

Spring 2009

Chosen Ones: A Qualitative Inquiry into the Collegiate Team Captain Experience

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THE CHOSEN ONES: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE
COLLEGIATE TEAM CAPTAIN EXPERIENCE

by

JEDEDIAH E. BLANTON

(Under the Direction of Daniel Czech)

ABSTRACT

The team captain is a highly recognizable position held in collegiate athletics. Loughead et al. (2006) suggests the team captain represents the formal peer leader in athletics. Although this may be the case, only one study was found which qualitatively investigated this position in male ice hockey (Dupois et al. 2006). Moran and Weiss (2005) highlighted differences in male versus female peer leadership in sport. A gap in the current sport psychology literature exists in the critical evaluation of both male and female, and team and individual peer sport leadership, from the first-person perspective. The purpose of this study was to critically examine the experience of the collegiate team captain as well as the perceived roles of the individual. Two open-ended questions were presented to individuals representing four area's of collegiate competition: male team sport captains, male individual sport captains, female team sport captains, and female individual sport captains. Participant interviews revealed an overall thematic structure of: A "Good" and "Fun" Experience, "Responsibilities", and Relationships. Several subthemes from each of these categories emerged in the data, as well as additional subthemes when separating the co-participants into their appropriate gender groups.

INDEX WORDS: Team captain, Peer leadership, Sport, Experience, Responsibilities, Relationships, Sport psychology

THE CHOSEN ONES: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE COLLEGIATE
TEAM CAPTAIN EXPERIENCE

by

JEDEDIAH E. BLANTON

B.A., Fort Lewis College, 2007

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2009

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Electronic Version Approved:
May 2009

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my friend, teammate and co-captain Jessica Quigley. For the duration of 2 schools, 8 years, and 12 competitive seasons side-by-side, Ms. Quigley served me as a confidant, catalyst, competitor, and friend. Our many conversations and debates over the years sparked my interest in attempting to understand what it was to be a team captain, from beyond my own eyes. She truly encompasses the notion of a leader, on and off the course. Without her support and friendship, this project would not have come to its fruition. *"From tree-line to red-line...whatever's comfortable"*. All the best to you "Dr." Quigley.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor's and mentor's Dr. Czech and Dr. Metzler of the Georgia Southern Sport Psychology program. Your passion and vision for student and professional development has certainly transferred through. As I continue through the working world, I wish to carry your guiding words, visionary enthusiasm, and passionate dedication to my work. Secondly, I wish to thank my colleagues within the GSU Sport Psychology program (Sport Psych-Cronies!). Your support and friendship during the duration of my time in Statesboro will never be fully repaid (and I will arduously work to "pay-it-forward"). I would especially like to thank Andrea Way, Evan Baltazar, Steve Gonzalez, Trevor Egli, and last but certainly not least: Jordan Blazo, a friend, catalyst and future phenom (enologist!). *We takin' over!* Without this core, life in graduate school would never have been so exciting – peace and love.

I wish to acknowledge the caring and guiding faculty in the Department of Health and Kinesiology at Georgia Southern University and in the Exercise Science Department at Fort Lewis College, for challenging and pushing me towards this great education, especially Mr. Jim Cross, Dr. MaryAnn Erickson, Dr. Melissa Knight, Dr. Paul Petersen, Ms. Sarah Carson, Dean Fred Whitt, and Dr. Barry Joyner (keep rockin' Doc!), I am especially grateful for the relationship we were able to form and I will strive to make you proud in my future endeavors. Finally, I thank my parents Julie and Gary. I know my words would not suffice my gratitude, so I will strive to continue to live in such a way that reflects your great teachings – peace and love to you as well.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Loughead, Hardy, and Eys (2006) detailed the importance of athlete leadership and described two types of peer leaders on a sports team, the formal leader and the informal leader. Traditionally, the formal leader is an appointed or agreed upon position by all members of the team, such as the coach or the team captain (Kozub & Pease, 2001). The formal leader holds a position on the team that carries a title (i.e. coach, captain, assistant, etc.) and all group members are aware of this title (Kozub & Pease, 2001; Loughead et al., 2006). The informal leader or peer leader is one member of the team who, without title, fulfills one or more needs of their teammates. In an almost counterbalancing act, peer leaders often display more characteristics surrounding positive feedback and support (Loughead & Hardy, 2005). Loughead et al. (2006) found that coaches agree and believe that peer and teammate leadership is beneficial and important to performance. The importance of peer leadership to the function of a team could be regarded as reason for the popularity of the selection of team captains amongst competitive sport teams, and thusly will be the phenomenon under examination in this study.

Moran and Weiss (2005) found that athletes will consider a peer their leader when they rate high in certain psychological characteristics and high in sport-specific ability. The psychological characteristics were related to expressiveness traits and described how the peer leader supports and behaves toward their teammates. Moreover, Glenn and Horn (1993) described expressive leadership traits as feminine and instrumental and sport-ability skills as masculine. Yet, the authors note that to be a successful leader, one needs

to be skilled in both masculine (instrumental) and feminine (expressiveness) characteristics of leadership. Although in this case, no studies were found to critically examine the perceived differences of male peer leaders to female peer leaders in sport.

Studies have supported certain preferred leadership styles and behaviors of high school and collegiate athletes (Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson, 2004; Chen & Rikli, 2003). Beam et al. (2004) found that male collegiate athletes showed preferences for coaches who displayed strong autocratic and social support behaviors where females showed preferences for coaches with strong situational consideration and training and instruction behaviors. Yet these preferences were only for the formal leadership role of a coach, not a team captain. No studies have been found on what leadership preferences exist for a team captain specifically. Chen and Rikli (2003) found no differences between male and female athletes when focusing on feedback styles of sports leaders, merely that they preferred coaches who give immediate, constructive, informational and frequent feedback. Furthermore, Pescosolido (2001) noted that when a group looks at whom to choose as their leader, individuals with high goals, positive outlooks and reasonable expectations were usually chosen. Additionally Todd and Kent (2004) state peer leaders are selected based upon their individual drive toward reaching the group's goals as well as to the extent that these individual's are influential in organizing the group's drive toward goal achievement (Loughead et al., 2006).

Loughead and Hardy (2005) mention that athlete leaders, such as the team captain, can often have stronger leadership strengths in social support, positive feedback, and democratic behaviors than a coach. Dupois, Bloom and Loughead (2006) supported this notion as a counter-balancing act to ensure that all the athletes needs are met. Todd

and Kent (2004) described the traits most commonly associated with peer leaders as “works hard in practice and games”, “shows respect for others on your team”, and “expects high levels of performance from self and teammates”. Along with several additional important aspects to the previously mentioned domains, Todd and Kent (2004) highlighted the characteristics that high school athletes look for when determining their group leaders, though these leaders are not defined specifically as the team captain. Mosher (1978) and LeBoeuf (1988) described the roles a team captain needs to fulfill from a coaches perspective. More recently however, literature has been describing a trend where team captains are often voted on by the team members and agreed upon by the coaching staff (Loughead et al., 2006), though no studies were found that compare differences in peer leaders based on selection style.

Literature regarding the specific characteristics of selecting a team captain included experience in the sport and a certain amount of greater athletic skill than other team members (LeBoeuf, 1988; Mosher, 1978). These values were supported throughout literature on ideal peer leaders (Beam et al., 2004; Dupois et al., 2006; Glenn & Horn, 1993; Loughead et al, 2006; Moran & Weiss, 2005), yet no studies were found to specifically target team captains. Mosher (1978) and LeBoeuf (1988) also mentioned that the team captain must serve as a liaison between the players and coach. They must be able to communicate the concerns of the players to the coach and also the coach’s intentions to the players. Yet, no research was found regarding the importance of peer leaders as liaisons to coaches in sport or if the liaison role is even necessary to be a successful peer leader, though Dupois et al. (2006) note being a good communicator is a characteristic of successful ice hockey team captains.

Kenow and Williams (1999) composed a study on coach-athlete relationships and the perception of leadership. In this study, the authors noted that as the coaches behave in certain ways, the athletes began to react and evaluate these behaviors as effective or ineffective to achievement, thus, shaping the way the athletes developed a leadership style. However, according to Moran and Weiss (2005) as children age through adolescence, influence shifts from adults to their peers. From this comparison, it could be derived that the behaviors of team captains and peer leaders are also influential in athletes forming perceptions of effective leadership. Smoll and Smith (1989) stated that this idea of leader effectiveness is derived from two perspectives, the leader's behaviors and the participant's reactions.

Loughead et al. (2006) detailed the importance of athlete and peer leadership in sports. Yet, many of the related leadership studies in the sport psychology literature have been focused on the coach and coaching leadership behaviors (Beauchamp, Bray, Eys, & Carron, 2005; Glenn & Horn, 1993; Kozub & Pease, 2001; Loughead & Hardy, 2005), coaching methods (Chelladurai, 1984; Kim, 1992; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995; Rowold, 2006), and preferences for leadership style (Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson, 2004; Chen & Rikli, 2003). Only one study has been found to qualitatively investigate the collegiate team captain (Dupois et al., 2006). The researchers interviewed former ice hockey captains on successful peer leadership leaving out the perspectives of current collegiate athletes from individual sports and female sports. To gain a better understanding of the current perceptions of peer athletic leadership, it is necessary to address those currently holding such a position to illuminate a first-person narrative. In doing so, a four-part perspective is further necessary to account for both male and female viewpoints in team

and individual sports. In this manner, a full investigation is exhausted by shedding light on the multiple regions of collegiate competition.

Streigel (1992) suggests that only through naturalistic, qualitative investigation, can sport psychology researchers and practitioners gain a better understanding of the situations their athletes face. Additionally, naturalistic data collection allows for the gathering and development of information while acknowledging the context and meaning of the situation or phenomenon under investigation. This study proposes to address the gap in literature surrounding peer athlete leadership through qualitative inquiry into the perceptions and experience of being a collegiate team captain.

To expand on the current literature of peer leadership in sport, it is important to select an appropriate theoretical framework for research question development, data collection, and analysis. This study will utilize a humanistic framework, which states that researchers can advance their knowledge of phenomena by revealing the richness of the lived human experience (Hill, 2001; Patton, 2002). Qualitative inquiry suggests that each individual has lived a unique experience and can offer a unique perspective on a phenomenon and so they are viewed as the expert on the subject under investigation (Patton, 2002). Hill (2001) states, “qualitative methods of inquiry were developed that conceptualized the individual not as a subject, but as a participant in cooperative inquiry”. The key characteristics of humanistic theory that support this study’s approach are empathy, genuineness, and nonjudgmental caring for the relationship that is fostered in the data collection process of qualitative research (Hill, 2001). Empathy refers the demonstration of a desire to be affiliated with the participant’s world and an interest in their experiences (Hill, 2001). Genuineness requires the practitioner of humanistic theory

to be honest and authentic with the participant without criticism (Hill, 2001). Nonjudgmental caring describes a complete acceptance of the participant, or coined as “unconditional positive regard” by Carl Rogers (Hill, 2001). Humanistic theory is centered in the human experience so a full description of the team captains lived experience can only be gathered if the participants feel the practitioner is truly fostering an environment free of judgment where the participants can feel safe in their vulnerability and disclosure (Hill, 2001). Practicing empathy, genuineness, and nonjudgmental caring will place value in the voice of the team captain. In order for this study to critically examine the lived experiences of not only the collegiate team captain as one group, but also the for the groups of team and individual sport captains as well as the groups of male and female team captains, the humanistic model must be adopted.

As in selecting the theoretical framework, it is also important to choose the correct methodology for data collection. In this study, existential phenomenology will be used. Dale (1996) explains existential phenomenology as a blending of two philosophies – existentialism and phenomenology – that combine to produce a perspective emphasizing a rigorous description of a lived human experience from a first-person narrative. Existential phenomenology seeks to gain an understanding of an individual’s lived experience through discussion, observation, or interviews (Patton, 2002). Utilizing the theoretical home of humanistic framework will allow for the co-participants perspective and experience to be regarded as the truthful view of the environment in which they operate. Additionally, exercising the methodology of existential phenomenology will allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of collegiate team captains in their appropriate environment. The researcher

using existential phenomenological methodology must approach the data with the intent of describing the actual lived experience of the co-participants within their selected environment (Czech, Wrisberg, Fisher, Thompson, & Hayes, 2004). Through an in-depth interview process, this study will examine the experience of formal peer leaders in collegiate sport as a whole group as well as the environments of male and female collegiate sport captains, and team and individual collegiate sport captains.

Furthermore, qualitative investigations in sport psychology research have been supported in much of the related literature (Cote, 1993; Dale, 1996; Hanson & Newburg, 1992; Locke, 1989; Streigel, 1992). These authors state sport psychology researchers and practitioners must recognize the athlete and their perspective as an expert viewpoint of sport to understand the phenomenon being investigated. To fully understand the phenomenon of a lived experience in collegiate sport it is necessary to use naturalistic inquiry as opposed to collecting objective quantitative data (Hanson & Newburg, 1992). Dale (1996) claims sport psychology researchers can gain valuable amounts of information if we allow the athletes the opportunity to speak freely about their experiences in a qualitative interview format. Existential phenomenological methodology is the appropriate framework for gathering information concerning the lived experience of an individual in an environment (Czech et al., 2004). In order to gain a rich description of formal peer leaders in collegiate sport from the selected environments of male and female team captains, as well as team and individual sport team captains, this study will utilize naturalistic inquiry and existential phenomenological methods.

Purpose of the Study

Only one study in sport psychology literature was found to naturally investigate the phenomenon of formal peer leadership in collegiate sport (Dupois et al., 2006). Dupois et al. (2006) critically analyzed successful athlete leadership from only one representative environment: male team sports, more specifically ice hockey. Therefore, a gap seems to exist regarding the lived experience of collegiate team captains representing the four different areas of collegiate sport where leadership characteristics may vary: male sports and female sports (Glenn & Horn, 1993), and team sports and individual sports (Beam et al., 2004). To examine this phenomenon, this research proposes an existential phenomenological inquiry of the lived experience of collegiate sport team captains. The primary research question for this study will be: What is the lived experience of collegiate sport team captains? The secondary research questions for this study will be: (1) What is the lived experience of male collegiate sport team captains? (2) What is the lived experience of female collegiate sport team captains? (3) What is the lived experience of individual collegiate sport team captains? (4) What is the lived experience of team collegiate sport team captains?

This study will attempt to answer the stated research questions through in-depth interviews with representatives from each of the four noted areas of collegiate sport competition. By allowing the co-participants to speak freely and openly about their experiences as collegiate sport team captains, a rich description of the phenomena will be captured. Analysis of the experiences and an understanding the individual's perspective will further the knowledge of the lived experience of formal peer leaders in sport.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Triangulation

This study will practice two forms of triangulation to enhance the analysis of the data collected from the participants. Triangulation involves investigating multiple avenues of the same phenomenon to ensure a rich and full description of the topic under evaluation (Patton, 2002). Previous literature points out the importance of various triangulation methods in highlighting research bias, testing the strength of the interview protocol, and gaining multiple perspectives in analyzing the data (Czech et al., 2001; Locke, 1989; Patton, 2002; Streigel, 1992). This study will first practice methodological triangulation by illuminating the primary researcher biases through a bracketing interview, piloting the interview protocol, and forming a research team to analyze the bracketing interview and pilot study to address a multiple perspective account of the data. Secondly, this study will use analytical triangulation when examining the data. Such measures in this form will include, collecting notes during the interviews, consulting with another researcher when analyzing the data, and allowing the co-participants to examine the data to insure that the research analysis matches their accounts.

The Researcher as an Instrument. In existential phenomenological methodology the researcher is seen as the primary instrument in data collection (Czech et al., 2001; Patton, 2002). Therefore, prior to investigating participant experiences, the researcher must complete the interview protocol to illuminate any preconceived biases of the phenomenon under study so that data collection and analysis are not shaped by these biases. A bracketing interview was conducted with the researcher and is analyzed in a

systematic approach to gather the thoughts and feelings of the phenomenon as it relates the researcher's environment and past experiences. As mentioned, the researcher is the primary instrument in an existential phenomenological exploration and since I have previous experience as a collegiate athlete and team captain I must explore my biases before further investigation of the phenomenon. Below is a description of my past experience and current viewpoints of the topic.

Currently, I am enrolled in the College of Health and Human Sciences at Georgia Southern University, studying sport psychology. Prior to studying at Georgia Southern University, I attended Fort Lewis College, a small public liberal arts institution where I was extremely fortunate enough have had the opportunity to participate in varsity athletics as a member of the men's cross-country team. I often reflect back to my experience as an athlete and the "life skills" acquired from my pursuit of competitive running. In my junior and senior years of competition I was selected as the team captain. At Fort Lewis College, the men's and women's cross-country teams practiced together and thusly, I formed close friendships with these female athletes, allowing for a close perspective on the different ways men's and women's sports teams function. I became interested in the different ways leaders must function to effectively lead a team to essentially the same goals based on the gender or type of sport they are involved in. Due to these previous experiences, I must be placed in the seat of the interviewee, and be able to explore my biases prior to investigating the experiences of the participants in the study.

Bias Exploration and Bracketing Interview. According to Czech et al. (2001) there is a certain amount of involvement by the researcher in existential phenomenological investigation that could hinder acquisition of collected data, should the

researchers biases remain unaccounted for. Therefore, the researcher must explore these biases by partaking in the interview protocol as a participant. A fellow graduate student and member of the research team, skilled in qualitative interviewing, asked me the same questions I would pose to a participant. Because of my previous experiences as a cross-country captain in college, this bracketing interview aided in the exploration of any potential biases regarding the experience of collegiate sport team captains.

The first theme that emerged from my bracketing interview was the notion of being a captain is an overwhelming position to hold on a sports team. There are so many responsibilities to uphold while also trying to be the best athlete one can. I felt that my captainship was similar to a job, where I had to meet not only my expectations of the position, but also those of my athletes and my coaches. This balancing act was often stressful given my perceived expectations to be the number one runner, an exceptional student, available outside of practice, and the director of our fundraisers. My personal strife and struggle with training and racing often had to take a backseat to those of my teammates in order to serve them best.

A second theme that emerged from my bracketing interview was the notion of a sense of pride and accomplishment stemming from the label and position of the men's cross-country team captain. Part of my captainship involved being the "face" of the men's team to the athletic department and media. I felt it was an honor to speak for and about my teammates athletic and academic accomplishments to the athletic directors, student newspapers and local area radio and press. Secondly, being voted in as the team captain by my teammates added to the sense of accomplishment by feeling that they chose me to be their leader and respected my leadership in situations where needed.

Thirdly, my bracketing interview revealed the theme of the motivator role a team captain must serve to their teammates. Because of the individuality of cross-country running, I feel as though the captain must constantly exhibit an attitude of positivity and energy in training and competition. Even when having a bad day of running, I feel that I had to put my ego aside and assist my teammates in staying positive when struggling to hit marks in practice or after a poor race.

Pilot Study. Due to the lack of found literature in qualitative inquiry of the lived experience of collegiate sport team captains, a pilot study was conducted to allow the researcher to gain practice in data collection with the intended interview protocol as well as to test the strength of the interview protocol in exploring the phenomenon. I interviewed one former female cross-country runner on her experience as a collegiate team captain. The interview method used in the pilot study will be the same as the protocol used in the actual data collection of the study. The interview was conducted over the phone and was audio taped and then transcribed. After eliminating the false starts and coincidental utterances that Henderson (1992) refers to as nonessentials, the final transcript text was prepared. The transcription was sent back to the pilot study participant to test for correct transcription of the interview as well as for any feedback on the interview process.

Some of the themes that emerged from the pilot study are as follows:

- The team captain needs experience within the program prior to becoming that programs leader.
- The team captain should serve as a role model in athletics and academics to the athletes and coaching staff.

- The team captain needs to give and earn the trust and respect of the team members.
- The team captain is a liaison between the coaching staff and the athletes.

Participants

As mentioned, qualitative research methods view individuals not as subjects but rather as participants in cooperative inquiry (Hill, 2001) and will thusly be referred to as co-participants to describe the collaboration of researcher and subjects necessary to produce a rich description of the phenomena. Using purposeful sampling, the co-participants used in this study will be current college student-athletes, representing one of four areas in NCAA Division I sports; the male team and individual sports, and female team and individual sports. The co-participants will be current student-athletes and team captains for the area of sport they represent. It is important and necessary to use purposeful sampling in this study to assure that all areas of collegiate sport are met and fulfilled equally to attain a fair perspective of the lived experience concerning the phenomenon under investigation. Coaches and team member inquiry will be used to identify the team captain from various NCAA institutions, as well as using the researcher's personal contacts in the western United States, to gain a broader demographic for co-participant experiences. Once the team captains have been identified, a request for an interview will be sent, until at least three members from each of the four areas has been filled. A minimum of twelve co-participants will be used for data collection.

Procedure

Co-participants in the study will be informed that participation in the study is completely voluntary and methods will be taken by the researcher to assure

confidentiality. Methods of confidentiality will include coding the transcription to eliminate identification of the co-participants as well as keeping any files with identifiable information in a locked drawer in the Southern Performance Clinic at Georgia Southern University. Prior to the interview, co-participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form, again stating that they understand participation in the research study is completely voluntary as well as stating that (1) interviews will be digitally recorded for future transcriptions, (2) they can refuse to be interviewed or cancel the interview at any time, (3) they will be allowed to ask questions at any time, (4) no incentives will be due to them, (5) transcribed interviews will be sent to them for review prior to analysis, and (6) the transcribed interviews will be reviewed by the researcher and the research team for thematic structure identification.

Interview Protocol

All co-participants in the study will be asked the same questions in order to gain an understanding of the co-participants experience of being collegiate sport team captains. The following two open-ended questions will be used as the interview protocol:

- (1) Describe your experience as a collegiate team captain.
- (2) If you could write a job description of your position as a team captain, what would that look like?

By using open-ended questions, the co-participants are free to explore their experience as a peer leader. Dale (1996) says, “phenomenological interviews seem to be more effective in describing an athlete’s experience than the questionnaire or interview guide” (p. 314). Follow-up and probing questions will be used to further clarify and

attain deeper elaborations of the athlete's experiences (Patton, 2002). An example of a probing question would be:

(1) I heard you say _____; can you elaborate on that for me?

(2) What did you mean when you said _____?

For this method of open-ended phenomenological interviewing and encouraging rich, clear descriptions through further probing questions, research must adhere to the guidelines described by Dale (1996) as “[viewing] the participant as an equal, asking descriptive questions that follow the dialogue set by the participant, avoid asking ‘why’ questions, and [making] every effort to stay at the level of the participant’s experience” (p. 314). Notes will be collected by the interviewer as a form of analytical triangulation during this process.

Data Analysis

Cote (1993) says that “although there is no one correct way of analyzing qualitative data, it is essential that qualitative researchers provide a detailed description of the procedures, decision criteria, and data manipulation that allow them to present the final results of a study.” (p. 128). The methodological approach of phenomenological investigation for this study has been adopted from Czech et al. (2001) and Patton (2002) as outlined below:

1. Approaching the interviews
 - Transcribing the interview*
 - Obtaining a grasp of the interview*
2. Focusing the data
 - Bracketing the data*
3. Phenomenological reduction
 - Eliminating irrelevant, repetitive, or overlapping data*
 - Verifying the elimination of the data*

4. Releasing meanings
 - Forming categories
 - Identifying the themes
 - Describing the themes

Approaching the Interview

Transcribing. All interviews will be digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim to create a document for thematic analysis. The primary researcher and a professional transcriptionist will transcribe the interviews. Upon completion of the transcripts and checking for verbatim accuracy the audio recordings will be erased. The co-participants will be sent a copy of the written transcripts to again check for accuracy of the recorded interview. It is important to acquire a verbatim text of the recorded interview to maintain accuracy of the data and avoid any inappropriate analysis (Patton, 2002).

Other than the co-participant, the professional transcriptionist, and the primary researcher, the transcripts will not be available to anyone. The transcripts will be coded to remove any identifying information. The informed consents, transcripts and code sheets will be kept in a locked file drawer.

Obtaining a Grasp of the Interview. Through a process of listening and reading, then relistening and rereading, allows the research to gain full grasp of the experience. This process is called obtaining a holistic grasp of the data (Czech et al., 2001). Listening and reading the text together and then eliminating parts of the data later on allows the researcher to maintain a grasp on the described lived experience of the co-participant.

Focusing the Data

Bracketing the Data. It is important for the researcher to bracket out any presuppositions and examine the data in a pure manner to fully understand the phenomena (Patton, 2002). Personal notions and biases must be put aside to in order to avoid interference with an open reading of the text (Czech et al., 2001). Though, it should be noted that it is not possible to bracket out all presuppositions, rather, its purpose is obtain a consciousness of one's presuppositions prior to investigating the phenomena (Dale, 1996). Furthermore, utilizing a research group can offer "a broader perspective than that of a single individual as well as noticing a pattern or patterns that the individual may not have noticed" (Dale, 1996, p. 316). Once completed the data can be spread equally and be analyzed with equal weight (Patton, 2002).

Phenomenological Reduction

Eliminating Irrelevant, Repetitive, or Overlapping Data. As discovered in the pilot study, the interviews may contain aspects of the conversation, such as false starts and brief utterances, that are nonessential to the data (Czech et al., 2001; Henderson, 1992). Eliminating the nonessentials does not affect the richness of the description of the data. Czech et al. (2001) notes that this elimination process maintains the meaning of the speaker and allows for clearer, shorter transcripts that are easy to read.

Verifying the Elimination of the Data. Once the transcripts are edited and nonessential data has been removed, they will be sent back to the co-participants for evaluation of accuracy. This step will encourage that a truthful experience of the phenomena has been captured.

Releasing Meanings

Forming Categories. The first step in analyzing the context of the transcripts involves an identification of concepts, or “meaning units” (Cote, 1993), which adequately represents the information gathered in the interview (Dale, 1996). These “meaning units” are defined as “a segment of the text that is comprehensible by itself and contains one idea, episode or piece of information” (Tesch, 1990, p. 116). Further, these “meaning units”, are placed into clusters based on similar themes that emerge (Patton, 2002). At this point, to enhance validity, it is crucial to utilize a research team along with the primary researcher to assure that no one person’s perceptual biases are solely used in creating the clusters (Cote, 1993). Applying tags, or names to the clusters, aids the analysis process by “separating relevant portions of the data from their context” (Cote, 1993, p. 131).

Identifying the Themes. First, the primary researcher and the research team will view each interview separate from the others to gain an understanding of the co-participants experience as a whole and then relating the passages to the overall context of the interview (Czech et al., 2001). Secondly, individual interviews will then be compared to one another to identify patterns called as “global themes” (Czech et al., 2001). These “global themes” are coded into categories and given a label that captures the aspects and substance from a given set of data (Cote, 1993; Czech et al., 2001). This study will use the following guidelines of thematic classification as detailed by Cote (1993, p. 132)

“This initial classification system is built according to three critical characteristics of categorization: (a) coding experience, (b) inductive inference, and (c) similarity. First, the coding or tagging experience, which is essential to categorizing a large amount of qualitative data, is used to rearrange the text into manageable and organized units. Second, inductive inference is used to create categories. In this process, there are no predetermined categories or patterns

before data collection. The important dimensions of the interviews emerge from the analysis. In other words, tags and categories are generated from the data. Finally the categories are judged by their similarity, so that the data in each category are similar to each other yet distinct from the other categories of data.”

Describing the Themes. The goal of existential phenomenological qualitative inquiry is to gain an understanding of the meaning of an individual’s lived experience. Therefore, to maintain a description that is nearest the experience, the research must strive to stay at the level of the participant and use his/her words when describing the experience (Dale, 1996). Further, Patton (2002) points out that a thick, rich description of the experience is essential. Therefore, this study will adopt the recommended guidelines for presenting the data: (a) focusing and balancing, and (b) description and interpretation (Patton, 2002). Given the large amount of data expected from the interviews, it will be necessary to omit some information in order to focus on the phenomenon of team captainship in collegiate sport. Therefore, the current study will present the collected data in a clear and descriptive manner that will illuminate and capture the co-participant’s experience.

Reliability

Reliability in the natural sciences, and in qualitative research is described as the ability to replicate methods and achieve consistency of results across people and time (Czech et al., 2001). Patton (2002) also states that for qualitative research the co-participants in the study must be trustworthy. Czech et al. (2001) utilized the following questions, as will this study, to account for reliability throughout the collection and analysis of data as suggested by Goodrich (1988): Do the descriptions capture the experience? Does the structure match the co-participant’s experience? Does the structure emerge from the data? Do others see the description? Therefore, if the description of the

athletes experience as collegiate team captains can be shown as true, then the study is considered reliable.

Validity

Validity is an important aspect of scientific investigation and in qualitative phenomenological methodology, validity is disregarded if the experience is based on a first-person description (Dale, 1996). According to Czech et al. (2001), the degree of a study's validity is based on a reader's ability to experience the descriptions as truthful. Whether the reader agrees with the researcher or not, they should be able to follow the process that led to the conclusion of analysis (Czech et al., 2001; Dale, 1996). Dale (1996) remarks, "it is the researcher's duty to provide an appropriate description that allows someone else to see the same thing" (p. 317). Triangulation, defined as the combination and application of several research methodologies on the same phenomenon, is used for validity because it offers multiple perspectives on the same data and the conclusions drawn from that data (Patton, 2002). Triangulation will be accomplished in this study by using member checks, allowing the co-participants access to the transcripts to check for accuracy, and a research team to offer a series of outside perspectives on the data. Further, Nvivo software will be utilized as a coding aid to ensure a rich description of the participant's expectations is found. Finally, the completed bracketing interview acts as another form of triangulation by highlighting the primary researcher's presuppositions and personal biases of the team captainship experience.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Table 1 provides a description of the co-participants. All co-participants were currently or less than one-year removed from their captainship of their competitive Division I NCAA teams. The sample in this study emerged from the southeast, southwest and eastern coastal regions of the United States.

Table 1

Co-Participant Descriptions

Co-Participant	Gender	Sport Type	NCAA Sport	Age	Year in School
1. FT	Female	Team Sport	Women's Soccer	21	Senior
2. FT	Female	Team Sport	Women's Soccer	21	Senior
3. FT	Female	Team Sport	Women's Soccer	21	Senior
4. FT	Female	Team Sport	Women's Softball	21	Senior
5. FI	Female	Individual Sport	Women's Cross-Country	21	Senior
6. FI	Female	Individual Sport	Women's Diving	21	Senior
7. FI	Female	Individual Sport	Women's Cross-Country	22	1 st -Year Grad Student
8. FI	Female	Individual Sport	Women's Tennis	21	Senior
9. FI	Female	Individual Sport	Women's Tennis	20	Junior
10. FI	Female	Individual Sport	Women's Tennis	22	Senior
11. MT	Male	Team Sport	Men's Basketball	22	Senior
12. MT	Male	Team Sport	Men's Basketball	23	Recent Graduate
13. MT	Male	Team Sport	Men's Soccer	21	Senior
14. MI	Male	Individual Sport	Men's Cross-Country	23	5 th -year Senior
15. MI	Male	Individual Sport	Men's Cross-Country	22	Senior
16. MI	Male	Individual Sport	Men's Cross-Country	21	Senior

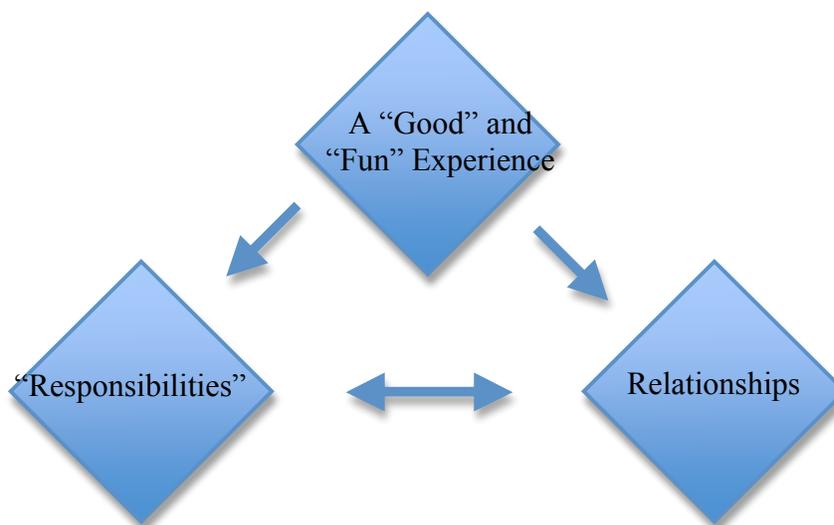
From the co-participants responses, a thematic structure could be discerned, resulting in a description of the lived experience of collegiate team captains. The interviews returned 1445 meaning units. Analysis of the data revealed three overall

themes, presented in a two-level hierarchy (Figure 1). The data first reveals a theme of (1) a “good” and “fun” experience. In the second level of the thematic hierarchy, the data revealed the interrelated themes of (2) “responsibilities” and (3) relationships. When the co-participant responses were separated into their appropriate gender, additional sub-themes within the second level of the overall thematic structure were found (presented in Table 3). Though, no unique themes or sub-themes were found when separating the data into co-participant sport-types. This process brings about one overall thematic structure for all the co-participants experience as collegiate team captains.

The overall thematic structure contains descriptions of similarities amongst all co-participant team captains. Figure 1 displays the thematic hierarchy of the lived experience of collegiate team captains as a fun experience with responsibilities and relationships. All 16 co-participants described various aspects of each theme when discussing their experience and role as a team captain.

Figure 1

Thematic structure of the lived experience of collegiate team captains.



Theme #1: A “Good” and “Fun” Experience

The primary theme that emerges from the co-participant interviews is the description of the team captain position being a good, fun and exciting role. Though, no sub-themes emerged from this theme, the team captains used several examples of positive statements surrounding the enjoyment they received from the role of team captain and the leadership position they held. Many of the words and examples used to describe the fun and positive experience were embedded within descriptions of the other two interrelated themes of *responsibilities* and *relationships*. The data for this theme is organized and presented in a manner by the small phrases co-participants used because they would often describe this theme in several parts of the interview.

Co-participant 8FI:

“it’s a lot a responsibility, it’s a lot of fun at the same time. It sometimes can be a burden when you have to wake girls up at 5:30 to get them to practice ‘cause they’re late, so that’s never fun to go knocking on their door that early and then to yell at them for being late, but, it’s mostly fun”

“mostly it’s been a lot of fun and I would never take it back”

“The fun things, uhm, throwing parties, throwing barbecues, just like being happy for them when the guy they like finally asks them to be their girlfriend and I mean just all those fun times where like the whole van is giggling and laughing it’s just like that’s just part of being a team but I think as a captain you kind of get like the first, the first little word”

“it’s a lot of fun just being with girls – like college is a huge transition as you know from all your work. I know I’ve changed tremendously since freshman year. And I think coach probably knows me the most. She’s seen me since I was a tiny little freshman with ADD to the focused nursing student senior year, she’s seen the whole thing so she’s just gotta love it, I would love it, but it’s just been a lot of fun”

“It’s definitely rewarding, yeah, and that’s always nice, like in the hospital when you like help somebody you know”

Co-participant 2FT:

“it’s been pretty interesting I think, ah, I mean, uhm, especially with college there’s a lot of things that go on, on the outside that you have to worry about with the players as well as the stuff on the field, so that has definitely been really interesting so, uhm, ‘cause I’ve seen in the past like just what our team captains have had to deal with and luckily we haven’t had too many problems with that this time around, we have a good group of girls, so that helps out a lot. But, so it’s been pretty like amazing and fun and I mean it’s just been exciting to work with the group of girls that we have right now I think that plays a lot into your experience as a team captain is actually is the team that you’re with and how they are”

“I mean like just seeing them like when everyone’s working hard and working for each other, like that’s what I love the most, seeing the most, you know, uhm, and once you see that you know like we’re gonna win. There’s no doubt because once everyone you know starts having fun with each other, it’s amazing like and watching them play is amazing. I mean I sat out, uhm, because I tore my ACL twice so I’ve sat out like quite a bit so I see a lot of stuff and like this year this team we have now, I’m just so excited to be a part of that team like just how they work hard for each other, and how they play for each other is, amazing”

Co-participant 12MT:

“my experience, it was pretty much up and down, but all in all, it was a great experience because you learn how to grow as a person, as a player, and as a leader of the [school] basketball team. The coaching staff pretty much, waived me in, took me – had me understand how to build a character and grow into someone, with a strong mindset, I proved that I could overcome a lot of things”

Co-participant 10FI:

“you know, making sure that in practice it’s OK to smile, it’s OK to laugh, you know, even though there are serious times, you know, you wanna make sure you’re having fun doing what you’re doing”

Co-participant 4FT:

“I would just say that, I mean it’s a good one because you feel like that you have a big role as far as your team kind of relies on you for a lot of things and you’re responsible for lot of things and, I don’t know, just - I think it’s a good experience, I mean, it’s been good”

Co-participant 5FI:

“I really like being the leader and think that, uhm, it - it drives me more, like I perform better when I’ve been the leader because I feel more accountable I guess for what I do”

Co-participant 11MT:

“I’ll just say it’s a very fun role, it’s a good experience, ah, as a senior, I think everybody should experience being the captain ‘cause it can help you, not only on – when you’re done with basketball, it’s just knowing, having the feeling like the big brother role, somebody looking up to you like, a – a manager, you know, it’s just a leadership role, it’s a good experience, very enjoyable”

Co-participant 14MI:

“I’d say that overall it was, it was a lot of fun, and it was a good opportunity to take on a leadership position. I’d been a captain in high school for several years but at the college level, it’s just very different. So, uhm, it was fun because, you know, it’s just nice to be a leader, it’s nice to feel important as - as an individual but it was also fun because you’re taking - you’re making the effort to really get to know the team, not just as your teammates, now but also as their leader and, you know, it’s just fun interacting with people like that, uhm, and it’s also a challenge though because as you look at people who are your friends and your teammates but you’re also having to take on this leadership role and at some level be – be sort of the authority figure, you - you sometimes clash with your teammates or it’s, you know, doing things that they necessarily don’t want you to do but, you gotta do, what you gotta do as the leader so - it was fun, it was a challenge, it was a good - like I said a leadership chance to just practice skills about taking charge of situations”

“as a captain, people turn to you a bit more – expect more of you, so - looking to you - have higher expectations, but when you rise to those higher expectations and you do what people expect, you know, it’s just a good feeling”

“I know we touched on some negatives earlier but, you know, I don’t want that to overshadow things – overall, it was a very - very positive experience - I’m glad I had the opportunity to – to do it”

Co-participant 9FI:

“it was an honor to be getting an award from people that I respected so much that had already been on the team for longer than I had, that had been through everything, experienced everything, uhm, gave it - you know, gave it to me, you know like, uhm, people that had kind of already been through the experience and knew what it entailed. They knew what it meant to be a team captain and then they voted me, so I felt really proud about it”

Co-participant 7FI:

“it’s just been a really interesting experience, uhm, stepping into that leadership position and being the one that’s like sending out the emails and getting the girls together for like meals or, you know, team meetings whatever, uhm, and being the person like with all the knowledge”

“I’ve also noticed like it’s amazing how much one person can influence like a team personality kind of and like get the team really excited and, uhm, enthusiastic about a race”

“it’s something that I really appreciate because it means that the girls trust me and it’s something I enjoy ‘cause I really like the girls on the team”

Co-participant 15MI:

“it has been an incredibly interesting experience overall, just trying to figure out how to deal with leading – leading different types of individuals, uhm, and especially in college - distance running – it’s a really difficult sport mentally, you to have to push your athletes – sometimes you’ve got, you know, guys coming in they can just say, I’m just gonna use my talent and not have to go through anything. I mean the guys that are running on the team with me have to go through a considerable amount of pain in order to succeed, so you try to push them in that respect. Uhm, you’ve gotta know how to encourage them, but, uhm, it’s been overall, a very rewarding experience and, I enjoyed the leadership opportunities that have been given to me”

“if given the opportunity I enjoy, the chance to step up and, and I feel like I know what needed to be done, uhm, I feel like the coaches recognized that in me so that was really kind of my chance to kind of take the reigns and, you know, help people be on time, to be responsible, to give it their best, you know, all those things, uhm, needed to be taken care of and, uhm, that’s what’s been really incredible that - the incredible times, the rewarding times are when, you know, when you try and help and lead your teammates and they’ll follow you, and they’ll, you know, they’ll do the right thing or, you know, they’ll listen to you and react and benefit from your leadership. The hard things are when they don’t react well to your leadership, and they criticize, and you’re wrong in certain areas, and they realize it, and that’s – that’s a hard thing to deal with sometimes. You think that you’re - you can’t think that you’re always gonna be right because you are gonna make mistakes but you have to realize that one mistake is not – is not grounds for dismissing everything that you say. So it’s hard- it’s hard in that sense but, uhm, the rewards are wonderful, when you have that unity that you’ve helped create, and you have determination of your team to work together and, those are the rewards that I enjoy”

“Like it’s been the - the physical demands and the time constraints have been the most difficult thing I’ve ever done in my entire life, and that’s not exaggerating at all, but I really feel like the benefits far outweigh, the challenges and the negatives”

Co-participant 3FT:

“I am very proud because I made it and like there was six girls like I said came in here my - my freshman year, class of 05...I’m getting a good education and playing soccer and I love my teammates so much like it makes me so emotional to say that because I love them more than anything - they will never know how much I really love my teammates every single one of them. They’ve helped me get through all of this stuff that I’ve had to go through for the past couple years and...I’m gonna take all these experiences with me and apply them to my career and for the rest of my life because it’s been a great experience...I’ve been very blessed like to be here, it’s so it’s been great”

Table 2 displays the themes in the second level of the thematic hierarchy. The theme entitled *Responsibilities* is supported with the sub-themes of (1) leading by example (2) communicating expectations and liaison duties (3) sport performance expectations (4) classroom and student duties and (5) off-the-field management. The theme entitled *Relationships* consists of the descriptive sub-themes (1) managing with different leadership styles (2) encouraging teammates in competition (3) maintaining a relationship with the coach (4) balancing friendships with teammates (5) offering guidance and being a confidant for teammates personal issues.

Table 2

Description of sub-themes within the second level of the thematic structure

Tier	Attributes
Responsibilities	Leading by Example Communicating Expectations and Liaison Duties Sport Performance Expectations Classroom and Student Duties Off-the-field Management
Relationships	Managing with Different Leadership Styles Encouraging and Supporting Teammates in Competition Establishing and Maintaining a Relationship with Coaches Balancing Friendships with Team Members Offering Guidance and Serving as a Confidant for Team Members Personal Issues

Theme #2: Responsibilities

When first asked to describe their experience as collegiate team captains, respondents identified the varying responsibilities they garnered upon team captainship appointment. The responsibilities described by the co-participants were described as being above the normal expectations for a member of their particular sport team. Team captains felt it was their duty to lead their teammates first by setting an appropriate example of behavior on and off the field. Co-participants also described the expectations

of communicating amongst teammates and coaching staffs and often serving as a bridge between the two. Interviews revealed thoughts concerning expectations related to playing at a high-skill level compared to their teammates, in addition to appropriate classroom and academic behavioral expectations. Finally, co-participants discussed the requirements and responsibilities of the team captainship that stretched beyond the competitive arena into social and community duties. The co-participants mentioned the following about their position:

“Well, I would just say that, I mean it’s a good one because you feel like that you have a big role as far as your team kind of relies on you for a lot of things and you’re responsible for lot of things” (Co-participant 4FT)

“So far my experience is that, ah, all the freshmen and a lot of times the sophomores, the undergrads, look up to you and they always have a lot of questions that they expect you to be able to answer, uhm, to help them out, to get things going for ‘em, and there’s, ah, there’s also an expectation from the coaches and everybody else on the team that you will know what to do in, ah, in - as far as leadership and practices and leadership in extracurricular activities such as community service and schoolwork.” (Co-participant 16MI)

“as far as being captain, I guess, ah, it holds a lot more responsibility than just if you’re on the team like you’re always – you always have to be aware of where everybody is and, uhm, you know, how everybody’s behaving so you can’t just completely forget about things like some ‘cause on the team, like, I - I know I’m in charge of a lot of like planning when everyone on the team’s meeting for practice, and what they’re doing, and, you know, if something happens I get called” (Co-participant 13MT)

Leading By Example. The co-participant in the present study described an aspect of their responsibilities to act in such a way that modeled the expectations of the coaches, their sport program, and their institution. Additionally they felt it was their duty to perform athletically well to further model the role of an exceptional competitor.

“if I don’t lead by example and portray that positive attitude instead of the negativity or the negative attitude then the other - then my other teammates are gonna feel like they can be negative too and everybody knows that having negativity isn’t really good for any sport and it really brings you down and it - it

takes away from that goal that all of us are trying to achieve” (Co-participant 3FT)

“like you’re not a leader if you break the rules obviously. I mean, even if you are a leader and you break the rules then everyone’s gonna follow you and break the rules. So you kinda have to like, walk on thin ice kind of like you have to be sure that you’re doing what you’re supposed to do so that other people are doing what they’re supposed to do” (Co-participant 4FT)

“I’m not gonna win every match but I need to go out there and give 110% effort each time and hopefully that will have the domino effect on everyone else on the court. They see me working hard and pushing hard and trying to win, then, you know, they’ll do the same” (Co-participant 10FI)

“I have not always necessarily been an outspoken leader, uhm, but I’ve always tried to be a leader by example - that means maybe not complaining, just - just getting out there every day and, you know, even if you’re having a rough day of school or something else is going on, you know, it’s - when you get on the track, you get on the trails, or whatever, you just get the job done and so – and they – just a leader by example – that’s – it’s pretty obvious what you’re supposed to do but I’d say – I’d say that’s one of my biggest strengths is just doing that” (Co-participant 14MI)

“Ah, basically, I mean you’ve got to lead by example in a way - I mean – ‘cause some players see you do certain things that you’re not supposed to be doing and you know so they feel that they can do the same thing but if you’re doing all the things that you know are right to do, you know, you’ll hope that they’ll follow in your footsteps and won’t turn to the other crowd or, you know, do things that they have no business doing that could put their scholarship in jeopardy” (Co-participant 12MT)

Communicating Expectations and Liaison Duties. Co-participants often discussed how they felt they were the bridge between the coaching staff and the players and again from the players to the coaches. Co-participants felt that as team captains they would often detail the coaches wishes and expectations to their players. There were also items discussed when the captains would approach the coach with player’s concerns.

“I guess you’re kind of like the spokesperson for the team a lot of times” (Co-participant 13MT)

“I think, for a team and their coaches, communication is absolutely key. Expectations are a big part of that, you know, expectations set everything, you’ve

got your teammates that have a certain expectation and your coach'll have a certain expectation and if there's no communication there then you're gonna be butting heads all season and, you know, people are gonna expect to go one way with the training and the coach is gonna take it the other way or the coach is gonna expect the team to listen but if they don't, uhm, you know, if there's no communication there then there's no way for anybody to know, uhm, the expectations of the other party so you've gotta - it's, it's important for a captain to be a mediator, ah, you know, kind of a middleman between the - the coach and the team to relay messages from the team to the coach and relay messages from the coach to the team" (Co-participant 15MI)

"if coach starts to notice that people are starting to break down emotionally and physically, she'll ask me to - like I'll have a meeting with the team and say, you know, is this too much for to handle? Are you really stressed out, you know, with work and practice and everything like that. If they say yes then I'll go and talk to coach about it and she'll talk to our weights coaches or she'll cut back practices or she'll you know, do something to kinda take the stress off" (Co-participant 9FI)

"definitely before every race, we gather round and talk, and then a lot of times before workouts - real hard workouts and after workouts we just make sure that, you know, we - we gather around and talk about it so we know why we're doing what we're doing" (Co-participant 5FI)

"[you're] a source of information as far as between the coach and the team because, I mean, she may say something and can't really understand what she's talking about and I would go to her and say, can you break this down a little further? Or if they miss something then they'll come to me and find out what they missed" (Co-participant 4FT)

Sport Performance Expectations. The co-participants mentioned an aspect of their own individual athletic performances to be a responsibility to the team. The co-participants thought being one of the more skilled athletes contributed to being a more respected leader and felt it was their duty to perform at a high level to further set a good example and help their team excel physically.

"to gain it you just have to, specially like on the field just working hard you know, uhm, always giving 110% you know never quitting...even if we're losing 4-nothing you know you're still running hard to every ball, just doing you what you're supposed to do and plus some if you have to. You know like for me like as a forward it's you know yeah, like everyone thinks like, uhm, my job is just to score but I also have to track back like the defenders if they go forward and stuff

like that so it's just doing that and always just sprinting hard to every ball like, never quitting basically" (Co-participant 2FT)

"now I'm like one of the top runners so it's definitely a lot easier to lead from the front because I've got a lot more say I guess, a lot more pull where I can lead more by example, by running example instead of just like wishing for them to do well in the big races" (Co-participant 5FI)

"I still think that talent matters but I think that you can be a great leader either way. Certainly if you're good runner, that's gonna lend some credibility to you and especially with the other guys on the team who are good runners. They're gonna be more likely to - to listen to something you say" (Co-participant 14MI)

"I'm saying to myself I can't miss when I'm in the paint, if I'm in the paint, I have to get something done. Ah, they rely on me to get seven - eight rebounds per game and I have to make my - my numbers - I have to get about eight or nine points a game, seven - eight rebounds and other things - some steals, some blocks, ah, they have to rely on me to be able to go guard my play - my - guard my man. Uhm, if they - coach put me in the situation, uhm, to score like, you know, coach might call a play for you, you have to be able to... account for the situation that you're put in" (Co-participant 11MT)

Classroom and Student Duties. All co-participants were collegiate team captains, meaning all were student-athletes at the institution for which they competed. The co-participants felt that they had to maintain an eligible GPA and model the correct behaviors of good students in the emphasis of a student-first, athlete-second. Co-participants also discussed the responsibility of advising their teammates from academic standpoints when necessary, helping teammates select professors and prepare for tests.

"You have to make sure that, if you're telling people they have to get to study hall, you have to be at study hall if you're saying, your grades have to be better, you know not even from a soccer point of view then, you know, your grades have to be good" (Co-participant 13MT)

"I think it's most effective - especially at a school like [our's], to have someone who's a good student because, you know, that's why also - why we're here - is getting an education and, you know, you have to make sure your - your, ah, your teammates keep that in mind and don't sell themselves short by just focusing too much on running or other things... you tell 'em, hey man, you know, if you need to get your work done, get your work done tonight, don't worry, you know, we'll

do – we’ll do poker night another night or like that, you make sure they get back to the lab and stuff after practice, you know” (Co-participant 14MI)

“ah, do good in school, you can’t sit there and tell somebody, you know, you gotta do good in school or whatever and then I can’t be the one who’s like failing all my classes or whatever, or just kinda be, you know, show them that it can be done - you can get good grades if you study kind of thing.” (Co-participant 6FI)

“I had a couple players, they wanted to be business majors and I’m a finance major so they come to me and ask, like what teachers to take, or how - what do you think about the business program, ah, what classes are good” (Co-participant 11MT)

“the tennis team has been awarded the highest GPA out of all the teams so that’s kind of pressure to make sure that you’re finishing strong in your classes so you can keep getting that, you know, award for your team” (Co-participant 10FI)

“I want to get across to them too is leaving my legacy behind that I was good academically as well as on the field. Because I was a student first and an athlete second” (Co-participant 3FT)

Off-the-field Management. Co-participants described aspects of their responsibilities extended beyond games and practices and into managing team bonding opportunities, community service requirements and other off-practice activities. The aspects of this sub-theme are discussed primarily as the co-participants felt it was their duty to schedule and manage these opportunities for their team.

“just keep people involved in everything and make sure...if a group of us are doing something, like outside of soccer, a lot of us hang out but there’s always certain people that are kind of out, like not like in the central group of girls that are friends – ‘cause a lot of - I mean we all live together but there’s always like the outliers and - but whenever we have an activity, we make sure everyone goes, or if we’re just going to a movie, we’ll call everyone, or just going to dinner, we’ll make sure everyone knows” (Co-participant 1FT)

“we all get together on the weekends usually and kinda just make sure everybody knows what everyone’s doing so no one’s left out kind of a thing. And if you’re doing something else that’s not with the team I mean that’s fine, I mean, you know, not everyone wants to hang out with the team, like, there are sometimes when I don’t wanna do stuff with the team – I wanna do stuff with people outside the team, kinda to get away almost type of a thing and that’s fine and I mean, just

let people know what you're doing so they know where you're at if something were to happen" (Co-participant 6FI)

"I've always kind of been like the organizer on the team, I've always been one to plan things, go out, hang out, or, you know, do things with people, at least once or twice we're going to a movie or going out to dinner" (Co-participant 5FI)

"since I'm on SAAC, and I know of all the opportunities, I think as a leader, it would be my responsibility to try to organize community service as a team function. You know, like maybe we'll go for a long run and then we'll have a pancake breakfast to be a team afterward, you know, we'll – we'll all go have breakfast somewhere, uhm, and it's – it's the same thing with community service... So I think it would be my responsibility to communicate with the team, and tell them that it's not really an option to do this as an individual, but it's more or less a obligated, mandatory, ah, team function that we all show up, meet somewhere, go to the community service, you know, help out with a good attitude, and then call it a day, you know, hey, we got in four community hours - four community service hours today, uhm, and we did it as a team. So not only has the community benefited by us, but they also got the whole experience - like the whole team came, you know, the whole like fourth in the nation [university] cross country team came and they really helped out here, that kind of thing. And I just feel that, as a team captain, that - that's kind of something that I – I ought to organize" (Co-participant 16MI)

"every time we have a free weekend or a free day or anything like that, I'm always hanging out with everybody" (Co-participant 13MT)

Theme #3: Relationships

The co-participants described the balance of relationships that came with their team captainship. Co-participants expressed that they had to learn how to manage with different leadership styles to meet the demands of their individual teammates. The team captain position also required the co-participants to be encouraging and a source of support for their teammates. In addition the co-participants discussed the requirement to establish and maintain a trusting and professional relationship with their coach. Furthermore, co-participants discussed balancing their relationship as friends and teammates with other members of their sport team and offering guidance and serving as a confidant to these other players and team members.

“the most important thing to me is that we’re successful as a team but like just in life, I want to see them do well. I don’t wanna see them like failing in any aspect, whether it’s with their family, you know, with their boyfriend, with - with school, you know on the field, I know that they’re gonna struggle but if there’s anything I can do to kind of relieve some of that then I mean, I want to be able to do that for ‘em. Just like, I don’t know, I guess I feel like that they’re kind of like my family ‘cause, uhm, I mean we’re all down here and our parents aren’t here and so we kind of rely on each other a lot” (Co-participant 4FT)

“I think I do a lot better job this year - I think - I think everybody follows me better knowing that, you know, I’m - I’m there for them instead of like being above them I’m and, you know, I’m in it with everybody” (Co-participant 13MT)

Managing with Different Leadership Styles. The co-participants described aspects of their leadership style by being able to adapt to the needs of their teammates without causing damage to a working relationship or friendship. Co-participants felt that team captains must be able to use different leadership styles to reach their teammates and ensure that the information they are attempting to impart is delivered successfully.

“I have to like play around with the way I communicate, and the body language, and the tone of my – my voice so that I get the - the response that I desire, uhm, from the team.” (Co-participant 16MI)

“when you’re getting so many different types of people coming in, you need to be willing to accept them all. And to be a team captain - like to be – I mean obviously I’m like a very nurturing team captain. I needed to be able to accept all of them and really understand them before I could kind of be telling them what to do” (Participant 9FI)

“captain must have the ability to be a leader, uhm, among all different ages and personality types. Uhm, has to be outgoing and has to have good character as much as possible, has to be willing to try new things and be willing to fail and has to be able to take that failure and move on...you can’t be driven by fear, you can’t be unwilling to try new things, new - new leadership tactics, new ways of dealing with people. You have to kind of put yourself out there sometimes and be willing to fail” (Co-participant 15MI)

“I guess ‘cause everyone’s different, so you have to learn how to like as far as, uhm, communicating with them – you have to communicate differently. Like one person, you might be able to yell at and get your point across. The other person, you know, you might have to pull aside and talk to one-on-one” (Co-participant 13MT)

“like everyone has a different like, uhm, I don’t know like how they react to situations so sometimes you have to realize hey, that’s just how she is right now” (Co-participant 2FT)

Encouraging and Supporting Teammates in Competition. Another sub-theme of the co-participant’s responsibilities included verbally supporting and encouraging their teammates in competition. Creating and maintaining a solid relationship of support is an important duty of the position these players felt they had to accept.

“a lot of times it’s just you know, uhm, just encouraging them during the game, uhm, even after if you know they mess up it’s just being hey, it’s OK like keep going or you’re doing good just keep working hard, you know, just letting them know that you know they’re working hard and that you know at some point like something’s going to fall right for them you know like they’ll get that goal or you know, their touch will come back and stuff like that so I mean it’s just always being there like not letting them think like too negatively” (Co-participant 2FT)

“basically even if they’re doing a bad or good job, you always being there trying to give them positive encouragement, you know, they can do better or they’ll get it next time or give ‘em high fives, pat on the butt, things like that” (Co-participant 12MT)

Establishing and Maintaining a Relationship with Coaches. Part of being an athlete in college means working and communicating with a coaching staff. The co-participants in this study described an aspect of their relationship duties involved working directly with the coach and having an exclusive trusting relationship to work through issues to advance the team. Co-participants described bringing issues to the coach and developing trust between themselves and the coach.

“it’s just keeping the open lines of communication with the coaches, having them hold me accountable for things, you know, if I have a bad race or if I, uhm, if I miss something, uhm, as a leader, I – I want them to tell me about that and to make sure that I’m – I’m held accountable there. Uhm, it’s just being honest and, uhm, having people on your side that’ll, uhm, you know, really set you straight if you step out of line that way” (Co-participant 15MI)

“they put a lot of confidence in me to run our team. And they felt I was the right person to do it, so he pretty much stayed on my case about a lot of things, you know, he wouldn’t let me get away with anything” (Co-participant 12MT)

“I’m gonna say everyday after practice I talk to my coach, uhm, he’ll ask me how practice is, I’ll always have to be, you know, thinking about what to tell him. And at the same time with that, uhm, a lot of being a captain I think is having like an open relationship with your coach, having a good relationship because you have to be able to tell him, you know, good things but you have to also be able to, you know, disagree with him sometimes...I would say we’re pretty good friends so when he calls me, he trusts me that I’m gonna tell him, you know, if practice was good and – and what should be different about it and, uhm, let’s see, uhm, I don’t know, I guess there’s just a lot of trust, uhm, that goes into it” (Co-participant 13MT)

“I would say I have a really good relationship with the coach, uhm, I feel like I can go to her and talk to her about anything and she won’t judge me and she’ll really, you know, listen to the concerns I have. And I also feel like, you know, she has enough trust and faith in me that she can come to me and ask me, you know, how’s the team, you know, handling this issue and how’s everyone getting along and what do you think about this recruit or what’d you think about that recruit, you know, can you see them fitting in well with the team? So I feel like, you know, not just with me but I think everyone has a really good relationship with the coach” (Co-participant 10FI)

“having that strong bond with a coach is very important with me being a captain, because if he can’t come to me and ask me what’s going on with his team and he’s out of the blue with it, there’s no way that he can fix the problem and help us fix the problem. So I think that’s very important to have a strong relationship with your coach.” (Co-participant 3FT)

Balancing Friendships with Team Members. The co-participants described the relationship they have with other team members being two-dimensional, vacillating between friends and teammates. There seemed to be times when the co-participants would have to transcend their personal friendships with other team members to successfully complete their duties as a captains and other times where it was more important to serve their teammates as a friend rather than an authority figure.

“I really like my role this year a lot better because now I feel like I can just, you know, keep the team unity up by, you know, being friends with everybody and

keeping everybody up instead of being, you know, the drill sergeant on the team that everyone hates” (Co-participant 13MT)

“you’re making the effort to really get to know the team, not just as your teammates, now but also as their leader and, you know, it’s just fun interacting with people like that, uhm, and it’s also a challenge though because as you look at people who are your friends and your teammates but you’re also having to take on this leadership role and at some level be – be sort of the authority figure, you - you sometimes clash with your teammates or it’s, you know, doing things that they necessarily don’t want you to do but, you gotta do, what you gotta do as the leader” (Co-participant 14MI)

“you can draw a line between being a teammate and a friend and at the end of the day, these girls are friends and you don’t want to keep that competitiveness in your friendship... And as long as we have that mutual respect I am happy for them, you know, like when you’re in the moment, and you’re running against each other, of course you wanna beat them, but you - I don’t know - there’s a certain way of just letting go of that, like when it’s done and respecting each other as athletes and then just being friends” (Co-participant 10FI)

“it’s like are you a brother’s keeper, you know, just looking out for anything – you don’t want to look – as a teammate and as a friend, you know as a brother, you know as more than a friend kind of but – its’ more - it’s like a brotherhood ‘cause all of the time that we spend together” (Co-participant 11MT)

“it’s really difficult to balance being a friend and a teammate to all the guys. And leading your peers is probably one of the hardest things in the world. I was thinking about it like I would – I would have the hardest time in the world being president because everything you do is scrutinized and you have all your friends but you also have to lead ‘em so you have to come down on ‘em and you gotta find the right balance” (Co-participant 15MI)

Offering Guidance and Serving as a Confidant for Team Members Personal

Issues. The co-participants described developing an open relationship with their teammates as a very important aspect of their unique position. The co-participants felt that their leadership position should be used to serve their team members personal needs in addition to the previously discussed athletic needs. Being approachable as confidants and mentors is detailed in the description of this sub-theme.

“I’m a really open person so like I definitely, you know, I’m pretty vulnerable to my team and so everybody’s pretty - feels comfortable talking to me about stuff

so, uhm, so we have a lot of time to talk, get to know each other better, so I mean they'll, you know, usually everybody feels pretty comfortable confiding in me with stuff about school or family or running, just whatever, uhm, so I mean it's a lot of talking (chuckles) with people - I just listen usually, offer whatever advice but usually people just want somebody to listen to 'em" (Co-participant 5FI)

"you gotta treat everybody the same I mean you just look at it as, you know, that you being the captain you look at the players on the team - the younger players on the team that like their your little brothers. So you know you wanna be able to listen to what they gotta say, I mean, they can be able to come to you about anything and you just want to help them with any type of problem that they have. You just wanna be there for them - be there for one another, you know what I'm saying" (Co-participant 12MT)

"So, with girls coming to me, being approachable, I'll always have their back - of what they want to do but I'm gonna give them the honest advice and the honest truth from my knowledge to what I feel that they should do whether it's academically, soccer-wise, school-wise, whether they're having boyfriend problems or whatnot 'cause I've had my fair share of all of that" (Co-participant 3FT)

"We all have lives outside of the team, and people have rough days...sometimes all they need is someone to say, hey man, what's up? You know, like what's going on?" (Co-participant 14MI)

"I try to be approachable. I don't wanna be like scary or anything (chuckles) like last year with the new freshmen, you know, I wanted them to know that they could come to me for anything, that I wasn't gonna judge them or, you know, wasn't gonna, you know, think poorly of them. I wanted them to come to me and I wanted to show them that I am approachable and that I am a human being and that I'm going through the same things, you know, that they went through that - that I had that experience and that I understand" (Co-participant 10FI)

Unique Sub-themes within Gender Groups

When the co-participant interviews were separated into their supporting sub-groups, unique sub-themes could be found for the (1) male team captains, and (2) female team captains. No unique themes outside of the previously discussed overall thematic structure could be found for differences in sport-type (individual vs. team), as the original research questions stated. Table 3 displays the sub-groups and their unique sub-themes as they are found within the overall thematic structure.

Table 3

Unique sub-themes within gender groups		
Co-participant Sub-Group	Descriptive Theme	Unique Sub-theme
Male Team Captains	Responsibilities	(a) Representing the team to others
Female Team Captains	Relationships	(b) Managing “Girls-only” and Drama (i) Settling Conflict (ii) Team members boyfriends (iii) Coping with and finding help for eating disorders

Male Team Captains Experience. Within the tier *Responsibilities*, male team captains discussed a unique attribute that was unseen in the female co-participant interviews. This sub-theme is classified as (a) representing the team to others. Male co-participant team captains described an aspect of their duties as representing themselves, their teammates, their sport program, and their university to the public. This was described in remarks about setting a good example to others, and taking criticism of their performance and the team’s performance. The following statements were made by male team captains about this attribute:

“as a captain, it’s like, you know, everything that you do is scrutinized by everyone on the team and your coaches. You’ve got to constantly be aware of how you’re performing, how you’re behaving, you know, your actions always reflect, uhm, you know, your leadership qualities so, you know, I need to be aware that some of the other guys will watch you and see what you do and so you have to, uhm, act in a way that is appropriate for an athlete, uhm, you know, an NCAA athlete, especially at [our school], we’re held to a pretty high standard so, you know, that leading by example in a sense and the level of, uhm, you know, your social life, and your academics, and all those things need to fall in line, in a positive way that, you just have to set a good example... there are a lot of other people that look at you and you represent [our school], you represent your team, you represent, your friends in all those areas so you have to watch out for that to” (Co-participant 15MI)

“as far as like from the public eye, I guess everyone gets viewed as like [our school] athletes, but, uhm, I think, when you’re a captain it just kinda raises that pressure of, if you’re the team role model, and you’re representing the team then, you know, whatever you’re doing can be, you know, concluded about the team so, you know, you always wanted to be something good and something positive so that your team, you know, looks good” (Co-participant 13MT)

“you gotta be a mentally tough son of a gun, you’ve gotta be able to go out there and take criticism and use the criticism as – you try to use it as positive reinforcement and just keep - keep your head steady” (Co-participant 12MT)

Female Team Captain Experience. Under the *Relationships* theme, female team captain co-participants seemed to discuss that being with a group of “girls” naturally brought drama they described as only happening with girls teams noted by the sub-theme (b) managing “girls-only” drama. The first mini-theme within this sub-theme is described as (i) settling dramatic conflict between players and managing conflict that would arise amongst team members. They spoke as if they were constantly mixed up in settling conflicts simply because that was a natural course of events with “groups of girls”. Secondly, female team captains spoke of offering advice and guidance when it came to significant relationships, primarily handling issues surrounding (ii) team member’s boyfriends. A third mini-theme of this sub-theme was discussed by a few female team captains as they faced (iii) coping with and finding help for eating disorders amongst other team members.

“it’s kind of just accepting lots of people and be willing to hear what they have to say. I know with like lots of girls’ teams, you have girls’ problems and I’m gonna be willing to hear any of that, you know (chuckles)” (Co-participant 9FI)

“well, we’re a team of girls so there’s obviously (chuckles) bickering all the time” (Co-participant 1FT)

“especially with girls you have a lot of emotions I think play into a lot of things so you have to be ready to deal with that kind of stuff” (Co-participant 2FT)

(i) Settling dramatic conflict between players.

“it’s like full of drama – it’s drama, that’s all it is...if someone is like talking behind somebody’s back or whatever I mean, be careful about what you say. Like if someone were to come up to me and say like, you know, has Kristin been talking behind my back? And if she has just be like, uhm, kind of be open about it but at the same time just don’t like make Kristin look like the bad guy kind of a thing. Just be like, you know, Kristin didn’t know how to approach you about it, or this person didn’t know how to approach you about it, but yet there’s problems or whatever kinda just you all need to talk together” (Co-participant 6FI)

“Maybe if a teammate’s talking bad about another teammate I try to, you know, settle the conflict and just say, well, you know, we’re not gonna get along with everyone but they are our teammates, you know, we have to respect them...when you have eight girls spending a lot of time with each other you’re gonna have cliques, you’re gonna have conflicts, you’re gonna have nitpicking at each other and, you know, I just try to – if someone comes up to me and, you know, saying dadadadadala, then I like to just say, all right, well, they are our teammates, you know, let’s respect them and, you know, let’s try to get along so it doesn’t carry onto the court and affect us in our tennis” (Co-participant 10FI)

“Some people are like, whatever, we’ve got drama, we’ve got drama but I don’t know. I really enjoy being around my teammates and so I want everyone to feel that way and I don’t want there to be like tension at practice because it gets awkward with like, well she’s talking to her or she must be on her side and I just think that’s kind of ridiculous. Yeah, usually you just get so much more done if you’re all, like, together on the same page, like, we spend so much time together, you know what I’m saying? And I just enjoy myself more if everybody’s happy. That would be kind of like a motherly – like, I feel like that sometimes but - and I just want ‘em to be happy ‘cause like they’ll have more fun” (Co-participant 4FT)

“if like someone was having a problem, I know like with girls and I don’t think it’s so much with like men’s teams, but I know with girls, if they have a problem with someone they won’t always be completely open about it and maybe not want to ‘cause problems. Especially if your freshman and you have a problem with like a senior, you’re not gonna want to go them because it’s - you don’t really feel like it’s your place... ‘cause girls are sensitive and so like I might – ‘cause instead of like directly confronting them and having an awkward situation, I might be able to go and just like say it in a nice way, so - like someone has a problem with the way you do this and then problem solved, you know it’s kind of changed” (Co-participant 9FI)

“just really when everyone’s getting frantic just to calm everyone down, just get everyone back into focus and, if they’re fighting with another girl on the team or when they’re screaming back and forth at each other, you know, just things – not taking constructive criticism from each other so you have to - you kind of have to

be a mediator between ‘em...like yesterday, and this is a perfect example. Like these two girls - and then they were just fighting about something stupid, like someone said something on the field and, you know, feelings get hurt quick. Like guy’s team, we practice next to them, they can just go at each other, you know, just and they don’t care, like they’ll call each other worse names but the minute one of us says something, it’s like - goes to hell (chuckles). And like people can just get mean and catty and like really it’s just you kind of have to step in and be like, you know, just drop it. Like yesterday like I had to like walk off the girl and was just like forget about it and she’s like no - I’m ti - I’m sick of this catty shit and I’m like, who cares? I’m like just forget about it, it’s nothing, just play, you know, so it’s just kind of like – girls will fight so you just have to keep everyone calm” (Co-participant 1FT)

(ii) Team member’s boyfriends

“guys could be a thing...I think if someone comes up to you and asks you about it or, you know, they’re saying that they were talking to this guy or whatever just be open about it, just be like you know, be careful or whatever, you know, or they’re like this, or they’re like that, they’re just known to be, you know, kind of be open about it. Don’t hide things or whatever ‘cause in the end they could come up to you and be like, why didn’t you tell me kind of thing? Or - I mean it’s not necessarily just guys but I mean that’s like a big thing” (Co-participant 6FI)

“I don’t know why but it’s just my personality like, girls like to talk to me about like boys and, you know, personal issues so (chuckles) uhm, stuff just kinda happens a lot on the team” (Co-participant 7FI)

“like you know like I’m sorry I don’t know what’s going on in your life right now – they’ll probably tell you after practice in tears – but like you need to focus on tennis right now and I know it’s hard to put the boyfriend that’s breaking up with you on the side but you have to bring yourself up in tennis... Boyfriends are always hard, especially when you’re like across a sea and then you break up” (Co-participant 8FI)

“Well, a lot of the girls, uh, I mean, everybody on the this team at one point has had some kind of problem with a boyfriend or a friend that they have been involved with and it leads on to the field. And [coach] told us at the beginning of the year like, whatever stresses you’re going through before you cross over those white lines onto the field to practice - you have to get rid of them for those two hours that we’re together every day from 3:30 to 5:30, leave it off the field and focus on soccer...So when girls say well I’m having trouble with my boyfriend, you know like, OK, well can we talk about it after practice? That’s what I’ll say - let’s talk about it after practice because I don’t wanna talk before practice because then I’m not focused on what we need to do. If we talk about it after practice then we have more time to just walk and talk and figure out the problem. And then another thing I told to the girls this past spring like I’m not gonna deal with other

bull shit coming from – who’s stealing whose boyfriend - and all this crap and then like there’s this whole my space and facebook deal where people wanna blast their things on there and that’s what happened to a couple of our players this past year, is two girls on our team, one who I am very close with - she’s actually my roommate – and, there was a guy and he played basketball and then these two girls played soccer and they’re on the same team fighting for the same guy. And it caused so much drama and problems on the field and off the field and I think that’s why we didn’t have a winning season because that got in the way too” (Co-participant 3FT)

(iii) Coping with and finding help for eating disorders

“And we just have eating issues run rampant in sports. That’s a whole other thing...like my sister went through an eating disorder pretty bad so I had dealt with it before pretty closely, but it’s always hard. Because it’s something that I can’t say anything to make them snap out of it, they have to get to a breaking point and that’s hard to watch. Like my captain a couple years ago, that was her problem, and she called me today and she was like I’m going to rehab again. She was crazy bad but it’s so hard ‘cause like you want to help them so much and you can’t. And it still runs- it’s still like some of the freshman dealt with it, uhm, I don’t know, it’s just something that’s like so touchy, so give and go, but it’s so huge... at the same time it’s like their own battle, you can only do so much, then you have to go get psychologists and doctors. We didn’t have anybody this year that was that bad but we definitely had some sketchiness going on and it’s so hard to talk about. Like a lot of times Stacey and I can just look at each other and be like yeah. And then we talk to somebody about it and either they get real defensive because there’s like two captains talking to one person – all we’re trying to do is help but they’ll just shrug you off but hopefully it just plants a seed in their mind” (Co-participant 8FI)

“I mean especially I was thinking in women’s sports as well, you can have lots of - like I was saying with health problems like eating disorders and just – like mental depression and things like that that the people will come and talk to me about and then I need to be the person to decide whether it’s serious enough to go and talk to someone else about it and like OK, you need to go get help...I know last year there was a girl on the team who was bulimic and nobody really knew about it for a long time, then we kind of all found about it and then it came to the point where we like - I spoke to her about it and I was like, this is very serious you know. It’s so unhealthy ‘cause it got to the point where she was playing matches and if it was a hot day she would just be like collapsing on the court. It was really, really bad so you know I spoke to coach about it and everything and then she was –she was in counseling and like it just got to the point we all knew something was wrong, we figured it out, and it was just about taking immediate action. And like that problem was obviously a lot bigger than I am. I could not help her with that. I had to go talk to somebody else about that” (Co-participant 9FI)

“a girl on our team, she passed out walking back after practice ‘cause she didn’t eat all day. And then someone came up to me and they’re like, you’re the captain, you need to go talk to her about her eating and I’m kind of like, I’m not – I’ll talk to her roommates but I’m not personally going to go and be like you’re not eating, that’s messed up – you know, ‘cause I don’t know her eating habits, I didn’t know, but apparently she’s really body conscious and I didn’t know that” (Co-participant 1FT)

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The analysis of this study revealed three main themes in a hierarchical structure, labeled as *a good and fun experience*, *responsibilities* and *relationships*. The results of this study are addressed in relation to these main themes. The discussion will include implications, limitations, and future recommendations for further exploration and examination of the current phenomenon under investigation.

A good and fun experience was the overall theme appearing in the data from the co-participant interviews. Despite many of the interviews seemingly resulting in a discussion of the burdens and frustrations with the varied and multiple tasks the position carries, most of the participants made small remarks that surrounded the notion that they enjoyed the honor and pride that accompanied their appointment as team captain. To address the current study's primary research question, *what is the lived experience of collegiate team captains?*, the participants echoed that the experience is enjoyable, though challenging at times, as seen in the second level of the thematic hierarchy with the interrelated themes of *responsibilities* and *relationships*. Many of the co-participants recited how much fun the position carried and the enjoyment received from being an important member of their competitive collegiate team. Limited research has been found in the literature regarding the enjoyment of athlete leadership. Ryan (1989) concluded that participation in intercollegiate athletics, just as involvement in other facets of college and campus life can increase an individual's overall enjoyment of the collegial years. Further, Ryan (1989) found that participation in college sports was associated with development of interpersonal skills and leadership abilities. Thus, it could be concluded

that being involved as a collegiate athlete and then *extra*-involved as a team captain could bring about a certain higher level of enjoyment in the co-participants position as team leader. Perhaps a comparison of enjoyment versus stress of being a team leader is the first suggestion for further research on the team captain phenomenon.

Maintaining a voice to answer the primary research question, the experience of collegiate team captains resulted in a slew of *responsibilities*. This second-level theme revealed in the analysis was supported by the sub-themes of *leading by example*, *communicating expectations and liaison duties*, *sport performance expectations*, *classroom and student duties*, and *off-the-field management*. It is no surprise that an appointment to a collegiate team captainship would be flush with new roles and obligations to one's teammates and sport program. The data in the present study supports much of the previous literature's findings in that team captains are expected to perform certain tasks (Mosher, 1978; LeBoeuf, 1988). In this manner, the data supports Northouse's (2001) notion that leadership and management function as similar, though separate constructs. Northouse quotes that "management was created as a way to reduce chaos in organizations and to make them run more effectively and efficiently" (p. 8) and leadership involves a process of influence with a much high level of emotional involvement that transcends a mere managerial position. As seen in the data and exploration of the team captain phenomenon, much of the co-participants descriptions of the various perceived responsibilities was motivated by setting a good example for the group (influence) in order to reach the group's goals. This coincides with Northouse's (2001) definition that leadership is, "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). Though, the data in the present study is

currently discussed as task-oriented in the theme of *responsibilities*, the motives to complete such tasks are emotionally fueled for the good of the sport program as outlined by the co-participants perceptions of expectations described in the sub-themes (see Table 2).

Leading by Example

The co-participants perception that the position of their team captainship required them to lead by example is predicated in the study conducted by Todd and Kent (1994) and the twelve aspects of ideal peer leadership from the Player Leadership Scale (PLS). This study concluded that peers prefer a leader who exhibits a high level of sport skill through hard work, respects ones teammates and expects high levels of performance from teammates and themselves. The Moran and Weiss (2005) study also reports that a high level of sport-specific ability equates to teammates selecting a certain peer as a leader. Further, Pescosolido (2001) notes that individuals will look to select a leader who has high goals and positive outlooks. Perhaps the notion that these ideals surrounding what a leader should be equate to the co-participants feelings toward the importance of leading by example. In conjunction with the idea of leadership being a process of influence (Northouse, 2001), the co-participants seemed to find a certain power in setting a good example for teammates to follow in order to be successful in their sport environment. Co-participant 3FT described this ideal when she stated that “if I don’t lead by example and portray that positive attitude...it takes away from the goal that all of us are trying to achieve”. Given the empirical support for leadership selection (Glenn & Horn, 1993; Moran & Weiss, 2005; Pescosolido, 2001; Todd & Kent, 1994), it could be derived that the team captains in the present study already exhibited these traits when selected for

their appointment and felt that it was their duty to maintain these characteristics in their current position when interviewed, as if to say that the leading by example sub-theme was a reflection of the co-participants characteristics prior to selection as team captain.

Communicating Expectation and Liaison Duties

The co-participants had a responsibility to serve as a bridge between their player teammates and the coaching staff. It was their duty to keep an open line of communication between the coach and their teammates as well as to help explain the demands of the coach and the frustration of the players. LeBoeuf (1988) described this expectation when describing to coaches how to select a volleyball team captain, “the team captain should also be the mediator or cushion between the team members and the coaching staff. This role is important in helping to smooth out the often stormy interactions that occur.” (p. 25). Further, the findings in Loughead, Hardy, and Eys (2006), were supported in defining the liaison role that selected team leaders fulfill as a sub-part of the coaching staff, and must have their teammates support to select them as the voice of the team.

Sport Performance Expectations

The co-participants discussed feeling they had to perform at a higher level athletically than their team members because of their captainship appointment. Again, looking into previous findings, this could be a factor of their selection and merely a characteristic the team captains felt they must maintain to keep the respect of their teammates. As found in the Glenn and Horn (1993) study, female soccer leaders were selected in part based on their skill level and competence. Moran and Weiss (2005) echoed this finding, citing instrumental leadership as a crucial element of one’s

leadership capability and potentiality for selection as a leader by one's peers. As well, Yukelson, Weinberg, Richardson and Jackson (1983) found that players who were the team's best performers and had the most experience were appointed team leaders. Therefore, similar to the sub-theme of *leading by example*, it could be concluded the expectation to perform at a high level on the athletic field, could stem from an understanding that one *must* perform well in order to be deemed team captain. The data does not reveal what brought about this expectation, merely that it existed within the construct of the phenomenological experience of *being* a collegiate team captain, and all of the co-participants in this study made reference to being a top performer on their team.

Classroom and Student Duties

The researchers of the present study could not locate in the literature where one's classroom performance was an integral part of the peer leadership experience. Not surprisingly, this sub-theme could not be delimited beyond the collegial setting, as academic success does not readily come into contention in sport leagues beyond this typical age range. Though the co-participants readily discussed its integral play within their leadership responsibilities and noted checking in on players at study hall, recording their own study hall hours, and tutoring teammates or offering personal advising in academic major selection. This aspect of the current study's findings should speak loudly to practitioners building and working in leadership training for the team captain, and academic success including how to impart knowledge on academic success should be implemented as these co-participants felt it was a crucial element of their particular role. Co-participant 3FT said it most proudly when she noted "that I was good academically as well as on the field. Because I was a student first, and an athlete second".

Off-the-field Management

The co-participants in this study listed several experienced expectations to maintain leadership role in activities away from the competitive and practice arena's. Loughhead et al., (2006) described a portion of this sub-theme as social leadership in organizing and/or managing social functions of the team. Dupois, Bloom, and Loughhead (2006) echoed this finding in their qualitative study of male ice-hockey captains, stating that their co-participants wanted to be perceived more as another player rather than as a coach, and coordinating and structuring social activities helped reach this peer acceptance. In the current study, many of these *off-the-field* duties not only encompassed preparing social get-togethers, but also assured that players follow team rules beyond the set aside practice time as well as organized community service projects. Within the theme of *responsibilities*, these duties remained instrumental in nature and further enhanced the leadership experience garnered during one's collegial team captainship. The research was not found to reinforce this integral part of the current study's co-participants experience, and practitioners should note that social-task management could be a source of stress and obligation of the team leaders they work with.

The final theme found in the data, *relationships*, appears to be interrelated on the second level of the thematic hierarchy with *responsibilities*. The team captain experience explored in this phenomenological study was heavily involved with the many relationships one must balance within their position. Moran and Weiss (2005) identified this aspect of sport leadership as the expressive and socioemotional expectations one

must fulfill to team members. The sub-themes in *relationships* seemed to closely mirror aspects of social support as Weinberg and Gould (2007) summarized Rosenfeld and Richman's research (1997), defined as "an exchange of resources between at least two individuals perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient" (Weinberg & Gould, 1997, p. 168). Agreeing with Glenn and Horn (1993) is the notion that those who emerge as sport leaders will possess both the masculine (decisiveness, dominance, assertiveness and leadership; as seen in the *responsibilities* thematic discussion) and feminine (nurturance, social skills, and friendliness; as seen in the *relationships* thematic discussion) leadership traits. The co-participants interviewed in this study described aspects of their experience revolving around their ability to serve as several different roles to their team members and coaching staff. Again, the ability to do so, could have predicted their selection as a leader and might not have been learned through the process of being a team captain, but is no less significant when describing the phenomenon of the lived team captain experience.

Managing with Different Leadership Styles

This sub-theme was very unique in that much of the previous literature has been focused on identifying which *one* particular leadership style is most effective for the group members under investigation (Beam et al., 2004; Chen & Rikli, 2003; Dupois, et al., 2006; Kozub & Pease, 2001; Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995). The co-participants in the present study articulated the importance of individualizing their approach to each player. Co-participant 9FI said "to be a team captain...I needed to accept them all and really understand them before I could kind of be telling them what to do". Other co-participants described paying close attention to their team members' body language as well as playing

with their approach in order to find what best fit the need to get the desired result from their team members. There was no found literature describing the need to “play” with leadership tactics or noting the ability to do so as a predictor or quality of a leader. With this information, perhaps future researchers would be inclined to shift from empirically testing and retesting current styles of leadership and examine the interchange amongst styles to better serve the need of group members, in a more humanistic approach to leading, beyond merely autocratic and democratic as so much of the current literature revolves.

Encouraging and Supporting Teammates in Competition

This aspect of the co-participants experience seemed very important to their balance of relationships with their team members. Within this sub-theme, the data showed two aspects of social support: task-challenge support and task-appreciation support. Weinberg and Gould (2007) define task-challenge support as “the perception that an other is challenging the support recipients way of thinking about a task or an activity in order to stretch, motivate and lead the support recipient to greater creativity, excitement, and involvement” (p. 169) (Rosenfeld & Richman, 1997). Beam et al., (2004) identified that female athletes demonstrated a significantly higher preference for training and instruction feedback, though in the present study, no significant conclusion could be drawn from gender differences in task-challenge social support, and both male and female co-participants described their experience requiring them to consistently encourage their team members through difficult physical and competitive tasks.

Task-appreciation social support is defined as “the perception that an other is acknowledging the support recipient’s efforts and expressing appreciation for the work

that person does” (Rosenfeld & Richman, 1997; Weinberg & Gould, 2007, p. 169). Co-participants in the present study described the importance of consistent encouragement of their teammates no matter the result of their efforts. Co-participant 12MT described this when he stated “basically even if their doing a bad or good job, you always being there trying to give positive encouragement, you know, ‘they can do better’ or ‘they’ll get it next time’ or give ‘em high fives, a pat on the butt, things like that”. Loughhead and Hardy (2005) described an aspect of this particular support when stating that peer sport leaders often act as a counter balance to coaches behaviors, and it could be concluded that the co-participants in the present study felt it was their duty to support their team members when the coaches were being particularly critical of a players skills. Supporting one’s team members in the face of coaching criticism was a very important attribute in describing the experience of the collegiate team captain.

Establishing and Maintaining a Relationship with Coaches

The co-participants in the present study described the importance of forming a working relationship with their coaches. As described in the *responsibilities* theme, the role of liaison is easier accomplished when a trusting relationship is in place between team captain and coach. Dupois et al., (2006) described the interactions between coach and captain and deciding which information to relay to the coach as well as how to relay the information. In the present study, co-participants discussed the aspects of this sub-theme in a social support manner with an exchange between captain and coach as an emotional-challenge, defined as “the perception that an other is challenging the support recipient to evaluate her attitudes, values and feelings” (Rosenfeld & Richman, 1997; Weinberg & Gould, 2007). The co-participants’ coaches in the present study had to be

willing to explore any doubt about their players with the captain, as well as the captain being comfortable enough confront the coach with their team members needs and concerns. LeBoeuf (1988) stated that a “captains’ relationships with coaches and staff should be friendly but, more important, professional in establishing the kind of interactive and mutually supportive environment that will facilitate player development and team success” (p. 26). As Kenow and Williams (1999) found, a coach and player’s relationship is more compatible when anxiety about a coaches behaviors decreases. Similarly, Chelladurai (1984) discovered that a stronger relationship is formed when perceptions of coaching behaviors matched preferences of team members. Further, Riemer and Chelladurai (1995) found that satisfaction with a coaches behaviors regarding social support increased as perceptions and preferences became more congruent. The co-participants in the present study mirrored these findings when discussing that being without a trusting and well managed relationship among captain and coach, it would be difficulty to challenge one another’s thoughts as well as remaining humble enough to be challenged by one another.

Balancing Friendships with Team Members

The sub-theme of creating a balance between the friendship role with team members and serving your team members as a leader, seemed an arduous task in the experience of the present study’s co-participants. In college, there is much time spent amongst team members and it is no surprise that strong relationship bonds can be formed. Co-participants mentioned that at times they were younger in their age and experience than some of their team members when appointed captainship and had a difficult time stepping over older, more experienced or more skilled players. Additionally, team

captains mentioned the “class” or cohort they were recruited with and when appointed captain, they sort of transcended the once equal relationship level they had previously with team members. No previous literature was found discussing this issue, and again, practitioners should take note that team leaders are battling with role conflict when they have to lead their friends. The co-participants described a shift in roles with friends and the friendly and professional roles they had to switch in and out of based upon the context they were performing in. Co-participant 14MI defined this fluctuation when he stated “it’s also a challenge though, because you look at people who are your friends and your teammates but you’re also having to take on this leadership role and at some level [be a sort] of authority figure...you sometimes clash with your teammates”. The clash between friends was described as producing a disconnect with those peers whose friendship the co-participant valued, yet had to set aside in order to accomplish the duties he accrued with his captainship. Practitioners can gain significant knowledge for leadership training by acknowledging the anxiety produced by having to separate yourself from your peers as a leader. As seen in the present study, team captains were faced with confronting and challenging their friends as team members regarding team norms and behaviors reflective of the team’s goals. LeBeouf (1988) notes that team captains must be ready for such interactions and that they “may not always be liked, but must be respected.” This balancing between friend and team leader can be difficult for a team captain, and leadership training programs should acknowledge this balance and instruct participants on proper techniques to successfully confront friends.

Offering Guidance and Serving as a Confidant for Team Members Personal Issues

This sub-theme within the *relationships* theme described the modes of Weinberg and Gould's (2007) social support of (a) listening support ("the perception that someone else is listening without giving advice or being judgemental" p. 168), (b) emotional support ("the perception that an other is providing comfort and caring and is indicating that he is on the support recipient's side" p. 168), and (c) personal-assistance support ("the perception that an other is providing services or help" p. 169) (Rosenfeld & Richman, 1997). The current study's co-participants listed several domains where they felt they were required to offer guidance with sport, school and personal issues. The co-participants described what it felt like to have younger players and their friends approaching them for advice or detailing their personal lives in an effort for guidance. Aspects of this included sport performance inquiries, class, professor and academic major guidance, and significant relationship inquiries, problems and advice. The position of team captain required the present study's co-participants to become confidants and mentors to many of the team members. Being a confidant assumes a certain level of trust between two people and Dirks (2000) found that heightened levels of trust can affect team performance, "trust in leadership allows the team members to suspend their questions, doubts and personal motives and instead throw themselves into working toward team goals" (p.1009). LeBoeuf (1988) also explains that an aspect of the team captainship as "maintaining open lines of communication is important for a clear understanding of the needs and concerns of the players" (p. 25) and must be willing to resolve conflicts and issues or take them to the necessary level to be resolved. The present study's co-participants discussed helping to resolve issues amongst team members and coaches, but also stretched its meaning to include advice and listening

support for dating relationships, eating disorders, and other personal issues. Co-participant 5FI described offering listening support and the confidant role she takes on when she said “everybody feels pretty comfortable confiding in me with stuff about school or family or running... I just usually listen, offer whatever advice, but usually people just want somebody to listen”. This notion was reflected in Dupois et al.’s, (2006) findings when their co-participants described an aspect of their task behaviors being able to support and handle personal concerns of other team members.

Unique Differences in Male and Female Team Captain Experiences

The current study revealed two distinct additional sub-themes based on gender. Interestingly, the following sub-themes when separated by gender fall into separate themes: male co-participants’ unique sub-theme is under the *responsibilities* theme, whereas the female co-participants’ unique sub-themes are under the *relationships* theme. Glenn and Horn (1993) described instrumental leadership aspects as being primarily masculine, and expressive or relational leadership aspects as being primarily feminine. The co-participants in the present study described all previous sub-themes similarly, marking a lack of strong gender identity in their experience as collegiate team captains. Glenn and Horn (1993) suggested that a combination of instrumental (masculine) and expressive (feminine) leadership traits were necessary for a successful term as a team leader. Perhaps, the reason the present study’s co-participants were appointed their sport programs leaders because of this ability to display strengths in both types of leadership traits.

Male team captains described an aspect of their *responsibilities* to extend to representing their team to others. The male co-participants described how holding the

team captainship position required them to behave in such a way the represented their team to the highest possible degree, “when you’re a team captain... whatever you’re doing can be, you know, concluded about the team, [so] you always wanted to be doing something good and something positive [so] that your team looks good” (Co-participant 13MT). No past studies were found discussing the importance of outward appearance and reflection of one’s personal behaviors upon other team members or the sport program itself.

Additionally, a unique sub-theme within *relationships* was found when female co-participants described the “girls-only” drama they had to deal with. An interesting point to be highlighted, the female co-participants themselves stated that they felt it was only girls who had these issues, and proclaimed these statements with words such “with girls teams, you have girls problems... ’cause girls are sensitive” (Co-participant 9FI), “especially with girls you have a lot of emotions” (Co-participant 2FT) and “we’re a team of girls so there’s obviously bickering all the time” (Co-participant 1FT). The literature was not found to support a unique understanding of female problems for female leaders. Within this construct, co-participants discussed settling conflicts between team members, handling information and offering advice about dating, and coping with and confronting team member possible eating disorders. The most noted piece from this finding was that the female team captains themselves described their position as uniquely different from a male leadership position, as if distancing themselves from what a male leader might have to do with male team members.

Implications

The overall perspective includes several important issues team captains face that have yet to be empirically tested nor are there support structures in place for team captains to become educated in handling some of the issues they may face. Researchers may want to further explore the gender differences in peer leadership in an effort to further illuminate how male and female leaders operate within sports teams. Also, research should be further conducted on what predictors of leadership differ from traits gained once placed into a leadership position, and how those with little characteristic predictors might behave and rate as leaders compared to those with a high number of predictive qualities of a successful leader. Within collegiate team captain populations specifically, further studies could explore successful teams and team leaders as well as quantitatively evaluate the multiple facets of leadership illuminated here. The next logical step in this particular research questions would be to further qualitatively explore the themes released here with more direct questioning including interviewing the team members of the team captains to gain a more holistic grasp of the functioning of team captains within sport programs. Perhaps from these findings a refined player leadership scale could be developed as well as supportive and educative programs designed to enhance a collegiate sport leaders experience.

From the current study's finding, practitioners can enhance leadership training modules to cover the many facets released as themes and sub-themes. The findings in this study that are unique to leadership training programs could include further understanding on effective listening and coping with large-scale issue such as eating disorders or organizational management as seen in providing community service projects. Practitioners should pay special attention to the many similarities amongst female and

male sport leaders but nevertheless disregard the small though significant differences. The researchers believe that peer support and education from an exchange of experiences could benefit participants of both genders in a leadership training and support environment. A team captain education (Blanton, Czech & Metzler, 2008) is in development and will take into account the crucial thematic elements highlighted in the co-participant interviews.

Limitations

One must be careful in the generalizations of the current study based on a very small sample size, as qualitative research isn't normally concerned with the number of research subjects. Interviews were conducted with participants in various times during the year, and some participants were not currently in season with the teams in which they captained. Reflecting upon past seasons versus describing a current situation could have changed the findings somewhat. Further, all co-participants competed in Division I of the NCAA and experiences of sport leaders at other collegiate levels or high school or post-college sport programs were not reflected in the present study's findings.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the current study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Collegiate team captains in this study felt their position was enjoyable and good overall.
- Team captains in this study described their position as handling many responsibilities such as leading by example, appropriate communication behaviors between coaches and players, being good student, being a good athlete, and managing team activities away from the practice and competitive arena's
- Team captains in this study described many relationship roles they fulfilled on their team including acting as a support system, offering encouragement, developing trust in team members and coaches, balancing between friend and leader with team members and offering guidance regarding personal issues
- Male team captains in this study differed from the female team captains with the addition of a responsibility to represent the team positively to others
- Female team captains in this study differed from the male team captains with the discussion of managing unique girl relationships and issues that they felt males would not see in their position.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH QUESTION, LIMITATIONS, ASSUMPTIONS, AND DEFINITIONS

Research Questions

The primary research question for this study is:

1. What is the lived experience of collegiate sport team captains?

The secondary research questions for this study are:

1. What is the lived experience of collegiate male sport team captains?
2. What is the lived experience of collegiate female sport team captains?
3. What is the lived experience of collegiate team sport team captains?
4. What is the lived experience of collegiate individual sport team captains?

Limitations

As with all naturalistic scientific inquiry, this study is predisposed to several limitations.

1. Participants in the study will be collected using purposeful sampling, mostly through personal contacts.
2. Participants in this study will only represent NCAA Division I collegiate sports and cannot be considered an appropriate account for all levels of collegiate sport competition.
3. The primary researcher of this study is a former collegiate team captain and could bring an air of biases into the analysis of data, though measures will be taken to eliminate as much of the researcher's presuppositions as possible.

Delimitations

1. This study is delimited to NCAA Division I collegiate sport team captains and the participants may not be a representative sample to generalize to all sports team captains.
2. The study will interview 12 NCAA Division I collegiate sport team captains, with 3 members representing each of the four sub-groups: male team sports, male individual sports, female team sports, female individual sports. Although 12 is a small sample size, it is considered adequate for qualitative phenomenological induction.

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were made in reference to this study:

1. The personal experiences of the male and female, as well as the team sport and individual sport team captains are important in better understanding the “lived” experiences of collegiate team captains.
2. The phenomenological interview will serve the purpose of exploring and gathering valid accounts and stories of collegiate team captains to give us a deeper look at the population’s personal experiences.
3. Due to the nature of the humanistic approach, the subjects in this research will be able to openly and honestly convey their own recounts, thoughts, and feelings of their experiences as collegiate sport team captains.
4. Participants will accurately and honestly describe the phenomenon in their own words during the interview.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions are utilized in the present study.

1. Existential Phenomenology – A philosophy that allows for an accurate interpretation of one's own "lived" experience (Czech, et al., 2004). A combination of the philosophical perspectives of existentialism and phenomenology that seek to arrive at a rigorous description of human experience (Dale, 1996).
2. Humanistic Framework – An emphasis on describing the perspective of an individual and how they experience the world in which they live (Hill, 2001).
3. Qualitative Interview – The researcher is used as an instrument for data collection and must attempt to conduct the research free of judgments, assumptions or bias towards the information described by the subject (Czech, et al., 2004).
4. Research Team – Primary advisor and two graduate student peers, all with experience and knowledge in phenomenological research and data analysis procedures.
5. Triangulation – Strategies for reducing systematic bias and distortion during data analysis (Patton, 2002).
6. Team Captain. – A formal leadership position amongst a sports team, designated either by the coaching staff, a democratic vote of team members, or combination of methods, designating an individual as the team captain (Loughead et al., 2006).

7. Team Sport – A sport that requires athletes work with others for successful completion of a task, interdependent functioning (Beam et al, 2004). Examples include: football, basketball, volleyball, softball, baseball, soccer, Lacrosse, crew, etc.
8. Individual Sport – A sport does not require interaction among athletes for successful completion of a task, independent functioning (Beam et al, 2004) Examples include: Cross-country, track and field, swimming, tennis, golf, fencing, etc.
9. NCAA Division I - Division I member institutions have to sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women) with two team sports for each gender. Each playing season has to be represented by each gender as well. There are contest and participant minimums for each sport, as well as scheduling criteria. Division I schools must meet minimum financial aid awards for their athletics program, and there are maximum financial aid awards for each sport that a Division I school cannot exceed. (Stephens, 2008, 1).

APPENDIX B
EXTENDED REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A lack of literature critically and exclusively focusing on the sports team captain is apparent in the sport psychology research journals. This review of previous literature encompasses studies from sport psychology as well as physical education and business to proximate a definition of leadership and shed light on the gap that exists regarding an exclusive investigation into peer leadership in sport. This paper will outline a strong, yet open, definition of leadership, followed by a brief introduction to the literature related to leadership in sport psychology and offer viewpoints on different types of leaders as outlined in previous studies. Further, this paper will highlight research investigating the peer leader from a sport psychology perspective and finally offer support for the author's proposed research investigation.

Defining Leadership

Many definitions of leadership are present throughout literature from a variety of topics. In sport psychology, Loughhead et al. (2006) notes of 65 different taxonomies to define leadership. With this large amount of definitions to define leadership, it is suitable to combine the most broad definitions to offer a simple perspective in defining leadership as it relates to sports teams. In physical education literature, Gerdes (2001) describes the leadership influence as bringing together a combination of beliefs, behaviors and emotions of the group to reach their potential. Womble (2005) agrees, stating that the strongest leaders are those individuals who provide the emotional support and encourage their members. These supportive and encouraging traits fulfill social needs of the members. Some characteristics of positive leaders are those who assist in setting goals, are motivating and move their members into action to reach these goals. As team

builders, these leaders are positive and enthusiastic as well as masters of communicating expectations and recognizing achievement within the designated group members.

Womble (2005) states that the most admired leaders are those who help their group members to believe in their ability to achieve success by first believing in themselves.

In business literature, Wharton (2003) describes the notion of a leader and leadership as a form of art that combines “competency, knowledge, management proficiency, interpersonal skills, wisdom, vision, goals and priority setting” (p. 272) to be regarded as an effective leader.

Most studies in sport psychology seem to agree that a leader is one who works with or influences a group to work toward a common goal (Dupuis, Bloom, & Loughead., 2006; Loughead, Hardy & Eys, 2006; Loughead & Hardy, 2005; Marzano et al., 2005; Reimer & Chelladurai, 1995; Barrow, 1977). Further, Moran and Weiss (2005) added to that definition by noting that a successful sport leader also helps to meet the various needs of team members. For the purpose of this study, the researchers operate on the assumption that a sports leader is one who works amongst a team to meet various needs while working to move the group towards an agreed upon goal or set of goals.

Types of Leadership

This section will highlight two categories of leader types from the literature. This first category refers to the motivational characteristics of leader. It is important to mention this category, as co-participants could possibly refer to their characteristics as leaders in the interview process. Fuchs et al. (2000) breakdown leaders into two types by the way they motivate their potential followers: the “internally-focused” type leaders and the “dual-focused” type leaders. The “internally-focused” group leaders, are those

leaders who use “internal motivational strategies” to reach the goal of the group. These internal or intrinsic strategies refer using accomplishing goals and positive feedback to enforce the efforts of the members. By using intrinsic strategies, the “internally-focused” leader is attempting to retain members and keep their motivations levels high simply by rewarding them with positive feedback and social, emotional supports. Fuchs et al., (2000) goes on to argue that the “internally-focused leaders tend to retain more participants in their groups” (p. 165). The “dual-focused” leader uses both internal or intrinsic strategies as well as external or extrinsic motivational strategies, referring to more tangible items such as scholarships, playing time, certificates of achievement, etc. It should be noted that the authors claim the “dual-focused” leaders seem to retain fewer members than an “internally-focused” leaders. Those leaders who are more focused on meeting the needs of their members, as supported by Moran and Weiss (2005) and Womble (2005), seem to be the more effective leaders.

The second category of leaders, detailed in by Loughead et al. (2006) refers to the role and position on the team. The authors separate leaders by their official or non-official designation, the formal leader and the informal leader. Traditionally the formal leader is an appointed or agreed upon position by all members of the team, such as the coach or the team captain (Kozub & Pease, 2001). The formal leader holds a position on the team that carries a title (i.e. coach, captain, assistant, etc.) and all members are aware of the title. The informal leader or peer leader is one member of the team who, without title, fulfills one or more needs of their teammates. In an almost counterbalancing act, peer leaders often displayed more characteristics surrounding positive feedback and support (Loughead & Hardy, 2005). Loughead et al (2006) identified that coaches agree

and believe that peer and teammate leadership is beneficial and important to performance. That is why so often coaches select a team captain or captains to offer their athletes a peer to look to.

Sport Psychology and Coaching Leadership

Research surrounding the topic of leadership in sport is no stranger to current and past sport psychology publications, though, these previous studies have focused on types of coaching leadership behaviors (Beauchamp, Bray, Eys, & Carron, 2005; Kozub & Pease, 2001; Loughhead & Hardy, 2005; Glenn & Horn, 1993), coaching methods (Riemer & Chelladurai, 1995; Rowold, 2006; Kim, 1992; Chelladurai, 1984), and preferences for leadership style (Chen & Rikli, 2003; Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson, 2004).

Some studies have supported certain preferred leadership styles and behaviors of high-school and collegiate leaders (Chen & Rikli, 2003; Beam et al, 2004). Beam et al (2004) found that male collegiate athletes showed preferences for coaches who showed strong autocratic and social support behaviors where females showed preferences for coaches with strong situational consideration and training and instruction behaviors. Yet these preferences were only for the formal leadership role of a coach, not a team captain. No studies to date exist, on what leadership preferences exist for a team captain. Chen and Rikli (2003) recorded no differences between male and female athletes when focusing on feedback styles of sports leaders, merely that they prefer coaches who give immediate, constructive, informational and frequent feedback. When looking at small groups, Pescosolido (2001), notes that when a group looks at whom to choose as their leader, individuals with high goals, positive outlooks and reasonable expectations are usually chosen. Along with these traits, leaders are selected also based upon how much

initiative they take in achieving the groups goals and to what extent they influence the group to work together to achieve these goals.

Kenow and Williams (1999) composed a study on coach-athlete relationships and the perception of leadership. In this study the authors note that as the coaches behave in certain ways, the athletes begin to react and evaluate these behaviors as effective to achievement or ineffective. However, according to Moran and Weiss (2005) as children age through adolescence, influence shifts from adults to their peers. By comparing these studies, it could be derived that the behaviors of team captains and peer leaders are also influential in athletes forming perceptions of effective leadership. Smoll and Smith (1989) stated that this idea of leader effectiveness is derived from two perspectives, the leaders behaviors and the participants reactions. Again, no studies were found to examine the importance of peer leader and athlete relations to the formulation of effective peer leaders.

Sport Psychology and Peer Leadership

The theories and methods of these coaching behaviors and measurements have been directed more recently onto the peer leader notion in sport psychology, investigating the athletes themselves as leaders on a sports team (Moran & Weiss, 2005; Loughhead et al, 2006; Todd & Kent, 2004; Dupuis et al, 2006). A popular trend in sports team is to appoint a team captain, however, there are few studies focusing exclusively on this popular character (Dupuis et al, 2006). Several years ago, publications were seen concerning how to select a team in volleyball (Mosher, 1978; LeBoeuf, 1988), yet no studies to date exist detailing the role a team captain, nor do they describe the current experience of being a team captain.

Moran and Weiss (2005) found that athletes will generally consider a peer a leader when that peer rates high in psychological characteristics and high in sport-specific ability. The psychological characteristics were related to expressiveness in the study, and describe how the peer leader supports and behaves toward their teammates. Glenn and Horn (1993) described the expressive leadership traits as feminine and the instrumental or sport-ability skills as masculine. Yet, the authors note that to be a successful leader, one needs to be skilled in both masculine (instrumental) and feminine (expressiveness) characteristics of leadership. The Glenn and Horn (1993) study developed and used the *Sport Behavior Inventory* (SBI) to measure the self-perception and others-perception of leadership traits. The SBI asks respondents to rate themselves on 25 characteristics that describe important leadership traits. Though a valid measure of traits of peer leaders, the SBI does not account for nor offer a description of what it is like to be a team leader or how to train these peer leaders to acquire the necessary traits to become better leaders, a training tool often missing in the sport psychology literature.

Loughead and Hardy (2005) mention that athlete leaders, such as the team captain, can often have stronger leadership capabilities in social support, positive feedback, and democratic behaviors than a coach. This works as a counter-balancing act to ensure that all athlete needs are met in a group, coaches and athlete leaders typically exercise different leadership behaviors (Dupois et al, 2006). In a study evaluating satisfaction in athletes the authors noted that team leaders who play a valuable role in assisting a group to reach its goals are often referred to as a task leader (Eys, Loughead, & Hardy, 2007). These task leaders, according to Kogler Hill (2001), (a) help focus the team on its goals, (b) help clarify responsibilities for teammates, (c) assist in decision

making, (d) offer instruction to teammates when required, and (e) help the team perform to the best of its ability. These task leaders are typically regarded as effective leaders and fit the proposed definition by meeting their peers needs in the sports realm.

According to an exploratory study done by Todd and Kent (2004), the athletes most identified as peer leaders are those who fit the descriptions of: “works hard in practice and games”, “shows respect for others on your team”, and “expects high levels of performance from self and teammates”. Along with several additional important aspects to the previously mentioned domains, the Todd and Kent (2004) study highlights what it is that high school athletes look for when determining who the leaders on the team are, yet this study does not define these individuals as the team captain.

Not since Mosher (1978) and LeBoeuf (1988) have articles appeared to mention what roles a team captain needs fulfill, and both articles are written to a coaching audience in what to look for when selecting an individual as a team leader. Both articles (Mosher, 1978; LeBoeuf, 1988) cite that a team captain must be someone the players can look up to, so its important they be experienced (upperclassmen) and athletically skilled (instrumental). These values are supported throughout literature on ideal peer leaders (Beam et al, 2004; Dupois et al, 2006; Loughhead et al, 2006; Moran & Weiss, 2005; Glenn & Horn, 1993), yet not as specific needs for the specific role of a team captain. Mosher (1978) and LeBoeuf (1988) also mention that the team captain must serve as a liaison between the players and coach. They must be able to communicate the concerns of the players to the coach and also the coaches intentions to the players, yet no research was found to support this liaison role as necessary or even existent from the actual peer leaders perspective.

Qualitative Investigation in Sport Psychology

The preferences that athletes exude for a peer leader are broad and very limitedly defined (Todd & Kent, 2004). It is important to place a reasonable effort into defining what roles a team captain plays on an athletic team, though much of the research, as previously mentioned, examined the coach's perspective. However, no studies were found that have gone into the exclusivity of the team captain. Beam et al. (2004) wrote "student-athlete preference for leadership behavior are influenced by gender and task dependence and task variability of their sport" (15). Hence, lies the purpose of this study.

This study will investigate what roles a team captain feels they play on their athletic team. In order to further examine leadership roles, leadership effectiveness, and perceptions of team captain leadership behaviors, it is necessary to receive a rich narrative from current team captains. This study will qualitatively describe, from collegiate team captains' perspectives, what roles they fulfill to their teammates and why they feel the team captain position is important to team functioning and achieving team goals. Team captains will be selected from four domains, (1) Male team sport team captains, (2) Male individual sport team captains, (3) Female team sport team captains, and (4) Female individual sport team captains, in order to achieve a broad base of experiences as a team captains across variables that can be compared.

Qualitative investigation in sport psychology research is supported by Hanson and Newburg (1992). These authors state sport psychology researchers and practitioners must recognize the athlete and their current view to understand the phenomena being investigated. To get a full and rich description of what roles a team captain plays and the experience of what it is like to be a peer leader, the experts, the team captains themselves

must be examined qualitatively. Dale (1996) claims that we as sport psychology researchers can gain valuable amounts of information if we allow the athletes the opportunity to speak freely about their experiences in the qualitative interview format. This study will take these principles of naturalistic inquiry from a grounded theory perspective and examine the team captain to gain this rich description of being a formal peer leader in sport. This description will allow researchers to gain a full understanding of what it is like to be a collegiate team captain from a first-person, expert, analysis. Implications from this study will allow future research to take on a new avenue in sport psychology research by looking at peer leaders as separate entities having separate and exclusive experiences as a leader in sport.

Summary

From sport psychology literature, with importance to this study, a designated definition of leadership in sport was obtained though left open-ended to encompass many experiences as a sport leader. This definition is noted as one who works with team members to achieve the groups goals as well as meet the various needs of the athletes. Previous literature often examines the coach as the leadership model, and those studies that do look at peer leaders often do so with a bias from studies based on coaching behaviors, observations and models. The types of leaders and those characteristics that pertain to ideal leaders often do so with little account for the actual peer leaders perspective. The roles and needs a team captain must meet to be successful are outdated in the literature. An examination into the experience of being a formal peer leader in sport is needed before further investigating the team captain as an individual leader separate from a coach.

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