To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Janine M. D'Anniballe entitled "A Phenomenological Analysis of the Performance Experience of Elite Female Collegiate Basketball Players." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in **Education.**

Mark A. Hector
Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

A Phenomenological Analysis of the Performance Experience for Elite Female Collegiate Basketball Players

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Janine M. D'Anniballe

May 1996

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my experience of. . .

high-tops, pick-up games, playgrounds, locker rooms, St. Anthony's School, coaches, practice, wooden bleachers, friends, dingy red pinnies, and teammates.

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

Although the literature on the psychological components of athletic performance is voluminous, there are few studies that examine athletes' subjective experience as they recall aspects related to performing their sport. Furthermore, women's sport experiences have received even less attention than men's experiences in the literature and have consistently been trivialized, devalued, and even unrecognized by the popular media and society. The purpose of this study was to describe and understand the performance experience of 10 female college basketball players. Through in-depth interviews and phenomenological analysis, general themes were derived that revealed the structure of the performance experience for the athletes.

Three primary themes emerged from the interview transcripts: 1) **Relationships**, 2) **"I" in Team**, and 3) **Play**. These themes unfolded in the context of **Team**

and each primary theme was present in all of the interviews. Results are discussed in regard to literature on women's relationships and development.

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Competition - from the Latin root petre (to go out, to head for, to seek); com (doing it together, in common, in harmony). Competition is simply each of us seeking our absolute best with the help of each other.

-George Sheehan
-This Running Life

I will never know the experience of others, but I can know my own, and I can approximate theirs by entering their world.

-Shulamit Reinharz (1946-).
-Dutch/American feminist sociologist
-On Becoming a Social Scientist, 1984

Chapter 1

Introduction

As the Brown v. The Board of Education ruling propelled the civil rights movement forward in 1954, the court decision that sparked social change for women's involvement in sport was the passage of Title IX in 1972. Title IX requires that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994, p. 41). In large part because of the Title IX ruling, more women are participating in interscholastic sports than ever before. Approximately 2.1 million girls are competing in high school athletics as compared to 300,000 before Title IX's passage, and one third of college athletes

are women, up from 15% in 1971 ("Girls are catching up," 1994; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994).

The involvement of millions of women in sport poses a challenge to athletics, an arena dominated by male norms and values. As the sport zeitgeist changes, the way that social scientists and practitioners conceptualize and understand the culture of athletics and the phenomenon of sport performance must also change to be inclusive of the experiences of both women and men.

Literature Review

Athletic Performance

An abundance of research in sport psychology has investigated various facets of athletic performance. Literature on performance from recent sport psychology journals appears to fall under five broad categories: performance enhancement, intrapersonal factors' effect on performance, cognitive (mental) factors and their

impact on performance, anxiety and performance, and peak performances.

The first category, performance enhancement, is defined as any way "a sport psychologist can be used to aid in the development and execution of athletic skills" (Nideffer, 1981, p. 6). Various approaches and techniques have been developed or adapted to athletics to enhance skills. For instance, several studies have demonstrated the use of psychological techniques like hypnosis, progressive relaxation, and imagery to improve an athlete's performance (Greenspan & Feltz, 1989; Kendall, Hrycaiko, Martin, & Kendall, 1990; Onestak, 1991; Schreiber, 1991; Van Gyn, Wenger, & Gaul, 1990). Other techniques such as performance profiling (Butler & Hardy, 1992; Jones, 1993) and analysis of performance routines (Cohn, 1990; Ravizza & Osborne, 1991) have been used to identify factors associated with athletes' good and bad performances. Finally, studies have been done to illustrate the use of videotaping as a performance aid (Gray & Fernandez,

1990; Van Wieringen, Emmen, Bootsma, Hoogesteger, & Whiting, 1989).

The second category in the literature on performance pertains to intrapersonal factors that influence performance. For example, studies have investigated the effect of attentional style on performance (Nideffer, 1976; Summers, Miller, & Ford, 1991; Wilson & Kerr, 1991) and have explored how Bandura's (1977) construct of self-efficacy is related to an athlete's performance (Martin & Gill, 1991; Weinberg, Gould, & Jackson, 1979; Weinberg, Yukelson, & Jackson, 1980). Finally, different aspects of athletes' personalities have been studied to assess for possible connections with performance (Friend & LesUnes, 1990; Frost & Henderson, 1991; Garland & Barry, 1990).

The third category concerns the use of cognitive or mental interventions in two general dimensions. The first dimension consists of studies that investigate the effect of mental rehearsal and practice to expedite

the learning of athletic skills or to improve performance (Epstein, 1980; Feltz & Landers, 1983; Mahoney, 1979; McCaffrey & Orlick, 1989; Straub, 1989). The second dimension deals with the coping strategies athletes use before and during competition (Madden, Kirkby, & McDonald, 1989; McPherson & French, 1991; Wrisberg & Anshel, 1989).

The impact of anxiety on performance surfaces as the fourth category in the literature. Anxiety in sport psychology can be defined as "the emotional impact or cognitive dimension of arousal" (Gould & Krane, 1992, p. 121). Most of the research focuses on the relationship between anxiety and performance (Bird & Horn, 1990; Martens & Gill, 1976; Rodrigo, Lusiardo, & Pereira, 1990; Terelak, 1990) or on sources of anxiety for athletes (Scanlan & Passer, 1978; Scanlan & Passer, 1979).

The final category involves the concept of peak performance. Peak performances are also referred to as optimal attentional states, or flow states,

characterized by a clear focus and awareness of power (Jackson & Roberts, 1992; Privette, 1982, 1983). Several studies have examined the psychological characteristics associated with such performances (Jackson & Roberts, 1992; Ravizza, 1984; Williams, 1986).

So while there is an abundance of research that examines some aspect of athletic performance, there are far fewer studies that attempt to discover the subjective experience of an athlete's performance. Even less research exists on women's experiences in sport.

Women In Sports

Despite the facts that over 2 million women play high school sports, one third of all college athletes are women, and over 4 million fans attended women's Division I college basketball games in 1992, women are still considered second-class citizens in the world of sport (Morse, 1992). In our society for instance, when

girls or women show affinity or demonstrate ability in athletics, they are frequently displaced into another gender category and labeled as "tomboys." Donna Lopiano, executive director of the Women's Sport Foundation, offers this opinion: "Sports in our society is still a right for little boys and a privilege for little girls" (Morse, 1992, p. 195).

Women's sport experiences have received scant attention in the social-psychological literature. Feminist researchers have argued that "sport has been shaped without regard to the existence and experiences of women and remains largely under the control of men" (Brown, 1986, p. 32). In fact, if a social constructionist analysis is applied to the existing performance theories in sport, it becomes evident that the theories have been developed predominately on men's experiences, and the social realities of women's athletic experiences have been routinely ignored (DiIorio, 1989).

When discussion of women's sport experiences *is* found in the literature, much attention is focused on themes of discrimination and trivialization, a trend especially reflected in the popular media. For instance, in an analysis of all Sports Illustrated feature articles between 1954 and 1987, researchers found that over 90% of the articles were about the sporting achievements and lives of males, and articles about men were considerably longer than those about women (Lumpkin & Williams, 1991).

Analysis of televised narratives and visual depictions of women participating in basketball, surfing, and marathon running revealed conflicting messages about female athletes (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988). The authors note that "positive portrayals of sportswomen are combined with subtly negative suggestions that trivialize or undercut the women's efforts . . . in a way of denying power to the women" (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988, p. 1). For instance, analysis of the television commentary of a women's

national championship basketball game revealed that the announcers ignored the physical talent of the athletes and focused instead on their aesthetic movement, describing the female players as "fun to watch," "beautiful," "very pretty," and "fine." Conversely, the commentary in the men's championship basketball game emphasized the physical skill and mental prowess of the male players, labeling their abilities as "great," "powerful," and "smart." (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988).

Attention has also been given to the de-athleticization of women through the naming of collegiate sport teams (Eitzen & Zinn, 1989). The practice of adding feminine suffixes (e.g., "Tigerettes"), using "gal" or "lady" (e.g., "Lady Jets," "Green Gals"), or creating a male/female paired polarity (e.g., "Bears"/"Teddy Bears") all "contribute to the maintenance of male dominance . . . by defining women athletes as second class citizens and trivial" (Eitzen & Zinn, 1989, p. 362).

Finally, accusations of lesbianism have also served to devalue women's athletic participation and success, especially in aggressive, contact sports such as hockey and basketball (Griffin, 1993). Lenskyj (1987) writes that society frequently labels athletic women as lesbian or man-like in order to discourage female participation in so-called masculine sports or to justify women's success in these sports. In sum, women continue to experience discrimination in the sports arena despite the fact that they are participating more than ever in athletics.

Research on Female Collegiate Basketball Players

The research that has been conducted with female collegiate basketball players is limited in quantity and narrow in scope. Existing literature reflects four main research areas: 1) issues related to eating disorders, weight, and body image (Black & Burckes-Miller, 1988; Furnham, Titman, & Sleeman, 1994),

2) self-concept and self-esteem issues (Finkenberg, Mitchell, & Weems, 1991), 3) gender differences in sport related constructs such as anxiety and motivation (Fortier, Vallerand, Briere, & Provencher, 1995; Madden & Kirkby, 1995), and 4) stereotyping and discrimination issues (Kane & Parks, 1992; Riemer & Feltz, 1995).

Few studies have examined female basketball players' performance and experiences exclusively. In fact, a survey of published journal articles since 1990 revealed that only five studies were conducted using female collegiate basketball players exclusively as research subjects (Hardy & Parfitt, 1991; Lamirand & Rainey, 1994; Savoy, 1993; Schindler-Zimmerman, Washle, & Protinsky, 1990; Shoenfelt, 1991). The method used in these studies was primary quantitative where variables were manipulated or evaluated to study some aspect of performance.

For instance, Hardy and Parfitt (1991) studied a catastrophe model of anxiety and performance, where the players performed a set-shooting task under conditions

of high or low anxiety. The subjects' physiological arousal was increased or decreased and their shooting percentage measured. The results showed that the subjects' performances were greater in the high anxiety condition than in the low anxiety condition, supporting the catastrophe model of performance were dire circumstances and pressure facilitate high performance.

Lamirand and Rainey (1994) conducted a study that also used female collegiate basketball players as participants. In this investigation, 18 players were pretested on free-throw shooting and then assigned to relaxation or mental imagery training groups. The results revealed no significant improvement in free-throw shooting percentage for the imagery group, but there was a significant increase in the shooting of those players who were trained in relaxation.

Savoy (1993) conducted a year-long study of a mental training for one female college basketball player. A psychological skills training program was developed for the athlete and she was monitored and

evaluated throughout the season through observation, interviews, and self-report measures. The mental training program that was used included techniques of imagery, centering, focusing, and energizing. Results indicated a reduction in the athlete's pregame anxiety, an improvement in individual game statistics (e.g., points scored), and an increase in the coach's evaluation of the athlete.

The Qualitative Method in Sport Psychology Research

A gap in the scientific literature appears to exist in the area of women's subjective descriptions of their athletic experiences. Phenomenological research is recommended by feminist scholars as a means of discovering and understanding women's experiences that are frequently undermined or unrecognized by society (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Daniluk, 1993). Feminist theologians Christ and Plaskow (1979) comment on the invisibility of women's experiences: "Because women have often shaped and understood their

lives according to norms or preferences for female behavior expressed by men, there is a sense in which women have not shaped or even known their own experience" (p. 6). Since athletics reflects a microcosm of a patriarchal society, female athletes' experiences are shaped according to men's values and understanding of the world (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983). Qualitative research could contribute greatly to the understanding of women's sport experiences and could challenge the ruling ideologies of performance-related theories based on men's athletic experiences (Boutilier & SanGiovanni, 1983; Bryson, 1987; DiIorio, 1989).

Several recent qualitative studies in sport psychology have provided insight into the experience of different aspects of athletic performance. For instance, Blinde and Stratta (1992) interviewed athletes who had experienced a "sport career death" when they either had been cut from a team or had had their sport programs eliminated. The results revealed

that the athletes experienced a great deal of trauma and disruption in their lives that paralleled feelings associated with death and dying.

When investigating the social psychology of the benchwarmer, Rotella and Newburg (1989) interviewed athletes who experienced sitting the bench while the rest of the team competed. The results suggest that the "bench/identity crisis" may be a common problem in sport, and suggestions were offered for athletes, coaches, and sport psychologists to help respond effectively to athletes in benchwarmer situations.

Scanlan, Stein, and Ravizza (1989, 1991) studied the sources of enjoyment and stress of elite figure skaters. When they interviewed former national championship skaters on their experience of enjoyment, four themes emerged from the data: social and life opportunities, perceived competence, social recognition of competence, and the act of skating (Scanlan et al., 1989). These findings enabled an enhanced "understanding for new and previously indicated sources

of enjoyment" associated with the sport experience for these skaters (Scanlan et al., 1989, p. 65).

To explore the effects of success, Kreiner-Phillips and Orlick (1993) interviewed athletes who reached the top of the world's competition in their sport. Eight themes emerged in the athletes' experience of continued success, including "Increased Demands" and "Maintaining Level of Performance." Each category was supported by direct quotations from the athletes "to illustrate the basis upon which categories were formulated and to help the reader gain a better understanding of individual athletes' perspectives" (Kreiner-Phillips & Orlick, 1993, p. 35).

Overall, the qualitative research paradigm is growing in popularity and utility in sport psychology. As demonstrated in the aforementioned studies, the research method can be used to discover and understand a wide range of phenomena in athletes' experiences, particularly those experiences that are not well understood or difficult to measure quantitatively.

Theoretical Model

Existential-Phenomenological Theory

Existential phenomenology is rooted in the philosophical theories developed by Soren Kierkegaard and Edmund Husserl (Polkinghorne, 1989). This philosophy is based on the premise that experience is the fundamental source of knowledge, and that behavior is an expression of one's experience of being in the world. Irvin Yalom adapted existential theory to psychotherapy, paying particular attention to one's experience of fundamental human issues such as: death, freedom, isolation, and meaninglessness (May & Yalom, 1989). In an applied sense, existential-phenomenological psychological thought "seeks to explicate the *essence*, *structure*, or *form* of both human experience and human behavior as revealed through essentially descriptive techniques including disciplined reflection" (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989, p. 6).

Two key concepts form the foundation of existential-phenomenological theory: the interrelationship between the person and her or his world, and the role of language as the structure that gives meaning to one's experience (Valle et al., 1989). One's connectedness with her or his world is the notion that individuals and their environment coconstitute each other, so that one cannot exist without the other. To understand a person's existence one must know the world in which that person lives (Valle et al, 1989). "It is through the world that the very *meaning* of the person's existence emerges both for himself or herself and for others" (Valle et al., 1989, p. 7). Language is what facilitates the interconnection between person and environment. Language enables an entrance into another's world and allows an outsider to understand the meaning of a person's experience (Giorgi, 1985). Husserl's (1970) existential philosophy did not focus "on the world as interpreted and . . . created by scientific fact and theory, . . . [but rather on] the

world of everyday experience as expressed in everyday language" (Valle et al., 1989, p. 9).

The Phenomenological Research Method

Grounded in Husserl's ideas, the goal of phenomenological research is to "produce clear and accurate descriptions of a particular aspect of human experience" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 44). To discover aspects of an experience, researchers usually conduct open-ended interviews, focusing on the "what" of the person's experiences, rather than on the "how." Polkinghorne (1989) describes a general format for conducting a phenomenological investigation:

1. Gather a number of naive descriptions from people who are having or have had the experience under investigation.

2. Engage in a process of analyzing these descriptions so that the researcher comes to a grasp of the constituents or common elements that make the experience what it is.

3. Produce a research report that gives an accurate, clear, and articulate description of an experience. The reader of the report should come away with the feeling that "I

> understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (p. 46).

Ideally, a phenomenological research study captures the essence of an experience through a person's own words and leads to a fuller understanding of a particular phenomenon, others, and ourselves (Valle et al., 1989).

Methodological Issues

Reliability

Reliability and validity, important methodological considerations in quantitative research, are not intrinsic to qualitative inquiries in the same way. Reliability refers to the dependability of a method (e.g., a questionnaire, interview) as reflected in the consistency of its results upon repeated measures of the same group. In qualitative research, there is no guarantee that subjects will describe their experience of a phenomenon in the same way if interviewed on different occasions due simply to human subjectivity

and variance in the way that participants see their experience.

It is in this apparent inconsistency in the data that a true strength of the phenomenological method unfolds. The qualitative researcher welcomes discrepancies in the data as participants describe varying salient features of their experience (Wertz, 1986). What may initially appear to be methodological "error" in quantitative measurement terms, actually fosters the richness and wholeness of the understanding of a fluctuating phenomenological experience (Wertz, 1986). Differences in researchers' perspectives in the data analysis are also valued. Fischer (1989) contends that rich descriptions of experiences are achieved by explicitly validating the enhancing impact of an assessor's subjectivity (e.g., individuality, perspective) on the understanding of a phenomenon.

Validity

In quantitative research, validity refers to the extent that a method measures the construct that it purports to measure. In phenomenological research however, validity is defined by how well the structure of an experience is brought forth from the data (Wertz, 1984). Because qualitative inquiry is highly subjective and dependent on the insights and capabilities of the participants and researcher, there is no absolute truth in the interpretation of a data set (Patton, 1990). However, there are several issues that should be addressed to enhance the quality and validity of qualitative data analysis. These issues include participant selection, bracketing of researcher's assumptions, and means of handling the data (Kvale, 1983; Patton, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1989; Wertz, 1984).

Participants selected to be informants for the study must have had the relevant experience to answer the research question and must be able to provide an

account of that experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). The quality of the data is directly related to both the researcher's acumen in eliciting description of a participant's experience and the participant's ability to provide a rich narrative of the individual experience.

Another way to promote validity in qualitative research is for researchers to make explicit their predispositions or biases that may impact data analysis and interpretations (Patton, 1990). Kvale (1983) suggests that researchers attempt to bracket their assumptions by being interviewed on the very experience that they are investigating, so as to name their prejudices rather than claim objectivity or impartiality that is mutually exclusive to the essence of being human.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, validity of phenomenological research speaks to the question: "Does the general [thematic] structural description provide an accurate portrait of the common features and

structural connections that are manifest in the examples collected?" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 57). It is the researcher's obligation to make clear to the reader what steps were taken to arrive at the conclusion of a thematic structure and to powerfully support the general structural description of the experience with the words of the participants (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Statement of the Problem

Although women's involvement in sports has increased at unprecedented rates over the past several years, the majority of the sport psychology literature has focused on men's sport experiences. As Murray and Matheson (1993) comment: "Until the past 15 years, the social, psychological, physiological, and biochemical research and information in sport was all about males, related to males, and for the purpose of improving the performances of males" (p. 217). While there has been recent research that has examined aspects of women's

sport performance (e.g., Fortier et al., 1995; Savoy, 1993), very few studies have examined women's athletic performance without comparison to the male model. Subsequently, female athletes have been confined to theoretical and practical parameters that have until this point been defined by the male experience.

To the researcher's knowledge, there has been no phenomenological study that has illuminated salient issues that female basketball players experience when they perform. So as not to confine or direct participants to describe a particular aspect of their experience of performing basketball (e.g., the experience of winning), the following general question was posed to each participant: "What has been your experience of performing basketball?" The purpose of this study then, was to explore the phenomena of performing for elite female basketball players in hopes of gaining a greater understanding and appreciation of this experience.

Chapter 2

Method

Data Collection

Participants

Phenomenological researchers (e.g., Colaizzi, 1978; Hycner, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1989) suggest that research participants meet specific criteria in order to be informants for a qualitative study. The two criteria most often noted for participant selection include the following: 1) the recent, relevant experience to answer the research question (e.g., the experience of returning to college, or performing basketball) and, 2) the ability to offer an articulate, spontaneous, reflective account of their experience of the particular phenomenon being studied. The participants interviewed in this study satisfied the aforementioned criteria.

Ten participants were solicited from two Division I women's basketball programs - one in the southeastern region of the country, and the other in the west. The investigator worked as a consultant for both. After obtaining permission from the respective coaches of each program, the investigator sought volunteers from the teams to be interviewed.

To recruit participants, the researcher attended team meetings at each university and informed the players of the purpose of the research study. If athletes expressed interest in participating in the investigation, they were invited to meet with the researcher to be interviewed at mutually agreeable times. All interviews were conducted during the off season when the athletes were involved in conditioning and not in practice or competition. Neither monetary compensation nor academic credit was offered the participants.

These athletes are considered elite because they are all receiving scholarships to play basketball at

the Division I level. Also, collectively, the women interviewed in this study had a combined winning percentage of 81% at the time the interviews were conducted, indicating that they have experienced considerable success in their collegiate basketball careers.

Since the goal of existential-phenomenological subject selection is to "obtain richly varied description, not to achieve statistical generalization" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 48), the investigator selected volunteers who appeared to have brought a diversity of experiences with which to answer the research question (Participants' demographic information is listed in Appendix A). After 10 interviews were conducted and analyzed, the investigator, in consultation with her primary advisor, concluded that no new themes were emerging from the protocols that did not already fit into existing thematic structures. Since the criteria of sufficiency and saturation of information for phenomenological inquiry were fulfilled, it was not

necessary to interview additional participants (McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1990; Seidman, 1991).

Seidman (1991) notes some potential pitfalls in interviewing people who are clients or acquaintances. The most common hazard occurs when investigators do not explore assumptions about participants' experiences and circumstances because the investigators make assumptions about what the participant is saying. Awareness of this tendency prior to conducting the interviews for this study helped the investigator minimize her assumptions while striving for clarity and exploration of the interviewees' experiences. It is the investigator's impression that having had previous contact with the interviewees may have enhanced the depth and richness of the interviews, as it appeared that many participants felt relaxed and safe to express intense feelings about their experiences without inhibition.

Phenomenological Interviews

The participants were interviewed by the investigator in a mutually agreeable private office. After reading and signing the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix B), the participants were reminded of their right to discontinue the interview without prejudice or penalty. To promote confidentiality, certain protective measures were taken, about which participants were informed before the interview began. The safeguards included not revealing individual participants' identities in any oral or written presentation of the data, and omitting all potentially identifying data (e.g., names of teammates, coaches, opponents) during the transcription process.

The interviews were open-ended and unstructured, and ranged in time from 45 to 75 minutes, varying as a function of the participants' depth of introspection and breadth of description. Each interview was audiotaped so that verbatim protocols could be produced. To protect the participants'

confidentiality, the audiotapes of the interviews were numerically coded and then transcribed by the investigator. Only the investigator knew the identity of the participants.

When discussing the objectives of qualitative interviewing, Patton (1990) notes that "the purpose of open-ended interviewing is not to put things in someone's mind, but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed" (p. 278). Patton adds that "qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (p. 278). In an attempt to stay true to the philosophical objectives of qualitative interviewing, the investigator was careful to remain open to the emergence of new or unexpected information from the interviewees and worked to direct the participant toward description and away from interpreting her experience (Kvale, 1983).

Each phenomenological interview began with the question: "What has been your experience of performing

(or playing) basketball?" All subsequent questions were prompts for the participants to elaborate on or clarify nuances of her experience and to describe in detail specific situations that reflected a particular theme of the experience (see Appendix C for sample interview questions). The participants were encouraged to talk about whatever aspects were figural in the grounds of their experiences of performance. A sample interview protocol is found in Appendix D.

Bracketing Interview

Before the interviews with the participants were conducted, a bracketing interview and an exploratory pilot study were done to enhance the rigor of the study. Hycner (1985) suggests that qualitative researchers attempt to suspend their own meanings and interpretations of the experience in hopes of unbiasedly soliciting the world view of the participant. One way for researchers to bracket their assumptions is to be interviewed about the phenomenon

in question. In this study, the investigator was interviewed by a colleague familiar with the phenomenological research method on her experience of performing basketball. The bracketing protocol was analyzed and general themes were identified.

Themes that emerged from the researcher's bracketing interview illuminated her preconceived notions of the experiences that the participants in the study may discuss. For instance, based on the data from the bracketing interview, she conceived that the athletes would remember specific games and practices in which they performed well and poorly. In the researcher's experience, stories involving members of the team were a salient theme, therefore, the researcher expected the participants to describe their thoughts and feelings toward teammates and coaches. Finally, based on her experience, the researcher presumed that the athletes would express a wide range of emotions (e.g., exhilaration, frustration, love) in connection with their experiences of performing

basketball.

The researcher's presuppositions about potential themes that could emerge from the athletes' descriptions were recorded and recollected during the process of this investigation. Being aware of the nuances that stood out in her experience before conducting the interviews for this study was beneficial. The investigator was aware of her biases and was able to minimize the tendency to lead interviewees and make biased interpretations of the data according to her sense of experience.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in order to test the fluidity of the research questions and to identify potential flaws in the research method. The investigator interviewed a former Division I female basketball player on her experience of performing. Feedback given by the participant after the interview indicated that the research question was clear and that

she was able to describe in depth the salient aspects related to her experience. Based on this feedback, no revisions were made to the research design or method.

Data Analysis

Thematization Process

The purpose of phenomenological data analysis is "to reveal and unravel the structures, logic, and interrelationships that are obtained in the phenomenon under inspection" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 50). To uncover the essence of an athlete's performance experience, the interview data need to be reduced and organized in a systematic way. In phenomenological research, the process of thematization is used to identify and organize the information that emerges from the interviewees' descriptions of their experiences (Polkinghorne, 1989). The following model of data organization and thematization used for this study was adapted from guidelines provided by Colaizzi (1978), Cote, Salmela, Baria and Russell (1993), Giorgi (1985),

Hycner (1985), Patton (1990), and Tesch (1990).

To assure accurate recording and to facilitate replicability of the analysis, each procedural step was logged on a Qualitative Analysis Documentation Form, adapted from Miles and Huberman (1984). Information such as the purpose of the analysis task (e.g., exploratory or confirmatory), a description of the procedures used (e.g., coding, clustering), and conclusions drawn were recorded for each protocol analyzed. A sample documentation form is provided in Appendix E.

Reading for a Sense of the Whole

The first step taken in the data analysis was to read the protocols thoroughly to get a sense of the whole (Giorgi, 1985). Gestalt psychologists introduced the importance of looking at whole patterns, noting that the whole is usually different from the sum of its parts. Before components of experience can be broken down and understood, the individual units must be

examined in the context of the whole experience (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1981). Understanding the protocols' contextual base from which themes emerged was essential to subsequent steps in the analysis. A complete protocol for one interview is included in Appendix D so that the reader may read for a sense of the whole context of the interview.

Identifying Meaning Units

Meaning units illuminating "essential constituents" (Hycner, 1985, p. 285) of the participants' experience of performance were identified and extracted from each protocol. Tesch (1990) defined a meaning unit as a "segment of text that is comprehensible by itself and contains one idea, episode, or piece of information" (p. 116). Every meaning unit was "tagged" to describe the text segment's contents (Cote et al., 1993). To illustrate how this concept was applied in this study, the meaning unit, "they (teammates) were my best friends" was

tagged to describe the theme in the following interview passage:

> . . . the other seniors helped me out a lot. The starting five really felt close knit. We did everything together. I mean, we went out together, stayed at each other's house. Being that close to my teammates, it seemed like that carried onto the court. They were my best friends.

If there was ambiguity or disagreement among research team members about whether or not a sample of text was indeed a comprehensive unit, it was included as a meaning unit in this step. An example of meaning units delineated from an entire sample protocol is found in Appendix F.

Creating Categories

After meaning units were identified, the next step involved creating categories comprised of meaning units with similar content or themes (Hycner, 1985). The categories were essentially words or phrases that gave meaning to the significant units extracted in Step 2. For example, the category called "Relationship with Teammates" was created after grouping related meaning

units extracted from the sample protocol found in Appendix F:

3. We all knew we were the underdog coming in and everyone rallied around _____ (teammate).

7. The other seniors helped me out a lot.

8. Being that close to my teammates, it seemed like that carried onto the court.

9. They were my best friends.

54. Because you didn't see other people break, it helped you not to.

57. The coaches thought that we were in cliques.

It is in this step that the researcher's 'creative insight' is accessed and "there is more room for 'artistic judgement' . . . than ever before" (Hycner, 1985, p. 288). Both Colaizzi (1978) and Giorgi (1985) discuss the precariousness of this step as it involves the transformation of the data from the words of the participant to the words of the investigator. Therefore, conscientious effort was made by the investigator to stay connected and true to the context of the original protocol statements (Colaizzi, 1978; Hycner, 1985). An example of the transformation of

meaning units into categories is found in Appendix G.

Clustering Themes

Next, categories were grouped into clusters, resulting in a final thematic structure that emerged from the data (Colaizzi, 1978). This step involved clustering related categories into encompassing themes that appeared in all of the protocols. Since some thematic clusters incorporated a broad range of meaning and description, the themes were also divided into subthemes. For instance, since the cluster of "Team" had many variations and meanings for each participant, a subtheme (e.g., "Working Together") was created.

The following example illustrates the process of condensing categories into themes in this study. During the data analysis, the research team generated broad themes to encompass the general categories of "Winning" and "Role." These categories were condensed under the more inclusive thematic umbrella of "'I' in Team." Next, the categories from each protocol were

reanalyzed and clustered into the encompassing themes. An example of the creation of a theme from categories using data from all ten protocols is found in Appendix H.

Internal and External Homogeneity

Patton (1990) notes the importance of assessing for "internal and external homogeneity" of the data (p. 403). After the text was organized into thematic clusters, the data in each group were evaluated to verify that the text was consistent with the heading within each theme, and that there were distinct differences among the different themes.

Research Team

Phenomenological data analysis is subjective by nature, therefore it is recommended that research groups or trained judges be used in an attempt to minimize the investigator's biases during the thematization process (Hycner, 1985). While the

investigator was primarily responsible for the organization and analysis of the data, she was assisted by her dissertation advisor and a research team composed of judges trained in phenomenological research methods. The research team was headed by the investigator and included three graduate students in counseling and a pre-doctoral psychology intern. All members of the team were informed of the confidential nature of the interviews and agreed to discuss the subject matter only among the research team members (see Appendix I for the Research Team Member's Pledge of Confidentiality). The research team enhanced the study's rigor by serving as a validity check during the data analysis, concurrently discussing, challenging, and substantiating the researcher's findings.

Chapter 3

Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experience of performance for female college basketball players. Phenomenological analysis was performed on the interview data and three major themes emerged: 1) **Relationships**, 2) **"I" in Team**, and 3) **Play**. These themes unfolded against the ground of **Team**, where the athletes' experience of performing basketball was described in the context of their social milieu comprised of teammates and coaches. A visual depiction of the thematic structure for this data set is found in Figure 1.

Upon analysis, the research team concluded that there were no apparent differences in the themes that emerged between the athletes from the two universities from which they were selected. There also did not

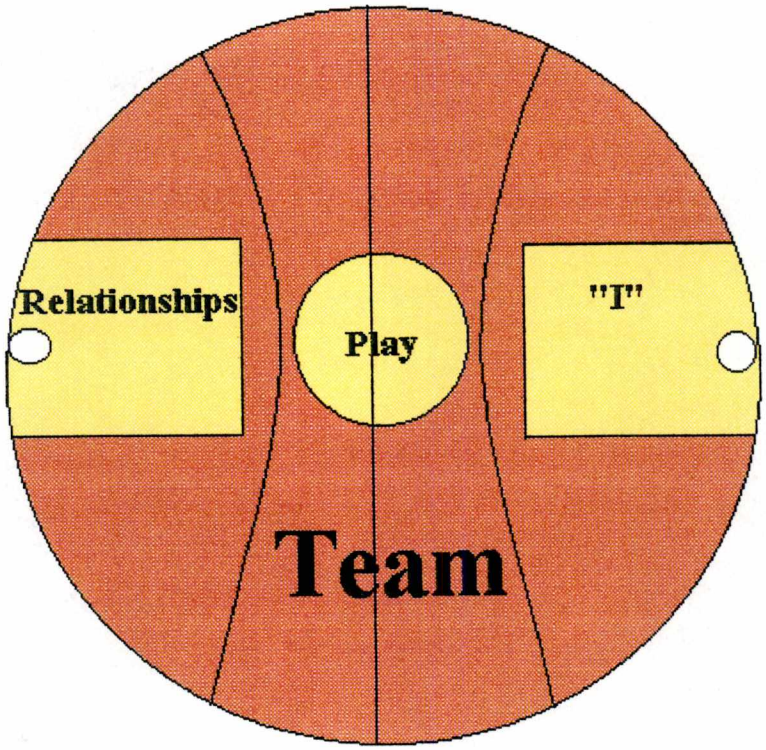


Figure 1. Visual depiction of thematic structure.

appear to be significant variation among participants' descriptions of their experience based on variables such as ethnicity, chronological age, or basketball position (e.g., guards versus forwards).

In this chapter, a description of the existential ground (context) from which the themes emerged will be presented, followed by a delineation of the three salient themes. Direct quotations from the study's participants will be cited to illustrate the essence of each experiential theme.

In Their Words

Before presenting the thematic structure that unfolded from the athletes' descriptions of their performance, a brief biographical sketch will be presented to give the reader a sense of each player and an association of the athletes' names with excerpts from their dialogues. The names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Keshia

Basketball Position: Guard
Year in College: Senior
Age: 21
Years of Playing Competitive Basketball: 11
Ethnicity: African-American
College Major: Public Relations
Personal: Viewed as an out-spoken leader on the team; known for her three-point shooting and defense.

Wanda

Basketball Position: Center
Year in College: Sophomore
Age: 20
Years of Playing Competitive Basketball: 10
Ethnicity: Caucasian
College Major: Sport Management
Personal: Highly recruited athlete; known for her rebounding.

Janelle

Basketball Position: Forward
Year in College: Sophomore
Age: 21
Years of Playing Competitive Basketball: 8
Ethnicity: African-American
College Major: Sport Management
Personal: Renowned for her athleticism and defense; red-shirted for a year because of a knee injury.

Teresa

Basketball Position: Guard
Year in College: First Year
Age: 18
Years of Playing Competitive Basketball: 7
Ethnicity: African-American
College Major: Community Health
Personal: Quiet, soft-spoken individual; known for her quickness and defense.

Jamie

Basketball Position: Guard
Year in College: First Year
Age: 19
Years of Playing Competitive Basketball: 9
Ethnicity: Caucasian
College Major: Psychology
Personal: Missed one full season because of a NCAA rule; seen as a team leader with a strong work ethic.

Rochelle

Basketball Position: Center
Year in College: Sophomore
Age: 20
Years of Playing Competitive Basketball: 5
Ethnicity: African-American
College Major: Sport Management
Personal: Seen as an emotional leader on the team; known for making plays that excite the crowd.

Robin

Basketball Position: Guard
Year in College: Junior
Age: 21
Years of Playing Competitive Basketball: 7
Ethnicity: Caucasian
College Major: Education
Personal: Viewed as a team leader; known for her shooting.

Stacey

Basketball Position: Forward
Year in College: Junior
Age: 21
Years of Playing Competitive Basketball: 10
Ethnicity: Caucasian
College Major: Public Relations
Personal: Transferred from a junior college; renowned for her athleticism and jumping ability.

LaShayna

Basketball Position: Forward
Year in College: Junior
Age: 21
Years of Playing Competitive Basketball: 8
Ethnicity: African-American
College Major: Business
Personal: Viewed as a hard worker by her teammates; known for her rebounding.

Dena

Basketball Position: Forward
Year in College: First Year
Age: 18
Years of Playing Competitive Basketball: 9
Ethnicity: African-American
College Major: Human Resources
Personal: Plagued by injuries throughout her career and medically red-shirted; most of her interview described her experience of being injured.

The Ground for the Experience: Team

In each interview, the experience of performing basketball was described in an existential ground of team. This ground of team provided the context that gave meaning to the participants' figural experiences of performance.

In all of the interview protocols analyzed, the athletes discussed salient aspects of their experience

of performance that reflected nuances associated with the notion of *team*. Participants powerfully delineated the importance and enjoyment of functioning in a team context. Within the team framework, relationships with teammates and coaches were described at length and successful performances were defined by cohesive, reciprocal, and unselfish interactions. The context of team was manifested in three ways throughout the athletes' descriptions of their performance experiences: 1) Cohesion Is Success, 2) Working Together, and 3) Team Above Self.

Cohesion Is Success

In the first manifestation of the team context, participants described how cohesion among the team fostered success. Interestingly for several athletes, success was defined in terms of close relationships with teammates and coaches, not in terms of winning. Wanda's words illustrate the benefits of having cohesive relationships among the team:

> You know how we worked on being closer. I've really felt it throughout the whole year; there was just this difference. When everybody put their mind to it that we are family and not just individuals out there. Our season was much better because of that.

> I remember when we beat ____ (opponent) . . . I mean we just got in a huddle in the middle of the court and we just all got together. We said, "It's just us, you know, just think of it as just us - we're the only ones out here." I felt like we were really close during that whole game. I mean the bench, the whole bench, people on the bench, everybody was just really close. . . . We were down most of the game, but we didn't just give up, we stayed together. I don't think we would have done that last year because we weren't together. People would have started thinking about themselves and their own performance.

Keshia and Robin talk about how having team cohesion is a mark of success:

> Like this year, we wanted to build our team cohesiveness and I feel like we won in that aspect of basketball, even though we didn't go on to win the national championship ball game, we won in other areas.

> I think we have a great team now. We have team unity, people caring about each other, getting along, no back-stabbing, stuff like that.

Here, Keshia describes how a teammate can be a motivating force to compete and succeed:

> We pulled together then. We won it for ____ (teammate). We were in the huddles saying, "Do it for ____, do it for ____ (teammate)." That was it - that was the most team-oriented play that I ever experienced.

The athletes included the coaches as part of their intimate team structure. Having a close, supportive

relationship with the coaches was also seen as a means of facilitating success. Robin said:

> I always believe in myself, but they [the coaches] give you that extra . . . you go to the next level when the coaches believe in you, too. When you feel close to them, when they think you can do it, then that helps you even more.

However, some athletes related how non-cohesive relationships with the team and coaches, marked by poor communication and cliques, presented a barrier to success. Keshia described a particularly bad year for her:

> It was a bad year - we were getting mixed messages from the coaching staff. . . .I remember this one specific time when we were on the road, and Coach said, "Who are you to question my coaching?" It wasn't a matter of questioning the coaching, but we didn't understand what Coach was doing. If we had better communication with the coaches it would have helped us play better.

> We had a lot of trouble my sophomore year. The coaches thought we were in cliques. . . . A lot of stuff was just blown out of proportion that people could have handled if people were more mature, and we didn't have to deal on a junior high level. I thought that because we had to deal with little petty things, it just caused the team to crumble.

Robin discussed her hesitation in coming back to play after an injury because the team atmosphere did not feel warm or safe:

> Related to the team . . . coming back last summer from my redshirt, I was really hesitant to come back because I had seen what the team was that entire year and it was YUCK! It wasn't anything that I wanted to be a part of. They were not caring people; they were talking about people behind their back.

Jamie spoke to a notion of feeling tension from the coaches, and how not feeling supported by them negatively affected her:

> It's not fun when the players feel tension from the coaches. The coaches have so much influence on the players even though they think that they might not because you're out there playing the game and they're not out there with you. But from a player's standpoint, if I look over at the bench and Coach is kind of sitting down, laid back, or standing up with the look on her face of "What are you doing?", that's when I would lose a little bit of confidence because she's not *with* me, she's not playing, she's not working *with* me when she's like: "What are you doing? That's not what we went over in practice!", instead of saying "That's OK, that's all right."

Working Together

As the athletes described their experience of team, there was particular mention of working together and helping fellow teammates perform. The following excerpts demonstrate how participants described helping their teammates and how cooperative, collaborative efforts fostered team success. Keshia recalled a big game and how the team worked together to engineer a

comeback:

> We were down by five in the championship game. ____ (teammate) was our scorer and we knew she was hot, so we kept giving her the ball. We were running plays to her and everybody was working together, if we had to set a screen for her, or whatever. . . .Nobody was worrying about anything else except getting her open - she's got the hot hand.

LaShayna recalled how she helped a teammate through a time when she was struggling:

> There was this one game where ____ (teammate) was struggling. The first couple of minutes during the game in the first half, I really didn't say anything to her. Then, in the second half when we came out, I said, "I'm going to make sure I go to her." You know, give her a high-five and say, "Yeah, let's go. You have to score next." - or whatever. So I gave her a high-five, and the next time I remember her responding. And the next time, I remember her scoring.

Stacey summed up the notion of working together simply:

> It's not just you as an individual like in some sports; it's more of a, everybody helps each other out more.

Team Above Self

Another aspect of the participants' experience of team was their philosophical descriptions of striving for and valuing team goals over personal accomplishments. These female athletes described their experience of performance in altruistic terms, where self-centeredness and individual stardom were

superseded by the value of working together as a team. Jamie talked about how she had modified her game for the benefit of her team:

> You just have to be tuned into your teammates and know what they like - be willing to sacrifice your game to help their game.

The following quotes from Keshia reflected her experience of unselfish, team play:

> When I think of winning, I don't look in the score box or think of the outstanding player; I think I would take a team award rather than an individual award at a tournament.

> When I first came here, I really felt like everybody wasn't out for themselves, didn't care whether they score the most points, didn't worry about if they had a bad game - they didn't let anybody else know. Even though ____ (teammate) was our most consistent scorer for us, it was like, that's fine, she is that - so keep giving her the ball - and no one else took it the wrong way.

> My freshman year, I thought that was the most unselfish team, handling their role, and not worried about themselves, but about the team. People were saying, "I'm going to do this for the team," and when you feel it inside that they are doing it for the team, then that's when it will all come together.

In the next passage, Rochelle commented on her experience of the media, and how she repeatedly emphasized a team focus over individual achievement, despite the reporters' persistent efforts to have her focus on herself:

> I guess it's just awkward for me because I'm never going to say, "Well, **I** did this and **I** did that." And that's what they [the media] want to hear. And I'm never going to say that. And that throws them off because they try to keep throwing questions at you to make you say "I" and I'm always saying, "Well, **we** did that," or "____ (teammate) did this," or, "If it wasn't for this person we wouldn't have done that," and they're waiting for me to say, "Well, **I** did this," and I never do it, and it just throws them off completely.

Here, Rochelle's frustration with her teammates for not conforming to a team-first philosophy is evident, and how teammates' individual foci negatively impacted her performance:

> Against ____ (opponent) we had some personality conflicts and that put two people on the bench in my position that didn't play for the rest of the game. That made me play just about the whole game. I was already tired because I had been playing 35 minutes a game in the last two or three games and I had to play the whole second half. And that made me mad, because to me, that's like they were just thinking of themselves, they're not thinking of me. And I really wasn't playing to my potential in the second half. They weren't thinking about anybody but themselves.

The Experiential Themes

The three primary experiential themes that emerged from the interviews against the ground of team are: 1) **Relationships** 2) **"I" in Team**, and 3) **Play**. These themes are salient issues in the athletes' experience

and, when examined in the context of **Team**, give meaning to the experience of performing basketball. All three themes were present in each of the interviews. Variation among participants' experiences is reflected by subthemes of each primary theme, as not all categories of the subthemes were experienced by each participant.

Figure-Ground Juxtaposition

According to existential theory (e.g., May & Yalom, 1989), what gives meaning to an experience is the juxtaposition of salient issues (figures) and context (ground). In this study, the first theme, Relationships, was a prominent aspect of the athletes' performance experience. Therefore, Relationships were figural and took on meaning in the context of team. Stacey's quotes exemplified the figure-ground juxtaposition:

> We always had such good camaraderie on our team. Everybody knew each other. There was no tension; everything was just . . . cool. You did things on the court for each other.

> We walked on that court and we were a team. When there were five people on that court, there were five people playing together. It wasn't two people taking on the world - it was all of us.
>
> My college years were probably my most fun. I made my best friends there - the ones that I had the most in common with, the ones that could understand the way I was feeling as far as athletics go.

The connection between the primary theme and the context of team will be demonstrated for the remaining two experiential themes (**"I" in Team** and **Play**) in their respective sections.

Theme 1: Relationships

In each interview, participants repeatedly described various types and aspects of relationships as they painted a picture of their performance experience. The theme of relationships was illustrated in three subthemes: 1) "*Like a Family,*" where the experience of basketball involves close interconnections with others; 2) "*Loving the Game,*" where one's relationship with basketball is associated with dynamics and feelings that are found in human relationships (e.g., love,

commitment, frustration, sacrifice); 3) *Time: Growing, Changing, and Ending*, where the transitional aspects of relationships are described. A presentation of each subtheme follows.

Like a Family

Participants described their performance experience in terms of being involved with others, feeling cared for by people, and having various social opportunities and connections. Examples of how relationships through basketball were experienced are illustrated in the following statements. When asked what stood out in her experience of performance, this was the first thing that Teresa said:

> Probably just the feeling of being part of a group, or like a family - everybody working towards that certain goal.

Wanda reflected on her relationships:

> You just form these close relationships with people. You go through a lot during the season and it just seems like you get to know each other and everything.
>
> You know, even looking back on high school now that I've graduated, I look back and I think of some of my teammates, and you are such a family, now that I look back on it.

Janelle spoke to the familial nature of the team and the environment:

> I really like it, just the atmosphere here, homey and loving and all that.
>
> Just that people care so much about you as a person and as a basketball player. I guess, I probably wouldn't have met a lot of people if I didn't play basketball: the President, people on other teams. Just knowing that you have people that will support you no matter what.
>
> I guess being around people who care about you, like the coaches, and how much they really care about you is amazing. The coaches see you as a player, but then they see you as an individual. They try to be your mom, then a counselor, and advisor and all that.

Stacey recalled her experience of feeling connected to and understood by her team:

> I made my best friends with the team - the ones I had the most in common with, the ones that could understand the way I was feeling as far as athletics go.

Loving the Game

In the second relational context, participants described their experience with basketball as if it were a relationship with a significant other with whom they were involved. The athletes talked about the feelings that they have for their sport, reflecting an intimate bond with basketball. Participants also

discussed the commitments and sacrifices they have made to make the relationship work. The following examples demonstrate how players' connection with basketball reflected nuances of interpersonal relationships. Stacey described how through basketball she has found calm and joy, feelings that one would likely experience in a satisfying relationship with a friend or partner:

> I found with basketball, just a feeling of being loose and happy. I have peace of mind when I play. It's so soothing.

Jamie described her love affair with her sport:

> There's not a night that goes by that I fall asleep without thinking about basketball. It's just something I do.
>
> I'm the kind of person that just loves basketball. I think about it all the time.

Conversely, Teresa spoke about her experience of falling out of love with basketball:

> You know how everybody has a love for the game? And a lot of people still have. I can honestly say that I enjoy playing, but I don't love playing anymore. At one point in time I did, but I don't really love, love the game. That's why I can't, like most people can go out everyday and just shoot. I don't really love it like I used to.

Dena talked about her commitment to basketball:

> See, that's why I love basketball so much. I've spent so much time with it that I've put other people off, my friends and stuff, for basketball. Even my parents. I promise you, everything was for basketball.

Robin and Jamie described sacrificing part of their social lives in order to give time and attention to basketball:

> Like sometimes when my friends would say let's go out to the movies or let's go do this - social things - and I've had to say no, I have to go to the gym. . . .It's kind of like a sacrifice, makes me feel like I am giving something up to do something else.

> When they (friends) would go out on weekends, they would always ask me, but I would always say, "No, that's OK." And I would be playing basketball at 12 o'clock at night when they'd drive by and wave and say hi.

Time: Growing, Changing, Ending

Thirdly, within the relational theme, descriptions of participants' relationships with and through basketball were set in the context of time, where relationships change, develop, and end. The following examples illustrate the growth and development of the players' relationships through basketball experienced over time. Robin described her process of learning:

> I think that throughout my three years of playing college ball, my freshman year, you think you know everything. Then it comes to your sophomore year and you're like, "Well, I didn't know that." You just grow more and more each year. And this year, after looking at our seniors, I think I know a lot right now, but in two more years, I'll have so much more under my belt. So it's encouraging to know that each year you learn so much more than you could ever imagine.

Sitting out a season after transferring from another university gave Jamie a chance to reflect on her experience and learn from her past to better appreciate the present:

> This year I had to sit out because I transferred schools . . . It gave me a chance to look at my past and see what I've done and learn from it and focus on the present and focus on what I was doing this year with my teammates, and look to the future thinking of what fun . . . So even though it was a bad experience, it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. I got to stop and look. It was like a picture. Instead of always being the one people were always taking pictures of, I finally took the picture. I looked out and saw so many things that I know I would have never seen if I would have continued at the pace I was going.

Sometimes changes brought challenges to the way that athletes defined themselves. Stacey described an existential identity crisis that occurred for her when after her senior season, her basketball career ended:

> I am at the point where I don't even know who I am anymore. I mean I was just sports - all the time. My mentality was based on that and then, all of a sudden, I decided, "Forget it. I don't want to do that anymore!" And now, I'm like, "Who am I really?" I don't know if that was me with the whole sports thing.

Nowhere was the notion of an ending more dramatic than in several participants' descriptions of their experience of being injured and the loss of their relationships with basketball and with their teammates.

Dena described the grief and loss related to her injury:

> There are things that I have to accept that I don't want to accept. I don't get to warm up anymore; I don't get to wear my jersey. I can't play with my best friend or anything. There's a lot of disappointment. I can't be strong anymore. I cry a lot.
>
> My heart is broken because I can't do what I want to do. And what I had in my mind that I was going to do, I can't. Everyday I'm hurting inside. My heart is hurting because I miss the game I love to play. There are two kinds of pain - emotional and physical.

Keshia's words reflected similar feelings:

> At the beginning I was depressed, sad. I felt like I couldn't do anything. I couldn't walk, I couldn't run - that was the worst thing. I couldn't do anything. I had to have those crutches to help me move and I felt like a cripple, like I was different from everybody else, like I was a handicap. I felt like, ohmygod, what am I going to do? I used to cry and all that. It got me down.

It was clear that one of the most distressing aspects of being injured for these athletes was that the injury separated them from the team. Stacey's image provided a powerful description of how her injury put her on the outside:

> It [the injury] took me away from the team. So then I just started running around the gym for a workout. I was bored. I couldn't practice. So looking at it from that perspective was weird. It was like the team is all down there in this square, practicing and pushing each other, where I'm still part of the team, but I'm just circling around. Kind of interesting. So in that respect, it kind of took me away

> from the team.

Janelle echoed the sentiment:

> The worst was not being around the team, not getting to know them. 'Cause I feel like ____ (teammate) and I are good friends now, but we lost a year.

Theme 2: "I" in Team

The second primary theme of the athletes' experience of performing consisted of their descriptions of how basketball impacted them individually. This theme reflected various aspects of the participants' individual style, role, and development related to basketball performance. Two subthemes captured the notion of **"I" in Team**: 1) *Individual Rituals*, which reflected unique differences of the players in their performance; and 2) *"We Need You,"* which described how the athletes' roles were influenced by their perception of being counted on by others.

Overall, the participants discussed their individual experience to a lesser extent than their

team and relationship experience. When the athletes did describe or define the "self," it was most frequently either related to their relationships with others or within the context of team. How the individual grew and changed in relation to the team is evidenced in the athletes' quotes which demonstrate the figure-ground juxtaposition.

Figure-Ground Juxtaposition: Developing the Self

The "self" for the athletes in this study was most often described in relation to the impact that the individual had on the team and the impact that the team had on the individual. Again, the figure of the self emerged from the ground of team. Jamie's quote illustrates how her development interplayed with others in the context of team:

> Relationships with my teammates, I never thought that was important. All my life, I'd say up until this year, I never really, I always thought to myself, however she feels, that's her business. But then I found out this year, if I try to help other people and act concerned, and **am** concerned about what they're going through, it again takes pressure off me. . . A lot of times, . . . I never really cared how my teammates felt. But, after this year, it feels so good to know that they care about you in return and if you give

> to them, they'll give back to you. Even if they don't give back to you, you still know you tried. That feels really good. I don't know, up until this year, I didn't think about it.

Robin's identity and development also changed in relation to others:

> Like in high school, basketball was for **me**, and it was what I could do for myself to maybe get in the newspaper, to just be good - be the star. Now, just as of recently, I don't necessarily think that's good, and what I would like to do in my basketball career is affect people. There's a lot of little girls that come to our games that just watch me - and just watch how I react, and what I do, and look at my hair!! It's going to be my goal that I affect people - and number one, my teammates - that I show them that I care about them.

For these athletes, changes and developments in individual style were influenced by the needs and goals of the team. The following quotes provide examples of how players challenged themselves to shift from a self-focused to a team-focused philosophy. LaShayna:

> This year I thought I did a better job of not getting as frustrated. . . . I concentrated on doing other things and being vocal toward my teammates. Even if I wasn't scoring or playing good defense, . . . I'd try to do other things. I'd try to get the ball out quicker so someone else can score on a fast break. Or I'd try going up to my teammates and saying "Good job" or anything like that.

Teresa's experience of change was more difficult for her than it was for LaShayna; however, she was working on taking a different role in order to help the team:

> Coach wants me to be vocal. I'm not good at telling everybody else what to do. I'm used to someone telling me what to do and I'll do it. I'm not used to saying, "You have to run this offense and you got to do this." I'm not comfortable with that - even if that's what the team needs. I guess I can change, but it's going to take longer than a couple of months.

Individual Rituals

There was wide variation among the participants in the way that they perceived themselves in relation to basketball and what each person described as salient aspects of performing. There were three areas that were discussed in each athlete's interview that illuminated the uniqueness of an athlete's performance experience: how players gain confidence in their performance, how athletes find motivation and inspiration to play, and how players prepare themselves to compete.

These participants described the way that they gained confidence in themselves. Teresa:

> . . . just little rituals that I do to get ready, like playing with the ball before tip-off or eating the same breakfast that morning. It gives me confidence.

Wanda:

> During warm-ups I'm kind of nervous, but right when they announce my name and I run out there and we all get together and say, "Together!" - all of a sudden I got confidence. I was thinking about that all year. I don't know if it's just getting your name announced as a starter, like that gives you confidence. It gave me confidence. Sometimes you need little reminders, especially when other people give you signs or tell you things that give you confidence. That helps me a lot.

Robin:

> Things like, stupid things, like going to bed with your basketball at night and just laying there shooting a hundred shots. Getting up at 6:30 in the morning and going out and dribbling in the pitch dark garage. Dribbling blind-folded - just fundamental things like that. Going for a jog and taking your ball - stuff like that. Those things give me confidence. Like, "Gee, I've been putting in the hours, I've been putting in the time - I'm good. I can compete.

The following quotes illustrate the different circumstances by which these athletes were inspired and motivated to perform. Jamie's relationship with her grandmother inspired her to play:

> My grandmother had never been to one of my high school games ever. She had went (sic) to the game before that and I was like so shocked that she was even there. She had been very, very sick with some kind of heart thing. She was strong enough to go to the game before, but she was like, "____ (player's name), I can't go to anymore." And I said, "That's O.K. At least you got to see that one game." And then she came to that game; she just showed up with my Dad and the rest of her family and his family. I kind of looked up in the stands as I always did before a game just to kind of give a thumbs up or a wave to my family, and I saw my grandmother and it inspired me to just work harder because she hadn't been there, and it's kind of a neat story.

For Wanda, having responsibility and expectations

placed on her was a motivating force:

> I just felt . . . I mean, going into that tournament I knew the team was depending on me. I felt that I had a lot of responsibility, that they were expecting things out of me. So I just went in and just, I mean, it was the mind set that I've got to do it now. It's hard to explain. I mean, I was motivated to play ____ (opposing player). I just think I took on more responsibility in that tournament. Especially playing where there were a lot of big inside players, you know.

Janelle took inspiration from the opposition. She raised her level of performance in order to defend the opposing point guard:

> Yeah, against ____ (opposing player), their point guard. I was motivated because . . . I thought, "This point guard is nothing. She's not." I mean, I can stop anyone. If I put my mind to it I can stop anybody.

Athletes commented on strategies that they had used to prepare and focus themselves for competition. Jamie described her rituals:

> As far as like, before the game, I just think about game situations. I've used very vivid imagery - I can see people and I can see myself playing on the court. I don't see myself messing up. I never do this in a negative way. I just see myself going over things and constantly doing game situations. I don't see myself just staying out there and goofing around shooting and stuff. I see someone guarding me and I see them talking trash to me and how I'd respond to that. I see myself getting my teammates fired up. That's how I get focused.
>
> So what I did that night, this is when I knew I was focused, I wrote down every single play that we had. I mean I used colored pencils, I used numbers, I wrote down everything! I

> even talked about it with my mom. I was like, "Mom, just quiz me on this because I might be playing point guard."

While these examples show distinct individual differences that reflect the athletes' experience of performance, their personal stories were usually described in relation to the larger context of team. The next two subthemes demonstrate individual performances related to others.

"We Need You"

Athletes' individual roles were strongly influenced by their perception of being needed or counted on by the team. The following excerpts illustrate how individual performance was enhanced when the athlete felt needed by her teammates and coaches. Consider Janelle and Wanda's words:

> My sophomore year, I used to think that my team was counting on me and that made me work even harder to score on that person, or play good defense on her.

> . . . it seems like I do better with more responsibility. I don't know if it's just the feeling of knowing that the team needs you . . . you just feel your confidence go up because you feel like they have confidence in you to give you that assignment.

Rochelle recalled a specific game where she played particularly well. When asked to reflect on that game, she responded:

> I was in a situation where the spotlight was on me and my team needed me to perform. If I didn't perform, we were going to lose. I think that was one main factor for me to perform like that - just the fact that I didn't want us to lose and the coaches needed me to perform and the team needed me to perform. And I guess I just had to prove to them that I was the one that could do it and I couldn't let them down.

Similarly, Keshia talked about how as a freshman, she had a very productive offense season because she felt her team needed her to play the role of a scorer:

> . . . see my freshman year, I felt that, I don't even know why, I just felt like this team needs me to score for them. And I was just a freshman, but I felt like that.

Wanda also described the impact of feeling needed:

> It helps when the coaches tell me things, but when the players say, "We need you," I mean when they show confidence in me, it means more than when the coaches say it. . . . when your teammates say they need you, especially when you have four different players that can play that spot, it just seems to build my confidence up.

Theme 3: Play

The third experiential theme that emerged from the interviews related to the participants' descriptions of what they were aware of when they were actually on the

court playing basketball. Three subthemes surfaced under the broad theme of Play: 1) *"In the Groove" and "Flowing" Into a "Zone,"* which reflects the experience of optimal performances; 2) *"The Struggle,"* which is the description of difficult, effortful performances; and 3) *"There's No Other Crowd Like Our Crowd,"* where the perception and impact of the crowd is discussed. The primary theme of play emerged against the context of team. The figure-ground relationship is discussed further in the next section.

Figure-Ground Juxtaposition: Playing Together

Many athletes described scenarios of play that were interwoven with their experience of team. In several cases, specific sequences of play were recollected, yet it was typically in the context of team that the events were understood. Consider Wanda's description of the final minutes of a big game in which her team was victorious:

> . . . this one time we were standing at mid-court, and the four of us . . . I forget who was shooting, I think _____ was, . . . we were just at mid-court getting the fans into it because it was at the end of the game and we knew we were going to win. I remember all of us putting our arms around each other at half-court when we were waiting for her to shoot her free throws. I mean that was exciting. The fans were just going crazy. You know, when you knew you had it won.

Wanda went on to describe another instance where a "struggle" was actually perceived as highly distressing because it was experienced in the context of team:

> . . . when you do bad and you hear a teammate make a comment, it just breaks your spirit. When a coach says, "You don't rebound," or whatever, you kind of just go on. You think of it as part of their job, criticism, constructive criticism. But see, like, when your teammates say something, it just breaks you down.

Conversely, LaShayna explained how a "struggle" could be turned into a positive experience with the help of the team:

> I think I got frustrated at one point and then I came out of it. I got frustrated when they were scoring on me and then I came out of it. _____ (teammate) helped me out. She said, "Don't worry about it; just do what you can." I cheered for my teammates and everybody was so together in the game. When I was out there I felt like a part, like everybody was together. I felt like, "We are going to do this," even when we were down. I just had that feeling that we were going to do it.

"In the Groove" and "Flowing" into a "Zone"

Athletes described incidents of performing when they felt smooth, relaxed, and confident in their play. Participants used many words to describe this peak experience, such as: "being in a flow," "clicking," "being in the groove," or in her "own little world." As evidenced by the following quotes, two characteristics of the flow state are the lack of focus on thinking and a physical resilience, often accompanied by an altered perceptual state. Teresa says:

> I feel like I'm just smooth. . . I don't really put that much effort into it, but I'm really hustling all out. . . . When I'm really into my game, I'm just flowing - playing defense, passing the ball. Without even thinking, I'm just doing it. I'm not even thinking about it.
>
> I mean, like you can't even see anything around you, like you're in a zone, with just the basketball and the other player and it just seems like everything you do is so smooth. You don't even really have to think, it's just instinct, like instinct takes over.
>
> I was real smooth and everything was flowing. Everything, timing and everything was like, perfect.

Jamie described a comparable experience:

> Sometimes when I'm in a zone I just feel like I can't do anything wrong. It's the best feeling - it's like a natural high - definitely a natural high. It makes you feel

> really good. . . I don't feel myself being physically fatigued at all. Kind of like you're floating.

Keshia felt similarly transformed:

> I feel loose - like shake-and-bake loose, like you got an air about yourself. I think I even start to handle the ball stronger. Like even when you throw the ball you might just hit it real hard, stuff like that. I don't know, you're more confident about your game, like this is going in. When you're in the groove you have more of an attitude. You're perspiring more but you're not tired, like you can play, but you don't get tired.

"The Struggle"

In addition to having had optimal, peak states of play, participants also experienced arduous periods during their performance. Athletes described these instances as being a "struggle," an "effort." Such enigmatic moments seem to be characterized by a hypervigilance to the environment, as well as the perception of being helpless, even disabled in some way. Consider the following descriptions of such arduous performance states. Janelle:

> I have had my bad days when my legs just cannot move. You struggle defensively; you struggle offensively. If I struggle defensively, then I'm worrying, "Gosh, I'm getting beat." And then, I'm not even thinking of offense.

Wanda:

> When everything is going bad, you notice the people around you, you notice the refs more, you notice everything. But when you're in a zone and everything's going good, everything is blocked out it seems.

LaShayna:

> I felt like I couldn't do anything. Like I wasn't contributing. I tried to find other ways to score, but it was like the ball never bounced my way.

Teresa:

> I struggled with being vocal and handling the ball. Coach stayed after me day after day. And I got to the point where I even cried. I just started bawling. It was just, it was just hard. I struggle every day.

Keshia:

> I feel like I'm kind of handicapped. Like I can walk but I gotta run - like that. Like I can shoot, but it's just not falling - I can play defense, but I'm just not denying. I don't know why. You know you can do it, but you're not - it's an effort, but you're trying, but you're still not, you know? That makes me frustrated.

"There's No Other Crowd Like Our Crowd"

In addition to their recounts of effortless and effortful experiences of play, athletes talked about how they were aware of the crowd and influenced by it. Descriptions of the participants' perception of the crowd focused primarily on how the crowd served as a

motivating force, inspiring these players to perform and entertain. Wanda recalled the frenzied excitement of a big crowd:

> Like in our games, just hearing the crowd go crazy if you make an awesome play or an awesome pass or anything. That's great when you can bring 10,000 people to their feet. You feel like you're on top of the world.

Rochelle spoke of her enjoyment of being a performer, an entertainer for the crowd:

> You know, I personally don't like to practice, and the conditioning, and all that stuff, just the fact to play in front of people that enjoy watching the game, that really get into it. That gets me into the game - that's mainly the best part about it. That's what really sticks out for me.

> That makes me play for the crowd. It makes me try to do things, you know, maybe score a basket that, you know, most people don't think girls can do things - they just play and run up and down the court, a little jumper, you know. I try to do things they wouldn't expect a girl to do in a basketball game that they really like, you know, throws them off really. They're like, "God!" - then they're waiting for me to do something else. To me, I just try to entertain. Maybe that's what I am, a little entertainer in a way.

Using the crowd, either friendly or hostile, as a motivating force worked for Jamie:

> But the crowd, it really doesn't matter . . . if they're mean to me, and I'm in an adverse situation, I use that as "Well, O.K., I'm going to show them." But, if they're for me, I also use that to feed off to do better, to try even harder. So with both, I don't really care, just so there's people in the seats. I like to perform for people, I really do.

Summary

This chapter discussed the three primary themes that emerged in the context of team: **1) Relationships**, **2) "I" in Team**, and **3) Play**. All of these main themes were present in each of the participants' interviews. Within each theme, various subthemes were identified that further illuminated the meaning of the performance experience for the athletes in this study.

It was in the context of team that the athlete's experiences were salient. **Relationships** within the team were considered an integral factor contributing to success. Athletes consistently de-emphasized the importance of the individual and focused primarily on the reciprocal and altruistic relational elements that occurred in the team context. The **"I" in Team** theme was indicative of the way in which the athletes experienced the individual components of their performance. Athletes discussed their individual experiences, developments, and roles in relation to

their team, and how their own performances were influenced by the relationships with others. Finally, the theme of **Play** was described in terms of the environment and performance states the athletes experienced when they were actually competing in basketball. These three primary themes constituted the participants' overall experience of performing basketball.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the experience of performing basketball for collegiate female athletes. Three major experiential themes unfolded from the interview protocols with athletes who participated in this study: 1) **Relationships**, 2) **"I" in Team**, and 3) **Play**. These themes emerged as figural against the ground of **Team**. Subthemes augmented the three primary themes, illustrating the multifaceted depth in which the participants experienced basketball performance.

While each athlete's interview provided a unique description of her experience, the three main themes were found by the research team to be present in all ten of the protocols. After data analysis, the

research team concluded that there did not seem to be significant variation among the athletes' descriptions of their experiences across ethnic, age, or geographical dimensions.

In this chapter, the existential basis of the three main themes will be explored. Salient aspects of the experiential themes will be discussed in relation to social and psychological literature in areas of women's development and sport. Finally, implications for professionals working with female basketball players and teams will be discussed and suggestions for future research will be offered.

Making Meaning

By undertaking this study, the researcher hoped to gain a clearer understanding of how the women who were interviewed made meaning of their experience of playing their sport. Three primary themes emerged during the phenomenological interviews and subsequent data analysis. These themes are existential in that they

provide meaning to the participants' experiences of being in the world (May & Yalom, 1989).

As existentialists Rollo May and Irvin Yalom (1989) note, there are three forms of the world that interact to give meaning to peoples' experiences: *mitwelt* (the world of one's fellow human beings), *eigenwelt* (the relationship with one's self), and *umwelt* (the biological world or environment). The thematic structure that emerged from the interviews reflects these three modes of world. Theme 1, **Relationships**, is indicative of *mitwelt*, and constitutes the "us" in the experience of performing basketball. Theme 2, **"I" in Team**, reflects *eigenwelt*, and can be viewed as the "self" of the experience. Finally, Theme 3, **Play**, speaks to the notion of *umwelt*, reflected in the athletes' descriptions of their physical world, specifically, executing the mental and physical actions of basketball.

When examined in the context of team, the athletes' descriptions of experience within the existential themes provide insight and understanding of how these women make meaning of their basketball world. Meaning of the participants' performance experience will be explored further in the next section by discussing one particular theme found in this study - that which the existentialists call *mitwelt* and which the athletes described as relationships.

Women and Relationships

Gender is an integral factor that shapes one's existence in the world. A construct created from a complex interaction of social, biological, cultural, and psychological variables, gender influences the ways we interact with others and make meaning of our experiences. Extensive research in psychology and women's studies has examined how women are socialized to interface with the environment. Throughout the social-psychological literature on gender issues, "a

major theme that emerges from the context of what it means to be female is caring for others and being connected in intimate, interpersonal relationships" (Doherty & Cook, 1993, p. 15). This relational theme was present in each of the athletes' descriptions of their experience of performing basketball and warrants deeper discussion.

One of the first researchers to address the salience of relational components in women's lives and to deconstruct existing theoretical models of development was Carol Gilligan. In her landmark work, In A Different Voice (1982), Gilligan challenged existing psychological theory of moral development and the prevailing hypotheses that women deviate from models that were based on the male experience. Instead of citing gaps in the theory, researchers once labeled women's development as deviant from men's development. Maintaining that women's experiences were not included in the construction of theory, Gilligan's goal was to include women's voices and experiences to provide a new

basis for theoretical development.

Gilligan drew upon foundations from the work of Nancy Chodorow's studies on women's personality from the early 1970's. Chodorow (1974) maintained that women view the world as comprised of relationships, enveloped in themes such as mutuality, reciprocity, and altruism. She says: "In any given society, feminine personality comes to define itself in relation and connection to other people more than the masculine personality does" (Chodorow, 1974, pp. 43-44). Instead of seeing a world where people stand alone, women conceptualize a world of human connection, whereas men tend toward separation and individuation.

Many research studies have illustrated the centrality of women's relationships in their work, leisure, and family activities. A particularly interesting study in which the results mirror those in the current investigation examined women's experience of peacekeeping and social responsibility (Brooks, Conn, Ellis, Mack, Murphy, & Surrey, 1992). These

authors reported that "long-term women activists in the peace movement emphasize the importance of relationships with others in both initiating and sustaining their activism" (Brooks et al., 1992, p. 272). In the article, the authors shared their personal experiences of working in the Boston Women's Peace Research Group. The authors recounted how they made meaning of their work in the peace movement through their connections with others. The women drew inspiration and motivation from their relationships; consequently, their work was enhanced, evidenced in their experience of collectively presenting their research at a professional conference:

> . . . a more powerful sense of "we" emerged through our relating as a group to others outside of it - so powerful that we were inspired to work toward a larger and longer gathering of women concerned with peacemaking later that year. Through this action, the group seemed to take a giant step toward a life of its own. The balance between the lively "I" and the larger "we" fueled our energy, empowering each of us as we took action in our lives (Brooks et al., 1992, p. 283).

Given Chodorow and Brooks, et al's conclusions about women's personality and interpersonal style, it seems logical that the prominence of relationships in women's lives would manifest itself when they participate in team sports. In the present study, women talked about their relationships with others as a figural part of their experience of performing basketball. As in Brooks et al's study, the athletes discussed how it was through connection with others that their mission was empowered. What makes the results of the present study particularly interesting is what the athletes did not discuss. As previously mentioned, the players that were interviewed in this study came from successful basketball programs where the combined winning percentage was over 80%; however, the participants did not talk about winning, nor did they expound on individual achievement. For these female athletes, the individual, or self, in performance was experienced in connection with others. Robin's words captured the importance of relationships

in her basketball performance:

> I want to show them (teammates) that I care about them. I want to show them that I'm going to give every single thing I have to be the very best that I can be, but it's not for my own personal glory. Not so much of a self-centered focus, but more of a reaching out, helping others.

Developing the Self-in-Relation to Others

In order to describe women's psychological development and experiences, researchers at the Stone Center at Wellesley College in Boston, Massachusetts, pioneered the "self-in-relation" theory. Their theory of self-in-relation recognizes that ". . . for women, the primary experience of the self is relational, that is, the self is organized and developed in the context of important relationships" (Surrey, 1991, p. 52). Surrey (1991) maintains that aspects of the self (e.g., creativity, autonomy) develop within the context of relationships and that there is "no inherent need to disconnect or to sacrifice relationship for self-development" (p. 53). Surrey's writings from the Stone Center reflect themes that emerged in this study,

particularly when the athletes described how they developed in relation to the team. Personal improvement and change was usually viewed in the context of team. Jamie's words summarize the concepts of reciprocity in relationships and of developing the self-in-relation to the team:

> I really improved my game. I got a lot better, but it was because I got my teammates involved. In this one particular practice I started scoring, but it was because I hit someone on a back-door cut, and I hit someone at the high-post that hit a jumper. That just kind of got me rolling, then I hit a three, and then I hit a jumper. I was feeding off my teammates and they were feeding off me.

Relationship with Basketball: Impact of Injury

A subtheme that emerged from the data was the relationship that the athletes experienced with the sport of basketball itself. The players used powerful words and phrases to describe their connection to the sport. In essence, they talked about a relationship with a significant other in their lives, recalling how they grew up with, struggled with, fantasized about, and rebelled against basketball. Just as with many relationships, basketball provided these athletes with

a secure base and sense of structure from which to learn and experience the world.

The emotional impact that a change or loss in the relationship with basketball could have on the athletes is considerable. Several studies have explored the social and psychological processes that athletes experience when they exit from sport, whether through injury, retirement, or termination. For instance, Blinde and Stratta (1992) examined the "sport career death" of college athletes. They found that the athletes "experienced a great amount of trauma and disruption in their lives and frequently equated their feelings with death and dying" (Blinde & Stratta, 1992, p. 3). The authors demonstrated how the athletes' responses to their career deaths paralleled the stages of dealing with death developed by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969): shock and denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

This post-traumatic reaction that Blinde and Stratta (1992) describe is illustrated by one

particular player's experience from this study. Dena was a high school All-American player and highly recruited by many universities. Shortly into her first college season, Dena was advised by team physicians to discontinue playing basketball because of extensive, chronic knee problems that, if exacerbated, could permanently interfere with her ability to walk. The following quotes capture Dena's feelings of devastation and grief about the injury:

> My basketball career is over and I can't do anything about it. It's like I lost my best friend. This year I struggled a lot, personally and everything. I had a problem with people who were healthy and that I didn't think had problems. . . .I just felt like my problems were big and it affected me more because I love playing.

Dena's reaction of denial and helplessness were pervasive throughout her interview:

> This year I just don't want to accept the fact that my basketball career is over. . . . This is like my dream and now it's gone. . . . There's nothing I can do. I try to accept it, that I couldn't do all this stuff, but I struggled emotionally a lot. It just hurts. . . . It's hard to learn to accept that you cannot play.

While the loss of the relationship to basketball because of injury is the most frequently examined

phenomena of loss in the sport literature, there are other kinds of transitions that also mandate change in the athletes' relational structures. Events that are considered ordinary occurrences in the sports world (e.g., coaching changes, addition and loss of new teammates with each new season) may be difficult for some athletes because there is a shift in the relationship structure of the team. On reflection, it seems as if the importance of the relational element in sports is sometimes only realized when there is loss of some kind. The living experience of the relationship issues within sport are often overlooked.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this investigation can be discussed in relation to the phenomenological research method. Phenomenological research seeks to describe and understand a person's experience of an issue. The phenomenological method is used to examine the essence of an experience, not to explain, predict, or control

the phenomenon under investigation (Polkinghorne, 1989). Since making generalizations of the findings is not the purpose of phenomenological research, it is left to the reader to interpret and apply the results to populations other than the ten participants sampled in this study.

Directions for Future Research

The findings from this study fostered a deeper understanding of the experience of performance for female collegiate basketball players. In other cases, however, it seems as if the sport experiences of athletes and coaches are still generally unknown or misunderstood. Consider the following quote from John Salmela, a prominent researcher in sport psychology:

> The psychologist and the athlete or coach have always been uneasy partners. Neither the psychologist [nor] the athlete/coach has had much understanding of the long-term concerns of the other, and hence they have had little respect for each other (Carron, 1980, p. xi).

Qualitative methods in sport psychology research may offer the opportunity to understand better the experiences of athletes and coaches. Before more theories and interventions are developed to explain or enhance performance, perhaps more information is needed about the actual experience of athletes and coaches. For instance, it may be useful to interview coaches of female athletes to assess if their experience of coaching reflects similar themes to those recounted by the players.

Additionally, further research examining models of performance enhancement could challenge the existing paradigm followed by most coaches and sport psychology consultants. Traditionally, when attempting to improve athletic performance, consultants have employed an individual model of enhancement. This model suggests that in order to achieve maximum success, one needs to empower the self independently through techniques such as relaxation training, cognitive restructuring, or hypnosis. The focus of the intervention is primarily

on the individual. Perhaps future studies could investigate the relationship between athletes' relationships with their teammates and coaches and their performance to ascertain if team-building strategies to cultivate relationships may be a useful intervention to enhance performance. Examining similarities and differences in the importance of team relationships with regard to variables such as gender and historically successful versus less successful teams may also facilitate further understanding of athletic performance.

Alternative methods, such as the phenomenological interview and analysis afford researchers intimate glimpses into another's world, creating an opportunity to develop theories or interventions based on what is meaningful in a person's experience. Bob Dylan admonished in his song "The Times They Are A-Changing:" "Don't criticize what you can't understand." Perhaps the mantra of investigators in the next generation of sport psychology research could be, "Don't theorize

what you don't understand."

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Appendixes

Appendix A

Appendix A

Participants' Demographic Information

	Number of Participants
Ethnicity	
African-American	6
Caucasian	4
Age	
19	3
20	2
21	4
22	1
Year in College	
First Year	3
Sophomore	3
Junior	3
Senior	1
Years of Playing Basketball	
Five	1
Seven	2
Eight	2
Nine	2
Ten	2
Eleven	1
Basketball Position	
Guard	4
Forward	4
Center	2

Appendix B

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

You have been invited to participate in a study of the experience of performance for Division I women basketball players. Your participation in this study will involve an informal, one-on-one interview with the investigator where you will describe your experience of "performing" or playing basketball. The interview will be audiotaped and will last anywhere from forty-five minutes to a maximum of two hours.

There are no mental or physical risks involved in this study. Potential benefits include the possibility of raising awareness of your thoughts and feelings related to the experience of your basketball performance. Information from this study may help coaches or sport psychologists identify key themes for athletes during performance, thus facilitating consultations or interventions.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence or prejudice. Additionally, you are free to ask questions at any point in the study. Neither your participation nor withdrawal from the study will effect your academic status or standing with the basketball team or coaches.

The information that you will share with the investigator about your experience will be **completely confidential**. At no time will your name be identified during any written or oral presentation of the data. The investigator will numerically code the audiotapes before they are transcribed to protect your identity. The tapes will be erased upon completion of the study and all forms and transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the investigator's office.

After the investigation is completed, the researcher will provide you with an explanation of the findings upon your request. If at any time you have questions about the study, please feel free to contact Janine D'Anniballe in 117 Stokely Athletics Building, or Dr. Mark Hector in 108 Claxton Education Building, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

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I have read and understood the purpose of the study and my role as a co-participant in the research. I am free to ask questions at any time and voluntarily agree to participate.

_____ _____

Name Date

_____

Signature

Appendix C

Appendix C

Sample Interview Questions

The following standard questions were asked of all the participants:

** What has been your experience of performing basketball?

** Can you think of a specific time when you were performing? Would you remember that experience now and describe it?

The following types of questions were asked to expedite participants' elaboration and clarification of thoughts and feelings related to their experiences of performance:

** What was that experience you just described like for you?

** You mentioned _____; could you talk more about that?

** What were you thinking and feeling during that particular moment?

** Would you take me back to that experience with you and tell me what stands out for you during that time?

Appendix D

Appendix D

A Sample Protocol

To ensure confidentiality for the participant, potentially identifying data (e.g., names of teammates, gender of coach, opponents) was omitted during the transcription of this interview. In the following protocol, "I" represents the investigator and "P" represents the participant.

I: Thinking back on all of your years of participating in basketball, what has been your experience of actually performing or playing basketball?

P: What now?

I: What stands out for you as you reflect on your experience of performing basketball?

P: Let's see. Uhm, as far as stands out, the most rewarding experience I had was during my first year, winning the National Championship. I thought that whole year, in school and in basketball, was the best year I ever had in basketball. Winning it all, going all the way, being the best team in America . . I mean, I've won State Championships and Junior National Championships representing ____ (University), but it didn't even compare to winning the national championship. I don't know, just my teammates. We all knew we were the underdog coming in and everyone rallied around _____ (teammate). She was the key ingredient to our team that year, as far as being the leader and being a go to player for us. Playing during my senior year in high school also stands out for me. My team really depended on me. We didn't have anyone else go and play collegiate ball, so, I didn't really feel pressure or anything, I just knew I had to go out there and perform. They depended on me, I had to do everything. But, the other seniors

helped me out a lot. The starting five really felt close knit. We did everything together. I mean we went out together, stayed at each other's houses. Being that close to my teammates, it seemed like that carried onto the court. They were my best friends.

I: The first thing you mentioned was that national championship experience and winning it all. What was and is your experience of winning?

P: Winning goes hand in hand with accomplishments. Like this year, we wanted to build our team cohesiveness and I feel like we won in that aspect of basketball, even though we didn't go on to win the National Championship ball game, we won in other areas. For me individually, when I think of winning, I don't look in the score box or think of the outstanding player, I think I would take a team award rather than an individual award at a tournament. When I got the leadership award I was real happy about it, and I was thinking back and I never got named to any of the tournament teams or got in the score box, but just as long as my team knew me. That's how I think of winning.

I: So for you, winning is accomplishing a goal. You've also mentioned the idea of "team" several times as you think about performing basketball. What has been your experience of team?

P: Uhm . . when I first came here to ___ (University), I really felt like everybody wasn't out for themselves, didn't care whether they score the most points, didn't worry about if they had a bad game - they didn't let anybody else know. Even though _____ (teammate) was our most consistent scorer for us, it was like that's fine she is that, so keep giving her the ball, keep giving her the ball, and no one else took it the wrong way. We got back to that this year. My sophomore year we really didn't play together. I don't know if people were being selfish, or they had the pressure on them. I know the in-coming class had a lot of pressure on them as far as coming in and they gotta do all this, they gotta do all that. I thought that taking the 10 returning players that we had from my freshmen team and blending the new players in with us, it would have helped us. Instead we put them on the spot. They weren't the reason why we lost or anything like that, but when you have so many people returning, go with that. I felt like ___ (coach) blended my freshmen class in with the team and I felt like that really helped take the pressure off of being a freshman.

I: Can you remember a specific time when you were performing that you experienced "team"?

P: Yeah - we were down by five in the championship game. _____ (teammate) was our scorer and we knew _____ (teammate) was hot, so we kept giving her the ball. We were running plays to _____ (teammate) and everybody was working together. If we had to set a screen for her, or the post had to duck in at the right time whenever we ran "____ (play)". Nobody was worrying about anything else except getting _____ (teammate) open - she's got the hot hand. She scored the last five points to get us into overtime. That was probably the most "in-synch" as far as people knowing what to do, what plays to run. Even the bench was into the game. You could look at our faces and see "we were not going to give up, we're not going to give up." And then, even when _____ (teammate) fouled out, nobody let down. Coach had a crucial call to make - who to sub in - a post player or a rebounder? You always talk about having experience on the floor during crucial times, but I always believed you're either a pressure player or you're not. Maybe experience on the wing would be better, but (coach) had four players with no experience on the floor. Because (coach) had us on the floor, such a young team, (coach) was gambling, and I guess (coach) gambled right. We pulled together then. We won it for ____ (teammate). We were in the huddles saying "Do it for _____ (teammate), do it for _____ (teammate)." That was it - that was the most team-oriented play that I ever experienced.

I: You've mentioned feeling pressure and the idea of a being a pressure player, what is that experience of pressure like for you?

P: Uhm, I like pressure. In high school I felt like it was my team in a sense. I mean I knew I was the best player on the team, but it was so good to see other people do well. Like it was good to see _____ (teammate) our point guard, use her left hand, because she would always go right and maul people over. She would get charges called on her for not going left!. . . Pressure helped me, being in sports helped me. Not that ____ (home town) is such a bad town, but we didn't have many role models and it all fell back to your parents. If they didn't care about you, you were out on the streets or whatever.

I: It sounds like playing basketball helped you.

P: Yeah, it kept me focused. I kinda knew that, I mean, my mom has a pretty good job working at the plant, but she would have just, I mean I probably could have gotten a student loan or something like that, but she couldn't just literally send me to college. So, I figured I had to have some way to go to college and I did it through basketball. I just put all my focus on it. My sister, she did the same. She just got a scholarship too. I mean that was good that I

could do that for my mom, so she wouldn't have to pay for it. She started us out young, and I mean she was into sports and I have other family members who are into sports. I guess it was the least I could do.

I: I'm wondering if that put pressure on you to perform?

P: I felt pressure, but not to the sense where I was going to break. If I had to describe something about me, I'd have to say that I'm a pressure player, I'm poised under pressure. I may not be the quickest or the fastest, but I think I am smart. Because I was put in that situation in high school, it helped me in the long run. You either handle it or you don't.

I: Can you think of a specific situation when you were playing that you felt pressure?

P: I felt a load of pressure in the state tournament my senior year. We had won the first game, and we were in the semi-finals. They went box-and-one on me and it was like, every time I would get open and get the ball, I'd have a person on me. Then when I'd beat them, there'd be someone else. I just felt like dang!!! That's when I felt the most pressure ever. Then I think pressure leads to frustration, then you get yourself out of your game and you don't do anything right! I got frustrated because when they'd double team on me, I'd dish off and they wouldn't score. I thought like "dang - you should be scoring!" or "you gotta take up the slack or something!" or "somebody else step up in this game!" That's what hurt us my senior year. But, that's how it goes. You ain't always gonna have five all-stars on your team. I mean I enjoyed my senior year even though we didn't go all the way because it was fun!!

I: Do you remember anything else about that game?

P: I felt like I couldn't do anything. Like I wasn't' contributing. I tried to find other ways to score, but it was like the ball never bounced my way. I felt like, not that I ever got mad at my teammates, I just got mad at the situation I was in!

I: Sounds really frustrating.

P: Yeah. But I let it get to me. I couldn't find a way to not get to me. How do you not let it get to you? All season people keyed on me and I handled it, and I'm not saying they had the best defensive player I've ever played against or anything like that, I just felt the pressure in that game. In that game. And that was our last game.

I: Can you say anything else about the experience of pressure?

P: I feel the pressure when I'm not into the game. I don't know if that's more so because I'm not in the groove, or what. I know there were games where I haven't gotten into the groove, haven't gotten the feel of the game. I don't think that was pressure, because there wasn't any pressure, those were games we've won and I never felt like I got into the groove of things. Sometimes I feel like, I wouldn't say it out loud or anything, but I'm the type of player that I need to be out there. You know when I'm out there for 3 minutes and then they pull me out, I didn't even sweat. That's when I know I'm not in the groove of things.

I: Were you thinking of a particular time when you were not in the groove of things?

P: It was a matter of not being out there. I didn't even get tired. I have to get up a sweat to get into the groove of things. I'm not saying I have to be out there for 10 minutes, but enough time to let me do something. I don't know. I think it's hard to come off the bench, to come in, then when you're out there starting because you're setting the tempo, you're out there and you are making the groove instead of having to come in and get into it!

I: What is "not getting into the groove for you?"

P: You're not really warmed up. You have a chance more so at the beginning to find your rhythm. Then when you come off the bench, your rhythm's gotta be there.

I: Can you say more about "rhythm" for you?

P: I remember being in rhythm against ____ (opponent) when they played us here at home - I felt like I was in the groove. I came off the bench in that game and I really felt like I was in the groove of things. Uhm, when we played that really good team, I think I got my game high, I was in the groove offensively, and I think I was having a good defensive night. I did get tired. It's a matter of me getting, you know, having to work and really sweat and get down and be like you know, get your second wind and get into things. A couple years ago when we played _____ (opponent), at ____ (opponent's school), I didn't even start that game, but I that I was in the groove in that game too. It's not necessarily always the big games that I get into the groove, sometimes it's the small games against lesser opponents.

I: So it sounds like it's easier for you to get in the groove the

longer you're out there.

P: Yeah, but against ____ (opponent), coach only played me for a couple of minutes because of my foot and everything, but I thought because that was such a big game . . . I think the first time I touched the ball I shot it and I made it. That got me into the groove.

I: You mentioned an experience against ____ (opponent) earlier. Take me back to that game and describe to me what you experienced.

P: See, I was on the bench . . . see my freshman year, I felt that, I don't even know why, I just felt like this team needs me to score for them. And I was just a freshman, but I felt like that. I remember at one point during the season we had sat down, and coach brought out this board, right? You know coach always uses statistics, and coach was like who do you think is leading us in field goal percentage and who's shooting better from the 3-point line? You know, I didn't even think that it was me. I thought it might have been ____ (teammate) or someone like that. Coach was using me as an example as a freshman of putting the ball in the hole. And I was like, yeah, I can put the ball in the hole! And that game, I probably didn't get double figures, but I came off of the bench and gave the team a spark. We went to me, in a sense. Like I was the go-to player for a couple of minutes. I think I got two of my threes off of a box one play and we ran it to me. Coach was like go to ____ (interviewee), go to _____(interviewee)! I didn't even really think about the fracture in my foot.

I: So when you're in this groove, what are you aware of? What are you thinking or feeling?

P: I wasn't thinking about the injury. I feel more loose - like shake and bake loose, like you got an air about yourself. I think I even start to handle the ball stronger. Like even when you throw the ball you might just hit it real hard, stuff like that. I don't know, you're more confident about your game, like this is going in. When you're in the groove you have more of an attitude. You're perspiring more but you're not tired, like you can play but you don't get tired. And if you get tired, you get your second wind. You might play like 8 or 9 minutes straight, compared to 3 or 4. That's how I feel.

I: Are there any other times when you were performing that you remember being in the groove?

P: Well, like in the ____ (opponent) game, I know we lost and

everything, but I felt, like in the second half even though we were down, I got in the groove. I did feel the tiredness, I did feel it. I was like "c'mon y'all, we can still do it!" Then we cut the lead to four and the team seemed to get into the groove, but then we lost.

I: You mentioned being injured a couple times. What has the experience of being injured been like for you?

P: I first got injured my freshman year, I got a stress fracture. I was having a good year, a real good year. I didn't miss that many games, I missed a couple of the easier games. I was supposed to stay off of it. I thought that hurt me as far as speed and my average went down because of it, missing my shots you know. I didn't realize how much your feet can throw off your shot. And then I got into this rhythm of shooting off one foot, off balance. I don't think I've broken that yet, because I'm still having problems with my left foot. It's just something that's nagging. At first you're like, O.K., the stress fracture went away, and then BAM, I had to have surgery on the right foot. I knew something was wrong with my right foot because it was real sore all the time. I told ____ (trainer) and we had the surgery, and I said O.K. the right foot is feeling good, and then the surgery took care of the problem, they got the bone out - I didn't miss any games, I just had to work out and rehab. I didn't miss any practice either, I just had to take it easy. I was like "that's fine" we came off this good year, we won it all, we were going to start a new year. I was down because that summer I tried out for a team and it was good that I didn't make it because the stress fracture wouldn't have been able to heal and I probably would have been playing on a chip and wouldn't even have known it. I probably thought it was sore from just playing, but when I stayed off of it and it was still sore, I knew something was wrong. So that was good I didn't make a team. So we got into my sophomore year and I felt like I had to start all over. I didn't even feel like a sophomore. I felt like I was something between high school and a freshman. I thought my injury hurt me as far as coming back and being able to shoot the rock like I did. So, then during that stage, my left foot started nagging me and that's when I started getting shots. I though "good" because I was pain free, it only lasted for a month, a month and a half. We took another shot during the season, but it still was a nagging injury.

I: What was that experience like for you, feeling like you had to start all over?

P: I would be like "why do I have to have this setback?" I felt

like I was just getting into the groove of things as far as playing on top of my game and then something happens, you have to have some injury of some sort. I hated surgery! I hated having to get cut on. The pain itself didn't hurt it was afterwards, just having to feel that and having to be on crutches. I hated having to be on crutches. It was frustrating. It got to me. It tore me up inside sometimes. Why did it have to have been me? I started out so good and it seemed ever since I had my foot injury, it hurt my game. . . In January of this year I got another shot and my feet were really feeling good, and then I had the heart problem. I always had the heart problem, I think I got used to it. I had to deal with that. Even though that was the easiest surgery, that was the scariest one. I didn't realize that there was that 1% chance of being like Hank Gathers. I'd run that risk and I was scared. If I could have one thing, I'd just want to go through a season without any injuries.

I: That whole experience sounds really tough.

P: If I didn't have them, I think I would have done a whole lot better as far as my game. I probably would have contributed more. It was like a set-back. As soon as I worked my way up, then it was another set-back, you know? It wasn't a life-threatening injury or anything like that, but it was a nag, like a negative thing right there. This one little thing that threw off other things. But ya know, I really thought I was a good shooter. I still think I am, but just watching me on film I didn't realize how off I was, how off balance. Then I think, just think if you were on balance. You probably could nail them. Then I didn't know, because my body had adjusted to shooting that way to compensate for injury, I didn't even know I was shooting that way.

(Long Pause)

I: You've talked a lot about your performance experiences during your freshman year. Is there anything else you'd like to add to the experience of being a freshman?

P: It was kind of like, I didn't feel pressure. I think it was because of _____ (teammate). Because you didn't see other people break, it helped you not to. Even if you had a bad game, I don't think it was necessarily pressure. It was just a bad game and it didn't affect other people. Like this year I know it affected other people. But my freshman year, I thought that was the most unselfish team, handling their role, and not worried about themselves, but about the team. People were saying "I'm going to do this for the team", but unless you feel it inside that they are doing it for the team, then that's when it will all come together. There was this

one time on the bus and we just all gathered around and we said let's talk about each other, in a sense. And for us to do that and nobody got an attitude with anybody, it was like "thank you for telling me that." I felt like if you would have told somebody that my sophomore year or this year, they probably would have took it the wrong way. I don't know if that's a matter that they didn't know that you cared about them or what. Even when you did tell people about themselves my freshman year, they were like "O.K., that's good that you're telling me that." And everyone went around and said stuff about somebody. We were doing stuff like you did with us my freshman year without a psychologist, by ourselves. It was like everybody knew, I can't understand why it changed. We had a lot of trouble my sophomore year. The coaches thought that we were in cliques. I hung around the same people I did my freshman year. A lot of stuff was just blown out of proportion that people could have handled if people were more mature, and we didn't have to deal on a junior high level. I thought that because we had to deal with little petty things, it just caused the team to crumble.

I: You said "caused the team to crumble," is there a particular incident that stands out for you about that year?

P: Well, it was like, I'm not going to say the coaches . . . but like, it was different when I first came here. There was a lot of discipline. If you messed up, you did whatever, you weren't practicing well, you weren't into it, you got kicked out. Coach had a lot of discipline. I guess with some people you can do it more than others, but I thought that we didn't know that. I see that now afterwards. If coach would have talked to us separately or, . . . I thought that we had a problem with ___ (teammate) and we had a problem with ___ (teammate), and some people had a problem with ___ (teammate), but I felt if coach would have talked to us separately - like "O.K. look y'all, here's where I'm coming from." I didn't understand where coach was coming from, so then I was like to ___ (teammate), "dang, if that was you, you would have been kicked out!" Coach was like that last year. So it's like we're getting mixed messages from the coaching staff. After all that blows over and we lost, then coach says "I was doing that for the individual, like I was disciplining ___ (teammate) this way because she may not have been able to handle it." Stuff like that, maybe coach should have let us know. Everybody was talking about it. Like, why is coach this way with certain people? I thought it was just a natural reaction because we were so used to it the other way and then coach was like . . . I remember this one specific time when we were on the road, and coach said "who are you to question my coaching?" It wasn't a matter of questioning coach's coaching, but we were like, we don't understand what you're doing. And so it was a whole lot of

stuff. If we had a better communication with the coaches and staff where they could come to us and be like "O.K. y'all, this is what is going down with ___ (teammate) or what's going down with ___ (teammate) and this is why we have to do this." I thought they should have at least explained to us. I think they owed us an explanation of why they were handling things like they were. We really didn't know how to deal with it. And the only thing they'd tell us in practice was "don't say nothing to her, she's too fragile." I'm like, well, why do we have to change our ways? We're so used to this way and it has gotten us a national championship. That's what I'm talking about where we had to separate that incoming freshman class instead of blending them in with us. We had to reorganize what we had been used to around them. . . . (long pause). . .

I: So, it sounds like you wish things would have been more consistent.

P: I know everybody's different, you have to treat them different, but I thought when coach let people get away with stuff, that was disrespectful to coach. I got mad at them for letting coach do it, like "who the hell are you to come in and do this to our coaches?" The coaches would say it's the individual, but I thought "they don't give a damn about y'all." Other people sensed it too. I thought that maybe unconsciously you had a negative feeling toward certain people because of the way they treated their coaches and how they disrupted our team. And they were freshman coming in, and I was like "whew!!!" I didn't understand where the coaches were coming from. I really didn't. I was like "why are they putting up with this?"

I: We've talked about a lot of stuff here today. Is there anything else that stands out for you as far as your experience of performance?

P: No, not really. We have talked a lot. You know how I like to talk anyway!

Appendix E

Qualitative Analysis Documentation Form

(Adapted from Miles & Huberman, 1984)

1. **Research issue being investigated:** Experience of Performance

   Analyst(s): J. D'Amibalde, S. MacQuiddy, R. Lanter, C. Godley, & C. Regardie, K. Irvine.

   Date: Feb. 16, 1994 **Form Number:** 5

2. **Purpose of this analysis task (context and rationale, exploratory or confirmatory, connections with earlier analysis):**

   - read for a sense of the whole
   - identify meaning units related to the participants' experience of performance.
   - identify/brainstorm potential themes emerging from protocols.

3. **Description of procedures:** **Protocol Number:** 10
   (what was done and how it was done; analysis operations, e.g. coding, clustering; how decisions were made)

   - read through protocol for sense of the whole.
   - extracted self-contained meaning units
   - gave words to themes that emerged

   All of the research team members' comments were noted on ~~this~~ a copy of protocol; if perceptions of the text's meaning differed among r. team members - a discussion ensued until consensus was reached. In the case where consensus was not reached; all opinions were noted.

4. **Conclusions drawn, reflections, or directions:**

   First protocol used for initial "talk-through" reading & thematization; clear themes began to emerge in the analysis (e.g. relationships, exp. of being injured, altered state of perception & selective attention, and roles).

   Cont. thematization process - look for recurring themes & newly emerging themes as well.

Appendix F

Appendix F

Meaning Units from the Sample Protocol

1. The most rewarding experience I had was during my first year, winning the National Championship.
2. I've won State Championships and Junior National Championships, but it didn't even compare to winning the National Championship.
3. We all knew we were the underdog coming in and everyone rallied around ____ (teammate).
4. My team really depended on me.
5. I just knew I had to go out there and perform.
6. They depended on me, I had to do everything.
7. The other seniors helped me out a lot.
8. Being that close to my teammates, it seemed like that carried onto the court.
9. They were my best friends.
10. Winning goes hand and hand with accomplishments.
11. Like this year, we wanted to build our team cohesiveness, and I feel like we won in that aspect of basketball, even though we didn't go on to win the National Championship ball game, we won in other areas.
12. For me individually, when I think of winning, I don't look in the score box or think of the outstanding player. I think I would take a team award rather than an individual award at a tournament.
13. My sophomore year we really didn't play together.
14. We were running plays to ____ (teammate) and everybody was working together.
15. Nobody was worrying about anything else but getting _____ (teammate) open - she's got the hot hand.
16. We pulled together then. We won it for ____ (teammate). We were in the huddles saying "Do it for ____ (teammate), do it for ____ (teammate)."
17. Pressure helped me, being in sports helped me.
18. It (basketball) kept me focused.
19. I figured I had to have some way to go to college and I did it through basketball.
20. I felt pressure, but not to the sense where I was going to break.
21. I'm a pressure player, I'm poised under pressure.
22. I may not be the quickest or the fastest, but I think I am smart.
23. I felt a lot of pressure in the state tournament

my senior year.

24. I think pressure leads to frustration, then you get yourself out of your game and you don't do anything right.
25. I felt like I couldn't do anything, like I wasn't contributing.
26. I tried to find other ways to score, but it was like the ball never bounced my way.
27. I let it get to me. I couldn't find a way to not let it get to me.
28. I feel pressure when I'm not into the game.
29. I know there were games where I haven't gotten into the groove, haven't gotten the feel of the game.
30. I'm the type of player I need to be out there.
31. I have to get up a sweat to get into the groove of things.
32. I think it's hard to come off the bench.
33. When you're out there starting, you're setting the tempo, you're out there and you are making the groove instead of having to come in and get into it!
34. When you come off the bench, your rhythm's gotta be there.
35. I remember being in rhythm against ____ (opponent)when they played us here at home
36. I came off the bench in that game and I really felt like I was in the groove of things.
37. It's a matter of me getting, you know, having to work and really sweat, and get down, and be like, you know, get your second wind and get into things.
38. It's not necessarily always the big games that I get into the groove, sometimes it's the small games against lesser opponents.
39. I think that first time I touched the ball I shot it and made it. That got me into the groove.
40. My freshman year, I felt that, I don't even know why, I just felt like this team needs me to score for them - and I was just a freshman!
41. I came off the bench and gave the team a spark.
42. When you're in the groove you have more of an attitude. You're perspiring more but you're not tired, like you can play, but you don't get tired. And if you get tired, you get your second wind.
43. My injury hurt me as far as speed, and my average went down because of it, missing my shots.
44. I thought my injury hurt me as far as coming back and being able to shoot the rock like I did.
45. I would be like "why do I have to have this setback?" I felt like I was just getting into the groove of things as far as playing on top of my game and then something happens, you have to have some injury of some sort.

46. It got to me - it tore me up inside sometimes.
47. Why did it have to be me? I started out so good and it seemed ever since I had my foot injury, it hurt my game.
48. If I could have one thing, I'd just want to go through a season without any injuries.
49. If I didn't have them (injuries), I think I would have done a whole lot better as far as my game.
50. I probably would have contributed more.
51. It was like a set-back.
52. As soon as I worked my way up, then it was another set-back, you know?
53. Because my body had adjusted to shooting that way to compensate for injury, I didn't even know I was shooting that way.
54. Because you didn't see other people break, it helped you not to.
55. But my freshman year, I thought that was the most unselfish team, handling their role, and not worried about themselves, but about the team.
56. We had a lot of trouble my sophomore year.
57. The coaches thought that we were in cliques.
58. I thought that because we had to deal with little petty things, it just caused the team to crumble.
59. So it's like we're getting mixed messages from the coaching staff.
60. I think they owed us an explanation of why they were handling things like they were.
61. I didn't understand where the coaches were coming from.

Appendix G

Appendix G

Example of Transforming Meaning Units from the Sample Protocol into Categories

The following categories were created by grouping the meaning units in Appendix F:

Winning

1. The most rewarding experience I had was during my first year, winning the National Championship.
2. I've won State Championships and Junior National Championships, but it didn't even compare to winning the National Championship.
10. Winning goes hand and hand with accomplishments.

Role

4. My team really depended on me.
5. I just knew I had to go out there and perform.
6. They depended on me, I had to do everything.
40. My freshman year, I felt that, I don't even know why, I just felt like this team needs me to score for them - and I was just a freshman!
41. I came off the bench and gave the team a spark.

Relationship with Teammates

3. Everyone rallied around ____ (teammate).
7. The other seniors helped me out a lot.
8. Being that close to my teammates, it seemed like that carried onto the court.
9. They were my best friends.
54. Because you didn't see other people break, it helped you not to.
57. The coaches thought that we were in cliques.

Team

11. Like this year, we wanted to build our team cohesiveness, and I feel like we won in that aspect of basketball, even though we didn't go on to win the National Championship ball game, we won in other areas.
12. For me individually, when I think of winning, I don't look in the score box or think of the outstanding player. I think I would take a team award rather than an individual award at a tournament.
13. My sophomore year we really didn't play together.
14. We were running plays to ____ (teammate) and everybody was working together.
15. Nobody was worrying about anything else but getting ____ (teammate) open - she's got the hot hand.
16. We pulled together then. We won it for ____ (teammate). We were in the huddles saying "Do it for ____ (teammate), do it for ____ (teammate)."
55. But my freshman year, I thought that was the most unselfish team, handling their role, and not worried about themselves, but about the team.
56. We had a lot of trouble my sophomore year.
58. I thought that because we had to deal with little petty things, it just caused the team to crumble.

Impact of Basketball on Personal Life

17. Pressure helped me, being in sports helped me.
18. It (basketball) kept me focused.
19. I figured I had to have some way to go to college and I did it through basketball.

Awareness of Skills, Ability, Image

21. I'm a pressure player, I'm poised under pressure.
22. I may not be the quickest or the fastest, but I think I am smart.
30. I'm the type of player I need to be out there.
31. I have to get up a sweat to get into the groove of things.

Feeling Pressure

20. I felt pressure, but not to the sense where I was going to break.

23. I felt a lot of pressure in the state tournament my senior year.
24. I think pressure leads to frustration, then you get yourself out of your game and you don't do anything right.
28. I feel pressure when I'm not into the game.

Not In the Groove

25. I felt like I couldn't do anything, like I wasn't contributing.
26. I tried to find other ways to score, but it was like the ball never bounced my way.
27. I let it get to me. I couldn't find a way to not get to me.
29. I know there were games where I haven't gotten into the groove, haven't gotten the feel of the game.

Starting vs. Coming off of the Bench

32. I think it's hard to come off the bench.
33. When you're out there starting, you're setting the tempo, you're out there and you are making the groove instead of having to come in and get into it!
34. When you come off the bench, your rhythm's gotta be there.

Being In the Groove

35. I remember being in rhythm against ____ (opponent) when they played us here at home.
36. I came off the bench in that game and I really felt like I was in the groove of things.
37. It's a matter of me getting, you know, having to work and really sweat, and get down, and be like, you know, get your second wind and get into things.
38. It's not necessarily always the big games that I get into the groove, sometimes it's the small games against lesser opponents.
39. I think that first time I touched the ball I shot it and made it. That got me into the groove.
42. When you're in the groove you have more of an attitude. You're perspiring more but you're not tired, like you can play, but you don't get tired. And if you get tired, you get your second wind.

Injury

43. My injury hurt me as far as speed, and my average went down because of it, missing my shots.
44. I thought my injury hurt me as far as coming back and being able to shoot the rock like I did.
45. I would be like "why do I have to have this setback?" I felt like I was just getting into the groove of things as far as playing on top of my game and then something happens, you have to have some injury of some sort.
46. It got to me - it tore me up inside sometimes.
47. Why did it have to be me? I started out so good and it seemed ever since I had my foot injury, it hurt my game.
48. If I could have one thing, I'd just want to go through a season without any injuries.
49. If I didn't have them (injuries), I think I would have done a whole lot better as far as my game.
50. I probably would have contributed more.
51. It was like a set-back.
52. As soon as I worked my way up, then it was another set-back, you know?
53. Because my body had adjusted to shooting that way to compensate for injury, I didn't even know I was shooting that way.

Coach

59. So it's like we're getting mixed messages from the coaching staff.
60. I think they owed us an explanation of why they were handling things like they were.
61. I didn't understand where the coaches were coming from.

Appendix H

Appendix H

Example of Creating Themes from Categories

The following is an example of how clusters were created by grouping categories from Appendix G:

Theme 1: Relationships

Like A Family

> Probably just the feeling of being part of a group, or like a family - everybody working towards that certain goal.
>
> You just form these close relationships with people. You go through a lot during the season and it just seems like you get to know each other and everything.
>
> You know, even looking back on high school now that I've graduated, I look back and I think of some of my teammates, and you are such a family now that I look back on it.
>
> I really like it, just the atmosphere here, homey and loving and all that.
>
> Just that people care so much about you as a person and as a basketball player. I guess, I probably wouldn't have met a lot of people if I didn't play basketball: the President, people on other teams. Just knowing that you have people that will support you no matter what.
>
> I guess being around people who care about you, like the coaches, and how much they really care about you is amazing. The coaches see you as a player, but then they see you as an individual. They try to be your mom, then a counselor, and advisor and all that.
>
> I made my best friends with the team - the ones I had the most in common with, the ones that could understand the way I was feeling as far as athletics go.

Loving the Game

There's not a night that goes by that I fall asleep without thinking about basketball. It's just something I do.

I'm the kind of person that just loves basketball. I think about it all the time.

See, that's why I love basketball so much. I've spent so much time with it that I've put other people off, my friends and stuff, for basketball. Even my parents, I promise you, everything was for basketball.

You know how everybody has a love for the game? And a lot of people still have. I can honestly say that I enjoy playing, but I don't love playing anymore. At one point in time I did, but I don't really love, love the game. That's why I can't, like most people can go out everyday and just shoot. I don't really love it like I used to.

Growing, Changing, Ending

I think that throughout my three years of playing college ball, my freshman year, you think you know everything. Then it comes to your sophomore year and you're like, "Well, I didn't know that." You just grow more and more each year. And this year, after looking at our seniors, I think I know a lot right now, but in two more years, I'll have so much more under my belt. So it's encouraging to know that each year you learn so much more than you could ever imagine.

This year I had to sit out because I transferred schools . . . It gave me a chance to look at my past and see what I've done and learn from it and focus on the present and focus on what I was doing this year with my teammates, and look to the future thinking of what fun . . . So even though it was a bad experience, it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. I got to stop and look. It was like a picture. Instead of always being the one people were always taking pictures of, I finally took the picture. I looked out and saw so many things that I know I would have never seen if I would have continued at the pace I was going.

I am at the point where I don't even know who I am anymore. I mean I was just sports - all the time. My mentality was based on that and then, all of a sudden, I decided, "Forget it. I don't want to do that anymore!" And now, I'm like, "Who am I really?" I don't know if that was me with the whole sports thing.

There are things that I have to accept that I don't want to accept. I don't get to warm up anymore, I don't get to wear my jersey. I can't play with my best friend or anything. There's a lot of disappointment. I can't be strong anymore. I cry a lot.

My heart is broken because I can't do what I want to do. And what I had in my mind that I was going to do, I can't. Everyday I'm hurting inside. My heart is hurting because I miss the game I love to play. There are two kinds of pain - emotional and physical.

At the beginning I was depressed, sad. I felt like I couldn't do anything. I couldn't walk, I couldn't run - that was the worst thing. I couldn't do anything. I had to have those crutches to help me move and I felt like a cripple, like I was different from everybody else, like I was a handicap. I felt like, ohmygod, what am I going to do? I used to cry and all that. It got me down.

It [the injury] took me away from the team. So then I just started running around the gym for a workout. I was bored. I couldn't practice. So looking at it from that perspective was weird. It was like the team is all down there in this square, practicing and pushing each other, where I'm still part of the team, but I'm just circling around. Kind of interesting. So in that respect, it kind of took me away from the team.

The worst was not being around the team, not getting to know them. 'Cause I feel like ____ (teammate) and I are good friends now, but we lost a year.

Appendix I

Appendix I

Research Team Member's Pledge of Confidentiality

As a member of the research team, I understand that I will be reading transcripts of confidential interviews. The participants who were interviewed for this study were informed that the content of their interview would be kept confidential. I pledge to uphold the ethical commitment to the confidentiality agreement and will not share any information about the content of the interviews with anyone other than the investigator (Janine M. D'Anniballe) or her faculty advisor (Dr. Mark A. Hector).

_____ _____

Research Team Member Date

_____

Janine M. D'Anniballe

Primary Investigator

Vita

Janine Michelle D'Anniballe was born in Steubenville, Ohio on January 16, 1967. She attended Catholic Central High School in Steubenville from 1981-1985. In August of 1985, she entered college at the University of Dayton in Ohio. She graduated Magna Cum Laude in 1989 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and minors in Sociology and Family Development.

Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Janine enrolled in the doctoral program in Counseling Psychology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. She completed her pre-doctoral internship at the Colorado State University Counseling Center in Fort Collins, Colorado and graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Counseling Psychology from the University of Tennessee in summer of 1996. Janine is presently working as a therapist at Larimer County Mental Health Center in Fort Collins, Colorado.