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The Female Adolescent Team Sport Athlete: Stress and Ways of Coping

by

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Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

of the

University of Ottawa

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Ottawa, Canada, 2000

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0-612-58275-2

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Abstract

Females who participate in sport face unique stressors not found in other contexts. However, most studies that have examined stress and coping in sport have used elite male individual sport athletes as participants (e.g., Cohn, 1990; Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1993; Gould, Horn, & Spreemann, 1983; Hanton & Jones, 1999; Petrie, 1993). Therefore it is important to understand the experiences of women in sport (Gill, 1994). The purpose of the present study was to identify the meanings of stress, the stressors experienced, the coping strategies used, and the development of coping strategies by female adolescent team sport athletes. The research questions are: (a) What does stress mean to female adolescent athletes?, (b) What everyday or ambient stressors do female adolescent athletes encounter in sport and in their daily lives?, (c) What coping strategies do female adolescent athletes use when faced with ambient stressors in their sporting context and in their everyday lives?, and (d) How did the athletes develop these coping strategies?

The philosophical paradigm that most informed the research study was constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Stake, 1994, 1995). A qualitative case study approach was used in the present study. The collective case studies were preceded by a focus group. Five female adolescent team sport athletes (ages 15 to 16 years) competing in club soccer were selected as the cases. Consistent with the constructivist perspective that guided the present study, multiple contacts were made with the participants over an eight-month period. Thus, sources of evidence for the case studies included background interviews, group interviews (with the athletes and coaches), semi-structured interviews, on-site interviews (with athletes and coaches), field notes from participant and non-participant observation, documents (media clippings, journal entries), and member check interviews. The qualitative software QSR NUD.IST (Qualitative Solutions and Research Pty Ltd., 1997) was used to facilitate the analysis and management of the data throughout the entire data analysis process and an inductive and deductive analysis process was used.

With respect to the first research question, results showed that athletes in the present study stated that stress held a variety of meanings for them. They cited examples of being stressed in situations where they were nervous, anxious or worried, but noted that they also became stressed in situations where they were frustrated, upset or angry. Thus, the present study supports the need for researchers to move away from defining stress for their athlete participants and instead examining the athletes' own perceptions of stress (i.e., in their own words).

The five athletes experienced a range of stressors related to soccer competition as well as from sport stressors considered to fall outside of the competitive arena. The athletes were found to also experience stress in their lives outside of sport. The fact that the athletes experienced significant stress due to their participation in a team sport context is a unique finding and makes a significant contribution to the literature. Furthermore, the finding that many of the team dynamic issues were especially stressful for the three athletes in leadership roles is an interesting finding and one that warrants further investigation.

The athletes used behavioral control strategies, task focus strategies, thought control strategies and emotional release strategies when dealing with stress. The use of emotional release strategies appears to be a relatively new finding and makes a unique contribution to the literature. Interestingly, emotional control strategies such as visualization or imagery and other relaxation techniques were important strategies for only one athlete.

The question regarding the development of coping strategies provided information related to the origin of coping strategies, but not the process used in their development. The present study makes a contribution, however, by providing insight into the people thought to be important influences in coping strategy development. Parents, coaches and friends were cited as influential models and as the people with whom athletes shared learning experiences. Thus, future research could focus on the impact of these significant others when investigating the development of coping strategies.

In conclusion, the present study makes a unique contribution by providing empirical data related to the female adolescent team sport athlete. This has not yet been done and thus, this study contributes to filling a gap in the literature. It is believed that the use of qualitative methods and the constructivist perspective that guided the present study provided a more complete portrait of the phenomena under investigation. The young athletes' multiple realities were taken into consideration and several different perspectives regarding stress and coping were heard by means of this multivocal approach. Reliable evidence in the athletes' own words was obtained concerning their perceptions of interpersonal and team-related stressors and their use of coping strategies, and both similarities between athletes and unique individual differences were found. Based on the results, practical suggestions for athletes, parents and coaches are also included.

For my husband, Wade,
the best part of me.

Acknowledgements

There is an old proverb that it takes a village to raise a child. This same statement can be applied to completing a dissertation as the doctoral candidate is just one of several key people that are central to accomplishing the task. Thus, I would like to take the next few paragraphs to publicly acknowledge the many villagers that helped me in reaching my goal.

First, I would like to thank the different funding sources for providing financial support throughout my doctoral studies. The University of Ottawa, and both the provincial and federal governments, i.e., the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowship have contributed greatly to my academic career and I am very grateful for their support.

I also owe a world of gratitude to the team that participated in the study, especially the coaches, five athletes and their parents. The coaches went above and beyond the call several times and I learned a lot by observing these gifted individuals at work. The entire team including the coaches, athletes and parents made me feel welcome from the first time I entered the field and were always open and willing to share their thoughts. This project could not have been completed without the constant support of these individuals – thank you. Upon entering the field in December of 1999, some of the parents mentioned that because of my education and outgoing attitude they thought that I would be a positive influence on the athletes. I don't know what impact, if any, I have made on the athletes, but I would be very happy if I have been able to contribute to their future success in some small way. These bright young women are going places, not only as athletes, but also as people. I am grateful for our time together.

I would be remiss if I also did not mention an important coach in my past. During the first year that a competitive soccer league was offered for females, Colin Freebury undertook the task of trying to assemble a team in Ottawa's South end. Several girls came to the team and most of us had never before played competitive soccer. Colin was knowledgeable and patient, and taught us to play with our heads. We learned many valuable lessons about soccer and life from this fine man and I want to publicly thank him for pushing me to be the best person that I could be on the soccer field, and in life.

I would also like to thank an important sounding board and colleague at the University of Ottawa. Michelle Fortier and I have spent a great deal of time together discussing our shared and individual research interests as well as other pursuits. Michelle gave me the opportunity to work with her on an intervention project involving young inactive female adolescents and was instrumental in helping me work through a critical issue during my study. I am even more thankful, however, for our friendship. I hope that both our friendship and working relationship continue to grow in the future as we collaborate on research and share our experiences over cokes at conferences.

I have been fortunate to have three very strong individuals on my dissertation committee. They have each brought unique perspectives and their comments and never ending

support have proved to be invaluable throughout my study. Colla MacDonald – thank you for sharing your thoughts about the experiences of athletes and reminding me that stress can be a positive force. Your feedback has been instrumental and has forced me to reexamine several key issues. Margaret McKinnon – First, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to work with you on several different research projects involving young women. I think this involvement solidified my growing interest in working with adolescent females. Also, I want to thank you for sharing your insights with me and helping me to conceptualize my study even before becoming an official committee member. Since joining the squad, your timely feedback and positive encouragement has been greatly appreciated and has provided me with an excellent model, which I will draw from when working with my own students in the future. Terry Orlick – In the beginning, there was Terry as he was the person that gave a name to my sport psychology thoughts and made sense of all the mental skills that I had been using in my own sporting experiences. Terry also inspired me to use these mental skills in working with children and in my own life. Thank you Terry for your initial and continued support of my academic pursuits. I would also like to thank Jean Côté, my external committee member. Jean willingly accepted the difficult role of the external examiner and shared his expertise in research design and methodology. His questions and comments were extremely insightful and he provided many interesting ideas about future research directions. Jean thank you for taking the time to share your expertise and I look forward to collaborating with you on future research projects.

I am also grateful to my thesis advisor, Cynthia Morawski. I took a class with Cynthia while I was completing my Bachelor of Education degree. Her teaching style and use of nontraditional resources stayed with me and when I was in need of a thesis advisor the following year, I sought her out. Over the last four years, Cynthia has been very receptive and encouraged my research interests, but also gave me the opportunity to work with her on a number of projects, including her own research studies and panel discussions about the experiences of women in education. Thank you for your continued support and encouragement. This project could not have been completed without you.

I have also been fortunate to have the support of close friends. In fact, the following paragraphs talk about friends that have become family over the years and I am very grateful for their love, support and encouragement. Mary and Alan Asselstine – thank you for your encouragement and support. Though I am not tall enough to be an Asselstine, I've always felt like one. Thank you. Colonel David Brown, Jr., and Yoshie Brown – thank you for your love and prayers, and for acting as my spiritual mentors. I have been blessed to have you in my life. Ron DeGuire – my Property partner. Thank you for your support and flexibility. We make a great team. Daisy Ouimet – thank you my Island Girl for your love and your laughter. No matter what was going on with me you could always make me smile and I thank you.

People say that you are lucky if you have one or two good friends over the course of your lifetime. I have been blessed with five. Colleen “Col” Hewitt, Paula “Paulie” DeSousa, Jennifer “Jen” Melymick, Carolyn “Cab” Serra and Christina “Tina” Ross and I went to high school together and some of us even went to junior high and grade school together.

We have shared good times and bad and have been there for each other countless times over the years. I thank you for putting up with me during my pursuits and for always listening when I needed someone to vent with. I am eternally grateful for your love and friendship. Even though many miles now separate us, I know that I can always count on you and I hope that you feel the same way about me.

I'd also like to thank two new friends and two old friends. Tim and Heidi Hamel welcomed us to Southern California with open arms and made our transition to the States that much easier. They have been our rock during the last year and I know our friendship will continue to grow. I also want to thank Tim for keeping me honest during the last year. At least twice a week Tim would call and ask, "are you done yet?" Knowing that the phone could ring at any moment and Tim would be on the other end pushed me to keep at it, even when suffering from writer's block. Our old friends, Gord and Bonnie Bloom have been our other "life lines" in California and also helped us make the transition to the California way of life. I'd also like to say a special thank you to Gord, as he continually put "good words" in for me at Fresno State. I am certain that he was instrumental in helping me obtain my new position and I am very grateful.

Extended family members have also supported my pursuits through the years. My Nana, Rita Medford, and recently deceased Grandpa, Joseph Medford, have encouraged me through the years and I thank them. I am also indebted to John and Gem Ross for their love and constant encouragement. They have always treated me like one of their own daughters and I am grateful. I also thank my two "sisters," Kimberley Ross and Rachel DiGiallonardo for all of their support and especially for making me laugh. Kelly Branch and the Branch Family and the Bonadie Clan have also been very supportive. Thank you.

I am lucky to have four siblings who are dedicated to the pursuit of their goals and have supported me in mine. Thank you to Duane and Heather and Jennifer and Jean-François for teaching me about perseverance and tenacity. I now turn my attention to my two sets of parents. Mom and Dad Gilbert (Barb and Rick) have supported and encouraged my decisions over the last ten years. You have also inspired me with your work ethic and for rising to the top in the face of adversity. Thanks for being such wonderful role models and for your love. I am forever grateful to my own parents, Bren and Jackie Bonadie. They provided me with a safe, challenging environment and encouraged me to work hard and pursue excellence. Both of my parents told me that I should go as far as I can with my education and that they would support me in every way possible. True to their word, they have done this in so many ways, from financial support to printing and chauffeuring drafts of my document to the university. They taught me about commitment and instilled me with confidence. I am certain that without their love and support I would not have gotten to this stage of my work. Thank you.

Finally, I want to turn to my immediate family. First, I want to thank my girls, Cali and Sequoia. Yes, they are of the four-legged variety, but they are my girls just the same. They have helped me to keep perspective through this entire process and have taught me a lot about balance. For example, no matter how busy life gets, a short walk around the block can do wonders for clearing your head, and it's always a good idea to stop and

smell the flowers. Thanks girls. Finally I thank my husband Wade. Over the last few years, Wade has acted as my peer reviewer and colleague. He has read countless drafts of my work and listened to my ideas. His feedback is always constructive and positive and he pushes me to excel in my teaching and research. However, what I am most thankful for is his non-academic side. Wade, you are my best friend and soul mate. You brighten my life by your caring ways and for always making me a priority. Because of your constant love and support, I feel safe. Thank you for this and for continuing to be the reason that I aspire to become a better person. I love you and thank you for all of your love and support, and for giving of yourself each and every day.

So, I have finally reached the end. However, this is in fact a beginning – the beginning of a new life in Fresno, CA, the beginning of a career (finally!) and the beginning of the next chapter. I hope the next edition is as fun, exciting and rewarding as the last one. I know that with the help of the people discussed above and new friends and acquaintances not yet met, it will be. Thank you all.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study was to identify the meanings of stress, the stressors experienced, the coping strategies used, and the ways in which coping strategies are developed by female adolescent team sport athletes using a qualitative case study approach. No studies to date have examined these concepts with female adolescent athletes. This is an important topic of inquiry, however, due to the high participation rate of female youth in sport and the impact that stress can have when not dealt with effectively. Organized youth sport outside of the school physical education curriculum makes an impact on significant numbers of children and adolescents (Gilbert, 1999). Over 70 million young athletes participate each year in organized youth sport (Petlichkoff, 1993). Therefore, the lack of an empirical investigation regarding the female adolescent team sport athlete is a serious limitation in the sport science literature that will be addressed in the present study. Further, the present study will make a unique contribution by its focus on the total sporting experiences of the female adolescent athlete and by its qualitative methods, which give voice to the young women and allow their thoughts regarding stress and coping to be heard.

Although stress and coping will be discussed in detail in the following chapter (i.e., Review of Literature) an introduction to the phenomena of stress and coping is warranted. Thus, an overview of the stress and coping literature will be presented, followed by a brief overview of the relevant sport science literature discussing stress and coping behaviors of athletes.

Overview of the Stress Literature

There is widespread recognition that stress and its resulting symptoms have the potential for negative and damaging effects. The stress phenomenon has received considerable attention in popular culture as evidenced, in part, by the rising number of self-help books devoted to examining this issue. Further, the potential negative impact of stress on athletic performance has been identified in the literature (e.g., Felsten & Wilcox, 1993; Finch, 1998; LeBlanc & Dickson, 1997). Because of its extensive use, it is important to clarify what the term stress actually means.

There have been a variety of definitions of stress put forth in the literature. Hans Selye (1978), a pioneer in research on stress, determined that stress is a by-product of change, and is caused whenever a physical, emotional or mental demand is placed on an individual. Once presented with a demand, an appraisal is made. This appraisal, or one's perception of the demand, identifies whether the individual will experience resulting stress (Matheny, Aycock, & McCarthy, 1993). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have also contributed greatly to the field that addresses stress and coping. They proposed that stress is an experience arising from transactions between a person and the environment, especially those transactions in which there is a mismatch between an individual's resources and the perceived challenge or need. In this framework, stress can result from minor or major discrete events and/or ongoing, chronic aspects of the person-environment relationship (Compas & Phares, 1991). The cognitive appraisal of stress (whether the individual perceives harm, a loss, a threat, or a challenge) is key and a precursor to any emotional or physiological reactions (Lazarus & Folkman).

This interpretation demonstrates the importance of one's appraisal or perception in the stress and coping process. As noted by Lewis (1994), "stress is not just an event but more importantly one's perception of and associations to the event" (p. 7). For example, if one's resources seem

adequate, “the demands are viewed as challenges and are dealt with in a healthy fashion” (Matheny et al., 1993, p. 112). If, however, the demands are overwhelming and appear to exceed one’s resources, the demands “become stressors and trigger the stress response which, in turn, leads to stress symptoms” (Matheny et al., p. 112).

There have been two main types of stressors identified in the literature – life event and ambient stressors (Falloon, Laporta, Fadden, & Graham-Hole, 1993). With respect to the framework suggested by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), life event stressors would consist of the discrete events that are major in magnitude (Compas & Phares, 1991). Life event stressors include events such as the loss of a job, the death of a close associate, or the breakup of an intimate relationship. Coddington (1972a, 1972b), a leading researcher on stressful life events in children and youth has distinguished varying stressors according to age groups. For example, parental death, divorce or separation were rated as the most stressful life events for preschool and elementary students. For junior and senior high school students, parental losses were also highly stressful, but so were unwed pregnancies, the prospect of getting married, and acquiring a visible deformity. Though residents of disadvantaged communities often have a higher exposure to stressful life events than the rest of the population (Attar, Guerra, & Tolan, 1994), most people experience fewer stressful life events as compared to ambient stress over their lifetime.

Ambient stress is the stress one experiences in dealing with the daily hassles of life. In the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) framework, these stressors are the minor discrete events as well as the ongoing, constant aspects of the person-environment relationship (Compas & Phares, 1991). This includes stresses in the household, social and leisure pursuits, and in the work environment (Falloon et al., 1993). For example, Band and Weisz (1988) examined children’s coping responses to situations such as “a time when your mom or dad, or teacher, was mad at you”, “a

time when another kid said mean things to you” and getting “a grade on an exam or your school report card that you didn’t like” among others (p. 248). Other everyday stressors that have been examined with children and adolescents include loneliness (Woodward & Kalyan-Masih, 1990), test-anxiety (Prins, Groot, & Hanewald, 1994), and relationships (Stark, Spirito, Williams, & Guevremont, 1989).

Everyday stress or hassles have a greater effect on health than relatively rare life events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Wagner, Compas, & Howell, 1988). When not coped with effectively, everyday stress is related to a wide range of adverse psychological and health outcomes (Bobo, Gilchrist, Elmer, Snow, & Schinke, 1986; Compas, Davis, Forsythe, & Wagner, 1987).

The focus of the present study was to examine the stress experienced by female adolescent team sport athletes in their daily lives and in sport. As previously noted, life event stressors are often large in magnitude, but their occurrence is rare (Aldwin, 1994). Ambient stressors, in comparison, can happen everyday. For example, in the Smith, Smoll, and Ptacek (1990) study of 424 male and female high school varsity athletes, the participants reported minor stressful events more frequently than major stressful events. The high frequency with which ambient stressors occur, and the infrequency of life event stressors, combined with the potentially negative psychological and physiological consequences of everyday stress lead to the adoption of ambient stress as the focus of the present study.

Overview of the Coping Strategies Literature

With respect to dealing with stress, it has been demonstrated that individuals cope in different ways, but that there are important aspects of all coping behaviors. Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) definition noted coping to be “a conscious, effortful response to a

psychologically stressful situation, and that it includes anything a person does or thinks, regardless of how well or how badly it works” (Kliewer, 1991, p. 689).

Two coping strategies that have been identified in the literature are the approach and avoidant methods. Roth and Cohen (1986) posited that approach coping comprises behavioral, cognitive and emotional activities that are oriented toward the stressor. Here, the source of stress is confronted and an individual makes deliberate attempts to reduce it (Anshel, 1996). Conversely, avoidance coping includes behavioral, cognitive and emotional activities oriented away from the stressor, which involves shunning the anxiety-inducing stimuli and their consequences (Anshel). This distinction suggests that approach coping is viewed as a more positive method of coping as compared to the avoidance coping strategies (Mullen & Suls, 1982). However, Aldwin (1994) noted that this type of dichotomy is too simplistic as it amounts to the “too general observation that trying to solve your problems is useful and avoiding them is not useful” (p. 120). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have suggested using problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies to further conceptualize coping, which they defined as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 141).

Problem-focused coping relates to efforts used by an individual to act on the source of stress to change it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and “includes such specific behaviors as information gathering, goal-setting, employing time management skills, problem solving and adhering to an injury rehabilitation programme” (Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996, p. 207). Emotion-focused coping is defined as the efforts made to regulate emotional states that are associated with or result from stressful events (Lazarus & Folkman). Hardy et al. stated that these coping behaviors included meditation, relaxation, and cognitive efforts to change the meaning, but not the actual

problem or environment of the situation. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) posited that when a situation can be changed, problem-focused coping is more effective, but when a situation is not amenable to change, emotion-focused efforts are relied upon with greater frequency.

Similar to the approach-avoidance dichotomy, problem-focused coping is considered to be more effective and adaptive than emotion-focused coping due to the focus of changing the stressful situation that is inherent in the problem-focused coping strategies (Unger, Kipke, Simon, Johnson, Montgomery, & Iverson, 1998). Some forms of emotion-focused coping (e.g. escaping to drugs and alcohol) are negative and destructive, but this is not true of them all (Aldwin, 1994). When emotion-focused coping is used judiciously, it can be very helpful. For example, if a student goes to the movies to escape the stressors of studying for his or her exams, this can be a useful strategy, as the student can return to his or her studies with a fresh mind and renewed enthusiasm. If, however, the student spends all of his or her time going to movies, watching television and engaging in other pleasurable activities, then the student's efforts have all been spent in the emotion-focused strategies where he or she has managed the feelings of stress about the exam, to the exclusion of the problem-focused strategies, and therefore, no studying will be done (Aldwin). This maladaptive use of emotion-focused strategies only can actually increase the stress experienced by the student.

Several studies have used the problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies to examine the coping efforts of children and adolescents (e.g., Compas, Malcarne, & Fondacaro, 1988; Henderson, Kelbey, & Engebretson, 1992; Unger et al., 1998). While both males and females use these coping strategies, gender differences regarding the types of specific strategies within the domains of problem- and emotion-focused coping have been reported. For example, Frydenberg and Lewis (1993) found that although adolescent males and females both used problem-focused

strategies to much the same extent, the males turned to sport and physical relaxation, while the females relied on others, and made “more of connectedness and relationships in coping” (p. 264). Similarly, Stark et al. (1989) noted that 14 to 17 year-old females reported using social support more frequently than their same-aged male counterparts. The authors suggested that females are more expressive and seek more social support than do males to deal with stressful situations. Still another study found that adolescent ninth grade females reported using a proactive orientation, catharsis, positive imagery, and self-reliance more often than did ninth grade males (Copeland & Hess, 1995). The authors attributed the females’ tendencies to use the coping strategies of crying and talking to a friend to the socialization patterns (e.g., of being encouraged to vent their feelings and to create close friendships) to which most young girls are exposed. Hoar and Crocker (1999a) have pointed out a very important distinction of the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) framework: it was developed with adults in a non-sport context. Furthermore, there is evidence in the developmental psychology literature “that (a) children and youth do not cope in the same manner that adults do, and (b) the structure of coping repertoire changes as youth mature from childhood to adulthood” (Hoar & Crocker, p. 58).

Stress and Coping Strategies: Athletes

As such, only a rudimentary understanding of stress and the coping strategies used by female adolescents is available. In addition, females who participate in sport face unique stressors not found in other contexts. Although stress and coping in sport has been examined before, most studies have been conducted with male athletes (e.g., Cohn, 1990; Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1993; Gould, Horn, & Spremann, 1983; Hanton & Jones, 1999; Petrie, 1993). Furthermore, there is some evidence that female adolescents in the general population experience greater stress (Groër, Thomas, & Shoffner, 1992) and that females athletes have slightly higher

competitive trait anxiety than do males (Martens, 1977; Passer, 1984). Also there is some evidence in the sport literature that female athletes cope differently than do male athletes (Crocker & Graham, 1995). Gill (1994) noted that there has been a long-standing male bias in research with an assumption that studies with females would yield similar results, “but research using males exclusively does not permit such conclusions and has limited our understanding of women in sport” (p. 257).

Stress and Coping Strategies: Female Athletes

Female athletes have not been neglected from research altogether, however, as a few studies have examined stress in female athletes (Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993; Scanlan & Passer, 1979; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991). For example, Scanlan and Passer examined competitive stress experienced by young (10-12 years of age) female athletes. More recently, Gould, Jackson et al. and Scanlan and colleagues investigated stress regarding the entire sporting experience with elite figure skaters. The athletes involved were older athletes (mean age = 25 and 35.11 respectively) competing in a predominantly individual sport. Therefore, these last two studies have contributed to a greater understanding of the total stress that female athletes experience. However, there is still very little information about the stress experienced by the adolescent female athlete competing in a team sport environment.

With respect to the area of coping in female athletes, even less information is available (Bianco, Malo, & Orlick, 1999; Crocker & Graham, 1995; Finch, 1998). Finch quantitatively investigated the coping strategies of 108 female adolescent athletes in dealing with sport stress. Crocker and Graham also investigated performance stress with male ($N = 123$) and female competitive athletes ($N = 112$) with a mean age of 20.4 years. Crocker and Graham used a quantitative measure to determine the coping strategies of their participants. Bianco and

colleagues examined the stress of sport injuries and how elite skiers (nine males and three females) coped with their injury. The age range of the skiers was 19 to 32 years. These studies (Bianco et al.; Crocker & Graham; Finch) have provided insight into the coping strategies used by female athletes. As with the stress studies previously discussed, however, the results are limited.

For example, the use of structured questionnaires, such as the measures employed by Finch (1998), and Crocker and Graham (1995) can obtain information about participants' use of specific coping strategies. However, participants may use other coping strategies not found on the questionnaire (Romano, 1997). Thus, there is a need to move beyond the traditional methods of data collection (i.e., standardized questionnaire) used in most studies (Gilbert & Morawski, 1999). Bianco and colleagues (1999) did employ a qualitative method of data collection when they interviewed their athletes about stress and injury. Nevertheless, only three female athletes were interviewed and their information was collapsed with the data collected from the male athletes resulting in very little information about the stress and coping strategies used by the female skiers. Thus, there seems to be a dearth of information regarding stress and coping in female athletes participating in a team sport environment.

Research Purpose

Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to identify the meanings of stress, the stressors experienced, and the coping strategies used by female adolescent team sport athletes. A fourth aim is to examine how these strategies were developed. The research questions are:

1. What does stress mean to female adolescent athletes?
2. What everyday or ambient stressors do female adolescent athletes encounter in sport and in their daily lives?

3. What coping strategies do female adolescent athletes use when faced with ambient stressors in their sporting context and in their everyday lives?
4. How did the athletes develop these coping strategies?

It is anticipated that the results of this research will contribute on both a theoretical and practical level. As demonstrated, there is very little information regarding the stressors and coping strategies of female adolescent athletes. Further, information that has been presented thus far has been obtained via quantitative methods (e.g., Crocker & Graham, 1995; Finch, 1998). Results found in the present study will contribute to filling a void in the literature and are especially important due to the in-depth qualitative methods used that will allow the voices of the young women to be heard.

Additionally, researchers examining stress and its meaning for children and adolescents often base their inquiries on results obtained with adult participants. Band (1988) highlighted the importance of conducting empirical investigations with children and stated, “By directly examining children’s self-descriptions of events they find stressful, and what they do in order to cope, we may enrich our understanding of children’s coping efforts as well as attend to child and not solely adult perspectives” (p. 201). This information is important not only on a theoretical level, but also on a practical level, as it may better equip those working with athletes the practical knowledge of the stressors experienced and the coping strategies used by youth sport athletes. Thus coaches, parents, sport psychologists and others working in the youth sport context may be in a position to help alleviate sport specific stressors for female athletes, and when not possible they may be able to better help their charges cope with these demands.

Finally benefits can be found directly related to the environment of education. It is anticipated that the athletes involved in the study will find themselves more aware of the

stressors they face and the strategies they use to help themselves cope. This knowledge could have an impact on their future reactions to stressful situations and the coping strategies they use to help them deal with these experiences.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When designing qualitative studies, researchers should look to their own experiences for insights into the phenomenon they wish to investigate (Maxwell, 1996). During adolescence I participated in a competitive female soccer league. Though I achieved success through my participation in soccer, I also experienced much stress. I coped in a variety of ways when dealing with these issues. While some of the coping strategies helped me feel better, they were not always effective. Realizing that stress and ineffective coping strategies are two of the primary psychological barriers facing athletes, I decided to investigate the meanings of stress for athletes, the stressors they experience, the types of coping strategies they use, and the process by which those strategies are developed.

Though experiential knowledge is important for qualitative studies, scientific knowledge about the topic must also be considered (Creswell, 1994; Maxell, 1996). Thus, the literature on stress and coping has been used to guide and inform the present study. The literature is divided into two main sections: (a) Research on Stress, and (b) Research on Coping Strategies. Limitations of past research and suggestions as to how the limitations will be addressed in the present study are also presented.

Research on Stress

In the Research on Stress section, literature related to the first two research questions is presented. The research questions are: (a) What does stress mean to female adolescent athletes?, and (b) What ambient or everyday stressors do female adolescent athletes encounter in sport and in their daily lives? The first question is addressed under the title, Meanings of Stress. Literature related to athletes' perceptions of stress (i.e., the first research question) is discussed. The second

research question is examined in the Sources of Stress – Stressors Experienced section and includes a discussion of the literature related to athletes' stressors.

Meanings of Stress

Stress in the form of anxiety or worry before an event can lead to a decrease in athletes' performance when they view the situation as threatening or perceive that they do not have adequate resources to deal with the situation. Nevertheless, this does not always occur: "athletes greatly differ in their interpretation of questions related to anxiety. Many athletes interpret anxiety as a very positive, helpful cue that they are ready, whereas others see it as a negative and debilitating factor" (Rotella, Gansneder, Ojala, & Billing, 1980, p. 354). In an early study conducted with 10 Little League Baseball players, Hanson (1967) used telemetry to monitor heart rates of athletes at various points during a game. The average resting heart rate was 110 beats per minute, but increased to 166 beats per minute while at bat. However, the telemetric device used could not determine whether this arousal was due to an aversive emotional reaction or excitement because "after the game, most players reported that they didn't feel particularly nervous while batting. This suggests that the arousal increases reflected stress reactions for some players and more positive emotional states for others" (Smoll & Smith, 1996, p. 368).

More recently, Ntoumanis and Biddle (1998) reported that 52.7% of the male and female university team sport athletes participating in their study believed their cognitive and somatic anxiety facilitated performance, as compared to 15.1% who perceived these anxiety states as debilitating. In another study, 66% of the 464 elite wrestler participants indicated that they became nervous or worried in 66% of their matches and that this helped their performance slightly more than it hurt it (Gould, Horn, & Spreeman, 1983). Many young athletes feel that anxiety helps their performance "or at least helps as much as it hurts" (Passer, 1988, p. 217). A

15-year-old male athlete in Gould, Wilson, Tuffey, and Lochbaum's (1993) study described the stress sometimes felt by adolescent athletes:

In soccer when I get a lot of action, I get stressed and nervous and my muscles tighten up. I don't play as well. Some of the athletes that I interviewed, however, felt that stress helps them. It gets them real pumped up and causes them to do a better job. Other athletes reacted as I do and felt that stress hurts their performance. And still other students that I interviewed said that when they are playing sports and feel stressed, they have a lot of fun. (pp. 290-291)

Thus, it is important to get athletes' perceptions of stress so that we can understand how stress can hurt and help their performance.

A review of the life skills interventions literature with children demonstrates that stress could be associated with a broad range of emotions. For example, when children are asked to describe stress and how it makes them feel, children offer examples of being angry, sad, confused, hurt, scared and frustrated (Bonadie, 1995; Bonadie & Orlick, 1994, 1995; Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert & Orlick, 1996, 2000). Stress meant so much more to the children than just being worried or anxious. However, when one looks to the stress literature involving athletes, two things are evident: (a) the researcher's definition of stress is imposed on the participants, and (b) this definition focuses on nervousness and anxiety to the exclusion of the other emotions that have been identified to be associated with stress.

For example, several researchers (Cohn, 1990; Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1993; Gould, Udry, Bridges, & Beck, 1997a; James & Collins, 1997; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991) used the following definition in an effort to elicit athletes' thoughts regarding competitive stress:

When we discuss stress or pressure now, I am referring to the negative emotions, feelings, and thoughts that you might have when you compete. These would include feelings of apprehension, anxiety, muscle tension, nervousness, physical reactions (such as butterflies in

the stomach, shaking, or nervous sweating), thoughts centered on worry and self-doubt and negative statements to yourself. (James & Collins, p. 21)

Some researchers have tried to address the problems associated with imposing a narrow definition of stress on study participants. For example, Gould, Wilson, and colleagues (1993) noted that they wanted to focus on the young athlete participants' own descriptions of stress. However, when they asked about this phenomenon they included the word nervous in their questions (e.g., How stressful or nervous do you become when playing sports?). All of the above definitions take only the negative aspects of stress into consideration and while an athlete may initially perceive an event to be stressful (based on this definition), he or she may then view the situation as a challenge and become motivated by it. A potential stressor would then be seen as something positive that helps the athlete perform at a high level.

Therefore I believe that the wording of the stress definition and the fact that it is used at all poses a potential limit with respect to gaining a more comprehensive portrait of athletes' perceptions of stress. This lends support to qualitatively asking athletes what stress means to them without imposing preconceived definitions or specifying resultant emotions of stress. In this way, the voices of the athletes, instead of the researchers, can be heard. Consistent with the constructivist perspective guiding the present study, these concerns are addressed. With respect to the first research question, (i.e., What does stress mean to female adolescent athletes?) the athletes were asked about their perceptions of stress. Furthermore, it was thought that the athletes' multiple realities with respect to feeling stressed or challenged would be better understood as a result of this constructivist approach. In the second part of the Research on Stress section, the potential sources of stress will be considered.

Sources of Stress – Stressors Experienced

Questions and interviews are the two main approaches that have been used to obtain information concerning athletes' stress. In this second section, the literature pertaining to the stress experienced by athletes collected via questionnaires and interviews is discussed. Following the discussion of each of the data collection methods, the limitations of the studies are highlighted. Concluding statements provide the reader with an understanding of how the constructivist approach taken in the present study will address the limitations of past research. First, however, a discussion of exercise and sport as stress-reducers is presented.

In their meta-analysis of the effects of exercise training on anxiety, Long and van Stavel (1995) discovered that high stressed adults benefit from exercise training in reducing their levels of anxiety. Engaging in regular physical exercise has also been demonstrated to reduce the negative impact of life stress in female adolescents (Brown & Lawton, 1986; Brown & Siegel, 1988). Participation in sport for some athletes can be stress-reducing as well. For example, Raugh and Wall (1987) reported that university athletes used sports participation as an "emotional release". A 16-year-old male athlete commented that "sports also helps deal with stress in the nonsport setting of school in that it can act as an outlet for all the stress that is built up in the classroom" (Gould, Wilson, et al., 1993, p. 293). Furthermore, physical fitness is associated with a quicker recovery to psychosocial stress and that highly fit individuals, such as athletes, have demonstrated a more rapid recovery when faced with mental stress (Dishman, 1984). However, athletic pursuits often involve stressful elements as well (Bandura, 1997).

Gould, Weiss and Weinberg (1981) studied 49 elite wrestlers and found that the athletes' anxiety increased prior to the meet and that there were few differences between anxiety levels of successful athletes as compared to less successful athletes. Similar results were found in a study of 458 junior elite wrestlers (Gould et al., 1983). Stress and its sources are important areas for

exploration due to the high participation rates in organized sport around the world (De Knop, Engström, Skirstad, & Weiss, 1996). Literature that has investigated athletes' stress via the use of a survey or questionnaire will be discussed next.

Sources of Stress Measured by Questionnaires

A number of studies have examined the prevailing sources of stress for elite athletes (junior and adult) and other adult athletes involved in sport. Studies examining junior and adult elite athletes will be discussed first. In their study of 171 elite male and female junior weightlifters, Fry and Fry (1997) asked athletes to respond to a 37-item questionnaire that assessed the frequency with which they experienced various sources of stress during their sport performance. The survey was completed following their competition in either the Junior National Weightlifting Championship or the Junior Olympics Weightlifting Championship. These athletes experienced various sources of stress including worry about performing up to their ability level (46%), improving on their last performance (42%), not lifting well (41%), who their opponent would be (29%), and not making weight (27%).

A second study with elite junior athletes examined perceptions of parental pressure in the sport environment (Hellstedt, 1990). The adolescent ski racers (38 females and 66 males, mean age 12.9 years) were given a 36-item questionnaire developed for the study, which they completed after their last run of the Eastern Junior Olympic Ski Championships. Athletes responded to demographic questions as well as rated their perceptions and attitudes toward their parents on 9-point Likert scales. An example from the questionnaire was “The degree to which my parents pressure me to compete in skiing is ...” (p. 138). Many of the athletes perceived a moderate to excessive level of parental pressure, but they did not all view this pressure as negative. However, the athletes that did perceive parental pressure to be negative felt considerable pressure to ski race. Furthermore, as the parental pressure increased, the athletes

showed greater negative reaction to the pressure and increased performance pressures. Thus far the discussion has centered on the elite adult and junior individual sport athlete. Attention will now be turned to team sport athletes competing in adult competitive leagues or at the junior elite level.

Madden, Summers, and Brown (1990) examined sources of stress by administering the Stressful Situations in Basketball Questionnaire (SSBQ) to 133 male and female competitive basketball athletes. They found that a loss of control, such as when the athlete's team was losing and the opposing team was holding up the play by keeping the ball or the act of having the ball stolen from the athlete lead to high levels of stress for these athletes.

VanYperen (1995) examined interpersonal stress, performance level and parental support with a group of 65 male highly skilled soccer players attending a soccer school. The mean age of the athletes was 16.6 years. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire consisting of 5-point Likert scales the week before the season started (Time 1) and in the last week of the season (Time 2). Results for Time 1 showed that a high performance level in combination with high parental support produces more problems and difficulties with teammates. The authors reasoned that this group of athletes experienced task-related problems, such as discontent with individual performances of teammates more at the beginning of the season.

From examining the above two studies (Madden, Summers, et al., 1990; VanYperen, 1995), two conclusions are evident. First, athletes participating in team sports do experience stress related to the competitive event as well as with respect to interpersonal issues with teammates. Second, very little information is available regarding the sources of stress experienced by team sport athletes. These findings support the need to further investigate stress and its sources with team sport athletes. Furthermore, all of the studies cited thus far (in the sources of stress section) have examined stress with elite and non-elite adult athletes and junior elite athletes. Attention

will now be turned to those studies that have investigated stress with youth athletes, i.e., non-elite youth competitors in both individual and team sport contexts.

Scanlan and Passer (1978, 1979) conducted two of the earliest studies examining sources of competitive stress in youth athletes. In the first study, the participants comprised 191 male soccer athletes aged 11 and 12 years, while the second study's participants consisted of 171 female soccer athletes between 10 and 12 years of age. Both studies employed the same procedure of administering Spielberger's (1973) State Anxiety Inventory for Children 30 minutes before and after youth soccer games to determine the intrapersonal and situational factors related to stress experienced by the athletes just prior to and immediately following a competitive soccer game. The game's outcome proved to be a significant source of stress for these athletes as results of both studies indicated that players on the losing teams experienced significantly higher stress levels than winning players. Analysis of the girls' data (Scanlan & Passer, 1979) revealed that players who perceived their team's performance as poor showed greater postgame stress than players with more positive perceptions. Also postgame stress was higher for the boys (Scanlan & Passer, 1978) who perceived winning to be extremely important to their coach as compared to players that perceived winning to be less important to their coach. However, Scanlan and Passer cautioned that while this variable was significant, it only accounted for 1% of the variance.

Passer (1983) completed another study with young male soccer players aged 10 to 15 years old. In the 7-day period prior to the beginning of the season a number of questionnaires were administered to the athletes, including Martens' (1977) Sport Competition Anxiety Test and measures designed to assess the athletes' fear of failure, fear of evaluation, perceived competence and self-esteem. A number of hypotheses were tested and results showed that athletes with high competitive trait anxiety (CTA) expected to play less well personally in the upcoming season, worried more frequently about making mistakes, not playing well and losing,

and expected that failure would be more upsetting and shameful than low-CTA athletes. Further, the high-CTA participants had a greater generalized expectancy to incur negative evaluation from parents and coaches in the event of failure and worried more frequently about how they were evaluated by their parents, teammates and coaches than did low-CTA players. Therefore, the results showed that fear of failure and fear of evaluation were critical sources of stress in competitive-trait-anxious children.

Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1984) also examined competitive stress in their investigation of 76 wrestlers between 9 and 14 years of age. These participants completed several phases of data collection and were administered the Sport Competition Anxiety Test (Martens, 1977) as well as measures of self-esteem, significant adult influences, prematch cognitions, personal performance expectancies, and perceived discrepancies between expected and achieved performance. Participants with higher levels of baseline state anxiety and competitive trait anxiety and lower personal performance expectancies experienced greater stress before matches than did boys with opposite attributes. Further, athletes who worried more often and who felt higher parental pressure experienced greater stress than did competitors who worried less frequently and perceived less pressure. Scanlan and Lewthwaite reported that this finding was the first empirical evidence “suggesting that children’s perceptions of parental pressure for sport participation are related to acute stress reactions prior to competing” (p. 224).

Since this finding, perceptions of parental behaviors/pressures have received some attention in the literature. For example, Ommundsen and Vaglum (1991) examined soccer competition anxiety and enjoyment in relation to perceived competence and the emotional involvement of significant others, which included parents and coaches. The 223 male participants were 12 to 16 years of age competing in organized youth soccer leagues. Data analysis revealed that the only predictor that correlated significantly with soccer competition anxiety was self-esteem, and that

perceived soccer competence, and adult behavior (parents and coaches) may influence enjoyment.

A second study examining parental pressure on youth athletes yielded different results. Stein, Raedeke, and Glenn (1999) noted that “parents can help create enjoyment by providing support and encouragement, or they can be a source of stress and anxiety by placing excessive pressure on a child” (p. 592). They examined this phenomenon with 13 and 14 year old adolescents involved in volleyball, soccer or football by administering a questionnaire during a regularly scheduled practice. Athlete participants responded to 7-point and 9-point Likert scales assessing perceptions of their parents’ involvement and the overall stress and enjoyment created by their parents within the sport setting. The athletes reported higher amounts of stress from fathers and mothers whom they viewed as being either not involved enough or too involved.

Limitations of Using Questionnaires to Obtain Stressor Information

There is consensus that participation in the competitive sport event can cause some stress for some athletes. However, there seems to be less agreement about the importance of other sources of stress, such as parental pressure perceived by youth athletes. It is important to consider whether the appropriate types of stressors have been identified for the particular age or ethnic group being studied (Aldwin, 1994). This is especially significant when using pre-structured measures such as questionnaires. At this stage of inquiry into athletes’ sources of stress, a more open-ended method of data collection, such as an interview, may be more appropriate so that researchers do not overlook previously unconsidered sources of stress. Researchers that have used interviews to investigate athletes’ stress will be discussed next.

Sources of Stress Obtained by Interviews

Bianco, Malo, and Orlick (1999) used open-ended interviews to investigate twelve male and female elite alpine skiers’ psychological journey from injury through recovery, with an emphasis

on factors contributing to stress. During their interviews, the athletes discussed several sources of stress including physical stressors (e.g., injury- or illness-related symptoms), cognitive stressors (e.g., concerns about re-injury, and lowered self-confidence) and emotional stressors (e.g., slow progress or rehabilitation setbacks, and disappointing results).

A second study also examined the stress sources encountered by elite skiers when they rehabilitated from season-ending injuries (Gould, Udry, et al., 1997a). Twenty-one male and female elite skiers on the United States National Ski Team participated in in-depth qualitative interviews. Inductive content analysis revealed 182 raw data themes that coalesced into eight higher dimensions: psychological concerns, social concerns, physical concerns, medical/rehabilitation concerns, financial concerns, career concerns, missed non-ski opportunities, and other. These studies demonstrated that stressors experienced by injured athletes are not limited to the physical nature of the injury, but also include psychological and social stressors, among others.

Competitive stress is another area that researchers have investigated via the use of a qualitative interview. For example, James and Collins (1997) investigated athletes' stressors during sport performance by the use of a qualitative interview with 20 athletes (10 male and 10 female) participating in a variety of team and individual sports. Two athletes competed at the international level, while eight were national or semiprofessional competitors, three were regional and district competitors and seven competed at the club level. The three main sources of stress for this group were significant other stressors (e.g., teammate issues and pressures from coach), social evaluation and self-presentational concerns (e.g., pressures to attain external standards), and competitive anxiety and doubts. James and Collins concluded that the results of their study support their contention that athletes competing in different sports may share some

sources of stress. While there may be some overlap regarding the sources of stress reported by the athletes, the small, nonrepresentative sample does not warrant wide-spread generalizations.

A more holistic approach, that considered the entire sport experience, was used in two studies that have contributed to the literature regarding sources of stress in elite athletes (Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993; Scanlan et al., 1991). Scanlan and colleagues interviewed 26 male and female former elite figure skaters and asked them to consider the stressors associated with their entire sport experience during their most competitive phase (i.e., from novice level to retirement, characterized by the athletes' highest commitment to their sport) of their skating career. Because of this novel approach, the data was not limited to competitive stress, but instead included information regarding "lessons, practices, skating tests, and relationships with significant others" (p. 104). Results of an inductive content analysis identified five overall themes. These are presented next along with the percentages with which these sources of stress were mentioned across the total sample: (a) negative aspects of competition (81%), (b) negative significant-other relationships (77%), (c) demands or costs of skating (69%), (d) personal struggles (65%), and (e) traumatic experiences (19%). It was concluded that the athletes experienced stress from worries, perceptions and events directly related to competition (negative aspects of competition). However, they also experienced a great deal of stress related to aspects outside of the competition environment such as negative significant-other relationships, demands or costs of skating, personal struggles, and traumatic experiences. The Scanlan et al. study was groundbreaking because it was one of the first studies to consider that stressors outside of the actual competition are critical to an athlete's sport experience: "these findings strongly demonstrate that a comprehensive understanding of an elite athlete's stressors requires consideration of the totality of his or her sport experience" (Scanlan et al., p. 117).

Gould, Jackson, and colleague (1993) also took a holistic approach in their investigation of sources of stress for 17 female and male national champion figure skaters. Athletes were asked to consider their sources of stress for two distinct phases of their skating career. The first phase spanned the time from when they first began skating at a senior level until they first won a national championship. Phase 2 included the time from first winning the national championship until the present time (when they were interviewed) or the time until they retired from their amateur skating career. Inductive analysis of the data revealed that similar general source dimensions were found in the two phases. For example, (a) physical demands on skater resources (Phase 1 = 9.1%, Phase 2 = 8.6%), and (b) competitive anxiety and doubts (Phase 1 = 19.7%, Phase 2 = 18.3%) were found to occur with similar frequency between the two phases. Other dimensions found in the two phases, but with varying levels of frequency included (a) environmental demands on skater resources (Phase 1 = 21.2%, Phase 2 = 8.6%), (b) expectations and pressure to perform (Phase 1 = 31.8%, Phase 2 = 21.5%), (c) relationship issues (Phase 1 = 10.6%, Phase 2 = 23.7%) and (d) uncategorized sources that comprised miscellaneous issues not readily classifiable into the previously established dimensions (Phase 1 = 7.6%, Phase 2 = 6.5%). Additionally, a seventh general dimension was identified in the Phase 2 data. This was termed “life direction concerns” and comprised information related to “skating career concerns” such as the decision about whether to come back as a singles skater and “life career concerns” that included, for example, concerns about the athlete’s age and social position and worry about school and retirement issues. Overall, the majority of the figure skaters experienced more stress after winning their titles than prior to attaining this national champion status. Elite athletes are not the only competitors to experience stress as a result of their sport participation. The literature examining the non-elite individual and team sport athlete will be highlighted next.

Cohn (1990) used an interview to examine sources of stress and athlete burnout in ten male high school competitive golfers, aged 15 to 17 years. Due to the open-ended nature of the data collection, this study provides insights regarding the stressors of youth athletes not previously found in studies employing quantitative measures. Empirical support for stress sources such as striving to meet the expectations of parents and coaches, worry about being evaluated by others and balancing golf with other commitments such as school and work were reported. However, the deductive nature of the data analysis used is a potential limit of this investigation. Cohn determined the major categories of stress sources a priori from an adaptation of previous research with elite figure skaters (i.e., Scanlan et al., 1991). By so doing, he forced the data into predetermined categories, which may or may not have been their best representation.

Gould, Wilson, and colleagues (1993) investigated stress, its consequences and coping strategies from young non-elite athletes' perspectives when they conducted a panel discussion with four male athletes (aged 11 to 16 years). Due to the in-depth discussion methods employed, the researchers were able to further validate existing research as well as recognize previously unidentified sources of stress. For example, the participants stated that they felt a great deal of stress when overloaded with information from coaches and parents during competition, and when their concentration and flow were interrupted during play. Gould, Wilson, et al. concluded that in-depth discussions with young athletes are an excellent method for better understanding sport stress and its impact, as these participants have a wealth of knowledge regarding their experiences.

Limitations of Using Interviews to Obtain Stressor Information

In the qualitative investigations cited above, data were collected via a one-time interview with participants, either in a face-to-face setting (Bianco et al., 1999; James & Collins, 1997; Scanlan et al., 1991) over the telephone (Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993) or both (Gould, Udry, et

al., 1997a). One-time interviews are frequently used in sport psychology research due to the limited availability and geographical locations of athletes and the resulting expense and time needed to talk with them. This method of data collection is limited because it is sometimes difficult to establish a positive relationship in a single meeting. The relationship between the researcher and the interviewee is an important and critical component of the interview's success. If a positive relationship is not established a participant may not feel comfortable enough to completely share his or her thoughts about the phenomenon (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

A second disadvantage of the one-time interview is the fact that the athlete may remember other important aspects of the sport investigation topic once he or she has left the interview setting. Unfortunately, this information would be lost and the researcher would obtain an incomplete portrait of the phenomenon being studied. In addition, a participant may not be able to fully articulate a response due to the foreign content of the question. For example, if an athlete was asked to discuss sources of stress, he or she may be able to talk about the most obvious stressors, such as meeting the expectations of the coaches or importance of the event. However, because the athlete had never been asked this question before, less blatant but equally important stressors may never have been considered, and consequently the athlete might not be able to give a complete response to the researcher's question.

These issues have been at least partially addressed by some of the researchers. For example, Gould, Jackson, and colleague (1993) and James and Collins (1997) sent the participants a copy of the interview guide before their scheduled interview. In this way, the participants could familiarize themselves with the questions and were given an opportunity to reflect on how they would respond. It was anticipated that by alerting the athletes to the interview questions the researchers would elicit more complete responses. Bianco et al. (1999) sent a final report back to their participants and asked them to provide feedback on the accuracy of the findings. This

procedure gave the athletes an opportunity to offer any additional information that they may have left out of the initial interview. However, even with these improvisations to the one-shot interview procedure, the limitations have not been fully addressed. Thus, there is a need to conduct research that provides participants with multiple opportunities to express their views and thoughts about the topic under investigation. Further, giving them time to reflect on their contributions and an occasion to provide feedback on their accuracy could strengthen the results.

With respect to the analysis of interview data, most researchers who have studied stress and sport (except for Bianco et al., 1999) performed inductive content analyses of the interview data and used percentages to discuss their results (i.e., Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993; Gould, Udry, et al., 1997a; James & Collins, 1997; Scanlan et al., 1991). These researchers inferred that sources of stress cited frequently were significant for the athlete participants. However, this may not necessarily be the case, and such analyses do not permit one to draw this conclusion. For example, it is possible that less frequently cited stressors were equally critical, and could be considered as such if other verbal and non-verbal clues were taken into consideration. An athlete's quality and/or clarity of details and description, the intensity of language used (e.g., "This was *very* stressful"), and any accompanying body language (e.g., the athlete shows emotion by crying), could point to the importance of a less frequently cited stressor.

James and Collins (1997) attempted to address this issue by including the athletes' nonverbal information (e.g., "[replying sarcastically]" or "[with irony]") in the interview transcriptions. These researchers didn't specify, however, if this additional information deemed a less frequently cited stressor to be important to the athlete participants. Further, Gould, Jackson, and colleague (1993) stated in their discussion that the most frequently mentioned stress-source dimensions were not necessarily the most significant for each participant, nor were they necessarily the stress sources with the greatest stress impact. The researchers did attempt to

support their results by stating that the investigative team felt that the “stress source frequency and magnitude were related and convey the variety of factors that were perceived as stress-causing to the skaters” (p. 154). Once again, while this may be true, it does not necessarily allow for conclusions about the importance of the sources of stress for the athletes. Therefore, if a researcher wants a more complete portrait of the phenomenon under investigation, there is a need to look further than the frequency with which an issue is discussed and include other equally important contributors such as the intensity of the language used, the details and level of description provided and non-verbal clues such as the athlete’s body language.

Despite their few limitations, the studies using qualitative methods have provided important insight into elite (junior and adult) athletes’ and other adult athletes’ sources of stress regarding the overall sporting experience (e.g., Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993; Scanlan et al., 1991), as well as specific aspects including injury (Bianco et al., 1999; Gould, Udry, et al., 1997a), and the sport performance or the competition (e.g., Fry & Fry, 1997; James & Collins, 1997). Most of the athletes competed in individual sports such as weightlifting, skiing, figure skating, gymnastics, track and field, swimming, dressage, fencing, tennis and golf. Although participation in individual sports has been reported to increase anxiety levels in athletes due to the high social evaluation of competition (Simon & Martens, 1979; Smoll & Smith, 1996), team sports participation can also be stressful. A few of the above studies investigated the stress phenomenon with team sport athletes, but the information was collapsed with that of the individual sport athletes. Thus, the researchers cannot report specifically about stress and its sources with team sport athletes.

Studies examining sport participation with athletes at all levels demonstrate the psychological impact that this involvement can have. Gould (1982) reported that two of the top five topics rated most important for study by sport psychologists and community youth sport

coaches and administrators were “competitive stress placed on young athletes” and “helping young athletes cope with competitive stress.” It is not surprising then that the majority of studies have focused on examining competitive stress of youth athletes (e.g., Passer, 1983; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1984; Scanlan & Passer, 1978, 1979). Since then other aspects of stress for youth athletes have been considered (e.g., Cohn, 1990; Stein et al., 1999). However, it should be noted that the overwhelming majority of these studies have employed quantitative measures to investigate this phenomenon, and as such, did not take into consideration the multiple realities of these young athletes. Researchers have recognized that a comprehensive understanding of an athlete’s stressors requires a holistic approach in which the entire sporting experience is considered. This has started to occur with elite athletes (Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993, Scanlan et al., 1991), but with only two exceptions (Cohn; Gould, Wilson, et al., 1993) the amateur youth athlete has been neglected from this line of research.

It has been estimated that for every elite-level adult athlete, there are thousands of young athletes participating in sport at various levels of challenge and that this participation can be very intense (Brustad, 1993). As such, there is a need to further understand the sporting experience of youth athletes using a holistic approach. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the team sport context is not as stressful as individual sport participation (Simon & Martens, 1979). However, my own experiences participating in a team sport (i.e., soccer), and the literature support that the team sport environment can also be a stressful context for youth athletes (Passer, 1981, 1983). Finally, much research has been conducted with male athletes. While there is some evidence to suggest that young males and females may share common sources of stress (Scanlan & Passer, 1978, 1979), there is not enough evidence to support this claim. Further, Gill (1994) noted that there has been a long-standing male bias in research including the assumption that studies with females would yield similar results. She asserted that this reasoning has limited the

understanding of women in sport. Review of the sport science literature examining athletes' stressors presented thus far, provides evidence for the lack of information regarding the female adolescent team sport athlete's stressors. Thus, there is a need to investigate the sources of stress of young female athletes participating in a team sport environment using a holistic approach. The constructivist perspective guiding the present study provided the female athletes an opportunity to discuss stress in their sport and non-sport lives and thus allowed their voices to be heard. It is believed that the present study provides empirical data related to the total stressors experienced by the female adolescent team sport athlete and therefore contributes to filling a gap in the literature.

Research on Coping Strategies

In the Research on Coping Strategies section, the third and fourth research questions are addressed. The research questions are: (a) What coping strategies do female adolescent athletes use when faced with ambient stress in sport and in their everyday lives?, and (b) How did the athletes develop these coping strategies? In the first part of the Research on Coping Strategies section, literature related to coping strategies (i.e., the third research question) is presented. Similar to the stressor data, questionnaires and interviews have also been used by researchers investigating athletes' coping strategies. With respect to studies employing quantitative measures, two main coping models have been followed: (a) dispositional, and (b) transactional. Studies using dispositional and transactional questionnaires will be highlighted and then critiqued. Next, a discussion of studies that have used interviews to obtain athletes' coping strategies will be presented. The limitations of these studies will be discussed. A discussion outlining the ways in which these limitations will be addressed in the present research will then be provided. The fourth research question regarding the development of coping strategies will then be addressed. A discussion regarding the consequences of ineffective coping strategies is

provided first, however, as a means to justify the importance of studying athletes' coping strategies.

Effective coping strategies are important in helping athletes deal with stress, as stress specific to the sporting environment can have a negative impact on athletes' psycho-social well-being. Several important negative consequences of excessive stress in the sport environment have been identified.

First, competitive stress can effect a young athlete's participation and enjoyment and, if chronic, may ultimately lead to the athlete withdrawing from the sport (Gould, 1993; Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997; Smoll & Smith, 1996). Orlick and Botterill (1975) discovered that reasons for youth sport dropout included the young athletes' fears of failure and disapproval from others as well as a pervasive emphasis on winning and overwhelming demands from coaches and parents. While there is evidence that parental support can buffer adverse effects of an athlete's below average performance (VanYperen, 1995), and that parents can be important components of an athlete's social support network (Rosenfeld, Richman, & Hardy, 1989), parental pressure still remains a critical source of negative stress for athletes. As an elite junior tennis player who suffered from burnout stated,

I always felt like I was supposed to win, and I never felt like anything I did was ever enough for him [father], you know. Even after I'd win a tournament or I'd do something well, even – on that same day – he'd already want something else, and I never felt like he was really satisfied with how well I did, like he was really, you know, proud of me. I always felt like I wasn't meeting his expectations. (Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Tuffey, 1997, p. 375)

Thus, parents who pressure their children excessively risk eliciting negative responses and “need to be aware of the possibility that excessive pressure ... may result in parent-child conflict or youth sport withdrawal” (Hellstedt, 1990, p. 143).

Performance decrements are a second potential consequence of excessive sport stress (Balague, Vernacchia, Gordin, & Reardon, 1998; Smoll & Smith, 1996). For example, Prakash and Ste-Marie (1998) noted that total skating-specific distress, competitive skating-specific distress, and competitive hassles predicted negative competitive performance in adolescent figure skaters. In another study of adolescent female figure skaters, results showed that perceived stress from daily hassles and skating stressors related to increased performance problems for these athletes also (Felsten & Wilcox, 1993). Thus “a limited coping repertoire or the absence of specific coping skills is a contributing factor in inadequate performance and sport dissatisfaction” (Crocker, 1992, p. 162).

Finally, excessive stress can have a negative effect on a young athlete’s physical well-being and can contribute to illness and injuries (Andersen & Williams, 1988; Smoll & Smith, 1996). For example, in his study examining the life stress-injury relationship in collegiate football players, Petrie (1993) discovered that life stress and other psychosocial variables were predictive of athletic injury. More specifically, results suggested that higher levels of anxiety and stress in the athletes were associated with a greater number of days missed due to their injury.

The overwhelming stressors inherent in sport participation provide the justification for trying to better understand the coping responses of athletes (Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993). The particular coping model they adopt will influence researchers investigating coping in athletes (Crocker, Kowalski, & Graham, 1998). For example, trait models assume that individuals exhibit coping styles, which remain constant across time and situations (Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996). In this view, individuals have a disposition to think or act in a stable manner (Crocker et al.). Several investigators feel that coping styles are useful predictors of coping behavior (Costa & McCrae, 1990; Endler & Parker, 1990b). In contrast, process models or transactional models place more emphasis on the environment and situational factors and assume that coping may

change across situations and even within a stressful incident depending on the demands of the problem (Crocker et al.; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

This model rejects the view that coping can be characterized as a stable style or trait. ...

Furthermore, the model holds that coping is a process and should not be confused and confounded with outcome. If an athlete is failing, it does not follow that he or she is not coping. The athlete may be attempting to cope with a demanding situation, but the selected coping strategies may be ineffective, inefficient, or inappropriate for that specific situation.

(Crocker, 1992, p. 162)

As noted by Crocker and colleagues, “the importance of these assumptions cannot be underestimated as they will shape basic research factors, such as the wording of instructions, wording of coping items, the selection of independent and dependent variables, and the analysis of data” (p. 150). Studies examining coping from the dispositional model will be discussed next.

Dispositional Model of Coping

Anshel (1996) adopted a dispositional coping style view when he investigated whether 421 adolescent male competitive athletes possessed an orientation toward using a coping style (i.e., disposition) in response to a series of acute stressors. The athletes completed a 128-item survey designed to identify approach and avoidance coping styles and problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies within the two coping styles. For each stressor, the participants indicated the extent of their agreement for each coping strategy on a 5-point scale (1 – “not at all like me” to 5 – “very much like me”). Results provided partial support for coping style use among adolescent-aged athletes: “in particular, an examination of four components – problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies within the approach and avoidance coping styles – indicating acceptable goodness of fit, demonstrated that coping style is one component of a person’s response to acute stress” (p. 319).

A second study conducted with athletes also showed some support for the dispositional coping model. However, according to the researchers, support was also found for the transactional model. Udry (1997) examined the coping strategies following surgery of 25 athletes (15 males and 10 females with a mean age of 27.9 years) using the Coping with Health and Injury Problems (CHIP) scale (Endler & Parker, 1992). Administration of the CHIP occurred just prior to surgery and then at four intervals (weeks 3, 6, 9, and 12 post-surgery). Results showed that instrumental coping was used most frequently across all assessment periods, while palliative coping was used least frequently. Furthermore, a series of repeated measures revealed significant time changes in negative emotion coping and palliative coping. Udry concluded that the “dynamic” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) view of coping was supported by the fact that significant time changes were observed in the use of negative emotion and palliative coping. However, the “stable” view of coping is also supported because regardless of the time period, instrumental coping and palliative coping were the most and least used coping strategies respectively.

Though not explicitly stated, other authors also assumed a consistent coping style when investigating relationships between coping and other variables in sport. For example, Madden, Kirkby, and McDonald (1989) examined how middle distance runners usually coped when they experienced a slump in their performance. Participants comprised twelve male and nine female athletes (aged 14 to 20 years) who were selected to attend a training camp for elite runners. The athletes completed the Ways of Coping with Sport (WOCS) Checklist, which was modified from Folkman and Lazarus’ (1985) Ways of Coping Checklist (WOCC) at the training camp three days before a competitive event. Results showed that seeking social support, increased effort and resolve, and problem-focused coping were consistently reported as the most frequently used coping strategies. Also, significant positive correlations were found between problem-focused

coping, general emotionality, and wishful thinking and the number of injuries experienced by a runner.

In a second study using the Ways of Coping with Sport (WOCS) Checklist, Madden, Summers, and colleague (1990) examined how 133 basketball athletes (84 males and 49 females, with a mean age of 24 years) typically coped when they experienced a slump in personal basketball form. Results showed that athletes experiencing high levels of competitive stress used increased effort and resolve, problem-focused coping, social support-seeking, and wishful thinking strategies when coping with a personal performance slump. In their review of these two articles, Hardy and colleagues (1996) stated that while the studies provided some interesting results, they must be viewed with caution. For example, details regarding the psychometric properties and the methodological procedures used in the development of the coping assessment tool were lacking and “the ‘slump’ situations to which subjects reacted were not well delineated or standardized” (p. 215).

More recently, Grove and Heard (1997) examined the coping behaviors of 213 team and individual sport athletes (with a mean age of about 22 years) when faced with a slump in their performance. All athletes completed the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations questionnaire (Endler & Parker, 1990a). The investigators were interested in exploring the personality constructs of optimism and trait sport confidence in relation to slump-related coping behaviors. As such, a sample of 90 athletes also completed the Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Carver, 1985) and the remaining sample (N = 123) completed the Trait Sport Confidence Inventory (Vealey, 1986). Results showed that the use of problem-focused strategies was positively correlated with both of the personality constructs of dispositional optimism and trait sport confidence when dealing with performance slumps. Further, these two constructs were negatively correlated with the use of emotion-oriented coping strategies. Dispositional optimism

and trait sport confidence were also negatively correlated with the use of avoidance-oriented coping, but were not significant. The transactional model of coping is the second coping model followed by researchers investigating athletes' coping strategies. Attention will now turn to quantitative studies that have followed the transactional model.

Transactional Model of Coping

Crocker (1992) noted that the Ways of Coping Checklist (WCC) held promise as a measure to investigate coping as a process in the sporting context. He modified the WCC for competitive sport and investigated how 237 competitive athletes (118 females and 119 males with a mean age of 21 years) coped with sport-related stress. The procedure involved athletes describing the most stressful situation that occurred in their sport in the preceding three weeks and then the completion of the WCC based on the described stressful situation. Results showed that athletes used a wide range of cognitive and behavioral strategies to deal with sport related stress and that these strategies can be organized into eight different dimensions: active coping, problem-focused coping, seeking social support, positive reappraisal, wishful thinking, self-control, detachment, and self-blame. Crocker suggested active and problem-focused coping were highly adaptive strategies since they could be used to alter the environmental demands that contribute to stress. Wishful thinking and detachment were thought to be helpful in the short term, but could be dysfunctional if continued over a period of time since they would prevent the athlete from being an active agent of change. With respect to the modification of the WCC, Crocker suggested that the instrument should be used with caution due to the lack of consistency of items within scales.

Crocker and Graham (1995) followed up on Crocker's earlier concern and used a modified instrument to assess coping strategies of 235 athletes (123 males and 112 females with a mean age of 20.4 years). The instrument used consisted of a total of twelve coping scales. Nine scales were based on Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub's (1989) COPE instrument. These scales included

Active Coping, Seeking Social Support for Instrumental Reasons, Planning, Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasons, Denial, Humor, Behavioral Disengagement, Venting of Emotion, and Suppression of Competing Activities. Three other scales were also included based on Crocker's (1992) earlier work with the WCC. These scales were Self-Blame, Wishful Thinking, and Increasing Effort. The resulting scales were termed the Modified-COPE (M-COPE) instrument. Results showed that athletes used primarily problem-focused coping strategies such as increasing effort, planning, active coping, and suppression of competing activities and that many of these problem-focused strategies were used in combination. Furthermore, this study was unique because the coping responses of males and females were considered separately and the results provided some evidence that these athletes cope differently with performance-related stress in sport. For example, females reported using higher levels of seeking social support for emotional reasons and increasing effort.

Martin and Pease (1999) also used the M-COPE in their investigation of the effect of perceived stress due to performance difficulties. Participants included 163 male and female college athletes representing both team and individual sports. Results showed that increases in perceived stress increased the use of both problem-solving coping strategies and emotional coping strategies by the athletes and that high perceived stress athletes engaged in more problem-solving and more emotional coping strategies than low perceived stress athletes. No sport type differences were found due to perceived stress, and contrary to the Crocker and Graham (1995) study, no gender differences were found either.

Limitations of Coping Research using the Dispositional and Transactional Models

The coping studies presented thus far, regardless of which model was followed (dispositional or transactional model approach), have examined coping in the sporting context with athletes via the use of structured, quantitative assessment tools. Though male and female

athletes competing at various levels of competition participated in the studies, only two studies (i.e., Crocker & Graham, 1995; Martin & Pease, 1999) examined the data from these athletes to see if there were any differences in their coping responses. Though Martin and Pease did not find any gender differences, Crocker and Graham did find that female athletes reported using higher levels of seeking social support for emotional reasons and increasing effort. These inconsistent findings and the overall dearth of information regarding the coping responses of female athletes provide the justification for exploring this phenomenon with female athletes in greater detail. Also, a number of limitations of the quantitative measures, such as their psychometrically unsound development and inconsistent scales have already been addressed. However, it should also be noted that most of the scales used were developed from adult empirical research and that the developmental psychology literature suggests that adolescents do not cope in the same manner as adults (Hoar & Crocker, 1999a). Therefore there is a need to investigate the coping strategies used by adolescents with a sensitivity to the fact that developmental changes across adolescence may impact coping resources and the frequency of different coping strategies employed (Hoar & Crocker, 1999b).

Another consideration that needs to be pointed out is that only a few of these studies have examined coping strategies used by athletes in competitive situations and that many studies used hypothetical coping situations (e.g., Grove & Heard, 1997; Madden, Kirkby, et al., 1989; Madden, Summers, et al., 1990), or situations away from the actual sporting context, such as recovery from injury (e.g., Udry, 1997). For research to move forward, “researchers need to characterize coping efforts used by athletes in ecologically valid sport settings [and that] qualitative methodologies are particularly useful in garnering rich and detailed data” (Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993, p. 84). Researchers are now recognizing the value of investigating coping

responses of athletes by means of qualitative methods. Studies that have taken a qualitative approach will be discussed next.

Coping Strategies Obtained by Interviews

Gould, Eklund, and colleague (1993) interviewed 20 Olympic wrestlers to examine their efforts to cope with stress experienced during the 1988 Olympic Games. Inductive content analysis revealed that the athletes coped in a variety of ways. The most frequently cited strategies (cited by 80% of the athletes) were thought control strategies and included blocking distractions, perspective taking, positive thinking, coping thoughts, and prayer. A second category, task focus strategies, were cited by 40% of the athletes and included narrow, more immediate focus, and concentrating on goals. The third category consisted of emotional control strategies (cited by 40% of the athletes) such as arousal control and visualization. Finally, the fourth category (cited by 40% of the athletes) consisted of behavioral strategies and included changing or controlling one's environment, and following a set routine. The researchers attempted to do additional analysis and deductively categorize the 39 coping strategy raw data themes into Folkman and Lazarus' (1985) categories of problem- or emotion-focused coping. Gould, Eklund, et al. concluded that Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) argument regarding stress as a transactional process between the person and the environment was salient. However, Gould, Eklund, et al. were unable to deductively categorize the coping strategies into the problem-focused and emotion-focused categories because:

Coping is a dynamic, complex process in which the athlete can simultaneously be striving to both manage the person / stressor environment and regulate distressing emotions. The same strategy may also be used in one instance to regulate emotions and in another to manage the environment. (p. 90)

In a second qualitative study, Gould, Finch, and Jackson (1993) investigated coping strategies used by 17 U.S. national champion figure skaters. The purpose of the study was to identify and describe the coping strategies used by the athletes, and to examine the relationship between the use of the strategies and the particular sources of stress experienced. Several coping strategy categories were identified. Categories cited by at least 40% of the skaters included rational thinking and self-talk, positive focus and orientation, social support, time management and prioritization, precompetitive mental preparation and anxiety management, training hard and smartly, isolation and deflection, and ignoring the stressor. Similar to the Gould, Eklund, et al. (1993) study with wrestlers, the skaters used different coping strategies to deal with different stress sources and did not use one or two “simple” coping strategies. Again, the transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) was supported.

A third study employing qualitative methods involved elite skiers who had suffered from sport injury and illness (Bianco et al., 1999). Twelve current and former members of the Canadian Alpine Ski Team (9 males and 3 females) served as participants in the study. Interviews were conducted with the athletes at a preseason training camp to determine their experiences with injury and illness. For all of the athletes, their experiences were complex and spanned three distinct phases: (a) the injury-illness phase, (b) the rehabilitation-recovery phase, and (c) the return to full activity phase. Coping strategies used during these phases included cognitive strategies (e.g., believe in recovery, readjust goals), and behavioral strategies (e.g., learn about injury or illness, build physical strength). It was concluded that coping is a dynamic process that is influenced by progress in rehabilitation and changing environments. Thus, the transactional model of coping espoused by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) is supported.

Coping with injury was also the focus of a second study with skiers. Gould, Udry, Bridges, and Beck (1997b) interviewed 21 elite U.S. Ski Team alpine and freestyle skiers (11 males and

10 females) to investigate how these athletes coped with season-ending injuries. Inductive analysis revealed seven general dimensions: driving through, distracted self, managed emotions/thoughts, sought and used social resources, avoidance and isolation, took note and drew upon injury lessons, and other. The driving through dimension was the most often used strategy (used by 90% of the athletes). The authors noted that this strategy was conceptually similar to Folkman and Lazarus' (1988) problem-focused coping. Gender differences in coping strategies were also examined. Female athletes were found to cite personal determination motivation, distract self by keeping busy, and sought social support more often than the male athletes. The male athletes cited "set and worked towards accomplishing goals" more often than female athletes. The authors concluded that the social support aspect of their findings supported previous research that females seek more help and reassurance support than males (Billings & Moos, 1981), but that the notion that females used more avoidance and emotion-focused coping was not supported.

Studies that have examined coping responses of athletes using qualitative methods have focused on elite athletes, with one exception. Gould, Wilson, et al. (1993) conducted a panel discussion with four non-elite individual and team sport male athletes (11 to 16 years of age), that focused on stress and its sources, consequences, and how to cope. However, the authors offered only description and presented their data in a question and answer format. Discussion about this study is included in the present chapter, however, because it is the only research to ask non-elite athletes about their coping strategies. Athlete responses to the question, "What do you do to deal with your stress or nervousness?" indicated that the use of reassuring self-talk, and removing themselves from the stressor were key strategies.

Limitations of Using Interviews to Obtain Coping Strategy Information

Studies investigating athletes' coping strategies have provided insight into how athletes deal with sport related stress. It has been shown that athletes use cognitive, behavioral, and emotional strategies and that these strategies are often used in combination with each other. However, as with the literature examining sources of stress, several limitations of these studies are evident. (Because these limitations are discussed in great detail within the sources of stress section, they will be briefly highlighted here.) For example, the issues associated with one-time interviews, such as establishing rapport and the possibility of incomplete data are limitations of these studies although steps were taken to alleviate their impact (e.g., Bianco et al., 1999; Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993; Gould, Finch, et al. 1993). However, coping is a long-term process, and as such, "it is recommended that future investigators conduct longitudinal studies ... where multiple interviews take place over seasons or multiple seasons and varying performance situations (e.g., easy matches, difficult matches, injury situations)" (Gould, Eklund, et al., p. 92).

Furthermore, the focus of these studies, for the most part, has been the male elite athlete involved in individual sports. Studies in the non-sport coping literature have demonstrated that there are differences between the coping strategies employed by males and females (e.g., Copeland & Hess, 1995; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993). There is also some evidence of gender differences regarding coping responses in the sport psychology literature (e.g., Crocker & Graham, 1995; Gould et al., 1997b). Furthermore, quantitative measures investigating the athlete participating in team sports have been employed, but there is relatively little information regarding the team sport athlete. The high numbers of children and adolescents participating in organized competitive sport as compared to the number of elite athletes competing justifies this younger population as valuable research participants. Qualitative methods have been suggested as especially appropriate based on the fact that these athletes have a wealth of knowledge

regarding their experiences that is often overlooked (Gould, Wilson, et al., 1993). Thus, these findings, or lack thereof, support the need to qualitatively investigate the coping strategies employed by female adolescent athletes in the team sport setting. In this way, we may begin to understand, “the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). Consistent with the constructivist perspective guiding the present study, the athletes’ coping strategies will be investigated from their perceptions. Identification of coping strategies is important, but so is understanding the underlying process of how coping strategies are developed. The process of coping strategy development is the fourth and final focus of the present study.

Development of Coping Strategies

The area of coping strategy development is a relatively new research focus. As such, few studies have been devoted to this topic. The discussion will commence with an overview of the intervention studies that have taught athletes coping strategies, followed by the few studies that have examined coping strategy development. Suggestions from the social psychology literature, such as social modeling, will be offered as a possible framework in which to study coping strategy development. Social modeling is suggested because of its emphasis on multiple realities and the socially bound context.

As stated by Lombardo (1987), “athletes must develop the ability to manage their reactions to the arousal and resulting stress that is ever-present in sporting events” (p. 11). But how do athletes develop stress coping strategies? Mental skills interventions with a focus on relaxation training methods (Gould, Petlichkoff, Hodge, & Simons, 1990), and cognitive and biofeedback training techniques (De Witt, 1980) have been conducted in an effort to help youth athletes manage on-site competitive anxiety and stress. Outside of sport, researchers working in the area of life skills training with children have designed programs to teach positive stress coping skills,

such as relaxation and visualization techniques to elementary school children (Orlick & McCaffrey, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1995d; Zaichkowsky & Zaichkowsky, 1984). Children and young athletes involved in these programs have learned to use positive stress coping skills, at least in the short term (Cox & Orlick, 1996; Gilbert & Orlick, 1996, 2000; Hellstedt, 1987), but little is known about how other athletes develop stress coping strategies. As a result, stress coping strategy development in athletes has been identified as an important research topic (Finch, 1998). As noted by Aldwin (1994): “it is not enough to document developmental trends in coping strategies. A crucial next step should be how these strategies develop” (p. 230).

Recently, some attention has been given to this important topic. For example, Finch (1999) investigated the development of coping strategies in 108 female adolescent athletes with a mean age of 15.8 years. The participants completed a demographic inventory assessing who taught them to deal with stress in sport and the effectiveness of the coping advice. A 4-point Likert scale (1 = not at all to 4 = very much) was used to assess the frequency of learning and the effectiveness of the advice. Results showed that head coaches ($M = 3.1$), teammates ($M = 2.9$), mothers ($M = 2.7$) were ranked the highest with respect to frequency of teaching young athletes about coping strategies. The ratings of effectiveness of coping advice followed a similar pattern with head coaches, teammates and mothers rated as providing the most effective coping advice ($r = 3.01-3.10$). Though this study provides insight into the origins of coping strategies of the female athletes involved, it does not explain the process of how the strategies are developed. Did the athletes learn vicariously through the words of their coaches, teammates and mothers? Did they learn by modeling themselves after the actions and behaviors of these significant others? Finch concurred that these questions had not been answered and concluded that future research should examine when and how coping strategies are developed.

In a study related to coping strategy development, Hanton and Jones (1999) investigated how 10 elite male competitive swimmers (with a mean age of 22 years) acquired the cognitive skills and strategies that enabled them to interpret their prerace thoughts and feelings as facilitative. Athletes were administered the Involvement Progression Questionnaire so that each athlete's career could be tracked from initial exposure to swimming to their current level of competition. Also, each athlete participated in an individual semi-structured interview. Results showed that as the athletes developed and gained experience they learned that precompetition symptoms such as nervousness and "butterflies in the stomach" could be positive and aid them in the event. The athletes attributed their altered interpretation to two important influences. First, parents, coaches, and older, more experienced competitors explained to the swimmers that the nerves they thought were negative were actually necessary to perform well. In essence, the athletes listened to the advice of these significant others and were educated in psychological techniques. Second, the athletes then realized that the nerves were a good thing, and enjoyed feeling nervous before a competition. Hanton and Jones also noted that the athletes' natural learning experiences helped them develop the ability to use prerace nerves to aid performance and mental preparation. The authors concluded that the athletes developed effective strategies over time and that these results had important implications regarding the use of cognitive restructuring strategies in the development of effective coping strategies.

The Finch (1999) and the Hanton and Jones (1999) studies provide a starting point in the study of coping strategy development. In both studies it was suggested that significant others, such as coaches, parents, teammates and other competitors were important in helping athletes to develop strategies to deal with their stress. Also, in the Hanton and Jones study it was suggested that experiential learning was an important component of how one learns to cope with stress. Though not yet investigated, other theories such as social cognitive modeling have also been put

forth as an explanatory model (Aldwin, 1994; Bandura, 1986). This theory posits “the capacity to learn by observation enables people to acquire rules for generating and regulating behavioral patterns without having to form them gradually by tedious trial and error” (p. 19). This theory is consistent with the constructivist perspective that guided the present study due to its socially bound context and inherent view of multiple realities.

For example, some authors have postulated that children take their cues from adults on how to handle stress, but important role models could be several different adults in a child’s life including teachers, neighbors, school administrators, clergy, and of course, parents (Berryman & Breighner, 1994). Parents are thought to be very influential stress buffers and demonstrate positive coping skills to their children (Matheny, Aycock, & McCarthy, 1993; Shulman, 1993). Aldwin (1994) suggested that children and young adolescents learn by imitating their parents. Though it has not been investigated, it follows that children and young adolescents can also develop stress coping strategies by observing and modeling their parents.

Due to the nature of sport, athletes have another significant adult in their life – the coach: “many kids will look up to the coach and may try to emulate his [or her] behavior...As a coach, what you are, what you do, and what you say can have extremely important effects on the child’s behavior” (Orlick & Botterill, 1975, p. 3). Siegenthaler and Gonzalez (1997) concurred and stated, “from the coach’s example, players can learn positive ways to deal with disappointment, failure and success” (p. 303). It follows that a coach’s coping behaviors can have an impact on the athletes to which he or she is charged. Gilbert and Bonadie (1996) noted that athletes need to develop strategies to cope with stress (among other mental skills) and that for these coping behaviors to be most effective, the coaches should model them.

Coaches and parents are very important during adolescence, which has been identified as a unique developmental phase. It is generally accepted that adolescence starts as early as 11 or 12

years of age and lasts until 18 or 19 years of age. Adolescence can be especially stressful for some females due to the focus on biological and social events, resulting in an increased risk of decrements in their well being (Brooks-Gunn, 1992). Schinke, Schilling, and Snow (1987) noted that the period of adolescence is a time of transitions including a pivotal shift in the importance of the parental influence to that of the peers in an adolescent's life. Furthermore, Seiffge-Krenke, (1993) noted that the processes of seeking social support and social comparisons that occur regularly in adolescence might point to the growing function of friends as coping models.

Once again, the context of sport presents another realm of significant people in the athlete's life. Athletes engaging in team sports have an additional peer group, their teammates. Most athletes participating in competitive sport adhere to a weekly schedule consisting of at least one game and one or more practices during the regular season. Because of the length of time that athletes spend together, it is postulated that teammates can also be a source of modeled behaviors from which the athlete can learn. Cobb (1998) noted that when friends, and teammates, share the same values they can be influential and positive models of coping, but that the peer group's deviant behavior can also influence an adolescent. As such, adolescence represents "a unique and crucial period in which to study coping skills" (Copeland & Hess, 1995, p. 204).

In conclusion, it is acknowledged that a great deal of experimentation occurs in learning to cope with stressors (Aldwin, 1994). However, Bandura (1986) posited that the outcomes of trial and error experiments could produce costly mistakes if this were the only way one could learn to cope. Some authors assume that children follow a social learning model whereby they learn coping skills from their parents (Aldwin; Honig, 1986). From this perspective, it follows that children and adolescents could also learn coping skills from observing significant people in their lives, including coaches, and peers or teammates.

Research Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to identify the meanings of stress, the stressors experienced and the coping strategies used by female adolescent athletes. A fourth aim was to examine how coping strategies are developed or learned. Given the information regarding low coping levels in female adolescents, and the fact that it has been reported that females report experiencing more negative events during adolescence than do males (Wagner & Compas, 1990), it would seem appropriate to examine stress and coping in female athletes, where participation in these athletic activities is inherently stressful (Bandura, 1997). However, there is a need to move beyond the traditional methods of data collection used in most studies, such as the standardized questionnaire. The present study calls for a qualitative constructivist approach, which will allow the multiple realities of female adolescent athletes and the stress and coping phenomenon to be discussed.

The research questions guiding the present study are the following: (a) What does stress mean to female adolescent athletes?, (b) What everyday or ambient stressors do female adolescent athletes encounter in sport and in their daily lives?, (c) What coping strategies do female adolescent athletes use when faced with ambient stress in sport and in their everyday lives?, and (d) How did the athletes develop these coping strategies? The methodology used to investigate these research questions will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative case study approach was used in the present study. Five female adolescent team sport athletes competing in club soccer were selected as the cases. The philosophical paradigm that most informed the research study was constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Stake, 1994, 1995). From this perspective, the accepted ontological view is that realities are multiple, and socially and experientially based. The realities of the athletes, therefore, could not be understood without immersing myself into their environment in an effort to document the stressors they experienced and the coping strategies they used. When conducting constructivist research the researcher's role is to interpret and gather interpretations regarding the phenomenon and to try and "preserve the *multiple realities*, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening" (Stake, 1995, p. 12). As noted by Rubin and Rubin (1995), "Interpretive researchers try to elicit interviewees' views of their worlds, their work, and the events they have experienced or observed" (p. 35) through continuous interactions between the researcher and the informants. The constructivist belief system influenced all components of the research design in the present study.

Within the case study tradition there is a variety of approaches (Creswell, 1998). Due to its focus on qualitative inquiries and strong naturalistic, holistic and phenomenological foundation, Stake's (1994, 1995) case study approach was used for the present study. Stake acknowledges that researchers have different purposes for studying cases and has identified three main types of cases within his approach: (a) intrinsic, (b) instrumental, and (c) collective. An intrinsic case study is undertaken because one wants to better

understand the particular case in question and theory building may or may not be the objective. An instrumental case study involves the examination of a particular case to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory. Stake (1994) noted that the case is of secondary interest playing a supportive role to help facilitate the understanding of a phenomenon of which the case is an example. In the instrumental case study, the selection of the case is made because it is expected to further the understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, researchers may choose to study a number of cases simultaneously in an effort to gain insight into a phenomenon. This is generally referred to as a collective case study. Stake (1994) noted an important distinction regarding this type of case: "It is not the study of a collective, but instrumental study extended to several cases" (p. 237). A collective case study was used in the present study, and each athlete, though competing on the same team, was considered a case in the collective.

A hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple sources of evidence. The sources of evidence used in the present study included various types of interviews, documents, and observations collected over an eight-month period. During the interviews, the athletes were asked about their perceptions of stress, the stressors in their lives, the coping strategies they used to deal with those stressors and any insights about how they may have learned or developed those strategies. Statements made by the athletes were triangulated with documents (journal entries, team newsletters, media), conversations with the coaches, and direct observations of the athletes during games, practices and other training sessions. The regular and multiple contacts between the researcher and the athletes in the present study is consistent with the constructivist perspective and allowed the researcher to obtain a more complete understanding of the

athletes' stories. For example, extended time together with each athlete allowed for rapport and trust to be developed between the athletes and myself. Also, if an athlete neglected to tell me something during an interview, it was not critical since the extended data collection period allowed for several discussion opportunities. Also, the athletes could use their journals to communicate any information missed during the interview. Furthermore, the athletes became more aware of their stressors and coping strategies through their involvement in the project and were then able to articulate these insights to me. Guba and Lincoln (1994) noted that participants' realities could change as they learn more about the phenomenon under study and "become more informed and sophisticated" (p. 111).

The collective case studies were preceded by a focus group. The focus group served as a pre-study and was conducted for several reasons. First, the focus group was used to resensitize me to the youth soccer club environment and to start to establish rapport with the athletes. Also, I wanted to determine the appropriateness of the interview questions. During the focus group I asked general questions regarding the athletes' perceptions of stress, the types of stressors they experienced, the coping strategies they used in dealing with their stress and their thoughts on how they may have developed or learned those strategies. The responses to these questions aided in the development of a semi-structured interview guide and provided direction on the initial data collection in the collective case studies. The depth of the athletes' responses and their willingness to share their thoughts about the phenomena during the focus group provided me with an opportunity to determine which athletes were best suited for participation in a more in-depth investigation, as the athletes selected for the case studies had to first participate in the

focus group. The qualitative software QSR NUD.IST (Qualitative Solutions and Research Pty Ltd., 1997) was used to facilitate the analysis and management of the data throughout the entire data analysis process including the focus group and the case studies.

Pre-Study

Sample

As noted by Stake (1994) one of the most unique aspects of conducting research in the social sciences is the selection of cases. Understanding the critical phenomena you are studying depends on choosing the appropriate case or cases (Yin, 1994). In the present study, the phenomena studied were perceptions of stress, stressors experienced, coping strategy use, and the development of coping strategies by female adolescent athletes. As such, the selection of a team whose coaches and athletes were willing to discuss/reflect on these issues was paramount to the success of the study.

Female athletes competing in club soccer were selected for several reasons. First, soccer has one of the highest team sport participation rates for youth in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1995). This sport is also gaining the attention of young women around the world. De Knop, Engström, Skirstad and Weiss (1996) noted that interest in girls' soccer was increasing worldwide. Further evidence of soccer's popularity increase for females was the recent Women's World Cup of Soccer competition held in the United States in the summer of 1999. Because of soccer's popularity it was thought that the results may reach a wider audience and that there might be an increased application of findings. Second, soccer is now played during the entire year and is not limited to the summer months. This extended season allowed for an extensive data collection period, which is consistent with the study's constructivist framework. Third, I have extensive experience as a soccer

athlete as I played club soccer for five seasons. Familiarity with the study's context can be a valuable asset for data collection and data analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Finally, this long involvement with the sport has provided me the opportunity to make and maintain contact with many coaches. Therefore I approached a coach of a female team with whom I had already established a positive relationship and was granted access to my sample.

Other criteria for participant selection included that the athletes must be approximately 15 to 16 years of age. To ensure a commitment to their sport, the athletes chosen to participate (in the main study) had to have been a competitor on the club soccer team for at least two consecutive years. Further, the athletes selected for the main study had to participate in the pre-study (i.e., the focus group). Because the coaches would be solicited for their input with respect to athlete selection (for the main study), they also had to have been involved with the team for at least two years. Before I discuss the team and athletes chosen for the pre-study and main study, a description of the club soccer context is warranted.

Club soccer is a non-school based, organized, competitive league comprised of teams that play against other teams in the region. During the winter months (October to March), club teams generally compete in an indoor league (one league game per week) and may or may not have additional training sessions. Tryouts (March to April) often determine the roster for the outdoor league where the level of competition is higher. During the outdoor season (April to September), the schedule generally consists of one league game and one or two training sessions per week. Many teams supplement their league games

by competing in local, national and/or international tournaments on the weekends during both the indoor and outdoor seasons.

With respect to funding, a set amount of funds are available to each club team via the governing sporting association. These limited funds are provided for tournament registrations and are based on the registration fees paid by the athletes' parents. Many club teams also participate in other fundraising events (e.g., bottle drives, garage sales, bingo nights, etc.) to supplement the limited funds received from the governing sporting association. Also, it is the parents' responsibility to pay for hotel rooms, travel expenses, and meals when the athletes are participating in out-of-town tournaments.

The team selected for the study (both the pre-study and the main study [i.e., five case studies]) was composed of athletes between 15 and 16 years of age. The team participated in the "Women's Premier League" during the 1998-1999 indoor season, which was an open age league comprising 12 teams. The level of competition in this indoor league was high; teams included a women's university team as well as the Women's two time Canadian National Champion team. The indoor season schedule consisted of 15 regularly scheduled league games at a rate of one per week, as well as play-offs and one or two practices per week. During the 1999 outdoor season, the team competed in the "Female Under 17 League" consisting of eight teams. League play in the outdoor season was similar to the indoor season as there were 14 regularly scheduled games at a rate of one per week and play-offs at the end of the season. A difference between the indoor and outdoor seasons, however, is that the team trained more intensely during the outdoor season. There were usually two practices per week as well as a fitness

training session. The outdoor league was the highest level of competition for athletes of this age in the region.

The team consisted of 14 players during the indoor season and 17 players during the outdoor season. Also, the team participated in three indoor tournaments and eight outdoor tournaments held on weekends while I was in the field. The tournaments consisted of local, provincial, national, and international forums of competition. During these tournaments, the team competed in anywhere from three to seven games depending on their level of success. The team had two coaches. One coach had been with the team since its inception in the “Female Under 9 League,” while the other coach joined the team the year they moved to the “Female Under 11 League.”

Procedure

A description of the procedures leading up to the focus group and its implementation is provided. Prior to entering the field in December, I suggested to one of the coaches that it might be a good idea for me to conduct two focus groups. I thought that I could divide the team in half and schedule two separate focus group interviews. The coach did not agree with this idea, however, and stated that it would be difficult to get the athletes and their parents to stick around for another hour after an indoor league game, because some of the games started as late as 10 p.m. Also, the coach mentioned that weekends were not a good option either since the athletes were involved in a number of activities in addition to club soccer. Instead, the coach suggested that I conduct the focus group with the athletes during a tournament to be held on January 2, 1999. He thought that most athletes would participate because the athletes were generally present at tournaments.

Furthermore, tournaments were conducive for conducting focus groups because there was

really nowhere for the athletes to go in between games, so they would probably like to participate in the focus group to give them something to do. I agreed with the coach's suggestion of holding the focus group during a break in an indoor tournament. Please see Appendix A for a memo outlining the procedures leading up to the implementation of the focus group.

At the January 2nd tournament, the team's manager arranged for me to use a conference room at the tournament site. The focus group was conducted between games during the indoor tournament at the tournament facility. At the time of the focus group, the team had reached the halfway point in their indoor season. Prior to the start of the focus group, the team manager and I collected outstanding consent forms of the athletes wishing to participate.

A total of fourteen athletes participated in the focus group. The number of participants was slightly higher than what is recommended (5-12) for an effective focus group (Krueger, 1994), but was done this way for two main reasons. Because of the tournament schedule, there was only one break in which there was sufficient time to conduct the focus group. This limited time meant that I would only get a chance to do one focus group instead of two as I had originally planned. A second reason for the high number of participants was that the focus group served as an opportunity for me to consider which athletes I would like to participate in the more in-depth case study work and therefore, athletes that would be participating in the case studies had to have been involved in the focus group. Thus, I wanted to include all athletes that expressed an interest in participating; i.e., I didn't want to turn potential future participants away just

because their inclusion would exceed the recommended number of focus group participants.

Right before I started the focus group I thanked the athletes for their participation and briefly explained the focus group's purpose. I asked that they raise their hands to speak and had them each state their name so that I could later identify them on the audiocassette tape. During the focus group the athletes were asked four general questions: (1) What does stress mean to you?, (2) What stressors do you experience?, (3), What coping strategies do you use when dealing with stress? and (4) Do you have any ideas as to how you may have learned or developed those coping strategies? Ten minutes were allotted for each question. The focus group was audio taped and lasted approximately 40 minutes. The discussion time was not evenly distributed between the four questions, however, as the athletes tended to refocus the conversation on their stressors and coping strategies throughout the focus group interview, and spent less time discussing their perceptions of stress and their coping strategy development.

I should point out that prior to the present study I had been involved with three different research projects that used focus groups as a primary method of data collection. I acted as a moderator for nine different focus groups, two of which were conducted with female adolescents. This prior focus group experience gave me the confidence that I could successfully conduct a focus group by myself (i.e., without an assistant moderator) and with 14 participants instead of the recommended number of 12.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the focus group started on-site. I probed athletes' with follow-up questions and rephrased their answers whenever possible. At the focus group's

conclusion, once the athletes had left the conference room, I wrote notes concerning the important themes and ideas expressed. I also wrote down my thoughts concerning which athletes seemed willing to discuss the concepts of stress and coping freely, i.e., the athletes that I believed to be best suited to participate in the collective case studies due to their openness and willingness to share their views.

Next, the focus group interview was transcribed verbatim and coded. As noted by Schwandt (1997), coding is a procedure that “disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments and identifies or names those segments” (p. 16). To start, the data were coded at a descriptive level into a category list (general coding scheme) that corresponded to the four main questions used in the focus group – meanings of stress, stressors experienced, coping strategies used, and development of coping strategies. This procedure is considered a middle ground approach between well-defined a priori codes and a completely inductive approach because even though the codes are inductively developed, a general accounting scheme (in this case the four focus group questions) is defined prior to the coding process (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Coding was completed concurrently by the researcher and a peer (a colleague in the Faculty of Education) familiar with the study and the sport context. The respective lists of codes were then compared and modified. After the peer review, the transcript was reread and a more interpretive analysis was performed whereby similar codes were regrouped so that the coding scheme moved beyond description. The qualitative software program NUD.IST was used to facilitate this more interpretive level of analysis. All segments of the focus group interview that were coded were indexed (stored) using NUD.IST.

The next stage of analysis involved assigning a level of importance to each of the codes. Because of the diverse responses elicited from focus group participants and their varying degrees of magnitude, this next stage of analysis is considered very important and is unique to focus group interviews (Krueger, 1994). For example, a comment made by one participant may generate intense discussion and concurrence among many of the other participants. Another comment may be brief and pass quickly without generating further discussion. These two instances do not carry the same weight with respect to their importance among the focus group participants and must be judged accordingly. A coding scheme based on Boyd, Trudel and Donohue (1997), Gilbert (1999), and Krueger was developed to facilitate this stage of the analysis. Thus, the codes developed in the second stage of the focus group analysis were assigned a rating in the following areas: (a) extensiveness, (b) internal consistency, (c) consensus, (d) intensity, and (e) specificity. A coding matrix was prepared to facilitate this process (see Appendix B). An overall or global rating was given to each code based on a three level rating scheme (see Appendix C for an example). The level of importance queries and the global rating criteria are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Level of Importance Rating Scale for Focus Group Data Analysis

Level of Importance Query	Rating	Example
Extensiveness	**	Code cited by two or more athletes
	*	Code cited by one athlete only
Internal Consistency	**	No contradiction within an athlete
	*	Contradictory statements within an athlete
Consensus	***	Supporting comments from one or more athletes
	**	No comments from other athletes
	*	Disagreement among athletes
Intensity	***	Strong language (“key” “really important” “major”)
	**	Moderate language (“this works well”)
	*	Weak or neutral language (“I do this”)
Specificity	***	Real and specific example provided
	**	Hypothetical example only
	*	No example provided
Global Rating	***	Strong – mentioned and discussed by more than one athlete and may be supported by specific examples
	**	Moderate – typically mentioned and discussed by more than one athlete and may be supported by some specific examples
	*	Weak – although mentioned, not considered to be a major point, may only be mentioned briefly by one athlete with no specific examples and no supporting comments from other athletes

Collective Case Studies

Sample

Five athletes from the same team were chosen to participate in the collective case studies. For the purpose of the present study, each athlete was considered a separate case. It was thought that five cases would provide sufficient data to develop an accurate and comprehensive understanding of female adolescent athletes' perceptions of stress, the stressors they experience, the coping strategies they use, and how they learned or developed those strategies. Consistent with the selection criteria, all of the athletes were female, 15 or 16 years of age, had played on the club soccer team for at least two years, and were focus group participants.

Procedure

As previously discussed one of the reasons that I conducted the focus group was to determine which athletes I thought would be best suited to participate in the case studies. During the focus group I observed the athletes to determine those who were readily able and willing to share their thoughts regarding stress and coping. I wanted to investigate the athletes' perceptions of stress, stressors experienced, coping strategy use and their development. It was thought that athletes who regularly used effective coping strategies may differ in these areas when compared to athletes who used less effective coping strategies on a regular basis. Stake (1995) advocated this type of sampling and stated, "Sometimes a 'typical' case works well but often an unusual case helps illustrate matters we overlook in typical cases" (p. 4). Thus, I sought three athletes who were considered to use effective coping strategies most of the time, and two athletes who were considered to use less effective coping strategies most of the time. This coping strategy distinction was

based on the athletes' inability to effectively manage their stress on the soccer field, which led to performance decrements. Because I had just entered the field and could not reliably make these decisions, I solicited the coaches' help in selecting athletes who met these criteria.

I conducted an individual background interview with each coach (see Appendix D) and collected their consent forms. The purpose of this interview was fourfold. First, I wanted to obtain demographic information as well as the coaches' insights into the perceptions of stress, stressors, coping strategies used and the development of coping strategies with respect to themselves and their athletes. Second, I hoped to further establish rapport and trust with the coaches. Third, the background interview provided an opportunity for the coach and researcher to discuss the purpose of the study in greater detail, share club soccer experiences and chat informally. Finally, the coaches were asked to give their input into the selection of the five athletes for the main study. I asked each coach to name the athletes that they felt coped with their stress effectively most of the time and those athletes that didn't cope effectively with their stress most of the time. Based on the number of years the coaches had been involved with the team (total of 14 years) and their extensive knowledge regarding optimal and less than optimal soccer performance, it was concluded that the coaches could reliably select five athletes that fit the two coping category distinctions. Background interviews with the coaches lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. The background interviews with the coaches were transcribed before progressing to the next phase of the case study data collection procedure.

The independent athlete assessments provided by the two coaches were compared. For ease of comprehension, I have used pseudonyms to help explain the procedure. With respect to the athletes that didn't cope with their stress effectively most of the time, the coaches were in complete agreement. They both picked the same two athletes, Jane and Kellie. When I consulted my list (based on my observations to date and the athletes' responses in the focus group), I had also chosen Kellie, as she was very open and forthright in her discussions during the focus group interview.

I asked the coaches to identify the qualities that made them choose these two athletes as those that use less effective coping strategies. They cited different reasons for each athlete. In the case of Jane, the coaches felt that her performance in games deteriorated markedly when she was unable to cope. Also, she regularly coped by blaming teammates, and making excuses as evidenced by the following quotation:

Jane is probably, as far as I'm concerned by far the worst in terms of reacting to stress. She literally shuts down. ... Like all of a sudden her feet don't move, she has got a very acid tongue. She blames all her teammates. She's very, very vicious to her teammates. ... She shuts down. Like in a big game, quite often she plays really very poorly. [Background Interview with Duane]

Bren provides additional support for Jane's coping distinction.

I don't think she (Jane) copes well at all. Jane is looking for excuses. Jane gets hurt sometimes, she's cried, she is looking for blame, she is doubting her ability, so I don't think she is a good copier, she doesn't cope well. [Background Interview with Bren]

With respect to the rationale for choosing Kellie as an athlete using less effective coping strategies, the coaches stated that Kellie is not able to perform to her potential in a game situation as supported by the following quotation:

Kellie is the kind of player that if you ever see her in practice, she is probably twice the player she is than in a game. So something happens between the practice and the game. There is a certain element of pressure that happens to her and makes her perform less. She is an outstanding talent. ... I think she is the most skillful player on the squad. It hasn't shown up in the games yet. ... She is probably the most dedicated player on the team and she always had these self-doubts that show up in the game. She can outrun anybody in a practice, but when it comes to the game, her speed can't get past 75%. Just something happens to her. [Background Interview with Bren]

A second quotation from the other coach, Duane, provides further support for Kellie's coping strategy classification.

Kellie really is the greatest underachiever on the team. You know she is one of the fittest players, she is one of the fastest, but she never plays fast. She's got probably the second best touch (on the ball), but you never see it. Like she really, really underachieves, and I think that a lot of it is because she doesn't deal with the stress very well. Like in terms of a practice player, like all around she is the best practice player. I've never seen her take that to the game. [Background Interview with Duane]

When asked about athletes that cope effectively most of the time, the coaches independently chose the same three athletes, Heather, Rachel, and Nadine and described

them with terms such as “unflappable,” “deals effectively,” and “an all-together person.” Heather and Rachel were also on my list, but I had not included Nadine as she seemed a bit shy during the focus group and did not contribute much to the discussion. Each coach also chose a fourth athlete, Jackie, which they believed had just moved into the group of effective copers within the last several months. Jackie was also on my list based on her focus group contributions. Because of the potential to learn about newly acquired coping skills, I chose Jackie as part of the effective copers group. I also chose three of the other four athletes that we had all picked – Heather and Rachel (effective), and Kellie (less effective). Finally, I chose Jane (less effective) whom the coaches had both independently chosen, but that I did not have on my list. Therefore, the selection of the athletes for the case studies (i.e., Heather, Jackie, Rachel, Jane and Kellie) was based on my observations and interactions with the athletes and the coaches’ independent input.

Once the five athletes were selected, I contacted each of them and asked them to participate in the main study. I explained what would be involved and told them that I was putting together a package for them to have a look at and that I would bring the package with me to their next training session (see Appendix E). I told each athlete that she and her parents should read over the package and that they should not make a decision about their participation until they did this. During our conversation, most athletes stated that they would like to participate in the study. However, I reiterated that they should not make a decision until they read over the package and that I would contact them within a week to check their participation status.

Over the next week I called the five athletes and asked them if they were interested in participating in the project. All of the athletes responded positively so I asked them to return the signed consent form to me at their next event.

Case Study Profiles

The demographic profiles of the five female athletes are presented in Table 2. All five of the athletes had been playing competitive club soccer for a number of years and represented a variety of positions on the field. To protect the identities of the participants their names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Table 2

Demographic Profile of Case Study Athletes

Athlete Pseudonym	Position	Leadership Role	Years in Competitive Soccer	Years on Team	Coping Strategy Use
Heather	Goalkeeper	Captain	7	7	Effective
Rachel	Defender	Assistant Captain	8	8	Effective
Jackie	Midfield/ Forward	Not Applicable	10	4	Effective
Jane	Midfield	Not Applicable	9	4	Less Effective
Kellie	Defender	Assistant Captain	6	5	Less Effective

Case Study Sources of Evidence

The researcher's long involvement is critical to the case study: "Qualitative case study is characterized by the main researcher spending substantial time, on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, revising

meanings of what is going on” (Stake, 1994, p. 242). Consistent with the constructivist perspective that guided the present study, multiple contacts were made with the participants over an eight-month period. Furthermore, the chosen methods of data collection allowed the voices of the informants to be heard. The process of asking questions and allowing the athletes to reflect and articulate their responses regarding their stressors and coping strategies was central to the study. Thus, sources of evidence for the case studies included background interviews, group interviews (with the athletes and coaches), semi-structured interviews, on-site interviews (with athletes and coaches), field notes from participant and non-participant observation, documents (media clippings, journal entries), and member check interviews (see Table 3). A summary of the case study data collected with each athlete is presented in Table 4.

Background interviews with athletes. After each athlete was contacted by phone and agreed to participate in the study, a preliminary background interview was scheduled at the athlete’s convenience. The background interview consisted of a series of questions on demographics, and perceptions of stress, stressors experienced and the use of coping strategies (see Appendix F). Background interviews typically lasted 30 to 60 minutes. However, it was not critical to obtain all of the information from an athlete during this interview as the extended data collection period (eight months) allowed for several discussion opportunities. The background interview provided an opportunity to obtain demographic information, and the athletes’ initial thoughts regarding the topic of study. It was also used to continue to establish rapport and trust with the athletes. Finally, I hoped to create a natural conversational environment by chatting informally with the athletes

Table 3

Description and Purpose of the Sources of Evidence for the Case Studies

Source of Evidence	Description	Purpose
1. Background interviews	- One-time interview with each athlete - Semi-structured interview guide - 30 to 60 minutes each	- Obtain demographic information - Obtain insight into stressors, coping strategies used, and development of coping strategies by athletes - Develop rapport and trust with athlete - Create natural conversational environment
2. Group interview (with athletes)	- One-time interview with athletes - Conducted early in data collection period (after background interview, but before formal semi-structured interviews) - 20 to 40 minutes each	- Obtain insight into stressors and coping strategies used during a highly competitive tournament - Create natural conversational environment
3. Group interview (with coaches)	- One-time interview with coaches - Semi-structured interview guide - At midpoint of data collection period - 90 minutes	- Obtain coaches' insights into athletes' stress and coping strategies - Validate interview and observational data
4. Formal semi-structured interviews with athletes	- Semi-structured interview guide - Throughout data collection period - 20 to 75 minutes each	- Discuss stressors and coping strategies used - Discuss reflective journal entries - Explore coping strategy development process with athletes
5. On-site interviews with athletes	- 5 to 15 minutes each - Throughout data collection period	- Obtain information on new or current stressors and coping strategies - Validate observational data

Table 3 (continued)

Description and Purpose of the Sources of Evidence for the Case Studies

Source of Evidence	Description	Purpose
6. On-site interviews with coaches	- 5 to 15 minutes each - Throughout data collection period	- Obtain coaches' insights into athletes' stress and coping strategies - Validate interview and observational data
7. Field notes	- Participant and non-participant - Throughout data collection period - 71 visits to field (includes games, practices, tryouts, fitness training sessions, and tournaments)	- Record observed stressors and coping strategies for use in semi-structured interviews - Validate interview data - Continue to establish positive relationships with coach and athletes
8. Documents	- Journal entries (collected in months 3 to 8 of data collection period) - Team newsletters, schedules	- Obtain information regarding stressors and coping strategies not discussed by athletes during interviews - Identify process of learning/developing strategy - Validate interview and observational data - Validate factual information
9. Member check interviews	- Upon completion of data collection and preparation of case summary reports - Semi-structured interview guide - 20 to 40 minutes each	- Validate the data and the findings - Verify importance of findings - Complete missing data

about my own experiences in club soccer and giving them the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

Group interviews with athletes. Two group interviews were conducted with the athletes during breaks in an indoor tournament. The tournament was highly competitive as the teams were playing for the title of Indoor Provincial Champion for the Female Under-17 age group. Prior to the tournament, the coaches suggested that I might want to interview the athletes at the tournament site. They believed that the competitive level of the tournament and its significance might lead to the athletes experiencing high levels of stress, and suggested that the tournament might be a good time to discuss stress and coping with the athletes. Thus, the purpose of the group interviews was to explore stressors experienced by the athletes and the coping strategies they used.

With respect to the data collection schedule, the group interviews were conducted after the background interviews, but before the formal semi-structured interviews, so I hoped to use this meeting to continue to establish rapport and trust with the athletes. The athletes were contacted prior to the tournament and asked if they would participate in a group interview during the upcoming tournament. I told the athletes that they could decide which athletes they would like to be interviewed with and suggested that they choose other group members based on their level of comfort. The athletes divided themselves into two groups (one group of three and one group of two). Each group had a mix of athletes deemed to use effective and less effective coping strategies. The first group was composed of athletes who considered themselves to be good friends: Heather (effective copier), Rachel (effective copier), and Kellie (less effective copier). The other group comprised Jackie (effective copier) and Jane (less effective copier) who were also friends. Based on my observations I would have to state that Jackie and Jane were not as close as

the athletes in the other group, however, they did play together on another team before coming to the team they currently competed with and have known each other for a long time. The group interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes each. The structure of the group interviews was informal and was focused on two main questions: (1) Did you experience any stressors today? If yes, what were they? and (2) Did you do anything to help yourself cope with that stress? The group interviews were transcribed before progressing to the next stage of the data collection, the formal semi-structured interviews.

Group interview with coaches. A group interview was conducted at the midpoint of the data collection period with the coaches. The purpose of this interview was to “check-in” with the coaches and obtain their insights into the stressors experienced and the coping behaviors of the five athletes. Furthermore, this discussion provided an opportunity to validate the interview and observational data. The interview was held over a lunch break during a local tournament and was very informal. Discussion focused on the following questions for each of the five athletes: (1) Tell me about the stress that you see for athlete (insert athlete’s name), (2) In what ways do you think she copes with this stress?, and (3) Do you still think that athlete (insert athlete’s name) is coping effectively/less effectively most of the time? The interview lasted 90 minutes.

Formal semi-structured interviews with athletes. Following the group interview, I spoke with the athletes at an event and told them that I would like to do an interview in the near future. The athletes chose a convenient date, time, and location. Since they didn’t have their daily planners with them at the events, I told them to go home and make sure that the chosen time would work. We decided that we would confirm the tentative schedule at the next event or change it if there was a conflict. The interviews were semi-structured and the questions were based on previous interviews and on my observations of the athletes at the different events. The

first formal semi-structured interview was based on the focus group information, the background interview, the group interview and my observations. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain new or current information related to stress and coping and also to obtain updates on previously cited stressors and use of coping strategies. Reflective journal entries were also discussed during the interviews after the journal's introduction into the study at the beginning of March. The interviews lasted between 20 to 75 minutes. The first interview tended to be short (approximately 20-40 minutes) as the athletes were still becoming familiar with the topic of study. At this point some athletes had not yet identified their stressors and coping strategies, while others had started this process, but still did not have a lot of information to share. The short length of these initial interviews was not a concern as the extended data collection period with its multiple contacts presented several data collection opportunities throughout the course of the study.

The middle interviews were longer (45-75 minutes) as the athletes had then identified many of their stressors and coping strategies and felt much more comfortable discussing these issues. Each interview was transcribed before progressing to the next phase of the case study data collection procedure.

The final interviews (i.e., member check interviews) were conducted after the data collection was complete. The member check interviews will be discussed in detail at the end of this section.

On-site interviews with athletes. At several events I conducted individual on-site interviews with the athletes. These interviews were both formal and informal in nature. For example, I conducted a formal on-site interview with each athlete after they participated in an out-of-town tournament that I did not attend. The interview questions were semi-structured and were focused on the stressors experienced and the coping strategies used while the athletes participated in the tournament. These interviews lasted between five and ten minutes and were audio taped. I also

conducted more informal on-site interviews. These interviews occurred when an opportunity to talk individually with an athlete presented itself and were not scheduled in advance.

Furthermore, each of the athletes and myself initiated these spontaneous interviews, though my initiation was more prevalent. For example, Jane injured her groin toward the end of the tryouts. Though she was unable to participate, she would often attend practice so that she could stay connected to the team. Because of this situation, I approached her at a training session when the team was engaged in a drill. We informally chatted about her injury and other stressors she was experiencing, as well as coping strategies she was using to help her deal with the stress. In another example, I missed a Saturday training session because I was participating in a Qualitative Research Conference. When I returned to the field, Kellie asked me why I wasn't at the last training session. I told her and she responded, "oh, because last week was really stressful." We then spoke for approximately five minutes about her stressful week and how she dealt with this stress. These spontaneous interviews were not audio taped. However, I wrote extensive notes regarding the discussion at the site and included these notes into my field notes for the event. The formal and informal on-site interviews generally lasted 5 to 15 minutes. The formal on-site interviews were transcribed before the next phase of the data collection.

On-site interviews with coaches. The purpose of the on-site interviews was to validate the observational and interview data, as well as to obtain insights into the coaches' perceptions of the stressors experienced and the coping strategies used by the athletes. I conducted individual on-site interviews with the coaches at several events throughout the data collection period. Similar to the on-site interviews with the athletes, the on-site interviews with the coaches were both formal and informal in nature. For example, during an important provincial outdoor tournament, I observed that one of the athletes was very stressed on the field. Her pace slowed, she didn't

challenge the opposing team when she should have and she didn't seem to want the ball. In effect, it seemed that she coped by giving up. She called to the coaches and asked them to take her off, stating that she was injured. I, however, did not see any evidence of an injury on the field. I talked to the coaches about this briefly after the game. This is an example of an informal on-site interview, as it was spontaneous and it was not audio taped. During our informal discussions I wrote notes and the information was included in my field notes for the event. All on-site interviews with the coaches were generally 5 to 15 minutes in length, but only the formal on-site interviews were audio taped. The transcription of each formal on-site interview was completed before the next phase of the data collection.

Field notes. Observations were conducted throughout the entire eight-month data collection period. During this time, I made 71 field visits, which included games, practices, tryouts, fitness training sessions and tournaments. For each event I arrived anywhere from 5 to 45 minutes before the event and often remained on-site for 10 to 30 minutes after the event. During the event and the time before and after, I observed the athletes, participated in informal discussions with the members of the team (athletes, coaches, parents), and recorded observations and insights in field notes (see Appendix G – June 8, 1999 Field Notes). The purpose of my visits and observations were threefold. At the beginning of the data collection period, I used the field visits to establish trust and rapport between the team members and myself. Also, the field visits provided me an opportunity to document observed stressors and coping strategies that I then brought up for discussion during formal semi-structured interviews with the athletes. Finally, my observations written in the field notes were used to validate the interview data.

Documents. The majority of documents collected in the study were the athletes' journal entries. At the beginning of March 1999, journals were introduced to the athletes (see Appendix

H). As noted by Seiffge-Krenke (1995), adolescents' diaries can provide information concerning the problems and events adolescents are concerned with, and the ways in which they tackle these problems. Thus, the journals provided an opportunity for the athletes to document their stressors, coping behaviors and insights into how they may have learned or developed their coping strategies. Furthermore, the journals gave the athletes an opportunity to communicate any information missed during an interview and/or record stressful situations and coping strategies that they may not have felt comfortable discussing face-to-face. Finally, the journal entries were used to validate interview and observational data. Athletes were asked to write journal entries at a rate of two to three per week, and it was anticipated that each entry would take between three and five minutes to complete.

Although the journal did not appear to be a huge time commitment, the coaches warned me before the project started that the journal requirement could deter some athletes from participating. Also, I was scheduled to attend the Advances in Qualitative Methods Conference at the end of February 1999. I had registered for a workshop presentation titled, Journal Writing as a Qualitative Technique offered by Valerie Janesick, a leading qualitative researcher. I wanted to include any relevant information learned at this presentation about journal data into my study. For these reasons, the introduction of the journal was delayed until the beginning of March 1999. It was thought at that time that the athletes would be highly involved in the project and would be enjoying their participation, and therefore, would not view the journal requirement as a deterring factor. With respect to the reflective journal entry page, it was restructured to include starter sentences and response options in accordance with information obtained at Janesick's workshop. Please see Appendix I for a completed sample journal entry from Kellie.

Other written documents included materials prepared by the coach or team managers, and media publications. These types of documents were used to validate factual information, such as names and dates. The coaches or team managers prepared team documents that were distributed to the athletes, and often their parents, throughout the season. These handouts included newsletters, rosters, league and tournament schedules, team formation guidelines, and nutritional information guidelines. A sample document outlining the team formation and position responsibility is provided in Appendix J. Finally, the local news media covered the team on occasion by publishing league standings or their performance results from important tournaments.

Member check interviews with athletes. Upon completion of the data collection period, a case summary report was prepared. This report followed a question/answer format and was based on the research questions (Yin, 1994). A member check interview was then arranged. Prior to the interview, the athletes were asked to read the report and write down any comments that they had about the results in the wide three-inch right margin allocated for this purpose. The member check interviews served two objectives. First, the interviews provided an opportunity to validate the accuracy of the data and the researcher's interpretations. Also, if I was unsure about the importance of any stressors or coping strategies to the athlete, I used the interview to address this issue. Finally, propositions developed through the process of data analysis were tested with each athlete and any gaps in information were addressed. An example of a member check interview is provided in Appendix K.

Table 4

Summary of Case Study Data¹

Cases	Background Interviews ²	Group Interview ²	Formal Semi-structured Interviews ²	On-site Interviews ^{2,4}	Journal Entries ³	Member Check Interviews ²	Pages of Transcripts & Journal Entries
Heather	1 (23)	1 (30)	3 (50)*	3 (10)	16 (17)	1 (11)	141
Rachel	1 (13)	1 (30)	3 (50)	3 (5)	11 (13)	1 (13)	124
Jackie	1 (8)	1 (6)	3 (42)	2 (5)	9 (12)	1 (9)	82
Jane	1 (9)	1 (6)	3 (49)	2 (9)	26 (26)	1 (10)	109
Kellie	1 (24)	1 (30)	3 (66)	3 (7)	25 (26)	1 (16)	169
Totals	5	2	15	13	87	5	625

Case Study Data¹ – data also included a group interview and formal on-site interviews conducted with the coaches to validate the interview and observational data, and notes based on 71 visits to the field (not all athletes were present at all events)

Interviews² – number of single-spaced transcript pages for interviews in parentheses

Journal Entries³ – number of pages of written material

On-site Interviews⁴ – data listed here were the results of formal on-site interviews that were audio taped. Athletes also participated in informal on-site interviews. This information is included in the field notes as these discussions were not audio taped.

* The number of transcript pages listed is not entirely accurate as I was unable to audio tape one interview with the athlete due to a cassette recorder malfunction. The number of transcript pages for this interview, therefore, was based on my notes taken during the discussion.

Case Study Data Analysis

There is not one correct way to analyze qualitative data (Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993). Because of this, qualitative researchers must make their procedures, decision criteria, and data manipulation explicit, such that readers can follow the study and understand the manners in which final results were obtained (Côté et al.). A detailed description of the analysis process follows in an effort to satisfy the above criteria. Data collection and data analysis were done concurrently; all interviews were transcribed as the data were collected which permitted the data analysis to inform or guide subsequent data collection. Coding was the primary method of data analysis.

Coding. In this section, I will discuss the concept of coding and the procedures that I followed while coding my data. The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with information regarding the decision-making processes followed throughout the data analysis.

Schwandt (1997) defined coding as “a procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments and identifies or names those segments” (p. 16). These segments are often called meaning units and are sections of text that have meaning by themselves and contain one idea or piece of information (Tesch, 1990). Two levels of coding were created. First, I read the interview transcripts and coded the data at a descriptive level. This was completed using a broad four-category coding scheme. This process resulted in four categories (i.e., perceptions of stress, stressors experienced, coping strategies used, and development of coping strategies) that corresponded to the initial research questions. The software tool NUD.IST facilitated this process. Storage areas, also referred to as nodes, were created in the NUD.IST software to correspond to these categories and were then used to break the interview data into meaning units

or raw data themes for further coding. The meaning units were then tagged with provisional labels that described the topic of the text segments (Côté et al., 1993).

Upon completion of this phase, a list of sample meaning units and their provisional labels were given to a colleague knowledgeable about the study and qualitative research methodology. The coding process, including tags or provisional labels was discussed. However, this was more of a peer debriefing process to make sure that I was on the right track with respect to the use of the coding process itself. At this time I wasn't overly concerned about the suitability of the provisional labels because the labels could change in the next coding phase.

The second phase involved coding at a more interpretive level. In this phase, the meaning units were listed, compared, and reviewed. Tesch (1990) has noted that the process of assembling and reviewing data related to one category, or node, is referred to as 're-contextualizing' the data, and leads to a set of categories that serves as a preliminary organizing system. Though this process was inductive, a provisional start list based on the focus group analysis was used for the "stressors experienced" data, and Gould, Eklund, and Jackson's (1993) coding structure was used as a provisional start list for the "coping strategies used" data.

The purpose of this coding phase was to identify and/or develop themes related to the research questions. For example, within the "stressors experienced" category it was determined that there were two main sources of stress for the athletes: people, and the context. These two main categories or sources within the "stressors experienced" category emerged from the data. Peer debriefing was then used. A more complete list including meaning unit labels and sub-categories were given to the same colleague so that the data associated with the "stressors experienced" category could be reviewed. During the debriefing process, suggestions were made

with respect to sub-categories and their definitions, and the placement of meaning units. These ideas were considered and appropriate changes were made.

The qualitative data analysis process must remain flexible and categories can be modified and refined until a satisfactory system is established (Tesch, 1990). As such, the organizing system and its categories were adapted throughout the data analysis.

Peer debriefing meetings with the colleague knowledgeable about the study and qualitative research were conducted at regular intervals during the analysis process. Suggestions resulting from these discussions were incorporated whenever appropriate. Analysis and peer debriefing continued with all interview data until saturation had been reached. Saturation occurred when no new categories or themes emerged from the data.

After the interview data had been coded, I then turned my attention to the athletes' journal entries. First, I transferred the journal entry data (87 pages) into an electronic format so that they could easily be incorporated into the qualitative software NUD.IST. I then inductively coded the data using the latest organizing system. Though saturation had been reached with the interview data, I was unsure as to whether the journal entry data might provide new themes or concepts. Upon examination and analysis of the data, however, it was determined that no new themes or concepts emerged. I then used all of this data (i.e., interview and journal entry data) to generate the case summary reports for each athlete.

While producing these reports I generated propositions based on my perceptions of the phenomena under study and then used the data to support my claims. For example, I wrote the following proposition for Heather in the "Coping Strategies – Task Focus Strategies – Narrow, More Immediate Focus" category: Heather copes by focusing on her game. Although she did use this strategy to help her cope, there was not enough information to support 'focusing on her

game' as an important coping strategy for her. When examining the data though, I remembered that Heather also coped by giving up. This occurred during training sessions, but I didn't find much evidence to support this claim in the interview or journal entry data. As such, I went back to the field notes and found several examples to support that giving up was an important strategy for Heather within the "Coping Strategies – Task Focus Strategies – Narrow, More Immediate Focus" category.

This example demonstrated to me that although the existing organizational system of data (that included the interview and journal entry information) was substantial, observed stressors experienced by the athletes and coping strategies that I documented in the field notes could provide additional support for the importance of these phenomena. Therefore, I then went back and coded my field notes, which included my observations in the field and notes regarding discussions, as a way to validate key themes already identified. Because of the magnitude of the field notes data and the amount of time that would be required to transfer them into NUD.IST, this part of the coding was done manually. I made a list of the stressors and coping strategies identified in the field notes for each athlete (see Appendix L for an example). The data were then incorporated into the summary reports for each athlete. Finally, the member check interview transcripts were inductively coded. No new themes or concepts emerged from this process. The meaning units were indexed in NUD.IST and included in the organizational system.

While writing the literature review I became reacquainted with the literature regarding stress and coping in athletes and refamiliarized myself with how other researchers examining sources of stress in athletes organized their data. For example, Scanlan, Stein, and Ravizza (1991) organized their data regarding the stress sources of elite figure skaters into five distinct categories: 1) Negative Aspects of Competition, 2) Negative Significant Other Relationships,

3) Demands/Costs of Skating, 4) Personal Struggles, and 5) Traumatic Experiences. My stressor data, however, was organized into two main categories: 1) Source – People and, 2) Source – Context. I compared the emergent categories to determine if there were similarities between the concepts and themes presented in my study and those presented in the Scanlan et al. work. Upon this comparison I realized that I had regrouped many raw data themes together for simplicity, but in so doing, I had taken away a level of abstraction evident in other studies. As such, I went back and ungrouped my data themes and added the second level of abstraction that had been missing. Upon completion of this step, I then deliberated about whether to modify my organizing system based on the one presented by Scanlan and colleagues.

I decided to regroup my stressor data where appropriate based on the following reasons. First, the current organizing system I developed had two main categories: 1) Source – People, and 2) Source – Context. The Source – People category included several sub-categories, such as Parents, Coaches, Self, Teammates, and Others, while the Source – Context category comprised Competition, Training and Injury sub-categories. However, as pointed out by my colleague during a peer debriefing session, Injury (which was a sub-category within the Source – Context category) did not really fit. Second, the current organizing system had a lot of overlap. For example, meeting expectations was cited as a source of stress in each of the Parents, Coaches, Teammates, Self and Others' sub-categories. Finally, while there is no one correct way to present qualitative data, I believed that an organizing system more in line with the literature would make for easier comparison of results. I should note, however, that the Scanlan and colleagues' (1991) framework was not forced onto my data, but was used to modify my organizing system and appropriate changes relevant to my data were made. Thus, the final coding system was based on

both an inductive and deductive analysis process, which resulted in three main categories:

Negative Aspects of Competition and Training, Team Dynamic Issues, and Personal Struggles.

Case summary reports. Two case summary reports (a long and a short version) were written for each athlete after the fieldwork was completed and all data had been analyzed. The purpose of preparing the case summary reports was to synthesize what had been learned about each case and to determine what needed further investigation (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The beginning of each case summary report contained a vignette highlighting athlete demographics and a summary of important data themes. Next, propositions were presented for perceptions of stress, the important stress sources and coping strategies, and information related to coping strategy development. Supporting evidence from the athletes was presented after each proposition. Questions regarding missing or incomplete data were listed appropriately throughout the case summary report and a wide three-inch right margin was provided so that the athletes could write any comments they had pertaining to the report and its accuracy.

The difference between the two case summary reports was that the longer version included information related to all of the data themes, regardless of whether or not an area was important to an athlete, and the shorter version highlighted only those areas important to each athlete. For example, Kellie did not use Emotional Control strategies when dealing with her stress. In the longer version of the case summary report the proposition for this section stated, "Emotional Control strategies were not important coping strategies for Kellie." The report then stated, "This proposition has been supported as there was no data for Kellie in this category. She did not use Emotional Control Strategies when dealing with her stress." In the shorter version of the case summary report, this information was not included because it was not important to the athlete.

Studies in which athletes' sources of stress have been investigated via qualitative methods have used content analysis to analyze the data and used percentages to discuss the results (e.g., Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993; Gould, Udry, Bridges, & Beck, 1997a; James & Collins, 1997, Scanlan et al., 1991). It is inferred that sources of stress cited frequently were important for the athlete participants. However, this may not necessarily be the case, and such analyses do not permit one to draw this conclusion. For example, it is entirely possible that less frequently cited stressors were as, or more critical, and could be considered as such if other verbal and non-verbal clues were taken into consideration. An athlete's quality and/or clarity of details and description, the intensity of language used (e.g., "This was *very* stressful."), and any accompanying body language (e.g., the athlete shows emotion by crying), could point to a less frequently cited stressor as being critical.

Consistent with the constructivist perspective guiding the present study, this issue was addressed. Thus, the frequency with which stressors were discussed (and observed) was important, but so was the intensity of the language used, the details and level of description provided and non-verbal clues such as the athlete's body language. Furthermore, if I was unsure about the importance of a particular stressor (or coping strategy) for the athletes involved, I asked them about this and had them explain to me the issue's importance. Thus, important themes were chosen based on a number of criteria consistent with the constructivist framework that guided the study.

Validity

Validity issues for traditional quantitative researchers have focused on internal and external validity, as well as reliability and objectivity. Though validity is also a key concern for most qualitative researchers, the terms used to address validity issues have been adapted to fit the

qualitative perspective. Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided a comprehensive discussion on validity criteria for qualitative research and introduced the terms credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. These concepts and the validity tactics used to meet these objectives will be discussed below. Please note that some validity tactics are used in more than one area. For example, the tactic of member checking is used to address credibility and confirmability. When a tactic has a dual role, it is discussed in detail in the first criteria (i.e., credibility) and briefly highlighted in its second criteria (i.e., confirmability). Please see Table 5 for an overview of the validity criteria and the techniques used to address them.

Table 5

Techniques used to address Validity Criteria

Validity Criteria Addressed	Techniques Used
Credibility	Comparison Member checks Multiple sources of evidence Prolonged interaction in the field Searching for discrepant evidence
Confirmability	Case study database Member checks Peer feedback Prolonged interaction in the field Searching for discrepant evidence
Dependability	Case study database Peer feedback
Transferability	Detailed description Replication
Researcher Bias	Reflection on personal experiences Continuous review of data Observer breaks

Credibility

When dealing with credibility, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that they have adequately represented the multiple realities of the informants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, questions that need to be answered include: “Do the findings of the study make sense? Are they credible to the people we study and to our readers?” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278). Five techniques were employed to maximize the study’s credibility.

Comparison. Due to the qualitative research design employed in the present study, the use of a control group was inappropriate. However, the lack of a control group makes it difficult to compare the findings. Instead, comparisons were made between the athletes and to the literature. For example, the results from each athlete were compared to illustrate key patterns and themes. These comparisons were made between all five athletes, and also between the two groups of athletes (i.e., the group of three athletes thought to engage in effective coping behaviors most of the time and the group of two athletes thought to use ineffective coping strategies most of the time). The literature on stress and coping in athletes was also compared to the results of the five case studies. Comparison allowed for the development of propositions that were validated within and across cases, and with the literature.

Member checks. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that member checks are the most crucial technique for establishing credibility of a study’s results. In this technique, data and the researcher’s interpretations are tested with participants to insure their accuracy. Member checks were used throughout the fieldwork (on-the-spot) and in a final member check interview (post-data collection) with each athlete after the case summary reports were written.

Opportunities for on-the-spot member checks occurred on a regular basis. For example, during discussions with the athletes, I probed and used follow-up questions. Also, I paraphrased

and summarized athletes' responses whenever possible. These techniques provided the athletes with an opportunity to correct any interpretational errors and contribute additional information, which contributed to both the credibility and the confirmability of the results.

Upon completion of each case study, two case summary reports (long version and short version) were prepared and submitted to each athlete. As previously discussed, each case summary report included (a) a vignette highlighting athlete demographics and a summary of important data themes, (b) propositions associated with the athlete's perceptions of stress, the important stress sources and coping strategies, and information related to coping strategy development, (c) supporting evidence taken from the interviews, journal entries and/or field notes, (d) questions regarding missing or incomplete data. Included with each report was a cover letter thanking the athlete for her participation and instructions for how to review the reports (see Appendix M). Due to time constraints, each athlete was given one week to review the report, which was double-spaced and had a wide three-inch right margin to allow the athletes to record their comments directly on the report. A member check interview was then scheduled with each athlete to discuss her thoughts and views regarding the report and its accuracy. Each member check interview was audio taped and transcribed verbatim. The length of the interviews varied, but was generally 20 to 40 minutes in length.

All of the athletes indicated that the case summary reports were accurate. With one exception, only minor clarifications were made to the final case summaries based on the member check interviews. Supporting comments from Kellie's member check interview are provided to illustrate the accuracy of the case summary reports.

Researcher: Tell me everything that you thought (about the report).

Kellie: I wrote some stuff that I didn't explain in my quotes. ... Um, playing good all the time, I didn't mean being the best all the time. I want to be trying my best all the time. ... That's all I wrote, I didn't really write anything because it was all true. All this stuff was true. I sound so bad in some of these quotes though (referring to the use of slang).

Researcher: No you don't. We all talk like that.

Kellie: ... Um, I thought it was good. I don't know what to say, it was good.

Researcher: Ok, so do you think it's accurate?

Kellie: Oh yeah, yeah, it's totally me. Everything I said. It's totally, it's accurate.

As previously mentioned, with one exception the data collected from the member check interviews were used to make only minor clarifications. The exception occurred with Jane. Interview data collected throughout the study with Jane varied with respect to some critical concepts. For example, Jane originally stated that she felt stress around meeting the expectations of her parents, specifically her Dad, with respect to soccer and that she didn't like it when he compared her performance to those of her teammates. In a follow-up interview she stated that her Dad was "Mr. Positive" and that she didn't feel any stress around meeting his expectations regarding her soccer play. I asked Jane about this in our final member check interview and she had the following to say:

Researcher: So what is going on?

Jane: I think that it's just after some games, my Dad has done this a few times where he's compared me to people, but I don't know, I don't know what, that really, seeing that I said all that it was really jumping all over the place what I had said, but normally my parents, like my Dad will encourage me as much as he can because he knows that I can't work under pressure, like I can't do anything under pressure, but sometimes if I am playing badly and I

ask him the truth, like I want to know, then he will tell me and he'll be like, "well they did have a good game" and then I will get all offended so he tries not to do that because he knows that I don't like that.

Researcher: So do you feel then that there is, that you do feel some stress around meeting his expectations with respect to soccer?

Jane: I do, but not so much because I know that he'll support me no matter what I want to do. If I wanted to quit soccer, he'd support me. If I want to go try out for a team in another city (referring to the Provincial team), he'd support me. He just basically wants me to be happy when it comes to soccer.

When reading the text from Jane's member check interview, it was apparent that meeting the expectations of her parents was an important source of stress for Jane. This conclusion was made based on the information discussed during the member check interview and other data (e.g., field notes, coaches perceptions, journal entries).

Multiple sources of evidence. The use of multiple data collection methods and different types of data are recommended as a means to increase credibility in a qualitative research study and is generally called triangulation (Maxwell, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Stake (1994) noted that triangulation has usually been considered a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, and verifying repeatability of an observation or interpretation. Three types of triangulation were used to establish credibility in this study: (a) triangulation of participants (focus groups, case studies and coaches), (b) triangulation of data (interview transcripts, journal entries and field notes), and (c) triangulation of methods (interviews, journals and observations).

Prolonged interaction in the field. A fourth measure taken to increase the credibility of the present study was to spend a prolonged time in the field interacting with the participants. As

Stake (1994) noted, a characteristic of qualitative case study research is that the investigator spends a substantial amount of time, on-site, personally in contact with the participants and activities of the case. Although not sufficient on its own, this extended length of time in the field can help to address the validity criteria of credibility and confirmability, as well as reactivity, which is the influence of the researcher on the setting or the individuals studied (Maxwell, 1996). Prolonged interaction in the field serves several purposes: (a) to learn about the context and phenomenon under study, (b) to check incomplete or misinformation, (c) to obtain missed information, and (d) to develop trust and rapport with the participants (Gilbert, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Over the eight-month period that I was in the field, I made 71 visits including games, practices, fitness training sessions, tryouts and tournaments. Also, at least nine interviews (includes focus group, group interview, formal semi-structured interviews, on-site interviews and member check interview) were conducted with each athlete.

As demonstrated, prolonged interaction in the field is a valuable technique used to increase validity. However, prolonged interaction also has its downfalls. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted the danger of what anthropologists have referred to as “going native.” In this phenomenon, the longer the researcher is in the field with the participants, the more accepted he or she becomes. With this acceptance, the researcher is more appreciative of the context and culture and this can increase the likelihood that professional judgments will be influenced (Lincoln & Guba). Though there is no way to guarantee against this type of influence, if the researcher is aware of it, he or she can take steps to prevent its occurrence. In the present study, I “pulled back” from the field whenever I felt that I had been too involved. For example, I was scheduled to go to three tournaments on three consecutive weekends. As the tournaments neared, however, I had spent a large amount of time with the athletes in a short period of time and was

already reaching saturation. For these reasons, I decided not to attend the first two tournaments, but did attend the third one because the tournament was very important to the athletes. Furthermore, most of the individual interviews with the athletes were held at their homes, which gave us a chance to discuss issues off-site, and out of the soccer context.

Searching for discrepant evidence. “Identifying and analyzing discrepant data and negative cases is a key part of the attempt to falsify a proposed conclusion” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 93). Searching for discrepant evidence or other explanations is an important technique to address the validity criteria of credibility and confirmability. Throughout the data collection and analysis processes I constantly sought out disconfirmation of what I thought were accurate conclusions. The following example will explain the process used. At an outdoor league game I wrote the following field notes:

The game got started and it was just like Bren said it would be. The ball was bouncing all over the place and the team really wasn’t able to play their game. At first they tried, but the ball just kept bouncing and it made it really difficult for them to get any sort of plays going. To top it off, their opponent was very aggressive and won most of the balls in the air. At one point the ball was in our end for quite awhile. At one point there was a goal kick and Heather didn’t get enough air under it and it didn’t go very far. After she kicked it I heard her curse. The other team got to the ball and eventually they had a good shot on net. Heather dove for it, but missed it and the other team went up 1-0. After the goal was scored, Heather lay there in the net on her stomach for a few seconds. Then she got up and kicked the ball back up to half. When the goal was scored, the team was very quiet. They moved back up to the center and got ready for the kickoff.

At the half, Bren told them that they needed to work hard and really concentrate on moving the ball up the field instead of laterally since the middle was so bumpy. They agreed. He also told them that they needed to win more balls in the air and judge them better. He said that they were going up for some balls, but then the ball would drop three feet behind them.

... The girls went to get a drink and Heather was standing with Duane and Bren. She was complaining that the field was really crappy and that she was basically standing on concrete.

... The second half started and the girls were playing much better. They seemed to be winning more balls in the air and were working harder to get the ball. ... After the game Bren, Duane and I were talking and I told them that I found a new stressor this evening - poor field conditions. They agreed that it was frustrating. [Field Notes – June 15, 1999]

I believed that poor playing conditions were an important source of stress for the athletes based on my observations of the athletes complaining about the field conditions, their overall performance level decreasing, and the coaches' affirmations that the condition of the field was frustrating. However, I couldn't conclude with certainty that poor playing conditions were an important source of stress for the athletes because although supported, the athletes did increase the quality of their performance in the second half. Because of this, I decided to flush out this issue further and ask the athletes about it in our next interview together. The athletes noted that while poor playing conditions could be stressful, the stress was not substantial.

Researcher: Are poor playing conditions a source of stress for you?

Jackie: Um, not really, because it's not just affecting my play, it's affecting everybody else's play, so like if I make mistakes, no one is going to be like, "oh look at her, she's not playing well." Like everybody is going to be doing that because nobody can really play on the

conditions so it doesn't really put a lot of stress on you because everyone really can't play their game so it doesn't really matter. [Jackie – Interview #5]

Multiple sources of evidence were also used in an attempt to identify negative evidence. For example, interview data was checked against the field notes and the reflective journal entries.

Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with “assuring that data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the investigator and are not simply figments of the investigator’s imagination” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, pp. 242-243). Five techniques were employed to address the validity issue of confirmability. However, because three of these techniques – member checks, prolonged interaction in the field, and searching for discrepant evidence – have already been highlighted in the credibility section, the discussion will focus on the two other techniques employed; the use of a case study database and peer feedback.

Case study database. Both confirmability and dependability were addressed by the development of a case study database. A case study database or audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is an organized collection of materials that show the sequence a researcher took in all aspects of a study. This systematically maintained documentation system includes a record of the study’s methods and procedures (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and is sometimes advocated as one of the most important validity techniques in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba). The records maintained for the present study included the raw data (audio tapes, interview transcripts, journal entries, field notes, team documents), and a field visit, interview and contact log (see Appendix N). All individual interview transcripts and journal entries for each athlete were stored in a separate three-ring binder. Field notes, group interview transcripts, coach interview transcripts and team documents were stored in three other separate three-ring binders (i.e., Field Notes –

December 1998 to February 1999, Field Notes – March 1999 to May 1999, and Field Notes – June 1999 to August 1999). The source, data, and location were clearly recorded on each piece of evidence.

Peer feedback. The researcher's role is an important component of the data collection and analysis within the constructivist perspective due to the fact that the researcher and the participant construct knowledge about the phenomenon under study together (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, this close engagement between the researcher and the participants, as well as the flexible, emergent nature of qualitative research increase the likelihood that the researcher may lose sight of how he or she is influencing the study. Peer feedback has been suggested as a technique to help researchers stay aware of their assumptions and how these can potentially interact with the context and/or participants under investigation. Maxwell (1996) acknowledged that peer feedback could further be used to identify threats to a study's validity, as well as flaws in the researcher's thinking and/or choice of methods. Two types of peer feedback – peer debriefing and peer review – were used to address the validity issues of confirmability and dependability.

Peer debriefing sessions were held regularly throughout the duration of the project, but at irregular intervals. On average, however, these meetings occurred at a rate of three per month. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that all questions are in order during a debriefing “whether they pertain to substantive, methodological, legal, ethical, or any other relevant matters” (p. 308). A successful doctoral candidate (referred to throughout the study as a colleague) acted as the peer debriefer. In our numerous discussions he acted as a sounding board whereby I bounced questions off of him related to matters of the study. His insights helped to keep my biases in

check, and provided support and encouragement at times when my sport psychology training influenced me to intervene with an athlete.

In the proposal for the present study I discussed my biases related to my sport psychology training. I stated that for many years prior to the study I taught children and youth athletes various mental skills including relaxation and other methods/techniques to help them cope more effectively when faced with stress, and that it was very important that I not slip into this role during the present study as my focus was exploring the phenomena of stress and coping with the athletes from their perspective. However I was faced with a situation with Jackie that made me rethink this issue.

Around the end of the tryouts, but before the beginning of the outdoor season, Jackie started to experience a great deal of stress. She was playing soccer at school and with the club team and was involved in numerous other extracurricular activities and told me that she had great demands on her time. Jackie's Mom, Iris came to practice one evening and told me that she was very upset about Jackie and how Jackie was feeling. Iris told me that Jackie's school soccer coaches expected Jackie to be the star and she was played entire games without a break. Jackie was then required to attend club soccer practice and give 100% effort, but she was already very tired. Iris mentioned that Jackie was burnt out and was seriously thinking about quitting soccer.

This situation with Jackie presented me with a dilemma. On the one hand, the stressors and coping strategies discussed by the athletes needed to emerge from the athletes themselves without my intervention. Nevertheless, I felt that I had contributed to Jackie's burnout because I was constantly in the field asking her to tell me about her stressors, which focused her energies on them in an even greater capacity. Furthermore, my sport psychology training equipped me with skills and knowledge that I could use to help her deal with her stress and for me to sit back

and do nothing in the interest of the research project didn't sit well with me ethically. All of the above was discussed with my peer debriefer. He reminded me of the study's importance, but agreed that I should intervene in this situation. We both felt that the quality of Jackie's mental health far outweighed the importance of including her in my study, which I may not be able to continue to do based on the intervention that I felt obligated, both morally and ethically, to perform. Therefore, I offered my sport psychology services to help Jackie with her stress, with the understanding that everything would be documented (as had been done throughout the study) and that the information discussed during these consulting sessions would be kept confidential. In this way, I could help Jackie, but information related to coping strategies, for example, would be kept private, and would not influence the other athletes still involved in the study. Jackie reacted positively to my offer, but never accepted it and the only intervention that I did was to occasionally offer some suggestions to help her cope with her injury. For example, I suggested that she use visualization to help her to heal faster and to cope with the stress associated with being injured. As you will see in the Results chapter, however, Jackie did not use or discuss these coping strategies with any frequency and were therefore not considered important to her. Thus she remained a part of the study and her results are presented alongside the other athletes.

The second type of peer feedback came in the form of peer review. This is a more comprehensive type of feedback whereby one or more colleagues review the study and make comments at various time throughout the project (Gilbert, 1999). The reviewers' comments may be either in verbal or written form, and typically both types of feedback are given simultaneously. The research advisor and a successful doctoral candidate (referred to throughout the study as a colleague) acted as the peer reviewers. Typically the peer review meetings were held twice a month, but occurred at irregular intervals throughout the project's duration. Prior to

these meetings, a formal written document was given to the reviewers to read and critique. Generally, the reviewers wrote comments directly on the document prior to the meeting. The peer reviewers' comments were then discussed in detail during the peer review meeting. The information garnered from the peer review meeting was then taken back to the project and used to modify the design, analysis and interpretations where appropriate.

Dependability

Dependability is centered on the process of the inquiry and the researcher's responsibility for ensuring that the process was logical, traceable, and documented (Schwandt, 1997). Two techniques have been posited as means to address dependability: peer feedback and an audit trail, or in this project, a case study database (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since these two techniques have already been discussed in the Confirmability section, they will not be addressed again.

Transferability

Transferability deals with the validity criteria of generalizability. In quantitative research, a primary goal is to generalize the results of the random sample participating in the study to the larger population. With its smaller number of participants and purposeful sampling, this type of transfer is not appropriate in the qualitative research setting. In fact, Stake (1995) argued that qualitative researchers engaging in constructivist case study work have a different goal in mind.

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (p. 8)

Though knowledge of the case in qualitative research is key, naturalistic generalizations can be made. For example, the reader of a qualitative case study can make case-to-case generalizations

when the researcher provides sufficient detail about the circumstances of the case.

Generalizations are then left to the reader who may engage in reasonable, but modest speculation about whether findings are applicable to other cases with similar circumstances (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 1997). Two techniques were used to address transferability in the present study; detailed description and replication.

Detailed description. Detailed or thick description is considered a foundation of qualitative inquiry and can include demographic information regarding participants and the context being studied, as well as comprehensive details regarding meanings and interpretations of the phenomena (Schwandt, 1997). Presenting a context-rich description provides readers with an opportunity to appraise the report and make their own generalizations to other settings and participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Demographic profiles of the team, and the case study participants in particular, have been provided earlier in this chapter. A thorough description of the club soccer context has also been highlighted in this chapter. Furthermore, transferability was also addressed by outlining the data collection, data analyses and methods information as clearly as possible in this chapter.

Replication. When conducting collective or multiple qualitative case studies, searching for common themes across cases is another way to address the issue of transferability. Yin (1994) noted that once findings have been replicated in many cases, there is an increased likelihood that a researcher could find similar results in other like cases not originally included in the sample. Cross-case propositions were established once the data had been collected and analyzed and will be presented in the results chapter.

Researcher Bias

Prior to the start of the present study, I competed in club soccer and was very familiar with the study's context. Although familiarity with the study's context can be a valuable asset during data collection and analysis, it can also be a source of potential bias. Qualitative researchers do not try to eliminate the values and expectations they bring to the study. Instead, it is important for researchers to (a) understand how these factors may influence the study and (b) explain how they will be considered (Maxwell, 1996). Thus, the final validity issue to be addressed concerns my familiarity with the study's context and measures that I took to address this potential bias during data collection. I used three strategies to address this concern: reflection on personal experiences, continuous review of data, and observer breaks. These will be highlighted next.

Reflection on personal experiences. While writing early proposal drafts for the present study I reflected on my own experiences participating in club soccer. During this process I wrote extensively about my perceptions of stress, the stressors I experienced, the coping strategies that I used and the development of my coping strategies. For example, I wrote the following information while reflecting on my perceptions of stress.

One of my earliest memories involved tryouts for the second season. That year the team had to move into the next age group. Most members of the team were born in 1969, but two of us (Erin and myself) were born in 1970. Because of this, we were going to be left behind in the younger age group. We were not pleased! Erin and I went and spoke to the coach we had the previous summer and told him that we wanted to play on his team even though we were younger. He considered our case and told us that if we wanted to play with him we would have to execute a certain skill (i.e., volley kick the soccer ball into the basketball net). Erin got really upset and told the coach that she didn't think that she could do it. She was very

frustrated. I was a little unsure about whether or not I could do this task, but said ok and left to go practice the skill. Within about 10 minutes I scored in the basketball net. I told the coach and he said that I would have to show him again since he didn't see the first successful goal. I said ok and did it again within about one minute. Erin still hadn't completed the skill successfully and was getting more and more frustrated. Upon reflection of this incident it occurred to me that this situation was a potential stressor for us. We desperately wanted to stay with the team that we had been playing with the previous summer and were given the task of proving ourselves able to do so. While Erin got very stressed with the unusual task, I saw it as a challenge and worked hard to achieve it.

In the above example, reflecting on and examining my own experiences provided me with an opportunity to become aware of the diverse perceptions of stress and decreased the likelihood of making assumptions of how the athletes involved in the present study perceived potentially stressful situations. This type of bias exploration is an important part of the qualitative research process (Dale, 1996).

Continuous review of data. Reviewing previously collected data was a second strategy used to deal with potential researcher bias during data collection. For example, field notes taken from participant and non-participant observation were collected throughout the data collection period. Documents such as team resources and athletes' reflective journal entries were also obtained. In an effort to stay focused on athletes' emerging perceptions of stress, stressors experienced, coping strategies used and the development of those coping strategies, all collected data were reviewed prior to conducting interviews with athletes. This procedure allowed me to focus my interview questions on emerging concepts and grounded the interview in the data.

Observer breaks. The third strategy used to deal with potential bias during data collection was rather unusual, but extremely helpful. As previously mentioned, I competed in club soccer as an adolescent and during that time I experienced much success. I was named the “Most Valuable Player” of a large Provincial tournament and was recruited to play soccer at a southwestern Ontario university. I include this information to illustrate that because I had competed at a high level myself, I did not anticipate that the level of competition in which the athletes involved in the present study competed would be novel or distracting. However, soon after entering the field I became very impressed with the skill level of the athletes and on a few occasions caught myself acting as a passive spectator instead of observing and collecting data with a research focus. As such, I decided to occasionally break from my role as a researcher and allow myself to be a spectator. This strategy proved to be valuable because it allowed me to observe the athletes through a different lens. Also, the break allowed me to return to my researcher role with an improved focus.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The research objectives, which guided the data collection and analysis concerned the perceptions of stress, the stressors experienced, the coping strategies used and the development of coping strategies of female adolescent athletes. The results are therefore organized and presented according to the four main research questions: (a) What does stress mean to female adolescent athletes?, (b) What everyday or ambient stressors do female adolescent athletes encounter in sport and in their daily lives?, (c) What coping strategies do female adolescent athletes use when faced with ambient stressors in sport and in their everyday lives?, and (d) How do the athletes develop coping strategies? Results are included to support the cross-case findings and also to illustrate how the athletes differed from each other.

For the questions related to the stressors experienced and the coping strategies used by the athletes (i.e., questions 2 and 3), the sections will commence with the presentation of the organizational system. To reiterate, the organizational systems emerged from the inductive and deductive data analysis outlined in the methodology chapter. There were three overall stressor categories (i.e., negative aspects of competition and training, team dynamic issues, and personal struggles) and five overall coping strategy categories (i.e., behavioral strategies, emotional release strategies, thought control strategies, task focus strategies, and emotional control strategies). In addition, these sections will conclude with a table summarizing the results of the important stressors and coping strategies. Prior to addressing the four questions, however, a brief athlete profile and a profile summarizing the stress and coping results for each athlete will be presented. The profiles serve as an introduction to the results, and provide information concerning the individual athletes. However, the reader may wish to read the athlete profiles

after reading the results to the four research questions, as the profiles could then serve as a summary of the results for the individual athletes.

Athlete Summaries

Heather

Athlete Profile

Heather played one year of house league soccer when she was eight years old. Since the age of nine, she has played competitive soccer. At the time of the study, Heather was the captain and the goalkeeper for the club soccer team, but occasionally played other positions when the team was leading their opponent by several goals. She was 16 years old and was in grade eleven. She was also participating in high school volleyball, badminton and football, and was involved in other non-sport related extracurricular activities at her high school.

Heather was the oldest of two children. Her younger brother was also involved in competitive sport. Her Dad, a civil servant, and her Mom, an elementary school teacher, divided their time between attending the events of both of their children. Nevertheless, her parents were both involved in activities related to Heather's team. Her Mom participated in the team's fundraising Bingo nights on a regular basis and organized other fundraising events for the team. Her Dad was involved in ordering the team's track suits and athletic bags. Heather's parents were very supportive of Heather with respect to her soccer although they were not happy when she first started to play goalie. They wanted her to be the "star forward" and get lots of exercise. However they were extremely proud of her and were happy that she was playing such a demanding position. Soccer was very important to Heather and she took it seriously. Because of this, she found the soccer environment to be stressful and noted, "There will always be situations where I am stressed out" [Member Check Interview]. However, Heather had a difficult year at

school (e.g., she failed her math class and had to take it again in summer school) and she stated in the member check interview that she felt more stress about school than her sport.

Stress and Coping Profile

A key issue for Heather was that while stress can make her frustrated and upset, she didn't always see stress as a negative phenomenon. When stressed, she often felt challenged or motivated to do well and sometimes it made her pick up her game and play better.

Heather experienced stress associated with all three overall stressor categories. With respect to stressors associated with the negative aspects of competition and training, Heather worried about meeting the expectations of her own parents and the parents as a collective. She also felt a great deal of stress about meeting her own expectations and when she did not play well or was not focused. Usually these stressors occurred in relation to when goals were scored against her. Important games and having to run during training sessions were also very stressful for Heather.

Team dynamic issues were also very important stressors for Heather, especially when her teammates displayed a lack of commitment and when they did not perform up to the team's standards. Her responsibilities to the team such as her job as the goalkeeper and her role as captain were also major stressors. She felt that because she was the only athlete that played in the nets that she was not able to miss a game. Further, her role as captain was also a source of stress, especially when she was expected to keep the team "together."

With respect to stressors dealing with personal struggles, Heather's injuries were a critical source of stress due to the pain she experienced as well as her perception that she had lost some skills. Heather also felt a great deal of stress about school, specifically about evaluative events such as exams, tests, assignments, and report cards. Heather's parents were both university educated and were professionals. They placed a high value on education and saw this as an

important goal for Heather. Thus, she also worried about meeting the expectations of her parents. Other stressors included her future job/career and having to make those decisions so early in her life via her course selections (e.g., math, science, languages) for her senior high school years.

Heather was deemed to use effective coping strategies most of the time by her coaches and was found to use a variety of coping strategies when dealing with her stress. The most important behavioral strategies included discussing or venting about a situation with her parents and coaches, avoiding others or the stressor, studying for tests or exams, attending physiotherapy sessions to cope with her injuries and distracting herself from her non-soccer stressors by participating in club soccer. The important emotional release strategies for Heather were crying and shaking out the tension. The latter was a new coping strategy that she had recently learned. With respect to the thought control strategies, Heather changed her focus, engaged in positive self-talk, and put things in perspective. She also used the task focus strategies of getting reassurance from the coaches and giving up and making excuses to deal with the stress of having to run during training.

The origins of Heather's coping strategies included her parents and coaches, specifically Bren. She felt that their attitudes and discussions she had with them shaped some of her coping strategies.

Rachel

Athlete Profile

Rachel has played competitive soccer since she was eight years old. She played defense and occasionally played in the sweeper position or the center midfield position when necessary. Rachel was a leader on the team. This was evident in the fact that she was an assistant captain and by the way she took charge on the field. For example, Rachel insisted on taking the throw-

ins when the ball went out of touch (i.e., over the sideline). As a defender, this tactic allowed her to direct her teammates up the field and closer to the opponent's goal, which resulted in an offensive advantage. At the time of the study Rachel was 16 years old and was in grade eleven. She was also participating in high school volleyball, badminton and soccer, and was involved in other non-sport related extracurricular activities, such as student's council. She also played competitive basketball in a city league. At the time of the study, she had a serious boyfriend and they had been dating for several months.

Soccer was very important to Rachel. She stated that "this year I think I got to a level where I love it even more than I ever did" [Background Interview] She later said the following about her soccer aspirations:

I want to bring this team far, like as far as we can go, like if we can become provincial champions I would love it *so* much. It would be so great to be able to say that. It is something that I love so much. We actually could do that. Our team is really, really good and I just want to do really well with this team. [Interview #2]

Rachel did mention however, that soccer is another world since none of her friends from school were on the soccer team.

It's kind of a release from everything else for me. Like it does stress me out, but not as much as school does. [Member Check Interview]

Rachel was the youngest of two children. Her older brother was not involved in sport, but instead played guitar in a few bands. Her Dad was a civil servant and was also one of the coaches of the team. Her Mom was also a civil servant. Both of her parents were very active in sport. They played soccer and hockey and exercised regularly. Her parents have been separated since Rachel was eight years old, but have a very good relationship. Rachel lived at home with her

Mom and brother. Rachel's parents were very supportive of her with respect to soccer and the other sports that she played. Her Dad often drove her back and forth from soccer events and basketball events so that she could participate in both.

Stress and Coping Profile

A key issue for Rachel was that while stress can make her frustrated and upset, she often saw potential stressors as challenges that helped her perform at a higher level.

With respect to negative aspects of competition and training stressors, Rachel noted that meeting the expectations of herself and her coaches were key stressors. She also experienced a great deal of stress about important games.

Much of Rachel's stress stemmed from team dynamic issues. For example, she felt a great deal of stress regarding her teammates. This occurred when her teammates exhibited a lack of commitment and focus and when the team was under performing. She also felt some stress around her role as assistant captain, particularly when expected to talk to her teammates about some of the above issues. The final stressor in the team dynamics category occurred when Rachel wanted, but did not receive positive feedback from the coaches.

Rachel also experienced a great deal of stress in her life outside of sport. These stressors were included in the personal struggles category and included balancing club soccer with her other commitments, her relationship with her boyfriend, and meeting her own expectations with respect to school and her grades.

Rachel was considered an effective copier and used a lot of different coping strategies to help her deal with stress. Important behavioral strategies for Rachel included discussing or venting about a stressful situation with her teammates, with her boyfriend, or in her personal journal. These latter two strategies were unique to Rachel. She also avoided others or the stressor, got

organized and followed a plan, and if she was experiencing anxiety before a soccer event she engaged in a good warm-up to cope with this stress. Rachel distracted herself with music and also used soccer as a way to distract herself from stressors outside of the soccer environment. Important emotional release strategies for Rachel included crying and yelling in frustration. Changing her focus in an effort to forget about the stressor and putting things in perspective were found to be important thought control strategies for Rachel. Key task focus strategies included working hard and not giving up, and getting reassurance from teammates. Finally, she used the emotional control strategies of focusing on her breathing and visualizing. These latter three strategies (i.e., getting reassurance from teammates, focusing on breathing and visualizing) were unique to Rachel.

Rachel did not give a lot of insight into how her coping strategies originated, but did cite her parents as potential influences.

Jackie

Athlete Profile

Jackie has played competitive soccer since she was 6 years old. The position she normally played was wing-half in the outdoor season, and midfield or forward when playing indoor soccer. At the time of the study Jackie was 15 years old and in grade ten. She also participated in high school volleyball and soccer and she was involved in other non-sport related extracurricular activities, such as the school fashion show. Jackie also used to participate in dance and gymnastics, but gave these activities up to focus on soccer. Sport and in particular soccer was very important to her and she took it very seriously.

When my Mom first put me into it, like a long time ago when I was 6, I just kept playing because I developed a real passion for it. I love the intensity and I love running. I just love

everything about soccer. The team play is good. I like playing with the team. I've just always liked it. I've always played it so I just developed such a passion for it. [Member Check Interview]

Jackie was the youngest of four children. The sibling closest to Jackie in age was her brother. He played competitive rugby in England. Her two older sisters used to play competitive sport also, but were no longer involved. Her Dad worked in the insurance industry, and her Mom worked in a local restaurant. Jackie's parents were supportive of her. Her Mom participated in the fundraising Bingo nights on a regular basis and other team fundraising activities.

Stress and Coping Profile

Jackie felt stressed whenever she was nervous, anxious, worried or frustrated. Nevertheless, she also saw stress as something that could make her determined or that could motivate her to perform at a higher level.

When asked about stress, Jackie stated that "*a lot of it is soccer*" indicating that soccer was very stressful for her [Background Interview]. She also stated that the stress she experienced in soccer made the sport a lot less fun for her. Thus, Jackie had many important stressors in the negative aspects of competition and training category, as well as the team dynamic issues category.

With respect to the negative aspects of competition and training category, many of Jackie's stressors were centered on evaluative issues. For example, Jackie experienced a great deal of stress about meeting the soccer expectations of herself, her coaches, and her teammates. She also became stressed when the team competed in final games or important games.

Team dynamic issues were also important sources of stress for Jackie. For example, she felt a great deal of stress with respect to her responsibility to the team, which was inherent in the

position (i.e., winghalf) that she played. The coaches supported the fact that her position carried a lot of pressure. Jackie also became stressed when her coaches gave her constructive criticism and when she perceived them to be uncaring. This occurred, for example, when they didn't want to listen to what she had to say.

Many important stressors were found for Jackie in the personal struggles category. For example, during the outdoor season Jackie injured her ankle and foot. This injury caused her to miss at least six weeks of the season including two major tournaments and it was a constant source of stress for her. Outside of soccer, evaluative issues were stressors for Jackie as well, especially exams, tests, and assignments in school. Other stressors included ongoing relationship issues with a friend, and trying to balance her club soccer commitments with her other activities.

Jackie was deemed by her coaches to use effective coping strategies most of the time, but the coaches believed she had just moved into the group of effective copers prior to the start of the study. Jackie used a variety of coping strategies to help her deal with her stress.

With respect to behavioral strategies, a unique strategy for Jackie involved discussing or venting with the researcher. She also distracted herself, usually by talking on the phone, and avoided the stressor. Other important strategies included attacking the source of her stress by studying for tests and exams and attending physiotherapy sessions to cope with her injury. Another unique coping strategy for Jackie was found in the emotional release category. This strategy involved being snappy or short with people. Important thought control strategies for Jackie included positive self-talk, rational self-talk and putting things in perspective. During a game situation she used the task focus strategy of working hard and not giving up even though she may have been discouraged. She also got reassurance from the coaches, especially when she was feeling burnt out and was thinking about quitting soccer. Jackie also used two unique

emotional control strategies: (a) touching herself and/or readjusting her uniform, and (b) making jokes/laughing/using humor.

Jackie did not give a lot of insight into how her coping strategies originated, but she did cite a type of trial and error process. If the strategy worked she then continued to use it in the future.

Jane

Athlete Profile

Jane first started playing recreational soccer when she was four years old and competitive soccer when she was eight years old. Her Dad was one of her first coaches. Jane played mostly in the midfield in the indoor season and in the center back midfield position in outdoor soccer. At the time of the study Jane was 16 years old and in grade eleven. She also participated in the ski club at her high school. Although Jane stated that soccer could be stressful (discussed below), she played soccer mostly “to get out and have fun instead of doing school and homework” [Background Interview].

With respect to birth order, Jane was the third of four children. All of her siblings have been involved in competitive sport or were still involved in some capacity. Her two oldest siblings went away for university and no longer lived at home. Her Dad, a Ph.D., traveled extensively, but attended games regularly when he was in town. Her Mom worked in the Information Technology industry and rarely attended games. Jane’s Dad contributed financially to the team and both of her parents attended out-of-town soccer tournaments. Her Mom prioritized family ahead of Jane’s participation in soccer though and Jane missed several Sunday practices because her Mom insisted that she stay home for family dinners.

Stress and Coping Profile

Jane described stress as “when a bunch of things come together that bother you, frustrates you. It takes the fun out of everything when you are stressed” [Background Interview]. She viewed stress as frustration, nervousness, anxiety and worry. However, she also noted that stress can be positive. While she may have viewed stress as something positive that motivated her in other environments (e.g., school), she often shut down or gave up when faced with stress on the soccer field.

The category, negative aspects of competition and training included many important stressors for Jane. For example, meeting her own soccer expectations and the soccer expectations of her coaches were found to be key stressors. In addition, it was believed that meeting the soccer expectations of her parents and her teammates were also important stressors. This finding was not conclusive, however, as Jane made a few contradictory statements about meeting the expectations of her parents and teammates. Information collected during the member check interview supported the fact that Jane found that meeting the soccer expectations of her teammates and parents, specifically her Dad, were major sources of stress. Important games and getting benched (i.e., losing playing time) were also found to be stressful for Jane.

Team dynamic issues were also important stressors for Jane. For example, tryouts were particularly stressful because she was unsure about her status on the team due to new players coming out for the team. Jane also experienced a great deal of stress when her teammates criticized her by yelling on the field.

Jane experienced a great deal of stress in the personal struggles category. She suffered two injuries during the season and experienced a great deal of stress about not being able to play and about disappointing others. Other important stressors for Jane were meeting the school

expectations of her parents and evaluative events in school. Once again Jane made contradictory comments about tests, exams, and assignments not being stressful. This issue was investigated further in the member check interview. Jane stated that she tried not to get stressed about evaluative events in school, but that she did, particularly right before the event (i.e., the night before an exam or in class before a test).

The coaches felt that Jane's performance in games deteriorated markedly when she was unable to cope. Also, they noted that she regularly coped by blaming teammates, and making excuses. These issues lead the coaches to designate Jane as a less effective copier. She used a variety of both effective and less effective coping strategies, however. These will be discussed next.

Jane used the behavioral strategies of discussing or venting with her teammates and avoiding others or the stressor. When dealing with school stress, Jane attacked the source of her stress by studying hard for any evaluative events, such as tests and exams. Although this was discussed only a few times, further information collected in the member check interview supported the importance of this coping strategy for Jane. Jane frequently used emotional release strategies. For example, she often yelled at her teammates when stressed on the soccer field. She also used the strategy of crying.

The other important strategies for Jane were changing her focus (thought control strategy), giving up and getting reassurance from coaches (task focus strategies). It was concluded that with respect to soccer, Jane used very few effective strategies (e.g., change focus) in the immediate moment that the stressful event occurred.

Jane often cited her parents as key influences on the way she behaved and in the origin of her coping strategies. Jane also believed that she learned to cope by drawing on past experiences where she successfully used a particular coping strategy.

Kellie

Athlete Profile

Kellie's introduction to soccer occurred at ten years of age when she played for one year on a recreational team. When she was eleven years old, she played competitive soccer on what she termed, "the bad team." The next year, she tried out for and made the competitive club soccer team with whom she presently played. Kellie used to play in the sweeper position, but now played in the wing fullback position. She preferred her new position because:

With sweeper you are the last man back so there is so much pressure on you. Then if someone beats you, it is just her and the keeper and no one expects the keeper to stop it, so I like it (fullback) better. There is not that much pressure anymore because you have someone behind you, you always have someone backing you up, and when you are sweeper you have no one. [Background Interview]

Kellie was one of the assistant captains on the team. Kellie was 15 when the study started, and turned 16 midway through the data collection. She was in grade 10 at the time of the study. She coached soccer for seven and eight year old girls and volunteered at a local hospital one evening per week. Kellie did not participate in high school sports, although she used to figure skate and dance. She stated that she quit figure skating a while ago, but left dance within the last year because she "didn't love it as much as soccer" [Background Interview]. She took soccer very seriously and had the following to say about her involvement:

I want to succeed in soccer and I want to do well and I want our team to do well and I have so much fun with this so, like I am having fun either way. There is going to be disappointments with everything and that's ok with me. I want to play soccer for a long time. [Interview #6]

Kellie was the youngest of two children. Her older brother was also involved in competitive sport. Her Dad, a senior police officer, and her Mom, an office administrator, divided their time between attending the events of both their children, with Kellie's Dad usually going to her brother's events and her Mom usually attending hers. When Kellie and her brother didn't have events at the same time, both her parents tried to attend. Kellie's parents were very supportive of her and she had a very positive relationship with them. Kellie's Mom also helped out with the fundraising Bingo nights on a regular basis.

Stress and Coping Profile

For Kellie, stress was nervousness, anxiety and worry. She also described stress as frustration and when she was angry or "pissed off."

Kellie said, "I don't really have that much stress day-to-day. I have stress in soccer, ... my only stress comes from soccer" [Background Interview]. In the member check interview Kellie was asked to compare her soccer stress with stress from other activities in her life. She stated that school stress will "always be around" and that outdoor soccer was very stressful because it is such a big part of her life.

Researcher: So soccer is more stressful for you than the other areas of your life?

Kellie: Yeah, yeah, I guess so, yeah. Because I want to do well in it, that's why. It's almost like I make it a stress because I want to do so well in it so I kind of force myself to get so hyped up about it, do you know what I mean? [Member Check Interview]

With respect to negative aspects of competition and training stressors, Kellie noted that meeting the expectations of herself, her coaches, her parents, her teammates and others connected to the soccer community were key stressors. She said that she was constantly trying to impress others and that this sometimes contributed to a loss of concentration during a game and negatively impacted on her performance.

Kellie: I would just get so wrapped up in trying to impress everybody and trying to do everything that everybody said because everybody would be yelling stuff at you. You are trying to do everything that everybody said and you absolutely lose focus because you are not focusing on what is happening in the game. You are focusing on, “ok I have to do this and then I can’t do this because she told me not to do this” because I was trying to impress everybody. I was trying to do what everybody said.

Researcher: Ok. So would you say that you were focused on your stress and because of that your performance decreased?

Kellie: Yeah, yeah.

Researcher: You would agree with that?

Kellie: Yeah. [Interview #2]

She also experienced a great deal of stress about important games and about impressing scouts.

Much of Kellie’s stress stemmed from team dynamic issues. For example, she felt a great deal of stress regarding her teammates. This occurred when her teammates exhibited a lack of commitment and focus and when the team was generally under performing. As a defender, she also felt stress about the responsibilities of her position on the field as a defender. Receiving criticism from her teammates in the form of yelling, and her coaches were also important

stressors. She also experienced a great deal of stress regarding the tryout sessions and how the new players could change the team dynamics.

With respect to personal struggles, Kellie experienced a great deal of stress due to her ankle injury. She was unable to play during important events and felt that when she did return to competition, she did not play up to her standards. She also felt a great deal of pain and she worried about disappointing others. Other stressors included evaluative events (e.g., report cards, tests, exams) in school and stress associated with meeting the school expectations of herself and her parents.

Like Jane, Kellie was deemed to be a less effective copier. The coaches stated that Kellie was an outstanding talent in training sessions, but was unable to perform to her potential in game situations. Nevertheless, Kellie used a variety of coping strategies to help her deal with her stress.

The most important behavioral strategy for Kellie, and probably her most important strategy overall was discussing/venting about the situation with her Mom and her teammates. Other important behavioral strategies included distracting herself from her non-soccer stressors by participating in club soccer, and avoiding stressors/others not related to school. She did attack her school stress by studying. She also got organized and followed a plan. Finally, to help her deal with soccer anxiety before a competitive event, she followed a good warm-up routine.

Important emotional release strategies included crying and cursing, which she did either in her head or under her breath. Kellie also used a variety of thought control strategies such as changing her focus, engaging in positive self-talk, focusing on positive aspects of her performance and praying. The latter two strategies were unique to Kellie. Finally, important task focus strategies included working hard and not giving up and encouraging her teammates. Kellie

noted that all of her coping strategies had varying degrees of success, and she stated on several occasions that some of these above strategies did not help her cope effectively.

Throughout the study, Kellie cited her parents, especially her Mom as a key influence on the way she behaved and in the origin of her coping strategies. She talked about her Mom “rubbing off on her” [Background Interview]. Kellie also believed that she learned her coping strategies through experience whereby she used coping strategies during the present study that she had successfully used in the past.

Cross-Case and Within-Case Research Question Summaries

1. What does Stress Mean to Female Adolescent Athletes?

Potentially stressful situations occur on a regular basis. Not all situations, however, cause individuals to experience stress. The first research question was posed to obtain information about the perceptions of stress and the types of situations female adolescent athletes perceive as stressful.

The athletes considered themselves to be stressed when they were frustrated, nervous, anxious, worried, upset or angry. The athletes also felt that stressful situations occurred in the soccer context and in their everyday lives. Heather noted, “stress is how you feel when you have way too much on your plate” [Background Interview]. Thus, the athletes experienced stress when they felt overwhelmed. For example, when the athletes experienced soccer stress and were unable to deal with it effectively, their performance deteriorated.

Yeah it definitely suffers. Because when somebody is yelling that is discouraging me so it's going to lower my level of performance. [Jackie – Interview #2]

A discussion between myself and one of the coaches (Bren) further supports the athletes' decrease in performance when unable to effectively cope with their stress.

After Bren arrived I sat with him for a minute. He told me that Jane had a really terrible tournament and that Kellie also struggled in parts. He said that Kellie's marking was off and that when she got beat, she could only get up to half speed. He said that her performance decreased and she couldn't seem to get out of her slump. [Field Notes – July 6, 1999]

Not all potentially stressful situations however, caused the athletes to experience stress. The three athletes who were deemed to use effective coping strategies on a regular basis (i.e., Heather, Jackie and Rachel) stated that they often saw potentially stressful situations in soccer as challenges and became motivated to work hard and meet the imposed challenge. When discussing nervousness before games, Heather stated the following:

I think this year I am motivated by my team. Like my teammates want to succeed and I want to too. So this year I don't want to disappoint the team by letting in goals. I have always hated letting in goals, but this year I am more motivated to keep the ball out of the net so my team can succeed more. [Heather – On-site interview]

Jackie explained how benching could motivate her to perform at a higher level:

Yeah, I'll be like, 'Ok I know I haven't been doing well. This means I am going to have to try harder, so when he (the coach) puts me on I'll be ready to go.' So then I am just like ready to go. [Jackie – Interview #2]

Two of the athletes deemed to use effective coping strategies on a regular basis, Heather and Rachel, also saw potentially stressful situations regarding school as challenges and though they may have initially felt some stress, they were determined to meet these challenges and succeed. For example, when Heather received bad grades, she became motivated to study hard for her exam. In another example, Rachel had a very difficult time with a science course and initially became frustrated. She then decided to try even harder and went to the teacher for extra help

every morning before school started so that she could go over the course material. She received a grade of 89% for this course on her first report card.

With respect to Jane and Kellie (the two athletes deemed to use less effective coping strategies most of the time), they both stated that potentially stressful situations in soccer could be positive. For example, Kellie noted that if you were angry with an opposing player it could help you to get more motivated and play better. However, she spoke about this situation in very general terms and made reference to this situation with a teammate and not herself. For this reason, it was concluded that Kellie did not actually perceive soccer stressors as challenges. Jane stated that stress could be positive and that “it pushes you to be the best that you can” (Background Interview). She discussed tryouts and how she perceived this potentially stressful situation as a challenge. She felt that new players coming to the team would have a positive impact on her because it would motivate her to work hard.

I think it's a good thing to feel threatened a bit because then the coach knows that you really care. If I play a lot harder, he'll know that I am worth playing that position, so I think it is a good thing. [Jane – Interview #2]

When new players actually came to tryout however, Jane could not perform. The following information reflects how Jane coped by giving up during a tryout session.

Duane told me that Marilyn was out from another team. He told me that Jane just shut down and went through the session like a zombie. ... Duane found out that Jane hates Marilyn because she is convinced that she will take her job (position) on the team. ... Duane said that Jane's performance drastically decreased at the session and she had in effect given up. He said that if it looked like Jane could not do a certain skill, she would turn her head so that

she wasn't looking at the ball and would therefore have an excuse for performing poorly.

[Field Notes – March 30, 1999]

The following information is another example of the inconsistency between Jane's words and actions regarding an indoor game against the Women's Canadian National Champion Team.

Some of the girls looked extremely nervous – Jane, Hillary, Kylie. ... Duane later told me that Jane already had the deer in the headlights look and I had noticed this myself. She just kind of stared blankly and looked like she was really anxious. [Field Notes – January 15, 1999]

I followed up on this observation at the next morning's practice with the coaches.

In later conversation with the coaches, they both said, ... Jane was quite nervous and this was reflected in her play. [Field Notes – January 16, 1999]

I also wanted to get Jane's perceptions so I had a phone conversation with Jane in the evening.

I asked her (Jane) how she felt during last night's game. She said that it was fun and that it was a good experience. She said she wasn't scared about anything when I asked her if she was. She did say that she felt kind of intimidated, but that she actually kind of felt relaxed because the team wasn't expected to win. I asked, 'So you felt like the pressure was off?' and she replied, 'Yeah.' ... I found it odd that she said she wasn't scared and that she said she was relaxed, because outwardly she looked anything but relaxed. She had the deer in the headlight look that the coaches refer to. [Field Notes – January 16, 1999]

I concluded that there was an inconsistency between what Jane said about soccer stress being sometimes positive and how she dealt with it. She did not rise to the challenge – instead she gave up. It did not motivate her to perform at a high level, but caused her to shut down and play

poorly. Nevertheless, Jane did view potentially stressful situations regarding school as challenges and became motivated by them. The following example supported this statement.

If I did bad (on a test or exam) then I'm like, 'I'll work harder.' [Jane – Interview #2]

Summary of Meanings of Stress

In conclusion, all five athletes considered themselves to be stressed when they were frustrated, nervous, anxious, worried, upset or angry and noted that stressful situations occurred in the soccer context and in their everyday lives. However, the athletes that were deemed to use effective coping strategies most of the time sometimes saw potentially stressful situations in soccer (i.e., Heather, Rachel and Jackie) and school (i.e., Heather and Rachel) as challenges and became motivated to work hard and meet the imposed challenges. The two athletes deemed to use less effective strategies most of the time (i.e., Jane and Kellie), did not share this view with respect to soccer, but there was evidence to support that Jane viewed potentially stressful situations in school, such as tests and exams as challenges.

2. What Everyday or Ambient Stressors do Female Adolescent Athletes Encounter in Sport and in their Daily Lives?

Prior to the presentation of the stressor results, a clarification is warranted. The athlete participants were not competing on a national or international team. Because of this, some may believe that the stress the athletes experienced as a result of their participation in sport would be minimal. However, the athletes did compete at a high intensity level. As discussed in the methodology chapter, the athletes participated in the “Women’s Premier League” during the 1998-1999 indoor season, which was an open age league comprising 12 teams. The level of competition in this indoor league was high; teams included a women’s university team as well as the Women’s two time Canadian National Champion team. During the 1999 outdoor season, the

team competed in the “Female Under 17 League” consisting of eight teams, which was the highest level of competition for the athletes of this age in the region. Furthermore, the team supplemented their league play by participating in eleven tournaments (three indoor and eight outdoor) while I was in the field. The tournaments consisted of local, provincial, national, and international forums of competition.

Information about the athletes’ level of competition illustrates the context and demonstrates the potential for stressful occurrences. However I followed this up by asking the athletes to compare the stress they experienced in soccer to the stress in other areas of their lives. Kellie and Jackie (who almost quit soccer due to the excessive stress she was experiencing) stated that most of their stress came from soccer.

Sometimes I stop and think and ask myself ‘If I don’t really have a lot of fun playing soccer, why am I playing it?’ So I forget that I am supposed to be playing it because I like it. ...

And I mean I do enjoy playing soccer, but I don’t think that me having so much stress is healthy for playing outdoor soccer, do you know what I mean? [Jackie – Interview #3]

The other three athletes, Heather, Rachel and Jane, commented that the most stressful aspect of their lives was school and wanting to do well in their courses. However, these athletes also stated that they experienced a great deal of stress from their participation in soccer because they took it seriously and hoped to achieve success.

After the Clovis United Tournament I realized that it (soccer) meant more to me than I thought it did. ... I always think in the back of my mind concerning the future, like if I want to get a scholarship or if I want to play in university. ... Like I think I have talent. It could lead to something. [Heather – Member Check Interview]

Thus, even though the athletes were not playing on a national or international team, they did compete against other teams of high caliber in their league play and in tournaments. For some athletes, soccer was the most stressful element in their lives, while others noted that school responsibilities were more stressful. However, even those athletes that found school responsibilities to be particularly stressful also noted that soccer contributed a great deal of stress to their lives.

The section of text for each major category (i.e., Negative Aspects of Competition and Training, Team Dynamic Issues, and Personal Struggles) will commence with the presentation of the accompanying organizational system, Figures 1, 2, and 3 respectively. The asterisks beside the Raw Data Themes, the Lower and Higher Order Sub-categories and the Overall Categories refer to the number of athletes for which the coping strategies were important. All of the Categories and Sub-categories will be discussed in detail. However, due to the magnitude of the results, only those Raw Data Themes considered to be important to the athletes will be discussed in detail (see Figure 1). Before continuing, an explanation of importance is warranted.

Studies employing quantitative measures use statistical tests, such as analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests or chi-square tests “to determine how likely it is that the observed characteristics of a sample have occurred by chance (or sampling error) in the populations from which the samples were selected” (Vogt, 1999, p. 264). If it is unlikely that the observed characteristics in the participants were due to a chance occurrence, then it can be concluded that the characteristics are statistically significant. Due to the nature of the data collected in studies employing qualitative measures, there is no equivalent “test” to determine significance or importance.

In an effort to deal with this issue, some researchers employing qualitative measures have used content analysis to analyze the data and then used percentages to discuss the results (e.g.,

Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993; Gould, Udry, Bridges, & Beck, 1997a; James & Collins, 1997, Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991). As discussed in the methodology chapter, these researchers have inferred that themes with high percentages (i.e., themes that were frequently cited by the participants) were important. However, this may not necessarily be the case, and such analyses do not permit one to draw this conclusion.

Consistent with the constructivist perspective guiding the present study, this issue was addressed. Thus the frequency with which the themes, in this case the stressors, were discussed and observed was important, but this alone did not determine importance. Other verbal and non-verbal clues were also taken into consideration, such as the athlete's quality and/or clarity of details and description, the intensity of language used (e.g., "This was *very* stressful."), any accompanying body language (e.g., the athlete shows emotion by crying), and whether the information was triangulated from other sources (e.g., data collected from coaches, journal entries, observations documented in field notes).

Upon examination of the organizational system for the stressor data (Figures 1, 2, and 3) it is apparent that not all stressors included in the Raw Data Themes, and the Lower and Higher Order Sub-categories were important for the athletes. When presenting the results of quantitative measures, the researchers include both significant and non-significant findings. This strategy has also been employed in the present study. The non-important stressors will only be discussed briefly in the text due to their non-important status but are included in the organizational framework for two main reasons. First, although not considered to be important, the athletes discussed these stressors at various times throughout the data collection period. They were not as critical as the important stressors, however, because: (a) the athletes' verbal and non-verbal clues were weak, (b) when discussing the stressors the athletes did not go into great detail, (c) there

was no accompanying body language, and (d) when asked, the athletes noted that although the stressors occurred, the athletes did not consider them to be very stressful. Second, inclusion of both the important and the non-important stressors provides the reader with a more complete portrait of the stressors experienced by the athletes.

Furthermore, stressors that were found to be important for only one athlete (e.g., meeting soccer expectations of others) were also included in the organizational system. These unique, but important stressors have been highlighted for two main reasons. First, the present study was guided by the constructivist perspective, which emphasized the significance of voice. Thus, the fact that a stressor was important made it worthy of discussion regardless of whether it was important for all five athletes or only one. Second, a case study approach was used and each athlete was considered a case. This necessitated that I be sensitive to cross-case results, as well as within-case results. As noted by Stake (1994), researchers working from a case study approach “seek out both what is common and what is particular” (p. 238) about the cases under study. The results related to the stressor data and the organizational system will now be presented.

Negative Aspects of Competition and Training

The Negative Aspects of Competition and Training category was defined as experiencing negative thoughts and feelings associated with training and the competitive process. All five athletes cited that negative aspects of competition and training were important stressors for them. Five higher order sub-categories were included in the Negative Aspects of Competition and Training category: performance expectations, worries about competition, competitive hurdles, competitive failure, and performance review.

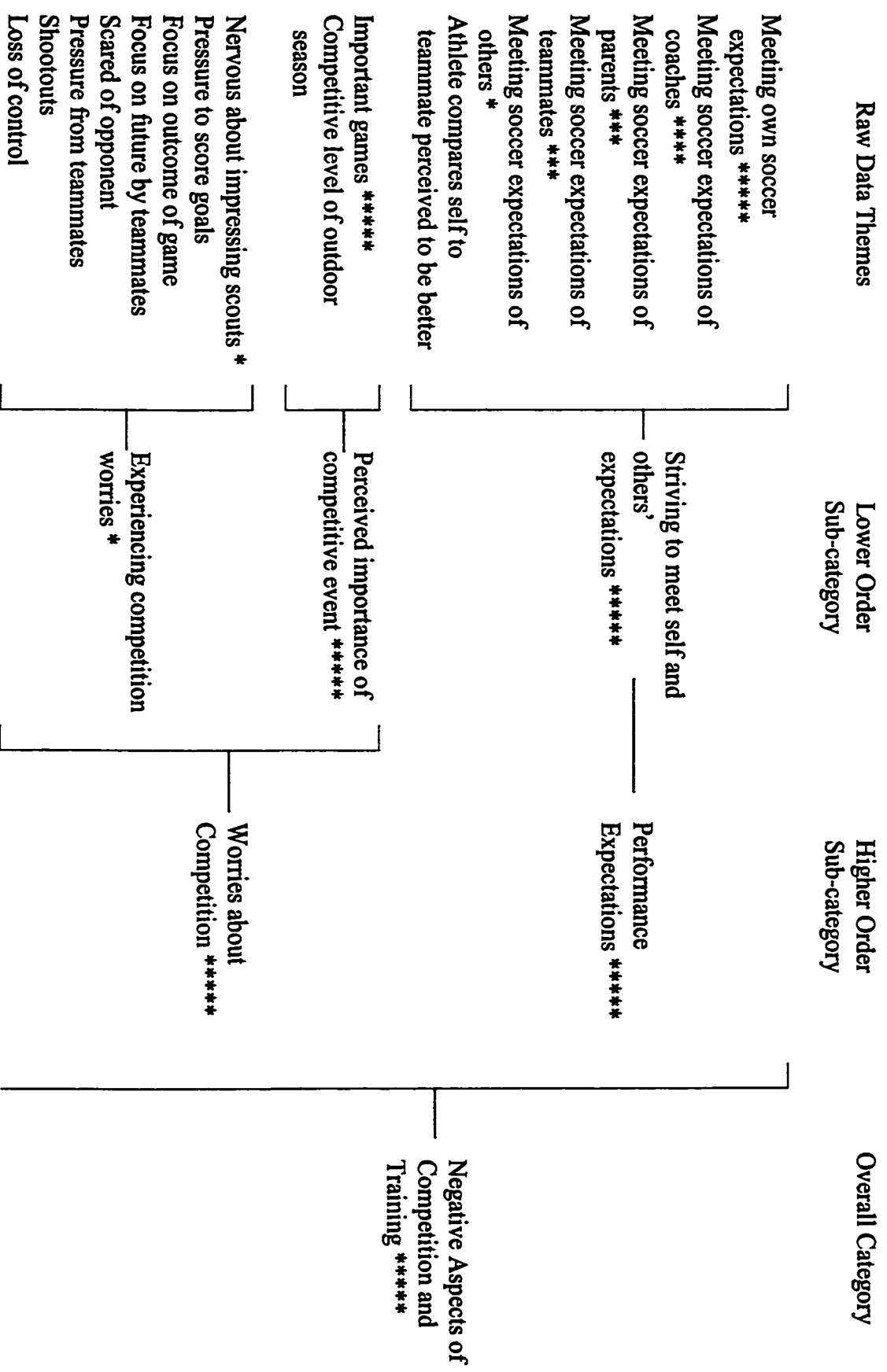


Figure 1. Organizational system for negative aspects of competition and training data

The number of asterisks indicate the number of athletes for which the stressor was important (i.e., five asterisks indicate that a stressor was important for five athletes).

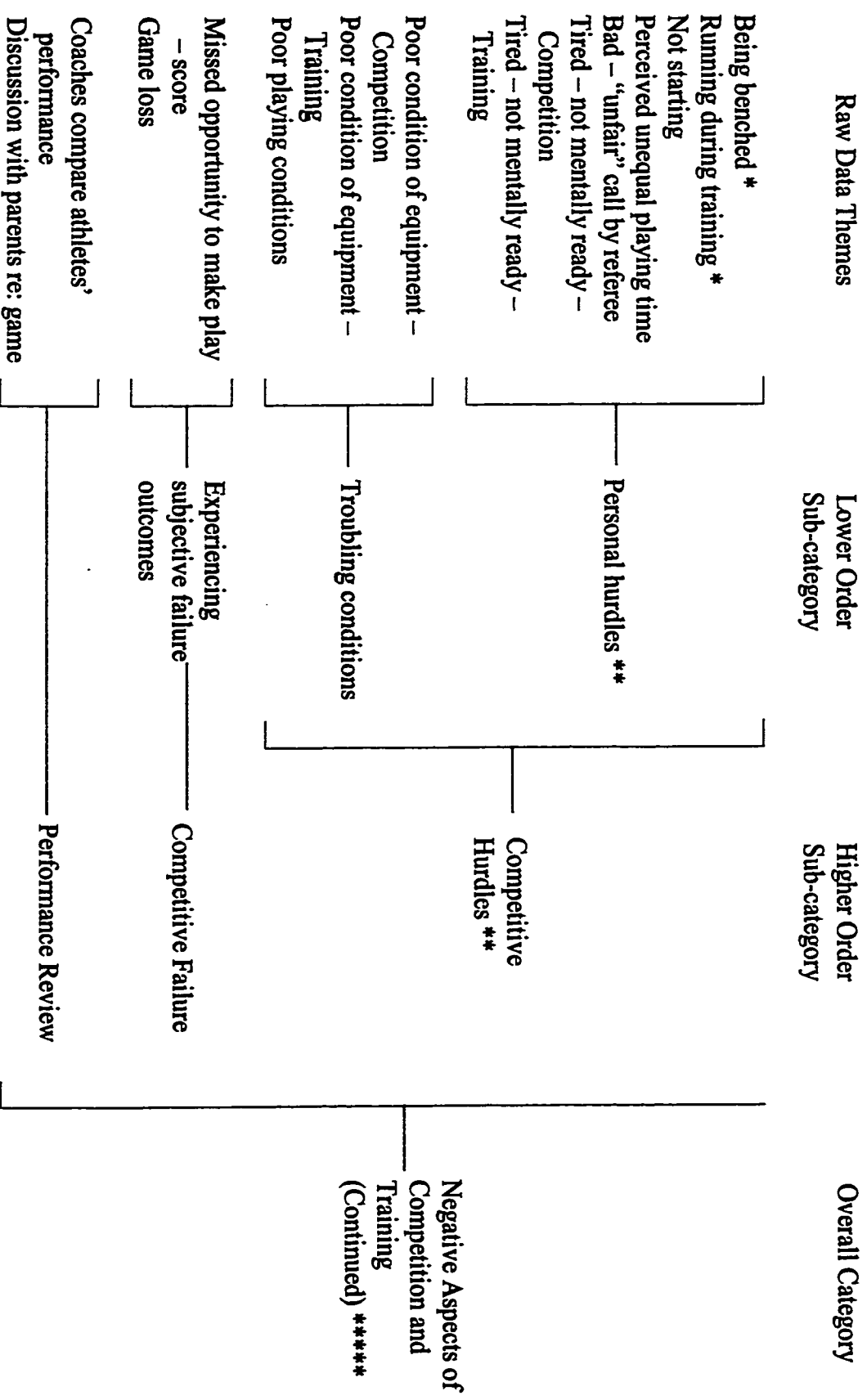


Figure 1 (continued). Organizational system for negative aspects of competition and training data

The number of asterisks indicate the number of athletes for which the stressor was important (i.e., five asterisks indicate that a stressor was important for five athletes).

Performance Expectations

The higher order sub-category stressor labeled performance expectations was important for all five athletes. This stressor was defined as the athletes striving to meet their own expectations concerning their soccer performance, as well as the expectations of significant others. One lower order sub-category was included (striving to meet self and others' expectations).

Striving to meet self and others' expectations. This lower order sub-category comprised six raw data themes: meeting own expectations, meeting the expectations of coaches, parents, teammates, and others connected to the soccer community, and feelings of stress associated with the athlete comparing herself to a teammate perceived to be a better soccer player. The important stressors will be discussed next and will be supported with quotes from the athletes whenever possible.

The most important stressor within performance expectations was self-imposed. All five athletes noted that they experienced a great deal of stress with respect to meeting their own expectations concerning their soccer performance. As the goalkeeper, Heather explained that she expected to keep the ball out of the net and she became stressed when the opposing team scored on her.

I always go to the game looking to not let goals in. ... I always try to block out the fact that I might let in goals. I always do that. I never want to let goals in. ... That's when I get mad is when the goals start going in. That's when I start losing it. [Heather – Member Check Interview]

In a second example, Kellie explained how she used an outstanding performance in one game (against Lincoln) to compare subsequent performances. Because she was unable to perform at

the high level she achieved in the Lincoln game consistently, meeting her own expectations became a critical source of stress.

Everything is going back to that stupid game against Lincoln. Now my standards, I'm trying to set them, they are so high. And like every game, I just feel so bad after every game because I want to do so well and then I am not achieving that so it's making me upset.

[Kellie – Interview #5]

Four of the athletes, Rachel, Jackie, Kellie and Jane, also cited that meeting the expectations of the coaches was a principal stressor.

There is so much pressure on me to play well so, and the coaches sometimes wonder why I am not playing well, they are just like, 'What happened?' And there is so much pressure on us out there because we know if we are not playing well we are going to be taken off. [Jane – Interview #5]

Unfortunately, striving to meet the expectations of the coaches was something that the athletes stressed about throughout their entire soccer career.

I am always like, 'Ok I have got to impress him more' even though he's been my coach for eight years and I think he knows how I play now, it still stresses (me out). [Rachel – Interview #2]

Striving to meet the expectations of teammates was an important stressor for three of the athletes. Interestingly enough these three athletes were the two athletes deemed be less effective copers (i.e., Jane and Kellie) and Jackie who, according to the coaches, had recently moved from being a less effective copper to an effective copper prior to the start of the present study.

I get stressed about ... letting the team down or causing a goal. I get stressed about little things like if the goalie may not think that I could be doing my best and then I am not

moving around for her to let her give the ball to me or whatever. I worry about that. [Jackie – Background Interview]

Two athletes, Heather and Kellie cited that meeting the expectations of their parents was an important source of stress.

I always want to make my parents proud of me. They don't mean to put pressure on me, but you know you kind of always have that feeling that they want you to succeed and it's kind of pressure because you want to do well for them. [Kellie – Interview #6]

Meeting the expectations of their teammates' parents was also a key stressor.

I do care what the parents think of me and that's also stressful. If I am not playing well, that usually goes through my mind, 'Oh no the parents, they're not going to think that I am good anymore.' ... Like it's paranoia stuff, but that's another stress. [Heather – Background Interview]

A third athlete, Jane cited that she also felt stress with respect to meeting the expectations of parents.

Jane looked like a zombie that day and played like one too. Duane pointed out that Jane's Dad was there that night and we talked about the difference in her performance when her Dad is there and when he isn't. She seems more relaxed when her Dad is not there and tends to play better also. [Field Notes – January 31, 1999]

This observation was supported by Jane's comments. In the following quotation she explained how meeting the expectations of the parents, both her own and those of her teammates, was a critical source of stress.

Jane: Everybody expects us to win.

Researcher: Is that a stressor for you?

Jane: Yeah, a lot. ... The parents pretty much expect us to win because they know that we have a winning team. [Jane – Interview #3]

Jane later stated, however, that she didn't feel pressure from her parents regarding her soccer performance.

I don't feel pressure at all from my parents because my Dad just encourages me. He never, ever puts me down. So I think that's very good for me because it doesn't, he always makes me seem like I am better than I am and sometimes I guess people wouldn't agree, like that's not a good thing to do, but for me it is. [Jane – Interview #5]

Because of the above inconsistencies, I followed up on this during the member check interview. I asked Jane if she saw any connection to her Dad being at the games and her performance (i.e., she tended to play better when he was not there). She stated that she didn't notice this phenomenon at all. She also stated that her Dad encouraged her "as much as he can because he knows that I can't work under pressure." However, she did say that it was stressful when her Dad compared her performance to that of her teammates. Because of my observations regarding Jane's stress with respect to meeting the expectations of the parents, specifically her Dad, and the supporting information in the interview data, it was concluded that meeting the expectations of parents was a critical source of stress for Jane.

Meeting the expectations of others in the soccer community was an important source of stress for only one athlete – Kellie. She stated that she was always worried about what other people thought of her soccer performance.

Journal Statement: Today I felt stressed when ...

Kellie's Entry: I was at the coaching session and I wanted to impress everyone. [Kellie – March 26, 1999 Journal Entry]

Worries about Competition

This stressor was defined as experiencing stress, often nervousness, anxiety or frustration, at or about a competitive event. All five athletes cited that they felt stress regarding worries about competition. The worries about competition higher order sub-category included two lower order sub-categories: perceived importance of the competitive event and experiencing competition worries.

Perceived importance of the competitive event. All five athletes cited that the perceived importance of the competitive event was an important source of stress for them. This sub-category included two raw data themes: important games and the competitive level of the outdoor season. Though the competitive level of the outdoor season was a source of stress, important games elicited a great deal of stress from the athletes and was considered important for all five athletes. Important games occurred when the team faced tough opponents in tournaments and in their league play, when they reached the semi-final and final rounds in tournaments and when they were in sudden death situations. For example, the team competed in a tournament in which the winner would be named the Provincial Champion for their age group. This was a very prestigious and important tournament to the athletes. It was stressful for them, however, because it followed a sudden death format. In the first stage, the team competed in a regional round robin tournament with three other teams. The winner of this mini-tournament advanced to the next round of play, and all other teams were eliminated. Over the course of the first round, the team won only one game and tied two other games. Unfortunately, this was not enough and the team was eliminated from further play. The following quotation supports important games as a critical stressor for the athletes.

I have been really nervous about the (upcoming tournament). I keep telling myself this is the test for the team. If we win, then we'll know how we can match up against the good teams.

[Heather – end of June, 1999 Journal Entry]

A second quotation is offered as further support for important games as a major source of athletes' stress.

When I think of stress, I think of big soccer games. I always get stressed in big games.

[Kellie – Background Interview]

Experiencing competition worries. This second lower-order sub-category included eight raw data themes: anxiety about impressing scouts, pressure to score goals, a focus on the outcome of the game, a focus on the future by teammates, being scared of the opponent, pressure from teammates, shootouts, and a loss of control. Though many of the athletes noted that they felt some stress in these areas, only Kellie experienced significant stress. Kellie discussed her stress regarding scouts and wanting to perform well in front of them.

Everybody has been talking about scouts lately and I am so nervous about that in every tournament. [Kellie – Interview #4]

Kellie followed up this statement with an entry in her journal.

People said scouts were there and I was scared. [Kellie – July 11, 1999 Journal Entry]

Competitive Hurdles

This higher order sub-category was defined as performance obstacles faced by the athletes. Two lower order sub-categories were included: personal hurdles and troubling conditions.

Personal hurdles. This lower order sub-category included situations during a competitive event or training session that had the potential to cause the athlete stress at an individual level and comprised seven raw data themes. These included being benched, running during training,

not starting, perceived unequal playing time, a bad or “unfair” call by the referee, and when the athlete was tired or not mentally ready for either a competitive event or a training session. The important raw data themes will be discussed next.

With respect to personal hurdles, two raw data themes were found to be critical stressors for two different athletes. For example, benching was a major source of stress for Jane when she was benched and also when other players were benched and she was on the field.

The players that do play, then they feel all stressed and scared because what if the coach takes me off? What if he thinks less of me because I played bad? [Jane – Focus Group]

Some of Jane’s stress about benching was also related to feelings of not meeting the expectations of the coaches.

The coach hasn’t done that often. I am not used to that. But when he did that that one game I got so annoyed and you’d look out on the field when you are benched and you’re like ‘He thinks these players are better than me and all this’ and it really categorizes us. ... I didn’t get benched the whole game, just at the end of the game he wasn’t switching up the lines like he normally did, he would put on specific people and when he didn’t put you on (referring to herself) I felt insulted like, ‘Oh, I’m not good enough.’ [Jane – Interview #2]

Although Jane did get benched in the indoor season, benching as a source of stress became more prevalent in the outdoor season. This is something that she never really had to deal with before this year because the team had only a small number of players. This year, however, the coaches took 17 players for the outdoor season and a new player joined the team that played the same position as Jane.

Jane: It just kind of feels like, just because every time I made a little mistake I was pulled off. I understand why, but it's different than all the other years because there are more people to put in. ...

Bren: It bothers you a great deal when that happens?

Jane: A little bit because in the last game we played, I only played, it felt like I only played 10 minutes the whole game and the first time I got pulled off I understood that I was playing horribly, but the second time I worked my hardest and I still got pulled off and it seemed like I couldn't do anything. [On-site interview with Bren and Jane]

Although Jane stated that this only bothered her a little bit, it actually bothered her a lot. Her journal entry about the incident serves as support for this claim.

Journal Statement: Today I felt stressed when ...

Jane's Entry: I was basically benched because I hurt my ankle again, but the coaches didn't understand that it didn't hurt at all so I didn't get to play and when I did it wasn't my usual position. [Jane – July 17, 1999 Journal Entry]

The second important stressor within the personal hurdles sub-category was the stress that Heather felt with respect to having to run in a practice. Although she did not discuss this issue during our interviews, I observed several instances where Heather gave up and/or made excuses to avoid running during training sessions.

In the scoring drill, the girls were paired up and they had to keep the ball away from their partner and pass the ball through the 'nets' – pylons set up around the gym. I noticed that when Heather got tired, she would kick the ball quite far so that she wouldn't have to stay with it and she would give herself a break from running. [Field Notes – January 9, 1999]

A second example is provided as further support of the claim that Heather gave up and made excuses when required to run during training sessions.

Duane started to tell them that they were going to run Fartlek-style. Heather was complaining and I heard her say, 'It's not that I don't want to run, it's just that I don't want to puke.' [Field Notes – July 8, 1999]

To validate my observations, Heather was asked in the member check interview if running during training was stressful. She stated that training was stressful; particularly the running drills and that she did give up and make excuses to deal with this stress.

Researcher: Training?

Heather: (laughs)

Researcher: What did you think about what I said? (I wrote in the summary report that Heather finds training stressful, specifically running and drills that involve running)

Heather: I think it's true. I have never liked training. Never.

Researcher: So it is stressful?

Heather: Yeah. [Heather – Member Check Interview]

Due to the high number of times that I observed Heather give up and then make excuses, when she was required to run in practice, and support from the member check interview, it was concluded that training (i.e., running) was an important source of stress for Heather.

Troubling conditions. This lower order sub-category was defined as the stressful situations that impacted the athletes as a group during an event and had the potential to hinder their performance. Raw data themes included the poor condition of the equipment during a game or training session (e.g., the ball was soft and needed air, the net had holes in it), and poor playing conditions (e.g., the grass on the field was too long, the field was not level or had potholes

throughout). Because none of these situations were important stressors for the athletes, they will not be discussed in further detail.

Competitive Failure

Competitive failure was defined as being unsuccessful and/or failing with respect to a competitive event. One lower order sub-category was included. The subjective failure outcomes sub-category included two raw data themes: missed opportunity to make play/score and game loss. The athletes noted that they would feel stress if they did not capitalize on a chance to score a goal or missed an opportunity to make a critical play. They also noted that they experienced some stress when they lost games. Nevertheless, these situations were not considered critical for any of the athletes. One reason for this could be that the team was very successful. For example, while I was in the field, the team played 56 games during the outdoor season, but only lost six of them.

Performance Review

Performance review was defined as the athletes' receiving feedback, either positive or negative, about their performance from significant others. Additionally, the athletes' performances were sometimes compared to the performances of their teammates, which were perceived by some (i.e., coaches and parents) to have been more successful. No lower order sub-categories were included, but there were two raw data themes. These included (a) coaches compare athletes' performances, and (b) discussion with parents regarding the game. For example, Jane discussed the stress she felt during a game's half time break in which the coach singled out a teammate and told the rest of the team that they should play like her.

Bren was saying, 'Why can't we all play like Nadine?' I don't think that is the right thing to do at half time, to bring us down further than we already were. [Jane – Interview #5]

Though the athletes did experience some stress in these areas, these situations were not found to be critical.

Team Dynamic Issues

The Team Dynamic Issues category was defined as experiencing the negative thoughts and feelings associated with membership and responsibilities in a team context. All five athletes cited that team dynamic issues were important stressors for them. Six higher order sub-categories were included in the Team Dynamic Issues category: responsibility to team, frustration with teammates, performance criticism, team selection issues, perception disparity, and lack of communication.

Responsibility to Team

This higher order sub-category was defined as experiencing stress, often nervousness, anxiety or frustration, due to the athletes' perceived or expected responsibilities to the team. Four of the athletes cited that they felt stress in this area. No lower order sub-categories were included, but there were three raw data themes: position on field, leadership role, and fitness level.

Three athletes cited that the responsibilities inherent in their position on the field caused them a great deal of stress. Interestingly, the three athletes that cited this as an important stressor played key positions: Kellie played in the sweeper and defender positions, Jackie played left winghalf, and Heather was the goalkeeper (see Appendix J for a description of the responsibilities of these positions).

I am a goalie and I can't miss a game and that's really frustrating for me ... I find that I have a lot of pressure from the coaches for me to always be there. I find that if I can't go to soccer, they'll be like, 'Oh, why not?' and I have to explain myself because I can't miss it because I am the only one person that plays my position. [Heather – Background Interview]

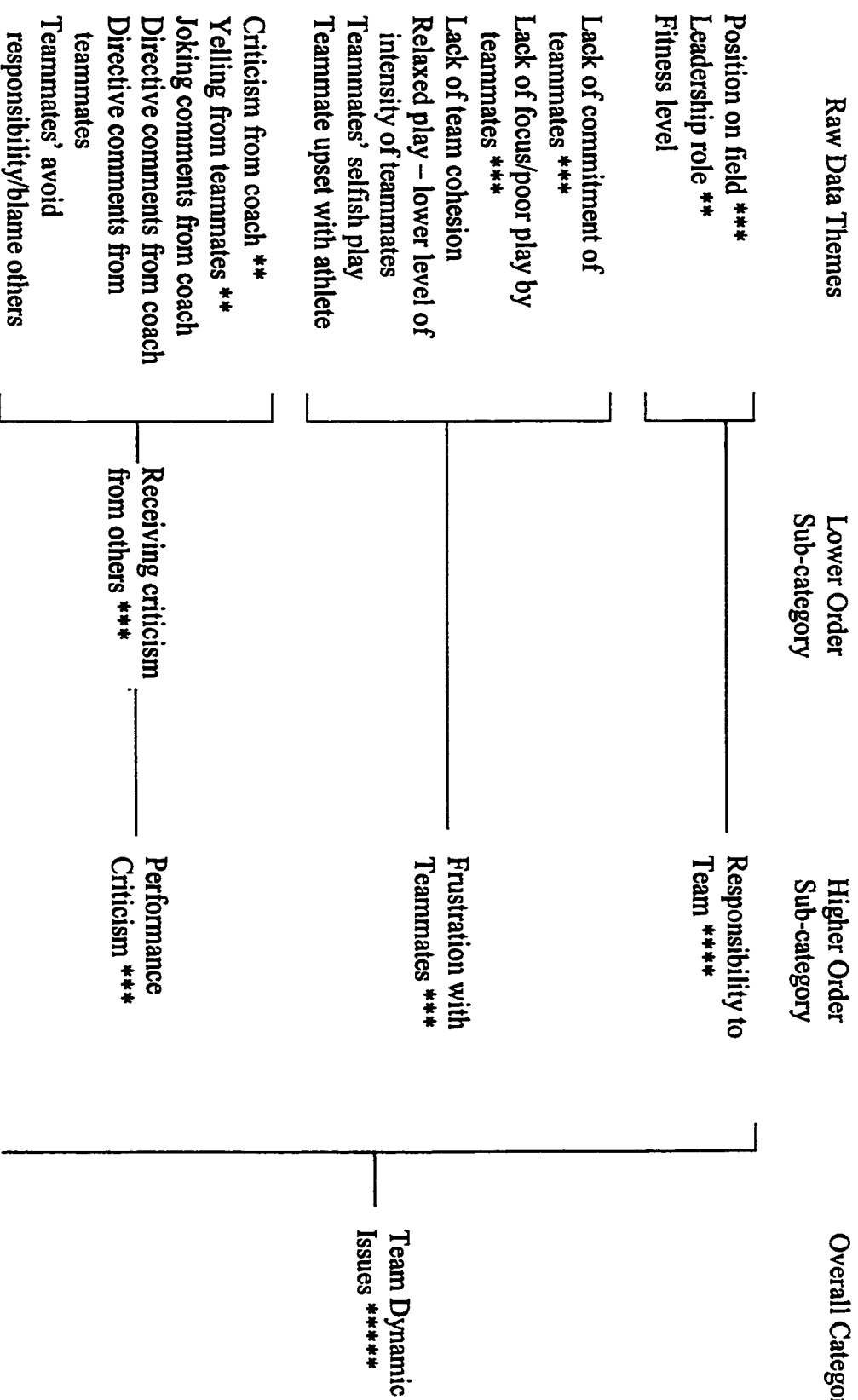


Figure 2. Organizational system for team dynamic issues data

The number of asterisks indicate the number of athletes for which the stressor was important (i.e., five asterisks indicate that a stressor was important for five athletes).

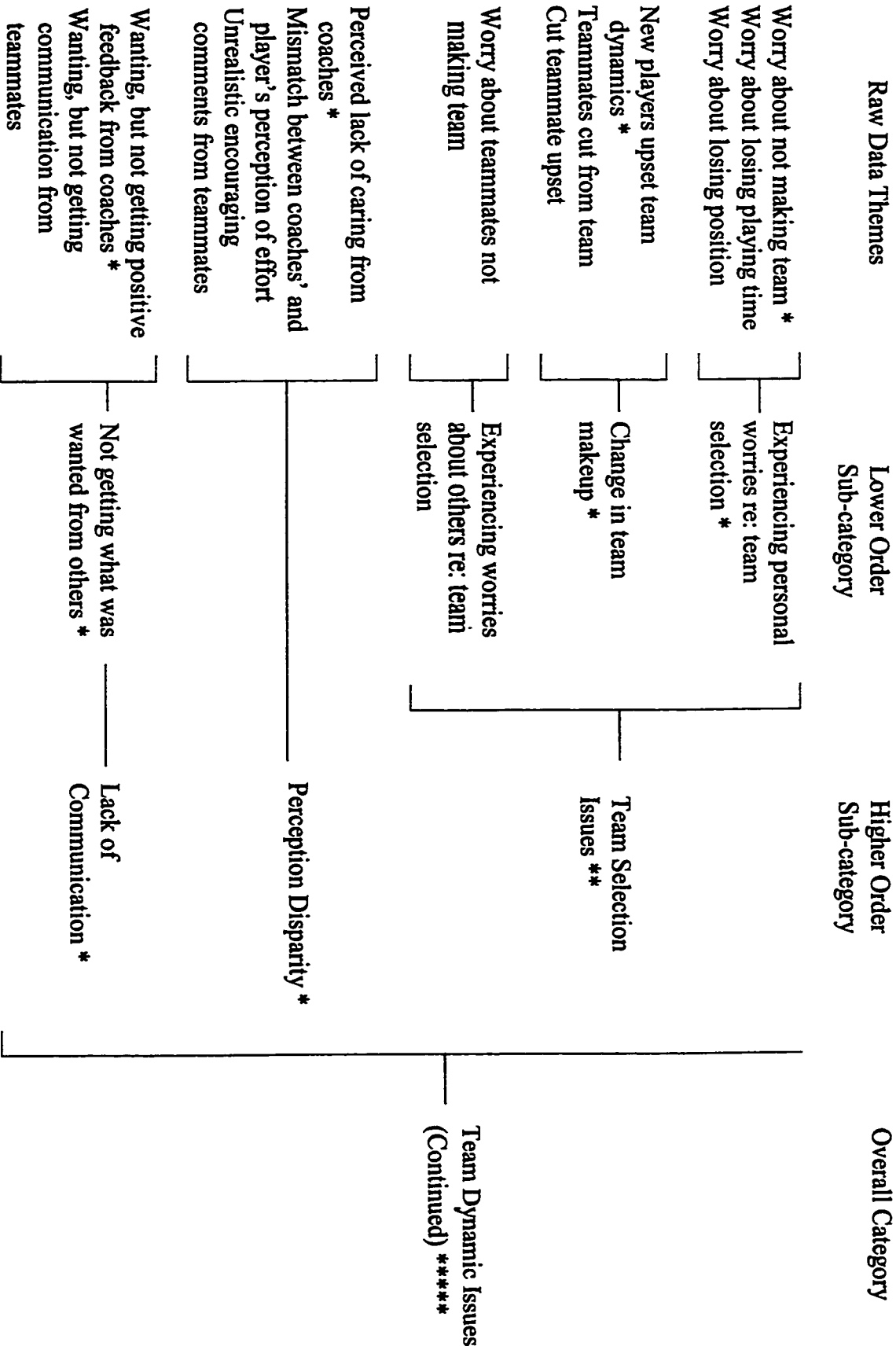


Figure 2 (continued). Organizational system for team dynamic issues data

The number of asterisks indicate the number of athletes for which the stressor was important (i.e., five asterisks indicate that a stressor was important for five athletes).

Jackie discussed the stress she experienced due to the demands of the winghalf position.

Yeah, there is a lot of pressure because you have to play three different positions, when you are offending you have to be a forward and then you have to play defensively as well. You have to get back and defend and then run up and sprint and if you don't get back you get yelled at by the coaches and the players, but sometimes you just can't do it because you are so tired and nobody really understands unless they play the position, they don't understand how you feel. [Jackie – Interview #5]

A second important stressor for the athletes was the leadership roles. The team had three explicit leadership roles: Heather was the captain, and Rachel and Kellie were assistant captains. Responsibilities as leaders included setting an example by displaying a positive work ethic, keeping the team together and focused during difficult matches, and talking to teammates about their lack of commitment and/or their low fitness level. These responsibilities were self-imposed and requested by the coaches. Both Heather and Rachel cited that they felt a great deal of stress in this area.

If they do say that I have to settle it down and if I feel that I can't, then that can be stressful because then I am trying to be in the net and gain my composure and set an example for everyone else. But (if) I am trying to focus more on me then I am also thinking, 'but I have to do this for the team.' So you have to separate the individual composure from composing the whole team and that can be stressful. If I don't feel like I can get it back then it's the stress of 'Ok my whole team is not going to play well if I can't get this back.' [Heather – Member Check Interview]

The coaches asked Rachel to talk to her teammates about their commitment to the team and their fitness level. This was also a key source of stress.

Just like talking to the girls about stuff. That really I do find stressful just because I really don't like doing it and I know I should say something because all coaches say that it does sound different coming from another teammate than it does coming from the coach, but it's just so hard for me to go up and say, 'Hey. You got to start doing something about that.' ... I kind of do want to say something to them, but I kind of feel awkward about it in a way too, so it's kind of stressful in ways like that, because I don't really know what I should do, but I feel that as a captain I should say something, just to make them feel, 'hey, you're not excluded. We are just slightly frustrated with you.' I feel like I should, but I can't. [Rachel – Member Check Interview]

Kellie, the other assistant captain, did not feel that her leadership role was an important source of stress. I believe that perhaps she did not find this role stressful because she was one of three leaders on the team and she was the youngest person in that role. Also, she was on the team for the least amount of time in comparison to the other two captains. Finally, unlike the other two captains, the coaches have not suggested to Kellie that she take on any assignments (e.g., talking to teammates about commitment, settling down the team, etc.) because of her leadership role. It is thought that these factors combined to alleviate any stress that she may have felt in her role as assistant captain.

Frustration with Teammates

This higher order sub-category encompassed stressful situations with teammates that caused the athletes to experience a great deal of frustration. Three of the athletes cited that frustration with teammates was a critical source of stress. No lower order sub-categories were included, but there were six raw data themes: teammates' lack of commitment, teammates' lack of focus/poor

play, lack of team cohesion, teammates' relaxed play/lower level of intensity, teammates' selfish play, and teammate upset with athlete.

As previously mentioned, there were three explicit leadership roles on the team: a captain – Heather, and two assistant captains – Rachel and Kellie. These athletes were voted into these positions by their teammates due to their leadership skills, soccer abilities and their dedication to the sport. In fact, Kellie commented on several occasions “soccer is my life” [Field Notes – June 10, 1999]. Thus, it is not surprising that Kellie and the other two captains, Heather and Rachel felt a great deal of stress when their teammates displayed a lack of commitment. Heather noted that there seemed to be a lack of commitment right after the tryout period ended.

Usually with this team there are four or five girls that come to every practice and I mean the most people that we have had to practice is ten I think. ... And it was six before that and four before that and ah, that's another thing that is stressing people out – the commitment thing because we feel bad for the people that got cut because maybe they would have been a little more committed because I think a lot of people are taking the team for granted now because they are thinking, ‘Ok we are on the team, so we don't really have to worry about coming until everything else is finished.’ That's not just me, that's everyone, that's the biggest stressor on the team right now. [Heather – Interview #3]

Lack of commitment as a source of stress was also experienced when teammates would come to practice, but would not participate with full effort.

It's frustrating, it's very frustrating especially in practices, like I get more frustrated in practices than anything else because you can see the people that don't work hard and it just frustrates me. Like I have a hard time practicing with Nancy anymore because she just gives

up on all the drills. Half-way through, she will just completely give up and it's so frustrating because you just wish she could work. [Rachel – Interview #6]

Unfortunately, lack of commitment as a source of stress also permeated other soccer related activities such as fund-raising. Kellie explained her position in the following quotation:

It's not fair that some teammates on the team give all of their time and do all these things, like me and Heather are always trying to get bottle drives going, like different fundraisers and stuff and the rest of the team benefits from it, but only half the team does it. It's not fair, and like bottle drives you only get eight people out which is pointless because there is not enough people. So that is a piss-off situation too. [Kellie – Interview #3]

Another important source of stress for the same three athletes (i.e., Heather, Rachel and Kellie) occurred when their teammates exhibited a lack of focus during events or played poorly.

Things that stress me out the most is, like my teammates, it depends on who I am playing with, 'cause there are certain people on the team that I don't like playing with as much as others ... I don't know why they stress me out so much now, but they frustrate me so much.

[Rachel – Background Interview]

Heather also felt stressed about the lack of focus or poor play on the part of some teammates. As a keeper, Heather depended on her teammates, especially the midfielders and fullbacks as the first lines of defense to stop any shots on net. If these athletes were not focused or didn't play well, the potential for a greater number of shots on net was high. The following quotation demonstrates how this added to Heather's frustration and stress as the keeper.

Like they jog back and then they get in (the wall) and one of them is turned around looking at me and I am telling them, 'move right' and they are looking at me with an empty look and they move left, and I'm like 'no.' ... Or there will be a space this big

between the players (makes a gesture with her hands) ... It's so frustrating. [Heather – Group Interview]

A second quotation is provided as further support for the stress experienced by Heather when her teammates were not focused or didn't play well.

They had a really good forward and 10 seconds in the game, boom, she just dribbled down and scored on me, beautiful shot. I thought we could get it back and then we had a penalty shot and we missed it and things were just not going right and basically they did the same thing again. The same player dribbled down and scored on me again, so I was getting a little frustrated. [Heather – Interview #5]

Performance Criticism

This higher order sub-category exemplified the stress experienced by the athletes upon receiving words of disapproval related to their soccer performance. The criticisms stemmed from significant others, most notably coaches and teammates and were a significant source of stress for three athletes. One lower order sub-category was included: receiving criticism from others.

Receiving criticism from others. Six raw data themes were included in this lower-order category: criticism from the coach, yelling from teammates, joking comments from coach, directive comments from coach, directive comments from teammates, and teammates blaming others.

Receiving criticism from the coach(es) was found to be an important stressor for two athletes – Jackie and Kellie. Unfortunately, even when the criticism was constructive, receiving these words was still found to be a critical source of stress.

Like what I need is encouragement from the coaches and not, even if they are giving me pointers and stuff, on the field and they are yelling, yeah, that will discourage me a lot. Like

I will be like, 'Ok, I don't want the ball. I am obviously not playing well, so why should I be on the field?' ... When he yells and everything and when I am trying and I am frustrated, I just don't want to listen to it. I don't want to hear any of it. [Jackie – Interview #2]

Further, receiving criticism from the coaches either publicly or in a one-on-one type of environment had a big impact on these two athletes.

In the next drill some of the girls were passive defenders and the other girls were to dribble at them and then make a move. As they were doing this Bren got on Jackie and told her that she was in slow mode. He said to her, 'Pick it up, or we'll have to send you for a run.' ... Jackie seemed upset. She was sniffing a lot and had her hands over her eyes as if to shield them from the sun when Bren was speaking to the girls. I thought that maybe she was trying to cover up the fact that she was crying rather than hiding from the sun. Then when Jackie was a passive defender Bren got after her for not looking like a defender – he wanted the girls that were defending to get low and pretend that they were going to channel the attackers. [Field Notes – April 25, 1999]

A second example further supports the finding that the athletes experienced significant stress when receiving criticism from the coaches.

I noted that Bren was yelling a lot at Kellie to do different types of runs and she was getting very frustrated. She seemed confused as to what he was wanting and was getting visibly upset. At one point she said to him, 'Bren!' ... Soon after Bren went onto the field and pulled her aside. They were too far away from me to hear what they were saying, but it seemed as if Kellie was crying. I saw her wipe her face as if she was wiping tears away and I knew that she was frustrated. [Field Notes – May 13, 1999]

A second important stressor was yelling from teammates. This was defined as the negative criticism received from teammates prior to, during, or after an event. These comments were unconstructive because they were accompanied by raised voices, and often cursing as well. Being subjected to these situations was especially stressful for the two athletes considered to use less effective coping strategies most of the time – Kellie and Jane.

She used to take it out on other players. She used to badmouth me so bad and I used to get so mad because I am an extremely sensitive person, so when other people say really bad stuff about me, I get nervous and everything and all upset. So she used to get me all worked up really because she would say that I played so bad. ‘Why aren’t you doing this? Why aren’t you doing that?’ You’re just like, ‘Oh my God.’ [Kellie – Background Interview]

In a second example, one of the coaches discussed teammates’ yelling as an important stressor.

Jane: It’s tough having everybody yell at you when you are on the field.

Bren: Do you have the feeling that there is too much yelling going on on the field?

Jane: In that last game there was. ... Just because that game was very stressful, everybody was yelling at everybody. [On-site interview with Bren and Jane]

Team Selection Issues

This stressor was defined as experiencing nervousness or anxiety resulting from participation in the tryout period for the outdoor season and its consequences. This was an important stressor for two athletes. The team selection issues higher order sub-category included three lower order sub-categories: experiencing personal worries regarding team selection, change in team makeup, and experiencing worries about others regarding team selection.

Experiencing personal worries regarding team selection. This was defined as feelings of anxiety or nervousness that the athletes experienced regarding their status on the team. Three raw

data themes were included: worry about not making the team, worry about losing playing time, and worry about losing position. This was an important stressor for one athlete. Although Jane had played with the team a number of years and was primarily a starter, she felt a great deal of stress about not making the team.

Bren kept saying how he didn't need so many midfielders and he said that just as an example, but I am like, 'Oh my goodness, there's eight midfielders.' And I am probably not the best of them so I figured, 'Oh no, what if he lets me go?' because I am pretty new on the team compared to some people so I was really worried about that. [Jane – Interview #3]

During a tryout session I decided to ask Jane about how she was feeling during the tryouts. She had the following to say.

I asked her how she was feeling now that tryouts had started. She said ok. She said that she would probably be nervous on the day. I asked, 'You mean on the day the decisions are made?' She said yes and that it doesn't even feel like tryouts. [Field Notes – April 10, 1999]

After that training session the coach called Jane aside to talk to her about the cuts.

He walked with Jane and I went with him. He told her, 'You've got this team made. I don't want you to be nervous. Relax out there. Have fun, ok?' Her expression changed dramatically. At the beginning of this little chat she looked scared, but as Bren spoke to her she relaxed and had a big smile on her face. Bren mentioned that Jane should not tell the other girls about this little chat, but that he doesn't want her to worry. She smiled and said ok. As Bren and I walked back he said to me, 'Did you see her expression change?' I agreed with him that it did. [Field Notes – April 10, 1999]

Jane was indeed nervous before this chat as evidenced in her journal entry about the incident.

Journal Statement: Today I felt stressed when ...

Jane's Entry: The coach called me over to speak to me after practice. I thought he was going to cut me right then and there. [Jane – April 10, 1999 Journal Entry]

After the tryouts had passed, I asked Jane about whether they had in fact been stressful for her.

She stated the following:

The tryout? Now I look back and I think, 'Why was I thinking that I wasn't going to make it?' because I see the people who were cut and I'm like, 'I can't see him choosing them over me.' So me and Colleen were like, 'Why were we stressed over that?' [Jane – Interview #3]

All of this information supports the fact that the tryouts were stressful and that Jane felt nervous or worried about not making the team. Therefore, this is considered to be an important source of stress.

Change in team makeup. This was defined as feelings of stress due to a potential change of athletes on the team and the new dynamic that this resulting change would create. This situation was found to create a great amount of stress for one athlete – Kellie. Three raw data themes were included: new players upset team dynamics, teammates cut from team, and cut teammate upset. In the following quotation, Kellie explained how she was worried about new players upsetting the team's chemistry.

I don't want anyone mean coming in and ruining the charisma because we are all like best friends on the team. ... We spend so much time together, you know? Like during the summer we are always together, we practice like twice a week, we have a game once a week. We usually have tournaments every weekend. We are always together and you don't really want to see a person that you hate every single day. You don't want to see that person, so I don't want anyone bad coming on my team. [Kellie – Interview #2]

Experiencing worries about others regarding team selection. This was defined as feelings of anxiety or nervousness that the athletes experienced regarding their teammates' status on the team. One raw data theme was included: worry about teammates not making the team. A few athletes expressed concern regarding the tryout period and the consequences that this may have for their teammates. Nevertheless, this was not found to be a critical stressor for the athletes.

Overall, Team Selection Issues were not found to be important stressors for most of the athletes participating in the study. One possible explanation for this is that the coaches approached many of the athletes early on in the tryout period to let them know that they had made the team. The following quotation supports this explanation.

Bren assured me that I am on the team. [Kellie – Interview #2]

Jackie also discussed receiving news about the tryouts before the team was announced.

I don't think they (the tryouts) were all that stressful, not really. ... Just before the end Bren had already told me that I had already made it so not to worry about anything. So that was ok, like I didn't really think about it after that. [Jackie – Interview #3]

Furthermore, at least one of the athletes (i.e., Kellie) concluded on her own that because she was participating in the project and it was to last until the end of the season, that she had made the team.

I am doing this thing with you, and this is going to the end of the season, ok, so I know that all those five players are on the team. [Kellie – Interview #2]

Additionally, Kellie discussed her assumption with other athletes involved in the study.

Perception Disparity

This stressor was defined as the frustration or anxiety experienced by the athletes when there was a difference in perception between the athlete and a significant other such as the coach or a

teammate. Perception disparity was found to be an important stressor for one athlete. No lower order sub-categories were included, but there were three raw data themes: perceived lack of caring from coaches, mismatch between coaches' and players' perceptions of effort, and unrealistic encouraging comments from teammates.

The coaches stated to me several times during the study that Jackie had the potential to be an excellent performer, but that she "always underestimates what she can do" [Field Notes – April 22, 1999]. Because of this the coaches pushed Jackie to work harder and had high expectations of her. However, this resulted in Jackie's incorrect perception that they didn't care about her.

I feel that Bren thinks of me differently on the team. Like he doesn't have the same attitude towards me. I found this out. If I get hurt or something and I come off the field, I am pretty sure he thinks that I am faking it or he thinks I am a wimp because if I have to come off the field because I am hurt he doesn't pay any attention to me. It's just like, 'Yeah ok, go sit down' and he doesn't say anything to me. But when Colleen or somebody else gets hurts, he is always like, 'Are you ok? Everything alright? Don't play, it's alright.' But when I get hurt it's just like, 'Oh she's faking it, that's nothing.' [Jackie – Interview #3]

Lack of Communication

This higher order sub-category was defined as the stress resulting from deficient communication between the athletes and significant others, namely the coaches and teammates. Lack of communication was found to be an important stressor for one athlete. One lower order sub-category was included: not getting what was wanted from others.

Not getting what was wanted from others. This lower order sub-category included two raw data themes: wanting, but not getting positive feedback from coaches and wanting, but not

getting communication from teammates. Rachel noted that the absence of positive feedback from the coaches was an important source of stress for her.

I played the whole tournament. I didn't come off once the whole tournament and I hadn't played the position yet. It was the first tournament and the coaches, neither of them said a single positive thing to me, so like I didn't even know if I was playing well or not ... I was getting so annoyed with it and it was just like, 'argh!' (made a frustrated noise) [Rachel – Interview #3]

Personal Struggles

The second research question asked the athletes about the ambient (i.e., everyday) stressors they experienced in sport and in their daily lives. Thus, the Personal Struggles category included personal situations related to their sport and their lives outside of soccer. All five athletes cited that personal struggles were important stressors for them. Seven higher order sub-categories were included in the Personal Struggles category: physical/mental difficulties, performance expectations regarding school, time demands, interpersonal conflict, work/career issues, other responsibilities and inconvenience.

Physical/Mental Difficulties

This higher order sub-category was defined as the stress associated with the physical and mental hardships experienced by the athletes resulting from an injury. Four of the athletes cited that they felt stress in this area. Not surprisingly, these same four athletes experienced at least one significant injury (e.g., pulled groin muscle, sprained ankle, etc.) during the course of the study. Two lower order sub-categories were included: physical consequences of injury and mental consequences of injury.

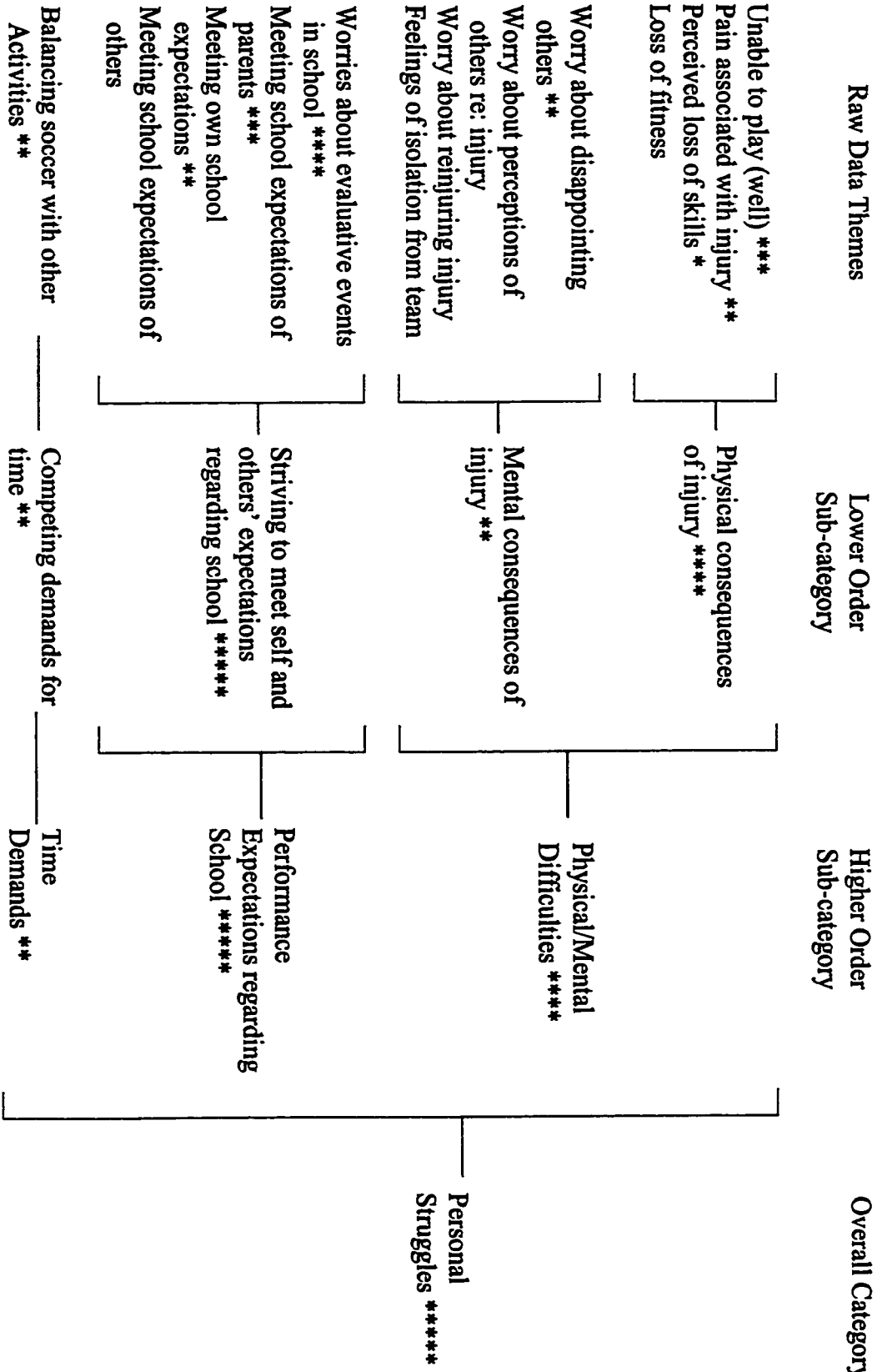


Figure 3. Organizational system for personal struggles data

The number of asterisks indicate the number of athletes for which the stressor was important (i.e., five asterisks indicate that a stressor was important for five athletes).

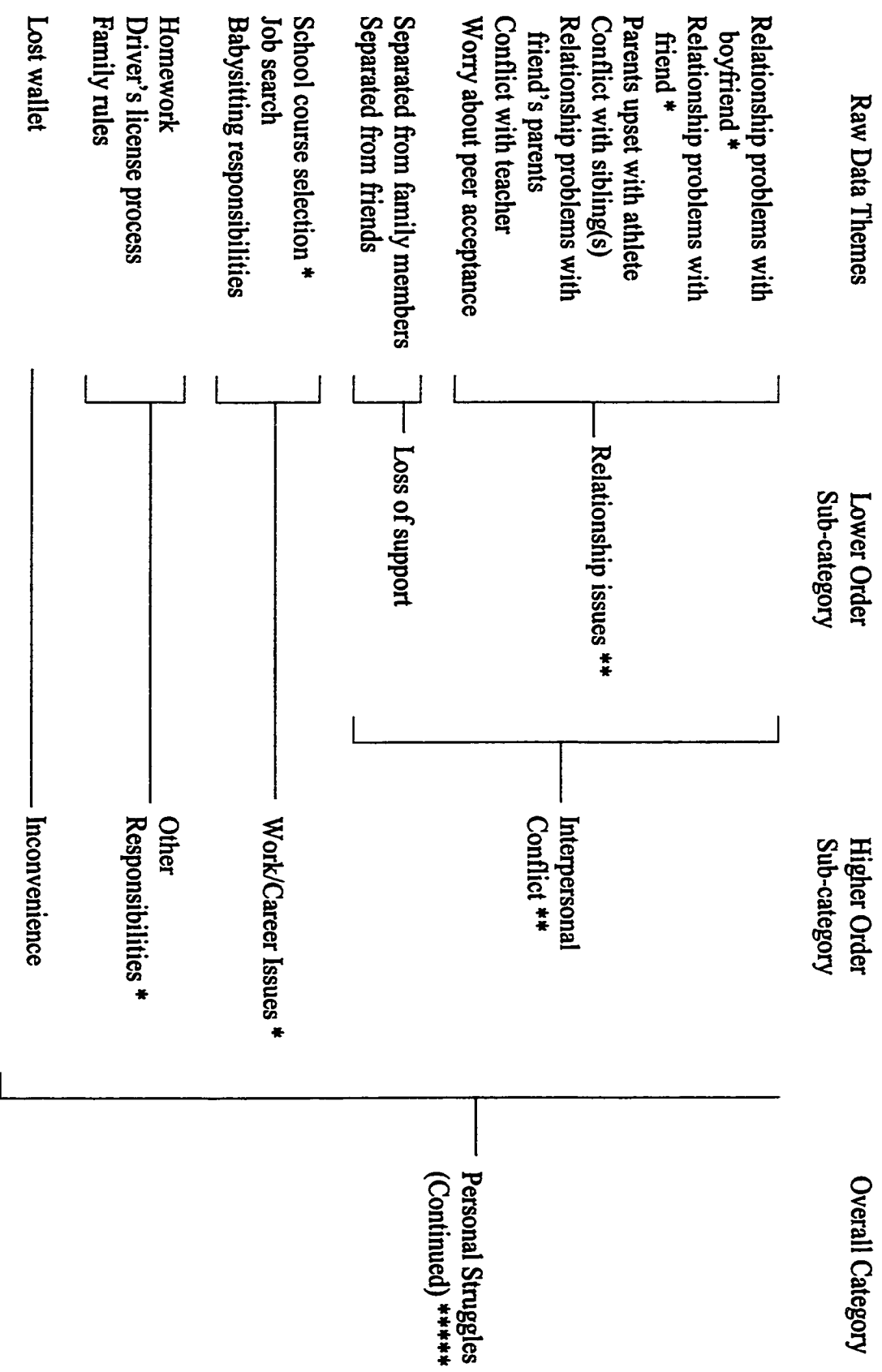


Figure 3 (continued). Organizational system for personal struggles data

The number of asterisks indicate the number of athletes for which the stressor was important (i.e., five asterisks indicate that a stressor was important for five athletes).

Physical consequences of injury. This lower order sub-category dealt with the athlete's stress regarding the physical repercussions of an injury. Four raw data themes were included: unable to play (well), pain associated with injury, perceived loss of skills, and loss of fitness.

Because of their injury, three athletes, Jackie, Jane and Kellie, had to refrain from playing at certain times. This was found to be a key source of stress.

Once again injured ... and it's sooo (sic) annoying! The doctor said that I'll be out for three weeks minimum. [Jane – June 17, 1999 Journal Entry]

Jackie experienced a serious injury and discussed its impact in the following quotation.

It's very stressful because I've been really starting to like soccer again. It's too bad that this happened because I was enjoying it and now I have to miss the tournament the next weekend, which is a humongous tournament to me because there are lots of scouts and a lot of competition there and good experience and I have to miss it. [Jackie – Interview #4]

It should be noted however, that these three athletes did not forego playing during the entire time they were injured. For example, all of these athletes came back to perform before their injuries had completely healed. Therefore, another key source of stress occurred when the athletes did play (while still injured) and were unable to perform at their optimal level due to their nagging injury.

I was also stressed because my ankle was bugging me and then I felt that I didn't play as well and I thought that if my ankle wasn't hurt then maybe I could have played better.

[Kellie – Interview #6]

The pain associated with their injuries was found to be a critical source of stress for two athletes, Heather and Kellie.

My leg went out and everything just kind of went out on me basically and that was really frustrating, that was a really stressful moment because then I realized, at that moment, I think I thought I was like dying or something, I took it so over. I went overboard with that, but it was really painful and I never felt that before and it made me nervous and it made me stressed because I was thinking, 'This is a really bad thing that is happening to me, I am not going to be back anytime soon.' [Heather – Interview #3]

Prior to the start of a very important tournament Kellie also experienced stress due to injury pain.

The girls warmed up and seemed ready. I was on the sidelines standing with Bren when Kellie came and said that she didn't think she could play because her foot was killing her. She was crying and Bren said ok and she sat down. I got some ice out for her and asked where the pain was. She said that it was different because now the pain was on the side and underneath her foot and it hadn't been underneath before. She was very upset and took off her cleats, socks and shinguards. [Field Notes – July 17, 1999]

Because of her injury, Heather was unable to consistently practice and compete at the beginning of the outdoor season. This contributed to her feelings of stress regarding a perceived loss of skills.

The worst part of it is just going to practice and not being able to do some of the things that I took for granted before. Like things that were easy to me before I can't do as well anymore. Like I mean it will come back to me, but I guess being out for a month you lose a lot. [Heather – Interview #3]

Mental consequences of injury. This lower order sub-category dealt with the athlete's stress regarding the mental repercussions of an injury. Four raw data themes were included: worry

about disappointing others, worry about the perceptions of others regarding the injury, worry about reinjuring the injury, and feelings of being isolated from the team.

The performance level deteriorated for most athletes as a result of their injury. This was previously discussed in the physical consequences of injury section. However, a mental consequence also stemmed from this issue for two athletes. For example, an important stressor for Jane and Kellie, the two athletes deemed to use less effective coping strategies most of the time, was the worry they felt about not wanting to disappoint significant others with respect to their soccer performance or their participation in soccer events.

My groin really, really hurt and I had to ice it and then I was hurt for the semis so I played, but I didn't play a lot because Bren wanted to put me back in the last ten minutes, but I didn't feel like 100%. I told Bren that I didn't want to screw it up for the team because I am not up to my full potential and he said that he perfectly understood so he said, 'Ok fine. You can sit down Kellie.' Because you know you don't want to be out there when you are not 100%. I just didn't feel comfortable doing that to everybody. [Kellie – Interview #6]

The following quotation supports Jane's stress about not wanting to disappoint her team because of her inability to participate in training sessions.

It's so annoying because you feel like you are letting everybody else down and I didn't feel like I was injured because it was just a muscle. It's not like I had a cast or anything to prove it, so I felt like I was lazy and I was just trying to get out of the practices because I didn't miss any games at all, I just missed the practices. [Jane – Interview #3]

Performance Expectations regarding School

This higher order sub-category stressor was important for all five athletes and was defined as the athletes striving to meet their own expectations concerning their performance in school, as

well as the expectations of significant others. One lower order sub-category was included: striving to meet self and others' expectations regarding school.

Striving to meet self and others' expectations regarding school. This lower order sub-category comprised four raw data themes: worries about evaluative events in school, and meeting the expectations of their parents, themselves, and others.

Tests, exams, assignments, projects, oral presentations, quizzes and any other evaluative events in school caused Heather, Jackie, and Kellie to experience a great deal of stress.

Journal Statement: Today I felt stressed when ...

Jackie's Entry: I was really stressed today because I had two tests – geography and science.

[Jackie – March 30, 1999 Journal Entry]

A second example is provided as additional support of evaluative events as key sources of stress.

Journal Statement: Today I felt stressed when ...

Kellie's Entry: This week I was stressed because I had three unit tests and an essay due and a presentation. These tests were in math, science, and religion and I feel I need to do better this semester so I had to do good (sic) on these tests. [Kellie – February 22, 1999 Journal Entry]

There was also a lot of information to support that evaluative events in school were a critical source of stress for Jane. The following quotation is just one example of the importance of this stressor.

Journal Statement: Today I felt stressed when ...

Jane's Entry: My teacher told me that we were going to have a unit test the next day. [Jane – April 7, 1999 Journal Entry]

However, I spoke to Jane on April 18th during the final tryout session and asked her about her stressors. Here are my field notes regarding this discussion.

Jane told me that she is not stressed about school anymore. She told me that she has realized that although grade 11 is important, it is nothing to get stressed about. Her marks are good and she just is going to relax a bit. She said that next year will be very hard (when she attends the private school) and that she needs to get prepared for that. [Field Notes – April 18, 1999]

This is an example of a contradictory statement about whether or not Jane felt stress regarding evaluative events in school. Here on April 18th she told me that she was no longer stressed about tests, exams, etc. On April 20th, just two days later, she wrote in a journal entry that she was worried about not being prepared for a test.

Journal Statement: Today I felt stressed when ...

Jane's Entry: I know that I should have studied all weekend, but I left it until the night before and now I feel rushed and I know I'm not ready for the test. [Jane – April 20, 1999 Journal Entry]

A further contradictory statement is the following:

I get lots of stress for exams, but I find over the years not to because in grade nine I was so scared for them and on every one I got above 95 so I've learned to kind of calm down. [Jane – Interview #3]

I followed up on this issue with Jane in the member check interview and asked her about the above discrepancy. She had the following to say:

I try to be relaxed, but always the night before tests, I go crazy. Or the night before an exam I go crazy and feel like I don't know it. Because during the year I try to be relaxed, but once

it actually comes up I am like, 'I am not ready. I don't know anything.' So that's just how I am. I think I do better in school when I am nervous for it. [Jane – Member Check Interview]

Therefore, the data support that evaluative events in school were a key source of stress for Jane. However, she saw these potentially stressful situations as something positive that helped her to work hard and do well.

Meeting the expectations of their parents with respect to their performance (i.e., grades) in school was an important source of stress for three athletes (Heather, Jane, and Kellie).

For school, it's my parents – I don't like bringing bad marks home because they are obviously going to be disappointed in me if I am not doing as well as I can. [Heather – Background Interview]

A second example further supports meeting parents' school expectations as a critical source of stress.

I am always worried about what my parents think of me about my marks because they expect high marks. [Kellie – Interview #3]

Meeting their own expectations with respect to their school performance was also a key source of stress for Kellie and Rachel.

It's stressful because I always used to get good marks and it's almost like people at school expect you to do well, to succeed. I like being known as one of the smart kids. I don't want to be known as one of those average kids, I want to be known as one of the smart kids.

[Kellie – Interview #2]

In the following example, Rachel discussed the stress she experienced when she was unable to meet her expectations regarding a science class at school.

I guess normally school comes so easily to me that it was so frustrating that I couldn't get it. And that was when I realized that maybe my expectations are too high because even my teacher was like, 'My best students last year were clueless at the beginning of the year, just like you are. Don't worry about it.' But it was still so frustrating. Even though everyone was telling me not to worry about it, I was still like, 'hey I have to be able to do well in this class.' [Rachel – Member Check Interview]

Time Demands

This higher order sub-category stressor was important for two athletes and was defined as the immense time commitment required to play club soccer. One lower order sub-category was included: competing demands for time.

Competing demands for time. This lower order sub-category was defined as the athletes' efforts to achieve balance between the time commitment required to play club soccer and to successfully attend to the other facets of their lives (e.g., extracurricular activities, social events, job or volunteer responsibilities etc.). One raw theme was included: balancing soccer with other activities.

Similar to many adolescent females, Jackie and Rachel were involved in many activities. Thus, balancing soccer with other activities was found to be an important stressor for these two athletes.

Today I'm pretty stressed for the rest of this month. Today is basically my last day off. When I start back at school tomorrow I will have soccer every night for basically the rest of this month and until the end of the school year. Soccer tryouts for the school are starting tomorrow. Everyday I will have soccer, plus I have to cram in my own soccer with the club team, try to participate in fashion show practices, and on top of that, get my homework

finished too. ...I'm going to get very run-down. I already don't get enough sleep, so how am I supposed to manage with this extra load on? [Jackie – April 5, 1999 Journal Entry]

A second quotation is provided as further support to the athletes' stress when having to balance participation in club soccer with other activities and responsibilities.

Not having enough time to do all the things that I am committed to right now really stresses me out. Just knowing that I have to go to basketball and soccer in the same day and get home and do all my homework. [Rachel – Background Interview]

Interpersonal Conflict

This higher order sub-category stressor was defined as the athletes' experiencing discord between themselves and significant others. This stressor was found to be important for two athletes and included two lower order sub-categories: relationship issues and loss of support.

Relationship issues. This lower order sub-category included the stress experienced by the athletes when they encountered a difficulty in their relationships. These relationship difficulties were outside of the soccer context. Seven raw data themes were included: relationship problems with boyfriend, relationship problems with friend, parents upset with athlete, conflict with siblings, relationship problems with friend's parents, conflict with teacher, and worry about peer acceptance.

Rachel was the only athlete that had a steady boyfriend throughout the duration of the project. Not surprisingly, she is the only athlete for whom relationship problems with a boyfriend was a key source of stress.

Sometimes problems with my boyfriend kind of stress me out because it is just another added on and it just kind of piles up and it frustrates me. [Rachel – Background Interview]

Relationship issues were also found to be an important stressor for Jackie, but the person with whom she was having difficulty was a friend. The supporting quotations below have been placed in chronological order.

Well, stressful experiences with my best friend, Nathalie, because our friendship was a little rocky, but that's ok now. [Jackie – Background Interview]

Two months after the above interview, Jackie's relationship with Nathalie continued to be a key source of stress.

I was just stressed a little while ago about my friendship with Nathalie, but that's fine again. [Jackie – Interview #2]

Unfortunately, Jackie's relationship with Nathalie was an ongoing stressor and persisted for a great deal of time.

I have been extremely stressed for the past month. Actually this year so far (since January) has been the worst year so far. ... I had a best friend for not even a year and things between us had been pretty rocky since December. She really started to have a problem with me. Some people say it was jealousy. ... Around Easter she started unexpectedly ignoring me. Ever since we haven't really been great friends. We used to share a locker and just yesterday she moved out of it. It really hurts to see someone change so drastically. ... I'm really tired these days because I can't really sleep. ... (This) effects my attitude toward soccer. [Jackie – April 29, 1999 Journal Entry]

I followed up on this issue in the member check interview (conducted in December) to see if this rocky relationship with Nathalie was still an important source of stress for Jackie. She had the following to say:

It was at the beginning of the (school) year. Like I was having a hard time with it because I was just like, ‘Whoa. You wanted to be friends and now you don’t. What’s going on here?’ And I didn’t know why she didn’t, like why she wasn’t calling me or trying to be my friend anymore. [Jackie – Member Check Interview]

Loss of support. This lower order sub-category was defined as the stress experienced by the athletes resulting from a break in their social support network. This stressor occurred when the athletes were separated from friends or family members and was especially difficult when the separation was beyond their control. Two raw data themes were included: separated from family members and separated from friends. This stressor was not discussed by the athletes often and did not occur frequently. Thus, this stressor was not found to be important for any of the athletes and it will not be discussed further.

Work/Career Issues

This higher order sub-category was defined as the unpleasant or negative experiences with respect to present work or future career opportunities. This stressor was found to be important for one athlete. No lower order sub-categories were included, but there were three raw data themes: school course selection, job search, and babysitting responsibilities.

Some of the athletes were in the senior level in high school. Teachers and guidance counselors emphasized that they had to select appropriate courses in their next grade so that they would meet the requirements for university entrance and ultimately their career. Heather found this to be stressful as evidenced by the following quotation.

We just had a big speech in homeroom, how grade eleven is when you have to make all of your choices and everything. That’s stressful too, when they are telling you in grade eleven that you have to make choices for the rest of your life. [Heather – Background Interview]

Unfortunately, this stressor did not dissipate for Heather as evidenced by the following quotation.

Journal Statement: Today I felt stressed when ...

Heather's Entry: I handed in my student contract (with next year's course selections) without confidence that I had made the right choices. [Heather – March 5, 1999 Journal Entry]

Other Responsibilities

This higher order sub-category included the negative or unpleasant feelings associated with other athlete responsibilities. No lower order sub-categories were included, but there were three raw data themes: homework, driver's license process and family rules. The athletes cited that the requirements of homework, having to go through the process of obtaining a driver's license and adhering to "unfair" family rules were sources of stress for them at different times throughout the study. However, these other responsibilities stressors were not found to be critical for any of the athletes, and thus will not be discussed further.

Inconvenience

This higher order sub-category was defined as the frustration or stress felt by the athletes when they were inconvenienced in some way. No lower order sub-categories were included and there was only one raw data theme: lost wallet. One athlete noted that she experienced some stress when she lost her wallet at school however, inconvenience was not found to be an important stressor for any of the athletes.

Summary of Stressors

In conclusion, the athletes experienced a great deal of stress in their sport and in their lives outside of sport. A number of key stressors emerged for the athletes and these were included in

three main categories: negative aspects of competition and training, team dynamic issues, and personal struggles. Many of the stressors were consistent across the athletes (e.g., meeting their own soccer expectations). However, there were also several unique stressors that were found to be important for only individual athletes (e.g., Heather – running during training, Jane – being benched, Jackie – perceived lack of caring from the coaches, etc.). The important stressors for the athletes are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Summary of Important Stressors for Athletes

Overall Stressor Category	Heather	Rachel	Jackie	Jane	Kellie
Higher Order Sub-category					
Lower order sub-category					
raw data theme					
Negative Aspects of Competition and Training	X	X	X	X	X
Performance Expectations	X	X	X	X	X
Striving to meet self and others' expectations	X	X	X	X	X
meeting own soccer expectations	X	X	X	X	X
meeting soccer expectations of coaches		X	X	X	X
meeting soccer expectations of parents	X			X	X
meeting expectations of teammates			X	X	X
meeting soccer expectations of others					X
Worries about Competition	X	X	X	X	X
Perceived importance of competitive event	X	X	X	X	X
important games	X	X	X	X	X
Experiencing competition worries					X
nervous about impressing scouts					X
Competitive Hurdles	X			X	
Personal hurdles	X			X	
being benched				X	
running during training	X				
Troubling conditions					
Competitive Failure					
Experiencing subjective failure outcomes					
Performance Review					

Table 6 (continued)

Summary of Important Stressors for Athletes

Overall Stressor Category	Heather	Rachel	Jackie	Jane	Kellie
Higher Order Sub-category					
Lower order sub-category					
raw data theme					
Team Dynamic Issues	X	X	X	X	X
Responsibility to Team	X	X	X		X
position on field	X		X		X
leadership role	X	X			
Frustration with Teammates	X	X			X
lack of commitment by teammates	X	X			X
lack of focus/poor play by teammates	X	X			X
Performance Criticism			X	X	X
Receiving criticism from others			X	X	X
criticism from coach			X		X
yelling from teammates				X	X
Team Selection Issues				X	X
Experiencing personal worries re: team selection					X
worry about not making team				X	
Change in team makeup					X
new players upset team dynamics					X
Experiencing worries about others re: team selection					
Perception Disparity			X		
perceived lack of caring from coaches			X		
Lack of Communication		X			
Not getting what was wanted from others		X			
wanting, but not getting positive feedback from coaches		X			

Table 6 (continued)

Summary of Important Stressors for Athletes

Overall Stressor Category	Heather	Rachel	Jackie	Jane	Kellie
Higher Order Sub-category					
Lower order sub-category					
raw data theme					
Personal Struggles	X	X	X	X	X
Physical/Mental Difficulties	X		X	X	X
Physical consequences of injury	X		X	X	X
unable to play (well)			X	X	X
pain associated with injury	X				X
perceived loss of skills	X				
Mental consequences of injury				X	X
worry about disappointing others				X	X
Performance Expectations regarding School	X	X	X	X	X
Striving to meet self and others' expectations regarding school	X	X	X	X	X
worries about evaluative events in school	X		X	X	X
meeting school expectations of parents	X			X	X
meeting own school expectations		X			X
Time Demands		X	X		
Competing demands for time		X	X		
balancing soccer with other activities		X	X		
Interpersonal Conflict		X	X		
Relationship issues		X	X		
relationship problems with boyfriend		X			
relationship problems with friend			X		
Loss of support					
Work/Career Issues	X				
school course selection	X				
Other Responsibilities					
Inconvenience					

3. What Coping Strategies do Female Adolescent Athletes use when faced with Ambient Stressors in their Sporting Context and in their Everyday Lives?

Figures 3 to 8 show the organizational systems for the coping strategies data. The asterisks beside the Raw Data Themes, Sub-categories and the Overall Categories refer to the number of athletes for which the coping strategies were important. (See the beginning of question 2 in this chapter for a description of how importance was determined.)

Behavioral Strategies

The overall coping category, Behavioral Strategies, represented those coping strategies characterized by the performance of explicit behavioral efforts. All five athletes cited that behavioral strategies were important means for them to deal with their stress. Four sub-categories were included in the Behavioral Strategies category: discussing or venting about the situation, changing or controlling the environment, attacking the source of the stress, and following a set routine.

Discuss or Vent about the Situation

The behavioral strategy of discussing or venting about a stressful situation was important for all five athletes. This strategy included a conversation between the athlete and often, but not always, another person with the athlete contributing significantly to the discussion. The person or other resource, with whom the athletes vented, differed between athletes and according to the situation. When dealing with soccer stress, Rachel, Kellie, and Jane vented with teammates in an effort to help themselves cope.

I don't like talking to them (other teammates), so usually it ends up me bitching to Kellie about something. [Rachel – Group Interview]

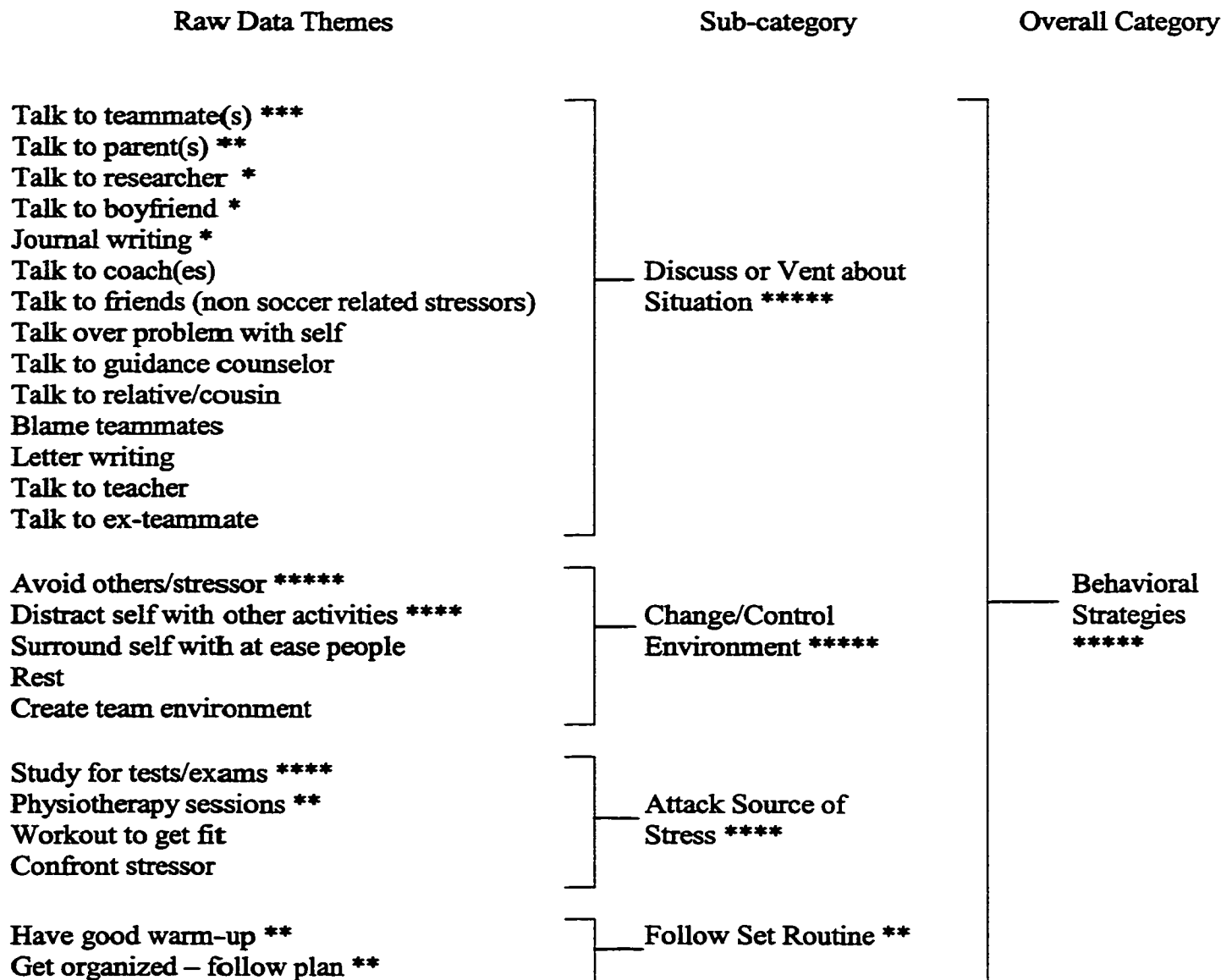


Figure 4. Organizational system for behavioral coping strategies data

The number of asterisks indicate the number of athletes for which the coping strategy was important (i.e., five asterisks indicate that a coping strategy was important for five athletes).

A second example provides further support for venting with teammates as a coping strategy.

I feel like I trust Rachel so I can tell her anything. [Kellie – Interview #2]

Kellie and Heather cited parents as a key venting outlet.

Usually my parents will either agree or they'll disagree, and I'll just get my points across and they'll get theirs across and then it's off my mind and it's ok. So usually they help calm me down after a game. [Heather – Background Interview]

These athletes discussed many different types of stressful situations with their parents, however, and did not limit their conversations to soccer stress.

Researcher: So basically the way you cope with all of this is just talk to your Mom?

Kellie: Yeah.

Researcher: Do you do anything else?

Kellie: No. Actually, she knows a lot about my friends, a lot, a lot, a lot (sic). More stuff than she wants to know. ... I tell her because I have to get it off my chest and the only person I can trust is her. [Kellie – Interview #6]

Other significant coping resources included the athlete's boyfriend, the athlete's journal and the researcher.

Rachel dealt with soccer stress by venting with teammates. One of her prime venting sources for stress experienced outside of the soccer context, however, was her boyfriend.

I think I talk to him the most because ... I think he knows me the best so he understands where I am coming from more. Like if I go talk to another friend that I am not as close to, they are like, 'Oh I don't really understand why you are getting mad' but Scott knows so if he knows that I am overreacting over a tiny deal, he'll be like, 'Ok, look what you are doing.' Like he can tell if I am really, really mad and he will know what to do to calm me down. ... Like he can just really help me because we are pretty similar in some things and he does know me really, really well so it helps a lot. [Rachel – Member Check Interview]

Rachel also vented in her personal journal (i.e., not the journal provided to her as part of the study).

Writing it down makes me feel good because I am getting it out of my body. ... And it just helps because usually when I start writing I just keep writing about everything, ... it always puts me in a really good mood no matter where I am after I'm finished because I've just gone on for so long about everything so I think that is why it helps me a lot. [Rachel – Member Check Interview]

The final important, but unique venting resource came from Jackie. She cited that talking to me, the researcher, helped her to cope with soccer related stress.

Me being able to talk to you about things, I guess relieves some of my stress because I mean I don't like talking to my Mom about it because, I mean she is my Mom and she'll just be like, 'If that is stressing you out, talk to that person' and that is not the case like what I want to do all the time, so just talking to you and you not saying anything is just what I need.

[Jackie – Group Interview]

Change or Control the Environment

The behavioral strategy of changing or controlling the environment was an important coping strategy for all five athletes. Raw data themes in this behavioral sub-category included: avoiding others/stressor, distracting self with other activities, surrounding self with at ease people, resting and creating a team environment. The first two strategies cited, avoiding others/stressor and distracting self with other activities, held greater importance for the athletes than the latter three strategies.

All five athletes stated that they avoided others or the stressor to help them cope with stress related to soccer and stress experienced outside of the soccer context. Kellie explained how she used this strategy to help her cope with a teammate with whom she was upset.

I left right away. The parents were all talking and I just left because I was so pissed off and I was going to kill her. ... I left because I didn't want to deal with her face. I was going to kill her. [Kellie – Interview #4]

In a second example related to soccer, Jackie commented how she sometimes avoided people after soccer games.

If I am kind of embarrassed of my performance after I've been playing I tend to avoid people. ... So after games I'll be like, 'ok Dad, can we go home now?' So it kind of sounds a little bratty, but I might be in a bad mood so I won't want to talk to anybody. [Jackie – Interview #2]

The athletes also avoided people and stressors outside of the soccer context. For example, some athletes avoided school related issues such as studying for tests and exams, or doing their homework.

I am just so sick of school and so stressed out so I just stopped doing my homework and stuff. [Jackie – Interview #3]

Other athletes distanced themselves from their parents or boyfriends so they could avoid conflict or discussing relationships.

So I didn't want to tell him that I didn't have the same feelings, you know? I didn't want to tell him that we should just be friends. ... I kind of stopped talking to Dave. I didn't call him. We weren't seeing each other ever. I was too busy, soccer was starting and we didn't have time. [Heather – Interview #3]

Finally, the parents of one athlete expected her to find summer employment. This was not a priority for the athlete though, so she coped with the stress of trying to find a job by avoiding the issue altogether. She did note that this strategy was not effective in alleviating her stress.

Jane: My sister is forcing me to go (look for a job). She's like 'You have to go now.' But I just keep making excuses why I can't. I'm just too nervous.

Researcher: So you're avoiding it?

Jane: Yeah.

Researcher: That's a coping strategy for you?

Jane: Pretty much, yeah.

Researcher: Do you feel better?

Jane: No. Because every time I think of it, I'm like, 'Oh great. I have to get a job.' [Jane – Interview #2]

Distracting themselves with other activities was also a key strategy cited by four athletes for dealing with both soccer and non-soccer stress. Heather, Rachel and Kellie noted that they often used soccer to help them cope with stressors they experienced outside of the soccer context. Their participation in training sessions and competitive events distracted them from other stressors such as evaluative events in school, homework, and when their parents were upset with them.

If I have a bad day in school and I head home and I am doing homework, I am usually the first person to try to go to soccer to try and get away from homework. ... I use soccer as a break from school and stress and stuff like that. [Heather – Member Check Interview]

A second example is provided for further support of soccer participation as a distracting coping strategy.

Because going to soccer is getting away from all the other stuff. Like if my house is stressful or I get into a fight with my Mom or my brother or my Dad, it gets me away from it. ... I get to release energy and get away from everything else. [Kellie – Member Check Interview]

Jackie commented how she talks on the phone as a means of forgetting about her soccer stress.

I'll occupy myself ... I'll talk on the phone because I think about soccer constantly. [Jackie – Interview #3]

In another example, Rachel noted that she uses music to help her deal with the stress of studying.

Whenever I have stress, like studying for an exam, I'll just take a break and I'll put my music on because I can't study to music, but I can take a break and listen to it and it will just help me relax for five or ten minutes. [Rachel – Focus Group]

Attack Source of Stress

The behavioral coping strategy, attacking the source of the stress, was important for four of the athletes and comprised four raw data themes. With respect to dealing with non-soccer stress, specifically stress regarding evaluative events in school, four athletes cited that they attacked the source of their stress by studying hard for their tests or exams.

Journal Statement: I did the following to help myself cope:

Kellie's Entry: I studied hard, and didn't watch any TV. I just studied and did all the reviews to be prepared. [Kellie – February 22, 1999 Journal Entry]

Heather also discussed how studying helped her to cope with school stress.

Well obviously if you study for an exam you are going to do well on it. It would be a lot more stressful if I went into an exam unprepared, so actually studying for it and then after

you are done studying just knowing that you have a better knowledge of that subject makes you feel a bit more relaxed. [Heather – Interview #2]

Two athletes dealing with soccer stress due to an injury cited attending physiotherapy sessions as an important coping strategy.

Physio, that kind of takes my mind off of it because I know that I am doing something about it (the injury). I am not just leaving it, staying at home and just icing it, you know? I am actually doing something about it so that helps me too. [Jackie – Interview #4]

Follow Set Routine

The behavioral strategy, following a set routine, was important for two of the athletes. When dealing with nervousness before a game, Rachel and Kellie engaged in a proper warm-up to help them cope and get ready.

Basically as long as I get my warm-up in and I get good touches on the ball for awhile that

helps a lot because it makes me think, ‘Yeah, I am used to the ball.’ [Rachel – Interview #2]

A second quotation from Kellie further supports engaging in a proper warm-up as an effective coping strategy.

When you touch the ball it is much more easier and I love doing footwork because it just makes me get more calm if I am moving and doing something. [Kellie – Interview #4]

All of the athletes on the team were engaged in extracurricular activities, such as other sports and volunteering, in addition to having responsibilities regarding school and playing club soccer. To cope with the demands on their time, Rachel and Kellie got themselves organized by developing and following a plan or schedule.

I try to organize everything. I am one of those people that has to always organize everything.

... Like tonight I have to do math so I am setting myself all up. ... I will do my math

assignment tonight and I want to do my geography assignment tonight, at least start on it because tomorrow night I have volunteering and my favorite TV show is on. ... I am not going to have time to do it after school because I will want to relax after school, so I am doing it all tonight and then I am going to give myself a break you know? I've set it all up on how I am going to do it. So I guess I organize myself, and that's a coping strategy.

[Kellie – Interview #4]

Emotional Release Strategies

The Emotional Release Strategies coping category represented those coping strategies used to discharge pent up emotions. Only one sub-category emerged in the Emotional Release Strategies category. This sub-category was labeled release emotions and it included eight raw data themes: cry, yell in frustration, snappy/short with people, curse, shake out tension, make a stressed face, physical release, and smash ball – kick ball hard. At times these strategies were effective because they allowed the athletes to get rid of their stressful thoughts and emotions, and they often felt better after. However, sometimes these strategies were not effective.

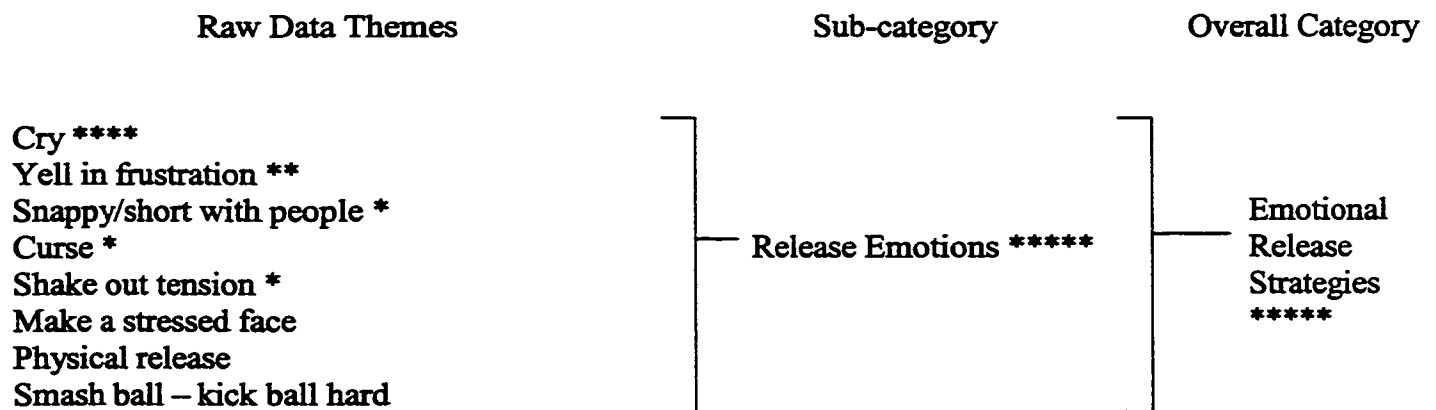


Figure 5. Organizational system for emotional release coping strategies data

The number of asterisks indicate the number of athletes for which the coping strategy was important (i.e., five asterisks indicate that a coping strategy was important for five athletes).

Release Emotions

Crying was an important coping strategy for four athletes. They cried when dealing with soccer and non-soccer stress. In the first quote, Heather explained how she cried to help her deal with the stress of being injured and not being able to perform at the level she desired.

Researcher: So in that situation were you able to do anything to help yourself cope?

Heather: I cried.

Researcher: Did you feel better after?

Heather: Um, yeah. I think I was keeping a lot of my emotions inside of me and when I did that it kind of got them out and I was a bit more relaxed. It was like, 'Ok you got that out, now you can move ahead with your problem.' So yeah. ... Yeah, it was like I was done feeling sorry for myself and now it's time to get better. It's time to work and it's time to play again. [Heather – Interview #3]

In another example, Rachel explained how she cried to help her deal with frustration she was experiencing regarding her homework.

And then I'd just go upstairs to my room ... and cry for half-an-hour and then I'd be better and then I'd go back and try to do it again. [Rachel – Background Interview]

Most of the athletes stated that crying can be an effective coping strategy because they could get "it" out. They then used other coping strategies to help them further cope with the stressor and move on. Some athletes noted, however, that crying was the first step in the coping process and that they didn't start to feel better until they implemented a second strategy.

Like I'll get so frustrated and it (crying) is kind of a release, but it doesn't work all the time, but I feel better after I talk about it more. [Kellie – Member Check Interview]

With respect to using other coping strategies to further help herself deal with her stress and move on, however, Jane did not seem to be able to do this on her own. In the following quotation her friends initiated her coping by offering reassurance.

At first I just cried a lot! ... I almost always cry when I'm stressed and since my friends don't like it when I'm sad they start to mention the positive side so I'll cheer up! [Jane – March 9, 1999 Journal Entry]

In the second example, Jane's coach offered reassurance and helped her to start the coping process.

The coach switched up the formation to allow more strikers and attacking midfielders and less defenders. This meant that Jane did not get to play in the last part of the game. After the game the girls were all sitting in a circle and they were getting undressed. ... Jane was sitting opposite Bren on the other side of the circle, but was facing out and crying. ... Bren made a speech about why the formation was changed and that they were going to play 70 games during the season and depending on the circumstances of the games (i.e., they needed to score, they needed to protect a lead, etc.) they may change it. He told them to not let this bother them. I could tell that he was mostly talking to Jane. [Field Notes – May 23, 1999]

Jane followed up with how she coped with this event in her journal entry.

Colleen always tries to make me feel better when I'm down because I do the same for her. It relieved a lot of my frustration when the coach talked to me privately. [Jane – May 23, 1999 Journal Entry]

Another important coping strategy within the release emotions sub-category involved yelling in frustration. Rachel, and especially Jane, used this strategy to deal with both soccer and

non-soccer stress. Though this strategy also helped to get “it” out for the athletes, it was generally thought to be less effective due to the impact it had on the recipient(s) of the yelling.

Jane: Sometimes I yell at teammates. I have a bad habit of doing that. I know I shouldn't because it is not doing any good. But that's just my letting it out, like, 'Go hard for the ball' and kind of make up for my mistakes if I don't get the ball then I yell at other people to. ... Like off the field I don't hold any grudges if somebody didn't get the ball, but on the field it makes all the difference because I am like, 'Why didn't you go hard for that?' Stuff I should not say. ... Because it is not good for anybody, like nobody likes when other people yell. I guess, I don't think about it because when I yell at people I don't notice it, but when people yell at me, then I do. ...

Researcher: So would you say that that is an ineffective way that you cope or a less effective way that you cope?

Jane: Yeah. [Jane – Interview #3]

Jane recognized that yelling at teammates was a less effective way to cope, but she did not seem to be able to use other types of strategies when frustrated. Unfortunately, this type of behavior contributed to stress for her teammates.

At one point Nadine, Rachel and Nicole were on the bench and Nicole said, 'I am so sick of that.' I thought they were talking about Jane and so I said, 'I am sorry I have to interrupt and butt in. Who are you talking about?' Nicole told me that they were talking about Jane. She said that Jane kicks the ball and then says 'pressure' if the ball is lost by a teammate. Nicole says that she does this when she makes a bad pass and commented, 'Well give me a good pass and I will.' Nadine added, 'it is so annoying.' [Field Notes – June 5, 1999]

Three other strategies were found to be important for individual athletes; get snappy or short with people, cursing and shaking out the tension. Jackie cited that when she felt stressed she sometimes snapped at her teammates, coaches or her parents.

Researcher: When the coach told you that, you snapped at him a bit. Did you feel better after?

Jackie: Yeah, basically I usually keep everything inside with those coaches, but now I just get so sick of it now sometimes ... I know I shouldn't talk back, but. [Jackie – Interview #3]

Because getting snappy or short with people could be considered a reaction to stress and not a coping strategy, I followed up on this issue with Jackie during the member check interview.

Jackie: I guess in soccer it is kind of a coping strategy because everybody is like that on the field. If anybody is stressed mostly everybody will just snap and I learned that about my team. Everybody does that.

Researcher: And so the reason why I classified it as a coping strategy was because it seems to me that when you do that, and tell me if I am wrong, you are able to release some anger or frustration.

Jackie: Hhmm. Definitely.

Researcher: And then you are able to do something else and move on. ...

Jackie: Yeah, definitely. ... If somebody is saying, 'Get to the ball. Go, go' or that I am not trying hard and I snap at them, then I'll just finally release some anger and then I can focus on my game. [Jackie – Member Check Interview]

As illustrated, Jackie gets snappy or short with people to release anger or frustration and then engages in another coping strategy such as focusing on her game as a means to cope. However, similar to the strategy of yelling in frustration, getting snappy or short with people could be

considered a less effective coping strategy due to the fact that it could have a negative impact on the recipient(s) of the harsh words.

The second unique coping strategy cited as important came from Kellie. She stated that cursing helped her to release stress and then she was able to move on.

It just helps me release my anger I guess. ... It helps me because then I am like, 'aw jeez' you know? And then I move on. [Kellie – Interview #2]

Contrary to yelling in frustration and getting snappy or short with people, cursing was not seen as ineffective because Kellie never actually swore at anyone.

Yeah, I swear in my head or underneath my breath and it just helps me to just let it go.

[Kellie – Interview #2]

The final unique coping strategy cited as important was shaking out tension. Heather claimed that this was a new coping strategy for her that she had just learned.

Researcher: So, in terms of during the game, did I leave anything out (with respect to coping) that you can think of?

Heather: I got a new one the other day. At the Bruin game, I felt like I was really, really tense. I just went out there and started shaking. I shook out my legs and shook out my arms and I just got in (the net) and I put my head up and I was ok. I felt like my body was more relaxed. That worked really well. [Heather – Interview #2]

Thought Control Strategies

The overall coping category, Thought Control Strategies, represented those coping strategies where the athletes' attempted to manage the direction of their mental processes. The sub-categories within the Thought Control category were labeled blocking, positive thinking, perspective taking, prayer, and concentrate on goals. All five athletes cited that coping strategies

found within the Thought Control Strategies group were important in helping them deal with their stress.

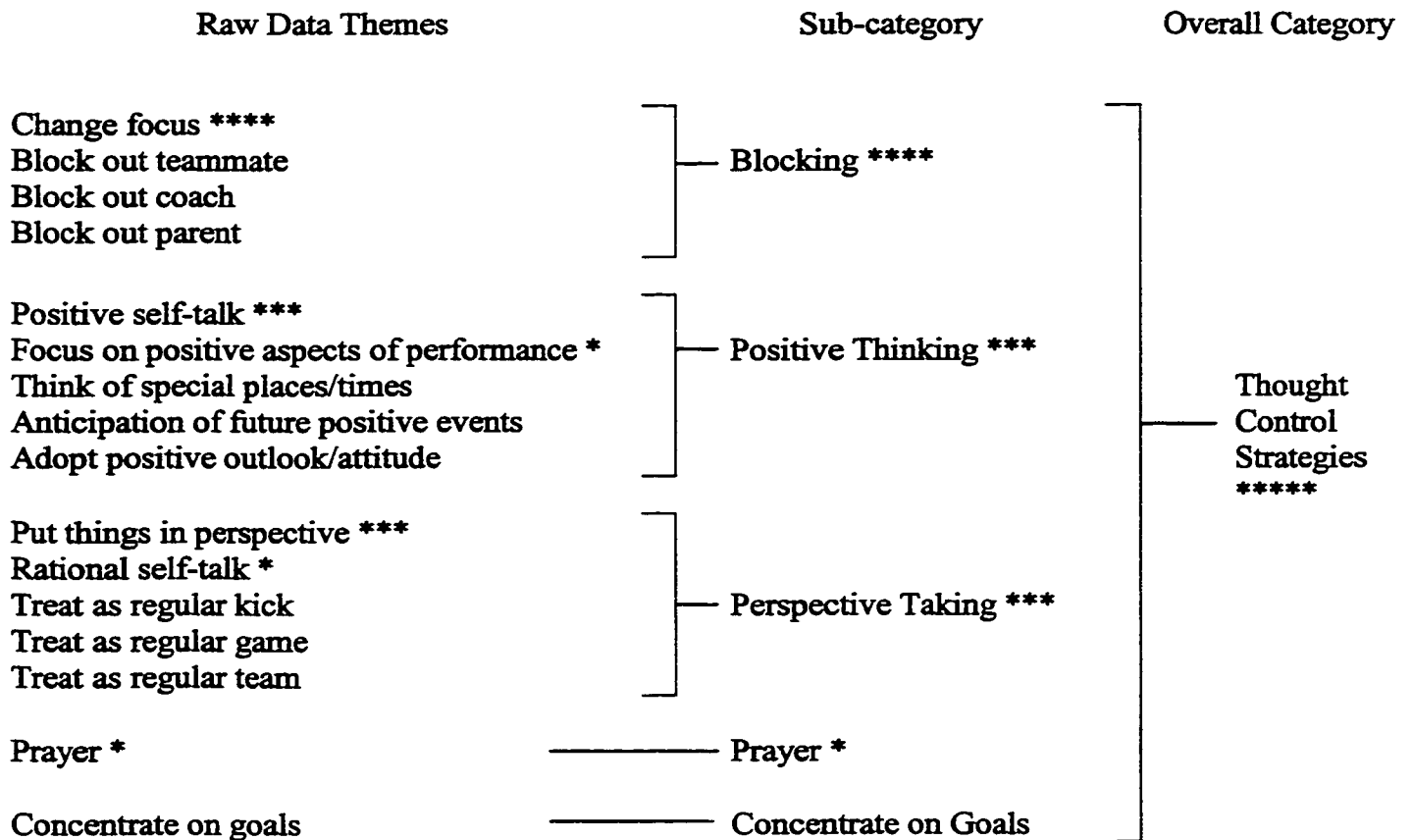


Figure 6. Organizational system for thought control coping strategies data

The number of asterisks indicate the number of athletes for which the coping strategy was important (i.e., five asterisks indicate that a coping strategy was important for five athletes).

Blocking

Blocking was considered an important coping strategy for four athletes and it included four raw data themes: change focus, block out teammate, block out coach, and block out parent.

Changing focus was used to deal with both soccer and non-soccer stress. Heather, Rachel, Kellie and Jane used this strategy to divert their attention from a stressful occurrence. Often, but not

always, they followed this diversion by concentrating on a less threatening situation or thought.

In the first example, the athlete just shifted her attention away from her stressful thoughts.

I just try and forget about it ... like if I don't think I am playing well then I try to improve myself and I mean if I think I am playing well as I can, I just kind of forget about it. [Rachel – Interview #6]

In the second example, the athlete diverted her attention away from feelings of nervousness before a game and focused on the day's events at school.

Normally Beatrice, Colleen and I, when we are passing around we don't talk about soccer.

We don't talk about the team. We talk about stuff that happened at school. So I basically talk about stuff that makes me happy and not soccerish (sic) stuff. [Jane – Interview #3]

Though this strategy was cited as important, its use was not always effective. Heather explained how she tried to use this strategy when dealing with anxiety before an exam.

I went up to bed and was drifting off and then boom it hit me. 'Oh no, I have the exam tomorrow' and there is not really much you can do at that point. I would try to think of something else. I would try to say, 'You know that was really a good movie' and then I'd try to think about that instead, but I just couldn't do it. [Heather – Background Interview]

Positive Thinking

The thought control strategy, positive thinking, was important for three of the athletes and comprised five raw data themes; positive self-talk, focus on positive aspects of performance, think of special places/times, anticipation of future positive events, and adopt a positive outlook/attitude. Heather, Jackie and Kellie spoke to themselves in positive ways or encouraged themselves in an effort to deal with soccer and non-soccer stress, thus positive self-talk was considered an important strategy.

During the game I encouraged myself a lot. I told myself that everything was ok and that I am a good keeper. [Heather – Interview #6]

Jackie explained how she used positive self-talk to help her cope with school stress.

So that's what I was thinking about. You know, always pushing myself saying, 'You have to do it. You have to do well. Keep studying. Maintain your mark or make it better.' [Jackie – Background Interview]

Kellie also discussed a unique strategy that she used to help her deal with soccer stress.

When the team did not perform well overall, she focused on positive aspects of her own performance in an effort to help herself cope. This is illustrated in the following example.

We went to Cookstown and we lost. ... We lost, but I played an amazing game. I know I played good, you know? And I will keep telling myself that sort of stuff. Like in games that we do bad in and I know that I played good, I will just be like, 'Yeah don't worry about it.' [Kellie – Background Interview]

Perspective Taking

The thought control strategy, perspective taking, was important for three of the athletes and comprised five raw data themes; putting things in perspective, rational self-talk, treating as regular kick, treating as regular game and treating as regular team. Perspective taking involved the athletes' attempts to rationalize about the stressor. Three athletes (Heather, Jackie and Rachel) cited putting things in perspective as an important coping strategy that they used to help them deal with soccer and non-soccer stress.

I just have to re-establish where I am coming from. I have to remember that I am doing this for fun and we are not professionals. I am not getting paid for it, and even if somebody says something negative about me, then that is their opinion and I have to remember that I can't

win everything and I can't be the best at everything, but you know I will try. [Heather – Interview #2]

Rachel explained how putting things in perspective helped her to cope when she was not one of the starting players at a soccer game.

I was kind of like, 'Oh why am I not starting?' but then I thought about it and I was like, 'Well I start all the time.' It's not that big of a deal if I start off. [Rachel – Interview #6]

Jackie also cited rational self-talk as an important strategy in helping her deal with soccer stress.

You just have to stop and think, 'Is this situation worth being so stressed about?' So I tell myself 'Relax, it will be over soon, and then you can move on.' [Jackie – January 15, 1999 Journal Entry]

Prayer

Only Kellie cited prayer as an important coping strategy. She stated that she often turned to God in an effort to deal with her soccer and non-soccer stress.

I started praying every single night and then it would just be comforting to me so then I would start praying when I was on the field because I felt like it gave me support, so I coped, so I did it. [Kellie – Interview #2]

Concentrate on Goals

The athletes referred to concentrating on their goals as a way to deal with non-soccer stress, such as school and their future. However, this strategy was not important for any of the athletes.

Task Focus Strategies

The Task Focus Strategies coping category represented those coping strategies used to deal with soccer stress. All five athletes cited that Task Focus Strategies were important means for

an event. Rachel, Jackie and Kellie cited working hard and not giving up as an important strategy for helping them cope with feelings of stress during an event, such as a game or practice.

‘Cause I mean I know I am not a perfect player. I make a lot of mistakes when I play soccer, a lot of them. ... But what I try to do is just try and make up for it, like I’ll boot back to defense. ... You just try and make up for it and make better plays and better plays and make yourself play better. [Rachel – Group Interview]

A second example provides further support for working hard and not giving up as a key coping strategy.

Like I will try my best, everything might not work and I might have the worst game ever, but I will work my butt off until the end. [Kellie – Background Interview]

Ironically, giving up and then making excuses as a way to justify their giving up behavior, was an important strategy for the other two athletes, Heather and Jane. For the most part, Heather gave up when she was stressed about having to run in practices.

I heard Heather ask Duane if she could practice with him since her leg was hurting her. I thought that this was odd because this was the first time that I had heard her complain about her leg since the tournament that was almost two weeks ago. Duane said that they could do this and he mentioned to me that he thought Heather might be using her ‘injury’ to avoid more running. [Field Notes – June 3, 1999]

I spoke to Heather about this sensitive issue in our member check interview. She agreed with my interpretation that she sometimes gave up when she was stressed about having to run during practice.

Researcher: So do you agree that you sometimes give up a little bit?

Heather: Definitely. I just don't feel that I am in as good shape as everyone else and I make excuses, but I blame it on the fact that I have been playing goalie for the past six or seven years and I haven't been running as much as my team has. ... I have to agree with that (that she gives up and makes excuses). I did not disagree with that at all. I do make excuses and kind of back out sometimes. [Heather – Member Check Interview]

Jane also coped by giving up, but this strategy was used more frequently and in more diverse circumstances, including tryouts and important games.

The game started and the team seemed to be playing well, but Jane did not. Soon after she asked the coach to come off and he said no. He kept her on for another five minutes. During this time it seemed like she had given up on the play. She didn't go into her tackles and seemed to be behind the play a lot. [Field Notes – July 17, 1999]

After I had seen several instances in which Jane coped by giving up, I broached this sensitive subject with her. She stated the following:

Researcher: I've seen that you fight really hard for the ball when an opponent goes by you or you or a teammate loses the ball, but it seems though that I've also seen times when you don't do this.

Jane: Hhmm (agrees).

Researcher: What is going on there?

Jane: ... When I don't (go hard to the ball) I am normally just like, 'Ah it doesn't matter. It's not going to change the world.' So it just depends on what kind of mood I am in.

Researcher: Ok, so when you say, 'Ah it doesn't matter' are you giving up or what's happening?

Jane: It's not that I am giving up. It's just that I'm more calm and then I have more faith in my teammates to help out or the game doesn't matter that much. [Jane – Interview #3]

I have interpreted that Jane does not want or can't handle the responsibility when she is playing. To avoid having to accept responsibility, she gives up or makes an excuse such as an injury so she will not have to play. The following information from the coaches supports this interpretation.

Duane: I think it manifests itself in slightly different ways. ... What happened was that she missed a couple of tackles and then you know, the next couple of tackles she didn't really go in at all and then she started miskicking the ball, and in the Elton (tournament) it was very similar. She couldn't tackle. She seemed to miskick in the first five minutes and then she came off and when she went back in at the start of the second half, she was totally flatfooted, she couldn't really seem to move at all and then she basically had to come off again. ... She played almost so deep that somebody suggested, maybe not inappropriately, that if Jane's going to play that deep, then why don't we just give her the gloves and the goalie strip and we'll put her back in the net. Like it was almost to protect herself, she would get so far back.

Bren: She doesn't want the responsibility. She does not want the responsibility and she has this, really this contradiction. She has this thing with Marilyn, 'Marilyn is going to take my position,' but in a way she is almost relieved that Marilyn is taking her position because that's a tougher position to play than further up in the midfield in terms of responsibility.

And ah, yesterday we did not put her in the center in the lower triangle and I think that was a relief to her, not having to have that responsibility and the same in the Elton Tournament.

Duane: Yeah. [Field Notes – Discussion with Coaches, July 18, 1999]

The final important coping strategy within the Narrow, More Immediate Focus sub-category was encourage teammates. Kellie explained why she considered this an important coping strategy in the following quotation:

I try to be positive because if I am playing bad I try to encourage other people and I find that it helps me get more upbeat and stuff. ... That is the way that I try to keep myself positive. ... I find I like encouraging my teammates. I guess because I am verbal and it helps me feel good about myself because I am encouraging everyone else. [Kellie – Background Interview]

Get Reassurance

The task focus strategy, getting reassurance, was important for four athletes. Athletes obtained reassurance from three main sources; the coaches, their teammates, and their parents. Getting reassurance did help the athletes cope with their soccer stress. Nevertheless, this strategy may not seem to be as effective as others due to the fact that the athletes did not usually initiate this coping process themselves. For example, getting reassurance was characterized by a mostly one-way conversation lead by the other party (coach, teammate or parent) whereby the other party encouraged the athletes and offered feedback and praise.

Heather, Jackie and Jane cited getting reassurance from the coach as an important coping strategy.

Bren talked to me after the game. He said, ‘As soon as you went out there, I knew you were ready. I knew you were focused again, just the way you went out there, you put your head up’ ... and then when he said that to me after the game, that made me feel a lot better.

[Heather – Interview #2]

As previously discussed, most of the Task Focus Strategies were characterized by the athletes' efforts to deal with the event at hand and the immediate processes which it demanded. There were a few instances, however, when an athlete engaged in coping efforts and were unsuccessful. In these cases, feelings of stress continued after an event and the athletes were unable to successfully cope on their own. For example, I discussed Jackie's excessive feelings of stress in Chapter 3. She was engaged in many activities including club soccer and felt that she was expected to perform well in all of them. She was starting to burn out and was considering quitting club soccer. Her feelings of stress lingered between club soccer events and in this situation, getting reassurance from the coach was critical in helping her to cope.

Bren said, 'Ok, I'll tell you how things are going.' He told her that in terms of an overall player, Jackie was the best on the team. She could do things with both feet that nobody else could do. He said that of all the players, she had the potential to go to the Provincial and National level. She kind of smiled and didn't say anything. ... I walked out with Jackie and asked her how she was feeling. She said that she felt a lot better after talking to Bren. [Field Notes – Discussion between Jackie and Bren, June 10, 1999]

Jackie followed up in her journal about the impact of this discussion between her and the coach and how it had helped her to cope with the high level of stress she was experiencing.

Bren told me a lot of things that he and Duane thought of me. I was really surprised. I guess I feel like that because of a lack of confidence. Now that I know what the coaches think of me, I feel much better about myself. [Jackie – June 10, 1999 Journal Entry]

Rachel cited getting reassurance from teammates as a key strategy that helped her to cope with soccer stress on the field. In the following example, she noted how encouragement from teammates can help her cope when she is feeling somewhat stressed about her performance.

It helps when you have people on the team supporting you. It really helped a lot I think. It helps a lot when someone says, 'Hey don't worry, you are doing great.' That helped a lot. It made me feel better about it. [Rachel – Interview #3]

Once again, the strategy of getting reassurance from teammates helped Rachel to cope.

Nevertheless, this may not be considered the most effective strategy, as Rachel was unable to initiate the coping process on her own and had to wait for her teammates to help her decrease her feelings of stress.

Emotional Control Strategies

The overall coping category, Emotional Control Strategies, represented those coping strategies characterized by the athletes' efforts to control their level of activation. Only two athletes cited that Emotional Control Strategies were important means for helping them to deal with their stress. Two sub-categories were included in the Emotional Control Strategies category: arousal control and visualization.

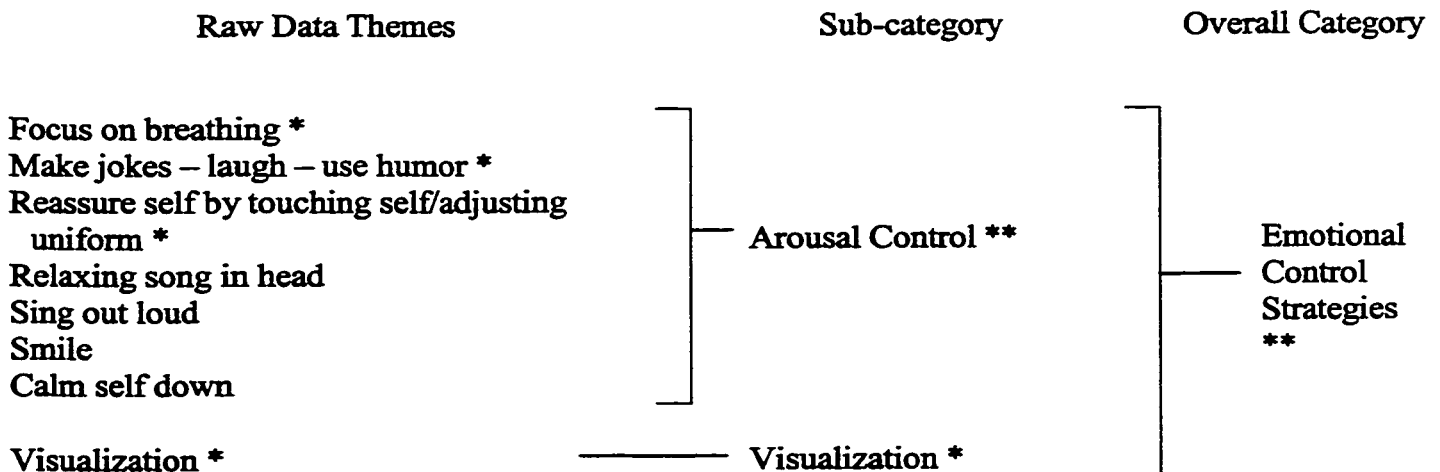


Figure 8. Organizational system for emotional control coping strategies data

The number of asterisks indicate the number of athletes for which the coping strategy was important (i.e., five asterisks indicate that a coping strategy was important for five athletes).

Arousal Control

Arousal control strategies included the athletes' attempts to attain a better mental state and get their emotions under control. Seven raw data themes were included: focus on breathing, make jokes – laugh – use humor, reassure self by touching self/adjusting uniform, relaxing song in head, sing out loud, smile, and calm self down. Two athletes cited that arousal control strategies were important in helping them deal with soccer and non-soccer stress.

Focusing on her breathing helped Rachel cope with soccer stress and non-soccer stress, such as studying for an exam or when doing homework. In the following example, she explained how she dealt with stress during a soccer event.

And then I just made myself breathe. ... I'll just breathe, basically that's what I did. I was just like, 'Ok breathe' and then it (the stress level) was a lot better after that. [Rachel – Interview #4]

An important strategy in helping Jackie cope with her soccer stress involved the use of humor. She often made jokes, or made a conscious effort to laugh when she was faced with a potentially stressful situation. Jackie explained how she used this strategy to deal with her feelings of stress during the tryouts.

I allowed myself to laugh a bit, which eases a lot of my stress. [Jackie – March 20, 1999 Journal Entry]

A second unique coping strategy cited by Jackie as important was the use of touch. She stated that she was able to cope with soccer stress by touching and sometimes adjusting her uniform. This gesture provided comfort and reassured her as explained in the following example.

Just readjusting my uniform, pulling my socks up ... touching the base of my neck. I will constantly do that. ... It's probably just a way of comforting myself to make sure, well I

know I am here, but it's just a reassuring thing I guess you could say. [Jackie – Interview #2]

Visualization

Only Rachel cited visualization as an important coping strategy. She used this strategy to deal with soccer stress by imagining her soccer performances in her mind prior to actually performing. She explained that her visualization was akin to watching herself on television.

If I have a bad feeling in my stomach about playing, I'll picture in my head. ... So it does go through my head. I'll start thinking about the game, like I'll think about myself making a good run or making a good play or working really hard and it helps me. ... I look at myself as if I am watching the game, like I see myself, my whole body running and I can see everyone on the team. It's like I am looking at it from an angle. ... It just reassures you.

[Rachel – Group Interview]

Summary of Coping Strategies

In conclusion, the athletes used a variety of coping strategies to help them deal with their stress in sport and in their daily lives. Several important coping strategies emerged for the athletes and were found in five main categories: behavioral strategies, emotional release strategies, thought control strategies, task focus strategies, and emotional control strategies. Similar to the stressor data, a number of coping strategies were found to be important for several of the athletes, and there were also some important coping strategies that were unique to individual athletes. The important coping strategies are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

Summary of Important Coping Strategies for Athletes

Overall Coping Category Sub-category raw data theme	Heather	Rachel	Jackie	Jane	Kellie
Behavioral Strategies	X	X	X	X	X
Discuss or Vent about Situation	X	X	X	X	X
Talk to teammates		X		X	X
Talk to parent(s)	X				X
Talk to coach(es)	X				
Talk to researcher			X		
Talk to boyfriend		X			
Journal writing		X			
Change/Control Environment	X	X	X	X	X
Avoid others/stressor	X	X	X	X	X
Distract self with other activities	X	X	X		X
Attack Source of Stress	X		X	X	X
Study for tests/exams	X		X	X	X
Physiotherapy sessions	X		X		
Follow Set Routine		X			X
Have good warm-up		X			X
Get organized – follow plan		X			X
Emotional Release Strategies	X	X	X	X	X
Release Emotions	X	X	X	X	X
Cry	X	X		X	X
Yell in frustration		X		X	
Snappy/short with people			X		
Curse					X
Shake out tension	X				

Table 7 (continued)

Summary of Important Coping Strategies for Athletes

Overall Coping Category Sub-category raw data theme	Heather	Rachel	Jackie	Jane	Kellie
Thought Control Strategies	X	X	X	X	X
Blocking	X	X		X	X
Change focus	X	X		X	X
Positive Thinking	X		X		X
Positive self-talk	X		X		X
Focus on positive aspects of performance					X
Perspective Taking	X	X	X		
Put things in perspective	X	X	X		
Rational self-talk			X		
Prayer					X
Prayer					X
Task Focus Strategies	X	X	X	X	X
Narrow, More Immediate Focus	X	X	X	X	X
Work hard – don't give up		X	X		X
Give up	X			X	
Encourage teammates					X
Get Reassurance	X	X	X	X	
Get reassurance from coach(es)	X		X	X	
Get reassurance from teammates		X			

Table 7 (continued)

Summary of Important Coping Strategies for Athletes

Overall Coping Category Sub-category raw data theme	Heather	Rachel	Jackie	Jane	Kellie
Emotional Control Strategies		X	X		
Arousal Control		X	X		
Focus on breathing		X			
Make jokes – laugh – use humor			X		
Reassure self by touching self – adjusting uniform			X		
Visualization		X			
Visualization		X			

4. How Did the Athletes Develop their Coping Strategies?

At the beginning of the present study the athletes were asked to reflect on the ways in which they developed or learned their coping strategies. Initial attempts to address this question were mostly unsuccessful. The athletes were unable to articulate their thoughts on the ways in which they developed coping strategies. As the study progressed, I continued to ask and modify questions regarding coping strategy development. I also probed the athletes whenever possible about this issue. The athletes became more aware of their coping strategy development, but were still largely unable to unpack and discuss this process. Therefore, I was unable to confidently answer the question regarding the process of coping strategy development, but suggestions regarding this process will be made. Nevertheless, I was able to obtain information related to the origins of the athletes' coping strategies.

There is some evidence to suggest that the athletes engaged in social modeling whereby they observed others, most notably their parents, exhibiting certain coping behaviors and then the

athletes modeled these behaviors when dealing with their own stressful situations. There were a few examples where the athletes explicitly stated that they modeled their coping behaviors after their parents.

Journal Statement: I think I may have learned this strategy ...

Jane's Entry: My Mom – she's always laid back and tries to take things as they come. She hates being rushed, but she's not so calm that she's lazy. She always seems to get things done. [Jane – April 14, 1999 Journal Entry]

In this second example, Kellie explained how she learned to discuss her stressors with someone by observing her parents do the same.

Journal Statement: I think I may have learned this strategy ...

Kellie's Entry: From my parents because they do the same with each other and find it successful. [Kellie – July 18, 1999 Journal Entry]

Heather also noted that the coach, Bren, was an important person from whom she learned coping strategies.

I think I have the same perspective as Bren on a lot of different levels just because I spend so much time with him and I see his attitude on the game. It affects me. He inspires me to play a certain way. I usually tell the defense the same things he is saying, just because I have been with him so long. [Heather – Interview #2]

However, the athletes attributed most of their coping strategy development to conversations with others about coping strategies. The following example will clarify and support this statement.

They (teammates) used to badmouth about her (another teammate) to me and I'd be like, 'Oh guys, just forget about it. It's not a big deal. Focus on yourself' you know? Because that's what my parents used to tell me to do, is to focus on myself when I get frustrated with some players. [Kellie – Interview #2]

A second example provides further support for the athletes attributing their coping strategy development to conversations with others.

I remember my Dad used to say stuff like that. ‘Oh you’ve got to visualize yourself.’ ... I used to think about it, like it helps you know? ... When you see yourself doing something it just kind of makes you feel more confident that you can do it. I guess that’s how I see it in my head. ... Maybe my Dad was the one that started that. [Rachel – Interview #2]

In conclusion, there is evidence to suggest that parents are key influences in the origins of the athletes’ coping strategies. All five athletes stated that they either directly modeled their own coping behaviors based on observations of their parents’ coping efforts or that they used coping behaviors discussed by their parents. Heather engaged in these same patterns with the coach. Thus, the coach was a key influence in the origins of Heather’s coping strategies also.

There is also evidence to suggest that the athletes developed their coping strategies through an experiential learning process. Three athletes, Jackie, Kellie and Jane, commented that they used a coping strategy during the study because they had used it successfully in the past. In the following example, Kellie stated that she had previous success in using positive self-talk on herself and that she always encouraged her teammates. These factors lead her to use this strategy to help her deal with stress that she was experiencing before a soccer event.

Journal Statement: I have used that strategy before.

Kellie’s Entry: During big games or after I made a dumb play in soccer.

Journal Statement: I think I may have learned that strategy ...

Kellie’s Entry: Just comes to me. I always speak positively of others so in return I feel it might help me once in awhile. [Kellie – March 26, 1999 Journal Entry]

Jackie noted that she dealt with nervousness before a soccer event by listening to music and that she has “always done that.”

I've always done that, like listening to music before a game pumps me up. ... So I guess one time before a game I was listening to rap music and I kind of found out that it pumps me up so I kept doing that for almost every game. [Jackie – Interview #2]

Summary of Coping Strategy Development

The data collected did not allow me to confidently answer the question about how the athletes developed their coping strategies. However, there was some evidence to suggest that the athletes' coping strategies were developed as a result of their engagement in two processes. The first process included social modeling. The athletes' parents were found to be the key influences because the five athletes either directly modeled their parents' coping behaviors or used coping behaviors discussed by their parents. One athlete also noted that she engaged in this process, but used the coach (i.e., Bren) as her model. The second process comprised experiential learning whereby the athletes used coping strategies during the course of the present study based on their successful use of the coping strategies in the past.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The present chapter is organized into two main parts. The first part addresses the four research questions that guided the present study:

1. What does stress mean to female adolescent athletes?
2. What everyday or ambient stressors do female adolescent athletes encounter in sport and in their daily lives?
3. What coping strategies do female adolescent athletes use when faced with ambient stressors in sport and in their everyday lives?
4. How are coping strategies developed?

Within the first part of the chapter, the information is organized into sections that examine these questions. The beginning of each section focuses on comparing the results of the research questions with the literature on athlete stress and coping. Where relevant, other sport psychology literature, stress and coping literature, and adolescent literature are also discussed. In the second main part of the chapter the theoretical and practical contributions of the present study, as well as areas for future research, are presented.

Based on the constructivist perspective that guided the present study, the previous chapter (i.e., Results) contained a discussion of *all* important stressors and coping strategies whether they were important for one athlete or all five. For the purpose of the present chapter, however, the discussion is focused on the cross-case findings that are important for three or more athletes. This decision was made based on the magnitude of the results and the need to compare and contrast the findings with the literature.

Three of the four research questions asked in the present study focused on description and interpretation. Descriptive questions inquire about what happens in terms of observable (or potentially observable) behavior or events, while interpretive questions ask about the meaning of these things for the people involved (Maxwell, 1996). Descriptive questions were appropriate in the present study for several reasons. First, there is very little information regarding the perceptions of stress, the stressors experienced, and the coping strategies used by athletes. Second, research has focused, for the most part, on the adult male elite individual sport athlete, and no studies have examined stress and coping with the female team sport adolescent athlete. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that adolescents cope in developmentally different ways than adults (Hoar & Crocker, 1999a). Thus, a descriptive approach was most appropriate for the present study. In fact, descriptive research is often considered the first level of research activity and is very important to the research process: “the soundness of the nondescriptive and the prescriptive aspects of research rests essentially on what has been provided by the accuracy, sensitivity, and comprehensiveness of its descriptive foundation” (Peshkin, 1993, p. 24). The fourth question was a “how” or more explanatory type of question. The four research questions are discussed next.

PART I: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What Does Stress Mean to Female Adolescent Athletes?

Comparison to the Literature

Most researchers studying athletes’ sources of stress have imposed a definition of stress on their participants. Researcher-imposed definitions focused on the athletes’ apprehensiveness, anxiety, self-doubt, and nervousness about and during competition (Cohn, 1990; Gould, Eklund,

& Jackson, 1993; Gould, Udry, Bridges, & Beck, 1997a; James & Collins, 1997; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991).

Due to the constructivist perspective that guided the present study, the athletes' perceptions of stress were examined without obligating them to accept a pre-conceived definition. In this way, the athletes' thoughts regarding stress and what it meant to them could be heard. Given this opportunity, the athletes cited several different definitions of stress such as being frustrated, nervous, anxious, worried, upset or angry. These findings are consistent with studies examining elementary school children's perceptions of stress (e.g., Cox & Orlick, 1996; Gilbert, 1997; Gilbert & Orlick, 1996).

Furthermore, for the athletes in the present study, stress occurred when they were overwhelmed and were not able to meet the challenges the situation presented. This is consistent with the framework conceptualized by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Lazarus and Folkman proposed that stress is an experience arising from transactions between a person and the environment, especially those transactions in which there is a mismatch between an individual's resources and the perceived challenge or need. Thus, if an individual perceives a situation as harmful, threatening or one in which a loss may be suffered, the individual will become stressed.

However, not all potentially stressful situations are perceived as stressful. For example, if the situation is perceived as challenging, the individual may become motivated or determined and will not feel excessive stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Consistent with this framework, many of the athletes in the present study felt that stress in the form of anxiety or worry before or during a soccer event could be something facilitative that helped them to work hard. Similar results were found in a study with university athlete participants (Ntoumanis & Biddle, 1998).

Interestingly, the three athletes in the present study deemed to use effective coping strategies most of the time – Heather, Rachel and Jackie – were the athletes that sometimes viewed potentially stressful situations as challenges. It is thought that this perception (of viewing potentially stressful situations as challenges) contributed to the effective copers categorization by the coaches. Furthermore, this perception may have contributed to their successful performances on the soccer field. The other two athletes, who were deemed to use less effective coping strategies most of the time (i.e., Jane and Kellie), did not share this view regarding potentially stressful situations concerning soccer.

Two of the athletes deemed to use effective coping strategies on a regular basis, Heather and Rachel, also saw potentially stressful situations regarding school as challenges. One of the athletes categorized as a less effective copier – Jane – also shared this view with respect to school. Though these athletes may have initially felt some stress when faced with evaluative events such as exams and assignments, they were determined to meet these challenges and succeed. It has been demonstrated in the literature that “what is stressful for one individual at one point in time may not be stressful for another individual or the same individual at another point in time” (Aldwin, 1994, p. 38). The question of why this occurs, however, needs to be addressed.

One possible explanation of this issue has to do with confidence. Confidence has been found to be a key factor in whether or not athletes achieve success (Gould, Guinan, Greenleaf, Medbery, & Peterson, 1999; Railo, 1986). For example, Orlick (1992) proposed a Wheel of Human Excellence and outlined seven mental skills that are prerequisites for athletes to achieve optimal performance. Central to this wheel is belief, or confidence. Orlick noted that when “belief or self-confidence is weakened, or wavers, performance wavers” (p. 113). Based on this, an individual may become stressed when faced with a potentially stressful situation if the

individual is not confident in her abilities. In fact, “a hallmark of successful athletes is their ability to manage competitive stressors and setbacks with an unshakable sense of efficacy” (Bandura, 1997, p. 383). Therefore, if an athlete is confident in her abilities whether it be on the soccer field or in the classroom, then she is likely to succeed and will not feel excessive stress. If however, she is not feeling confident, then her chances of feeling stressed increase and she may or may not be successful in her endeavors.

Locus of control may also explain why some athletes became stressed when others perceived a potentially stressful situation as a challenge. Locus of control is a “generalized expectancy to perceive reinforcement as contingent upon one’s behavior (internal) or as the result of forces outside one’s control and related to luck, chance, fate, or powerful others (external)” (Le Unes & Nation, 1996, p. 174). Following this line of reasoning, athletes who believe that a potentially stressful situation is within their control and believe that they have the coping resources to deal with it will perceive the situation to be a challenge. If, however, athletes believe that their coping behavior will have little or no impact on the stressful situation, they will perceive that the situation is out of their control and will become stressed. Therefore, perceived efficacy to exercise control over potentially stressful situations plays a major role in one’s level of stress (Bandura, 1986).

Turning to the athletes involved in the present study, Jane, an athlete deemed to use less effective coping strategies, sometimes perceived stressful situations in school such as tests and assignments as challenges, but became stressed when faced with potentially stressful situations on the soccer field. If locus of control was used to explain this pattern, it could be concluded that Jane sometimes felt in control about evaluative events in school because she believed in her abilities to study and was well prepared for these tasks. In fact, attacking the source of her school

stress by studying was an important behavioral coping strategy for Jane. Nevertheless, Jane did not view potentially stressful situations in soccer as challenges, and often became stressed.

Perhaps this occurred because Jane, as only one of the eleven players on the field, did not feel that she had any direct control over the soccer event and that the game's outcome would largely be determined by the performances of her teammates, which was beyond her control.

2. What Ambient or Everyday Stressors do Female Adolescent Athletes Encounter in Sport and in their Daily Lives?

Comparison to the Literature

Based on the constructivist perspective that guided the present study, consideration was given to the athletes' multiple realities and individual voices. Consistent with this perspective, the athletes were given the opportunity to discuss all of their stressors, and not just those related to their sporting experiences. Three main categories of stress were discussed: (a) Negative Aspects of Competition and Training, (b) Team Dynamic Issues, and (c) Personal Struggles.

Negative Aspects of Competition and Training

All five athletes experienced stress directly related both to competition and training. These results are consistent with the literature that has found both competition and training to be stressful for some athletes (Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993; Scanlan, 1986; Scanlan et al., 1991). The cross-case findings important for three or more athletes are discussed next.

Performance expectations – striving to meet self and others' expectations. Athletes often place tremendous pressure on themselves to perform well and in a consistent manner (Orlick & Partington, 1986). Self-imposed performance expectations have been demonstrated to be a significant source of stress because concern about "what one thinks of oneself can be a competitive stressor" (Bandura, 1997, p. 389). In a study examining athletes' stressors, more

than half of the athletes noted that failing to achieve their performance goals (or meet their own expectations) was a significant stressor (James & Collins, 1997). This finding is consistent with the results of the present study, but it was much more pronounced in the present study. The athletes achieved much success in their sport and held high expectations for themselves. Thus, for all five athletes, meeting the expectations of themselves with respect to their soccer performance was a key source of stress.

Meeting others' (coaches, parents, and teammates) expectations was also found to be important sources of stress. The sporting environment is one in which athletes are subject to constant evaluation because competitions and practices are public events. This assessment has been termed social evaluation and is defined as the information about one's ability that is received from other people (Scanlan, 1986). The potential for social evaluation can result in increased stress for athletes as they may feel that they have to perform at a certain level in order to meet the performance expectations of others and be evaluated favorably (Kidman, 1998).

Meeting the expectations of coaches and parents as significant sources of stress has also been demonstrated in the literature (Martens, 1978; Thompson, 1995). For example, boys who frequently worried about the performance expectations and evaluations of their parents and coach tended to experience greater stress prior to competition when compared to boys who worried about these issues less frequently (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1984). In another example, high school aged golfers stated that meeting the expectations of their parents and coaches were critical sources of stress (Cohn, 1990).

A number of factors may contribute to athletes perceiving high levels of pressure from their parents and coaches. For example, participation in youth soccer has recently increased (De Knop, Engström, Skirstad, & Weiss, 1996) and soccer now has one of the highest participation rates for

youth in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1995). Many of the athletes' parents did not have the same opportunity to participate that their daughters now have. Though not clear from the data, it is possible that the parents are trying to live vicariously through their daughters and in so doing, impose pressure on the athletes. This scenario occurs quite often with parents of youth athletes (Greenspan, 1981; Thompson, 1995). Additionally some parents get wrapped up in their children's athletic pursuits and envision their child as the next big sport hero (Ryan, 1995). Unfortunately, the stress that accompanies this dream can be significant for the youth athlete. With respect to pressure from coaches, often coaches' success is measured by the performances of their athletes, so they coach to win (Chaumeton & Duda, 1988; Gilbert, Trudel, & Haughian, 1999; Ryan). Regrettably, this can equate to significant pressure for the athletes.

Meeting the expectations of teammates was also found to be an important stressor for the athletes involved in the present study. There is very little evidence in the literature about meeting the expectations of teammates as a critical source of stress for athletes other than one study with elite figure skaters (Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993). An explanation for this finding becomes apparent upon closer examination of the studies that have investigated athletes' sources of stress. To date, most studies that have investigated athletes' stressors have been conducted with elite individual sport athletes, such as those involved in skiing, golf, and figure skating. Although the athletes were on a team (e.g., the athletes that participated in the Gould, et al., 1997a study were members of the United States alpine and freestyle ski team), their actual sporting performances were, for the most part, of an individual nature and the athletes did not rely on their teammates during their performance. As such, meeting the expectations of their teammates would not be expected to be a stressor for these individual sport athletes. The finding that meeting the

expectations of teammates was an important source of stress for the female adolescent team sport athletes involved in the present study appears to be a unique contribution to the literature.

Meeting the expectations of self and others was found to be an important stressor for all five athletes. The period of adolescence may offer insight about the reason this stressor is so prevalent for the athletes. For example, “many young athletes appear to be victimized by irrational beliefs concerning the meaning and importance of success and approval of others, and such beliefs predispose them to inappropriate stress reactions” (Smoll & Smith, 1996, p. 361). An explanation concerning adolescents’ preoccupation about others’ perceptions of them has been posited (Cobb, 1998). Adolescents often lose perspective as to what concerns them and what concerns others. With such a high focus on themselves, adolescents can have the feeling that others, too, are thinking about them with similar magnitude. This loss of perspective has been termed the imaginary audience and helps to explain why some adolescents have exaggerated feelings of self-consciousness (Cobb).

Athletes have a number of stimuli to attend to while competing, but the amount of information that an individual can process at one time is limited (Wann, 1997). For example, some of the concerns a soccer athlete needs to attend to include her position on the field, her teammates’ positions, as well as the positions of the opposing team’s players, the execution of different skills, and set offensive and defensive strategies. If athletes are attending to worries about others’ evaluation of their performance (i.e., social evaluation) these athletes will not be able to successfully attend to competitive stimuli and their performance will suffer.

Although meeting the expectations of self and others were important stressors for all five athletes, these stressors seemed to be most prevalent for Kellie and Jane, the two athletes deemed to use less effective coping strategies most of the time. The athletes were categorized as less

effective copers by their coaches because they were often unable to perform to their capabilities in competitive situations.

Worries about competition – perceived importance of competitive event. The athletes involved in the present study experienced a great deal of stress when they had important competitions. Important contests such as the Olympic Games and World Championships have also been shown to be significant stressors with elite athletes (Orlick & Partington, 1986, 1988; Ravizza, 1996; Scanlan et al., 1991). Elite athletes devote their lives to their sport, which often becomes their career. They spend several hours per day training and invest significant resources (e.g., time, finances) in their athletic pursuits (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993; Starkes, Deakin, Allard, Hodges, & Hayes, 1996). They often represent their country when competing, are seen as public figures by the media and are expected to do well. Because of these factors, one would expect that elite athletes find important events to be stressful. An elite skater made the following comment about the stress of competing at important events once the status of national champion was achieved: “A lot of people in skaters that you’re only as good as your last performance, so you know, you don’t want anybody to outshine you when you’re a national champion” (Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993, p. 149). High amounts of stress are not limited to those athletes competing at an elite level, however, as the adolescents athletes involved in the present study also experienced a great deal of stress about important competitions.

Nevertheless, in comparing the level of involvement of the elite athlete to the female adolescent athlete involved in the youth sport soccer league, the contrast in their experiences is vast. The adolescent athletes involved in the present study competed at the highest level of competition in the region for their age group, and most of them took their sport very seriously. However, the athletes were involved in a number of activities in addition to soccer. Also, they

usually participated in three or four soccer events per week, and this number could increase if they were competing in tournaments. This level of participation by the adolescent athlete seems high. Yet, when the actual numbers of hours the adolescent athletes are engaged in their sport are compared to those of the elite athlete, the adolescent's time investment is minimal. Obviously, the adolescent athletes did not have the same level of investment as elite athletes. Why then did the adolescent athletes involved in the present study perceive levels of stress similar to that experienced by an elite athlete when faced with an important competitive event?

Perhaps the structure of youth sport is partly to blame. It has been suggested that there is too much adult interference in youth sport and that parents and others have moved from an attitude of "helping out where they can" to dominating the sport (LeBlanc & Dickson, 1997). With this shift comes an emphasis on winning and a de-emphasis on the execution of skills and performing at a high level regardless of the game's outcome.

From my time in the field, I know that the coaches emphasized that the athletes perform well by playing "their game" and that the winning would take care of itself. For example, the coaches did not allow the team to keep track of individual statistics. Although one of the managers recorded the statistics for every game, these stats focused on team objectives, such as the number of shots the team had on the opposing team's goal, and the number of times the team won possession on throw-ins. Some of the athletes' parents did not seem to be able to adopt this attitude. Several fathers kept individual statistics and could tell me at any time the number of goals their daughters had scored and the team's win-loss ratio. A father of one of the five athletes dubbed the team "one of the ten best teams in the world" for their age group. The coaches did not have any idea as to how he came up with this distinction. At national and international tournaments this father made a point of telling anyone who would listen that this team was "the

team to beat.” It is possible that the adolescent athletes involved in the present study also shared this attitude. Taking this information into consideration, the high level of stress experienced by the athletes when they are faced with important competitive events makes sense. After all, they are often expected (by themselves and others) to win and they are the “team to beat.”

Team Dynamic Issues

The Team Dynamic Issues category was defined as experiencing the negative thoughts and feelings associated with membership and responsibilities in a team context. All five athletes experienced stress directly related to team dynamic issues. This result appears to be a new finding as there is very little evidence in the literature that team dynamic issues are stressors for athletes. This could be in part due to a study published in 1979 by Simon and Martens, in which they investigated the stress in individual and team sports and other evaluative activities in which children participated. The most anxiety inducing activity was the band solo competition and the only sport found to be significantly more anxiety inducing than school tests was wrestling, an individual sport. This study was published just when the field of sport psychology became a recognized discipline. Rainer Martens, the second author, has gone on to become a very influential voice in the field of sport psychology. As such, this study could be considered one of the early landmark studies that influenced the direction of sport psychology research.

It is thought that because of this early study, as well as the potentially high level for social evaluation inherent in individual sports, such as wrestling, figure skating and skiing, researchers have tended to focus on athletes competing in individual sports. Team sport athletes have not been neglected altogether, but the studies that have been conducted have investigated, for example, the athletes’ competitive stress (Scanlan & Passer, 1978, 1979) without inquiring about the negative thoughts and feelings associated with membership and responsibilities in a team

context and how they may contribute to athletes' level of stress. Thus, team dynamic issues as a source of stress is a unique contribution of the present study. The important cross-case findings within this category are discussed next.

Responsibility to team. Three of the athletes involved in the present study experienced a considerable amount of stress concerning their responsibilities to the team, specifically the responsibilities inherent in the positions they played on the field. The three athletes and their positions were Heather (goalkeeper), Jackie (winghalf), and Kellie (defender). Case studies documenting athletes' stories and their mental skills have shown that athletes in key positions can experience high levels of stress. For example, in a study that investigated the psychological dimensions of goalkeeping, Pat Jennings, a 24-year veteran goalkeeper of the European Football (soccer) League commented that there was a lot of pressure on him. He stated, "You can hide if you're an outfield player and you don't want to move or pass. Or, if you make a mistake you can get away with it, then put things right in the 89th or 90th minute. As goalkeepers, though, we can't get away with that. I mean, there's nowhere to hide within those sticks" (Newman, 1992, p. 80).

When playing a central position on a team, an athlete has high visibility and the potential to stand out is magnified. It is posited that this may be the case for Heather (goalkeeper), Jackie (winghalf), and Kellie (defender). In soccer, a goalkeeper has a distinct location on the field and rarely plays outside of a clearly marked area. She is the only player on the field allowed to touch the ball with her hands on the field while the ball is in play and wears a different colored uniform than her teammates. Defenders are known as one of the last lines of defense. When a defender makes a mistake, the potential for a shot on the team's goal is high. A winghalf is involved in all aspects of the play. This midfield player generally controls the pace of the game because her

duties include offending and defending. See Appendix J for a document outlining the team's formation and the responsibilities of the positions on the field.

These positions are prominent on the soccer field and are easily recognized by spectators. Because of their high visibility and distinctiveness, it is very easy to identify when a mistake is made. As noted by Jennings, an athlete in a key position does not have a chance to hide on the field (Newman, 1992). With this exposure comes an increase in the potential social evaluation by others. Social evaluation is the information about one's ability that is received from other people (Scanlan, 1986). Thus, athletes in key positions (goalkeeper, defender, and winghalf) may experience a considerable amount of stress because they want to perform at a high level and be evaluated favorably.

Frustration with teammates. Frustration with teammates was found to be an important source of stress for three athletes: Heather, Rachel and Kellie. This occurred when the athletes' teammates displayed a lack of commitment and when they had a lack of focus or played poorly. These areas are discussed next.

The literature that has examined athletes' sources of stress has focused on elite athletes competing in wrestling, skiing and figure skating. These sports are considered individual sports. However, some of the elite figure skaters competed in pairs events and thus had one partner or teammate. For these athletes, their partner's commitment to the sport was found to be a significant stressor (Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993). This finding is consistent with the results of the present study. A perceived lack of teammate commitment may be stressful because commitment is a key requirement for athletic success (Gould et al., 1999; Orlick, 1992).

Other than the above finding (Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993), there is little empirical evidence of commitment, as a source of athletic stress. Task cohesion, a related concept has been

investigated, but not as it relates to stress. Task cohesion has been defined as the extent to which group members work together and remain united in their attempt to complete a specific task (Wann, 1997). Thus, task cohesion implies commitment of group members to the task at hand. Factors influencing cohesion have been identified and include intragroup cooperation and intergroup conflict, team stability, team homogeneity, team size, and severe initiation (Wann). It is posited that if a team's task cohesion is low, then some athletes may experience substantial stress. This has not been investigated, however, but could be an area for future research.

Heather, Rachel and Kellie also experienced considerable stress when their teammates displayed a lack of focus or did not play well. There is not much evidence of teammates' poor performance as an important source of stress in the academic literature. However, there is support for this stressor in popular media and sport texts (Jackson & Delehanty, 1995).

Interestingly, there does appear to be a relationship between task cohesion and performance. High cohesion could lead to greater team performance. Also, successful team performance could lead to increased team cohesiveness (Widmeyer, Carron, & Brawley, 1993). There is support for a positive correlation between team cohesion and performance in a variety of sports and at different levels of competition (Slater & Sewell, 1994; Williams & Widmeyer, 1991).

The question though is why did the athletes experience substantial stress when their teammates displayed a lack of commitment and when they had a lack of focus or played poorly? The three athletes that experienced substantial stress when faced with these situations were Heather, Rachel and Kellie. Heather and Rachel were both deemed to use effective coping strategies most of the time, while Kellie was deemed to use less effective coping strategies most of the time. When looking at these distinctions, there doesn't appear to be any pattern as to why these three athletes experienced significant stress, as both the effective and less effective copers

experienced considerable stress. However, a possible explanation about the athletes' stress may be found if we look to the role of these three athletes on the team.

Heather (captain), Rachel and Kellie (assistant captains) were the leaders on the team. They were chosen for the leadership roles based on their high commitment to the team, strong work ethic, and overall positive attitudes. The team captains were expected to lead by example whenever possible. They often trained on their own outside of the team context by working on their fitness or on certain skills. For example, Heather attended goalkeeping clinics and both Rachel and Kellie ran on their own. These athletes, specifically Heather and Rachel, were also expected to "keep the team together" in times of adversity, and talk to any teammates who were not fully committed to the team's goals. In addition to these duties, the captains spent extra time organizing and participating in fund raising events, as well as social activities for the team.

As captains of the team, these athletes had a greater investment in the team as compared to their teammates in non-leadership roles. Because of their high level of investment to the team, the captains may have been more sensitive or vulnerable to stress when their teammates did not follow suit. The literature supports that some individuals have a greater vulnerability or predisposition to experience stress (Aldwin, 1994). Thus, their roles as captains may have lead Heather, Rachel and Kellie to experience greater levels of stress with respect to their teammates than that experienced by their teammates in non-leadership roles.

Performance criticism – receiving criticism. Three of the five athletes in the present study experienced considerable stress when they received criticism about their performance from their coaches or their teammates. Elite figure skaters have also been shown to experience significant stress when subjected to coach criticism (Scanlan et al., 1991). Furthermore, receiving criticism

from significant others such as judges and officials have been shown to be stressful for elite and non-elite athletes (Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993; James & Collins, 1997).

Upon examination of the three athletes that experienced considerable stress regarding criticism a possible explanation becomes apparent. The three athletes were Kellie and Jane, the two athletes deemed to use less effective coping strategies most of the time, as well as Jackie. Jackie was categorized as an athlete who had recently moved into the effective copers' category. Jackie was the same athlete who became very stressed at the beginning of the outdoor season and had thought about quitting soccer altogether. It is posited that the success of these three athletes on the soccer field was related to their feelings of self-worth. This claim is made based on information received from the coaches shortly after the present study began.

The coaches told me that prior to joining the team, Jackie and Jane played for another team. For the sake of clarity in the following explanation, the previous team will be called the Raiders (a pseudonym). According to Bren and Duane, the coach of the Raiders yelled loudly and often at his players whenever they made mistakes. He also engaged in other behaviors to show his displeasure with the athletes' performance, such as throwing his clipboard to the ground in disgust and grabbing his hat and crumpling it. Bren and Duane played against the Raiders team in regular league play and had the opportunity to observe this coach's behavior for a few years. The Raiders' coach was eventually released from his coaching duties and the team disbanded.

Jackie and Jane then came to tryout for the club team involved in the present study. Bren and Duane noted that these two athletes needed to be handled with "kid gloves." The coaches noted that if they performed well, they felt good about themselves and their contributions to the team. Thus their feelings of self-worth would be enhanced. If, on the other hand, they performed poorly, then they felt discouraged about themselves as soccer athletes and as people.

Kellie's background was a bit different. The coaches commented that Kellie was the most dedicated player on the team. After joining the team, she quit several other activities that she was involved in so that she could focus on her soccer participation. Much of her identity was wrapped up in her sport. Also, Kellie worked extremely hard on the field, but did not seem to be able to perform at the same level during a competition as she could in practice. When mistakes were made, Kellie talked incessantly in an attempt to explain the reason behind the mistake and why it had occurred. For this reason, it is posited that Kellie's self-worth also appeared to be linked to her soccer performance.

The self-worth of these three athletes appears to be directly linked to their performance. This is detrimental because "an athlete who believes that his or her self-worth depends on success will attach a different meaning to sport outcomes than will an athlete who can divorce self-worth from success or failure" (Smoll & Smith, 1996, p. 361). When their performance is criticized, the athletes feel that they have not performed well and their self-worth is decreased. This process leads to the athletes experiencing substantial stress. Elite figure skaters have also been shown to experience stress resulting from a loss in self-worth (Scanlan et al., 1991).

Furthermore, these same three athletes (i.e., Jackie, Jane and Kellie) experienced considerable stress about meeting the expectations of their coaches and teammates. It is thought that they experience high levels of stress when they receive criticism from these significant others because the criticism reinforces the fact that they have not met the perceived expectations of their coaches and teammates.

Personal Struggles

The personal struggles category included personal situations experienced by the athletes related to their sport and their lives outside of soccer. All five athletes experienced stress

regarding personal struggles. The inclusion of stressors related to situations experienced by the athletes outside of their sport was made possible due to the constructivist perspective that guided the present study. This perspective and the emphasis on attempting to gain a comprehensive portrait of the stressors experienced by the team sport female adolescent athlete made it possible for the athletes to discuss all of their stressors, and not just those directly related to their sport. This finding is consistent with the literature. For example, elite figure skaters also noted that they experienced stress outside of their sport (Gould, Jackson, et al., 1993; Scanlan et al., 1991).

Physical/mental difficulties – physical consequences of injury. Four athletes experienced considerable stress regarding the physical repercussions of their injury. Three of these athletes had to sit out for an extended period and experienced substantial stress about not being able to play. These same three athletes did not forego playing during the entire time they were injured however, and came back to competition before their injuries had completely healed. This resulted in another source of stress, as the athletes were unable to perform at their optimal level due to their nagging injury. Elite athletes that miss training and competition opportunities due to injuries also experience significant stress (Bianco, Malo, & Orlick, 1999; Gould et al., 1997a; Scanlan et al., 1991). Experiencing a reduction in performance ability due to a nagging injury has also been shown to be an athlete stressor (Cohn, 1990; Gould et al.; Scanlan et al.).

Attachment theory provides a possible explanation for the substantial stress experienced by the athletes when unable to play or unable to play well due to injury (Evans & Hardy, 1995; Peretz, 1970). In the sporting context, attachment theory relates to the process whereby an individual's important attachments, such as relationships and views of oneself, are threatened when he or she suffers an injury. Thus, in addition to the losses in movement and ability, injured athletes also suffer losses in their self-image and self-esteem. Perhaps these psychological losses

are a result of athletes' decreased status on the team, their lack of shared experiences with teammates (due to the isolation an injury can cause) and the fact that praise and positive feedback regarding their performance is minimal, if not completely absent. Interruptions in psychological attachments are important because they form the basis for feelings of satisfaction with oneself as well as types of social reinforcement (Gould et al., 1997a).

Heil (1993) offered an alternative explanation about the stress that athletes experience when they are not able to perform well or at all because of injuries. His related, but slightly different explanation is that when injured, athletes suffer a temporary loss in the ability to participate in an activity that they value highly. This is often accompanied by feelings of threat about whether the athlete will continue to achieve success in his or her sport. These factors may have a negative impact on the injured athlete's sense of self, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Heil). Jackie's situation supports this explanation. When Jackie became injured she missed six weeks of the season. During this downtime she experienced a great deal of stress. She wanted to support her teammates, but had difficulty attending games because seeing her team play reminded her about her current inability to contribute to the team's performance and feelings of whether she would ever heal and be able to play again.

Performance expectations regarding school – striving to meet self and others' expectations.

Evaluative events, such as tests, exams, and assignments were important stressors for four of the five athletes in the present study. Three of these athletes also experienced considerable stress about meeting the expectations of their parents with respect to their performance in school. These findings are consistent with the literature. The abundance of studies conducted to investigate students' stress about academic failure and their test coping skills supports the extreme stress that some students feel when faced with evaluative events in the classroom

(Bauwens & Hourcade, 1992; Mantzicopoulos, 1997; Prins, Groot, & Hanewald, 1994).

Additionally, Verma and Gupta (1990) found perceived parent expectations regarding academic performance were high and a key source of stress for young- to mid-adolescent students.

It is believed that the athletes' stress concerning evaluative events in school and meeting the school expectations of their parents occurred as a by-product of the society and the time in which we live. For example, Verma and Gupta (1990) noted, "As culture becomes increasingly diversified and technologically advanced, with growing number of individuals seeking active participation in the work force, the need for adequate educational preparation becomes a paramount concern" (p. 7). In today's society, a high school education is often not enough. For most people to succeed, as measured by gainful employment and the ability to contribute to society, post secondary education is key. The primary way to gain access to a university education is through achieving good grades in high school. Thus, evaluative events in school are important in this endeavor, and as a result, cause a great deal of stress for many secondary students, including four of the athletes involved in the present study.

Examining the athletes' parents may help to explain the reason why meeting the school expectations of parents was a key source of athlete stress. With one exception, all parents were employed as professionals. Most of them expected their daughters to do well in school and attend university. The question, "are you going to go to university?" was replaced with, "which university do you plan to attend?" for many of these athletes. Though not always explicit, the expectancy of a university or college education was implied. As already discussed, a student's high school grades are a primary determinant of university acceptance, so the athletes needed high grades. As further support for this explanation, a father of one of five the athletes threatened his daughter that if she didn't improve her grades, which were in the 80 to 85% range, she would

be sent to private school. The athlete coped with this stress in a variety of ways including crying and studying. This father told me in a phone conversation that his daughter was not getting the academic guidance that she needed in the public school, but that she would find this in the private school. As it turned out, the athlete left her public high school during the summer of data collection and enrolled at the private school in the fall (after data collection was finished). The two-year International Baccalaureate Program for which she enrolled at the private school was more academically challenging and would better equip her, according to her father, to handle the academic challenges of university and succeed in life. Thus, attitudes such as this father's, as well as the implicit expectancies from other parents, contributed to the stress experienced by the athletes about meeting the school expectations of their parents.

3. What Coping Strategies do Female Adolescent Athletes use when faced with Ambient or Everyday Stressors in Sport and in their Everyday Lives?

Comparison to the Literature

The athletes were asked to describe the coping strategies that they used to help them deal with ambient (or everyday) stressors experienced in their sport and in their lives outside of soccer. Before the results are discussed, three important points need to be addressed.

First, a constructivist perspective guided the present study. This perspective was chosen because of its emphasis on multiple realities and because it allowed the voices of the young women to be heard. Concurrent with this, the athletes were given an opportunity to discuss all of their coping efforts and were not limited to those that they considered effective. This is an important point because many researchers studying athletes' coping efforts have limited the athletes' responses to those coping behaviors that were facilitative (Gould, Udry, Bridges, & Beck, 1997b; Prapavessis & Grove, 1995). Information regarding ineffective coping efforts,

however, is important to gaining a more complete portrait of the coping strategies used by female adolescent team sport athletes. Furthermore, coaches and sport psychologists can use this information to help athletes cope more effectively by sharing what has been shown to be effective and ineffective coping efforts of other youth sport athletes.

Second, an examination of the results in the previous chapter might lead one to conclude that the athletes involved in the present study went through a step-by-step process whereby they engaged in a particular coping strategy (e.g., positive self-talk) when they were faced with a particular stressor (e.g., stress before a competitive event). However, this assumption is incorrect, as the athletes did not limit their coping efforts to particular strategies or single approaches. For example, when Rachel was stressed before a competitive event she engaged in a multitude of coping efforts including going through a proper warm-up, focusing on her breathing, and using visualization and positive self-talk. This finding is consistent with studies examining the coping efforts of elite athletes (Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993; Gould et al., 1997b), and the framework espoused by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) who noted that coping is a complex, dynamic process involving various strategies which are often used in combination.

Finally, Folkman and Lazarus (1985) posited that coping efforts could be classified as either problem-focused or emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping relates to efforts used by an individual to act on the source of stress to change it, while emotion-focused coping is defined as the efforts made to regulate emotional states that are associated with or result from stressful events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Because of the lack of previous research on the coping strategies of female adolescent athletes, however, the analysis of the coping strategy data followed a more inductive approach (see the methodology chapter for detail). Furthermore, it became apparent very early in the data collection and analysis stages that the coping strategies

used by the female adolescent athletes involved in the present study could not be characterized into the dichotomy outlined by Lazarus and Folkman. This occurred because the athletes often attempted to act on the person/stressor environment and regulate their emotions at the same time. An example from the present study provides support for this finding.

Jackie, an effective copier, became stressed when the coaches or her teammates constantly criticized her performance. Jackie noted that this situation caused her to get stressed, and frustration and anger built up inside of her. Sometimes she snapped at her critics. This unique, but important coping strategy served two purposes. First, it acted as an emotion-focused coping strategy because it allowed her to release the anger and frustration that she was feeling. Second, the act of snapping at the critics curtailed their negative comments thereby allowing her to act on the stressful situation. Therefore, the strategy of being snappy or short with people, in this instance, was used as both a problem-focused and an emotion-focused coping strategy. Four main types of coping strategies were important for three or more athletes in the present study: (a) behavioral strategies, (b) emotional release strategies, (c) thought control strategies, and (d) task focus strategies. These strategies will be discussed next.

Behavioral Strategies

Behavioral Strategies represented those coping strategies characterized by the performance of explicit behavioral efforts. Behavioral coping strategies were found to be important for all five athletes in the present study. These results are consistent with the literature that has found that elite wrestlers (Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993) and elite figure skaters (Gould, Finch, & Jackson, 1993) also use behavioral coping strategies when dealing with stressful situations. The cross-case findings important for three or more athletes are discussed next.

Discuss or vent about situation. The behavioral strategy of discussing or venting about a stressful situation was important for all five athletes. This strategy included a conversation between the athlete and often, but not always, another person. When using this strategy, the athlete initiates the conversation and employs the conversational partner as a sounding device. Three of the athletes, Rachel, Jane and Kellie, vented with their teammates in an effort to help themselves cope with stressful situations related to their sport. This finding appears to be consistent with the literature. Due to its reliance on others and the nature of the conversation, the strategy of discussing or venting about a stressful situation is likened to the strategy termed seeking social support, which includes efforts to gather emotional, technical, and informational assistance from others (Gould, Finch, et al., 1993). Thus, the literature on seeking social support will be compared to the findings of the present study.

There is evidence in the sport literature and the stress and coping literature that substantiates the claim that female adolescents seek social support as a key coping strategy (Feldman, Fisher, Ransom, & Dimiceli, 1995; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993; Shulman, 1993). For example, female high school students were more likely than males to seek the support of others to talk about their feelings and to vent (Phelps & Jarvis, 1994). Turning to sport, NCAA Division I level university athletes sought out their teammates for listening support (Rosenfeld, Richman, & Hardy, 1989). Teammates provided listening support when they actively listened without giving advice or making judgments. Teammates of the athletes involved in the present study would provide similar support when the three athletes discussed or vented about soccer stressors with them. Seeking social support from teammates has also been shown to be an effective coping strategy used by elite athletes (Gould, Finch, et al., 1993; Udry, Gould, Bridges, & Tuffey, 1997).

It appears that there is an increased ability during adolescence to utilize support resources when coping with stress (Levitt, Guacci-Franco, & Levitt, 1994). One possible explanation for the prevalence of this coping strategy use by females, though, may be socialization, as studies have suggested that the way adolescents cope with stress is associated with their psychosocial adjustment (Feldman et al., 1995). For example, it has been suggested that the increased use of relationships in coping may indicate differential socialization that supports more affiliative behavior for girls (Patterson & McCubbin, 1987).

The period of adolescence is a time of transitions including a pivotal shift in the importance of the parental influence to that of the peers in an adolescent's life (Schinke, Schilling, & Snow, 1987). This shift to peer importance is also supported in the adolescent literature (Cobb, 1998). Further, the process of seeking social support and social comparisons that occur regularly in adolescence point to the growing function of friends in coping (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993). Many of the athletes in the present study considered their teammates some of their closest friends. These factors contributed to the importance of teammates in the athletes' use of venting and discussing stressful soccer situations with them.

Furthermore, the athletes involved in the present study, only discussed or vented about stressful soccer situations with their teammates that they trusted. In mid-adolescence, an important factor in whom females confide is trust (Cobb, 1998). Especially important for females is that they can trust their friends to not reveal confidential discussions to others or to talk about them behind their backs (Berndt, 1982).

Finally, the athletes and their teammates shared similar soccer experiences. This may have contributed to the athletes' belief that their stressors could be best understood by their teammates. Also, the team's shared sporting context may have increased the ability of the

athletes' teammates to empathize with the athletes involved in the present study. It is posited that these factors contributed to the athletes' adoption of teammates as their chosen partners with whom to discuss or vent.

Change or control the environment. The behavioral coping strategy of changing or controlling the environment was important for all five athletes. A key strategy within this category was avoiding others or the source of stress. Avoidance coping includes behavioral, cognitive and emotional activities oriented away from the stressor (Roth & Cohen, 1986), and was an important coping strategy for all five athletes. This finding is consistent with the literature. Elite athletes have been shown to cope with the stress of their sport and the stress of injuries by using avoidance strategies such as physically or psychologically isolating themselves from the stressor (Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993; Gould, Finch, et al., 1993; Gould et al., 1997b).

Perhaps this strategy was used by the athletes in the present study because it is an "easy way out." When the athletes avoid others or the source of their stress, they don't have to immediately deal with the situation. An alternative explanation is that at the time of the stressful occurrence, the athletes did not feel able to confront the situation. They may have felt that they would do or say something that they would later regret. By avoiding the stressor initially, they create some space and allow themselves time to reflect on the situation. Furthermore, this time-out provides the athletes an opportunity to cool-down mentally and return to the stressful situation in a better frame of mind.

Distracting themselves with other activities was also a key strategy cited by four athletes for dealing with both soccer and non-soccer stress. For example, Jackie often talked on the phone and Rachel listened to music in an effort to help them cope with stress. Distracting themselves via their participation in soccer was also found to be a key coping strategy for three athletes.

Heather, Rachel and Kellie noted that they often used soccer to help them cope with stressors they experienced outside of the soccer context. Their participation in training sessions and competitive events distracted them from other stressors such as evaluative events in school, homework, and when their parents were upset with them. Participation in sport and physical activity as a means to cope with stress has been supported for the general population of adolescents and adults (Brown & Siegel, 1988; Long & van Stavel, 1995), as well as high school and university level athletes (Gould, Wilson, Tuffey, & Lochbaum, 1993; Raugh & Wall, 1987).

It is thought that the athletes turned to their sport as a means to cope with their non-sport related stressors for a variety of reasons. First, although the soccer environment itself was often stressful for the athletes, it was also a place where they could get away from their other stressors altogether. Rachel noted that none of her friends from school were on her club soccer team. This meant that when she came to soccer she could forget about her other stressors. Also while the athletes were engaged in soccer events they often experienced success and had fun. Thus the positive outcomes achieved through their sport participation are an easy way for them to cope, at least temporarily, with their stress.

Attack source of stress. Attacking the source of their stress was found to be an important coping strategy for four athletes involved in the present study. A common strategy that the athletes used was to attack the source of their school stress by studying for evaluative events such as tests and exams. This is consistent with the literature. In an examination of college students' behaviors the week before exams, studying was their preferred response to address heightened exam anxiety (Noel & Cohen, 1997).

Perhaps the athletes used the coping strategy of attacking stress by studying because the consequences of not studying are high. For example, if the athletes did not study in an effort to

cope with their stress, they increase the possibility of receiving poor grades. With this result, a number of other consequences can occur. First, poor grades may contribute to disappointment on the part of the athletes themselves and their parents. Secondly, grades in high school are a key factor in whether individuals continue their education at the post-secondary level. Because of the diverse and technologically advanced society in which we live, completing post-secondary education is vital (Verma & Gupta, 1990). Thus, students that make a habit of not studying and receiving poor grades diminish their chances for higher education. This can lead to further disappointment for themselves as well as their parents. Furthermore, a lack of post-secondary education can put one at an economic disadvantage.

The coping strategy of attacking the source of stress by studying was not found to be important for Rachel. Nevertheless, Rachel did study often and at an intense level as demonstrated by her final grade average of 95%. Perhaps Rachel did not view studying as a coping strategy because although she did feel stress about meeting her own school expectations, she viewed evaluative events in school as challenges and not stressful. It is thought that Rachel did not view studying as coping because it was just something that needed to be done in order for her to meet her own school expectations and do well on exams and tests, and therefore was not part of her coping process.

Emotional Release Strategies

The Emotional Release Strategies coping category represented coping strategies used to discharge pent up emotions. The athletes stated that emotional release strategies helped them to get "it" (e.g., frustration, anger, etc.) out. Emotional release strategies were found to be most effective when they were used in combination with other coping strategies. For example, athletes may first use an emotional release coping strategy to get rid of their stressful thoughts and

emotions, and then a second strategy such as a behavioral strategy or a task focus strategy to help them further cope with the stressor and move on. Regardless, athletes sometimes felt that the emotional release coping strategies were not effective. Further, some emotional release coping strategies were thought to be less effective because of their negative impact on teammates (e.g., an athlete yelled in frustration, but a teammate was the recipient of the yelling). Nevertheless, emotional release coping strategies were important for all five athletes involved in the present study.

There is very little evidence in the sport psychology literature to support this finding. For example, twenty-one elite skiers suffering from season-ending injuries were interviewed about their coping strategies (Gould et al., 1997b). Although the age and gender of the athletes may have been a factor in this limited finding (i.e., mostly male athletes in their mid-20s), only three athletes expressed their emotions in an effort to cope with their stress. Professional tennis players also noted that a strategy for coping with their anger was letting it out immediately because this serves to “let off steam and diffuse a build-up, which often can lead to a major blow-up” (Striegel, 1994, p. 76). The athletes commented, however, that once the words have been said, the situation should be forgotten and focus should be turned back to the performance (Striegel). The use of emotional release coping strategies by athletes in the present study appears to be a relatively new finding and one that should be investigated in future research.

Perhaps athletes’ use of emotional release coping strategies has not been found previously (other than Gould et al., 1997b and Striegel, 1994) is due to the assumption in sport psychology that athletes need to control their emotions (Brunelle, Janelle, & Tennant, 1999; Orlick, 1990; Prapavessis & Grove, 1995). Athletes that act out by releasing anger on the playing field often lose their focus and their performance suffers (Orlick). The athletes involved in the present study

did experience this pattern. However, there were also many other instances during performances, where an emotional release coping strategy was used and then followed by a more positive and effective coping strategy such as the athlete re-focusing on the game or going hard to the ball and getting back in the play. The athletes also used this pattern before and after soccer events and in their lives outside of soccer. With respect to studies that have investigated athletes' coping strategies via qualitative methods, it is thought that the athletes may have used various emotional release strategies but did not discuss them for one of three reasons.

First, the athletes may not have viewed the emotional release strategies as part of the coping process and only discussed those strategies that followed this initial coping attempt. For example, an athlete may use an emotional release strategy followed by a second strategy such as re-focusing on the game. However, the athlete may only discuss the second coping strategy (i.e., re-focusing on the game) and may fail to discuss the initial emotional release strategy. The second reason is somewhat related to the first, that is the athlete may have viewed the use of an emotional release strategy first, a reaction to stress, rather than a coping strategy. Third, athletes that do use emotional release strategies may not feel comfortable discussing them with researchers. To date, the researchers that have investigated athletes' coping strategies via the use of qualitative methods have used one-shot interviews (Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993; Gould, Finch, et al., 1993; Udry et al., 1997). With a one-shot interview it is difficult to establish a high-level of rapport and an environment in which athletes feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. Further, there seems to be a stigma attached to athletes that use acting out behaviors while performing (e.g., John McEnroe). These two factors may have combined and prevented athletes from sharing information related to their use of emotional release coping strategies with the researchers.

Release emotions. Releasing emotions was found to be an important coping strategy for all five athletes and the use of crying was important for four of these athletes. There is very little support in the sport psychology literature for the use of crying as a coping strategy by athletes. Three elite skiers noted that they sometimes used a “good cry” to help them cope with the stress of being injured (Gould et al., 1997b). There is greater evidence in the adolescent literature to support the use of crying as a coping strategy. A longitudinal study examining sex differences in relations between adolescent coping and adult adaptation found that females were significantly more likely than males to cope with family problems by retreating to isolation (Feldman et al., 1995). Crying was included in the isolation measure. In another study, females used tension reduction strategies such as crying more often than males (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993).

As early as middle adolescence, females are more emotionally expressive than males (Stark, Spirito, Williams, & Guevremont, 1989). It has been suggested that the prevalent use of crying by female adolescents may be attributed to gender socialization patterns. For example, young girls have traditionally been encouraged and expected to express their feelings (Copeland & Hess, 1995). Furthermore, it is generally more accepted when females cry as opposed to males, and boys are less willing to express sadness (Zeman & Garber, 1996).

Thought Control Strategies

Thought Control Strategies represented coping strategies used to impose order on, or limit the athletes' thought content, in some general sense (Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993). Thought control strategies were important for all five athletes. This is consistent with the literature. When coping with the stress of competing at the Olympics, the dominant coping strategies for elite wrestlers were thought control strategies (Gould, Eklund, et al.). The most successful

athletes take control over their thoughts: “They choose what to think rather than letting the situation dictate to them what they should think” (Ravizza & Hanson, 1995, p. 174).

Blocking. Blocking was an important thought control coping strategy for four of the five athletes and included the athletes’ conscious efforts to deny themselves access to stressful thoughts that could distract or irritate them. Within this group, the strategy of changing focus was key. Four athletes used this strategy to deal with both soccer and non-soccer stress. The act of changing focus has been documented to be a key strategy used by athletes (Orlick, 1998).

Heather, Rachel, Kellie and Jane changed focus to divert their attention from a stressful occurrence. Often, but not always, they followed this diversion by concentrating on a less threatening situation or thought. Unfortunately, the athletes were not always successful in their use of this strategy. Orlick (1996, 1998) developed an exercise called changing channels to help athletes (and non-athletes) cope with their stress and excel in their pursuits. In this exercise individuals are encouraged to mentally change their channel or focus and become absorbed in their new focus. For example, if an athlete is feeling stressed because she is frustrated about her performance, she can change her channel and think about a time she played well. If the athlete immerses herself in this positive image, the likelihood of effectively coping with her stress and improving her performance will be high.

Positive thinking. Positive thinking and the use of positive self-talk were found to be important coping strategies for three athletes. Negative self-talk such as “I can’t” contributes to inconsistent performances and a reduction in an athlete’s confidence (Ziegler, 1987). These factors can also add to an athlete’s performance stress. Thus, positive thinking has often been mentioned as an important skill for athletes. In coping with the stress of their injury, athletes who regularly engaged in positive self-talk were found to heal quickly as compared to athletes’ whose

self-talk was negative and unforgiving (Ievleva & Orlick, 1991). The importance of positive self-talk in helping individuals cope with performance stress has also been documented in the literature (Dale, 1994; Orlick & Partington, 1986; Prapavessis & Grove, 1995).

Turning to the athletes involved in the present study, Heather, an effective copier, experienced a great deal of stress due to her position as goalkeeper. Also, in this position, she often did not have a lot of communication with her teammates on the field. Perhaps these two factors contributed to her use of positive self-talk as a positive coping strategy. Jackie, an effective copier, and Kellie, an athlete deemed to use less effective coping strategies most of the time, also used positive self-talk to help them cope with their stress. Kellie was found to be a very positive athlete and was constantly encouraging her teammates. Because she knew her positive comments helped her teammates cope, she turned and applied her positive comments to herself. At the beginning of the outdoor season, Jackie experienced a drop in self-confidence and thought seriously about quitting soccer. It is thought that Jackie used the self-talk coping strategy in an effort to enhance her self-confidence, leading to a reduction in her stress about the task at hand. It has been suggested that the self-talk coping strategy reminds athletes that they are capable of performing the skill, and thus, there is no need to worry (Hackfort & Schwenkmezger, 1994).

It is not known why Rachel and Jane did not use positive self-talk. Because of the importance of this strategy in coping with stress and realizing successful performances, these athletes could be taught how to talk to themselves in positive ways. An exercise aimed at increasing positive self-talk involves athletes figuring out the statements that they say to themselves when they are having an optimal performance. Armed with this information, athletes repeat these same statements in future performances regardless of whether the athlete believes

the statements or not (Ravizza & Hanson, 1995). Even if an athlete does not “buy” the statements, making the effort to say positive things directs one’s focus and keeps the athlete from saying something negative (Ravizza & Hanson).

Perspective taking. Perspective taking involved efforts to rationalize about the stressful event and place it within a reasonable mental framework in which the athletes felt comfortable or in control (Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993). Putting things in perspective was found to be an important coping strategy for Heather, Rachel and Jackie in dealing with soccer and non-soccer stress. Perspective taking has also been shown to be an important coping strategy for elite athletes. Elite figure skaters and wrestlers were shown to focus on what they could control and view their stress from a realistic perspective (Gould, Eklund, et al.; Gould, Finch, et al., 1993).

The athletes took soccer seriously, and most of them wanted to continue competing in the future. With respect to how far they envisioned their soccer careers going, most athletes set their goals at a modest level and hoped that they would be able to continue to compete at the university level. No athletes discussed athletic goals beyond university competition. Also, the athletes were involved in a number of activities in addition to club soccer. Therefore, club soccer was only one area of the athletes’ lives in which they competed. Furthermore, the athletes did not plan to make a career out of competing in soccer. It is thought that these factors contributed to some athletes being able to cope with their soccer stress by putting things in perspective.

The three athletes that coped by putting things in perspective were the athletes deemed to use effective coping strategies most of the time: Heather, Rachel and Jackie. Perhaps, it is because of this outlook and their ability to use this type of coping strategy that lead to the coaches classifying them as effective copers.

Task Focus Strategies

The Task Focus Strategies coping category represented those coping strategies used to deal with soccer stress. The athletes usually engaged in these coping strategies during a limited timeframe, such as immediately prior to, during and immediately after an event (i.e., game or practice). Task focus coping strategies were important for all five athletes in the present study. Elite athletes have also been shown to use task-focus strategies when dealing with sport stress (Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993; Gould et al., 1997b).

Narrow, more immediate focus. Working hard and not giving up was found to be an important coping strategy for three athletes when dealing with feelings of stress during an event, such as a game or practice. The literature has demonstrated that elite athletes also used this coping strategy. For example, when dealing with the stress of competing in the Olympics, wrestlers noted that they just kept fighting in an effort to cope (Gould, Eklund, et al., 1993). National junior and semi-professional baseball players cited that they kept “working hard” and “stuck with it” when coping with the stress of batting slumps (Prapavessis & Grove, 1995).

Turning to the athletes involved in the present study, an examination of the coaches’ philosophy may help to explain the use of this coping strategy. Throughout the period of data collection, the coaches emphasized a strong work ethic. For example, about one month into the outdoor season, the athletes were preparing to write their final exams and attend graduation ceremonies. The primary focus for some athletes was on these other events and soccer was not at the forefront. During this time, the athletes came out to some games and were mentally “flat,” as evidenced by their poor decision-making and execution of skills. The coaches understood the athletes’ lack of focus, and encouraged them to continue working hard on the field even though

their minds were not in the game. Therefore, the coaches' strong work ethic may have contributed to the use of the working hard and not giving up coping strategy by some athletes.

Furthermore, the potential for social evaluation of the athletes' performance was high. Rachel and Kellie were defenders and Jackie played winghalf. These positions carry a great deal of responsibility and are easily identifiable on the field. The athletes may have engaged in the coping strategy of working hard and not giving up because if they did give up, their coaches, parents, and teammates would have easily recognized this unacceptable behavior. Further, meeting the expectations of these significant others were key sources of stress, so to cope by working hard on the field and not giving up, helped the athletes cope with this stress also.

The three athletes that used the strategy of working hard and not giving up were a mix of effective (i.e., Rachel and Jackie) and less effective (i.e., Kellie) copers. Why was working hard and not giving up a significant coping strategy for only these three athletes? Heather, the goalkeeper and an effective coper, did not use the strategy of working hard and not giving up. As the goalkeeper the potential for social evaluation was high. However, an examination of the goalkeeping position may lead to a plausible explanation as to why this coping strategy was not found to be important for Heather. Because the goalkeeper plays in a very small area, there is little running inherent in the position. Also, a soccer goalkeeper usually has only a few shots on net per game and very few, if any rebounds. Thus, Heather may not have felt that the coping strategy of working hard and not giving up applied to her in her position in the nets. With respect to Jane, it has been documented previously that she often gives up on the field when faced with soccer stress. It has been posited that she does not want and/or can not handle responsibility and chooses not to get involved. Thus, it is not surprising that she does not use the work hard coping strategy when dealing with soccer stress.

Get reassurance. The task focus strategy, getting reassurance, was important for four athletes in the present study. Three athletes got reassurance from their coaches when dealing with soccer stress. Usually, this was a one-way conversation where the coaches encouraged the athletes and offered feedback and praise. Elite athletes also got reassurance from their coaches when dealing with performance and injury stress (Gould, Finch, et al., 1993; Udry et al., 1997). The difference between the results of the present study and the literature, however, is in the initiation of the coping strategy. For the most part, the athletes involved in the present study did not initiate the use of this coping strategy, but instead were passive recipients of the encouragement. This is in contrast with the literature as it was the elite athletes that sought reassurance from others (Gould, Finch, et al.; Udry et al.).

Heather, Jackie and Jane coped by getting reassurance from the coaches. This was an important coping strategy. The coaches were very knowledgeable about soccer and had been coaching for many years. The coaches also had vast experiences as soccer athletes themselves. Duane competed in two different adult men's soccer leagues in the city and Bren had just recently retired from competing due to a nagging knee injury. The coaches were well respected by the athletes, but also in the larger soccer community for their knowledge of the game and their coaching skills. Thus, it is not surprising that the athletes coped by getting reassurance from these respected and knowledgeable coaches. In a study examining the social support networks of athletes, results showed that the athletes coped by turning to the coaches for technical support (Rosenfeld et al., 1989). The authors of this study deemed that technical support could be provided effectively by individuals with expertise in the sport in which the athlete participates (Rosenfeld et al.).

An examination of the context may help to explain why getting reassurance from the coaches was an important coping strategy for Jackie, Jane, and Heather. First, Jackie and Jane both experienced considerable soccer stress during the outdoor season. At the beginning of the outdoor season Jackie played soccer for the club team and her high school. Jackie's school soccer coaches expected Jackie to be the star and she played entire games without a break. Jackie was then required to attend club soccer practice and give 100% effort, but she was already very tired. Furthermore, Jackie did not feel that she was playing well. She was approaching a state of burnout and was seriously thinking about quitting soccer. Jane also experienced a great deal of stress at the beginning of the outdoor season. Jane's stress, however, stemmed from new players joining the team. She felt insecure about playing time and losing her status on the team. When the coaches took her off the field during must-win situations in favor of one of her new teammates, this further contributed to her heightened level of stress. The coaches felt that they needed to try and help the athletes with their stress and devised a plan to do so. The plan involved the coaches, Bren in particular, communicating with the athletes on an individual basis. During these discussions, Bren offered reassurance to both Jackie and Jane. He told them that they had excellent skills and that he knew they were capable of performing at a high level. These discussions reassured the athletes and helped them to cope.

The situation with Heather was slightly different. Heather played for Bren since the second year that the team was formed. Also, Bren lived in the same community as Heather and often carpooled with Heather and her parents to practices and games. These commutes, Heather's long involvement with the team, and the frequent interactions between Heather and Bren provided the opportunity for a strong bond to develop between them. In fact, they both told me separately

about a special connection that they share. Thus, it is not surprising that when dealing with performance stress that Heather would find comfort in Bren's reassuring words.

Rachel and Kellie were also close to the coaches, and it is thought that even though getting reassurance from the coaches was not an important coping strategy for these two athletes, that they did use this strategy, although it was in more of a vicarious nature. For example, Heather, Rachel, and Kellie were close friends on the team. Also, as goalkeeper and two defenders, these athletes played in close proximity on the field and dealt with similar stresses. During the data collection, Heather spoke about talking with her defense during games. Furthermore, she stated that she shared information with the defense that she had heard from Bren. Therefore, Rachel and Kellie may have also coped by receiving the coach's reassuring words. These words, however, were communicated through Heather.

4. How are Coping Strategies Developed?

Comparison to the Literature

Prior to the present investigation, the development of coping strategies had not been examined (Luthar & Zigler, 1991). In developing the research design for the present study, I had no past research to use as a blueprint or guide. Although information related to the origins of coping strategies was found, the research design did not provide insight into the process of how coping strategies are developed. For example, the athletes were asked to think back to when they learned coping strategies and describe the process. Retrospective questions have a variety of problems such as being restricted by the participants' recall and the fact that the information may become distorted over time (Ericsson & Simon, 1980; Yinger, 1986). Thus, to gain insight about the process of how coping strategies are developed a research design that captures coping strategy development in action is required.

Furthermore, during the research study, I became aware that the fourth question, How do athletes develop coping strategies?, was actually a grand tour question (Creswell, 1994). A grand tour question is a statement of the question being examined in the study in its most general form and is followed by several subquestions that narrow the focus of the study (Creswell). Possible subquestions that could have been asked in the present study include: (a) Where did you get information regarding the coping strategy?, (b) When you used the coping strategy, what prompted you to use it?, and (c) Why do you think you used that strategy now? These subquestions would then become topics explored specifically in interviews, observations, and documented material. Thus, the inclusion of subquestions may have provided additional information related to coping strategy development.

Finally, although coping strategy development is a process, the data obtained regarding the development of coping strategies focused on the origin. For example, an athlete might state that she developed the coping strategy of getting organized and following a plan because that is what her Mom has always done. The athlete emphasized that she developed the strategy from observing her Mom (origin), but there is no reference to the process whereby the strategy developed.

However, the data support the conclusion that parents were key origins of coping strategies for the female athletes. The coaches were also found to be important influences, but only for Heather. Although not empirically answered in the present study, social psychology literature provides insight into how coping strategies were learned from parents and coaches. For example, it has been suggested that children follow a social learning model when learning coping skills (Aldwin 1994; Honig, 1986). Observational learning is a four-step process and occurs when individuals attend to modeled behaviors, code and retain the information in their memory,

prepare to convert the coded information into appropriate actions and finally, become motivated to do so (Bandura, 1986). Parents have been suggested as a key source of modeled behaviors from which children may be able to develop coping strategies (Berryman & Breighner, 1994; Matheny, Aycock, & McCarthy, 1993; Shulman, 1993). The literature supports that coaches can be another important source of modeled behavior for athletes (Gilbert & Bonadie, 1996; Orlick & Botterill, 1975; Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997).

There is also some support for these findings in the sport psychology literature. For example, head coaches and mothers were rated as very important in teaching young female athletes about coping strategies (Finch, 1999). The process whereby the young athletes learned these strategies, however, was not discussed. In a second study with elite male swimmers, parents and coaches were named as important influences in helping the athletes interpret their precompetition nervousness as positive and facilitative (Hanton & Jones, 1999).

It is not surprising that the athletes involved in the present study primarily cited their parents and coaches as key influences in their coping strategy development. Though the peer group's role continues to increase during adolescence, parents are still important and key influences (Cobb, 1998). Furthermore, the athletes were very close to their parents and had good relationships with them. Further evidence of the positive relationships between the athletes and their parents can be found in the Athlete Profiles in the previous chapter.

Heather also cited the coaches, particularly Bren as important in her coping strategy development. Heather and Bren shared a very positive relationship. Heather stated that she considered Bren to be a role model and that she admired him immensely. Another time she noted that Bren was like an uncle because she spent more time with him than with her actual relatives.

Thus, it is not surprising that Heather considers Bren to be an important influence on the development of her coping strategies.

There is also evidence to suggest that three athletes (i.e., Jackie, Kellie, and Jane) developed their coping strategies through an experiential learning process. Similar to the discussion regarding the use of social learning, the data that support the use of an experiential learning process focuses on the end result and does not emphasize the actual process involved. For example, the athletes discussed using coping strategies during the course of the present study based on their successful use of the coping strategies in the past. They attributed the development of their coping strategies to this trial and error procedure.

Within the sport psychology literature, there appears to be support for coping strategy development via experiential learning. For example, in a study of elite male swimmers, the athletes' natural learning experiences helped them develop the ability to use pre-race nerves to aid performance and mental preparation (Hanton & Jones, 1999). The authors concluded that the athletes developed effective strategies over time and that these results had important implications regarding the use of cognitive restructuring strategies in coping strategy development.

The athletes in the present study attributed their coping strategy development to prior experiences with parents, and friends. The continuing influence of parents during adolescence has been highlighted (Cobb, 1998). The peer group is also a significant component of the adolescent's life (Schinke et al., 1987), and it has been suggested that because of the social comparisons that regularly occur during adolescence, friends are other likely sources of coping strategies (Seiffge-Krenke, 1993). Interestingly, the athletes did not cite their teammates as key influences in their coping strategy development. The athletes spend a significant amount of time with their teammates, especially during the summer months when they are no longer in school.

Furthermore, many of the athletes cited their teammates as close friends. Thus, it was surprising that the athletes did not attribute their coping strategy development to this other peer group.

Thus, in developing their coping strategies, it appears that the athletes may have followed either a social modeling process and/or an experiential learning process and that parents, coaches, and friends were models and were the persons with whom the athletes shared experiences. Coping strategy development is a process. Because the data support the origins of coping strategies and only allude to the process involved, these findings must be interpreted cautiously. The area of how athletes develop coping strategies is in need of further research.

PART II: SYNOPSIS OF DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the second part of the discussion chapter, the major theoretical and practical contributions of the present study are presented. The practical contributions include suggestions for the three main groups of people involved in the youth sport context: athletes, coaches and/or sport psychologists, and parents. Because of the small sample involved in the present study, these suggestions should be viewed as exploratory ideas and adapted as necessary. Directions for future research are also discussed. This information is organized according to the four research questions. Prior to this discussion however, the contribution of the research design used in the present study is presented.

The present study makes a unique contribution by providing empirical data related to the sources of stress and the coping strategies of the female adolescent team sport athlete. This has not yet been done and thus, this study contributes to filling a gap in the literature. It is believed that the use of qualitative methods and the constructivist perspective that guided the present study provided a more complete portrait of these phenomena. The young athletes' multiple realities were taken into consideration and several different perspectives regarding stress and

coping were heard by means of this multivocal approach. Reliable evidence in the athletes' own words was obtained concerning their perceptions of interpersonal and team-related stressors and their use of coping strategies, and both similarities between athletes and unique individual differences were found. When using the constructivist approach, data collection requires a lengthy time commitment. For example, I averaged two to three field visits per week for an eight-month period. However, the richness of data collected and the possibility of obtaining a more comprehensive portrait of the phenomena under investigation provide the justification for following the constructivist perspective. Thus, it is suggested that future research move away from the one-shot interview and instead follow a design that allows for greater involvement with participants in the field.

1. What Does Stress Mean to Female Adolescent Athletes?

Theoretical Contributions and Future Directions

For the most part, studies that have examined athletes' sources of stress have defined stress as situations where the athletes experienced feelings of nervousness, anxiety, or worry, and had negative thoughts (Cohn, 1990; Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993; Scanlan et al., 1991). Because they were given the opportunity, athletes in the present study stated that stress held a variety of meanings for them. They cited examples of being stressed in situations where they were nervous, anxious or worried, but noted that they also became stressed in situations where they were frustrated, upset or angry. Thus, the present study supports the need for researchers to move away from defining stress for their athlete participants and instead examining the athletes' own perceptions of stress (i.e., in their own words).

Future research could also attempt to determine the roles of confidence, or self-efficacy, and locus of control in the interpretation of a potentially stressful situation as a challenge rather than

a stressor. Other factors that may contribute to perceptions of stress and the appraisal process also need to be considered.

Practical Contributions and Suggestions

It has been demonstrated that the way athletes perceive possible stressful situations can depend on their level of self-confidence and the extent to which they feel that the situation is within their control. Coaches and sport psychologists could focus on increasing athletes' confidence so that they may continue to view potentially stressful situations as challenges rather than getting overwhelmed and feeling unnecessarily high levels of stress. In an exercise developed to enhance confidence, coaches could help female athletes interpret stress prior to a performance as a "readiness to perform" rather than a "fear of performing" (Lirgg & Feltz, 1989). If this cognitive restructuring strategy improves performance, the athlete's self-confidence might also be increased. Orlick (1998) proposed a more complex three-step exercise he termed "remember-think-and-look for the positive" as a method to help athletes increase their confidence. In the first step, athletes are reminded to remember positive feedback received from others. The second step involves the athletes thinking about what they could achieve if they allow themselves to perform to their true potential. Lastly, the athletes look for actual examples, such as previous good performances, that highlight their capacity. Orlick suggested that engaging in this three-step process helps athletes increase their confidence. Reminding athletes to focus on what is within their control and reminding them of their successful coping strategies may also help athletes when confronted with stressful situations. Using the present study as an example, the coaches could talk to Jane about her role on the team and remind her that although she does not have control over her teammates' performance, she does have control over her own

performance. This mindset may then help Jane, and other athletes like her, to view potentially stressful soccer events as challenges, rather than as stressors.

2. What Ambient or Everyday Stressors do Female Adolescent Athletes Encounter in Sport and in their Daily Lives?

Theoretical Contributions and Future Directions

The present study makes a unique contribution by providing empirical data related to the sources of stress of the female adolescent team sport athlete. This has not yet been done and thus, this study contributes to filling a gap in the literature. The five athletes experienced a range of stressors related to soccer competition as well as from sport stressors considered to fall outside of the competitive arena. The athletes were found to also experience stress in their lives outside of sport.

Furthermore, the fact that the athletes experienced considerable stress due to their participation in a team sport context is a unique finding and makes a significant contribution to the literature. According to the results of the Simon and Martens (1979) study, athletes participating in team sports do not experience significant stress. The results of the present study, however, refute this earlier finding. The athletes' stressors with respect to meeting the expectations of their teammates, as well as the stress they experienced because of their membership and responsibilities in a team context demonstrate the need for the team sport athlete to be recognized as a valuable research participant when examining athletes' sources of stress. This is especially important with the rise and continued popularity of youth team sports such as soccer, ice hockey, volleyball, basketball, and baseball (De Knop et al., 1996). Also, the finding that many of the team dynamic issues were especially stressful for the three athletes in leadership roles is an interesting finding and one that warrants further investigation.

Practical Contributions and Suggestions

The results of the present study could also contribute on a practical level. Information obtained about the stressors of the female adolescent team sport athlete could help coaches and sport psychologists working with similar athletes. For example, it has been demonstrated that important competitive events are a key source of stress. Therefore, coaches and sport psychologists can set performance objectives for each game, such as the correct execution of a defensive tactic. This may take the athletes' focus away from the importance of the game and take the emphasis off of the game's outcome. Coaches could also discuss developmental or team statistics (e.g., number of shots on opposing team's goal) rather than individual statistics (e.g., number of goals for each player) or those statistics that are dependent on the outcome of the game (Gilbert, Gilbert, & Trudel, in press-a). Further, the coaches could downplay the team's win-loss record. If these suggestions were followed, it is thought that winning would be de-emphasized, which in turn may help to alleviate the stress that some athletes feel regarding the competitive event (Thompson, 1995).

Another important finding was that meeting the expectations of self and others were key stressors for the athletes. This information could be used to remind coaches and sport psychologists about the importance of establishing a supportive team atmosphere. If this occurred, the soccer environment may ultimately become an area where athletes are not afraid to make mistakes. Coaches could also speak in general terms regarding performance errors and not single out athletes when mistakes are made. A further benefit of a supportive environment is that athletes may have a greater capacity to learn since they would experience less stress about winning and would not be burdened about the perceptions of others regarding their performance.

With respect to meeting the expectations of parents, the coaches could implement a parent contract. Though this has been traditionally used to deal with parental disagreements (Gilbert, Gilbert, & Trudel, in press-b), this strategy could also be used to help alleviate athletes' stress about perceived parental pressure. For example, the contract could provide clear and specific guidelines for parent behavior, outlining that behaviors such as keeping individual statistics or yelling discouraging comments to the athletes while they are playing are not acceptable. Though this type of contract may not curb all parental behaviors that add to athletes' stress about meeting the expectations of parents, it may make some parents think twice about the impact that their negative behavior can have on their sons and daughters as athletes, and as people.

Receiving criticism has also been demonstrated to be a key source of stress for the athletes involved in the present study. Armed with this information, sport psychologists could teach coaches and athletes appropriate ways of providing and receiving feedback. For example, a fundamental concept for teachers is that they critique students' behaviors, and not the students themselves. Sport psychologists could teach coaches and athletes about this important technique so that they focus their comments on the execution of skills, rather than the athlete as a person (Coaching Association of Canada, 1989; Martens, 1997). Along the same lines, if the critique is directed at the athlete's behavior and not at the athlete, and athletes are taught that constructive feedback is a natural part of the learning process, the athletes should not experience overwhelming stress when receiving feedback in the sporting context.

Finally, one would expect that the self-worth of elite athletes would be related to their identities as athletes. Elite athletes train intensely and compete at very high levels pursuing their sport as a career (Ericsson et al., 1993; Starkes et al., 1996). The female adolescent athletes involved in the present study took their sport seriously, but did not train and compete at the same

intensity level as elite athletes. Further, these adolescent athletes were engaged in a number of activities in addition to club soccer and none had aspirations of making a career out of their sport participation. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that the self-worth of the athletes involved in the present study was closely related to their identities as athletes and when they failed or were unable to give an outstanding performance they experienced a great deal of stress. Future research could examine if this finding was unique to the female adolescent sporting context, or if it transfers to youth athletes competing in other sporting environments. In the meantime, sport psychologists would do well to work with athletes to help them further develop their identities outside of their sporting lives.

Additionally, athletes could be counseled to accept themselves as worthy people regardless of their sporting performance (Orlick, 1986). For example, Orlick asks athletes to rate the extent to which they would be able to accept themselves as worthy human beings should they fail to meet their desired performance goals. The scale ranges from 0 (complete self-rejection) to 10 (complete and full self-acceptance). Orlick noted that if athletes resolve to accept themselves regardless of their performance outcomes, they are “less likely to suffer the kind of worry and distraction that contributes to high anxiety and poor performance” (p. 7). Therefore, improving athletes’ self-acceptance is an important area in which sport psychologists and coaches can work to help athletes alleviate their feelings of stress when their identities as athletes are challenged.

3. What Coping Strategies do Female Adolescent Athletes use when faced with Ambient or Everyday Stressors in Sport and in their Everyday Lives?

Theoretical Contributions and Future Directions

The present study contributes to filling a gap in the literature by providing empirical data related to the coping strategies of the female adolescent team sport athlete. It is believed that the

constructivist perspective that guided the present study provided a more comprehensive portrait of the athletes' coping strategies as the athletes were given an opportunity to discuss all of their coping strategies and not just those that were deemed to be effective.

Even with the approach followed in the present study, however, it is possible that not all athlete coping strategies were documented. For example, some of the athletes' coping responses may have become automated. In this situation, it is thought that the athlete engages in the coping behavior without thinking about it and attributing the behavior to coping. This has been posited as an explanation as to why Rachel did not attribute studying to helping her cope with school related stress. It is possible that the athletes had made some coping strategies automatic, especially those that they would use in the immediate moment of encountering a stressful situation during a game. If this is the case, they may not have been able to discern the use of these strategies. The ability to "automatise" coping skills might be particularly important for athletes to develop, because coping during sport competitions must often be accomplished quickly and in short time periods (Hardy, Jones & Gould, 1996).

The athletes used a variety of strategies when coping with stress, but not all were found to be important. For example, the total number of coping strategies found to be important for each athlete were: Heather – 13, Rachel – 13, Jackie – 10, Jane – 8, and Kellie – 15. Not surprisingly, all athletes used a combination of both effective and less effective coping strategies. The athletes deemed to use effective strategies most of the time (i.e., Heather, Rachel and Jackie) had a higher number of coping strategies as compared to the less effective copers. Furthermore, the effective copers used effective strategies with greater frequency as compared to their use of less effective coping strategies.

Nevertheless, an athlete deemed to use less effective coping strategies most of the time (i.e., Kellie) had the greatest number of important coping strategies. Further examination of the important strategies reveals that Kellie also used a lot of coping strategies considered to be effective. Two important points need to be addressed regarding this contradictory finding. First, the above information seems to support that Kellie was incorrectly classified as a less effective copier. However, when faced with stressful situations on the soccer field, Kellie was unable to use effective coping strategies on a regular basis and this was reflected in her performance. The coaches noted that when she got too stressed, her speed would deteriorate, she would make poor decisions and her marking of the opposition would be off. Therefore, even though Kellie used a lot of strategies to be considered effective, she had difficulty implementing them in the immediate moment during game situations. Second, because Kellie was unable to use the effective strategies on a regular basis, when she did use them, they were not always effective. Coping with stress is considered a mental skill, and therefore to be most effective, coping strategies must be practiced and rehearsed on a regular basis (Albinson & Bull, 1988; Halliwell, Orlick, Ravizza, & Rotella, 1999). With respect to Jane (an athlete deemed to use less effective coping strategies most of the time), her total number of coping strategies was the lowest of all the athletes ($N = 8$). Further examination of Jane's strategies shows that Jane used very few strategies considered to be effective.

The finding that the athletes coped by the use of emotional release strategies appears to be a relatively new finding and makes a significant contribution to the literature. Some may dismiss this result citing that what have been termed emotional release strategies in the present study are actually reactions to stress. However, the athletes stated repeatedly that they considered crying, yelling in frustration, cursing, being snappy or short with people and shaking out the tension to

be coping strategies. Nevertheless, these strategies may not have always been effective for two main reasons.

First, emotional release strategies were sometimes directly or indirectly aimed at another person, such as a teammate. For example, during a game an athlete may have coped by yelling in frustration. This athlete may not have stated the name of a teammate when she yelled, but a teammate could interpret that this yelling was directed at her, which may result in the second teammate experiencing an increase in her stress level. In this example, the first athlete was able to cope by releasing her frustration, and the emotional release strategy may be considered effective. However, because of the impact that the yelling had on the second teammate this strategy overall may be considered less effective.

Second, emotional release strategies were sometimes used in isolation. For example, an athlete may cope by crying and only use this strategy. However, it was found that the most effective use of the emotional release strategies occurred when they were followed by further coping strategies. In the above example, the athlete may cry, but then discuss the situation with a teammate. This process allows the athletes to get much of their stress “out” and then continue to cope by discussing the situation and working through the stressful occurrence. Furthermore, it appears that the effective copers (i.e., Heather, Jackie, and Rachel) were better able to follow their initial use of emotional release strategies with follow-up coping behaviors when compared to the athletes deemed to use less effective coping strategies most of the time (i.e., Jane and Kellie). The data was not analyzed in a true linear fashion, (i.e., the athlete first coped by crying and then discussing with a teammate). Thus, this finding is made with caution, and further research is needed. Furthermore, because of concerns regarding the effectiveness of emotional

release strategies, future research is needed to determine if the use of these strategies is appropriate.

Another interesting finding in the present study, is actually a lack of a finding. Emotional control strategies such as visualization or imagery and other relaxation techniques have been documented throughout the sport psychology literature as extremely important in helping athletes cope with performance stress and in allowing them to achieve optimal performances (Dale, 2000; Orlick & Partington, 1986, 1988; Park, 2000). I expected to find a similar pattern with the athletes involved in the present study. However, visualization was found to be an important coping strategy for only one athlete (i.e., Rachel). Furthermore, only two athletes (i.e., Rachel and Jackie) used relaxation techniques in an effort to cope.

It is thought that the majority of the athletes did not use visualization and relaxation methods because of the environment in which they competed. The coaches were very knowledgeable about the sport and used a wide variety of pedagogical techniques. They emphasized fun, skill development, and fitness. However, sport psychology was not a central component of the coaches' repertoire and any references made to sport psychology issues were made quickly and in a subtle manner. Furthermore, the sport psychology references that were made were never followed-up with the athletes so even if a concept was introduced the athletes were never reintroduced to the concept at a later date.

There is a second interesting finding with respect to the athletes' non-use of some common emotional control strategies. The sport psychology literature has shown that athletes who are best able to cope with their performance stress and achieve optimal performances do so by using emotional control strategies, such as relaxation and visualization (McCaffrey & Orlick, 1989; Zhang, Ma, Orlick, & Zitzelsberger, 1992). The athletes in the present study experienced a great

deal of success during the indoor and outdoor seasons. For example, their outdoor win-loss-tie record was 46-6-4, and they won six of the nine tournaments in which they competed. However, four of the five athletes involved in the present study did not engage in emotional control strategies to cope. Therefore, do emotional control strategies, such as visualization and relaxation play as large a role for youth athletes as has been demonstrated for elite athletes? This area warrants further investigation.

Practical Contributions and Suggestions

The results of the present study can also contribute on a practical level. Knowledge regarding the effectiveness of coping strategies can give direction to coaches and sport psychologists. For example, the use of positive self-talk has been demonstrated to be an effective coping strategy. Coaches and sport psychologists could work with athletes and help them to engage in positive self-talk on a more regular basis. Also, sport psychologists could help athletes restructure their negative and self-depreciating thoughts into positive statements. The use of a good warm-up was also found to be an important coping strategy for the athletes involved in the present study. This could be considered a component of a precompetition plan advocated in the sport psychology literature as a way to help athletes deal with performance related stress and prepare for successful performances (Orlick, 1986). Thus, coaches and sport psychologists could help athletes establish routines to help them get physically ready before competition, as well as mental plans so that they may be in the best possible psychological state. Explicit mental skills training whereby all athletes are taught strategies such as those outlined above, may help all athletes cope effectively and successfully when dealing with performance stress.

4. How are Coping Strategies Developed?

Theoretical Contributions and Future Directions

The question regarding the development of coping strategies provided information related to the origin of coping strategies, but not the process used in their development. This has been attributed to a number of factors. First, the research design used in the present study was not sensitive to providing valid data on the learning process because it relied on retrospective recall of the participants. Therefore, a research design that takes a more developmental approach may be most appropriate. Because learning coping strategies is a developmental process, longitudinal studies (i.e., longer than the eight months in the present study) may be most appropriate to study this phenomenon. Second, the fourth question was a grand tour question, and this necessitated the use of subquestions (Creswell, 1994). However, the present study focused on the grand tour question exclusively. Although this broad focus provided data on the origins of coping strategies, it did not provide sufficient data regarding coping strategy development. Future research should consider examining coping strategy development with the inclusion of subquestions concerning influences and other factors related to coping strategy development. Subquestions may also help participants better understand and articulate their own coping strategy development process.

The present study makes a contribution, however, by providing insight into the people thought to be important influences in coping strategy development. Parents, coaches and friends were cited as influential models and as the people with whom athletes shared learning experiences. Thus, future research could focus on the impact of these significant others when investigating the development of coping strategies.

Practical Contributions and Suggestions

The results of the present study regarding coping strategy development may also contribute on a practical level. For example, parents, coaches and friends were cited as models and as the people with whom athletes shared learning experiences. Thus, sport psychologists could describe to these significant others the potential influence that they have on athletes. Knowledge concerning their influence may lead to the modification of behaviors and/or coping strategy use by parents, coaches and friends. Furthermore, parents, coaches, and friends could also be counseled to model and engage in effective coping strategies whenever possible thereby providing an increase in positive experiences for athletes.

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Appendix A

Memo Outlining Procedures Leading to the Focus Group Implementation

I entered the field on December 22nd, 1998 to observe an indoor league game. I arrived early and one of the coaches introduced me to the athletes and their parents as they arrived and reminded them of the purpose of my study. Previously, the coach had discussed the project at a team meeting to make sure that interest was high enough to warrant my selection of this team for the study. The athletes went to warm-up and I stayed to talk with the parents. I met many of them and gave them a handout (see attachment) outlining the purpose of my study and asked them if they thought their daughters would be interested in participating in a focus group, which was going to be conducted at a tournament on January 2nd, 1999. I explained the purpose of the focus group and distributed consent forms to all parents that were interested. I also told them that I hoped to work with five athletes in a more in-depth manner. Right before the game started, the coaches called the athletes in for a pre-game meeting. They called me over and reintroduced me to all of the athletes. The coaches explained that I was doing an important study and that I would be observing them and talking to them about stress and coping and that they should give me their full cooperation. The coaches then dismissed the girls and I drifted back over to talk to more of the parents about the study. At half time I walked over to the other side of the field and stayed with the athletes and the coaches. After the game, the coaches called the girls in and gave me an opportunity to talk to them as a group. I explained that I was interested in their opinions regarding stress and coping in female athletes and that this interest was based on my own experiences competing in club soccer. I told them that I had played with one of their rivals, which elicited smiles and laughs from some of the athletes. When creating a natural involvement, researchers can mention experiences that made them interested in the topic under study or that show some commonality between themselves and the interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I then told the athletes that I wanted to conduct a focus group at the tournament on January 2nd,

1999 to get their insights into stress and coping and that I hoped they would all participate. I also mentioned that I had talked to many of their parents and had given them some further information regarding the study. I told them that they were welcome to contact me if they had any questions (I had supplied my phone numbers on the handout to the parents) and that I would be around at the tournament on December 27th also so they could speak with me then.

I went to the tournament on December 27th, 1998 for several reasons. First, I wanted to continue establishing rapport with the coaches, athletes, and their parents. Also, I wanted to start making observations and finally, I hoped to generate further interest in the study and collect any signed consent forms. I made a point of speaking to any parents with whom I had not yet discussed the study and reminded them of the focus group that was going to be held at the next tournament on January 2nd, 1999.

December 22, 1998

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The purpose of this letter is to give you a brief introduction to the project and myself in the hopes that you and your daughter will become interested in participating in the study.

I am very interested in the concepts of stress and coping in female athletes due to my own experiences growing up in sport. I have a Bachelor Degree in Physical Education, a Master's Degree in Human Kinetics (Sport Psychology), and a Bachelor Degree in Education. I am currently a doctoral candidate and a part-time professor at the University of Ottawa. The following is some background information about the project, which is titled, "The Development of Coping Strategies by Female Adolescent Athletes." It will also provide some support regarding the importance of the study.

Athletes, like the rest of society, face both life event stress and regular everyday stress, which is also known as ambient stress. However, they also encounter unique ambient stressors due to their participation in sport. This is an important area for exploration due to the high participation rates of youth in organized sport around the world. Sources of stress for this population have included the stress the athletes place on themselves, perceived expectations from others, and worries about outcome.

Due to the overwhelming stressors inherent in sport participation, there is a need to better understand the coping responses of athletes. Several studies have identified the type of coping strategies athletes use. Though information about the kinds of stressors athletes face and the coping strategies they use is important, researchers must move beyond just identification to examine the development of strategies.

There has been a long-standing male bias in research in both psychology and sport psychology, and an assumption that studies with females would yield similar results. Because of this, there is very little known about the types of coping strategies used and the development of these strategies by female adolescent athletes. As such, female athletes have been chosen to participate in this study. I am especially interested in working with female soccer players due to my past involvement with competitive soccer. From 1983-1987, and 1989, I played in the midfield for the South Ottawa Internationals.

The study will attempt to answer the following questions: 1) How is stress manifested for female adolescent athletes? (What does stress mean to female adolescent athletes?), 2) What ambient stressors do female adolescent athletes encounter in their daily lives and in their sport?, 3) What coping strategies do young female adolescent athletes use when faced with ambient stress both in their everyday lives and in their sporting context?, and 4) How did the athletes develop/learn these strategies?

There are two main parts of the study. If you agree to allow your daughter to participate in the first component, and she wishes to do so, her involvement will consist of participation in a 45-60 minute focus group. Focus groups are commonly thought of as group interviews. This will be scheduled after a practice or game at a time and location selected by the coach and athletes as mutually convenient. The focus group will be audio taped.

Approximately five athletes will be involved in the second component of the study. These athletes will also require parental or guardian consent. If you agree to allow your daughter to participate, and she wishes to do so, her involvement will consist essentially of being observed and interviewed over the

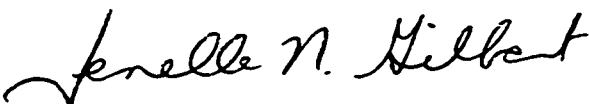
course of a season. The first step will be a background interview. This interview will last between 30-60 minutes and she will select the time and location of the interview at her convenience. The interview will be audio taped. She will then be observed while she participates in her sport. Informal discussions will take place at practices, games, etc. throughout the season. These informal discussions will not be audio taped. Once every three weeks, your daughter will be asked to collaborate in an individual interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. Again, your daughter will select the time and location of the interview and this conversation will be audio taped. In addition, your daughter may participate in shorter focus group sessions during the season. These meetings would be used to clarify information received from the athletes in a group setting. The coach and athletes will select a time that is mutually convenient and this discussion will be audio taped. Your daughter will be asked to keep a journal regarding her stressors and the coping strategies she uses. Each entry should take no more than three to five minutes to complete. Finally, your daughter will be asked to read a copy of the results and discuss the conclusions with the researcher in a 30-60 minute interview. Once again, your daughter will select the time and location of the interview and this conversation will be audio taped.

Though the researcher does not anticipate any discomfort or uneasiness on the part of the participants, there is a possibility that some athletes may find talking about their stressors and coping strategies slightly uncomfortable. To minimize this possibility, the researcher will remind all participants that they may refuse to participate and/or refuse to answer any questions without consequence. The information shared by your daughter will remain strictly confidential. Pseudonyms for your daughter and her team will be used in all research reports, and any direct quotations in research reports will have a pseudonym. You and your daughter will be entitled to receive a copy of the final research report if you so desire.

It is expected that the study will: (a) provide valuable insight into how female athletes perceive the stressors in their lives, (b) identify the coping strategies they use, and most importantly, (c) provide an understanding of how they developed those coping strategies. Information regarding coping strategy development could help coaches better equip their athletes to cope with the abundance of stress they routinely face, which could not only help them in sport, but also in their daily lives. Furthermore, the athletes will benefit from their participation in the study. For example, they may find themselves more aware of the stressors they face, and the strategies they use to help them cope. This could have an impact on their use of coping strategies when dealing with future stressful situations.

It is hoped that this brief overview has given you a sense of the project and what it is all about. Should you wish to discuss the project further, or if you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the numbers below. I look forward to meeting you and possibly working with your daughter over the course of the season.

Sincerely,



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Appendix B

Focus Group Coding Matrix A – Coping Strategies

Coping Strategy (Code) CS-BS-DV-TP	Coping Strategies – Behavioral Strategies – Discuss/Vent about Situation – Talk to Parents	Rating
Extensiveness (how many different athletes)	Kellie – but she said it four different times	*
Internal Consistency (do athlete(s) change their mind)		**
Consensus (do other athletes agree or disagree)		**
Intensity (language, type of words)		*
Specificity (detail, specific examples)	“I talk to my Mom.” - Kellie	*
Notes	Although this issue did not receive a lot of discussion, I will follow-up in the interviews because I have observed that most of the girls get along really well with their parents, especially Kellie	
Global Rating	Level of importance: *weak, **moderate, ***strong	*

Appendix C

Strength of Coping Strategies described in Focus Group

Overall Category	Global Rating
Sub-category	
Raw Data Themes	
Behavioral Strategies	
Distance Self from Stressor	
Listen to music	**
Go to bed and go to sleep	*
Talk on phone	*
Go to bed and listen to music	*
Discuss or Vent about Situation	
Talk to parents	*
Talk to teammates	**
Talk over problem with self	*
Emotional Control Strategies	
Arousal Control	
Relaxing song in head	*
Sing	*
Reassure self by touching self/adjusting uniform	*
Focus on breathing	*
Make jokes/laugh/use humor	*
Visualization	
Imagine special friend is watching	*
Task Focus Strategies	
Narrow, More Immediate Focus	
Focus on game	*
Go hard to the ball	*
Smash ball/kick ball hard	*
Listen to coaches' words	*
Get reassurance from coaches	**
Give up	*
Talk to teammates on field	*
Go at opponent	**
Participate in sport	*
Thought Control Strategies	
Positive Thinking	
Positive self-talk	**
Perspective Taking	
Put things in perspective	*
Prayer	**

- *** Strong – mentioned and discussed by more than one athlete and may be supported by specific examples
- ** Moderate – typically mentioned and discussed by more than one athlete and may be supported by some specific examples
- * Weak – although mentioned, not considered to be a major point, may only be mentioned briefly by one athlete with no specific examples and no supporting comments from other athletes

Appendix D

Background Interview Guide with Coaches

- ❑ Re-explain the purpose of the study
- ❑ Thank coach for his participation.
- ❑ Go over the consent form. Collect signed consent form.
- ❑ Explain reason for audio taping the discussion, and remind coach about the use of pseudonyms.
- ❑ Remind coach that he is not obligated to answer the questions and that he may refuse to do so, and/or withdraw from the focus group without penalty.
- ❑ Examine the following questions:
 1. How many years have you been coaching the team you are involved with now?
 2. Do you have any formal coach training? If so, please describe.
 3. How has your team performed in previous years?
 4. What does the word stress mean to you? How do you feel when stressed?
 5. What stressors do you experience as a coach?
 6. Do you do anything to help yourself cope with these stressors? If yes, what do you do? Does it help?
 7. How do you think you learned that coping strategy?
 8. What does stress mean for your athletes?
 9. What stressors do your athletes encounter?
 10. Do you do anything to help your athletes cope with their stressors? If so, what do you do?
 11. What are some of the ways they cope with these stressors?
 12. Do you have any insight into how your athletes developed their coping strategies?
 13. Which athletes, in your opinion, cope with their stressors effectively most of the time? Please explain why these athletes are considered to cope effectively.
 14. Which athletes, in your opinion, do not cope with their stressors effectively most of the time? Please explain why these athletes are considered to cope ineffectively.
- ❑ Thank coach for his time.

Appendix E

Package Inviting Athlete Participation in Study

Jenelle N. Gilbert
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 (613) 738-1516
 jngilbert@cyberus.ca

January 9, 1999

Dear Athlete (insert athlete's name):

I'd like to invite you to be one of the five athletes to take part in my study on stress and coping strategies. As you know, I am very interested in what female athletes think about stress, the stressors they face, the types of coping strategies they use and how they may have developed those strategies.

You have been selected based on a number of criteria including your position, the insights you expressed during the focus group, your demonstrated commitment to soccer, and the number of years you have been on the team. Also your comment to me after the shoot-out on the 2nd of January about that being a stressful situation makes me think that you have started to identify the stressors in your life and that you may be willing to talk about these issues.

So, what does all this mean – what is involved? Basically I will be around during the season and will be talking to you and observing you and your teammates at your different events (e.g., games, practices, etc.). During breaks I will be asking you about what I observed and we will chat informally – kind of like we have already been doing. Also, I will conduct formal interviews with you to talk about the different stressors you have and the coping strategies you use. These will occur about once every three weeks, will be audio taped, and will last about 45 minutes each time. You decide when and where the interviews will take place and what we discuss is confidential. Therefore, at no time will I report what you have said to your parents, coaches or teammates. I expect that we will have about six or seven interviews over the course of the entire season. You will also be asked to complete a journal of which I have attached a sample page. I am asking that you do this two or three times a week (you can do it more if you like) and we will discuss these journal entries when we meet to do the interviews. Each journal entry should take about three to five minutes to complete and if you would prefer to write your entries in point form that is okay with me. The journal will be introduced in March. Finally, when the study is over, I will prepare a case summary report. This report will focus on you and may provide you with additional insight into how you perceive stress and cope when faced with it. You will be asked to read this report and then we will discuss your reactions to it in a final interview. Because I will need some time to prepare this report, it is expected that this final interview may be held in December 1999.

So, what do you think? If you are interested and your parents agree to your participation, please complete the two attached consent forms and return one to me (the other is for you to keep). Bear

in mind, that you are free to withdraw from the study at anytime and/or refuse to answer any question without penalty.

Should you require further information, please give me a call. I hope that you will choose to get involved in the study as I think we may both be able to learn as a result of your participation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jenelle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jenelle



Université d'Ottawa • University of Ottawa

Faculté d'éducation

Faculty of Education



Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and Athlete:

Whenever a research project is undertaken with human participants, the written consent of the participants (or the parents/guardians where minors are concerned) must be obtained. This does not imply, of course, that the project in question necessarily involves a risk. In view of the respect owed the participants, the University of Ottawa and the research funding agencies have made this type of agreement mandatory.

It is known that athletes can face an abundance of stress due to their participation in sport. Though the stress phenomenon has been studied with elite athletes, very little is known about this area in terms of youth amateur sport. Further, the development of coping strategies has not been examined. Information regarding coping strategy development could help coaches better equip their athletes to cope with the abundance of stress they routinely face, which could not only help them in sport, but also in their daily lives.

The purpose of this study is to determine how young female adolescent athletes perceive the stressors in their lives, identify the types of coping strategies they presently use, and their thoughts on how they developed those strategies.

If you agree to allow your daughter to participate her involvement will consist essentially of being observed and interviewed over the course of a season. The first step will be a background interview. This interview will last between 30-60 minutes and she will select the time and location of the interview at her convenience. The interview will be audiotaped. She will then be observed while she participates in her sport. Informal discussions will take place at practices, games, etc. throughout the season. These informal discussions will not be audiotaped. Once every three weeks, your daughter will be asked to collaborate in an individual interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. Again, your daughter will select the time and location of the interview and this conversation will be audiotaped. Your daughter will be asked to keep a journal regarding her stressors and the coping strategies she uses. Your daughter will be asked to make a minimum of two-three entries each week and each entry should take no more than three to five minutes to complete. This document will be introduced in March. Finally, your daughter will be asked to read a copy of the results and discuss the conclusions with the researcher in a 30-60 minute interview. Once again, your daughter will select the time and location of the interview and this conversation will be audiotaped.

Though the researcher does not anticipate any discomfort or uneasiness on the part of the participants, there is a possibility that some athletes may find talking about their stressors and coping strategies slightly uncomfortable. To minimize this possibility, the researcher will remind all participants before the start of the interviews that they may refuse to participate and/or refuse to answer any questions without consequence.

The information shared by your daughter will remain strictly confidential. Pseudonyms for your daughter and her team will be used in all research reports, and any direct quotations in research reports will have a pseudonym. You and your daughter will be entitled to receive a copy of the final research reports if you so desire.

Any information requests or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project that you have may be addressed to the University of Ottawa's Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC), by calling the Secretary of the Committee (562-5800 x4057). If you have any questions, you may contact Dr. Cynthia Morawski (562-5800 x4109) or myself, Jenelle Gilbert (see numbers below).

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which you may keep. Please complete the section below. Thank you for your cooperation and time. It is sincerely appreciated.



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I, _____, am / am not (please circle one) interested in allowing my daughter, _____ to collaborate in the study **The Development of Coping Strategies by Female Adolescent Athletes** conducted by Jenelle Gilbert of the Department of Education at the University of Ottawa.

Parent's/Guardian's signature _____ Date: _____

Athlete's signature _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date: _____

Reflective Journal Sheet

Date: _____ Time of Stressful Event _____

1. Today I felt stressed when ... (Please describe your stressful situation.)

2. Circle one:

a) I didn't do anything to help myself cope.

b) I did the following to help myself cope (Please describe what you did to help yourself cope. Also, tell me if this coping strategy helped you or not.)

3. Circle one

a) I have never used that coping strategy before.

b) I have used that coping strategy before. (Please tell me when you used that strategy before.)

4. I think I might have learned this strategy ... (Please tell me how you think you may have learned the strategy.)

Appendix F

Background Interview with Athletes

- ❑ Re-explain the purpose of the study
- ❑ Thank athlete for her participation.
- ❑ Go over the consent form. Obtain signed consent form, if not already collected.
- ❑ Explain reason for audio taping the discussion, and remind athletes about the use of pseudonyms.
- ❑ Remind athletes that they are not obligated to answer the questions and that they may refuse to do so, and/or withdraw from the study without penalty.
- ❑ Examine the following questions.

Section A – Demographic Information

1. When did you first become involved in your sport?
2. What position do you play?
3. What is the role of sport in your life?
4. Are other members of your family involved in sport? If yes, who and in what sport?
5. Who are you most like in your family? Why?
6. Are any of your friends involved in your sport?
7. Of your friends/teammates, who are you most like? Why?
8. Do you have any role models? If so, who are they and why are they your role models?

Section B – Perceptions of Stress, Stressors Experienced and the Use of Coping

Strategies

1. When I say the word stress, what do you think of?
2. What does stress mean to you?
3. How do you feel when you are faced with stress?

4. What sorts of stressors do you experience on a daily basis?
 5. What sorts of stressors do you regularly experience in your sport?
 6. When you are faced with these stressors, do you do anything to help yourself cope with it? If yes, what do you do?
 7. Can you tell me about your most recent stressful experience?
 8. Did you do anything to help yourself cope with your stress during your most recent stressful experience? If yes, what did you do? If yes, did anyone (coach/teacher/parent/friend) help you cope with this stressful event?
 9. Have you used that strategy before? If so, when?
-
- ☐ Confirm time and location of next event with athlete.
 - ☐ Thank athlete again for her participation.

Appendix G

Example of Field Notes

All names and identifying features have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Date: June 8, 1999

Event: League Game vs. Sunnyville

Location: Manley Park

Length of Time in Field: 5:50 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. (~ 2 hours + 40 minutes)

Present: Everyone was present tonight.

I arrived at the field at about 5:50 p.m. and most of the girls were just arriving or walking across the field while I was parking the car. I made my way over and we said hello to each other. They were all hyper and didn't really seem to be into soccer that night as they were talking about everything but soccer. I said hello to Duane and noticed that Bren was not there yet. When Bren arrived he commented that I was there ahead of him and Duane said that I had gotten there early. Leslie (a parent) was coming across the field carrying a bunch of stuff so I went over and took some stuff from her. We said hello and she told me that she was going to watch her son tonight because he had a game in Amherst also. She was hoping to watch one half of each game.

Bren told me that the girls were not into the game and that they had so many other things on their minds. He expected that it would be like this for the next few weeks because school was ending, exams, grads, etc. Leslie had to leave and gave me the game sheet and Darren (team manager) gave me the cards. The game was getting ready to start and Duane and Bren asked me to "check" the cards. Basically they told me that they don't really do this and that I should just go through the motions. I did and I told the girls that I felt weird doing this. They laughed. When they were finished getting their cards checked, I collected them and put them in my bag for Darren. The game got started and there were 6 subs on the bench. This was the first time that they had a full squad and Bren and Duane commented that this was going to be interesting. I didn't really notice any problems with this. All of my five athletes started though. The game was really rough. The girls did not seem to be working hard and they weren't really making the smart plays. Sunnyville scored first to take a 1-0 lead. When the goal went in, Heather got it out of the net right away and punted it back up the field. The girls continued to play with the same intensity – low. When Marilyn was off she told Bren that the problem was that three people would go for the ball and then they would all stop because they assumed that somebody else would get it and that they needed to communicate better. Bren agreed and said that they had to work that out amongst themselves. Heather's kicks were all over the place and she sent a lot of balls out of touch. I also noticed that she wasn't really

taking charge at the back. Usually she calls her players off the ball and is aggressive. This was not the case, at least in the first half.

I think they scored to make it 1-1 and the half ended this way. At the half Heather commented that they had everything going for them in the second half. They had the sun at their backs and the wind in their favor in the second half and she thought that this would be good. Bren told them that they needed to pick their intensity up and look for the smart play. Bren commented to Heather that she needed to do a better job with her kicks and she said that she couldn't do anything because of the wind and because the players weren't moving. Bren said to her that she could play the ball on the ground and to not make excuses. He said that it was a team game and that they all had to improve. Heather at first put her head down, but then she seemed to accept what Bren was saying and put her head back up and nodded her head as he continued.

Duane and Bren did a lot more yelling than usual at the girls especially when they didn't hustle on the field. Duane kept yelling at Jackie to get goal side and Bren yelled at Nancy when she didn't move into space and make the right play. Bob kept saying that the decision-making was terrible. Breana was also yelled at a lot. It was her first game back in quite some time and she was really rusty. She didn't seem to move properly and was kind of lazy. When she came off she sat at the end of the bench and looked the other way. It seemed like she was crying. Bren went down to speak with her and then when he came back I noticed that Nadine went and sat beside her and brought some water for Breana. The girls played better in the second half, but they still did not play as well as they are capable of playing. The girls scored two more goals and the game ended 3-1.

When it was over Bren told them to jog across the field and back and they told him that they just jogged from the centerline to the end line and back. He was not convinced and told them to do it anyway. Heather especially did not look happy. When they returned and started to stretch Bren told them that they had just tried to tell him that running from the centerline to the end line where most of them fell down and then coming back halfway was the same as running to the other side of the field and back. He said that was how they played the game too. He said that he knew that they were not in the game and he could tell by the way that they warmed up. They were very hyper and were not concentrating at all on the game. He said that that was ok and sometimes that would happen, but when it did, they needed to have a really strong work ethic and work hard on the field. He told them that against strong teams they would not win with that kind of effort. He told them to stay put because he had some handouts for them and some announcements. He told them about the upcoming provincial tournament schedule. He said that they would be playing against Poloma,

which was the Jackson City team with some of the Venice players, and some of the girls made “oh great” kinds of comments. Jackie did at first too, but then said, “it doesn’t matter” and seemed like she was looking forward to the challenge. Bren also reminded them about the training schedule with Dean and the Atom tournament where they would work the concession and fundraise. Bren emphasized that he wanted them all to be there and that they would take turns. Several of the girls complained that they had exams and Bren said that they didn’t have exams on the weekend. Heather said, “but that’s when we study.” Bren told them that they would only be expected to be there for a couple of hours.

Many of the girls left and I hung around a bit to see what the coaches had to say. Heather said something like, “I can see that I am not going to get many shots on me and then we are going to play against Jackson City, great!” Bren told Heather that she had a really good tournament and she said, “I didn’t even do anything.” Bren told her that she had good ball distribution, she communicated well and if she were to look at the keepers in Premiere divisions or professionals, the keepers might get 3 or 4 shots a game, that’s all. He told her that she needed to work on concentrating for the entire game and she said that she did lose focus during games. At this point, I wanted to get involved in the conversation, but I didn’t feel right about it because it was just Bren and Heather talking to each other and Duane and Rachel were starting to walk across the field. I decided to walk with them, but made a mental note to write this down and find out if this was what Bren was going to talk to Heather about in her individual meeting with the coaches.

As I walked across the field Duane commented that that must have been a better game for me in terms of Heather and I asked him what he meant. He said that she gets down and doesn’t deal with adversity very well. He commented that her kicks were all over the place and that she was saying that her teammates were not moving. I said that was something that I had noticed before, but that he was right that was a better game than what I had seen on the weekend. Rachel had kind of drifted to the car so I didn’t feel badly about discussing this with Duane at this point. I then said goodbye to them and got in my car and headed for home.

Appendix H

Package Introducing Athlete Journals

Jenelle N. Gilbert
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March 2, 1999

Dear Athlete (insert athlete's name):

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in my study thus far. You have been open and honest and in so doing have made a significant contribution to the project. Your ideas regarding stress and coping are greatly valued and I have learned a lot as a result of our discussions. Also I wanted to thank you for making me feel very welcome in your setting. This has made my job that much easier. We are now ready to move to the next stage ...

As promised in my previous letter, a journal will now be introduced. I am asking that you complete journal entries at a rate of two to three per week (you can do more if you like). The opening phrases provided on each journal entry page will help you get started and you are welcome to write your journal entries in point form. Each journal entry should take about three to five minutes to complete. These are just guidelines, however, and I would encourage you to take longer and/or use the back of the page if you wish to write more than the space I've provided allows. In fact, deeper reflection/introspection on your stressors and coping strategies will allow us to better understand your perceptions regarding these concepts.

In addition, I would like to continue to chat with you on a regular basis at your different events. While it is important that I be there at the games, practices, etc. to observe your stressors, I am finding that most of the information related to my study is coming from our discussions rather than my observations. So again I would like to thank you for taking the time to talk with me at your events. I hope that we will be able to continue these chats over the next several months.

Please remember that your journal entries and our discussions are confidential and that you are free to withdraw from the study at anytime and/or refuse to answer any question without penalty. Should you require further information, please give me a call. I am looking forward to exploring your journal entries with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jenelle". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jenelle

STRESS



AND COPING



LOGBOOK

Reflective Journal Sheet

Date: _____ Time of Stressful Event _____

1. Today I felt stressed when ... (Please describe your stressful situation.)

2. Circle one:

- a) I didn't do anything to help myself cope.
b) I did the following to help myself cope. (Please describe what you did to help yourself cope. Also, tell me if this coping strategy helped you or not.)

3. Circle one:

- a) I have never used that coping strategy before.
b) I have used that coping strategy before. (Please tell me when you have used that strategy before.)

4. I think I may have learned this strategy ... (Please tell me how you think you may have learned the strategy.)

Appendix I

Completed Sample Reflective Journal Entry

Reflective Journal Sheet

Date: May 22/99 Time of Stressful Event Daytime.

1. Today I felt stressed when ... (Please describe your stressful situation.)

I felt I wasn't having a good game
and was disappointed with play.

2. Circle one:

a) I didn't do anything to help myself cope.

☒ b) I did the following to help myself cope (Please describe what you did to help yourself cope. Also, tell me if this coping strategy helped you or not.)

I talked with my mom & grandma.
I tried to let it all out then get
over it.

3. Circle one

a) I have never used that coping strategy before.

☒ b) I have used that coping strategy before. (Please tell me when you used that strategy before.)

My mom always suggests it because then
I will forget about it and feel better
about it, after games.

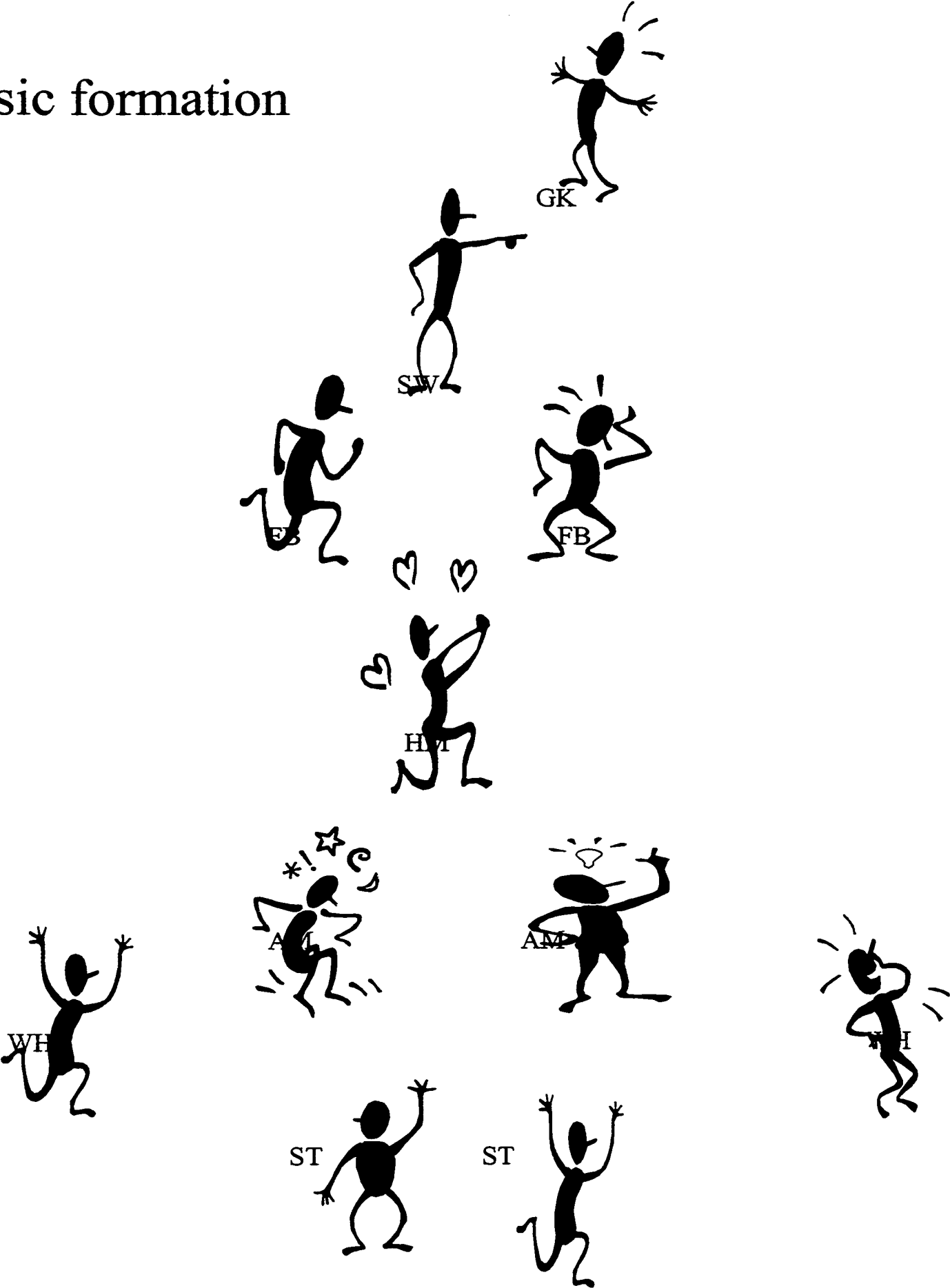
4. I think I might have learned this strategy ... (Please tell me how you think you may have learned the strategy.)

I learned this from my mom she
suggested it as a positive example
of releasing my anger.

Appendix J

Team Document Outlining the Team Formation and Position Responsibility

Basic formation



THE FORMATION

Our basic formation will be the same as we used last year. We will play a 3-5-2 formation. That means we will have 3 in the back, 5 in the middle & 2 up front. The 3 at the back is pretty standard with a sweeper & two man-marking fullbacks. In the midfield we will have a holding (or more defensive oriented) midfielder, two attacking midfielders & two winghalves to provide width. We will have two strikers partnered up-front. The formation is depicted pictorially on the attached graphic.

Descriptions of the roles of the various positions will follow but before we get into that we need to qualify that this formation is our normal formation but it is not a formation that will use exclusively. A number of factors can lead to us alter the formation on a given day or during a given situation in the game. For example, if the other team is playing with 3 strikers, we may have to add a centreback, altering the formation to 4-4-2. We may change the formation based on the players we have available for a given game. To a large degree, the formation is designed around the players we have. If certain players are not available, a different formation may make better use of the available players. At times the formation may be altered situationally during the course of a match. If we are trailing & need goals, more players could be pushed forward. If we are protecting a lead, we make take a more defensive posture.

The roles of the various positions are as follows:

Sweeper (SW)

The sweeper is the last line of defense. The sweeper does not man-mark but must close down any player that gets past the defender. The sweeper should remain fairly central, not venturing out to the flanks unless she is sure to win the ball. When the sweeper makes up her mind to go for the ball, she goes in a full speed & goes in hard. Any balls knocked through by the other team should be played in the air; a ball that bounces is trouble. No opponent should muscle past the sweeper.

The sweeper must take charge at the back. She becomes an “on field general”. She has to ensure that when we are defending all the opposing players are marked. She calls out marking assignments when necessary, particularly ensuring that the midfielders are picking up any free men.

The sweeper can be a playmaker from the back. The ball can be switched from one side of the field to the other through the sweeper. Most of the time, the sweeper has the other 9 outfield players in front of her so she has the best vision as to which players are in space. She should get her head up when in possession of the ball & look for a good outlet pass to allow the quick transition from defense to offense. If the opportunity to go forward presents itself, the sweeper can participate in the attack. This can be an important part of the transition game.

Defenders (FB)

The defenders primary defensive responsibility is man-marking the opposing forwards. This may bring them in more centrally than they have played in the past. They may not even play sides per se. They can both be viewed as central defenders & should stick with their man. The winghalves will have responsibility for covering wide.

Defenders must be aggressive & persistent. They have to know when to go in & tackle & when to jockey. "Diving in" is a no-no. It is better to hold the opponent up & wait for defensive support than to make a low percentage challenge that allows the opponent a clear opportunity. A challenge for the ball should be made when a decision is made that it is likely that the challenge will be successful. Defenders also must be solid in the air & quick to the ball over short distances.

Defenders should participate in building the play up from the back. They should be looking for the easy pass to open teammates. They should look for opportunities to overlap when they present themselves. Since basically only the winghalves move up & down the outside channels, chances to overlap the winghalf will be frequent when the winghalf comes back to the ball. As well, the defenders will get chances to jump into the play between the central midfielders.

Winghalves (WH)

The winghalves provide the width in attack & defense. This position requires lots of running, hence it requires optimal fitness. The winghalves must defend all the way back to their own goalline & then may have to turn & run 100 metres the other way to attack. On turnover, they would then would have to get back again to their own end.

They must be good crossers of the ball but also capable of taking on an opponent one-on-one. They can't be drawn into the box too early when the ball is on the opposite of the field. They must stay wide for a late run onto crossed balls.

A strong work ethic is required for this position. If the winghalf doesn't stay with the play offensively, attacking options are limited. If the winghalf doesn't track all the way back defensively, the opposition will exploit it. The success of this formation depends on the winghalves stepping up to all aspects of the job.

Holding Midfielder (HM)

The holding midfielder is very active in both attacking & defending roles, although the position has a bit more of a defensive orientation. Of the 3 central midfield positions, it is the one closest to our own goal. This is not a centreback position. The holding midfielder must go forward & participate in attack.

The holding midfielder must be a ball winner in midfield. Many games are won or lost on the 50/50 balls in midfield. Tackling must be strong & the midfielder should be aggressive on the tackle. Since there will generally be cover between the holding midfielder & our own goal, this player can challenge for most balls.

The holding midfielder is often the initiator of the attack. When in possession, she should get her head up & look at the options. She can look to distribute or carry the ball. She can dribble past her marker but shouldn't be looking to dribble through the whole team. She can make her initial move & look at the passing options. She can also control the tempo of the game. She can slow the game down by knocking the ball square or back or speed it up by knocking the ball forward into space for someone to run onto.

Attacking Midfielders (AM)

The attacking midfielders are the focal point of the attack. The attacking midfielders link the play from the back with the strikers. The attacking midfielders act as a partnership & don't really play sides per se. The attacking midfielders have defensive responsibilities as well as offensive responsibilities. They must get behind the ball on opponent's possession & go hard to win the 50-50 balls.

One of the primary responsibilities is to be distributors of the ball. Most times they will have to move the ball quickly as they will have little time to settle. They can knock the ball wide, play the ball through the ball through to the strikers or even look to play the ball back if that's the best options. Within the 18-30 metre range, they will look for shots if they have a sight of goal. They will also be a primary option for the strikers if either one receives the ball with her back to goal. They can expect the early layback & look to shoot.

Strikers (ST)

The strikers form an attacking partnership. They have to move together but allow enough space so that they don't get in each other's way. They must play off each other so their skills & approaches should be complementary. One striker should play slightly ahead of the other. The striker closer to the attacking midfielders can act as more of a target person. The target person will want the ball played to her feet but should be ready to control a higher ball with any of her varied trapping skills. She will control the ball, shield off defenders & can look to turn to shoot or to lay the ball off.

The striker playing further forward will want the ball in space. She will look to take defenders on with either speed to blow by or using one of her dribble moves.

A good partnership requires a good understanding between the strikers. They can't be too far apart & they don't want to play in a line. As they move around they should be

conscious of each other's positioning. The same striker isn't always the target man. They must adjust to game situations.

The strikers do have a defensive role. They aggressively pursue the ball in the offensive end trying to pressure defenders into a turnover. In our half the defensive role is more limited. They must keep the other team honest by denying the pass back to the defenders. They can also track back when a teammate is caught out of position when an attack breaks down. The big responsibility in their own half is to be an outlet to make the quick transition to attack, most particularly when the ball is in the keeper's hands.

Appendix K

Sample Member Check Interview – Heather

- ☐ Thanks for continued participation.
 - ☐ Catch up.
 - ☐ Like usual you don't have to answer any question that you would rather not.
 - ☐ Want to wrap-up and hear from you about any other stressors and/or coping strategies that you use.
- 1) Did you read the report?
 - 2) Did you show it to anyone?
 - 3) Did you discuss it with anyone?
 - ☐ Want to ask you some general questions and then I will ask some specific questions about the report and I want to hear your opinions/comments about it.
 - 4) Why do you play soccer?
 - 5) I'd like you to compare the stress you experience in soccer to the stress in the rest of your life. Tell me about this. Do you use soccer to help you cope with other stressors in your life?
 - 6) We have talked before about your role as captain. When you were first chosen as captain and since then, have Bren and Duane talked to you about what they expect of you in this role? If so, what have they said? Have you taken on any responsibilities with respect to this role yourself (without coaches telling you to do it)? What are they? Tell me about this experience overall. Have you found it stressful? What have you done to cope with it? Did this assignment help you in any way? Did you develop any skills as a result of your role as captain? Give me examples.
 - 7) I wrote this the following in the report: "Heather also feels stress around meeting her own expectations and when she does not play well or is not focused. Usually these stressors occur in relation to when goals are scored against her. Which comes first? The goals are scored and then she feels stressed about not playing well and meeting her own expectations, or is she stressed about this and then the goals are scored? Not sure, but something to think about." What can you tell me about this? Do you have any insights into which comes first?
 - 8) Along the same lines - is your position as the keeper stressful? Why?
 - 9) Training stressful? What about my observations of you giving up?
 - 10) Let's talk about crying. It seems to me that this is a coping strategy for you. Do you agree? I have thought that it was because it seemed to release some frustration for you and then you could do something else to help yourself cope and move on.
 - 11) Is the vignette accurate?
 - 12) Your comments/thoughts about the paper.
- ☐ Thank athlete again for her participation.

Appendix L

List of Stressors and Coping Strategies Identified in Field Notes – Jackie

All names and identifying features have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Stressors

Date	Code	Field Notes
January 16	Big games/final games	I also asked Jackie if she was nervous before the game and she said that she was a little bit.
January 19	Lack of team cohesion	Jackie commented that they didn't play like a team.
February 3	Constructive criticism	Throughout the second half, Bren was on Jackie a lot getting her to move. She did seem to be running a lot, but always behind the defensive players, which was what Bren wanted her to avoid. Several times she came off and looked very disappointed. I wanted to talk to her about it, but she always sat on the opposite end of the bench from me.
February 27	Constructive criticism	The drill started and the girls were just going through the motions at first. Bren yelled at Jackie to run hard and that it was not a jog. She nodded her head discouragingly and picked up her pace.
March 6	Poor play	Just then Jackie came by and said, "Argh!" Kellie asked her what was wrong and she said, "The first time I got 11 and now I can only get 2!" She seemed quite frustrated.
March 7	Perceived lack of caring	When they were stretching Jackie said, "I feel like Duane doesn't care about us when he leaves us like this."
March 13	Constructive criticism	Jackie also ran well. At one point Duane told Jackie that she could run faster. She replied that she was "running faster than most of the girls!"
April 12	Competing demands for time	As they were warming up the instructor asked how long they would like to spin for and Jackie said, "half-an-hour because we have to go home and do homework." The instructor joked, "I am sure that you can't wait to get home and get started on that." Then Jackie said, "No, it doesn't matter." Jackie commented while we were waiting though that she had about three hours of homework to do.

Stressors – Continued

Date	Code	Field Notes
April 24	Joking comments	The drill was that some of the girls would act as pilons – passive defenders – and the rest would dribble to them and then do a move. Jackie said that she wanted to be a pilon first and Duane commented, “It’s not like when you play wing-half Jackie” and laughed. Jackie did not think that this was funny and did not laugh. It almost seemed as if Jackie was being picked on.
April 25	Constructive criticism	After the sprinting Duane set up a plyometric-skills circuit where the girls had to dribble the ball at different speeds and then jump on boxes, do 25 crunches and then jump over the box or ball. Because it was windy (again) I offered to hold the ball that the girls were jumping over. I had visions of the ball being knocked over by the wind and the girls jumping on it as another athlete had done during the tryouts. I was holding the ball for Jackie and Duane said, “over the ball Jackie.” She seemed frustrated and snapped, “I think I am over the ball.” Duane then said, “just because I say something, it doesn’t necessarily mean you are not doing it. If I say keep working hard, it doesn’t mean that you are not working hard.” I have to admit that I did find that Jackie was getting picked on a bit, or perhaps I am more sensitive to this because she told me that she gets frustrated sometimes when the coaches tell her stuff.
April 25	Constructive criticism	Nadine, Breana and Jackie were to cross the ball throughout the drill from the corner and the rest of the girls were to attack the net and try to score. The girls in the middle were Jodie, Nicole, and Nancy. Nadine and Breana always crossed the ball from the right side, which left Jackie to cross from the left. She was having a difficult time getting the ball in the air and Bren said several times after she kicked a less than perfect cross “in the air please.” I could tell that she was frustrated because she asked if someone else wanted to cross. She switched with Jodie at one point and Bren stopped the drill and asked how many times Jodie ever crosses the ball in the game. Jackie and Jodie switched back and a few minutes later Jackie asked if somebody else wanted to switch.
May 29	Constructive criticism	While he was talking Bren said to Jackie, “Jackie pay attention.” She replied, “what?” and seemed frustrated. I don’t know why he said that because she wasn’t talking or anything.

Stressors - Continued

Date	Code	Field Notes
May 30	Benching and Perceived lack of caring	The game started and the team took the lead early. Bren then started to take players off. The first player that he took off was Jackie. She tried to explain to Bren that she had made a mistake and she knew that, but he told her that there was a difference between making a mistake, which everybody did, and not giving any effort, which he believed, was the case with Jackie. Jackie came and sat down with the rest of us, put her hat on and looked like she was going to cry.
June 10	Competing demands for time	While the girls were running Jackie's Mom showed up and she was really stressed. She said that Jackie was at a point where she wanted to quit soccer and that she needed a break. She said that Jackie often had soccer two times a day and that she was playing the entire game. She said that it was crazy and then she had to come to club soccer and if she didn't then that was not acceptable. Darren commented that that was why a lot of the girls were no longer playing school soccer. Jackie's Mom said that she had mentioned to Jackie that she should play something else next year because her schedule now was too much. I didn't know who was more stressed – Jackie or her Mom.
June 17	Responsibility of position	Bren said that Jackie would be back on Sunday. I asked her how she was and Bren said ok, but I got the impression from him by his tone of voice that she was still not feeling all that good about soccer and herself. Bren said that it was more than just soccer that had gotten Jackie down and that she had other issues. For some reason she seems to have low confidence in herself in different areas in her life. Bren suggested that they move her into the inner midfield rather than leave her on wing-half. I nodded my head in agreement with this suggestion as Jackie had told me that she would like to try other positions. I did not voice the reason for my agreement to Duane and Bren. Duane said that this sounded like a good idea because "there is a lot of pressure on the wing-halves."
June 22	Responsibility of position	Bren and Duane spoke about moving Jackie into the center and playing her as a forward. Duane said that that would be ok tonight because Nicole would be away, but that they needed to figure out what they would do when all three forwards were back. Bren suggested moving Nicole into the wing-half position and Duane thought that this might work. Bren said that there was a lot of pressure on Jackie in the wing-half position and that this move might alleviate some of the pressure that she feels.

Stressors - Continued

Date	Code	Field Notes
July 5	Injury	Duane said that Jackie hurt her ankle in the game against Clarita and did not play for the rest of the tournament. He said, "that in and of itself must have been difficult for her." She seemed down and he said that it looked like she sprained her ankle across the top because it was swollen there.
July 6	Injury	She is stressed about getting injured though because she will miss the Narnia tournament and scouts are supposed to be there. Also, she said that she was just getting to the point where she likes soccer again and now she has to miss it because of her injury. She is also worried that she won't be ready for the provincial tournament, "the most important tournament of the year" because she will not have the opportunity to play before it.
July 20	Responsibility to team	Jackie was warming up and was testing out her ankle to see if she could play in the game. After the warm-up she said that her ankle was sore, but that she would like to try and play, but maybe not play left wing-half since she didn't have confidence with respect to kicking the ball with her left foot.

Coping Strategies

Date	Code	Field Notes
March 6	Yell in frustration	Just then Jackie came by and said, "Argh!" Kellie asked her what was wrong and she said, "The first time I got 11 and now I can only get 2!" She seemed quite frustrated.
April 25	Snapped	I was holding the ball for Jackie and Duane said, "over the ball Jackie." She seemed frustrated and snapped, "I think I am over the ball."
April 25	Gave up	I could tell that she was frustrated because she asked if someone else wanted to cross. She switched with Jodie at one point and Bren stopped the drill and asked how many times Jodie ever crosses the ball in the game. Jackie and Jodie switched back and a few minutes later Jackie asked if somebody else wanted to switch. I think Breana ended up going in for Jackie and Jackie joined the group in the middle.
May 6	Adopt positive attitude	I noticed that there was a change in attitude by Jackie. Whereas before she seemed to really dislike getting any comments from Duane or Bren, she took what Bren said to her tonight and was positive with his comments. She then tried to incorporate his suggestions into her game.

Coping Strategies - Continued

Date	Code	Field Notes
May 23	Encourage teammates	I noticed also that Jackie was giving a lot of positive encouragement from the sidelines to her teammates on the field whenever she was off. She has told me in the past that that is a coping strategy for her.
May 30	Get reassurance from teammates	I overheard her tell some of the other girls that she had made a mistake and they told her not to worry about it and that she would get back on.
June 1	Avoid stressor	When I arrived at home I decided to call Jackie and find out if she wanted to postpone our interview. She answered the phone and I said hi and identified myself. I asked her how she was feeling and she said ok. I asked her if she wanted to reschedule our appointment and she said that tomorrow was fine. She said, "well Jenelle, basically I just needed a break from soccer, so that's why I didn't go to the game."
June 5	Make jokes – laugh – use humor	At one point Jackie took a corner kick and it went right along the ground. As she ran past the sideline she said, "That's why I don't take corner kicks" with a smile on her face.
July 13	Visualization	I approached Jackie during the second half and asked her how she was doing. She said ok. I asked about her ankle and if she had done the things that we talked about. She then couldn't remember what we had talked about and then she said, "oh the visualization? Yeah, I'm doing it. The physiotherapist said that it's gotten a lot better."

Appendix M

Summary Interview Letter

Jenelle N. Gilbert
1-3918 Huron Avenue
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(310) 836-9554
jngilbert@msn.com

December 14, 1999

Dear Athlete (insert athlete's name):

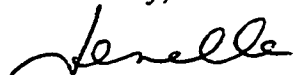
Well the time has come and we are almost finished the project. I want to thank you again for your participation. I learned a lot of interesting things about stress and coping in female athletes and this is a direct result of your openness, willingness to share and your personal insights about the stressors in your life and the ways that you cope with them.

I have enclosed two case summary reports for your review. The first copy is a complete profile of your stressors and coping strategies. This report is for you to read, if you like, and you are under no obligation to do so. I just thought that you might like to read this information about yourself as I found it very interesting and thought that you may also. The second report (from herein will be called the condensed report) is a shorter, more compact version of the first. It has a very wide right margin so that you may write comments as you read the report. It is important that you read this condensed report before we meet to do our final interview. At this meeting, I would like to discuss any concerns/suggestions/thoughts you have regarding the condensed report (or the complete one, should you choose to read it) as well as have you answer some other questions that I have developed from the analysis. As I previously mentioned, I anticipate that this final interview would last between 20 and 30 minutes.

With respect to the reports, I would like to ask that after you read the condensed report (and the complete report, if you choose to do so), that you not discuss it (them) with anyone until you and I have a chance to discuss its (their) contents. After we have had an opportunity to talk about the information, you may share the reports with anyone you wish. *However, please keep in mind that while the information has been changed to protect the identity of the other people, places, and events discussed, you can be identified.* Also, don't feel that you have to show the reports to anyone, as you are not obligated to do so, and I will be providing reports to the coaches and parents after the five summary interviews have been completed. The reports given to your parents and coaches will be completely confidential and you will not be identified at all.

I am really looking forward to meeting with you to catch up on how things are going and to discuss the project information. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me at my parents' house (738-0838). Take care.

Sincerely,



Jenelle

Appendix N

Sample of Field Visit, Interview and Contact Log

All names and identifying features have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Visit #/ Interview #	Date	Event	Location – Mileage (Description)	Time in Field	Field Notes Written/ Interview Transcribed
Mini- Interview with Jackie	July 6, 1999	Mini-Interview (Interview #4)	During league game at Manley Park	~ 10 minutes	July 12, 1999
Contact	July 6, 1999	Discussion between Rene, Heather and me	After league game at Manley Park	~ 10 minutes	July 12, 1999
Contact	July 8, 1999	Phone message for Jackie		~ 1 minute at about 6:25 p.m.	July 8, 1999
Visit #63	July 8, 1999	Practice	Culver Pitch 36 km	7:35 – 9:45 p.m. = 2 hours + 10 minutes	July 8, 1999
Mini- Interview with Heather	July 8, 1999	Mini-Interview (Interview #4)	During Practice at Culver Pitch	~ 5 minutes	July 12, 1999
Mini- Interview with Kellie	July 8, 1999	Mini-Interview (Interview #4)	During Practice at Culver Pitch	~ 5 minutes	July 12, 1999
Mini- Interview with Rachel	July 8, 1999	Mini-Interview (Interview #4)	During Practice at Culver Pitch	~ 5 minutes	July 12, 1999
Contact	July 13, 1999	Phone conversation with Duane		About 1 hour in the morning	July 13, 1999
Mini- Interview with Rachel	July 13, 1999	Mini-Interview (Interview #5)	Before league game at Manley Park	~ 5 minutes	July 15, 1999

Visit #/ Interview #	Date	Event	Location – Mileage (Description)	Time in Field	Field Notes Written/ Interview Transcribed
Mini- Interview with Heather	July 13, 1999	Mini-Interview (Interview #5)	Before league game at Manley Park	~ 5 minutes	July 15, 1999
Mini- Interview with Kellie	July 13, 1999	Mini-Interview (Interview #5)	Before league game at Manley Park	~ 5 minutes	July 15, 1999
Mini- Interview with Jane	July 13, 1999	Mini-Interview (Interview #4)	During half- time of league game at Manley Park	~ 5 minutes	July 15, 1999
Visit #64	July 15, 1999	Practice	Culver Pitch	7:45 – 9:45 p.m. = 2 hours	July 16, 1999
Visit #65	July 17, 1999	Tournament	Thoreyville	9:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. = 8 hours + 30 minutes	July 19, 1999
Visit #66	July 18, 1999	Tournament	Thoreyville	10:15 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. = 2 hours + 45 minutes	July 19, 1999
Mini- Interview with Bren and Duane	July 18, 1999	Mini-Interview before final game of Tournament (3 rd interview with coaches)	Thoreyville	~ 10 minutes	July 19, 1999
Contact	July 20, 1999	Phone conversation/ message with Athletes		~ 20 minutes (total)	July 20, 1999
Visit #67	July 20, 1999	League game vs. Cardale	Jollacrest Park	6:20 – 9:00 p.m. = 2 hours + 40 minutes	July 21, 1999