Sport
Bree	Soccer	African American	Traditional	Yes	14 years
Chaz	Basketball	African American	Traditional	Yes	17 years
Beyonce	Basketball	Interracial	Traditional	Yes	15 years
Grace	Basketball	Caucasian	Traditional	Yes	15 years
Jackie	Swimming	Caucasian	Traditional	Yes	17 years
Natasha	Track	African American	Traditional	No	13 years
Tiffany	Softball	African American	Traditional	Yes	16 years
Gabrielle	Volleyball	African American	Traditional	No	12 years

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The purpose of present study was to explore daughters' perceptions of their father's role in their athletic careers. I was especially interested in understanding how college-aged women perceive their father's influence in their athletic experiences. To accomplish this purpose, I utilized a phenomenological interview approach to obtain the information from the young women in their own words.

In this chapter, the findings from the study are presented as themes and sub-themes. All of the major themes and their related sub-themes are discussed and a selection of supporting quotes for each theme is presented (see Figure 1). The major themes from the interviews with these collegiate female athletes were: *Social Support through the Sport Process, Father as Coach, Mom as Emotional Connection, Relationship Revolves around Sport*, and *Dad as Motivator*. Although each of the collegiate female athlete's experience regarding her father's involvement in her athletic career was unique, there were remarkably consistent patterns to the co-participants' collective stories. Therefore, in this chapter, I also introduce "Ruth," a fictitious figure who represents a composite of all the co-participants and whose story is told in the co-participants' own words (indicated by italics) describing their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers.

Quotes	Sub-Themes	Major Theme
He's pretty much the one who got me started playing. He got me interested actually. He's actually the one that started me to play.	He Got Me Started	
One of the things that he has helped me with down here is recovering from a knee injury. He was there holding my hand and I was in so much pain. For instance with my injury, my dad's like, "she's strong enough to handle this."	Injury	
He was there for my games. He comes to just about every home game here. Every game, every activity he's there. He has always come out to my big races.	He Attends My Competitions	Social Support through the Sport Process
He was there through the whole recruiting process because that stuff was just really long. So when recruiting came it was a pretty easy decision.	The Recruiting Process	
I learned from my dad more than any other coach. He taught me that if you didn't learn anything then you weren't doing what you were supposed to be doing, you weren't working hard enough.	I Learned from Him	

Figure 1. Thematic representation of female athletes' experience of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers

Quotes	Sub-Themes	Major Theme
I could feel like I had one of the best games you know and while he's always been positive it always seemed like there was so much more negative that he could say than there was positive. I felt that if I proved it to him there was still an area where I and if I worked on my shot and did what he asked me to do then my ball handling skills weren't good enough and if my ball handling wasn't good enough then I wasn't fast enough on defense and I didn't read the offense as well as I should've.	Never Good Enough	Father as Coach
He was harder on me, of course, I'm his daughter. He gets mad at you because he knows what you are capable of because you are his daughter so its kind of hard to slack off and goof around like your other teammates. He was always harder on me. I'm not the only one on this team, yell at somebody not at me, you do it all the time. He won't yell at anybody else.	Harder on Me	

Figure 1 cont'd. Thematic representation of female athletes' experience of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers

Quotes	Sub-Themes	Major Theme
My mom has been just as involved as my dad. My mom probably has a big influence because my dad's always working. She comes to every game, every tournament.	Mom's Just as Involved	Mom as Emotional Connection
Mom was on the phone and she said that dad is always talking about how great I ran and stuff like that. He's very loving; he doesn't show it all the time but my mom is telling his feelings to us. Mom was basically there to like smooth everything over. She was just the pacifier. She was the mediator between us.	Mom's the Mediator	

Figure 1 cont'd. Thematic representation of female athletes' experience of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers

Quotes	Sub-Themes	Major Theme
From the beginning it was a sport-oriented relationship so I think it was a way for us to get close. Basketball has probably put me and my dad on a higher level. Our relationship really revolves around basketball. Without sport I don't think there'd be much to our relationship.	A Relationship Without Sport?	
I always felt that my discussions growing up with my father were either one, I did something wrong, or about basketball. Dad, why do we have to talk about everything about basketball? Why can't we just be normal and not talk about basketball?	Sport Conversations	Relationship Revolves Around Sport
But I'm really close to my dad because he's the one who took me to all my practices, was there for my games and all the car rides and trips. I like just spending time with him watching sports. When we hang out its normally sports-related. I think it was my junior year me and my dad went on our nationals, just me and my dad went.	Spending Time Together	

Figure 1 cont'd. Thematic representation of female athletes' experience of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers

Quotes	Sub-Themes	Major Theme
I want to make him happy and proud of me. I want him to be proud. I don't want to be a disappointment.	I Want Him to Be Proud of Me	
He's always encouraged me. He's really encouraging. He's supportive. He comes to support me.	He Encourages/ Supports Me	Dad as Motivator
Got mad at him for pushing me. He was trying to push me the way he thought I needed to be pushed. Pushed me to be better.	He Pushes Me	

Figure 1 cont'd. Thematic representation of female athletes' experience of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers

Ruth's Story

The purpose of this narrative is to provide a prototype of these women's experience of their fathers' involvement in their athletic careers is to express the different voices and meanings associated with each woman's experiences sewn together in a verbal structure that represents a collection of these experiences (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). This structure is representative of how the main themes from the interviews emerged and how they might be understood simultaneously, not one at a time or sequentially (Cook, 1981). Ruth's age and experience are a cumulative mean of the female collegiate athletes in this study. Due to the fact that the co-participants participated in various collegiate sports, Ruth is characterized as a multi-sport athlete who represents the sports the co-participants play.

My name is Ruth, and I am 20 years old. *It is really funny because nobody believes me but my first Christmas my dad bought me a little plastic basketball goal. So, I can honestly say that I've been playing since I was able to walk. I remember going to the gym from an early age, just going in a stroller* and *just sitting there watching him play. And then, umm...just him taking me to the park and teaching me the basics and everything and I didn't even learn how to shoot a basketball really until I was like 10 because I concentrated on all the fundamentals besides shooting. I actually started playing organized ball when I was four when I played bitty ball and then I started playing AAU when I was 8 and played until I was 16.* Dad's *the person that started me playing and he's always been involved.*

He coached me for...I don't, let's see; he was my tee ball coach and all the way up until probably when I started 18 and under. So, I liked it but at the same time I was

like, "get out of here". Because I felt like he was always picking on me. For instance, I would do something he would be like, don't do that. You know but I think he just was always looking out for me but at the time I didn't like it. It was just how he handled it. He's my dad and he knows me so it's not the same as having a random person coaching you.

When Dad was *my coach...it made things a little bit tense because I looked at him as my dad a lot of times and not a coach and sometimes talked back to him and that's not the kind of respect you'd show a coach and so at first it was just kind of like weird because I had to learn you know that he is my coach right now. He's still my dad but not right now. He's my coach. You know just kind of like knowing the boundaries and stuff like that. Umm...he was harder on me, of course, I'm his daughter. Sometimes that got frustrating because I was like you know what I'm not the only one on this team and you know yell at somebody else not at me, you do it all the time.*

There's one difference between Dad being my coach and *him being in the stands, he can't say anything. So I can do whatever and just like block him out. But like when he was coaching he would be on the field and when I would be pitching he would come to the mound and I'd be like don't talk to me right now. But when I'm in the zone he can affect that if he's on the field but when he's in the stands he can't stop play and he can't say anything. When I play I've been told I block everybody out. So I guess I could block it out and I wouldn't even know that he was there. But when he was coaching I could block him out to some degree but then he'd call a timeout and say I need a timeout sir and I'm just like "NO! I don't want a timeout." So if he was in the stands he would not have any say whatsoever, so I could just do whatever.*

However, because he knew so much, *overall I think I learned a lot more about the game of basketball than other players because my dad did understand the game and he expected me to know it just as well if not at sometimes even better than he did. I had to anticipate what he was thinking to do. It was a very positive thing because it made me learn the game and I think I understood the game better than my peers and my teammates. I think him being my coach I knew what was expected out of me where some players maybe didn't know what he meant by a certain thing or comment or look. I could read him much better so I was able to adjust I think quicker than other players were maybe able to and I knew what he wanted to accomplish. I guess at the same time I always wanted to prove to him that I was as good of a player as I could be. I felt that if I proved it to him there was still an area where I wasn't good enough and if I worked on my shot and did what he asked me to do then my ball handling skills weren't good enough and if my ball handling was good enough then I wasn't fast enough on defense and I didn't read the offense as well as I should've. There was always something else that he was critical of* and *I took it very personal.*

The other aspect that was hard was when I was in high school after the game I didn't want to talk about everything that I did wrong. I could feel like I had one of the best games and while he's always been positive it always seemed like there was so much more negative that he could say than there was positive. I would get so frustrated and say, "Dad, why do we have to talk about everything about basketball? Why can't we just be normal and not talk about basketball?" When we'd get home it would be on the t.v. and he'd be sitting there talking about what I need to do and I was constantly playing. You know that was the biggest thing, always having to talk about it. I mean, I love the

sport - don't get me wrong - but you know sometimes it is nice to talk about something else.

I think he was just always was looking out for me but at the time I didn't like it. Now, I realize that he was just trying to push me in the way he thought I needed to be pushed. Obviously, there were times when I was in the gym like three hours a day. I would practice for a couple of hours and then I'd go to another gym right after that. He always was really keen on me doing that because high school is so much different from college. So, I have to work on my skills on my own time and not during the practice in two hours to become a great player. Sometimes I would get really frustrated with him you know I was tired and you know Dad I want to go home. But now that I look back I am like "look at where it got me." I'm playing at you know one of the best, the top school in the nation so basically that paid off. Yeah, I was definitely really ticked off at times and got mad at him but like I said it got me to where I am today and so I can't really regret that at all.

He was there *through the whole recruiting process because that stuff was just really long. It was frustrating and exciting all at the same time and he had been there, done that. So, for him it was easy to encourage me and look at the pros and cons of each school. And that just kind of sticks out in my mind because it is one thing to sit down and do that like a regular person who hasn't been there. But, for him, he kind of had seen both sides of the field being a scholarship athlete and playing for a good school in college. So, I definitely think that was one of the biggest things that he has ever helped me with.*

Another time when he was always there was during my injury. *I had surgery on my left shoulder and have to have surgery on my right shoulder because I hurt it in the end of November. I remember in January that my shoulder just hurt so bad. I couldn't swim, I couldn't do anything...it was just awful. I called him and talked to him and he just put the facts out like "this is what happened, this is what you have to do." I was seriously like "this is going to end my career, what am I going to do with my life?" He was like "no, relax your shoulder" and was totally like "it is going to be okay." I was like "Dad, I'm going to cry," and he said not to worry about it. This is the way it goes and you're totally going to be okay. He can put things into perspective a lot better than I can. Whenever I start to wonder why I'm doing this or why everything is happening to me, he's really straightforward and telling me that I'm going to be fine.*

As far as Mom, *she was always the pacifier. He would yell at me and he would say "do you not see it" and my mom would be the mediator and say, "Ruth, you do kind of do that". She understood that basketball was so much a part of my life that I needed to do something else and that's why I played the other sports to give me a break from basketball.* Also, *she would tell me my dad's feelings. Like my mom will be on the phone and she'll say, "Dad is always talking about how great you ran" and stuff like that. My mom has* been involved in my experience, *too, but like* dad's *the athletic one and that's where I got my athleticism from because my mom didn't do anything. She's just tall basically.*

When it comes down to it, *every game, every activity, he's always there. He's the one who pushes me into doing it but is like telling me, you're doing a great job, keep it up. Just telling me how much he loves to watch me swim. He's a huge influence on my*

swimming. He's definitely a huge impact. If I had anything going on or whatever he especially would be like "you know you can quit we won't hold it against you." But you know he's always pulling me back in the right direction like "you're okay, you're going to make it." He's amazing! He's the reason why I'm still swimming. He's always been there for me. He'll call me and say, "I am on the internet and did you see the article about you?" And I'm like "no, I didn't know anything about it."

From the beginning it was a sport-oriented relationship so I think it was a way for us to get close. I definitely think that basketball probably has put me and my Dad on a higher level because we've both shared such a common interest and both of us playing in college and just having that drive to play in college because not everybody wants to play college basketball. I'm just real close with my dad. I can talk to him and I just enjoy spending time with him. Also, my dad's got my back. He's just always there for me and I know him so well. For instance, a lot of times we can look at each other and just by the face know what the other is thinking. He doesn't need to tell me when he's mad at me, or when he's proud of me...I just know by looking at him.

Then there's *sometimes that I think my dad doesn't always view me as, well, I don't want to say "his daughter" because that's not correct but I'm more of like, I don't know...I think our relationship would be much more father-daughter and much more...what's the word?... emotional...umm...I guess more "girly" but I think because of sport and our interactions that it is much more of a buddy-buddy, like one of the guys type of relationship I feel I have with my father because sometimes we don't talk about what is important. We just kind of say what needs to be said and go on and all of the emotions don't get involved unless they need to be and I think that partly has to do with*

that our personalities are very similar and the fact that I always felt my discussions growing up with my father were either I did something wrong or was about basketball. So, without basketball I'm sure I'd probably have more of that "gooey" or whatever you want to call that "girly-girly" father-daughter relationship instead of going to the basketball game and shooting hoops where you can go three hours and not really say anything and be okay with that relationship. But without basketball, I don't think I'd be as close to my Dad.

And, I guess *I want to make him happy and proud of me. Every time I run I want to make sure that he feels that* because *he's actually the one that started me playing and has been there for me the whole time. All the money and everything, he's always been there.* Also, *he knows me better than anyone else and I can look at him when I'm playing and actually be calmed down when I'm really frustrated. I just know that I would start playing a lot better after I had heard his encouragement. You know I would get mad at him but I would start playing a lot better. He's my biggest fan* and *I know he loves me* because *he's always been there.*

Social Support through the Sport Process

The first theme that emerged from the interviews was the women's experience of their father always being there. "Socialization through the Sport Process," is the theme that underlies all the other themes and provides a context for all the other themes and sub-themes. Each one of the female athletes interviewed mentioned that their father is and always has been "there" for them. "Socialization through the Sport Process" can be best understood by four intertwined but textually exclusive sub-themes (a) *He Got Me Started*; (b) *Injury*; (c) *He's at My Competitions*; (d) *Recruiting*; and (e) *I Learned from Him.*

He Got Me Started. The focus of this sub-theme is how the fathers got the women involved in sport. The athletes expressed that their fathers sparked their interest in participating in sport and as Chaz said, "he was there from the beginning."

The following quote demonstrates how Beyonce's father got her involved in sport:

> For my dad, he's pretty much the one who got me started playing basketball. Well, it is funny because nobody believes me but my first Christmas my dad bought me a little plastic basketball goal. So, I can honestly say that I've been playing since I was able to walk and dad got me into it.

Furthermore, Natasha discussed how her father got her involved in track and field, a sport that no one else in her immediate family had ever participated in:

> He got me interested actually. When I was younger I used to always go and watch my sister play tennis and there was a track near by. So, every time we went there I'd always be running around and stuff. He used to be like, "Oh my God, she's so fast. She's always running." A woman that he was working with was actually part of a track team so he had me like join with her. I was pretty little, probably like 5 years old. I've been running ever since and he got me into it.

Additionally, several co-participants also spoke of getting interested in participating in sport by watching their fathers play. Like Natasha stated, "He was on a

team and my sister, mom and I would always go watch him play." The following quote illustrates Chaz's first recollections of her father's influence on her sport participation:

> So, I remember going to the gym as early as I can remember like going to the gym in a stroller like just sitting there watching him. I couldn't wait to play too.

Injury. The sub-theme, *Injury*, captures the co-participants' experience of their father being present during their injury and rehabilitation. The female athletes described their experience in terms of their father being there and reminding them to "not give up."

Many of the athletes expressed that their father provided perspective following their injury. Jackie elaborated on her father's role in her rehabilitation of a recent shoulder injury:

> The thing about my dad is he's black and white and there's no gray area. I see a lot of gray and don't always see things clearly. Like, I had surgery on my left shoulder and have to have surgery on my right shoulder because I hurt it in the end of November. I remember in January that my shoulder just hurt so badly. I couldn't swim, I couldn't do anything. It was just awful. You know I called him and talked to him and he just put the facts out like, "this is what happened, this is what you have to do." I was seriously like "this is going to end my career, what am I going to do with my life?" He was like "no relax your shoulder" and was totally encouraging me that it is going to be okay. I was like "Dad, I'm going to cry" and he said not to worry about it. "This is the way it goes and you're totally going to be okay." He can put things into perspective a lot better than I can. Whenever I start to wonder why I'm doing this or why everything is happening to me he's really straightforward and telling me that I'm going to be fine and I can make it through the rehab.

Beyonce shared a very similar experience during her recovery from a knee surgery:

> One of the things that he has helped me with down here is that you know recovering from a knee injury and not playing you know as much as I'm maybe used to back in high school. Just him encouraging me to you know keep working hard you know…he reminds me I will get my chance eventually you know. Just him encouraging me is what I think is what is helping me make it through down here. So I think that is definitely a big thing that sticks out in my mind about him is just his encouragement for me because he was like "I've been there too. I've felt like giving up." He's just like you just got to push through it and you'll reach

> the end of the tunnel eventually. He reminds me every day this will get a little easier and my knee will get better.

During Gabrielle's interview she focused on her experience of her father's influence at the time that her ACL injury occurred, as well as her father's support during her rehabilitation:

> I went down at nationals. The second day, we were defending champs and we were number one and I was top five and I was going to college which thank God I had already committed. So, when I went down I was upset because I was like "Oh my God, I don't know what just happened." I was like "great." I look at him and he's like sitting there like "get up." I'm like "I can't get up." He's like "get up." I'm like "I know, I can't." My leg got caught behind me and so I tried to pull it forward to get up and as soon as I did that a scream came out from every ounce of my body. People were crying and seeing them cry made me worse and coaches are coming over and my dad is still not on the court yet. He's like "she's okay" and I'm like "Dad, no I'm not". He's so calm and he's just that kind of person who doesn't get tense or nervous. He's just so calm with everything. That's just how he is. Finally, he came down on the floor to see what's going on. I'm on the floor crying and trying to talk to him at the same time and we go over to one of the hospital stations that they have and he's still there. My mom wasn't even there because she's in the hotel room. She had no idea for almost two hours. And so, he's there and he's holding my hand and I'm in so much pain. I tore up everything, my meniscus, bruised MCL and PCL, I had an ankle sprain, and tore my ACL and they didn't even know that it was ACL until about a month later. He's still there with me and he's so supportive just because it is hereditary, the knee problems that I have. I've always had knee problems but they weren't as bad. He's supportive because he's my dad and he was there with my ACL the whole time. When I had my surgery, he went out and got a futon and it takes like 2 hours to put one together, he had it put together in like 5 minutes so I could lie down because we had stairs and I couldn't get up and down the stairs. He's just always there. He pushed me to get it strengthened because I was really lazy. I never had had a major surgery. Knowing how athletic I was and knowing that volleyball consists of a lot of jumping and lateral movement. I don't understand, how am I going to come back? He was there. With this surgery now, they actually put medical in my face for two years because they knew it was so bad and I didn't want to get cut because the surgery I just got doesn't fix it, it just cleans stuff up. So, it helps something it just doesn't solve the problem. So, I said no and my Dad's like it is whatever you want to do. He always asked me and he never just tried to shove things in my face like they did. Like, you need this surgery. He just asked me, "Gabrielle what do you want to do?" because he knows that I love playing.

He comes to my competitions. The women expressed gratitude at the fact that their fathers came to their events and supported them. As Natasha stated, "Just being there, he motivates me by being there at my meets when he can." The women expressed the importance that their fathers come and watch them participate in their respective sports. Natasha's comment further illustrates this point:

> He has always comes out to my big races where I want my parents to be there. He will come to support me....My dad was really involved with tennis and he'd always come and watch me and my sister play. He was really big into that.

Chaz, a collegiate basketball player explained that still today her father makes it a priority to come to her games:

> He was the one who took me to all my practices when I was younger, was there for my games and he comes to just about every home game here. So, and that's like four hours away from home. He even works his schedule around my home basketball games.

Jackie, a collegiate swimmer illustrated how her father too, took off work and reorganized his schedule to support her. She also discussed the importance to her for him being at the Olympic trials:

> A time that comes to my mind when my dad was really influential was the Olympic trials. My mom couldn't get out of work and make it, so my dad took off work. He made signs and just having him there and like seeing how much fun he was having was cool. I was like "Thank you God for my dad." He made it better, I was scared and he was there. It was the Olympic trials. He was like a little kid with jar of candy the entire time. It meant so much to have him there.

Bree, a soccer play expressed that her father was going to travel to her game even though there was a good chance she would not play in the game due to an injury.

> He's definitely been a big influence on me because I always know that he's going to be there. Like this weekend he is going to be here whether I play or not.

Recruiting. The female athletes' discussed their awareness of their fathers' presence during the recruiting process. Tiffany, a softball player, discussed how her father left the process of choosing a university up to her. However, the entire time he was involved in the experience:

> I just knew I was going to play softball (in college) because softball will get me into college on scholarship so I think I just knew that it was the only way I was going to get in. I don't know daddy didn't really have to pressure me because he knew that I knew it was something I wanted to do. So when recruiting came it was a pretty easy decision to know that I was going to play softball in college and that was what I had been working for. He went with me on recruiting trips and he said, "whatever you want to do, you just have to know which school you want to go to." He left it up to me.

However, Beyonce expressed during her interview that her father played a much more active role in her decision-making process of choosing a university because he had done that in his own collegiate sport career. She responded with the following quote when asked what sticks out with regard to her father's involvement in her athletic career:

> I definitely think through the whole recruiting process because that stuff was just really long. It was frustrating and exciting all at the same time and you know he had been there, done that. So, for him it was easy to encourage me and you know look at the pros and cons of each school. And that just sticks out in my mind because it is one thing to sit down and do that like a regular person who hasn't been there. But for him, he kind of had seen both sides of the field you know being a scholarship athlete. That was one of the biggest things that he has ever helped me with. I don't know how I would've done it without him.

Father as Coach

This theme describes the women's experience of having their father as their coach. Five of the seven women had had their father as their coach at some point during their athletic career; of the remaining two co-participants, one had a father who was a coach but he was never her coach.

Tiffany expressed the difference between having her dad as a coach and him being a spectator in the stands in length:

> Him being in the stands, he can't say anything. So I can do whatever and just like block him out. But like when he was coaching he would be on the field and when I would be pitching he would come to the mound and I'd be like "don't talk to me right now." But like when I'm in the zone like he can affect that if he's on the field but when he's in the stands he can't stop play and he can't say anything. Like I tend to I guess like when I play I don't know but I've been told I will like block everybody out and like my mom will say did you hear me cheering for you? And I'll be like…no, I didn't hear anything. And she'd be like oh. So I guess like I could block it out and I wouldn't even know that he was there. But when he was like coaching like I could block him out to some degree but then he'd like call a timeout and say "I need a timeout sir" and I'm just like "NO!" (Laughs). "I don't want a timeout." (Laughs). So if he was in the stands he would like not have any say whatsoever so I could just do whatever.

Beyonce mentioned that her dad was always coaching her:

> Well, being a coach he's intense. He's intense when he's in the stands like in the crowd also but like I said earlier like you can hear him above everybody. He's always coaching me in the stands. No matter where he is, he's always coaching me.

Similar to Tiffany and Beyonce's experience, all of the women who had had their father as their coach at some point expressed it as being a pertinent experience for them, whether positive or negative. The sub-themes of He's My Coach Too include (a) Hardest on Me, (b) Never Good Enough, and (c) I Learned the Game from Him.

Harder on me. It is significant to note that all of the co-participants whose fathers coached them articulated that their father had higher expectations of them than of their teammates. The following quote illustrates Beyonce's experience:

> Actually being my coach…it makes things a little bit tense because like I look at him as my dad a lot of times and not a coach and sometimes talk back to him and that's not the kind of respect you'd show a coach and so at first it was just kind of like weird because I had to learn you know that he is my coach right now. He's still my Dad but not right now. He's my coach. You know just kind of like knowing the boundaries and stuff like that. He was harder on me, of course, I'm

> his daughter. Sometimes that got frustrating because I was like "you know what I'm not the only one on this team. Yell at somebody else not at me, you do it all the time."

Tiffany expressed a similar experience when she told a specific story about her father coaching her during a softball game:

> We were in a game and I can't remember quite what happened but I was playing third base and I think he was in the dugout. I had an error and he like got really mad because the game was on the line and I was like "what do you want me to do like, I mean I'm sorry I'm not perfect." But he like went crazy and then at bat he's the third base coach so I always have to look down at him and read his signs and I'm like I'm not looking at him. (Laughs). I was like "whatever I'm just going to do my own thing" and then my mom is in the stands. He just got upset and started yelling at me and I was like, like I couldn't do it and the umpire was like its okay, just go and swing do whatever. So, I have tears coming down my eyes and I can't even see the ball coming towards me. And I was like, "You know what? I quit." Like I get out of the dugout and get my stuff and walk to the stands and my mom is like "Oh god." (Laughs). So my mom takes me to the car and like we are watching the game from afar. I'm just like telling her and she's like you know, "you can't take it personally" and whatever. I just felt like he was picking on me like because if someone else does that he's like its ok, you'll get it next time and he won't yell at anybody else you know. I don't know. I just always felt like he…I don't know I know he was being there for me and all that stuff and wanted the best for me but I just felt like always picking on me or yelling at me for every little thing that I did and when someone else would do it he would say, "yeah its okay, you'll get it next time" and the next time do this or something like that. But with me he was like, "no you have to do this" and I'm like man. I don't know.

Jackie, too, expressed her experience of her father as a coach:

> He coached me for…I don't know like he was my tee ball coach and all the way up until probably when I started 18 and under. So, like, I don't know I like it but at the same time I was like, "get out of here". Because like, I felt like he was always picking on me. Like if I would do something he would be like, don't do that. If someone else would do it, he'd be like "Do better next time." You know but I think he just always was like looking out for me but at the time I was like I didn't like it. Its just like how he handled it, like other people could do things wrong but not me.

Chaz discussed her experience of having her father as her coach and illustrates how she was not able get away with things that her teammates were:

> Dad's been my coach since I was four. It is kind of hard to have your father as your coach because you get so mad so easily. Then, he gets mad at you because he knows what you are capable of so its kind of hard to slack off and goof around like your other teammates at a young age which is what you want to do all the time. So, I mean he might not necessarily pressure but I don't know it's a little difficult at times to be at practice and knowing that when you get in trouble at practice and still being in trouble when you go home.

Never good enough. This sub-theme captures the co-participants' experience of feeling "never good enough." The female athletes described the experience of always feeling like there was something else to work on or improve on, in their fathers' eyes. As Tiffany stated, "I mean I'm sorry I'm not perfect." The athletes expressed their experiences very passionately. Grace's quote supports the experience of never feeling that her performance was adequate:

> I felt that if I proved it to him there was still an area where I wasn't good enough and if I worked on my shot and did what he asked me to do then my ball handling skills weren't good enough and if my ball handling was good enough then I wasn't fast enough on defense and I didn't read the offense as well as I should've. There was always something else that he was critical of umm at the time I took it very personal. I think he was trying to motivate me and to communicate to me that I could always improve and I could always work on something and be better at something and because I learned that at home and in academics in which Cs were not good enough that on the basketball floor it was the same mentality that I feel that you know you can do well in an area and it wasn't ever good enough for him. He would try to motivate me by being very critical and um…and I think some of it was constructive criticism and I think some other of it was making me feel guilty and inadequate of the amount of work that I had put into it. So I think that because he only pointed out the negative there were many times where I sort of just gave up…well why do it. Umm…then when I think someone else would point it out then I think I was like, "Oh crap, dad was right" and then I would do it. Umm…you know the way he tried to communicate with me made me feel like I had to improve on something and I was acting like not that I didn't care but that umm…I didn't need to get better at it. I was like "Fine, I'll get by," and I knew that if I wanted to be really good that I couldn't get by.

Beyonce expressed her frustration with her father focusing on "everything she did wrong" in the following quote:

> Yeah because like when I was in high school like after the game I don't want to talk about everything that I did wrong. I could feel like I had one of the best games you know and while he's always been positive it always seemed like there was so much more negative that he could say than there was positive.

Interestingly, and ironically, although the athletes discussed their experience of always having something to work on and never being good enough, the same athletes also found value in their father's critical perspective as supported by the following quote:

> Sometimes I would get really frustrated with him you know I was tired and you know dad I want to go home or I don't want to hear about it (blah blah blah). But now that I look back like I am like "Look at where it got me." I'm playing at you know one of the best, the top school in the nation so you know basically that paid off.

Grace discussed in length about never feeling good enough and always having something to work on. However, she later explained that her dad taught her her work ethic and that there is always something to get better at. There was often discord in the women's experiences and Grace's quote assists in illuminating this phenomenon:

> I think what I learned from my dad more than any of the other coaches that I had was that as long as I did my best that it was good and that every time you step on the floor you could've done better, you could've done something different but you have to learn something. If you didn't learn anything then you weren't doing what you were supposed to be doing, you weren't working hard enough. So, I think that mentality, that work ethic that you never can stop learning or ever stop understanding more about the game and life and it is never ok to be average I think has affected me more than anything else. You know just that work ethic that transpired from the basketball floor to other areas. Too, sometimes it is ok to lose I guess. You know he'd be upset that we lost but if you learn something from that and sometimes you have to lose to figure out how to win.

As Tiffany stated, "He just wanted everything to be perfect, me to be perfect." Then, when asked if she could elaborate on the experience, she reframed his expectations into a positive trait as illustrated in the following quote:

> He knew I was going to have down falls or whatever but he wanted like I guess he just wanted me to know like the difference between right and wrong. He wanted

> me to know that yeah, I did something wrong and wanted me to fix it because if you don't then you'll just do it wrong the whole time and then where are you going to be? You know…like, if you just keep making the same mistakes over and over then you're not going to get any better and that's what he wanted me to realize.

I learned the game from him. The focus of this sub-theme is on the co-participants' fathers teaching them their athletic skills and learning about the game from him. Due to the fact that Grace's father was her basketball coach, she "had to understand the game" as the following quote expresses:

> Well, overall I think I learned a lot more about the game of basketball than other players because my Dad did understand the game and he expected me to know it just as well if not at sometimes even better than he did. Like I had to anticipate what he was thinking to do well and umm… it was a very positive thing because it made me learn the game and I think I understood the game better than my peers and my teammates.

Furthermore, Chaz elaborated on her experience of her father teaching her the fundamentals as a youngster and now him giving her constructive criticism:

> I remember him taking me to the park and teaching me the basics and everything and probably I didn't even learn how to shoot a basketball really until I was like 10 because I concentrated on all the fundamentals besides shooting. And he made sure that I got the team concept instead of being wrapped up in myself at an early age. Ahh…so for me like that team camaraderie I learned early from him and now its just basically constructive criticism. Like when I call him, "Did you watch the game? What you think? What do I need to do? So its like I still look back to him as a coach and he still teaches me some stuff.

Grace elaborated on the fact that she enjoyed being able to talk to her dad about the game after it was over when she said:

> I think at the time it was nice to have my Dad as a coach because I could talk about the game afterwards and I knew what I did wrong where some people didn't because they went home and never talked about it.

Jackie was the only woman who mentioned that her mom had taught her athletic skills. Essentially her father was instrumental in teaching her all sports except swimming skills:

> He taught me all my athletic skills but swimming. My mom taught me swimming but I played soccer, basketball and softball in high school. With soccer he'd go with me and kick the ball around. Soccer and softball…well, he's a huge baseball guy so he's always been instrumental in softball for me. But mom pretty much taught me everything in swimming because she swam and dad didn't.

Mom as Emotional Connection

All of the co-participants were asked about their father's involvement in their athletic careers. However, at some point, every one of the co-participants not only mentioned their mom's involvement, but often times expressed her role in their athletic careers. The following sub-themes emerged from the interviews: (a) *Mom's Just as Involved* and (b) *Mom's the Mediator.*

Mom's just as involved. This sub-theme describes how the female athletes' mothers had been just as involved as their fathers. However, the co-participants described how their mothers' involvement had been different from their fathers'. One of the differences several of the women expressed was that their mothers were very supportive but knew less than their fathers with regard to the technical aspects of sport. However, as demonstrated by Beyonce's quote, often, the mothers provided another perspective than the fathers and therefore, provided balance for their daughters:

> Well, my mom has been just as involved as my dad. The difference is just that my dad has actually experienced the whole college scene you know whatever with basketball. But, they dated all through college so she was there to experience that with him because they dated since they were sophomores in high school. So you know they've been kind of love birds and high school sweethearts whatever you would say. So I mean she was there to experience that with him and umm she knows how hard it is in college and everything like that and she's been just as supportive you know trying to give her two cents which is sometimes nice to have a different perspective other than somebody who knows everything about basketball. She knows enough about the game to you know like correct me when I'm doing something wrong. She wasn't as hard like "*Beyonce* c'mon you have to do this." She kind of knew you know…she understood that basketball was so

> much a part of my life that I needed to do something else and that's why I played the other sports to give me a break from basketball.

In Bree's interview, she described how her dad was always there for her but it was really her mom that did not miss any of her competitions or athletic related events. The following quote illustrates her mom's involvement:

> My dad is always there to give me advice. But, you know, my mom has a big influence because my dad's always working. My mom works too but her schedule is more flexible than his. So, when I think of it, it is kind of split because my mom is always at every tournament, every game, and every banquet. She doesn't miss anything. Actually the night I got hurt neither my mom nor dad could come. The next day when my mom came everybody was like, "you can never miss another game again." She said, "Alright, I won't." The thing about it is that she was serious and probably won't miss a game ever again because that is one of the first ones she missed in a really long time and look at what happened, I got hurt.

Furthermore, Gabrielle illustrated the differential responses of her parents following her injury:

> Well, like for instance with my injury, my mom was like okay I want to talk to your coach and you know make sure that we're all on the same page and that your doctors are good. And my dad's like, "how you feeling?" I'm like, "I'm great" and he's like, "Alright, you're gonna be back!" You know I mean its not like he's pressuring me but like mom, she's the caring cheerleader you know who says "are you ok?" My dad says, "she's ok, she's strong enough to handle this you know she can make her own decisions."

Tiffany explained how she felt that her mother was "more lenient" and wanted her to do whatever she wanted to do while her father was more insistent on her participation in sport. The following quote illustrates this point:

> The difference between my mom and my dad was that my mom was more lenient. My mom was like if you want to quit go ahead and quit. She was like if this is something that you don't want to do then go ahead and she was just like the opposite of my dad. She would be like is this something that you want to do you need to look into it and make a decision that is best for you and the rest of your life. My dad was always like you're playing softball what else are you going to do? You want to go practice right now? Or like, let's go pitch. You want to

> practice and my mom's like whatever you want to do. When I was little I used to pitch and she used to take me to my practices and stuff like that and would catch for me but she was always like if you don't like it then its not a big deal. She was always like whatever.

Mom, the mediator. In the interviews, the female athletes often expressed that their mother's role was to be the mediator between their fathers and themselves. Some of the women expressed that their mothers would agree with their fathers. Tiffany's quote supports this point:

> Like if I would do something he would be like, don't do that. He would yell at me and he would be like do you not see it and my mom would be like the mediator and say, "Tiffany you do kind of like do that."

Grace had a similar experience and reiterated the phenomenon of the experience of having her mother "smooth everything over" and support her father's opinion:

> Mom was basically there to like umm…smooth everything over. She really didn't say anything, she basically supported whatever my dad would say. If there was any confrontation or issue that we were going through as far as athletics she would just say something like somebody else always has it worse than you or just try to smooth it over or never really…I don't know, she was just like the pacifier…and she was just trying to support everyone.

The mothers of the female athletes were also responsible for relaying their fathers' feelings. This is best illustrated by Natasha's quote:

> He came to watch me actually like a week ago to run at Penn State. Like my mom was on the phone and she said that dad is always talking about how great you ran and stuff like that. He's very loving. He doesn't show it all the time but…like my mom is telling his feelings to us.

Relationship Revolves Around Sport

The sentiments of the women were that their relationship with their fathers were largely and sometimes only due to sport. As Chaz expressed, "Our relationship really revolves around basketball, especially now in my life."

The communication the women had and the time the women spent with their dads, revolved around sport. Thus, the sub-themes that emerged from the data were: (a) *Sport Conversations* and (b) *Time Together*.

Sport Conversations. This sub-theme captured the female athletes' experience of feeling comfortable talking about sport with their dads. Not only that, many of the women discussed how sport gave them something in common with their fathers and brought out the similarities between their personalities:

> I think athletics is something that we have in common. We can talk about the game of basketball as adults and we have a relationship because of the sport and because we are both very similar, our competitiveness and what we expect out of people when we watch the game. We both will make comments like "He or she didn't hustle enough "where other people might point out like, "he has a really nice shot." We are both ones to find the critical side of people. I think we can communicate in that way and we know that. That's a positive that has come from our relationship with sport. There were just like a lot of little things that were really positive at the time. Looking back I think I realize that his support and that relationships is what is important now. So, I guess that's why that sticks out in my head as far as my dad. Not that there weren't other positive things at the moment umm...but now as an adult I realize that some things didn't matter...what matters was that we had a relationship and a bond and that we understood each other because I played basketball.

Beyonce's experience echoed the experience of the other women when she stated:

> I definitely think that basketball probably has put me and my dad on a higher level because we've both shared such a common interest and both of us playing in college and just having that drive to play in college because not everybody wants to play college basketball.

Interestingly, there was a dichotomous quality to the experience of having sport in common with their fathers. For example, while the female athletes said that had brought them closer, they also illustrated that outside of sport they do not interact with their fathers. Grace's quote captures this dichotomy:

> I don't think there'd be much to it (her relationship with her father)...not that there wouldn't be a relationship but I think that it would be more of a, what's the word? I think my dad doesn't always view me as well I don't want to say his daughter because that's not correct but I'm more of like a I don't know...I think our relationship would be much more father-daughter and much more...what's the word? Emotional? I guess more girly but I think because of sport and our interactions that it is much more of a buddy-buddy, like one of the guys type of relationship I feel I have with my father because sometimes we don't talk about what is important. We just kind of say what needs to be said and go on and all of the emotions don't get involved unless they need to be and I think that partly has to do with our personalities are very similar and the fact that I always felt that my discussions growing up with my father were either one I did something wrong or was about basketball. So, without basketball I'm sure I'd probably have more of that gooey or whatever you want to call that girly-girly father-daughter relationship instead of going to the basketball game and shooting hoops. You can go three hours and not really say anything and be ok with that relationship.

Beyonce also mentioned her frustration with continually talking solely about basketball:

> You know what I'm like I would get so frustrated and say "Dad, why do we have to talk about everything about basketball. Why can't we just be normal and not talk about basketball." When we get home it is on the t.v. and you're sitting here talking about what I need to do and I'm constantly playing. You know that was the biggest thing, always having to talk about it. I mean, I love the sport, don't get me wrong but you know sometimes it is nice to talk about something else.

Yet, many of the women also felt that talking about sports was a positive aspect of their relationships with their fathers. Natasha's perspective was one of these and she valued the fact that she had sport in common with her dad:

> Like that's how we're close (sport)...I'll call him during a football game and stuff and we'll chit-chat about stuff going on. We have sports in common. So, when we usually hang out it is normally sports-related and stuff like that.

Gabrielle echoed Natasha's positive experience and discussed how she and her dad could watch Sports Center and then talk about sport:

> But umm...my dad and I are so sport-oriented like umm, we love sport. Me and him will sit there and watch sport for like three hours. And we can talk about anything regarding sports and other things too. But a lot of times its about sports like when we're just sitting around or something and umm he's like I swear he could work for Sports Center. He's a sport junkie he knows everything about

> sport. It is amazing because he'll sit there and he'll say everything the broadcasters are going to say and I'll be like what, "how did you know that they were just about to say that?" But, we definitely talk a lot because of sports.

Spending time together. As a parent's involvement in any extra-curricular activity, sport enabled these daughters time with their fathers.

> He always likes to spend time with us. Like me, my mom and sister are always doing girl stuff and like, I don't want to do girl stuff all of the time and neither does he. So we both get a break and will like watch a game or go play something (Natasha).

Tiffany explains how she and her father's shared participation in softball had enabled them time together that the majority of her time spent with her father revolved around softball:

> I guess like inside jokes because we're always around each other every weekend. Like every time we went away it was like we would stay in a hotel and we were always like around each other. Like he would take us to baseball games and stuff like that. But like our whole life was basically around softball because we all played so we were all gone every weekend playing softball and if we weren't doing that we were either at the batting cages, I mean everything was only about softball.

Furthermore, Gabrielle echoed the experience of spending time with father when she discussed the opportunity to spend significant time alone with her dad because of a volleyball tournament and how much she enjoyed the one-on-one time alone with her father:

> I think it was my junior year me and my dad went on our nationals, just me and my dad went. Everybody was looking at us like it was weird because they're like, "Where's your mom at?" I'm just here with my dad. Another girl on my team used to do that too, just her and her dad used to go because her mom worked. It was just me and my dad you know and I had THE BEST time because it was just me and him. I knew I could do whatever I wanted to do because my mom kind of limits stuff. She makes me go to bed and she always wants to rest all of the time. With dad, well it was in Utah which is the worst city I've ever been to in my life and I hated it because it was so horrible. We spent a day from nine o'clock in the morning until midnight doing stuff around Utah, the salt mines the copper mines

> we went to museums, Mormon this, Mormon that. It was so much fun and it was just me and my dad. Nationals is five days so it was just me and him. We'd be at the game at like 7:30am and be at the gym all day until like one or two and then we'd leave, eat, and do whatever. So, it was just me and him. I told my mom that it was probably the best nationals that I've ever had because being with our whole family is so much stress. Everybody is like we want to do this and we want to do this. But at this nationals it was just me and him chilling. I remember it all the time and it was just me and him. It was fun. At home it is hard because he does so much. He's there but like he's so busy and I'm so busy. He coaches, he teaches, he preaches and he has his own business. So like for me and him to be together that long for five days just me and him, one-on-one, I will always remember that.

Dad as Motivator

"Dad as Motivator" emerged as an essential theme of the phenomenon of fathers' role in female athletes' sport experience. After asking Gabrielle what stuck out in her experience of her father's involvement in her athletic career, her initial response was, "He's very motivating and very motivated."

The co-participants expressed that they were motivated by their fathers for four major reasons (which serve as sub-themes under this heading): (a) *I Want Him to Be Proud of Me*, (b) *He's an Inspiration*, (c) *His Encouragement,* and *(d) He Pushes Me.*

I want him to be proud of me. This sub-theme emerged from the interviews and illustrates how co-participants wanted their fathers to be proud of them:

> Like anytime I know that my dad is coming, I'll like mentally prepare myself and take away like all of the negative thoughts from it and be like, well, I have to do this especially because he's come so far to watch me. So, like I want to make him happy and proud of me. Every time I run I want to make sure that he feels that (Natasha).

Chaz elaborated on the probe of "can you expand on wanting to make your dad proud of you?" by saying:

> Like I don't want to fall short, I don't want to be any type of disappointment. But, I guess in a not so conceited way like I know I please my father as far as

> athletics and even academically. But its like in a specific game when I played bad I'm like man I hope he did not watch all of that game. I want him to always be proud of how I play, that's why I always hustle.

Jackie explained that not only does she want to make her father proud, she knows that he is indeed proud of her:

> He motivates me by being there at my meets when he can be there. I want to make him proud and that motivates me too…and I know that he is…ah, (laughs) yeah, he's proud.

He's an inspiration. These female athletes experienced their fathers as a source of inspiration in their athletic careers as best demonstrated by Beyonce's quote:

> He was raised in a poor home and basketball was you know, his way out to get to college. So, he just, he like taught me a lot just like working hard you know and never letting anybody mess up my goals or my dreams because for him playing basketball was the only way he was going to get to college and umm…he would always tell me he would go out back and he made is own little basketball goal. It was inspirational because I was blessed to have our own hoop you know. So for him, how hard he worked to get to where he is, just like how successful he is today has just kind of inspired me in knowing that umm…I could do it if he could do it you know and I'm in a better home probably than he was for his age. So, definitely he has had probably the biggest impact on me than anybody else has probably.

Natasha echoed the feeling that her father made her want to be better when she stated:

> Like, he challenges me and my sister a lot. He'll like race us and say, "You can't beat me." I am really strong and I'd beat him. I think he's a good motivator like he'll say, "I bet you can't do something" and am like inspired to prove him that I can. He does it because he knows I don't want to lose or admit that I can't do something. He makes me want to be better.

He supports/ encourages me. This sub-theme emerged from every interview when each female athlete discussed the importance of her father's support and encouragement throughout her career whether it was through the rehabilitation of an injury or wanting to give up. Whether the women were discussing a positive or negative experience, they always came back to the fact that their fathers were supportive and

encouraging. As Jackie expressed, "He's the reason why I'm still swimming. He's always been there encouraging me and that's been the difference in me sticking with it rather than giving up." Chaz provided insight into how her dad was there for her during a slump and encouraged her to persevere:

> Like my dad would encourage me to play ball and keep workin' towards getting here. You know when sometimes you have a bad game or bad couple of games, in a slump you know he'd remind me that I had to keep workin' towards my goal.

Natasha explained the support that her father provided even after performing poorly:

> Like even if I do bad like he'll only bring out the positives. He's really supportive. Like if I do bad, I'll go to the stands and he'll give me a hug and like say, "Its ok, good job".

She expanded on the fact that even when she was frustrated with her father, he was still encouraging and supportive:

> Well, in high school he would always like hug me and say you did so good. You're great, did you hear me cheering?! He's always trying to like help me and say you should've done that. But, it is always really nice to have him there. He never pressured me but just like would give me a hug after races. Like during a race it would sometimes drive me crazy, it depends....like when he tells me to kick it and I'm running, I'm like, "Its not that easy." (Laughs). He's really encouraging but it is harder than he thinks sometimes.

He pushes me. While all of the women discussed the support and encouragement that their fathers provided, some expanded on and illustrated how their fathers pushed them. Interestingly, after elaborating on this, they would take a step back and discuss what their father was trying to do for them or did do for them through such "pushing." As Grace revealed, "I realize that he was just trying to push me in the way he thought I needed to be pushed." Tiffany expressed her experience of driving home after a game and her father explaining why he "pushes her," in the following quote:

> He'll be in the car and say, "You know I'm not trying to pick on you, I'm supporting you I just want you to do everything well." He knew I was going to have down falls or whatever but he wanted like I guess he just wanted me to know like the difference between right and wrong. He wanted me to know that yeah, I did something wrong and wanted me to fix it because if you don't then you'll just do it wrong the whole time and then where are you going to be? You know...like, if you just keep making the same mistakes over and over then you're not going to get any better and that's what he wanted me to realize.

Beyonce explained how she was grateful that her father did push her because of what she gained from it:

> Obviously there were times when I was in the gym like three hours a day and I would practice for a couple of hours and then I'd go to another gym you know right after that. He always was really keen on me doing that because high school is so much different from college. So you know I have to work on my skills on my own time and not during the practice in two hours to become like a great player. Sometimes I would get really frustrated with him you know I was tired and you know "Dad, I want to go home." But now that I look back like I am like look at where it got me. I'm playing at you know one of the best, the top school in the nation so you know basically that paid off. So yeah I was definitely I think I was really ticked off at times and got mad at him for pushing me but like I said it got me to where I am today and so I can't really regret that at all.

Summary

In summary, the five major themes derived from the interpretative content analysis of the interviews revealed that the phenomenon of the fathers' role in these college female athletes' athletic careers involved the experiences they described as "Social Support through the Sport Process," "Father as Coach," "Mom as Emotional Connection," "Relationship Revolves around Sport," and "Dad as Motivator." It is important to note that none of these themes were experienced in isolation; rather the lived phenomenon became prominent for the female athletes at various moments in time. In the next chapter, the findings of this study are discussed in light of relevant literature. In addition, suggestions for future research and practitioners are offered.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, I attempted to explore the role fathers play in collegiate female athletes' sport experiences. I engaged in a phenomenological dialogue with eight female athletes between the ages of eighteen - and twenty-two years and gave them freedom to unravel various meanings of their experience in their own words. One of the major purposes of this study was to gain a better understanding of the father-daughter relationship in sport. In particular, the focus was to obtain female athletes' perceptions of their relationship with their fathers and the role their fathers played in their athletic careers. Due to the fact that no prior research has been conducted on the phenomenon, no predictions were made for the results of the study. However, five themes emerged from the interviews regarding these eight female athletes' experiences: (1) *Social Support through the Sport Process*, (2) *Father as Coach*, (3) *Mom as Emotional Connection*, (4) *Relationship Revolves around Sport*, and (5) *Dad as Motivator*. In this chapter, I discuss these results in light of relevant literature. I also suggest a few limitations of the study. Finally, I offer conclusions and recommendations for future researchers as well as sport psychology consultants and coaches.

Discussion

The current study was the first to investigate the father-daughter relationship in sport. In fact, little research has been conducted on the father-daughter relationship in general, perhaps due to our society's belief that fathers are less important than mothers in the rearing of children (Parke & Brott, 1999). Therefore, the intent was to add to the literature on the influence fathers have in developing female athletes and possibly the influence fathers have in rearing daughters. Based on the findings of the current study,

the fathers of these female athletes appear to have had an integral influence on their daugthers' athletic experiences.

Consistent with previous research findings in family studies suggesting that daughters have or are expected to have activity-oriented relationships with their fathers (Way & Gillman, 2000), the women in the current study revealed that their relationships with their fathers revolved around sport and doing such things as going to the batting cages and shooting hoops. While they revealed that their mothers were just as involved in their sport experience, their mothers rarely, if ever, offered technical advice and/or criticism.

Congruent with the results of Way and Gillman's (2000) study, these women never mentioned or alluded to the fact that they were less engaged with their fathers than with their mothers, but that they were engaged in a different manner with each. However, contrary to the participants in the Way and Gillman (2000) study, the female athletes in the current study expressed that their mothers provided an intimate emotional connection for them when theirs father did not and also played a mediator role between themselves and their fathers. Their mothers understood that these female athletes needed balance away from athletics, something their fathers did not seem to grasp. Therefore, it appeared that mothers in this study encouraged their daughters to get involved in other extra-curricular activities.

As Chodorow's theory (1978) suggests, females gain esteem from intimate relationships. Thus, while it was very interesting that the athletes in the current study referred to their mothers without prompting, what they suggested followed Chodorow in that it was mothers (females of the family) who told their daughters how proud their

fathers were of them, how their fathers were feeling, and served as the overall "connector" in the father-daughter relationship – not the fathers. However, each co-participant expressed having a strong relationship with her father, especially compared to other women they knew. They also suggested that they enjoyed spending time with their fathers. Because of this, it would be interesting to investigate whether or not this merely replicates the norm in our society that says that simply spending time with fathers is sufficient, even if that time lacks emotional connection. Regardless, Chodorow (1978) asserts that the strength and quality of a woman's relationship to her father depends on the strength and quality of her relationship with her mother. It could be theorized that these female athletes had strong emotional relationships with their mothers and, therefore, perceived to have healthy relationships with their fathers due to their mothers' mediating skills and ability to make the daughters feel connected to their dads.

Interestingly, similar to the findings in previous research, the women of the current study seemed to protect their fathers (Way & Gillman, 2000). In all of the interviews when co-participants discussed a potential negative aspect of their relationship with their father or a negative influence on their sport experience, they would conclude with a statement with a positive twist such as, "I can't regret that (he pushed me) - look at where it got me." Or they would say, "Looking back, I realize that he was trying to push me the way he thought I needed to be pushed." Even more so, if it was a negative experience, the female athletes would reframe the experience and explain what it taught them. For example, when one female athlete felt that her performance was "never good enough," she concluded by stating that her dad taught her "work ethic and that there was always room for improvement." Never did any co-participant end a topic on a negative

note towards her father. It is fascinating that while several of the female athletes expressed, at times, the feeling that they were not good enough or that there was always something wrong with their "game" in their father's opinion, these same athletes mentioned that they did not know where they would be without their dads' support and encouragement.

In addition, each one of the women said she respected her father and expressed a sense of gratitude toward him for her athletic success. This was one of the most intriguing revelations of this study the dynamic of respect of the father-daughter relationship through sport. While, at times, some of the athletes resented their father because of his expectations for them, they also recognized that he was their reason for participating in sport and they indicated that they were grateful for that. Not only that, each one of the women mentioned that her father was able to motivate her. The motivation typically came in one of three forms: (a) through his mere presence; (b) through his coaching or his expectations for her athletic success; or (c) through the athlete not wanting to "let her dad down."

As I delved deeper into the meaning of some of these women having their fathers' as their coaches, I began to realize the negative aspects of their experience. For example, generally speaking, when the women spoke about "never being good enough" or feeling as though they had to live up to their fathers' expectations, it was when they were referring to their relationship with their fathers as their coaches or when their father was "coaching" them after the game. In contrast, when the women talked about fathers' encouragement and support - the positive aspects of their sport relationships with their dads - the conversation did not revolve around their experience of their dads serving in a

coaching capacity. While these athletes spoke of how much their father taught them, pushed them, had high expectations for them and the long-term benefits of all of these factors, this aspect of their relationship with their father is what seemed to be the most harmful to their (lack of) emotional relationship with their dads.

The women interviewed in the present study were female athletes competing in NCAA Division I collegiate sport; thus, just as interesting is the female athletes' experience of their fathers being harder on them than their teammates and having higher expectations for them. Yet, the reason for why these female athletes achieved success could be because their fathers expected them to succeed in sport. The "self-fulfilling prophecy" has emerged as a prominent framework in sport psychology for understanding the influence of coaching behaviors on athlete performance. According to this framework, coaches offer differential feedback to athletes based on their perceptions of each athlete's ability (Solomon et al., 1996). Researchers have proposed a four-step process to explain how the self-fulfilling prophecy occurs. First, coaches form expectations for athletes' performance based on their initial evaluations of the athletes' ability. Second, coaches' expectations affect their behaviors. Third, the coaches' behavior affects the athletes' performance. Finally, athletes' performances conform to the coaches' initial expectations (Brophy, 1983; Cooper & Tom, 1984; Harris & Rosenthal, 1985; Jussim, 1986). If fathers have been successful athletes and are coaching their daughters, it would make sense that they, too, would expect their own offspring to experience at least the same if not more success than they had. Thus, their daughters' performances may be said to conform to their fathers'/coaches' initial expectations and thus, their daughters succeed in sport.

In light of these co-participants' feeling that their fathers had a higher standard for them than their teammates, now when they look back, they explain that they know he wanted the best for them. However, almost every one of the athletes whose father coached them described the feeling of wanting a life outside of sport and of not always wanting to talk about their performance in sport or sport in general. It was clear through the interviews that one of the aspects these women were grateful for was what their fathers "taught" them when he was their coach and that they were able to understand the game better because of him. The downside was that this created a sense of "split personality" where each daughter had to remember when dad was "dad" versus when dad was "coach". This seemed to have impacted co-participants deeply emotionally because what each seemed to want was the closeness, but instead they felt the distance. Fathers and daughters more often stand at a great distance, figuratively, because fathers and daughters seldom try to understand each other (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986). This distance was also enhanced by the fact that these women felt like they were constantly juggling the relationship of being their fathers' "daughters" and their fathers' "athletes", never knowing which role they were going to have to play at a given time. Thus, it was "easiest" to "pretend to be sleeping on the car ride home after a game" (co-participant quote). As Belenky, et al. (1986) further illustrate in *Women's Ways of Knowing*, "...dialogue is the primary means for preventing or resolving conflicts, not listening." Likewise, in the current study, when the women spoke of communication with their fathers that was not sport related, it was their father giving them advice or telling them what they had done wrong.

In regard to these female athletes' involvement in sport, it was apparent that their fathers initiated their interest in sport. Often times, a young girl has one or both parents who have been actively involved in sport, thus making getting and staying involved in sport "normal or expected" (Greendorfer, 1987). Research suggests that the likelihood of a female getting involved in athletics is influenced by parental sport history (Greendorfer, 1979; 1987). In the future, if these women choose to become mothers and have daughters they will be well equipped to spark the interest, encourage the involvement, and teach the technical skills of sport to their daughters since they are successful and avid athletes. This is an uplifting possibility for feminist sport researchers because, potentially, the stereotypical gender roles that even these successful female athletes grew up in could slowly fade.

Seven of the eight women in this study had heterosexual "traditional" parents who fit stereotypical gender roles while only one of the eight athletes had been raised in home that defied the stereotypical traditional family experience and gender stereotypes. When defining "father" or talking about their dads many of the co-participants said he was "the leader of a family, the provider, and the stronghold for the household." Not only that, they referred to their dad as "athletic" and their mom as "just being tall." Statements such as this conform to the stereotypical gender roles that suggest that sport is a male preserve and that males possess innate skill and talent whereas it's less natural for women to be athletes (Greendorfer, 1987). Only Jackie, a swimmer, discussed her mom's involvement in teaching her the technical skills of her sport. It also was Jackie's mom who could not make her Olympic trials due to her work schedule so her dad came instead. A possible explanation for the continuation of stereotypes in the families of

these female athletes could be their mother's lack of opportunity to participate in sport. Prior to the mid-1970s, many girls and women were not exposed to sport, play sport, nor receive financial scholarships for sport participation. Teams and programs in most parts of the country did not exist (Coakley, 2004).

Previous studies have revealed that, throughout their lifetimes, daughters and fathers do not generally communicate as comfortably, spend as much time with each other, feel as close to each other emotionally, get to know one another as well or talk about as many personal things as mothers and daughters (Nielsen, 1996; Nielsen, 2004; Way & Gillman, 2000). The women in the present study said that they enjoyed spending time with their fathers because of sport and were grateful for the time they were able to spend one-on-one with dad. However, they never indicated that they would like to spend more time with their fathers. This could be due to the fact that these women are an exception to the rule and have had the opportunity to spend significantly more time with their fathers than other non-athlete daughters. However, it could also be that their time with their father was not as emotionally rewarding as it related to advancing their sport career.

The dialogue with these women revealed was that several desired a more complex relationship with their fathers than one revolving solely around sport or their sport performance. In fact, some of the women articulated that their conversations were only about sport and lacked anything "important" or emotional. From this study, it can be inferred that some of the women could indeed be wanting more emotionally from their dads. In many ways, this is no surprise, given the gender structure of our society. Gilligan (1982) suggests that women have differing psychological tendencies than men,

women are more inclined to think in terms of caring and relationships whereas men are more inclined to think in terms of justice and autonomy and are rewarded for doing so. The daughter may feel empty because her father's way of communicating and relating to the world is different than hers. This may further explain why she relates better with her mother and her mother is the mediator between she and her father.

Throughout the process of the current research, I have wrestled with my own feminist beliefs. Like other young women I have struggled with being firmly pro-women but not wanting to be anti-men (Greenleaf & Collins, 2001). Not only that, I do find it imperative to share women's sport experiences in order to highlight women's potential and by doing so I understand that one of the pitfalls is reverting easily to traditional stereotypes that turn back and focus on the dominance of men over women (DeSensi, 1992). Within the current study, since all but one of the women were raised in traditional families and held several stereotypical views, it demonstrates how the patriarchal structures of family have continued to construct stereotypical relational expectations for "men" and "women." It is interesting that by attempting to study the father-daughter relationship, the patriarchal family system in our society has been placed on the forefront. What was lacking in these relationships was also placed on the forefront.

In addition, women as much as men perpetuate and sustain a patriarchal culture (hooks, 1984). This needs to be recognized so that instead of having patriarchy as a system, women and men can support each other equally. In particular, the mothers in the current study perpetuated patriarchy by continually playing the role of mediator for their husbands and daughters, inherently teaching their daughters that men are the authority

and are unable to communicate, and that this is an acceptable form of communication. Mothers, too, are teaching daughters that they are supposed to have a silent voice.

In conclusion, the fathers in these women's lives were influential in their daughters' athletic careers. Overall, all of the women spoke of having a positive experience. Furthermore, the eight female collegiate athletes in the present study were grateful that their fathers were always there to support and encourage them. In spite of their fathers' support and encouragement, however, there were also times when these women wanted more from their fathers than a sport-oriented relationship. They wanted to talk about "girly" and "emotional" things (from co-participants' own words) as well as the technical aspects of sport. Additionally, six out of the eight women had experienced her father as her coach. For these women, there were times when they felt they were "not good enough" and always "being picked on" because of their fathers' higher expectations for them compared to their teammates. Yet, they realized that it was because of these higher expectations that they had attained athletic success.

Limitations

Based on the findings of the present study, a number of limitations need to be addressed that have implications for future research. First, there is a need for future investigations to enlist female athletes raised in a single parent home. All of the women in the present study were raised in a "traditional" family, one of the limitations of the current study. Therefore, this study does not express the experience of collegiate female athletes who were raised in other family structures. Another limitation of the study is the fact that all of the women who participated expressed having an overall positive experience with regard to their father's involvement in their athletic career. Logically,

women who have had a negative experience might be more reluctant to share their experience than those who have had a positive one. However, before being overly critical of the current pool of co-participants, one needs to recognize that all were NCAA Division I collegiate athletes who have had athletic success and an overall positive experience with their fathers in relation to their athletic career. Thus, this study could be used as an example that reveals the outcomes of a generally healthy and positive father-daughter relationship.

Future Research

Future researchers should attempt to identify female athletes who have not had a positive experience, interview them and compare the results of that research with those of the present study. Moreover, research should be conducted on the role that mothers play in female athletes' sport experiences. Every one of the women in the current study brought up their mothers at some point during the interview, without being prompted. Therefore, it can be inferred that mothers play an integral but – in this study - "different" role than fathers when it comes to female-athletes' sport experiences. Due to the norms of our society, it would be interesting to learn if and how we continue to develop and define stereotypical gender roles in our families and in sport. It would also be of interest for researchers to interview fathers to determine what they view their roles to be in their daughters' athletic experiences. It would be fascinating to study the dissonance and accord between daughters' and fathers' views of their shared sport experiences. Additionally, more research needs to be conducted on the experience of having a parent as a coach and the interesting interplay between "being mom or dad" simultaneously with "being coach."

The father-daughter relationship is inevitable for some men and women. Therefore, understanding the relevance of this relationship could be beneficial for everyone. Sons may one day become fathers, so their experience cannot be ignored. It is human nature to repeat the behaviors we have learned growing up. Therefore, the father-son and mother-son relationship needs to be investigated as well. After doing so, the dynamics of all of these parent–child relationships can be compared and contrasted, and the benefits and pitfalls of each can be explored.

Recommendations for Practitioners and Fathers

Previous research has demonstrated that positive parent-child interactions have been shown to be a primary predictor of sport enjoyment for both youth and elite athletes (Brustad, 1988; Scanlan et al., 1993). In the previous research, questionnaires have been used mostly to assess the relationship between young athletes and their significant others (Scanlan et al., 1993). Therefore, participants were required to comment on the role that their significant others played by answering specific questions (e.g., Do parents do/say things to make you feel good?). However, in the unstructured phenomenological approach used in the current study, co-participants were able to discuss the salient aspects of their experience without prompting or leading questions. Therefore, the researcher is able to learn from the co-participants what has been most relevant in their experience. The present findings suggest that one of the more important aspects of a father's involvement in his daughter's athletic career is to always be there for her, both physically and emotionally. The women in the current study said that their fathers were there through various times throughout their careers, during their injury rehabilitation, the recruiting process and important athletic competitions. Not only were they present

physically, fathers were also "there" to encourage, teach, inspire, and push their daughters. No matter what the experience - positive or negative - the aspect that the female athletes in this study continually came back to was their father's presence in their sport experience. This has important ramifications for both coaches and parents.

For the sport psychology consultant, in particular, understanding the family dynamics a female athlete experiences is paramount. Traditionally, parents - especially fathers - are the individuals who spark their daughters' interest in sport. Not only can they be a source of encouragement, but they can serve as a source of pressure. Another key implication from the current study is the essence of the dichotomous relationship between the father and daughter - the experience of female athletes knowing their fathers want what is best for them, support them and attend their events but at the same time feeling never good enough or feeling their fathers have heightened expectations for their athletic career. If the sport psychology consultant is better able to understand the essence of the experience of a female athlete's relationship with her father (and mother), the consultant will be better able to relate to her; therefore, it is essential for consultants to develop a trusting relationship in which the athlete feels understood and connected. From the data of this study, a relative advantage of being a female consultant of a female athlete would be the athlete's perception that the consultant has the ability to emotionally connect and relate to her. Whereas, the relative advantage of being a male consultant of a female athlete would be his perceived ability to have superior technical knowledge of sport and the ability to be direct when providing feedback. To legitimize both male and female sport psychology consultants, it is important for all consultants, regardless of sex, to provide both the emotional support and technical knowledge for athletes.

In conclusion, sport can provide fathers with a means of getting involved in and forming a relationship with their daughters, a relationship that daughters long to have. Previous research has also suggested that "well-fathered" daughters are usually more self confident, self- reliant, and successful in school and in careers than "poorly fathered" daughters (Morgan & Wilcoxon, 1998; Perkins, 2001). The present study of successful female athletes demonstrates that fathers have been influential in these women's athletic success. Thus, a recommendation to fathers of female athletes is to "always be there" for her and while your relationship with her and her athletic performance may not always be perfect, she will be grateful for your presence. Not only that, attempt to get to know your daughter outside of sport, "ask her about school, dating or life" (co-participants' words) because the father-daughter "sport relationship" might be more powerful if it were paired with a strong emotional relationship outside of athletics.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

The purpose of the current study is to gain a greater understanding of the role fathers have in women athletes' experiences. The study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the master's degree at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

During the interview, you will be asked to talk about your athletic participation and, in particular, your father's involvement in your athletic career. The interview will be conducted in the setting of your choice and will last approximately 45 minutes. There will be no monetary compensation for your participation. However, you may find the interview rewarding in that it may promote self-awareness and reflection on your athletic experiences. The entire interview will be audio-taped. To protect your identity, you will be asked to select a fictional name. At no time will your identity be revealed in oral or published reports. The data of the study will be kept confidential and will be made available only to the principal investigator, Tanya Prewitt, and her major professor, Dr. Leslee Fisher.

After we complete the interview, it will be transcribed verbatim. I will then send you a copy of themes from your interview for verification. After the audiotapes have been transcribed, they will be destroyed. The transcripts will be kept locked at all times.

We foresee no major risks associated with your participation. However, should you feel emotional discomfort during the interview you can end the interview at any time without penalty or punishment. Your participation in the study is strictly voluntary. If you have any questions about the study and/or about your participation, please call me (Tanya Prewitt, 865-974-8768) or e-mail me at tprewit1@utk.edu. Once the study is completed, I will be happy to discuss the findings with you if you wish. If you would like to contact the University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board for any ethical questions you might have or your rights as a participant, you can do so by calling the Research Compliance Services section of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville at (865)974-3466.

Statement of Consent

I acknowledge that the research procedures described above have been explained to me. Also, I have received a copy of this form and I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name (Please Print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Sincerely,

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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello, I'm Tanya Prewitt and am a master's student from the Department of Exercise, Sport & Leisure Studies in the Sport Psychology Program at the University of Tennessee. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview study. I am talking to elite women performers and discussing the influence of their fathers in their sport experience.

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to gain an insight into your experience. During this interview, I am interested in your experiences and how you perceived your father's involvement in your athletic career and life. I want to learn in greater depth about your experiences so that with the help of this study we are better able to understand the dynamics of the father-daughter relationship in sport and how both fathers and daughters can utilize sport to maximize the positive experiences they share.

The information from this study will be used in two ways. First, the information will be used for my own master's research thesis. Secondly, the results may be published in a scientific journal so that other sport scientists, female athletes and fathers can benefit from them.

However, I would like to emphasize that your interview information will remain confidential. I will ask you to choose a pseudonym to represent yourself in the transcripts. In the presentation of results, I may want to use selected quotes from the interviews in order to illustrate important ideas. These will be strictly anonymous, and I will ensure that your identity is protected. I am using a tape recorder to get complete and accurate information, and to make the interview process more efficient. The tape recorder is also necessary so that I will be able to make a typed transcript for later reference.

As a participant in this study you have several rights. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to decline to answer any questions or to stop the interview at any point. There are no right or wrong answer to the questions that I will be asking. I want to learn and benefit from your experience and expertise so that I can better understand the role fathers play in the athletic careers of their daughters. I hope, therefore, that you will answer candidly.

If you have any questions as we go along please ask them.

At the end of the interview there will be an opportunity for you to add anything that you felt was important and not covered. Do you have any questions now about what I have talked about so far? Okay, then let's get started.

General question: *"When you think about your experience of your father's influence on your athletic career, what stands out for you?"*

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE CONTINUED

Ok, now I just have some background questions for you. (These questions were asked after the phenomenological interview if they had not been addressed).

1. First of all, what's your age?
2. What year in school?
3. What is your family origin like? (i.e., brothers, sisters, parents, other relatives)
4. How would you describe your family? (i.e., traditional family, single-parent family, extended family)
5. How would you define father?
6. How long have you been involved in basketball and at what levels?
7. What other sports have you been involved in and for how long and at what level?
8. Lastly, has your father ever been your coach?
9. Is there anything else you think is important for me to know about your background?

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBER PLEDGE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

As a chosen member of this project's research team, I understand that I will be reading the transcripts of confidential interviews. The information in these transcriptions has been revealed by participants in this project in good faith that their interviews would remain confidential. I understand that I have the responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I agree not to share any of the information from these transcripts with anyone except the primary investigator of this research project, Tanya Prewitt (974-8768), or other members on the research team. A violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I pledge that I will not do so.

Research Team Member Signature _____ Date _____

VITA

Tanya Raquel Prewitt was born in Wausau, WI on March 17, 1982 to Steven and Charmaine Prewitt. She graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelors of Arts degree with a triple major in Psychology, Exercise and Fitness Instruction, and Physical Education from Carthage College, Kenosha, WI in May of 2004. In addition, she received the Class of 2004 College Leadership Award and was the recipient of the Lloyd B. Yepsen Outstanding Psychology Student Award.

In May of 2005, Tanya entered the master's degree program in Sport Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Over the course of two years, she taught physical activity courses and began personal training at a local fitness facility. In addition, she was a member of a sports development team that traveled to Israel to conduct the Sports for Life Peace Camp for Israeli and Palestinian girls from the ages of twelve to sixteen in Netanya, Israel in July of 2006. Tanya plans to receive her master's degree from the College of Education, in May 2007. She plans to pursue her PhD in Exercise and Sport Sciences with a specialization in Sport Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Tanya's current research interests are in the intersection of Sport Psychology theory and the impact of sociocultural issues in sport, in particular family dynamics, female athletes, youth sport, and body image.

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