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Feminine Voice, Masculine Space: Understanding How Passion for Sport Emerges in Female College Student-Athletes

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DePaul University
College of Education

FEMININE VOICE, MASCULINE SPACE:
UNDERSTANDING HOW PASSION FOR SPORT EMERGES IN FEMALE COLLEGE
STUDENT-ATHLETES

A Dissertation in Education
with a Concentration in Curriculum Studies

by

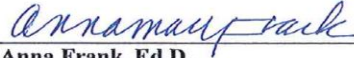
Jill Hollembeak

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of the Requirements
for the Degree of
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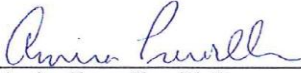
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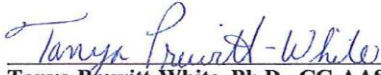
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Abstract

Many sport sociologists argue sports play a significant role in creating culture (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006; L'Etang, 2006). Yet, even as there has been a gender revolution in U.S. sports, media “coverage today misrepresents both the participation and the interest in women’s sports across our population at large” (p. 3). A powerful entity, the media misrepresentation of the number of females competing devalues the importance participation plays in the lives of many females. Their status as “jock” causes potential negativity as they navigate college and their roles in society, and their status as “female” carries historical conditions in all realms, including education and athletics. Finally, their combined status as “female-athlete” is underplayed in the media, adding to the marginalization of women, especially those who play sports.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to further understand the essence of passion, specifically the passion females have for sport and how passion develops and is sustained in the patriarchal environment of collegiate athletics. Defined by Vallerand (2008) as “a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that one likes (or even loves), finds important, and in which one invests time and energy,” (p. 4) understanding passion may help researchers and practitioners better understand the female, college student-athlete experience. In particular, this research, framed by Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and informed by phenomenological and feminist philosophies, focused on how passion has been developed and/or sustained by examining the experiences of ten female, college student-athletes who compete at the Division I level by employing semi-structured interviews, a focus group and observations. As university student-athletes, they participate passionately in environments that have historically

limited their opportunities (academia and athletics). Yet, despite such historic limitations, upon listening to their stories, several themes arose that help explain the emergence and persistence of their passion. These include 1) personal connections, 2) rising to challenges, 3) effort intensive, and 4) for the love of the game. This study concluded that relatedness, autonomy, and competence help develop and sustain passion. Likewise, these females are using their bodies as agents to re-define what it means to be an athlete.

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Prelude to Passion

There are moments of awe that seem to transform reality. A painter's fine brushstroke, a singer's perfect pitch, or an inventor's 'ah ha' flash may seem insignificant during crises, disasters or downturns. Yet, these times of brilliance by people who are actually living beyond what has been previously imagined can arguably be transformative. Is it not inspiring to observe individuals who transcend boundaries? Such individuals may be named; think Picasso, Flo Jo, Sinatra, or Einstein. Conversely, many persist in a myriad of activities for which they may never become overly recognizable in name; think doctoral student, little league coach, inner-city teacher, or community activist. Why do some go above and beyond to do good, perform well, or reach excellence? And, equally interesting, what in their journey brings them to this place? Many constructs may be at play, including opportunity, access or even motivation. Arguably, one construct that may be at the core of such activity is passion. Recently, a model for passion, the Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand, Blanchard, Mageau, Koestner, Ratelle, Leonard, Gagne, & Marsolais, 2003) stemming from Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000) emerged in the literature as a way to understand the role of passion in life's activities. By understanding its role in life's activities, as well as how it is developed, perhaps passion can be ignited in people and environments where seemingly none exists. It is in these unforeseen places where lives can be transformed.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Those who danced were thought to be quite insane by those who could not hear the music.”
~Angela Monet

Classrooms and Sports: Tangled Together in the Fabric of University Life

“Colleges and universities are historical institutions” (Thelin, 2004, p. xiii). The traditions and rituals of most universities are long and storied, telling a tale of American life including the challenges and struggles, victories and defeats, our nation has faced. Long tied to university tradition, intercollegiate athletics have also had a storied history within university settings where student-athletes have displayed their passions for sport and love of their school. From the beginning, with the famous Harvard versus Yale crew event, or Harvard-Yale Regatta, in 1852, and twenty-three years later “The Game” between the Harvard and Yale football teams, “intercollegiate athletics had been a source of intense enjoyment and rivalry among students” (p. 177). Additionally, Thelin argues, intercollegiate competition gained public interest as paying fans and news media flocked to events. Since the beginning, it has often been difficult to separate colleges from their respective sports teams. As such, intercollegiate athletics are a part of the traditional and current university fabric.

Furthermore, the drawing power of sport attracts alumni and fans to events on campus that exceed almost any other activity within the university. The real life drama that occurs as student-athletes compete passionately in their sports against rival schools is a way to build community, school pride and spirit (Lombardi, Capaldi, Reeves, Craig, Gater, & Rivers, 2003). Additionally, “The competition of sports is, of course, a universal human activity and every society has its games...many of those who attend and follow these games take sports success as symbolic of the college’s enduring value as an educational institution” (Lombardi et al., 2003, p.

4). This link between sport and college is seemingly everlasting. Yet, because they are a part of society overall, within sport and within universities, biases exist that diminish voice and discriminate against various students who do not always easily fit into the ivory tower's or the athletic ideal. Such discrimination limits potential and with it the full development of positive passions and fully engaged citizens.

While frequently glorified in society, college athletes often face pressure within academia that may go unnoticed by the gaping public. For instance, according to Harrison, Stone, Shapiro, Yee, Boyd, and Rullan (2009), “[o]ne pressure facing college athletes on a college campus relates to the negative stereotypes that faculty, traditional students, and administrative personnel hold about them” (p. 79). As Apple (2004) suggests, “those people who are perceived as being different from normal institutional expectations are threatening to the day to day life of schools, to the normal pattern of operation that is constant...thus, stereotyping is heightened” (p. 137). The stereotyping of student-athletes based on their “jock” label is an area that professors and administrators must be conscious of in educational realms, especially in the current climate, where athletic departments and student-athletes are simultaneously being scrutinized, as well as celebrated for their actions. Sadly, Engstrom and Sedlacek (1991) found that “freshmen students perceived student-athletes negatively in situations dealing with academic competence” (p. 189). Furthermore, Simons, Bosworth, Fujita, and Jensen (2007), found that 62 percent (of student-athletes) reported a faculty member had made a negative remark in class about athletics. Such negative perceptions and pressures impact the student-athletes’ college experience making this a critical factor in their academic and personal development that may include the development and maintenance of positive passion for learning and for sport. Likewise, Dee (2013), in his work on

stereotype threat, found “if a student-athlete believes he or she is looked at as a "dumb jock," that anxiety may become self-fulfilling...student-athletes who were reminded of their jock identities scored about 12 percent lower on Graduate Record Examination (GRE)-style tests, relative to non-athletes” (p. 1). The disconnect between the two defining labels – ‘student’ and ‘athlete’ - creates a conundrum that student-athletes must tackle on campuses nationwide as they are continuing to develop and maintain their passions for sports and other activities where learning takes place.

Interestingly, when asking student-athletes how they would respond in a course in which they perceived the faculty member has a negative perception of athletes, the largest response (35 percent) stated that they would reject the stigma and work harder, and 32 percent stated that they would drop the course (Simons et al., 2007, p. 265). While many would choose to work hard or drop the course, some chose to hide their athletic identity in college classrooms. For instance, Simons et al. reported, “athletes can be hyper sensitive about revealing their athletic identity in academic settings presumably to avoid being stigmatized” (p. 265). This way of coping can be equated to being closeted, and is unproductive.

If a student-athlete is passionate about her sport, that sport becomes a part of her identity (Vallerand et al., 2003). If closeted about her athletic identity within classroom settings or other arenas on campus, there is no chance for dialogue regarding the place of sports in higher education, the learning experiences student-athlete gains from participating at the collegiate level, or how passion for an activity like sports is developed. For instance, Greene (2008) suggests that the ideally educated individual is “one who is engaged with others in dialogue about their shared worlds and how to improve them” (as cited in Johnson & Reed, 2008, p. 148).

The absence of dialogue equates to no further understanding and no opportunity for change. Interestingly, Giroux (1998) asks and answers an important question regarding voicelessness by stating, “Can learning take place if in fact it silences the voices of the people it is supposed to teach? And the answer is: Yes. People learn that they don't count” (p. 6). What is idealized in academics and what is stereotyped about sport may leave many out of the dialogue surrounding learning and democracy in higher education, as well as explicitly point out whose voices are valued. Giroux suggests, “Radical education is interdisciplinary in nature” (p. 2). As a former college basketball player, Giroux understands that “learning was a collective activity” and the various involvements students experience cannot be denied in the learning process (p. 5). Furthermore, Apple (2004) suggests that “the act of designing school environments, though they may not be done consciously, are based on ideological and economic presuppositions which provide common sense rules for educators’ thoughts and actions” (p. 44). If a group is being judged negatively in the educational realm based on the presuppositions of “common sense rules” that Apple highlights above, it is the responsibility of educators to start the dialogue that will begin to eliminate biases and improve the context of education for all students. In doing so, positive passions for various activities, including sports, have room to develop and grow through affirmative experiences in classrooms, on playing fields, and in university settings overall.

While Comeaux and Harrison (2002) suggest that student-athletes may be at risk for discrimination by their student peers and faculty in academic settings, in particular, the experiences of female student-athletes are of significant importance to this study for two additional reasons. First, historically, women have not always been allowed an education. Yet, taking a closer look at more recent history indicates that females are still often neglected in the

classroom. For example, Flinders and Thornton (2004) suggest, “whether one looks at preschools or university lecture halls, at female teachers or male teachers, research spanning the last twenty years consistently reveals that males receive more attention than do females” (p. 211). Likewise, Martin (as cited in Johnson & Reed, 2008) suggests “women have typically been excluded from the conversation that constitutes the history of Western educational thought” (p. 165). And, “those who listen to and engage in conversation about women’s education can expect to find enlightenment” (p. 176). We must provide spaces to listen to female student’s experiences including those who participate in sport. This study provides such a space.

Although student-athletes may be at risk for discrimination by their student peers and faculty, and historically, women have been discriminated against within academic settings, an additional reason this research is of particular importance is because of the portrayal of female student-athletes in the media. For example, according to Messner and Cooky (2010):

For women athletes, and fans of women’s sports, things have devolved, rather than having evolved. It is frankly unfathomable, and unacceptable, that viewers are actually receiving *less* coverage of women’s sports than they were twenty years ago. (p. 3)

Although there has been a gender revolution in U.S. sports with tens of thousands of women competing in collegiate athletics, sports “coverage today misrepresents both the participation and the interest in women’s sports across our population at large” (p. 3). As powerful as the media is, the misrepresentation of the number of women competing at all levels, including college, devalues the importance sports participation plays in the lives and in the education of many women and girls. Their status as “jock” causes potential negativity as women athletes navigate

college and their roles in society, and their status as “female” carries an historical condition in all realms as well, including education. Finally, their combined status as “female-athlete” is underplayed in the media and in society, thus adding to the marginalization of women, especially those who participate passionately in sport.

The present research is intended to engage in a conversation with female student-athletes who have carried their “female-athlete” label and have risen above their circumstances by participating passionately in intercollegiate sports. Learning from female, student –athletes about their experiences surrounding passion for sport, many of which may align with their academic and athletic experiences, is an important objective of the present study. Since historically women have been left out of many societal conversations, including those in education and in college sport, and today female student-athletes’ passionate participation in sports is continually minimized because of limited media coverage, it is time to begin and continue to dialogue with female, student-athletes who have often been sidelined because of their status as female and their status as athlete. In doing so, much can be learned about the experiences of women who play sports passionately. And, by listening, as Martin (2008) suggests, perhaps we will be enlightened.

Prequel: A Little Back Story on Gyms and Privilege and Getting In

My own entre into the ivory tower comes mainly because of my status as ‘athlete’. I grew up in the gymnasium. Not the one with hard wood floors, hoops and rims, but the one with uneven bars and balance beams. In short, the more privileged gym and the gym where little, white girls from upper class families are dressed in sparkles and taught to control their bodies while performing unrealistic contortions and breathtaking flips. This is one of the contexts that

defined my childhood. The other was my family and the small, Midwestern town in which I experienced childhood. My identity, and who I am and what I am passionate about, are continually constructed by both, but, it was the 1980's when I came of age. And my dad was not a doctor or a lawyer like my teammates' dads often were. He was a proud member of the Ironworkers, Local #498, and the Reagan years were not so kind to 'our kind'. Rather than a Cadillac, which my best "gym" friend had, we had a Ford Pinto which wasn't always reliable on cold, winter days. One day, when I was ducking in the front seat of the Pinto as we drove through "pill hill" so my dad could drop me off before practice at the doctor's kid's house, I hurt my dad. I was embarrassed by the Ford Pinto and told him.

It was on that day I learned that I, too, was privileged because my dad's hands offered me the chance to develop a passion, as well as, to train and compete at the highest level in a sport typically reserved for the upper class. He explained to me the value of his work and his existence. Although we rarely talked about opportunity *through education* in my house, we talked about the value of hard work. As a working class, white child, if I worked hard, I could have a good life, making what Brown (2011) describes as the "Protestant work ethic" my reality (p. 20). Back then, I didn't fully understand privilege based on other demographics like race or gender or sexuality and how often times access and opportunity trump hard work. Nonetheless, the possibility of attending college, since no one in my family had done so before me, popped onto the radar during a chance encounter that occurred because I was a good athlete and might be able to get a scholarship to attend.

The rest is history. I attended college and earned an education because of my dad's (and my mom's) hard work, which allowed me to participate passionately in sport during my youth.

When I took the ACT my junior year of high school, the results were not so stellar. I had to take it twice because the ACT didn't care that I had twice visited South Africa and competed there during the time Nelson Mandela was in jail and saw firsthand the injustices based on race present in that country. The ACT didn't care that I had a more thorough understanding of communism and its impact on people's agency because I had competed behind the iron curtain in places like Beijing and the USSR. I got into college because I was a great athlete, not because of the education I had garnered *through experiences*. My ACT was lower than average and I barely squeaked in. What I carried with me as a first-generation college student may not have been the most gifted *academic* mind; but my body was gifted. And the work ethic that I garnered from my family and being in the gym, training and competing passionately in a sport I loved, I soon learned could help train my mind for academics and rid me of the dumb jock label I often felt because of my ACT score. I have never been the "ideal" student as my test scores have never shown pronounced academic prowess. When my body, through the passion I had for athletics, gave me the chance to pursue an education, I took advantage using the most powerful tools I had: My body (not as object, but as agent) and my work ethic. To this day, I still feel more comfortable in the gym than in the classroom. If the possibility exists for academia to examine what can be gained *through passionate participation* in sport as part of an ideal education, then maybe we can place mind and body as partners who enhance rather than oppose each other, especially when there is so much to learn *through* both entities. In so doing, dumb jock may cease to exist, and positive passions can be developed in any arena including those within masculinized spaces like athletics, regardless of gender, and everyone can experience the joy that comes from *moving* freely.

Throughout this research, I will jump back and forth from the academic to the personal and from the fixed to the fluid. As a feminist, the personal matters. As a student of sports psychology, the research from which I draw is often empirically based theory, grounded in testable hypotheses. I am absorbed in the scientific, yet completely comfortable in the personal/emotional that leaves me at the intersection. Like the importance of the intersection of the mind and body for an ideal education, the intersection of the quantified and qualified is of value too. Thus, I hope by examining the constructs of motivation and passion, which have been studied over and over again with numbers and degrees and quantification, and turning this on its head by listening to and hearing from the voices of women through qualitative research, influenced by feminist and phenomenological frameworks, that are often left out of the conversation in education, sport, and the media, a further understanding of the constructs, as well as an invitation to learn more *through* experience will be garnered.

Research Purpose and Questions

Sports are a dominant subculture within U.S. society today. Many sport sociologists even argue that sports play a significant role in creating culture, especially American culture (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006; L'Etang, 2006). College athletics in particular, continue to be a focus of fascination, as well as scrutiny in our culture. The term college student-athlete can conjure up many images from Saturday afternoon hero, to dumb jock, to athletic prodigy. While revenue producing men's college sports, namely football and men's basketball, continues to receive much of the focus in media, funding and the like (Huffman, Tuggle, & Rosengard, 2004), arguably women student-athletes quietly exhibit the essence of what it means to be 'ideal' college student-athletes who participate in athletics with great passion for their sport. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to further understand passion, specifically the passion female student-athletes

have for their sport and how that passion has been developed and maintained in the patriarchal environment of collegiate athletics. Defined by Vallerand (2008) as “a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that one likes (or even loves), finds important, and in which one invests time and energy” (p. 4), understanding passion may help researchers and practitioners better understand the female college student-athlete experience. In particular, this research focuses on how passion has been developed and/or sustained in female athletes by examining the experiences of female college student-athletes who train and compete at the Division I level which is the highest competitive college level designated by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

This research is based on the following questions:

1. What are the ways in which passion for sport has been developed and continues to shape the lives of Division I (DI), female student-athletes?
2. Does passion for sport influence female student-athletes' behavior and actions in academic, social, and personal settings?

By asking these questions, hopefully, a more thorough comprehension of how passion is developed and maintained, as well as its influence on other domains experienced by female college student-athletes, has been garnered.

Research Problem

In most social institutions throughout the United States, leadership positions and opportunities are allocated to men. For example, most often men lead us in worship, our school administrators are often male, and we have yet to see a female president in our country. Such allocations often result in women's exclusion from policy making, educational opportunities and chances to gain wealth. As a social institution, college sports mirror other organizations, with

most Athletic Director positions being assigned to males, leaving women's voices sidelined. Likewise, participation by women in collegiate sports remains dubious. Although there have been an increased number of women participating in organized collegiate sports, this does not equate to "greater acceptance and/or equivalence and the positioning of women remains strongly contested" (Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 127). In other words, sporting environments are most often positioned to construct and maintain the predominant white, heterosexual, male and masculine identities associated with athletes specifically and athletics overall. In fact, Messner (1988) argues "sports have come to serve as a primary institutional means for bolstering a challenged and faltering ideology of male superiority" (p. 197). Female participation in the dominant masculine arena of sport represents a challenge to this prevailing sporting ideal. Therefore, a further understanding of the experiences of female college student-athletes was an important goal of the present study as rarely are there times or spaces in the dominant masculinized world of sport for women to be seen or heard, let alone have the ability to share their experiences. As women's issues continue to be at the forefront of debates today concerning equal pay and equal opportunity, college sports must also be examined as a space where inequities are commonplace.

As a way to more thoroughly understand the experiences of female student-athletes, an examination of a relatively new area of research called 'positive psychology' may be of value and will be the starting point of the literature review and research study. In general, positive psychology focuses on understanding ideas that make people's lives more fulfilling (Vallerand et al., 2003). According to Seligman (2005), positive psychology's goal is to stimulate changes in psychology from applications of reparation with what is wrong with life to stimulating life's best

qualities in people (as cited in Snyder & Lopez, 2005). As such, positive psychology generally focuses on an individual's strengths and helps each find spaces that allow such positive qualities to develop. While there are many characteristics of successful student-athlete attributes in the literature, one attribute that is of particular interest for this research is passion – specifically passion for an activity like sports. Because 'passion' can inspire creativity, improve well-being, and provide meaning to daily life, passion has become an important area of study within the realm of positive psychology (Vallerand et al., 2003).

The research on passion for an activity stems mainly from a macro-theory of motivation known as Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Vallerand et al., 2003). Motivation is a critical impetus of passion and thus important to its development. Arguably, without motivation, there is no passion. Thus, understanding both motivation and passion and what impacts each is valuable to teachers, parents and coaches who are focusing on creating a love for the learning process in their children or students. Additionally, the research surrounding passion's development is almost exclusively limited to quantitative understanding with little research from a qualitative perspective. The limited qualitative research that is present focuses mainly on adolescents in a variety of activities such as sport or art (Fredricks, Alfeld, & Eccles, 2010) or on youth's intrinsic motivation for physical education (Hassandra, Goudas, & Chroni, 2003). Such limited qualitative research surrounding motivation and passion may narrow our understanding of it. For example, Westmarland (2001) in her consideration of the quantitative/qualitative divide suggests, "it is not enough to simply know a (construct), we need to know how this (construct) affects the lives of women" (p. 7). Furthermore, Gelsthorpe and Morris (1990) suggest that quantitative methods are helpful in constructing background data whereas qualitative methods help create a

deeper understanding for the persons being studied (as cited in Westmarland, 2001). Therefore, gaining a deeper understanding of the passion evident in female athletes through qualitative methods was an important goal of the present research study. A great deal of data has been gathered quantitatively surrounding the constructs of motivation and passion. Digging deeper qualitatively fills a gap in the current research and understanding of these constructs. This research study's aim was to begin filling this gap.

Furthermore, most mainstream attention given to sports, at all levels, including college athletics, focuses on males. For example, consider the nightly news sports segment. If women are highlighted, it is often at the end of the broadcast. In fact, according to the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota, "Forty percent of all sports participants are female, yet women's sports receive only 4% of all sport media coverage and female athletes are much more likely than male athletes to be portrayed in sexually provocative poses" (www.cedh.umn.edu, Original Broadcast: 12/01/2013). Additionally, according to longitudinal research by Messner and Cooky (2010), sports coverage for women through major media outlets was at 5% in 1989, reached a peak in 1999 at 8.7% of total coverage, and drastically diminished to 1.6% in 2009. The disconnect between increased athletic participation by women and decreasing media coverage of women's sports greatly skews how women are perceived in sporting contexts and provides misrepresentation of and neglect for female passion for sport. Interestingly, Elueze and Jones (1998) argue the media continually present a masculine hegemony of sport that serves to strengthen the differences between male and female athletes using unique methods including, not covering women athletes at all or doing

so minimally, leading society to miscalculate the actual number of women participating in sports (as cited in Kian, 2007).

Yet, every day, many girls and women are training and competing passionately in sports at all levels, including college, without formal recognition and “largely without the help, notice, guidance and institutionalized resources of the larger society” (Davis & Weaving, 2010, p. 15). Such exclusion impacts sporting ideals and institutional practices. Likewise, “this exclusion of women from sport implies our exclusion from full participation in humanity” (p. 16). For example, because of “cultural prescriptions against using their bodies” females have historically been discouraged from doing so and thus, kept from reaching their full potentials (Dowling, 2000, p. 64). Such a sexist view of society, according to Davis and Weaving (2010), endangers women’s autonomy and subjectivity while creating a fertile landscape for dehumanizing women and girls. Furthermore, “when little girls are not given equal opportunity to play – or if they withdraw from opportunity because of what they’ve learned about what is ‘appropriate,’ they fall behind...the media, parents, teachers, and peers tell children in many obvious and subtle ways that if boys are one thing, girls are its opposite” (Dowling, 2000, p. 52). For instance, by age three, children know the gendered rules, internalize and practice them; thus, girls’ sports participation and skill lags behind boys because they start later, *not* because it is natural for girls to be less athletic than boys (Dowling, 2000). Yet, physical educators, like parents and the rest of society, often make assumptions about the “natural” abilities of boys and girls and these assumptions impact their teaching (Dowling, 2000). As such, boys learn how to fully utilize their bodies while girls “actually learn to hamper their movements, developing a body timidity that increases with age” (p. 56). Thus, interest in sports is often eliminated for girls, “and there is

evidence that this pressure on girls to distance themselves from PE and sports persists well into early adulthood” (Paechter, 2003, p. 196). The fact that college, female athletes surpass the odds and make it to such a high level of competitive and physical sporting standards, even within the disadvantaged milieu within which they have grown and developed, is of great interest to the present research. What has allowed these athletes to persist? How has passion played a role in such persistence? Answering such questions was important to this research. In addition, entering college, women athletes are once again situated in a place that historically has not granted women access to mobility: higher education.

Historically, education and physical education have favored males (Graham, 1978). For example, Graham explains, “unlike men, who were never barred from attending college on account of their sex, women were unable to enroll in any college until Oberlin permitted them entrance in 1837, ostensibly to provide ministers with intelligent, cultivated, and thoroughly schooled wives” (p. 764). Thus, the motivation for allowing women access to education was for the benefit of men, not greater equality for women. As women were slowly allowed entrance to college, women were not allowed to be faculty members until well after World War II when Alice Hamilton joined the medical school faculty at Harvard under the condition that she could not walk at commencement; once again displaying ability to move (walking) as power and inability to move (walk) as incapacity. In paychecks, rankings and tenure, women faculty members continue to be disadvantaged. For example, according to Graham, “although women currently constitute 24 percent of the college and university faculties across the nation, they make up a much smaller percentage of the faculties of the most prestigious institutions, particularly in the tenured ranks” (p. 768). Situated within university settings, intercollegiate

athletics, like academia, lags behind when it comes to opportunities for females. For example, in intercollegiate athletics, “nearly 18 percent of women’s programs are directed by females, and nearly 19 percent have no females anywhere in the athletic administrative structure” (Acosta & Carpenter, 2002, p. 2). Although Bourdieu (2001) suggests, “one of the most important changes in the status of women and one of the most decisive factors of change is undoubtedly the increased access of girls and women to secondary and higher education...they remain practically excluded from positions of authority and responsibility” (p. 94). With such limited female leadership in colleges’ academic and athletic realms, females historically and today, have limited role models once they arrive on campus and they have few opportunities to hear leading women’s voices or share their own. In such an environment, how do female student-athletes persist and sustain their passion?

By examining the topic of the experiences of female, Division I, student-athletes, a more complete understanding of passion’s development and maintenance can be gained while giving a voice to women who participate in the masculinized world of college sports. Although it cannot be assumed that passion resonates with all women playing college sports, it may be induced that passion has played a role at some point in their playing careers. As such, an investigation of the experiences of women playing college sports as a way to recognize how passion has been developed and sustained is an important research goal and critical to this research study. Finally, my own experiences as a female student-athlete, coach, and staff professional within athletics have led me to question and search for a further understanding of how females develop and maintain passion for sport given their lack of formal representation in the media or true understanding from society at large. As a former Division I gymnast, Division I coach and

current athletic academic advisor, I am keenly aware of the gender discrepancies within and surrounding sports that limit feminine voices. Given there are very few times and spaces in which female, college student-athletes have the chance to share their stories of passion and have their voices heard, it is critical to make available such circumstances. By providing such a space in the present research, the female sporting experience can be validated and potentially heard.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Passion in Positive Psychology

Understanding constructs that make life more positive is a relatively new goal of psychology labeled “positive psychology” (Peterson, 2010; Vallerand et al., 2003; Vallerand 2008). Rather than focusing on negative aspects, the focus in positive psychology is generally on what is good in life and makes it worth living (Peterson, 2010; Seligman, 2005; Vallerand, 2012). In other words, positive psychology generally focuses on people’s strengths while assisting each to find time and space to develop and maintain these strengths. As passion can inspire, improve well-being, and give meaning to life, it is an important area of study for teachers, coaches and researchers who are striving to bring equity to areas where it may not exist, such as sport (Vallerand et al., 2003, Vallerand, 2012). Women passionately participate in athletics daily for a multitude of reasons. Yet, the majority of sports media coverage – more than 95% - focuses on male participation and stories of men in sports who are passionately dedicated to their athletic performances and roles as athletes (University of Minnesota Tucker Center for Research, 2013, www.cehd.umn.edu). Given that only about 4-5% of media coverage for sport focuses on females, learning about women’s passion for sport and its development and maintenance is a critical step in chipping away at the dominant structures which limit equity in sport.

While passion can generally be viewed as positive, passion has also been shown to bring about emotions that are negative, result in rigid persistence, or obstruct the achievement of a balanced and successful lifestyle (Peterson, 2010; Vallerand et al., 2003). Thus, passion may be dualistic in nature. On one hand, it may inspire. On the other, it may stifle inspiration. Therefore, understanding how passion is developed in individuals is an especially important goal for

research. By increasing an understanding of passion's development, perhaps educators can inspire students' motivation toward the positive aspects of passionate activities and in doing so, enable healthier learning experiences. Although not highlighted in the media or society commonly, many women and girls participate passionately in sport, a masculine domain. As such, there is much to be gained from learning how their passion is developed and upheld. Defined as, "a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that one likes (or even loves), finds important, and in which one invests time and energy," passion, when approached healthily, may be a critical component to positive classroom experiences, coachable moments and a joyous life (Vallerand, 2008, p. 1).

Self-Determination Theory: An In Depth Starting Point for Passion

The research on passion for an activity, according to Vallerand et al. (2003), evolved from an understanding of the psychological motivational theory posited by Ryan and Deci (2000, 2002) called Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Passion's development is not possible without motivation. Thus to understand passion, motivation must also be understood. Seeking knowledge of human motivation has historically been a goal of the discipline of psychology. In the 1950's, theories of motivation began to shift from understanding motivation as *physiological drives* to realizing motivation may also stem from inherent *psychological needs* (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. vii). In addition to understanding motivation as associated with psychological needs, motivational theorists like Deci and Ryan started comprehending the importance of energy and direction as part of the motivational process. While energy relates to needs, those within an individual, and those obtained because of environmental interactions, direction "concerns the processes and structures of the organism that give meaning to internal and external stimuli,

thereby directing action toward the satisfaction of needs” (p. 3). Furthermore, direction also references the seeking out or approaching of an activity whereas intensity refers to the energy put toward the activity (Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992). In short, motivation can generally be described as the “direction and intensity of effort” (p. 61). Because, according to Ryan and Deci (2000, 2002), motivation gets results, it is thus of critical concern for people like teachers or coaches who are involved in rallying individuals to action (p. 69). Additionally, motivation is the impetus of passion. Thus, considering motivation provides a greater understanding of passion.

Armed with the knowledge of motivation as a combination of energy and direction allied with psychological needs, Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed the macro-theory of motivation known as Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT, stemming from positive psychology, begins with the belief in the premise that the individual is “an active organism striving for effective interactions with the environment in the hope of growing as an individual and living a meaningful life” (Vallerand, 2012, p. 42). In other words, SDT posits individuals have agency in their own actions to fulfill their own well-beings (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002; Vallerand, 1997; Vallerand, 2012). While generally SDT asserts people pursue activities that will allow for overall growth and well-being, it is also understood that, “this tendency to grow, however, may be facilitated, stalled, or stopped because of the organism’s vulnerability to being influenced by the environment” (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vallerand, 2012, p. 43). Because it examines a broad array of issues including “personality development, self-regulation, universal psychological needs, life goals and aspirations, energy and vitality, nonconscious processes, the relations of culture to motivation, affect, behavior and well-being,” SDT has been utilized to understand motivation in a variety of life domains, including education and sport (Deci & Ryan,

2008, p. 182). As indicated, motivation can generally be described as utilizing intensity and direction, yet SDT also posits an individual's motive for persisting in an activity can be examined by considering self-determined behavior towards personal growth on a continuum.

SDT's Motivational Continuum: Amotivation to Intrinsic Motivation

Believing that individuals are unique in their endeavors and their experiences, rather than examining the *amount* of motivation, Deci and Ryan (1985) recognized the *type* of motivation individuals' display is also important. As such, their theory of self-determination begins with highlighting motivation on a continuum of motivational type based on degree of self-determination. For instance, according to Hollebeak and Amorose (2005), "the reasons *why* individuals choose to participate, exert effort, and persist in an activity can be classified along a continuum of self-determined behavior" ranging from intrinsic motivation to extrinsic motivation to amotivation (p. 20). In general, self-determination can be defined as the degree to which an activity is freely chosen (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002). At one end of the SDT continuum is the least self-determined type of motivation known as amotivation. Amotivation is a state in which individuals lack motivation because they are "not able to perceive a contingency between their behavior and the subsequent outcomes of their behavior" (Pelletier, Dion, Tuson, & Green-Demers, 1999, p. 443). Because they are unable to foresee the outcomes of their actions, they doubt those actions and thus, lack motivation. Additionally, "amotivated behaviors are initiated and regulated by forces beyond the person's intentional control" (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 150). Furthermore, Legault, Green-Demers and Pelletier (2006) suggest individuals who are amotivated "may feel disintegrated or detached from their action and will thus invest little effort or energy in its effectuation" (p. 568). For example, a student who does not believe studying will

produce a successful grade may lose motivation to study as he/she doubts the action will yield successful results and thus, invests little to no effort in the endeavor. With little or no effort invested, there is no motivation and no possibility of passion developing.

Midway on the continuum of self-determined motivation is extrinsic motivation (EM). EM involves participating in an activity for instrumental reasons such as to receive awards or to avoid punishment (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vallerand, 1997). According to SDT, there are four types of EM that also range on a continuum of low to high degrees of self-determination. These four types of EM include external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation, which is the most self-determined EM (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, Connell, & Grolnick, 1992; Ryan & Deci, 2002). External regulation is the least self-determined within EM and is exemplified by behavior that is controlled by external forces such as rewards or punishments (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Introjected regulation denotes behavior that is motivated by pressure that is internal such as shame or worry (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The next type of EM is identified regulation which can be described as motivation that is internally regulated. Identified regulation is more self-determined and done out of choice due to the fact that an individual values the activity and finds it beneficial and important (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Pelletier, Fortier, Vallerand, Tuson, Brière, & Blaise, 1995). For instance, a person may choose to work-out doing cardiovascular actions because he or she sees the heart healthy benefits of completing continual exercise activities. The last type of EM according to SDT is integrated regulation. This motivational type is displayed when an action is harmonious with given social values that an individual has taken as his or her own (Deci & Ryan, 1985). For example, a person who decides to quit smoking, not because society demands it, but rather he or she has integrated the ideal that

smoking is unhealthy and therefore, modified the behavior, is exemplifying integrated regulation which is the most self-determined type of EM (Hollebeak & Amorose, 2005). The integration process is critical to passion's development and will be further discussed later in this literature review.

Finally, the most self-determined type of motivation on the SDT continuum is intrinsic motivation (IM). IM is evident when actions are performed for the joy and satisfaction of simply doing the activity. The action is performed for its own sake (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002; Vallerand, 1997, 2012). For example, when an individual reads for the pure enjoyment and satisfaction she gets from reading, the activity is said to be intrinsic. Certainly, people engage in activities for a variety of reasons including an arrangement of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (Weiss & Ferrer Caja, 2002). Yet, there are many benefits from participating in activities for more self-determined reasons. For example, people with an intrinsic motivational orientation tend to experience more joy, increased persistence, diminished anxiety and lower risk of dropping out of activities (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Hollebeak & Amorose, 2005; Vallerand, 1997; Vallerand & Losier, 1999; Weiss & Ferrer Caja, 2002). Additionally, a positive form of passion may stem from more self-determined motivation because the joy experienced may turn into a love for the activity which is a requisite for passion's development as proposed by Vallerand (2003).

SDT's Psychological Needs: Competence, Autonomy, Relatedness

In addition to the motivational types including amotivation, EM and IM falling on a continuum from least to most self-determined, SDT postulates people have three essential psychological needs, which when fulfilled encourage self-determination and thus, more fulfilled

lives and the possibility of developing passion for the activity. The three needs postulated by SDT include competence, autonomy and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Kipp & Amorose, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002). Competence involves the feeling or perception that one is able to complete a task effectively; autonomy is the belief that participation in an action is elected freely; and finally, relatedness involves a sense of belongingness to others (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002; Kipp & Amorose, 2008). For example, a softball player's need for competence may be met if she gains confidence after being praised by her coach for her excellent fielding; a gymnast who feels she has a choice of the elements placed in her floor exercise routine may be fulfilling her need for autonomy; finally, a tennis player who feels a connection with his team because of the positive interactions they have experienced together represents an individual whose need for relatedness is being met. According to Kipp and Amorose, "based on SDT, individuals will seek out activities that satisfy these three fundamental needs, and ultimately, anything that impacts one's sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness will impact the type of motivation that the individual develops for that activity" (p. 110). Additionally, the closer an activity is to fulfilling these three psychological needs, the greater the self-determination associated with participation. In other words, if an action fulfills the needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness, the action will be inherently enjoyable and the person will be motivated intrinsically to act (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vallerand, 1997). On the other hand, if the needs are not met, a person may still participate, but the motive would be less self-determined (e.g., participation to receive a prize or to please a teacher).

Furthermore, "any event, whether an award, a structure, or a communication, has two main functional aspects: a controlling aspect and an informational aspect" that impact intrinsic

motivation through the needs of autonomy and competence (Vallerand, 2012, p. 43). As such, controlling events tend to undermine IM due to perceived loss of autonomy, and informational events impact competence and can increase or decrease IM depending on their impact on perceptions of competence. In other words, if the controlling function is prominent, IM diminishes as a result of diminished perceptions of autonomy. Likewise, if the informational function is prominent, perceptions of competence processes are activated and IM will increase or decrease as a result (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vallerand, 2012). Thus, while external events like receiving scholarships or comprehending coaches' feedback are clearly from an external source, how such information is internalized within individuals impacts peoples' self-determined motivation, as well as their potential development of positive passion depending on whether the controlling or informational aspect is emphasized or desired by the athlete (Vallerand, 2012; Weinberg & Gould, 1995). For instance, sports scholarships may impact IM positively if they are seen as informational – athletes who respond this way to such scholarships see themselves as competent, fulfilling this need, thus increasing IM (Deci & Ryan, 1980). However, if the scholarship is seen as controlling and leveraged to regulate the athletes' behavior, it will negatively impact IM because of perceived loss of autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Medic, Mack, Wilson, & Starkes, 2007; Weinberg & Gould, 1995).

Similarly, praise and feedback, while coming from an external source such as a teacher, parent or coach, also play a role in motivation and the potential development of passion as it impacts perceived self-determination. For instance, according to Hollembeak and Amorose (2005), prior research on feedback from coaches studied the impact of positive and negative feedback on self-determined motivation and IM (e.g., Vallerand & Reid, 1984; Whitehead &

Corbin, 1991). While positive feedback has been shown to impact IM positively (Vallerand et al., 1983; Vallerand & Reid, 1984), later studies indicated that the quality of feedback was most important in impacting the need for competence and thus, IM (Horn, 1985; Horn & Amorose, 1998). For instance, Horn (1985) found that repeated praise for youth softball players resulted in lower levels of perceived competence while higher levels of specified, critical feedback increased perceptions of competence, thus increased IM. Horn clarified these results by stating that overpraising may imply that these athletes had reached their pinnacle, thus having nothing left upon which to improve. In other words, if teachers and coaches are praising just for praise's sake, this may undermine students' perceived competence and thus, diminish self-determined behavior and IM, as well as the potential development of a positive passion. On the other hand, "players receiving contingent performance-related criticism, including information on how to perform better in the future, may have been given the message that higher levels of performance are possible" (Weiss & Chaumeton, as cited in Horn, 1992, p. 75). In other words, quality of feedback that specifies room for growth and furthering potential is more important than quantity of feedback. By providing feedback that is relevant, perceptions of competence are increased and thus, IM or self-determination is positively impacted (Deci & Ryan, 1985, pp. 26-29) and the potential for developing a positive passion may be ignited. How teachers, parents and coaches interact and communicate with students matters in positively motivating students and may be critical in passion's positive development.

Interestingly, according to Deci and Ryan (1985), the energy for learning is provided by the competence need. To fill the need for competence, people must feel challenged and capable of successfully fulfilling challenges. Furthermore, Deci and Ryan explain, "the experiential aim

is the feeling of competence that results from effective action” (p. 27). Therefore, this feeling of competence can only be met if there is a “continual stretching of one’s capacities” (p. 27). In other words, seeking and fulfilling optimal challenges help satisfy the need for competence. According to Harter (1978), “individuals are motivated to demonstrate competence in an achievement area and do so by engaging in master attempts (i.e., learn and demonstrate sports skills)” (as cited in Horn, 1992, p. 65). If an individual has experiences where she masters a skill, the positive affect she experiences will increase her intrinsic motivation because her psychological need for competence will be met. To reiterate, experiences which impact a person’s perceptions of competence will also impact his or her self-determined motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and potentially his or her development of a positive passion.

In addition to the need for competence impacting IM and the potential for a positive passion to develop, Deci and Ryan (1985) also suggest, “self-determination or freedom from control is necessary for intrinsic motivation to be operative” (p. 30). Much research has shown behaviors that are intrinsically motivated stem from a need for control of one’s actions and environment (Angyal 1941; deCharms, 1968; Langer, 1975; Schorr & Rodin, 1984, as cited in Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 30). Although previous research examined control, Deci (1980, as cited in Deci & Ryan, 1985) posited that it was not a need to control the environment that was intrinsic; rather it was a need for choice or self-determination within one’s environment. Furthermore, when self-determined, people are free to initiate behavior; rather than individuals’ actions being contingent on or controlling the outcome during various experiences, people desire a say in their own engagements (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In other words, Deci and Ryan posit that people typically do not want control over outcomes; rather they want a choice in determining and

initiating their own actions. When freedom is threatened, individuals will act to restore it; if it cannot be restored individuals may become less self-determined or even amotivated and feel helpless to effect restoration (Brehm, 1966; Worman & Brehm 1975, as cited in Deci & Ryan, 1985). In such moments, IM is negated, and passion's development impossible.

As such, autonomy is a critical component of motivation. Interestingly, effort is often positively associated with intrinsic motivation as well because effort is perceived as an autonomous choice (i.e., I choose to work hard) and thus, fulfills SDT's psychological need of autonomy. When the need for autonomy is being satisfied, self-determination or IM is positively impacted. Conversely, if such need for autonomy is not being fulfilled, participation may still occur, but for less self-determined or intrinsic motives (Hollembek & Amorose, 2005; Kipp & Amorose, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002). For example, if the effort is associated with achieving an award, the energy utilized is for more extrinsic reasons which are often out of a person's control, thus diminishing the perception of autonomy and thus, IM and potentially the sustainment of passion.

While the needs for competence and autonomy play important roles in impacting the motivation continuum, relatedness, while less studied, also is important and is the third need highlighted by Deci and Ryan (2000, 2002) in SDT and may impact if and how passion is developed. Relatedness generally denotes feeling a connection with others; care for and by others, and a sense of belongingness to one's community and individuals within that community (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bowlby, 1979; Harlow, 1958; Ryan, 1995, as cited in Deci & Ryan, 2002). This need to belong has been acknowledged throughout peoples' lifetimes (Baldwin, 1992; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Weiner, 1995, as cited in Deci & Ryan, 2002). For example,

Bowlby (1988) suggests when a person knows someone “is available and responsive (it) gives him a strong and pervasive feeling of security, and so encourages him to value and continue the relationship” (p. 27). Bowlby explains further that this attachment is as important to people as eating and having sex. Additionally, Baumeister and Leary (1995) discuss the “belongingness hypothesis,” which says, “human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships” (p. 497).

Interestingly, Hollembeak and Amorose (2005) found relatedness to be a significant and positive predictor of IM in college, student-athletes and the relationship between IM and relatedness was stronger than that of perceived competence and IM (p. 34). Thus, relatedness, although studied less in its relationship to IM, is an important component of SDT and the needs associated with self-determination and the potential of developing a positive passion.

Finally, according to Ryan and Deci (2000, 2002), human beings, at their finest, are seemingly curious, self-motivated and determined to utilize talents as a way to gain understanding and learn new skills. Unfortunately, the human spirit can also be weakened, leading some to abandon curiosity or responsibility, resulting in actions that are apathetic, separated, or amotivational. Therefore, finding ways to fulfill psychological needs through more self-determined activities is important for researchers and practitioners like teachers and coaches as the benefits for participating in activities for intrinsic reasons are great and may lead to positive production of passion for an activity. Thus, understanding why females persist in a domain such as athletics, which is dominated by patriarchal ideals that are continuously perpetuated, is important. SDT would suggest female student-athletes’ needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness are being met and therefore, they are motivated to persist in athletics.

Yet historically, in education and in sport, women have not had the chance to gain competence, choose to participate, or relate to peers, coaches, teachers, etc., because these institutions have not always welcomed their participation. Today, women can participate, but with less freedom than their male counterparts because of the historical roles that determined women's places in education and sport. Perhaps if needs are met and persistence prevails, then females can contest the dominant ideology present in sport and maintain their passion for athletic activities. Gaining depth into such rationale is important to further understanding passion and was a critical goal of this study.

Research on Passion: Philosophy versus Psychology

Prior to Vallerand et al. (2003), the research on passion for an activity was seemingly nonexistent (Fredricks, Alfeld & Eccles, 2010). Rather, discussions on passion were generally housed in philosophy where it was frowned upon as issues of the head (reason) were of greater importance than matters of the heart (passion) (Solomon, 1976). Yet Solomon argues, "It is our passions and our passions alone that provide our lives with meaning" (p. xiv). Interestingly, the word passion seems to stem from the Latin, *patoir*, which means to endure and suffer; quite a contrast to the present day when we use passion to describe enjoyable activities rather than painful pursuits (Peterson, 2010). Traditionally, the term passion was also utilized as a description of Christian martyrdom and Christ's suffering. Thus, according to Peterson, the term passion historically and philosophically "came to mean, more generally, very strong emotions, not only suffering, but also what sustained the person who suffered" (p. 1). Although philosophy's examination of passion is long and storied and tends to look at passion as a factor in humanity that must be controlled or suffered through, for the purpose of this literature review,

the focus will be on psychology's perspective with a specific focus on passion for an activity. While some research has focused on passion in dependency or addiction (e.g., Glasser, 1976; Sachs, 1981, as cited in Vallerand et al., 2003) or creativity (Goldberg, 1986), passion's motivational capacity was initially examined by Frijda, Mesquita, Sonnemans, and Van Goozen (1991) and involved time and energy spent in goal attainment (as cited in Vallerand, 2003).

Additionally, work in psychology has focused on romantic passion (Vallerand, 2008, 2012) rather than looking at passion towards an activity. Interested in Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT; 2000), Vallerand et al. (2003) grasped the idea that some activities that fulfill participants' needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness, while generating great enjoyment, become increasingly important and resonate within one's self-view. Such activities, according to Vallerand et al., are passionate activities. Furthermore, "these activities come to be so self-defining that they represent central features of one's identity" (Vallerand, 2008, p. 2). The idea that passions define people differentiates the concept of passion from constructs like perseverance and persistence (Peterson, 2010). For instance, students may persist at completing a final paper for their history of art course without such persistence leading to a passion toward art history. While passion is similar to the concept of flow which is defined as "a state of concentration so focused that it amounts to absolute absorption in an activity" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 1), generally flow can be seen as a result of passion (Vallerand, 2003; Vallerand et al., 2007, p. 2). Moreover, passionate activities are so highly valued they become internalized within a person's self-perception (Vallerand et al., 2003, 2008, 2012), and this often begins in adolescence (Peterson, 2010). For example, rather than being a person who plays football or acts, passionate individuals become football players or actors, that is the activity is all or part of their

identity. How does this transfer to female college student-athletes? Do they self-identify as tennis players or basketball players? The research would suggest so, yet how does this development occur and how is passion sustained when females play in a mainly masculine environment and institution called sport? Gaining an understanding of the situations where and how such development and maintenance of passion occurs were additional critical questions for this research and understanding passion's development.

Passion's Dualistic Nature: Obsession versus Harmony

In addition to identifying passion towards an activity from SDT, Vallerand et al. (2003) proposed two distinct types of passion, obsessive and harmonious. According to Peterson (2010), "although distinguishable (obsessive passion and harmonious passion), they can co-occur and – interestingly – both contribute to one's self-image" (p. 2). However, to distinguish between the passion type depends on the process by which the activity has been incorporated into a person's identity. For example, "Self-Determination Theory and research has shown that elements from the environment can be internalized in either a controlled or an autonomous fashion" (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Sheldon, 2002; Vallerand et al., 1997, as cited in Vallerand 2012). In other words, if the internalization and integration of the activity is a result of controlling behavior, the passion is said to be obsessive; the passion controls the person. People with obsessive passion towards an activity must engage in the activity regardless of negative consequences or dangerous outcomes (Peterson, 2010; Vallerand, 2008, 2012). Therefore, their persistence towards the activity is unbending as their ego is dependent on the activity. Such obsession may lead to dependency on the activity whereas other aspects of life are foregone. Obsessive passion towards an activity can hinder social relationships, and people participating

obsessively in their activity may experience shame as a result (Peterson, 2010; Vallerand, 2012). Because a passionately obsessed person has to do the activity, that activity is in control of life. For example, a student-athlete who is obsessed with her sport may potentially suffer from reaching her full potential because other important activities are foregone, making the passionate activity a rigid task involving guilt and anxiety and lacking joy (Vallerand, 2008, 2012).

Alternatively, harmonious passion is evident when the passionate activity is internalized autonomously within one's identity. Individuals with harmonious passion are free to allow space in their lives for the activity devoid of contingency. Stemming from intrinsic propensities within the self (Deci & Ryan, 2000), such actions, "produce a motivational force to engage in the activity willingly and engenders a sense of volition and personal endorsement about pursuing the activity" (Vallerand, 2008, p. 2). In harmonious passion, the activity is highly valued within a person's identity, yet not overwhelming and leads to positive outcomes during the activity and following it. As such, there is balance between the passionate activity and other life responsibilities. If unable to engage in their passion, those with harmonious passion are able to focus resources on other tasks and feel they have the choice as to when to partake again. In other words, a harmoniously passionate student-athlete who is in midterms will freely choose to study during free time rather than play in open gym without feeling guilty or anxious about his or her decision. Therefore, "behavioral engagement in the passionate activity can be seen as flexible" within those who are harmoniously passionate towards an activity (p. 2).

Overall, the development of a harmonious passion is ostensibly healthier for individuals. For example, "harmonious passion is linked to the usual suspects that comprise the psychological good life: positive affect, life satisfaction, physical health, and good performance (at the

passionate activity)” (Peterson, 2010, p. 2). As such, understanding contexts where and moments when passion is developed is critical and was an important part of this research. In so doing, much was gained to assist in understanding passion’s positive development and an opportunity is presented for parents, teachers and coaches to assist everyone, regardless of demographics, in developing positive passions. Researchers have historically contended that participation in sports plays an important part in social-psychological growth (Bredemeier, 1984; Kane, 1988; Martens, 1978; McCloy, 1957). For example, “students involved in sport report higher educational expectations than those who are not involved” and “females involvement in interscholastic high school sport is positively correlated to attainment of a bachelor’s degree” (Troutman & Dufur, 2007, p. 189). However, according to Kane (1988), historically sports have been gender specific, and sports and masculinity intertwined while the sporting passions of male athletes are cherished. Additionally, the mass media continually highlight what is valued and who is esteemed in American culture. The message of women’s positioning as the other in society is sent to girls and women from birth through many modes including political, historical and societal institutions such as the media. For instance, by relegating less than 5% of media coverage to female athletes (Tucker Institute at University of Minnesota, 2013), it is clear that the passions of female athletes have been and continue to be diminished and devalued in our society, making the resulting inequities an issue of social justice. Giving voice to female athletic participants can be a starting ground for female athletic participation to become more highly valued in our culture while contesting the gendered stereotypes prevalent in sport. The present research attempted to give a voice to college female student-athletes by learning about their

experiences in collegiate athletics and how such experiences have fulfilled and sustained their development of passion in a variety of contexts.

Measuring the Concept of Passion

To measure the concept of passion and test the validity of their definition of passion, Vallerand et al. (2003) created the Passion Scale. In so doing, Vallerand and colleagues were able to provide strong support showing that the two types of passion, harmonious and obsessive, existed. Additionally, both types of passion were said to be positively associated with the evaluation of an activity as a passionate one. Also, harmonious and obsessive passions were shown to have varying affective outcomes (p. 761). This initial research offered support for the concepts of both types of passion and the unique emotional outcomes of each. Additional research has supported the validity of the Passion Scale and found consistency in its measures on passion toward an activity such as sport or dance (Vallerand, Rousseau, Grouzet, Dumais, Grenier, & Blanchard, 2006; Wang & Chu, 2007).

The Passion Scale has six items each within two subscales – one for harmonious passion and one for obsessive passion (Vallerand, 2010). While a quantitative measure for passion has been very beneficial to further understanding passion, very little research has been done qualitatively to understand experiences that have led to passion being developed. However, understanding such experience is critical to the overall understanding of the construct of passion. What has been done qualitatively has focused mainly on adolescents and their experiences in and commitment to extracurricular activities (Frederick's, Alfeld-Liro, Hrada, Eccles, Patrick, & Ryan, 2002; Frederick's, Alfeld, & Eccles, 2010) or on children's intrinsic motivation regarding physical education (Hassandra, Goudas, & Chroni, 2003). Interestingly, Frederick's, Alfeld and Eccles (2010) found that passionate "youth were more likely to talk about wanting to do their

activity all the time, experiencing flow, getting emotional release from participation and internalizing the activity into their identity” (p. 18). The benefits of qualitative research’s ability to go deeper into the understanding of passion “by attending to the particulars” makes it an important part of learning how passion develops and what times and spaces such development occurs (Schram, 2006). Thus, more qualitative studies, such as this research, should be conducted to add to the growing body of literature on passion in particular as it relates to female college athletes whose sporting lives are often left out of the dominant conversation.

Outcomes of Passion

Much of the research on passion has revealed the positive affect of harmonious passion and conversely, a more negative affect of obsessive passion. While both types of passion lead to persistent practice and higher performance levels (novice, to intermediate, to advanced, to elite), each passion type has unique personal results. For example, harmonious passion has been shown to lead to improved affect in a person’s life (Mageau, Vallerand, Rousseau, Ratelle, & Provencher, 2005; Rousseau & Vallerand, 2003; Vallerand et al. 2003; Vallerand, Salvy, Mageau, Elliot, Denis, Grouzet, & Blanchard, 2007). Specifically, in elderly adults, those with harmonious passion towards an activity experienced greater vitality and satisfaction with life while those with obsessive passion reported lower subjective well-being (Rousseau & Vallerand, 2008). Similar results were found with athletes wherein more adaptive outcomes such as overall joy and well-being are associated with harmonious passion towards sport than obsessive passion (Vallerand et al., 2006). Furthermore, passion research shows that harmonious passion results in constructive emotions during and after participation in the activity (Mageau et al., 2005; Vallerand et al., 2006). Interestingly, in dramatic art students, obsessive passion was found to be

unrelated to life satisfaction, yet harmonious passion was positively and significantly related to overall satisfaction with life (Vallerand et al., 2007).

In addition to emotional outcomes, passion may also impact physical well-being (Peterson, 2010; Vallerand et al., 2003). For example, cyclists with a more obsessive passion towards biking were more likely to put themselves in dangerous situations in order to complete their passionate task (i.e., biking outdoors in winter). Similarly, in dancers, harmonious passion was unrelated to chronic injuries as harmoniously passionate dancers were able to take time away from dance before injuries became chronic, whereas their obsessively passionate counterparts were more likely to experience chronic injuries because of their inability to take time off from dance (Rip, Fortin, & Vallerand, 2006).

Performance outcomes have also been studied in relation to obsessive and harmonious passion. Both types of passion are believed to be related to persistence at a task resulting in high level performance where people move from novice participants to more elite contestants in their chosen activity (Fredrick's, Alfeld & Eccles, 2010, Vallerand, 2008, p. 7). Several studies by Vallerand (2008) have been conducted to confirm the relationship between passion (both harmonious and obsessive) and practice persistence leading to various performance outcomes. Such research has involved artists and athletes and reveals that passion, indeed, impacts one's motivation to practice persistently leading people to move toward higher levels of performance (Vallerand, 2008). However, when harmonious passion is engaged, passionate people tend to focus on skill improvement, which leads to high performance levels. Conversely, when obsessive passion is employed, the passionate person is more inclined to focus on his or her competence or incompetence in relation to others, a seemingly less healthy approach as the measure is against

others rather than within the individual (Vallerand, 2008, 2010). In sum, passions should be followed in healthy ways that allow them to prolong well-being. Certainly, the fact that there is sacrifice in the pursuit of the activity helps define the activity as passionate. However, passionate activities are “healthy when the sacrifice is as freely undertaken as the activity itself and does not undercut the goal of the passionate activity... That passions may strike others as irrational is irrelevant in describing them as harmonious or obsessive, healthy or unhealthy” because passions are personal and what is important about them is that they are understood by the individual pursuing the passionate activity (Peterson, 2010, p. 3). Thus, it is important for teachers and coaches to understand the implications of passion and where it is focused. In doing so, perhaps passion can be developed positively in those, regardless of gender or any demographic, who display a love for certain activities, ultimately leading to more affirmative experiences with the activity and life overall.

Developing Passion

Given the relatively positive outcomes of passion, especially harmonious passion, understanding how passion is developed and sustained was a critical part in the present research on passion for an activity like sports. Passion’s development has been connected to accomplishment, persistence, excellence and happiness (Ben-Shaher, 2007; Colvin, 2008; Posner & Eiler, 2013; Vallerand, 2007; Veeck & Williams, 2005). According to Kouzes and Posner (2002), foreseeing the future as positive starts with the idea that an activity is worth pursuing and explained, “we don’t see the possibilities when we don’t feel the passion” (p. 122). Veeck (2008) suggests passion provides purpose as values become aligned with effort (p. 4). Similarly, Ben-Shaher (2007) examines the relationship between passion and happiness and suggested both

happiness and passions are developed when people engage in activities that are meaningful and pleasurable. Additionally, according to Fredrick's, Alfeld and Eccles (2010), "Developing a passion can increase motivation, enhance well-being, and result in more positive affect" (p. 18). While past research has indicated that valuation for the activity (Deci et al., 1994), time and energy on task (Emmons, 1999), and liking of the undertaking (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993, as cited in Johri &Yadav, 2012), are all linked to people participating in interesting activities, three processes are suggested to influence how passionate activities are developed: the selection of the activity, the valuation of the activity, and how the activity is internalized and represented in one's identity (Vallerand, 2008, p. 8). Activity selection, according to Vallerand, involves preferences for one activity over others; valuation includes the subjective meaning placed on the activity and also impacts how the activity is internalized in identity. Studies have shown when an activity is valued greatly individuals generally internalize it and perceive the activity as part of the self (Aron, Aron, & Smollen, 1992; Deci, Eghrari, Patrick & Leone, 1994, as cited in Vallerand, 2008). The more important the activity becomes, the greater the internalization and the more passionate the person becomes for the activity (Vallerand, 2008, p. 8). Therefore, according to Vallerand, "activity valuation can be seen as the intensity (or quantity) dimension (the fuel) underlying activity internalization and the development of passion" (p. 8).

How the internalization takes place within the individual is of utmost importance as the greater the autonomy associated with internalization, the greater likelihood of harmonious passion being developed, leading to more positive outcomes. Conversely, the more controlled the internalization process, the more likely the passion will become obsessive (Vallerand, 2008).

Research has also shown that the internalization process is influenced by both personality and social factors (Johri & Yadav, 2012; Vallerand, 2012). Furthermore, Deci and Ryan (1987) suggest the internalization process is impacted by how social structures influence autonomous behavior. For example, autonomy support received from individuals such as “parents and teachers facilitates children’s autonomous internalization of values and regulations of non-interesting activities such as school... Thus, autonomy support will facilitate the autonomous internalization of the interesting activity in one’s identity and self, leading to harmonious passion” (Johri & Yadav, 2012, p. 2). Conversely, behavior that is perceived as controlled by important figures like parents, coaches or teachers will facilitate a controlled internalization of an activity leading to more obsessively passionate people.

In addition to social factors influencing the development of passion, it seems that personality also plays a role (Vallerand & Houliort, 2003; Vallerand & Miquelon, 2007; Vallerand et al., 2006). For example, when people have a more autonomous personality orientation, meaning they generally participate for fun and feel they have a choice in participation, the tendency to develop harmonious passion is more prevalent. On the other hand, individuals with a more controlled personality orientation, where there is inner pressure to participate, may have a prevalence toward obsessive passion’s development (Guay, Mageau, & Vallerand, 2003; Vallerand, 2007). While both harmonious and obsessive passion may ultimately lead to high levels of performance, harmonious passion is seemingly healthier as it stems from more autonomous motives. Yet, most all of these studies have been completed quantitatively, measuring passion and its development numerically. Therefore, by seeking to understand ‘how passion is developed’ in passionate athletes through qualitative phenomenological processes as

was the case in this study, much has been gained. Furthermore, by asking about the particulars of such development qualitatively, much was added to the understanding of passion's impetus. More qualitative research, such as the present investigation, with passionate female athletes is needed to add to the current comprehension of the development of passion.

Passion is Androgynous: Why do Female Athlete's Voices Matter?

While research on passion for sport has generally not found gender differences (Phillipe, Vallerand, & Lavigne, 2009; Vallerand, 2008), hearing from and learning about women's experiences in sport, specifically in the development of passion, matters because athletics has historically been situated in the dominant patriarchal hegemony in society that takes issue with women as athletes. For example, Anderson (2008) contends, "gendered institutions are always dynamic arenas of tension and struggle, but perhaps there is no other institution in which gender is more naturalized than sport" (p. 260). Additionally, sports are a "highly segregated, homophobic, sexist, and misogynistic gender regime," which helps maintain a gendered order while reproducing masculine ideals (p. 260). Furthermore, "maintaining the masculine status quo of sport requires continued work to exclude or "other" those who do not properly fit the category, which is apparent in the media framing of female athleticism" (Kane & Lenskyj, 1998, as cited in Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 129). As such, "reproducing masculinity requires the policing of femininity, because these categories are dichotomous and cannot be constructed without an oppositional framing" (Hall, 1988; Lakoff, 1987, as cited in Mean & Kassing, 2008, p. 129). In sport, the legitimation of hierarchical power in the patriarchal sense is apparent because, in general, men are physiologically stronger than women, making their ability to jump higher or run faster a reason for keeping hegemonic structures intact.

This tendency to rely on biological differences for hegemonic purposes serves to legitimize the idea of men as dominant and women as subordinate, as natural and ordained. Because sport often reflects society, dominant ideologies as situated in sport through biological differences are embraced and celebrated. As such, innate differences are seen as superiority in men and inferiority in women. Women who attempt to cross into the powerful world of sports are seen as unusual and thus, the hierarchy remains intact (Willis, 1996, p. 41). Furthermore, Willis suggests that to succeed in sport is to succeed in masculinity and to fail at femininity. Thus, the existence of women in sports historically, according to Willis, has been understood as peculiar and serves to maintain the continuation of the dominant ideology seen in both athletics and in society (p. 36). This view of women athletes cannot be changed unless we understand more fully why women participate in their passionate activities and how these passions are initially developed and sustained.

Finally, the institution of sport often times reflects the larger society. Salter (1996) suggests that “[a]thletics is a part of a universal fabric. It is revered, scrutinized, analyzed, but always cherished” (p. 9). As such, sports have the opportunity to transform. Yet, athletics has historically been situated in the dominant patriarchal hegemony in society that often takes issue with women as athletes. Thus, according to Mean and Kassing (2008), “sport remains a powerful gender demarcator, reproducing traditional hegemonic forms that render the relationship between sport, the body, gender and sexuality especially ideologically challenging” (p. 127). Furthermore, because of the paradox between increased numbers of participants and concern about femininity and its place in the world, as well as diminished media coverage of female sports, historically, little has happened to change or challenge the dominant ideology present in athletics.

As such, women who are successful athletes are still scrutinized because as Butler (2006) articulates, “[t]hose who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished” (p. 63). Because being successful in sports is seen as masculine, a successful or passionate female athlete is perplexing as she contests masculinity. However, according to Mean and Kassing (2008), “there is nothing inherently male about some of the key themes relevant to the community of sport (such as dreams), except their powerful association with a masculine foundational discourse that makes their mobilization inherently gendered in sporting contests, hence problematic for women athletes” (p. 142). Therefore, women who succeed in athletics often have the additional task of managing femininity within the dominant male hegemony as femininity and athleticism are two expressions that “need something to mitigate their ostensible incongruity” (Schulz, 2014, p. 5). For example, Krane, Ross, Miller, Rowse, Ganoë, Andrzejczyk, and Lucas (2010) argue, “female athletes learn the importance of presenting a suitably feminine image; those who do not perform femininity acceptably often are labeled deviant and face discrimination” (p. 176). Furthermore, according to Krane et al., “this continuous negotiation of femininity and athleticism has been expressed by women across a variety of sport contexts, including soccer (Cox & Thompson 2000), rugby (Baird 2001, Chase 2006), gymnastics and softball (Ross & Shinenew 2008)” (p. 177). Finally, Butler (2003) argues the body is filled with possibilities that are not predestined or innate; in fact, “the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives” (p. 67). Negotiating the possibilities of the female athletic body is a challenge that women participating in sports face because the idealized image of the male body as athlete is culturally dominant. Understanding

how such negotiation takes place in passion's development and maintenance was critical to the present research.

With this dominating ideology intact, the masculine version of what is ideal continues to dictate how society thinks. Because historically, intercollegiate sport has its roots in football, a 'males only' institution, college sports have been reproduced in a historically male situation. In this sense, the body is, as Butler (2003) suggests, filled with possibilities "both conditioned and circumscribed by historical convention and thus, in a manner of doing, dramatizing, and reproducing an historical situation" (p. 63). Although all bodies have the possibility of becoming athletic, because college sport has been replicated and performed as a masculine domain throughout history, there it remains, situated in the dominant, male, hegemonic ideal.

Conclusion

Much of the current research on passion for an activity stems from Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory which examines motivation for action in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as amotivation, based on the psychological needs of competency, autonomy and relatedness being fulfilled. Current research on passion for an activity stems from this theory and was thus, an important starting point in this literature review and research study. While the research on self-determination and passion has generally not shown any significant gender differences, athletics has historically been situated in the dominant patriarchal hegemony in society that often takes issue with women as athletes. As such, females historically have not had the opportunity to gain the needs of competence, autonomy or relatedness through collegiate sports that SDT sees as requisites for self-determination. Thus, learning about women's experiences in sports and how their passions have been developed and sustained is critical to

breaking barriers that are held tightly in place through solidly built ideals that perpetuate the inequities girls and women face in sport and society overall. The assumptions presented in sport and society today include the idea that a boy's body is capable and allowed to physically move and explore passion for activities in a rough and tumble world that includes kinesthetic physicality. As boys grow into men, this ability to move freely in any space, like sports or business, is reinforced. Conversely, girl's bodies are assumed to be created for docility and submissiveness. This assumed inability to move is also reinforced culturally, limiting the development of passion for sports (or other masculine domains) as they grow into women. Such assumptions limit potentials. Although girls now participate in a wider range of sports and exercise than ever before, in part due to the 1972 passage of Title IX, today, there are still inequalities as evidenced in the lack of sports media coverage for women. With the lack of and diminishing media coverage, or time and space for women athletes to be seen and heard, much of society assumes that females' participation in sport is insignificant and meaningless. Although thousands of girls and women participate daily in sport and physical activity at the college level, the representation of the ideal 'passionate' athlete is always male. Thus, the discourse surrounding sport is gendered and difficult to penetrate with alternative possibilities.

Recognizing that all bodies have the possibility of becoming athletic is an important initial step in breaking barriers and was an important goal of the current study. Knowing that female athletes persist in this seemingly impenetrable sporting environment provides hope for transformation and social justice. Understanding how their passions are developed and how they persist was important for this research and critical to leveling the playing field for girls and women in sport.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY/RESEARCH DESIGN

Conceptual Framework

Much of the current research on passion for an activity stems from Deci and Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT). This theory examines motivation in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as amotivation, based on the psychological needs of competency, autonomy and relatedness being fulfilled. Current research on passion for an activity stems from SDT and was an important starting point in the present research study. Therefore, this study has been undertaken to understand how passion for sport has been shaped and maintained in the lives of Division I, female student-athletes. More specifically, it aimed to capture women's stories and perspectives on their own understandings of passion's development; therefore, qualitative research was necessary. According to Lichtman (2010), qualitative research is "a way of knowing in which a researcher gathers, organizes, and interprets information obtained from humans using his or her eyes and ears as filters" (p. 5). Likewise, Creswell (2009) suggests, "qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). The meanings individuals make vary from person to person and are complex based on one's position or perspective. Informed by phenomenology, this study provided a deeper understanding of collegiate, female student-athletes' perceptions of their own development of passion in sport. For example, Merriam (2002) suggests the significant "characteristic of phenomenological research is its focus on describing the "essence" of a phenomenon from the perspectives of those who have experienced it" (p. 93). Likewise, Lester (1999) suggests, "phenomenological approaches are based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasize the importance of personal perspective and interpretation... (and) are particularly effective at bringing to the fore

the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives” (p. 1).

Phenomenology was an influential philosophy in this research by making sense of female’s sporting experiences and creating meaning from such experiences. In addition, it provided a better understanding of when and where passion for sport was developed and sustained in female student-athletes, but also who or what influences this development from their own perspectives.

The female college sporting experience was critical to the present research; thus, a feminist approach was also essential. According to Schram (2006), “Feminist thinking places gender front and center in its focus” (p. 49). Likewise, Creswell (2009) suggests, “Feminist perspectives view as problematic women’s diverse situations and the institutions that frame those situations” (p. 62). Females persist (often passionately) in the institutions of sport and academia in their roles as student-athletes even as such institutions historically have limited their voices. Using qualitative methodology informed by feminist and phenomenological philosophies, this study helped unravel how females’ passion for sport develops and is sustained in otherwise masculinized environments.

Sample

As a researcher, I was “bound by the code of conduct and ethical standards imposed by (a) college or university” (Lichtman, 2010, p. 63). As such, the present research began by obtaining permission from the College of Education’s Local Review Board (LRB) and the institution’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon approval from both the LRB and IRB, research was started. Division I women’s basketball, student-athletes from a private university in the Midwest labeled Midwest Private University (MPU) for the purpose of this research, were contacted at a team meeting and asked if they would like to participate in this study. The choice of women’s basketball was because women’s basketball programs are most often compared to

men's programs due to the similarity of their game's rules and regulations, as well as recruitment of players. Additionally, women's basketball receives the largest amount of sports media coverage (albeit relatively small) surrounding women's athletics while having the potential to generate more revenue than other women's college sports (Eichelberger, 2011; Messner & Cooky, 2010). Therefore, understanding women's basketball players' experiences as student-athletes at MPU who play and compete passionately in their sport provided great insight into the essence of passion's development and maintenance in Division I athletics, as well as how passion influences other life domains such as school and personal development.

Additionally, the selection included ten student-athletes in their second, third, fourth or fifth year of eligibility from the women's basketball team. Selecting student-athletes from this group was logical because such student-athletes have experienced at least one year of participating in college athletics. In short, these female, student-athletes are in the process of experiencing their passions through a common journey that can be shared and thus, better understood. Prior to their participation in the research, informed consent was signed and individual interviews, as well as the focus group, were set up at times conducive to their and my schedules.

Methods of Data Collection

In addition to the sampling of participants, methods of data collection are important. According to Frechtling and Sharp (1997), utilizing interviews for collecting data as a method starts with "the assumption that the participants' perspectives are meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit, and that their perspectives affect the success of the project" (pp. 3-5). Interviews are often a good choice when personal contact is significant and when follow up on

interesting data is necessary. Interested in learning about the development and maintenance of passion in female, college student-athletes, I employed interviews as a space for those who were interviewed to share openly about their experiences that are meaningful to them in their development of passion toward sports. Furthermore, feminist interviewing techniques were critical to this research and included the ideas that Hesse-Biber (2006) points out. For example,

As a feminist interviewer, I am interested in getting at the subjugated knowledge of diversity of women's realities that often lie hidden and unarticulated. I am asking questions and exploring issues that are of particular concern to women's lives. I am interested in issues of social change and social justice for women and other oppressed groups. As a feminist interviewer, I am aware of the nature of my relationship to those whom I interview, careful to understand my particular personal and research standpoints and what role I play in the interview process in terms of my power and authority over the interview situation. (p. 114)

In short, through interviews, as a feminist, I was concerned about the participants and their ways of knowing and understanding the imbalanced world in which we live while simultaneously understanding my own positioning. Particularly, in this study, audio recorded semi-structured/ guided interviews were conducted with female, college basketball players from MPU. Guided or semi-structured interviews involve "developing a general set of questions and format that (I) follow and use with all participants" (Lichtman, 2010, p. 141). Semi-structured interviews allowed guided questions with flexibility as the situation demanded. Closely, well-developed interview questions (see Appendix A) were followed as the interest was in hearing freely chosen responses to interviewees' perceptions of how their passion for sport has developed and the

impact such development has made on their lives. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were an appropriate method for collecting data. Furthermore, “a semi-structured protocol has the advantage of asking all informants the same core questions with the freedom to ask follow-up questions that build on the responses received” (Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2009, p. 362). Having guidance along with flexibility for follow up was an advantage to semi-structured interviews. Additionally, interviews were conducted in a tutoring room of the MPU athletic center. Because it was a neutral space, yet a space all participants and I were familiar with and likely more comfortable in, it was a good choice for the semi-structured, guided interviews. Individual interviews began following fall quarter, 2014. Although I work in the athletic department, I have no evaluative authority over the students, rather my role as an academic advisor is that of advocate and support staff.

In addition to audio-recorded semi-structured interviews, the use of an audio recorded focus group as a follow up was utilized. Because women’s basketball is a team sport, the experiences these women have in sport is most often surrounded by their teammates. As such, functioning as a team is authentic to their experiences as student-athletes. Because of such authenticity, much was gained through a focus group where the student-athletes’ natural camaraderie with each other was enhanced. In short, focus groups were utilized as a follow up to individual interviews to give the participants a chance to listen to each other’s experiences and uncover additional information regarding their own experiences of which they may not have been aware. According to Madriz (2012), “In sharing their lives, women confirm and recognize the existence of common patterns and experiences in their everyday lives...through this sharing, women’s voices are validated in a collaborative way” (p. 117). Interestingly, the focus group

may have mimicked the team setting from which student-athletes experience college sports. As such, it was an important addition to this study. All but one participant was able to participate in the focus group. In that one instance, a follow up email was sent to her for additional feedback. However, she did not respond to the email, therefore, only her one-on-one interview was used as part of the data collection. Similar to the semi-structured interviews, the focus group also utilized semi-structured tactics. A list of questions generated for IRB approval, as well as from information garnered from individual interviews, was created as a guide for the focus group that took place in a conference room in the advising offices at MPU (see Appendix B). For example, according to Lichtman (2010), “many researchers use such a plan as a guide and are willing to modify it as needed” (p. 154).

In addition to interviews and a focus group, observations of the participants during competitions occurred to gain insight into their interactions with coaches, teammates and the game. Because passion is often positively influenced by relatedness, observing the women basketball players in their athletic settings where interactions are taking place enhanced this study. Additionally, “astute observing is an excellent way to gather information in your qualitative study” (Lichtman, 2010, p. 173). Furthermore, using a multitude of information gathering techniques adds data triangulation to this study, enhancing credibility and validity (Lichtman, 2010; Merriam, 2002). Overall, the goal was to utilize semi-structured interviews and a focus group, as well as to observe female, student-athletes during games. The goal of such methods “is to elicit rich, detailed material that can be used in analysis” (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, as cited in www.nsf.gov). Inherent in this goal was to better understand what experiences

female, college student-athletes perceive as important in their development and maintenance of passion.

Methods of Data Analyses

All data were transcribed using TranscriptionStar, a private transcription company. Transcribed data was organized into electronic files stored on a password protected computer for coding and categorizing key concepts or themes. Additionally, to validate the research, transcriptions were sent to study participants via email for feedback including clarification or inaccuracies. No clarification response was received, thus, the analysis process began. Both one-on-one interviews and focus group feedback will be presented as part of the findings of this study in Chapter Four.

Generally, to make sense of the transcripts, it was important to transfer “conversation and text into meaningful chunks” of data (Lichtman, 2010, p. 197). Additionally, analysis included generating codes stemming from the data. For example, Merriam (2002) suggests, “In taking apart an observation by a line, a sentence, or a paragraph of transcription, each discrete incident, idea, or event was given a name or code word that represented the concept underlying the observation” (p. 149). Creativity was a key element to analyzing data via open coding. Code words were placed into categories or themes stemming from the data and led to overall concept development. According to Creswell (2009), “these themes are developed into broad patterns, theories, or generalizations that are then compared with personal experiences or with existing literature on the topic” (p. 64). In an attempt to understand the essence of female student-athletes sporting experiences, the goal was to create a “rich, detailed description of the central phenomenon” of passion for sport (p. 64). As Lichtman (2010) advises, “it is your task to decide the most informative or logical manner of sorting...you will find that reorganizing and rewriting

and rethinking often lead to more powerful ideas” (p. 200). Continually re-examining data to gain prevailing ideas and further understanding until saturation was a critical goal of the present research.

By and large, data was analyzed using Creswell’s (2009) six-step approach. This six-step approach offered an organized method to help the researcher make sense of and understand the large data sets collected during the interview and focus group processes, moving from the specific to the general, in order to see more clearly the emerging themes surrounding the phenomenon of passion that was being studied (Creswell, 2009). These six steps generally include: 1) Organizing and preparing the data, 2) Reading through all of the data, 3) Coding the data, 4) Generating descriptions and themes, 5) Theme representation, and 6) Interpretation.

Transcripts were read and re-read to gain an overview of the material. Upon re-reading, margin notes were made of relevant facets of the data. In the next read of the data, open coding was employed. As Reissman (2008) advises, the focus was on “what” was said rather than “how” it was said attempting to stay focused on the *experiences* of the participants (p. 59).

Additionally, as Merriam (2002) suggests, “In taking apart an observation line by line, a sentence, or a paragraph of transcription, each discrete incident, idea, or event was given a name or code word that represented the concept underlying the observation” (p. 149). Therefore, through detailed examination of the data, using open coding, categories of data that represented a unique observation were assigned code words. Coded data were then placed into categories, or themes. The codes, categories and themes generated were informed by both the participant data and, as a feminist, my understanding of Self-Determination Theory. As themes appeared, excel spreadsheets were utilized to create what Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) label “electronic flip

charts” (p. 146). Such an approach was valuable because “it enables you to visualize your data, live with it, and think about it” (p. 146). This step was important because the data was thoroughly organized electronically allowing easy access to the data and also facilitated the making of “thoughtful judgments about what is significant and meaningful in the data” (p. 148). As such, the themes emerged inductively from the data.

Overall, analysis and coding of the data, including one-on-one interviews and a focus group, facilitated the results of this research and helped illuminate the experiences these females have had in sports and continue to have in collegiate athletics. As themes emerged from the data surrounding their experiences in sports, they were categorized and brought to light in order to further understand the essence of passion in the female sporting experience.

To protect the participants, limited demographic information will be provided. Because they are high-profile, student-athletes at MPU, the public can easily gain access to their biographies. However, a limited description includes the knowledge that there were three seniors (Stefani, Lindsey and CC), four juniors (Roxi, Lauren, Molly and Char) and three sophomores (Felicia, Jane and Sabreena) who participated. The names listed above are pseudonyms to protect their privacy. In addition, all of the participants have had at least one year of playing experience on the MPU Women’s Basketball Team. Also, all participants are American, with many hailing from urban areas. Most have been participating in sports since their early childhood. The participants have been playing for an average of 14.85 years, and the range of years playing sports was as few as five years and as high as 20 years.

Upon analysis, themes emerged from the data initiated by the interview and focus group questions. These themes include: 1) personal connections, 2) rising to challenges, 3) effort

intensive, and 4) for the love of the game. Each of these emerging themes will be presented in the following chapter.

Validity

Merriam (2002) suggests “internal validity is a strength of qualitative research” because researchers are “closer to the reality than if an instrument with predefined items had been interjected between the researcher and the phenomenon being studied” (p. 25). Yet, it is critical that qualitative researchers use various validity strategies to enhance the accuracy of findings. According to Creswell (2009), ideas such as trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility are important considerations for validity in qualitative research. Likewise, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest trustworthiness is critical in establishing a study’s worth and offer several strategies to ensure trustworthiness that include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The current study attempted to establish trustworthiness by employing member checking, triangulation, and thick descriptive data.

Once the data was collected and transcribed, member checking was employed by offering each participant her transcript via email to check for accuracy and allow for feedback. This helps to ensure that “the researcher’s own biases do not influence how participants’ perspectives are portrayed, and to determine the accuracy of the findings” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113). None of the participants offered any changes to the transcriptions, but the opportunity to do so was offered to ensure exactness.

In addition to member checking, triangulation was also utilized. Different methods were used to examine and understand how passion is developed and sustained in the lives of the participants. According to Lichtman (2010), “triangulation refers to the idea that multiple sources

bring more credibility to an investigation” (p. 229). By using semi-structured interviews and focus groups, as well as observing and note taking during several home and away games, understandings of passion’s development were produced using multiple data sources. This technique enabled confirmability and added to the trustworthiness of the present research.

Finally, to establish transferability, rich and thick descriptive data were utilized. The rich data was derived from the voices of ten females who are currently participating on the MPU women’s basketball team. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), “the richness of the descriptions included in the study give the discussion an element of shared or vicarious experience” (p. 113). Because the goal was to ensure the voices of the participants’ were heard, as well as display an accurate interpretation of their shared stories and experiences, quotations were taken directly from the transcripts and used in the findings.

Overall, validity was ensured through member checking, triangulation and utilizing thick descriptive data. In so doing, trustworthiness was increased and enhanced credibility for this study. In the next chapter, study findings will be analyzed.

Ethical Considerations

According to Merriam (2002), “ethics begins with the conception of the research project and ends with how we represent and share with others what we have learned. As such, “ethics should drive our fieldwork conduct, our theory choices for interpretation, and our conscientious attention to self-reflexivity” (p. 313). In other words, from start to finish, researchers must be continually considering what is ethical and follow through with ethical actions that make the research strong and valid. As part of this process, protecting participants is of utmost importance. For example, Howe and Dougherty (1993, as cited in Greene, Camilli & Elmore, 2006), suggest,

“The qualitative interview involves special considerations because of the personal relationship it often establishes with an informant and the sometimes unpredictable direction that conversations can take as a project evolves” (p. 361). As such, confidentiality and participant protection is a critical part of qualitative research. All data collected was saved on a password protected computer and pseudonyms were utilized.

As the research on Division I collegiate, female student-athletes proceeded, there were many ethical considerations in order to make the research reliable, valid and most importantly, ethical. To begin, gaining participant consent, as well as site consent, was critical. Although I work for the Division of Student Affairs, Athletic Academic Advising offices are housed in the Athletic Department where I conducted this research; therefore, careful consideration was taken to protect the participants of this study and the athletic department, as well. Additionally, having no evaluative authority over the student-athletes I chose to interview was a critical component of the present research. Regardless, because I was familiar with the participants I was interviewing, an ethical consideration was presented. However, by making the research collaborative through individual and team settings, and requesting feedback from the student-athletes about their participant ‘voice,’ assisted me in making this research more ethical.

Additionally, my own experiences as a former Division I female student-athlete had to be considered. Stating my own perspective and assumptions clearly within the research has been an important component of this study. As such, I had to carefully examine my own assumptions about what may be present in current student-athletes’ experiences regarding the development of passion in order for their voices to be fully heard. Again, through a thorough collaborative

process and by constantly evaluating possible ethical concerns, ethical challenges were diminished.

In addition to my own experiences, the examination of ethical concerns must be thought about in terms of my research problem, purpose and questions. For example, Creswell (2009) states regarding the research problem, “it is important to identify a problem that will benefit individuals being studied, one that will be meaningful for others besides the researcher” (p. 88). In other words, the problem should allow for voices to be heard and thus, benefit those who participate, as well as readers. Because the present research problem involves understanding the experiences that have led to development and maintenance of passion in female college, student-athletes, female voices can be heard in the arena of college sports where masculine voices are often more prevalent. To this end, every consideration was taken to make sure participants understood the purpose of the research, as well as the questions that were proposed.

Researcher Subjectivity

As both a former student-athlete and coach, as well as in my current position as an assistant director of athletic academic services, I have a logical interest in understanding the experiences of current female, student-athletes and their perceptions of how passion was developed and is sustained in their own lives. As Schram (2006) suggests, “Aspects of the self can serve as filters through which one perceives the topic or phenomena being researched” (p. 136). Having been highly passionate about my own participation in the sport of gymnastics, it is impossible to take the athlete out of the researcher. Understanding the fact that my own passion for sport may have been influential in the present research was critical. Knowing the passion I had for sport was influenced by several entities such as family and coaches was an important part of my understanding of the present research, as well.

Likewise, I grew up in an era of sport highly influenced by Title IX where females were just beginning to receive scholarships for participation in sports. Often times during this transition, female athletic departments were merging with male athletic departments, and in doing so, female voices were muffled in the sounds of what is important within such departments. While “we’ve come a long way baby,” female voices are still lacking in the masculinized world of collegiate athletics. Sports sections and segments of television broadcasts, newspapers, radio, etc., are most always dedicated to the experiences of male athletes. Thus, continually pushing for women’s voices to be heard in the world of sports at all levels’, including college sports, was an important research goal. In doing so, a more egalitarian world may be possible. While I admittedly recognize my situation as a female in the masculinized institution of athletics, in the present study it was imperative that I understood my own motives and position within the research to further understand what is being stated explicitly and implicitly from my participants, as well as examining what I am missing, what’s out there that is valuable and needs stating, and what has yet to be examined. By doing this, I was able to provide a richer experience for the participants by allowing each a platform from which to share her viewpoints while simultaneously enhancing my own understanding of passionate women in sports. In turn, this may contribute to the broader body of research on women in college athletics and expand the horizons of possibility for future college female student-athletes.

Limitations/Delimitations

In addition to ethical considerations and research subjectivity, there are also limitations to this study. Because only a select group of female athletes from the university athletic department were chosen, it is difficult to generalize to larger populations. However, by going into deeper

conversations about passion's development, it is hoped much was gained and added to the research on passion. Furthermore, according to Merriam (2002), "providing rich, thick description is a major strategy to ensure for external validity or generalizability in the qualitative sense" (p. 29). In other words, focusing on the depth of how passion has been developed and maintained in female college student-athletes added strength and validity to the present study.

An additional limitation to this study is subjectivity which was explained previously. Because I am a former DI female student-athlete and coach, and I currently work within a unit of Student Affairs housed in the athletic department, I have had a vested interest in this research which may also add richness to the present study. Yet, it was imperative that I continuously checked my own perceptions while allowing the voices of the current participants to come through. Constantly questioning what is out there or what perspective is missing was an important aspect of this present study. I consciously worked to refrain from leading participants on or projecting my own ideas in order to allow participants' voices and experiences to be fully heard.

Additionally, besides gender, no other specific demographic characteristics were researched or interrogated. Although the examination of the singular variable of gender was intentional, the intersection of other descriptors such as race, socioeconomic status or sexual orientation may have provided greater insight into passion's development and was thus, a limitation of this study.

Ultimately, while there are some limitations to this study, the strength of this study lays within the opportunity for Division I female student-athletes to have a voice in the masculinized world of collegiate athletics. The institution of sport with its masculinized power structures,

often times reflects the larger society. As Salter (1996) suggests, sports are a part of a universal fabric that are always cherished. As such, sports have the opportunity to transform. Yet college athletics have historically been situated in the dominant patriarchal hegemony in society that often takes issue with women as athletes. For example, according to Mean and Kassing (2008) sports often reproduce traditional patriarchal ideologies. Furthermore, because of the irony between greater female participation, decreased media attention and trepidations about femininity, historically, little has changed the dominant ideology existing in college sports or athletics overall.

Interestingly, constructs like dreams or passions are often found in all human beings. Yet, the context of such dreams or passions is often contested if such passions do not fit into prescribed societal conditions. Girls who dream of being president, or CEO, or quarterback, and gear their passions toward such dreams, are often scoffed upon because such dreams and passions are inherently gendered. Allowing all people, including females, to move freely and pursue any dream or positive passion in every environment should be a universal goal. Yet, historically held ideals are difficult to challenge. Change often begins with dialogue and listening. Thus, providing time and space for such actions is imperative to transformation in any institution, including higher education and college sports, in particular. Listening to female student-athletes' voices and hearing their experiences and focusing on the *processes* involved in their development of passion for sports may bring athletes, athletic departments, higher education and the broader society closer to an egalitarian ideal.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

“I am building a fire, and every day I train, I add more fuel.
At just the right moment, I light the match”
~Mia Hamm, World Champion, Women’s Soccer

Introduction

Mia Hamm’s short statement, quoted above, provides a glimpse into her passion for sport. After all, for anyone who has attempted to build a fire, it is not an easy task. It takes patience, time, energy and persistence to get the fire started. And, when the match is lit, and the wood first catches fire – there is magic. Listening to and hearing from the voices of the women’s basketball team at Midwest Private University (MPU), for me, was similar to building a fire. With each woman who was interviewed, another ember was added to my understanding of the passion that surrounds females who participate in sport. Although the fires of passionate female athletes’ stories are not often seen or heard in our masculinized sporting media, they are there. And, they are burning brightly.

As university student-athletes, the females in this study participate passionately in environments that have historically limited their opportunities (academia and athletics). Yet, despite such historic limitations, upon listening to their stories, several themes arose that help explain the emergence and persistence of their passion for sport. These themes include: 1) personal connections, 2) rising to challenges, 3) effort intensive, and 4) for the love of the game.

Findings

The following section provides insight on the experiences surrounding passion’s development in ten female, student-athletes from MPU and how these passions influence their lives. The findings in this chapter are considered based on the themes that emerged from the data

and shed light on how passion for sport has developed and is maintained in the lives of these Division I student-athletes, as well as how passion for sport impacts other entities in their lives.

Personal connections. When listening to the participants' stories, one idea became evident. For these females, their development of passion is very personal. In their stories, passion begins with personal connections. It often starts with the most intimate people in the athletes' lives, their families. As their passion develops, these personal connections continue with family and grow, reaching outward to teammates and coaches who also help nurture and feed that passion. It is evident in the participants' stories that people matter to them, and people are very influential in their development and maintenance of passion. For example, Roxi states:

Support is everything to me, you know; it's one of the main reasons why I came here.

And I feel like without support you can't really go anywhere, because, you know, there is no one there pushing you and even criticizing you at the same time - there is no growth, there is no room for growth and, you know, just support from everyone - coaches, teammates - and from all my family, even in different states, you know, it makes me feel a certain way, even special in a way, because, you know, there's not many families that does that and then, you know, they're coming to watch me and they're coming to see how I'm doing. And, you know, they don't find out about that unless my family is sitting here bragging about me anyways! So, I feel like I'm doing something right. It's not just my game, but it's also my character that influences them to go out and tell everyone about me.

Roxi explains the important role her personal connections play in her life. By saying, "support is everything to me" she is giving credit and paying tribute to the idea that her success and her

passion are not hers alone. She has shared this journey with many others, and without that, it may not be possible. She explains the critical value of relationships to growing. Without support, she says, there is “no room for growth.” The importance others play in our growth is not missed on Roxi. Although when she plays basketball, it is her passion that is being lived out, she knows that others helped feed her fire, and because of them, she can play and also grow. Additionally, Roxi is telling us that she is a good basketball player, but she is a good person too. The personal connections she has – her support system, come to watch her because she can play really well, but also because of her character – who she is as a person. She brings it back to that personhood; the connections people have to her and her to them. For Roxi, who she is as a person connects her to her supporters, and her passion for the game would not be the same, and may not have grown, without their support and that personal connection. Likewise, Molly says:

I consider the love for the sport and the game, and the people in it, and around it - and just being a part of it - and being a part of like a family, and having the ability to do something you love, and love it so much that it influences everything around you.

Molly explains how interconnected the game of basketball and the people in it are. This reciprocal relationship between the game and the people in it are influential to Molly and the other participants in this study and their development of passion. In fact, it is so intimate, that Molly describes the personal connections as a family. She feels so fortunate because she gets to pursue her passion and be surrounded by the intimacy of a family. This sense of support and connectedness is critical to Molly’s development of passion and the other females in this study.

The theme of personal connections manifested through three ideas that include connection to family, connection to teammates and connection to coaches. This personal

connectedness seems to be critical to both the development and maintenance of passion, as well as have influence on the personal relationships that the student-athletes have with the people in their lives. Nussbaum (1996) discusses the idea of the ‘accident of birth’ in her book about patriotism. When considering the vast world in which we live, where and to whom we are born is random, and therefore, we should generally focus on the commonalities of our humanity rather than our differences, according to Nussbaum. For the student-athletes in this study, the accident of their births included being born to people who provided an opportunity to hone their physical prowess. The people who initially opened this door helped stoke the fires of passion for sports within each. Family is an entity that has shaped and sustained passion in all of the participants and continues to influence who they are as people and athletes. For example, Lauren explains:

I remember, like every weekend, my mom, it would be my mom or dad driving me out to, most of the time - both of them. But if my dad was working or my mom was doing something, then one of them. But the majority of the time, I remember getting up at like 7 a.m. to drive to a gym and, you know, for an 8 o’clock game and be there all day. And they would be there with me - ALL day! When I think back on it, it’s like, Oh my gosh! The amount of time that they have put into it - it is unbelievable. And they are still coming to every game!

As Lauren reflects on the time she spent in the gym, and recognizes that she was not there alone, she seems to have an “ah ha” moment regarding the investment her parents made allowing her to pursue her passion for basketball. Such revelatory moments were prevalent in the one-on-one interviews and the focus group showing how important sharing stories are to people generally,

including the females in this study. Like Lauren, all of the participants mentioned their families being influential in their initial involvement in sport. For example, Roxi elaborates:

Everyone in my family contributed to me pursuing basketball and any sports in general. My older sister, she sort of helped start it when I was just playing in the backyard with her and then my dad would come and we will play two versus one or one versus one, and then after that my mom started getting involved and my grandparents and eventually 'Deena' (younger sister) started playing, so it was sort of like passed down and passed around...once, I went to go watch my (older) sister play when she was at 'Midwest' School for the Deaf, you know, she was so strong and she was so independent and when I looked at her, I looked at her in amazement. And I was like, man, she is so cool, like, she did her own hair, I didn't even know how she did these hairstyles - and then she always wore these long socks that had the individual toes and they were colorful and she wore those - and you knew who she was in the game and she was such a team player and I wanted to model my game after her, even though I didn't have the boldness to wear the colorful socks or the crazy hairstyles, but I wanted to be the team player that she was and someone that, you know, put the team before herself.

The details in Roxi's reflection, from the colored socks to the crazy hairstyles, as well as the strong and independent aspects of her sister, help us understand the impact her older sister had on her and her love of the game, so much so, that Roxi wanted to model her game after her sister's game. Again, we see Roxi's knowledge on the role of others and how they influence who we are when she says she wanted to be someone who put the team first, just like her sister.

Through her personal connection to her sister, she learned this critical element of the game. She also was learning to love the game because of the connection between basketball and her family.

Likewise, Lindsey states:

My family is a big influence - I mean the whole reason why I play basketball...a lot of their weekends revolve around the 'MPU' women's basketball team. So it (basketball) has a huge influence on my family and me.

In this passage, Lindsey gives significant credit to her playing sports to her family. They are the whole reason. Again, this intimate connection between family and sport shows the power family has on passion's development.

In addition to immediate family influencing the development of passion, teammates and coaches seem to play a central role in developing passion and sustaining it. In fact, participants often describe teammates as family. For example, Sabreena states, "It's always, like, we are together, like we are having fun - like almost, like a family away from home, yeah, a family away from home...I feel like everything is gonna be fine because we are like family." As she reflects, the personal connection Sabreena has with her teammates is like 'a family away from home'. In explaining that her team is like her family, she illustrates the intimacy a team develops when they are training and competing at such a high level together. This intimacy helps sustain the passion they have for sport. While Sabreena uses family to describe her personal connection to her team, Jane adds richness to her description by shedding light on our sense of belonging, calling it an option to belong rather than a need. Jane states:

I think sport creates a sense of community, and the sense of belonging for, so many people. I think lots of humans are looking for something to call their own, to call their

thing, their niche, their own. For so many people...sports gives them this incredible option to belong.

In this statement, Jane is giving credit to autonomy – by choosing to use the word ‘option’ over the word ‘need’. Yet she is talking about a sense of community, thus illuminating the need for relatedness, as well. In this instance, Jane shows us how the needs for autonomy and relatedness can be intertwined and overlapping by using the language, “Sports gives them this incredible option to belong.” She goes on to explain these personal connections by saying:

I will always remember the individual relationships I have gained with teammates because of basketball. Like wanting to know who these people are and knowing that - it is so interesting to me that we all, even though we are so different, have this shared hobby, this shared experience because of a game. It is so interesting to me.

In this instance, she heeds Nussbaum’s (1996) recommendation that we look at our commonality rather than our differences. Without the game of basketball, all of these differing individuals may not have been friends. However, because of a game, the game of basketball, she and her teammates are all intimately connected.

CC and Stefani add another layer to our understanding of personal connectedness and relatedness with teammates by suggesting the idea of care and like mindedness. CC says:

The way I play is more about caring – because I care so much. So, it’s not about me, it’s about helping my team and when I can – I bring energy to help my team. So, it is not about, like, what I do; but what I could do for them. So, it makes me – for me, it’s about like, getting everyone involved. So, it’s like stopping the ball and doing stuff like that, and that’s helping my team, so.

This idea of caring is not new to education and may often be overlooked in sports because we often overlook feminine virtues like caring in the masculinized world of sports. Perhaps a philosophy similar to that of Nel Noddings' "caring approach" from education can be adopted in the arena of sports; it certainly appears to have been adopted by CC. For instance, according to Johnson and Reed (2008), Noddings believes that "children will work hard for people they like and trust" (p. 220). CC explains this above. She will work hard for her teammates, who she likes and trusts, because she cares about them. This personal connection to her team exemplified through care helps sustain her passion for sport and impacts the relationships she builds with her teammates. Likewise, Stefani has found personal connectedness with her team through their like-mindedness. The fact that she has found others who share her passions highlights the importance of relatedness and its role in sustaining passion for sport in college. Stefani suggests:

It just shows me that - like people are like me. Like our basketball team, it's just; it's players that are like me, they have the same passion as I do. They like basketball and going to school. They want to do something with themselves. So, I guess it just helped me see that there is people out there that want to do things within themselves, just like me.

Stefani's background is such that sport has afforded her the opportunity to meet other females who have goals and want to reach their full potential, just like her. This personal connection and shared passion with her teammates seems to be critical to Stefani's continued love of the game.

Like teammates, coaches also play an important role in passion's development. Athletes' connections to their coaches seem to help meet the need for relatedness and also help sustain passion. While generally in sports, there seems to be a love/hate tenor with coaches, the personal

connection with the participants in this study to their coaches seems to be overwhelmingly positive. Roxi begins by explaining the role her high school coach played when she was going through a difficult time:

Coach (Laurey), she was like my mom, and she talked me through a lot of stuff. And there was a lot of stuff that I didn't realize then that I realize now - that she was such a good person. And I don't think she knows how grateful I am for that and everything she has done for me. You know, we (family) were sort of struggling in high school and she sort of took me in and she was always there, so I'm always grateful for that.

The fact that Coach Laurey took Roxi in shows the importance of the coach/athlete relationship and how it helped Roxi get through a challenging time. Molly elaborates on her high school volleyball coach and his impact:

He always pushed us and he gave us a positive influence and always brought us (my teammates and me) everywhere; he would take - like a car full with five girls and we would always go everywhere together, and have tournaments and what not. So, I would say my volleyball coach taught me a lot, my like recently deceased volleyball coach, and he taught me like a lot about life, and like formed me into the woman I am today. So, I owe a lot to him.

As Molly talks about her former coach, it is evident the impact that he had on her is still relevant. She believes he helped shape her into who she is today. In doing so, he also helped shape her passion for sports and helped sustain it, as well. Finally, Lindsay explains the impact her college coach is having on her when she states:

Basketball teaches you life lessons and stuff you probably don't want to ever learn; but I think it teaches you something. I don't know. I just feel like it is something that will just stick with you forever. I still have like – like it kills me every time I'm going through a situation and all I can think of – all I can hear is Coach in my head saying something. And, he, like pisses me off sometimes - and I'm like, "oh shit, he's right," because he sticks with you; the lessons stick with you. Like, it's something - how it always revolves back to Coach and basketball and something to do with that.

It is evident that the lessons her coach is teaching now are impactful. Even when Lindsay does not want it to stick with her, the lessons her coach is teaching are powerful and helping her learn more than she ever even wanted to learn about life. This personal connection with her coach is lasting and influential in her passion being sustained. It is evident that connections to family, teammates and coaches are influential to passion's development and maintenance.

Rise to the challenge. In addition to personal connections arising from the data, another idea that emerged was rising to the challenge of any endeavor. The females in this study love to compete. They also feel competent and capable of meeting challenges they face. This study's participants want to rise to any challenge put before them. For example, Roxi says:

You're in the gym constantly. You're trying to work on your game. And steadily, you're competing with yourselves like, I didn't make that shot – the next time, I'm going to make that shot. So, you're always going back and forth with yourself and it's like you are competing against your ultimate self. And yourself is the ultimate competitor and the opponent, I guess, in a way. So, once you get confident in yourself, by yourself, then you have a chance. You have no choice but to be confident against other players.

Roxi is showing how her competence is built by rising to the challenges presented in the gym through practicing with the ultimate competitor – herself. She wants to prove to herself she is competent. Then, when the time comes, she can feel confident to play against others and rise to the challenge of the game’s competitive environment. Molly explains this rising to the challenge, too, when she says:

Like, wanting to have the – I guess, the competitive nature to stop the person in front of you and not have them beat you. And like, thinking that the person you’re guarding is not going to get any points, no boards, like you’re going to stop her. And then, as a team, all of us coming together and we stop them.

Molly refers to her competitive nature in a way that feels internalized. It is within her. And she gains her competence from this natural component within that helps her stop the competition from getting boards (rebounding the basketball) or scoring at all. She also brings the team along with her saying, “all of us coming together” showing the association between competence and relatedness. The competitive nature in the MPU players exemplifies the theme of rising to the challenge and plays a role in their development and maintenance of passion. Roxi elaborates:

There were these guys from around the corner who thought they were just like ‘oh so good’ and so, we invited them to the backyard and I played against one of them. And at the time I had just come back from church and I had on my cute little sandals and he was like, ‘play me,’ and I was like - I have to go change and stuff, then, - I was just like - all right, fine. I’ll play him and, you know, my sandal broke and I was like, well I’m not going to the house to put on any more shoes, so I just played with a broken sandal. And, I

was playing against him and I just remember winning the game and I was like, nothing is going to come between me and winning and that's just point blank period.

That last line in Roxi's story sums up greatly the desire to compete and win that most all of the participants in this study have. For example, Stefani said how basketball makes her happy, and it is fun, yet she desires to win. She states, "I am just happy, like, I want to win. So when I am playing, it's just like - I want to win so, playing basketball is, it makes me happy." It is difficult to separate the winning, the fun, and the happiness that Stefani is alluding to here. All are a part of her passion for basketball.

Interestingly, Felicia also mixes the intrinsic and extrinsic when she alludes to her rationale for wanting to win. She combines winning and doing the best she can by saying, "I think I am just a competitive person; I want to win all the time and I want to do the best I can and I think sport has made me not lose sight of that, like for any factor in my life, so." In this statement, Felicia is explaining how she competes to win and attempts to do her best in all areas of her life including school and sports!

Likewise, Lindsey shares a similar sentiment as Felicia by saying, "If you're a competitor, you compete no matter what. I see physicality as a big difference in men's and women's sports, but no - I think besides physicality, we compete the same. Yes, we compete the same." Here she is talking about men and women being equal in terms of competitiveness for the game of basketball. For Lindsey, a competitor competes, regardless of gender, and she is adamant about that fact. Additionally, Sabreena suggests competitiveness impacts school too when she says, "(School) - It's just like basketball, you just try to compete - to do as good as you can, you just try to work as hard as you can, like you would in basketball." Like Felicia, for

Sabreena, doing as ‘good as you can’ is part of competing. Lauren, on the other hand, explicitly states the extrinsic motivation behind her competitiveness when she says:

I always want to be one up on everyone around me, so even if it is like, you know, answering questions in class, asking questions so that you can get ahead, you know - doing the extra work. I just feel like it is always a competition – even - not even people that are in your class, like even people on your team, like you just always want to be at the top and you are just always trying to be better than the person that’s right next to you.

For Lauren, sport and school are competitions. That competition is centered on being better than others, definitely an extrinsic factor. Interestingly, when asked if they compete in the classroom, all but one participant had a definitive yes! The one naysayer, Stefani, had a qualifier. She competes in the classroom, but not as hard as she has for basketball. She explained how her competitiveness for school grew when she had the chance to play in college. Stefani said:

Just me knowing that I have to do good in school in order to be eligible to play – there’s just a huge part in that, because I know like in high school, before I knew if I wanted to come play in college or not - I didn’t really care about school. I just went to school because I had to and then, like even in high school, I had to still do good, to like play, but I didn’t have to do as good as now. So it didn’t like matter as much. And then just coming into college and knowing like school is as important as basketball, it’s just huge too... I wanted to come to college to get a degree. And if I played basketball it would make it (school) easier, because at school, basketball was something that I loved to do, so me coming to school would have been, it wouldn’t have been as easy if I wasn’t playing basketball so, I would much rather play than to not play and have to go to school so.

For Stefani, she recognizes that at college ‘school is as important as basketball’. The coaching staff has placed a huge emphasis on doing well in the classroom and Stefani recognizes this. She also discusses how school is easier because of basketball. Her passion for sport helps her motivation for school. If she did not have basketball, it would be much more difficult to be motivated for school.

In addition to competing and winning, gaining competence from within also manifested through the theme of rising to the challenge. Generally, gaining a sense of competence can lead to more self-determined motivation and create a more positive development of passion. In this study, this idea of competence was made clear. For example, Lauren states:

So when I was a sophomore and I knew how to, like you know, shoot the jump shot for two or three, and that is where I was like getting all my points; but as I started like developing my game as a sophomore and playing teams where I had to post up or they would put a guard on me, I realized like, wow, if I go into the post, I could really do a lot of damage in there too. So it was probably like towards the end of my sophomore year and beginning of my junior year that I realized that I could play so many positions and do so many different things with my game.

Lauren knows she is capable of being a well-rounded player who can do ‘damage’ in various areas of the game. This recognition of her potential is motivating to her and the energy this produces can be sensed in her choice of words – “wow... I can do a lot of damage...” Likewise, Lindsey is equally excited about recalling her competence when she says:

And then, also to continue to play the game is awesome - and when I was a senior (in HS) it wasn't like I had reached my peak. I wasn't done playing and I wanted to continue to play. I knew I had a lot of basketball left in my career.

For Lindsey, she has a lot of basketball left. She knew in her last year of high school that she was capable of improving. This sense of competence is a driving force in passion's development. As these athletes begin to understand what they are capable of, they are seemingly more motivated to play – adding fuel to their developing passion.

Felicia, too, indicates this idea of improving. Interestingly for Felicia, it is not just about seeing herself get better, but also about seeing her teammates get better. She states:

Like - seeing your teammates be successful and making the actual pass where they score, or seeing them get better and feeling yourself get better too, that's fun.

The complex relationship between two of the needs highlighted by Self-Determination Theory are highlighted in Felicia's simple phrase. The needs of competence and relatedness are not lost in Felicia's statement. In fact, it is 'fun' to see oneself and one's teammates improve. Gaining competence amongst teammates is a significant idea highlighted by Felicia's statement. That sense of relatedness connecting to competence is also evident when Roxi says:

So, I was a teacher's pet, and I was competitive in the classroom, and I was competitive on the court, but at the same time, I was still focused on my studies and stuff, and I focused on getting good grades and I feel like basketball, you know, it helped me for some time in the classroom, and at the same time, it made me feel invincible.

Roxi is explaining the impact of her teachers on her competence. She was a teacher's pet because she was competitive on the court and in the classroom. At the end of the statement, her

competence resonates and highlights her passion. Basketball assisted her competence in school and on the court because she was ‘invincible’! Roxi also mentions teachers above. For many, their high school coaches were also classroom teachers who provided a space for them to gain confidence in their abilities as students and athletes. The feedback provided by both teachers and coaches as they grew up and presently is powerful. Stefani exemplifies this when she states:

I think we have a good relationship with the coaches; it just helps you as a person, not only as a player but as a person too, because they see what you are capable of and they see, like, they want you to do better. So when they see that you are capable and they try to push you as much as you can go, it helps you in the long run. Like Coach, he always yells at me, he knows what I have to do, to be a great player, so you just have to listen to him.

Stefani perceives coach’s yelling as him seeing her full potential. He yells so that she can get better as a player and a person. The coach’s actions impact her perceptions of competence. He believes she is capable, hence the yelling. She, in turn, also believes she is capable.

Most of the players within this study echoed this sentiment shared by Stefani. For example, Char said:

I knew that they (coaches) wanted me going as far as I can and things like that; and how I had to try - just keep pushing and keep learning, and take what the coach is telling me to do to try and improve.

Again the language of reaching one’s fullest potential is evident. Char believes it is possible to get better as long as she keeps learning. Listening to her coach, who also believes she can go far, provides Char with great motivation and helps sustain her passion. Similarly, Lindsey suggests:

Really just listen to your coaches, like you might want to brush them off and then, like whatever and things like that, but they know what they are talking about. They've been all around a lot longer than you, and what they say is valuable and you need to listen to them and make sure you do what they say and act like - listen to them and take it to heart.

This language used by Lindsey is rich because she understands the challenges surrounding excellence and how difficult it can be to always listen to coaches. Yet, she understands the need to 'take it to heart' in order to improve. Likewise, Roxi sees the value in coach's feedback, as well as her own self-talk when she says:

Even when Coach is yelling, like, it's the little things that matter and I'm yelling back in my head, like, yes, I know, I know, it's the little things that matter; I'm trying to get the little things that matter better and that's when it becomes sort of tricky for me because I'm so coachable, I'm going to do exactly what you say, and I'm not going to change it unless I feel like there needs to be a change. But, at the same time, I'm going to do it exactly right, exactly the way you want me to do it, and if I don't get it right, then I'm going to get it right the next time.

Roxi wrestles with her needs for competence and her needs for autonomy, while relating to her coach - again showing how the needs outlined by Self-Determination Theory can be intertwined and thus, impact motivation in a multitude of ways, showing the complexity with which people are motivated. Roxi is coachable and wants to 'get it right,' but she feels she has the power to change if the action needs to be changed. This recipe of feeling she has a choice and is capable is powerful. For Roxi, this combination motivates her and builds and sustains her passion. Again, we see this combination in Molly's statement:

I mean most coaches are tough on me because I can handle it, and that's fine with me; but most people would be like, he (coach) is super mean to you. And, I just take it as like, he was just telling me what was right and how to improve, and it's like everybody else would be like breaking down, but he understood that I had that mental barrier, and we had that connection between him and me that I could just handle that kind of stuff; and most people – that's what they would say. That is like what I meant by 'he was mean to me'. But I took it like a grain of salt, and like - he knew that, and it rolled over my shoulders, but I took what he said to heart and like made it change me, and made it morph into what I am today, so.

Molly believes she is capable. She also is autonomous and allowed herself to change by taking her coach's words to heart. She, like the other females in this study, truly believes she is capable and can rise to any challenge. As the participants shared their stories, I could sense the great positive power they feel within. The emotions garnered as they shared their stories during interviews and the focus group allude to this capacity to rise to any challenge.

Effort intensive. As I have observed the MPU team this year, there is no question that they work hard. The intensity with which they participate in their passion is impossible to deny.

This ethic of effort was a constant theme during individual interviews. Jane explains:

I don't think you could teach work ethic to somebody - just like you have to put in extra work, and this is how it works; it is the equation - if you want to do it, you have to call for extra effort. It is like watching coaches try to inspire, and motivate people, and get someone to work, but it works faster by pushing yourself.

Jane is directly referring to autonomy and effort and their impact on passion. Others can try to motivate you. But, it is much better when an athlete is pushing herself. That choice to work hard is exemplified in Jane's statement. Likewise, Char says, "I was really pushing myself a lot because I really wanted to." Char chooses to work hard. Effort is a choice. Roxi, too, chooses to work hard and clarifies the misperception that student-athletes have it easy:

I've actually had a friend tell me, you know, you're so lucky - like you have it all right now. And I'm like, I don't have it all! It's just - you HAVE to work for it and I had to tell her that - that it is hard work!

Participating as a student-athlete is not easy. It takes time, energy and effort. Molly says:

Just push yourself and be like, even though I'm tired, like I know I can guard that girl, like because she is doing it, she is tired, and she is doing it, running all over the court. So, it definitely pushes you as you go through - and the people you meet, and definitely - up until now it's like being with people at that high caliber level; you're seeing that people are better than you, a lot better maybe, and it pushes you to want to develop that passion and that effort to get yourself better and seeing others work hard, in the gym making extra hours, putting in extra shots, putting in extra work, it's like I want to do that too; they want to get better and so do I.

It is evident in Molly's statement that there are many dimensions of motivation leading to passion for her, as well as her teammates. The theme of effort is also evident.

For Lauren, the day to day is hard – but game day makes it worth it; doing what others cannot do also makes it worth it. She says:

I mean yeah, it sucks. The training and the conditioning, the lifting, all the time that you put in, you know - I put in like five hours of rehab these past couple of days because of my injury, but it's like - it's the moment when you are on the court, when the ball goes up for the tip, when you are in the live games, when you, you know, people talk about seeing your game on TV - and how awesome we did in the NCAA tournament last year and everyone is looking forward to a new season. It's just always - you know - winning the games and being able to go out there and compete and do what so many people wish they could do - is what makes it fun.

There is so much richness in this statement. The effort seems to lead to the joy. Along the way, there are internal and external motivators. This statement so eloquently sums up Lauren's development of passion. Interestingly, when asked, Felicia brings up the differences in effort between men's and women's basketball players. She is bold enough to state that she believes women may work harder, and her reasoning for this is because society undervalues women's basketball; women have to prove themselves, therefore, their workload is greater. Felicia states:

I mean we work just as hard if not harder (than the men) because we like, have to prove ourselves; I feel like we're working harder not only to win, but to change the game so that people want to watch us play - as opposed to guys - when you know, not every (men's) team has to pass to every player - they can go slow and do whatever - and then they get a dunk here and there; that's easier, and they're going to get fans in the seats, so.

Felicia understands the role she is playing to change the women's game and perhaps change the way female athletes are viewed. That is part of her motivation for working hard - to change the way people view women's basketball, her passion. That is a huge task given that less than 5% of

sports media coverage is dedicated to covering females (Tucker Institute at University of Minnesota, 2013). Felicia understands part of that change can come from her efforts to work hard and improve the game; once again a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The effort these females give does not just impact the way they approach their game. It also impacts the way they approach school. For example, Lindsey says:

I mean for – in terms of basketball, we're in the gym all the time - we're always, well even if we're not in the gym, we're lifting or conditioning or watching film or we're always doing something; it's a lot of hard work to get to play basketball. And just like in the classroom, it's hard work to attain, to get an A. So, just like it's hard work to win a (Conference) Championship, you have to put a lot of work in. Just like in the classroom, it's hard work to get an A, you have to put a lot of work in, a lot of time and effort, so.

The effort the participants put into basketball, they also put into school. CC says:

If I'm going to achieve the highest I can in basketball, I'm going to try to shoot for the highest I can in my education. I work hard on the court; I'm working hard off the court.

CC understands that the effort she puts in is a critical part of who she is as a student-athlete.

Because the participants spoke so intensely about their hard work in one-on-one interviews, I brought up the concept in the focus group for further examination. I remember them sharing about hard work, and I became lost in the moment of the powerful interaction that took place as the team dynamic took over. Roxi started the conversation by saying:

I mean everyone knows like - if it's hard then, like it's something worth going for. And that - what if it wasn't hard? Then of course everybody could do it. And I think that's why we all continue to play basketball now and why some of us want to go to the next

level. All of us aren't going to go to the next level, but that's just the way it is. And I think that making the path or making the journey hard is what's going to make it that much more memorable.

Again, the hard journey – the challenges along the way, make it great. It is in the difficulty that the passion is honed. Lindsey elaborated saying:

I don't want to be the one to say it, but that kind of reminds me of what coach says.

Whatever; he says like obviously it's hard, like I mean that's why we're good – we are good at doing hard things.

Molly takes over and says:

And it's like in everybody there is like a competitive nature; they want to do something hard. That's how all of us like strive for greatness in the end. Like when you finish that task, that hard - impossible task, and then you can say you've done it and then suddenly – it's a satisfying feeling.

CC takes it from here, suggesting:

I guess you're going to have those hard days or those days where you want to give up, and it's easy to quit. But because you put so much time and effort into it; like it just – you have to keep going. Because quitting is easy, we can all just walk away whenever we wanted to, but we choose not to and like we just get through it.

And so it went; the group discussed how easy it would be to walk away and how challenging it is to stay. They talked about the time commitment, the physical and mental toll carrying out their passion to play takes on them. And yet, none of them would give it up. However, it cannot

always be hard. There is also joy. Therefore, the final theme surrounds joy and is about “the love of the game” emerging as passion in action.

For the love of the game. Even though it is hard and challenging, each of the participants has a love of the game that comes from enjoying the journey and enjoying learning, resonating with passion in action. The number one reason youth participate in sports is because sports are fun. This joy of sport is not lost on the females in this study. For example, Stefani says:

It’s just so fun, how can you not want to continue? I think, even like, if I don’t make it to the WNBA, I still want to go overseas and play, just to get the experience until I get tired of it - until it don’t make me happy no more - I will keep playing.

The game makes Stefani happy. Stefani’s passion in part stems from that happiness. Similarly, Molly says:

It's like basketball practice, I feel like I'm ready to go, let's go and people are like, “Why are you so happy all the time?” I'm just like, I don't know - it’s just something I love to do. Like, you can't be mad at something you love, like when you love to do it, it’s like you're just going to get over it even if you get mad at it for little bit.

Yes, the game may make you mad. But it is difficult to stay mad at something you love. It is clear that Molly loves basketball. It is her passion. Likewise, this love of the game is exemplified in the participants’ voices as they share their insights on enjoying the journey and enjoying learning. Char explains what she has learned on this journey playing the game she loves:

I am a shy person and me like, coming out of my shell and meeting these new people and seeing how I gave basketball a chance and how it enabled me to experience these new

places and it was like an outlet too. I was able to like, like how I just gave it this one chance - you know - I was able to like make it here to MPU. It was just like - WOW, like even if I wanted to do that (play basketball) a little bit earlier and like how much would I have grown – I wouldn't be able to see it, like, what if I would have like just tried to do it a little earlier, how much more I would have been able to absorb.

As she recalls her late start to playing basketball, she also recalls what she has gained and what she could have gained by starting playing earlier. There is no question that the experiences she has had through basketball have expanded her as a person. Likewise, CC says:

I feel like being on any team, you learn so much while having fun. Like working with others, dealing with adversity, and just becoming a different—like it molds you into the person of whatever it is going to mold you into, but it's going to mold you into someone, and I feel like for me, it's molded me into a better person. So, just looking back on that, I was like, you know, I can handle anything. You know, working hard too—just working for something that I love to do. So, just having that like, love for the game; I don't know...

This idea of the game teaching life lessons was continually echoed and seems to be a part of the love each has for the game, exemplified through passion in action. For example, Stefani says:

I mean I am always willing to learn if it's something that I want to do, so basketball would be something I want to do and - just learning new things, it's just fun. I mean I know stuff, but knowing more is better; I guess learning will help me in the long run too, when I stop playing basketball because I need to do something else then.

Similarly, Molly sees an important lesson she has learned from sports:

It creates a different aspect on life, but it's like, maybe if you do get people that you're kind of like "Well they're different," like the chance or the time of day, they maybe become your best friend, so, I think sport teaches athletes to open up about difference.

Athletic departments are arguably one of the most diverse areas within universities.

Sports can be a unifier when it comes to understanding and accepting difference. Molly is grateful to the game for helping her learn that lesson. While Molly has learned to understand people who are unique, sport has helped Roxi more fully understand herself. She states:

It (basketball) has helped me to come out of my shell, because I have always been the quiet person, and I'm like, no, like, I shouldn't do that. But at the same time, it has given me a voice, you know. Even though I don't really speak to people about their actions, there have been some times where I've pulled them over to the side, and I told them like, you know what, like maybe we should do this or something, and I tried to help the team now in a greater sense. But, I mean, it has helped me to become a leader and a more vocal person and to just do what's right and then also to see what's wrong.

Learning about oneself and others through sport is an important component of passion's development and gaining a love for the game. Additionally, learning to love learning through sport is also an added benefit. For instance, Lauren says:

Even yesterday, you know, there are still things that we need to fix for the next game. So it's a continual learning process, you know, each and every game you have to take it, you got to analyze it - regardless if you win or lose - you need to learn for the next game, so you don't make the same mistakes. You can always get better. You literally can get so much better that, you know, there is so much more stuff I could learn and do, so much

more that I could get better at, but it just is an ongoing process, like in the classroom and in basketball, there is so much more that you can learn.

CC and Lindsey also seem to have a love for learning. For example, CC says:

I feel like everything is a learning experience. So, I feel like, even now like, if I'm going to be a future coach, or future trainer, or anything, I just try to look at the do's and don'ts, what I will want to do and what I don't want to do. And I mean, there are times that you have to do certain things to get certain results, but yeah. So, I just try to learn from what's going on now and see how I can use it in the future.

And Lindsey states, "I'm still learning to this day, I feel like each year I have -- I've learned a lot. And every year I continue to learn - I feel you can't stop learning." Love of the game is evident through love of learning and having fun. These student-athletes are passionate about the game because they love it, and they are having fun doing it. It is this passion in action that also emerged through the theme of love of the game. The participants' passions came alive as they recalled and shared their stories. Indeed, the participants have invested time and energy into basketball; they all love the game and find it a significant part of their lives. In the passages below, it is evident that basketball has also become a part of their identities. This process of self-identification has been a result of a multitude of factors including the people in their worlds and the environments in which they have grown. For example, Lindsey says:

I mean it's my whole life. I wouldn't be here right now at MPU if I wasn't playing basketball. I mean it's like basketball has created friendships for me; it's like I said and we talked about all day today. It just teaches you like aspects in life, competitiveness, leadership, communication, how important those things are. I mean basketball has led

me to where – yeah, I guess it has led me to where I am today. In high school and grade school, my life has been shaped around basketball. I mean basketball has been a priority and I'm always doing basketball, playing basketball, going to practice. It's just always been a part of my life.

For Lindsey, basketball has been her whole life. It is who she is. Everything she knows about the world can be linked back to lessons she has learned through basketball. This game has led her through life and to college and toward specific relationships. She would not be here (at MPU) if it were not for this game. Like Lindsey, Lauren stated, “I mean I think it has shaped the majority of who I am. You know, it's like I live and breathe basketball.” Through basketball is how she has survived and continues to survive.

CC has similar sentiments. For example, she says:

I feel like it (basketball) has molded me into this person that I am. Basketball has affected me in so many ways. I've had so many emotions, different emotions about it. I've become—I'm still working on it, but I've become way better. Like, I'm way more patient than I used to be. I feel like I'm way more—well, I continue to become more wise—wiser in my decisions because basketball...just having basketball as a part of my life has helped me to want to see that I want to help other people.

Basketball has shaped CC into who she is, and she is a better person because she played this game. She is more patient and wiser. Interestingly, she credits basketball with the desire of wanting to help others in her future goals. Because she helps her teammates through caring and through her play, she has learned through basketball how important it is to help others. The

lessons learned through sport were not lost on Molly, as well, as she explains her passion for sport:

Because it molds the things I do; because sport is just more than an organized group of people; it's, it teaches you so many different aspects of life. It teaches you time management, how to connect with people that are diverse and have different emotions, on how they react to certain situations, and it teaches you leadership skills, and to be compassionate when something happens to deal with things - that when you mess up that mistakes can be created into positive aspects with other people, and that you're pushing each other, and it just teaches everybody connectedness and to be a part of something bigger.

Again, this ideal of caring and connectedness shines through. Molly explains her passion further in a powerful metaphor when she describes the evolution of her passion for basketball:

I think (my passion) has grown in a mature way though, that it was kind of like, a metaphor: like - it was like - a seed and then it slowly like started to blossom. Like it's, it was planted there by my parents, by my family, by everybody around me that played sports, and then slowly, as I started playing and developing that love, my passion grew with it, and that - the passion I felt for the sport, came from the people within - the coaches, the players, the opposing team, my teammates that I met along the way, that showed me their passion and showed me that other people have different aspects of the game, and it is all great.

I remember when Molly was describing this growth of her passion and how my emotions got caught up in her incredible metaphor. I could not have scripted this statement more perfectly.

Indeed, passion for Molly and the females in this study is like a seed planted inside and then allowed to flourish. People nurtured their passion. Hard work and effort allowed the passion to grow and develop into the powerful construct it is currently in their lives. Char explains:

Well, like you see, it is like an inner desire, like you see like - how the heart is, like their eyes would light up for the game, like it is a spur or something; it is like you are not really playing - you are just really, you know, active in that you are totally engaged; basically you are just engaged to whatever it is that you are participating in.

In Char's sentiment, you get to see what someone's heart is like when you see her passion. This statement is so intimate and so critical to understanding the passion these females have for their sport. If you watch them play, watch them train, practice or compete, you get to see what their hearts are like. Likewise, Stefani explains her passion through a story of grit and determination. Stefani states:

I played in an athletic game, very physical - with a broken arm; my mom like wrapped it up in like an Ace bandage and she, she let me go play in the championship game. And after the game, my dad, he was like, what did you say - and then I like held my arm up and I just kept shaking; he was like, your arm is broken. And I just looked at him and he's like, yes it's broke, but I HAD to play in the game, so.

As Stefani was telling this story, she was smiling recalling it. Her sentiment of 'I HAD to play' shows that there is an obsessive side to her passion. Vallerand (2012) suggests that when passion is obsessive, the passion controls the person. Stefani HAD to play in that game. Yet, her arm was broken. This exemplifies the obsessiveness of passion that Stefani displays. Peterson (2010) suggests obsessive and harmonious passion can co-occur and both obsessive and harmonious

passion contribute to a person's self-image. This is evident in Stefani's choice to pursue her passion and develop her game. She says, "I guess it was just something that I wanted to do, so I did." Stefani chose this passion. In the first quote, Stefani's mom allowed her to play with a broken arm because she HAD to play. In the next, Stefani's desire to play is her choice; an autonomous decision that motivates her. She wanted to play basketball; she HAD to. So, she did. Likewise, there is a combination of obsessive and harmonious passion in Lindsey's recollection:

I think, like it is in your blood; like it takes over mentally and emotionally more like in a positive - but also a negative aspect or something like that. Like, if you like, lose a game, like a big game— for example Rival Team (played the other night), it still bothers me, and it's going to bother me the rest of my life.

The loss that Lindsey experienced is powerful, and I recall the emotions with which Lindsey shared this experience. As a senior, Lindsey and MPU lost in over-time to their biggest rival. It is raw. The loss hurts. In fact, it is so hurtful, Lindsey expects it to stick with her 'the rest of her life'.

Jane's description, on the other hand, is also extraordinary as she describes the journey of passion's development. She says:

You are at the point of where you want to be - like almost like you are in the red zone all the time because you get to play college basketball and manage it the whole time. But it's – it doesn't translate perfectly to words because we are - I mean - our masterpiece is a cumulative process of so many events - not this one ending product.

In Jane's eyes, her passion is a masterpiece, and it is built on a variety of different moments. Yet, it is incomplete because it is not over. There is more to come. There is more to experience. There

is more to learn. This, it seems, is another essence of passion. It is endless. The hurt will never end; yet, neither will the joy. The masterpiece continues. Roxi expresses this infectiousness too and explains how contagious her passion is within her. She states:

You get happy, it's something that makes you happy and it puts you in a happy place. I find myself on the court just running, and I'm not just running just as punishment, I feel like I'm running like – I don't see it as an obligation, I see it as an opportunity. And it's like – I don't know - it's just something you want to do and you're not upset about it.

You know like you pass a good pass, oh yes – you knock it down: you just feel so excited and it like overwhelms you sometimes!

You can feel the passion in Roxi's statement. That happiness is a result of the cumulative processes that have developed and sustained passion for Roxi and the other women in this study. The process of passion's development for these student-athletes includes the personal connections they have to their families, teammates and coaches, the ability to rise to any challenge presented, the effort they have displayed through participation, and the love of the game and learning through passion in action.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

There is no question that females participate passionately in athletic activities daily on a variety of levels, including college. Such participation is often without formal acknowledgment and “largely without the help, notice, guidance and institutionalized resources of the larger society” (Davis & Weaving, 2010, p. 15). This exclusion and limited female recognition in sports influences ideals and established practices in institutions such as academia and athletics, where male student-athletes are often idolized and venerated. Furthermore, “this exclusion of women from sport implies our exclusion from full participation in humanity” (p. 16).

While society looks the other way and does not often recognize the continued tenacity of female, student-athletes, many persist in college sports because of a passion for the activity that becomes self-defining. How such passion develops and is sustained is of great interest to the present study. In the following sections, the findings from the previous chapter will be discussed through the defining framework of Self-Determination Theory and through a feminist conceptual lens. Self-Determination Theory (SDT), according to Ryan and Deci (2000), posits there are three essential psychological needs that may lead to self-determined motivation and possibly passion’s development. These three needs include competence, autonomy and relatedness. In short, competence reflects experiencing effectiveness while interacting in various settings; autonomy “refers to the experience of volition and the self-endorsement of one’s activity”; and relatedness suggests a positive connection to significant others (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013, p. 264). It will be evident throughout this analysis, as it is in the previous chapters, that these three needs play a role in motivation and passion’s development for all of the females in this study. These ideas will be discussed through the themes that emerged from the data in the previous

chapter. These themes include: 1) personal connections, 2) rising to challenges, 3) effort intensive, and 4) for the love of the game.

Personal Connections

The psychological need of relatedness, through the theme of personal connections, arguably stood out as the most influential motivation for the participants' development of passion in the present study. According to Hollembeak and Amorose (2005), "Unfortunately, this potential determinant of Intrinsic Motivation (relatedness) has generally been ignored in the coaching literature" (p. 22). Since SDT research has often limited the study of relatedness, and has also been carried out quantitatively, understanding the importance and complexity of relatedness and how it influences passion's development was profound in this research, resonating with the theme of personal connections. Indeed, it was their relationship with others, including family, teammates and coaches, as they learned, developed and participated in sport that resonated with the participants in this study, creating a passion for sports that often times defines who they are.

Over and over again, each participant discussed *who* was important in her life more often than *what* was important. According to Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, Soenens and Lensin (2010) and their work with SDT, "the need for relatedness is defined as individuals' inherent propensity to feel connected to others...the need for relatedness is satisfied when people experience a sense of communion and develop close and intimate relationships with others" (p. 983). The community and intimacy created through sports with families, teammates, teachers and coaches allowed these participants to fulfill the psychological need of relatedness as highlighted through SDT. More importantly, such intimacy and connection to others provided a

safe space to feel empowered and to develop a passion for sports that seemingly started in childhood and is still evident in their collegiate experiences and continues to infiltrate their lives. This was especially evident in the ideal of care that was exemplified throughout the findings, especially as a way to personally connect with others through sport.

In masculinized environments like athletics, feminine virtues, such as caring and connectedness, are often seen as weaknesses and limiting to the competitive edge needed to win sporting contests. In addition, according to Jarratt (1990), “One of the major points of dissension for feminists interested in sports hinges on the issue of whether or not women lose their cooperativeness and interpersonal orientation when they become involved in competitive sports” (p. 495). Jarratt continues, while some research has shown:

If females become socialized into the competitive world of sports, it is likely that they will adopt the values of that world... Other scholarly literature pertaining to women and sports suggests that women who compete in sports have the best of both worlds. They have maintained their femininity while acquiring healthy masculine behaviors that have been shown to correlate with well-being and high self-concept. (p. 497)

It is evident that the participants in the present study want to win and have adopted this value in sport, school, and life. However, what also stood out in the findings through the theme of personal connections was the ideal of caring and connectedness that was ever present in the participants’ stories. As an example, Roxi says:

They’re always going to be my friends, now, and I wouldn’t jeopardize our relationship off the court or on the court. When you’re on a team you sort of develop a sisterhood, and you develop this close, caring friendship where no one else knows about that specific

person, and that's something I've had on every team, you know, there is always a friendship and there is a real team bonding there.

This idea of caring is not new to education and may often be overlooked in sports because we often overlook feminine virtues like caring in the masculinized world of sports. For these student-athletes, working together, trusting each other, and caring about one another through 'sisterhood' has not been lost; in fact, it seems to be critical to the development and continuity of their passion for sport. This sense of cooperation and care was powerful and a welcome addition to the findings of this study. Jarratt (1990) suggests the current structure of sport rests solely on a model of domination; many of the discrepancies in sport stem from this patriarchal ideal. Feminist transformation of sport requires an elimination of this authoritative ideal through an ethic of care.

The female student-athletes in this study are beginning such a transformation. Certainly, they want to win, but they have generally painted winning as becoming their best selves rather than dominating others. Additionally, their stories were infused with an ethic of care that governs their personal connections. As Gilligan (1993) suggests, "Relationship requires connection. It depends not only on the capacity for empathy or the ability to listen to others and learn their language or take their point of view, but also on having a voice and having a language" (p. xx). In the present study, the participants are connected and listen to and engage with each other in a common language that drives their passion for sport and physicality, as well as their desire to continually learn through education. In their connectedness to each other and their empowering of one another, there is a sense of well-being, positive health, and joy that seemingly energizes their pursuit of passion in all areas of their lives. Through this ideal of care, sport can be

transformed. For example, Fisher (2014) believes sports, especially at the university level, are ideally situated to re-invent sporting ideals. Fisher suggests, “My vision for university sport in particular (since that is where my work is situated) is that of a place—in fact, the place – where performance “excellence” is rooted in caring” (p. 2). Within collegiate athletics, character development programs immersed in an ethic of care have the potential to transform sports. For the participants in this study, the ethic of care with which they approach sports, resonating in the theme of personal connections, underscores the way they may be redefining athletics and maintaining their passion.

Rising to the Challenge

In addition to personal connections resonating as a theme highlighted through the need of relatedness, this study’s participants want to rise to any challenge put before them. In accordance with Self-Determination Theory, this ideal of rising to the challenge may be explained to a certain degree as fulfilling the need of competence, which can lead to self-determined motivation and passion’s development. For example, according to Niemiec and Ryan (2009), “competence can be supported by educators’ introducing learning activities that are optimally challenging, thereby allowing students to test and to expand their academic (and athletic) capabilities” (p. 139). For the participants in this study, they are optimally challenged in the gym and the classroom every day. Such challenges are highly motivating and have led and continue to lead to a passion that is fully integrated into their self-definitions. However, when examining this theme of rising to the challenge more closely in accordance with Self-Determination Theory, it is very interesting because competition, especially winning and beating others, is an extrinsic motivator and having a sense of competence is more intrinsically driven. It is true that people participate in

activities for various reasons including intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Yet, this tension between competing to win and gaining competence to rise to any challenge was of interest and highlights the murkiness and complexity surrounding motivation and passions' development that became apparent as the participants shared their stories.

As evident in the voices of the females in this study, competition and winning are highly important to them. Sarmiento, Catita and Fonseca (2008) in their work with Self-Determination Theory and high level athletes suggest, "The existence of a complex relation between the competitive level and motivation" (p. 634) as determinants that are multifaceted in many high level athletes, including the female participants in the present study. Such complexity is not easily defined or understood and seems to happen simultaneously with the females in this study. They can at once want to beat the competition and feel capable of doing so leading to a motivation that stems from both internal and external regulatory propensities. Furthermore, Wilson, Rodgers, Fraser, and Murray (2013) in their work with highly competitive athletes suggest "the quality of extrinsic motivation is important in understanding the regulation-consequence link" (p. 88). These authors suggest that when it comes to contexts such as sport, examining the quality of extrinsic motivation is worthy of deliberation because of the messiness surrounding sport motivation and the complexity with which participants are motivated and how such motivation is regulated within each athlete. The females in this study exemplified such complexity and their stories suggested a multi-layered notion of motivation ranging from internal and external factors, which have influenced their development and sustainment of passion. In other words, as winning traditionally involves beating a competitor, competing is seemingly

more complex and can involve not only winning, but being capable of doing one's best against the ultimate competitor, oneself, highlighting the need for competence being fulfilled.

The student-athletes in this study believe if they do their best, they can win; thus, making this a deeper, richer understanding of what it means for these female, student-athletes to compete and experience competence. In many of their stories, this was evident. For example, when many of the participants shared, they suggested the idea of doing their best while competing to win. The tension once again is evident between the internal (doing one's best) and external (competing to win) motivational components in their stories. It is worth noting the complexity within which their motives lay, having fewer clear-cut lines than previously anticipated. The participants' stories as they reflected on their participation as student-athletes showed that motivation is complex; these females demonstrated the complexity of motivation as they told their stories and entangled the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of their passion and motivation for sport, challenging prescribed motivational ideals. As suggested, winning is an extrinsic motivator that assists the females in this study to build competence and rise to any challenges they face. Additionally, there are more intrinsically regulated factors that lead to building competence and rising to challenges that drive each to the development and sustainment of passion. Both the internal and the external matter, simultaneously each force directs motivation and passion's development.

For example, Felicia explains the internal and external tension as she simultaneously speaks about being competitive and winning while doing her best. She states,

I think I am just a competitive person; I just want to win all the time, and I want to do the best I can, and I think sport has made me not lose sight of that, like for any factor in my life.

Felicia explains the internal agency and the power within her body to prepare herself for the competitive world and make changes through improving her game and her physicality by doing her best. Therefore, for these participants, their bodies, as change agents, are also a significant part of their ability to rise to challenges. They have become passionate basketball players because their bodies performed the sport, allowing their physiques to grow, develop and move physically in their worlds regardless of the masculinized environment in which they participate. In doing so, the participants in this study have also resisted culturally prescribed norms for what a female body is capable of becoming, and they have done so in landscapes that have not always accepted females' participation (academics and sport).

Furthermore, "Bodies are not simply objects of regulation, but subjects in negotiating power relations. Because where there is power there is resistance (Foucault, 1980), bodies are disciplined, but they also resist dominant discourses" (Azzarito & Solmon, 2006, p. 204). Through their adaptation and performance of basketball, a sport typically viewed as reserved for male participants, the participants in this study are resisting the dominant discourse surrounding gender in sport and rising above any challenges presented. Their disciplined bodies are sources of power that provide each participant with access to move on the court, in the classroom and throughout life, helping make them, as Roxi stated in chapter four "invincible." Through such bodily performance and adaptations, the participants' rise to the challenges they face and their

passions are developed and sustained, regardless of dominant discourse about what is possible for female bodies.

Interestingly, for the participants' in this study, almost all of them participated in 'boys' leagues when they were young. Because they were allowed to participate 'with the boys' from a young age, when asked, most generally do not believe they have seen changes in sports for women since they started. For these participants, sports are a part of their fabric, and they have always had access to participation, normalizing female participation in sport for most of them and eliminating the binary that separates boys versus girls. While gendered discourses about the body are often learned through sport and physical education and historically physical education has "reproduced a dominant feminine body," post structural feminists have given emphasis to "the complexities and diversity of gendered bodies, identifying different femininities including those that challenge and resist the "norm"" (Flintoff & Scraton, as cited in Kirk, Macdonald & O'Sullivan, 2006, p. 770). For these participants, sports participation has seemingly been normalized and thus, their passion for basketball also seems to transcend gender binaries. Likewise, if sought out, they can find media coverage of themselves and other women in sports, especially through easily accessible Internet sources. Interestingly, not one participant brought up the lack of media coverage for females in sports. Because media access to female sporting events is readily available to them, or perhaps they are socialized to accept the dominant male discourse in sports media, conceivably it does not rise to their consciousness almost making gender a non-issue for most of these participants. I recall many times during interviews wanting to tell them that women's basketball gets less than 2% of **all** sports media coverage and that is the most of all women's sports combined, and is still so diminutive. I refrained, though, wanting

to hear their current experiences, not their reactions to my research, or others. Yet, as a feminist, I thought about how male activity is valued in our society and female activity often overlooked.

For example, as Mead (1962) suggests:

In every known human society, the male's need for achievement can be recognized. Men may cook or weave or dress dolls or hunt humming birds, but if such activities are appropriate occupations of men, then the whole society, men and women alike, vote them as important. When the same occupations are performed by women, they are regarded as less important. (p. 157, as cited in Thornton, 1986, p. 77)

While all of the participants in this study claim to compete just as hard as their male counterparts, their actions and participation are arguably less recognized and celebrated. In fact, when asked, all of them stated that they compete just as hard as men's basketball players. As evidenced in the findings, for these participants, competing is complex and can mean both beating the competition and trying one's hardest as they rise to any challenge faced. Yet, when females compete in sport, it is seemingly always underplayed in society, as Mead (1962) suggests.

However, one of the participants, Felicia, mentioned that part of the reason she competes and works so hard at basketball is to help grow the women's game, something she sees as a challenge to which she must rise towards. In this sense, she seems to understand the discrepancies present for females in sports. As such, Felicia is using her body as an agent for change and for transformation. Overall, however, for the females in this study, their immersion in sport seems to shelter them from the larger political battle going on regarding access and opportunity for females in all areas of life, including sport and academics. Nonetheless, they are

in the fight, rising to challenges they face. Their mere sports participation in basketball challenges the dominant discourse about the female body and its capabilities. Likewise, their families and coaches have also challenged dominant discourse about the female body's capability. Through their encouragement and support, families and coaches have also resisted traditional determinants of what it means to be female. In addition to resisting dominant discourse through the use of their bodies, the participants in this study are rising to the challenge of re-creating their own versions of what it means to be a female who participates in sports.

Effort Intensive

The two needs of relatedness and competence as highlighted by SDT were evident in the participants' voices in this study as they re-create what it means to be passionate student-athletes. So, too, was the need for autonomy. Each of the participants understands the demands that it takes to play sports and go to school at this level. The female-athletes are tenacious when it comes to the stresses they face balancing the rigors of sports, school and social life. They work hard. Their actions and their stories reveal that effort is integral to passion, highlighted in the theme of effort intensive. Not everyone could handle the challenges these females face; but these student-athletes handle it because they are not afraid to lace up their high-tops and bulldoze through whatever endeavor they face. As Self-Determination Theory addresses, effort is often connected to autonomy, and autonomy is a powerful motivator that is integral to developing a positive passion. Autonomy is all about choice. For example, Deci and Ryan (2000) suggest, "choice, acknowledgment of feelings, and opportunities for self-direction were found to enhance intrinsic motivation because they allow people a greater feeling of autonomy" (p. 70). When people have choices, their motivation is more self-determined, and they are much more likely to

develop a positive passion. The participants in this study do not always have a great deal of autonomy as their schedules are often intense and clearly defined.

Likewise, historically, females have lacked autonomy in many areas of life and have been especially discouraged from using their bodies contextually because of cultural prescriptions that dominate society's thinking about what it means to be female (Downing, 2000). As such, Downing articulates, by age three, children know the gendered rules about how boys and girls should act, with girls subject to docility and boys to dynamism. As such, males often have more autonomy and move more freely in all areas of society than their female counterparts. Additionally, without an opportunity to move or play, or if they withdraw from participation because of culturally prescribed values, girls often fall behind boys in terms of physicality, not because of a naturally occurring athleticism reserved for boys, but because of cultural prescriptions limiting females from movement (p. 52). According to Davis and Weaving (2010), this sexist perspective jeopardizes autonomy and subjectivity for females and creates a landscape for dehumanizing them.

For the females in this study, however, they did not learn the rules, or if they did, they did not employ them, nor have they accepted such prescriptions. These participants were encouraged to play, to participate, to move, regardless of their given biology. In doing so, regardless of whether or not they understood how or why they were not playing by the rules, they were challenging what it means *to be* a female and *to act* feminine. They have also chosen to work hard, to try, to give everything they have to improve and to play their passion and accepted the effort it takes to play their passion. This ideal may be integral to passion's development and

maintenance as manifested in the female, student-athletes' stories as they strive to improve in their sports and school. For example, Roxi says:

Just accept the hard work, because there have been times when I wanted to push school and basketball and everything away, and I'm like, I don't want to deal with this right now, and there are times when I wanted to just overlook stuff, and I'm like, I can't deal with this, I've got enough issues of my own; but I would say, you know, accept it, accept every challenge that is thrown your way, accept every obstacle that is thrown your way, and never give up. That's it.

Like Roxi, the participants in this study exemplify effort intensiveness in their sport and in school even as it gets difficult. Furthermore, the choice to work hard is often an intrinsic motivator, and nearly all of the participants explicitly shared how much determination it takes to train and participate in athletics and academics as student-athletes at the collegiate level. Yet, there was murkiness in the difficulty, as well, because it was often combined with other needs highlighted by SDT being met and extrinsic forces being present, too. For example, many participants were motivated by seeing others go through what they were going through (relatedness), and they were motivated by game day, and the chance to win and play in front of a crowd (extrinsic motivation). Again, this unveils the messiness and the lack of clear cut definitions between the psychological needs and motivational factors addressed by SDT. The day-to-day grind is so very challenging, and athletes have to choose to work hard through it; and on game day, there is often joy because they get to play together in front of a crowd that often includes their families. It is amazing in our world of instant gratification that these participants understand the challenges of the day-to-day demands surrounding their commitments as student-

athletes. Their competitive season is only about four months long; however, the rest of the time, they are grinding it out and looking forward to the approximate 30 games they will play in a basketball season. This value of effort and a work ethic is an interesting characteristic of these female student-athletes who find joy in hard work as they pursue their passion for sports.

For the Love of the Game

The three needs of relatedness, competence and autonomy, manifested in the participants' stories. Additionally, there was a love of the game and for learning that arose, resonating in their passions in action. It may be argued that the love of learning, in the gym and in the classroom, stems from each need highlighted in Self-Determination Theory. Competence, autonomy and relatedness can all be applied. If a student-athlete feels that she is capable of learning, she is more motivated to learn. If she feels she has a choice to work hard, to try, to learn, she is more motivated to learn. And, if she relates to her teammates, her coaches, or her professors, she is arguably more motivated to learn. All of these factors have increased the MPU women's basketball team's love of learning and thus, passion for the game, and this passion flows into all areas of their lives. There seems to have been an environment created in each of their lives as they grew up, as they progressed through middle and high school, and as they matriculate through college, which has provided a space for each to positively hone her passion. While it has been a challenge, it has also been fun.

Garrett (2004), in her work on gendered bodies in physical education, suggests, "the body actively participates in the construction of the self" (p. 142) and "through continuous bodily practice, gender is 'performed' and it is through the on-going process of gender performance that the nature and meaning of people's bodies are physically altered" (p. 143). For the participants in

this study, their bodies have been physically altered into athletic bodies because of their continuous performance of sport, not because of their prescribed biological sex. If one continuously performs physical activity, the body becomes physically fit and athletic, regardless of sex or gender. Such continuous performance of sport can lead to a passion for the activity and a fulfillment of the psychological needs highlighted by SDT that defies societal prescriptions of what it means to be athletic.

Interested in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), Vallerand et al. (2003) contemplated the notion that some activities that satisfy the needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness while generating joy become increasingly central to a person's self-view regardless of gender. These activities, according to Vallerand et al., are passionate activities. Furthermore, "these activities come to be so self-defining that they represent central features of one's identity" (Vallerand, 2008, p. 2). Likewise, Solomon (1976) argues, it is our passions that make our lives meaningful. Vallerand (2008) defines passion as "a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that one likes (or even loves), finds important, and in which one invests time and energy" (p. 4). Throughout the interviews and focus group with the participants in this study, as well as observations, it was apparent that Vallerand's definition of passion rang true. This has been evident throughout this chapter, as is the affirmation of Vallerand's model of passion, including the idea that fulfilling the needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness can lead to passion's development. What stands out to me, however, is the richer and deeper understanding of passion as highlighted through the participants' stories. While a textbook definition is critical to our understanding of a construct and can provide a starting point for comprehending various concepts such as passion, the lived experiences of participants actualizing such concepts make

the textbook definition more accessible and relatable to the human experience, allowing us to further our own understandings of that construct.

As evidenced in this chapter, there are multitudes of ways in which passion for sport has been developed and continues to be sustained in the lives of the participants. In connection with the theoretical framework of this study, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), Vallerand (2008), in his work on passion for an activity, explains “people engage in various activities throughout life in the hope of satisfying the basic psychological needs of autonomy (a desire to feel a sense of personal initiative), competence (a desire to interact effectively with the environment), and relatedness (a desire to feel connected to significant others)” (p. 1).

Throughout this chapter, the role of these three needs has been discussed and seems to support Vallerand’s conclusions surrounding passion and its development. In fact, all three needs were highlighted in the voices of the females who participated in this study through interviews and a focus group. Most significant, however, was the need for relatedness. This was evident in the first theme of ‘personal connections’ and played out in various areas of personal connections including families, teammates, and coaches. While autonomy and competence are highly motivational and contribute to self-determined behavior and positive passion, relatedness seemed to play a huge role in passion’s development for this study’s participants. Over and over again, the participants in this study mentioned others. Even as they were talking about working hard and being competitive, it seemed like they were almost always considering others’ roles in their development of passion.

What was also interesting is that although the need of relatedness stood out as critical to the development and maintenance of passion, the other needs of autonomy and competence

played important parts too. However, as mentioned, there was murkiness and an overlapping between internal and external motivators, suggesting the intricacies of motivation. SDT suggests, as the needs are satisfied, self-determined motivation occurs. From this, there is the potential for positive passion's development. Interestingly, as I listened to the student-athlete's stories, I gained a new understanding of the complexities and richness of motivation and passion's development and continuity. For example, Belenky (1986) in her book, *Women's Ways of Knowing*, provides a glimpse into this complexity and intertwining of the psychological needs by explaining how relating to others can often lead to competence. She suggests it is "these kinds of relationships that provide women with experiences of mutuality, equality, and reciprocity that are most helpful in eventually enabling them to...emerge with a powerful sense of their own capacities" (p. 38). In their experience as teammates, the present study's participants' experiences are reciprocated, and their positioning as teammates provides a space for them to know themselves and each other intimately. In such a space, they seem to be motivated to continue to learn and grow, as well as maintain their passion for sport.

By and large, there are numerous ways in which individuals are motivated. These motivational factors include both intrinsic motivators like joy for joy's sake and extrinsic motivators like rewards or beating the competition. My initial approach assumed that there was a better motivator; the more intrinsic, the better. The research on SDT suggests that there is the possibility of more joy, and overall well-being, when a person is intrinsically motivated. Yet, motivation is arguably more complex. These student-athletes' narratives suggest that it is possible for intrinsic and extrinsic motives to occur in the same breath, and there can be immense joy from the various motivations. The participants in this study seem to want to win, work hard

and do so with others, simultaneously. The simultaneous intersection of the masculine quality of competition and feminine quality of cooperation challenges historically situated athletic ideals. Such a challenge “involves the practical and symbolic incorporation into sport of feminine virtues such as expressiveness and grace, alongside a cessation of sport’s pathological masculine excesses” (Davis & Weaving, 2010, p. 3). These women seem to be bringing such binary convergence to sport. It is in this multifaceted situation that these participants’ passion is ostensibly developed and sustained. Through a complex intricacy of varying motivations and ideals, they learn to love the game while challenging the construct of athlete.

In addition to loving the game, the passion these participants have for basketball impacts how they encounter school, social and personal settings. First and foremost, through relatedness, as understood by SDT, basketball has impacted their relationships with their families, friends and teammates, as well as coaches. Sports started with every participant within this study, in the intimacy of their families. As their passions grew, their families supported the development of their passion. Now, as they compete at the college level, families are still the support networks for all of the participants. Many of their families come to home and/or away games and support the MPU Women’s Basketball Team. In addition to families, the teammates these student-athletes have had throughout the years have become their best friends. Because they relate to each other and love the game, they become like ‘sisters’. Because of basketball, the need for relatedness is met and motivation occurs. Basketball is a thread that weaves through their relationships and impacts their interactions with others. Basketball provides a social network that is a powerful part of each of the participants, thus influencing who they are and with whom they interact.

In addition to social settings, basketball also has an impact on school for the females in this study. For all of the participants, it is also the competitive and effort themes that impact their passion for sport, and this drive to compete and work hard also impacts how they approach their education. They want to win. They work hard to do so. The environment can be a classroom or the gymnasium; in any case, these participants have learned through their passion for basketball to rise to any challenge, including academics. Because basketball is a part of each of the participants' identity, it is impactful in all areas of their lives, including the competitive nature with which they approach school and sports. They see themselves as basketball players, not someone who happens to play basketball. As such, wherever they go, whomever they meet, these women carry that identity with them, making it infiltrate all of their social environments and interactions including their education.

Vallerand (2012) highlights how passion for an activity can impact other activities because of the positive psychological well-being associated with participating in a passion. He explains, "Positive emotions and associated processes represent the important mechanisms that facilitate the positive effects of harmonious passion on well-being. This is because positive emotions lead one to expand the self and to broaden one's repertoire of skills" (p. 7). In addition to the positive emotions Vallerand highlights, our bodies' experiences also shape our identity development. For example, Azzarito and Solmon (2006) suggest, "the body is essential to our experience; meanings we give to our bodies shape our identity, mold our physicality, and influence our decisions to engage in or resist physical education practices" (p. 201). As such, how we utilize our body through physical fitness, for example, shapes who we are, who we become, and how we identify. If we use our bodies to become athletic, we may identify as

athletes regardless of our biology. As such, our bodies are powerful agents in our becoming, as well as our resistance to prescribed practices relative to gender.

For the student-athletes' in this study, the positive emotions and overall positive well-being they have gained from physically participating passionately in basketball, as well as the physicality with which they have developed their ability to move, have been broadened to their approach to school and learning environments. For example, Lindsey says:

What you do on the court relates to what you do in the classroom - in a way, like, competing, learning, things like that. Those two coincide with each other. So what I learn on the court, you know, are the same concepts that you learn in the classroom... like competitiveness and just learning and being a good listener, I mean those are just a few things I could think of. Actually, there are so many ways that basketball relates to being in a classroom. So that's a huge benefit as well, for playing this sport.

Like Lindsey, the participants' in this study seem to apply the lessons they have learned on the court, to the classroom, and to university life overall; competing to win and be their best, relating to others, and trying hard all resonate for these participants. The gym is an extension of the classroom and vice versa; both are places within universities where they can learn, grow and develop through challenging activities that give them the opportunity to continually become their best selves. Furthermore, Fisher (2014) states:

I see those who have the power to influence sport interested in developing character and the related skills of moral consciousness, caring, and connection in themselves and their athletes...the social context of sport (undergirded by feminist moral principles and reflective practice) can be used as a site for the development of "good" character in

athletes, coaches, and administrators- not to mention athletic trainers, parents and other constituents who contribute to athletes' lives. (p. 10)

When sporting environments allow for the growth of the mind, body and spirit, resonating in the development of positive passion, arguably constructive change is possible in environments, like sports, that sometimes seem impenetrable. Self-Determination Theory and feminist framings help explain the development of passion and how it is sustained and permeated into every aspect of the participants' lives, including their education, as well as how these participants have risen beyond gendered prescriptions of what it means to be athletic.

There is no question that within university academic and athletic settings, females have been marginalized and the stories and voices of males venerated. As such, examining SDT through a feminist lens added to our understanding of the essence of passion's development and maintenance in female, college student-athletes. As females, the participants in this study have seemingly found ways to fulfill the needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness to develop their passions even within sport and academics, where historically, females have not often had arenas to feel competent, exercise autonomy, or relate to like-minded people. Azzarito and Solmon (2006) challenge us to "understand that being physically active is not a matter of performing ideal feminine or masculine body shapes and sizes or muscularity to achieve happiness and ideals of success, but a means to feel empowered, positive, and healthy about the body and the self" (p. 220). The passion in action these participants experience seems to stem from physical feats and the fulfillment of psychological needs that lead them to feel capable in all aspects of their lives.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a discussion of the findings from the present research study. The rich and thick descriptive data garnered from the participants' stories in one-on-one interviews and a focus group, as well as observations, provided an illustration of their experiences competing passionately in the sport of basketball at the Division I level highlighted by the themes of personal connections, rising to challenges, effort intensiveness and love of the game. The insights gathered from their stories provide a glimpse into how passion for sport is developed and maintained in female, student-athletes even as the world continues to value males' participation in sport over female participation. Understanding motivation leading to passion through SDT provides further insight into how the study participants' needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness are met and help develop and sustain their passion for sport that permeates all areas of their lives including school.

Additionally, a feminist lens provided insight into how these participants create agency through the utilization of their bodies on their own terms, regardless of their biology, resulting in athletic bodies that participate passionately in sport. Likewise, these females are re-defining and re-constructing sport by adding a component of care resonating in the personal connections that are manifested through sporting passions. For these females, they are going to play regardless of the recognition they may or may not receive from the media because they care about each other, want to work hard, desire challenges, and love the game. It is important to continue to examine passion through qualitative methodologies so we do not miss the murkiness, messiness, and essence of passion as it is developed and sustained in participants' lives. Molly sums up passion's complexity in one short statement. It is noteworthy how in the following declaration,

she starts with ‘me’, brings in the ‘we’, and then brings it back to herself, showing the impact personal connections have in passion’s sustainment. She also shows harmonious passion when she talks about fun, and obsessive passion when she talks about living and dying for the game. Finally, it is evident that a basketball player is who she is. Molly states:

It’s still fun for me, and I still love it, but it’s like, it’s more of embedded in my heart now - that this is my nature, this is what we live and die for, like, this is what we, like - breath for and that's how - like - I feel when I play.

Molly’s voice is powerful. Her passion is embedded in her heart, and it rings through in her words. Women’s experiences matter in sports, in education, and in life. By providing times and spaces for females to share their stories, we are challenging traditional notions of what it means to move in the world and experience it. Gilligan (1993) suggests:

A new psychological theory in which girls and women are seen and heard is an inevitable challenge to a patriarchal order that can remain in place only through the continuing eclipse of women's experience. Bringing the experiences of women and girls to full light, although in one sense perfectly straightforward, becomes a radical endeavor. Staying in connection, then, with women and girls-in teaching, in research, in therapy, in friendship, in motherhood, in the course of daily living-is potentially revolutionary. (p. xxiv)

If gender is malleable, as suggested by Butler (2003) and Garrett (2004), then how we perceive gender must be malleable, as well, especially in environments such as sport and education, where gender has been appropriated to marginalize individuals. It is important to teach to the possibilities and potential for passion’s development present in *all* people. The lesson that any “body” is capable of developing a positive passion in any arena is critical.

Broadening the vision of gender's potentiality can help create positive classroom and gymnasium environments as places where *everyone* can learn, develop and sustain a positive passion. As Gilligan (1993) explains above, the 'radical endeavor' of highlighting the experiences of women and girls as they pursue their passions has a chance to be revolutionary. This research may be a small step toward such a revolution as we realize the potentials and passions of females who participate in collegiate sport.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Introduction

Recently, the morning news highlighted a young girl named Rowan, who had written a letter of concern to *DC Comics* because of the lack of girl superheroes in their books. When my mom was young, like Rowan, she wrote a similar letter to the editor regarding the books she was reading for grammar school. She loved to read, but wanted to read more about girls' adventures. She doesn't remember if she heard back from the book's editors or not, but she felt proud of taking a chance to demand more girls be seen and heard in story books. Likewise, my college alma mater did not recognize females who participated in sports as Varsity Letter recipients until the year I graduated, 1991. Years later, my dad and I attended a banquet to watch female athletes who had attended my alma mater prior to 1991 receive their well-earned accolades, including a Varsity Letter. After the event, my dad wrote a poem as a tribute to the women (see Appendix C). Among his many beautiful stanzas, one stands out to me, "As most of you know, they only had one sin; that was to play or perform in the shadows of men" (Hollemeak, 2003). In our world, I still believe women and girls want to see and hear about females who are super heroes, who have adventures and who play sports.

Until I started this doctoral process, I had not thought about the fact that my mom and dad could be considered feminists who care about female's participation in the world. We never used that language in our family; I was the first to attend college so discussions were unique to our own situation. Through this process, however, I have come to reflect on my life and my values. Initially, I naïvely assumed I came to be a feminist through my own journey of discovery and self-enlightenment. The truth is, this feminist perspective and philosophy was with me all

along and it is not just mine. My parents gave me innumerable gifts. Among the many include a view of the world that includes the ideal that gender should not limit anyone even in traditionally masculinized arenas like politics, education or sports. Likewise, in such spaces, females should be seen and heard and given opportunities to make policies, change institutional practices, and transform environments.

My mom has been an elected official in the town I grew up in for over 30 years. One of few females, as a Village Trustee she fights for her community and demands the best from herself and those around her. When my parents, years ago, recognized that I had physical prowess, they ‘planted a seed and allowed it to grow’. Like the females in this study, in my family is where my passion for sports was initially sparked and continually nourished. Also, like the participants in this study, my body was a positive agent that allowed me to pursue sports and an education. As an educator, I want to pass this gift along to all the students with whom I am blessed to work; I want to help nourish passion. As Solomon (1976) suggests, “It is our passions and our passions alone that provide our lives with meaning” (p. xiv). Through the examination of passion, and the females in this study that are living out their passion for sport, my life has become more meaningful.

In particular, this research looked closely at the experiences of Division I female, student-athletes who participate in Women’s Basketball at MPU to understand how their passion for sport was developed and is sustained. Using themes generated from the participant data, as well as my understanding of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) influenced by feminist philosophy, much was gained about how passion for sport matures even in environments where female’s voices and perspectives have not always been valued. This chapter

will provide a conclusion to the study, taking into account the implications of this study and recommendations for future research.

This research focused on how passion has been developed and/or sustained in female, college athletes by examining their experiences surrounding sports and attempting to answer the following questions.

1. What are the ways in which passion for sport has been developed and continues to shape the lives of Division I (DI), female student-athletes?
2. Does passion for sport influence female student-athletes' behavior and actions in academic, social, and personal settings?

By asking and answering these questions, a more complete comprehension of passion's development and maintenance, as well as how it has influenced other domains experienced by female, college student-athletes, was garnered.

A significant part of the theoretical framework guiding this qualitative study was the macro-theory of motivation called Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Furthermore, "SDT is relatively unique in emphasizing that a positive psychology should be concerned with the nexus out of which human development and well-being will either be enhanced or diminished – that is, with the processes that determine whether peoples' potentials will be actualized or their vulnerabilities will dominate" (Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004, p. 24).

Much of the recent research on passion for an activity like sports stems from SDT because motivation is integral to developing passion.

While most of the research on passion for an activity has utilized quantitative methods, the present focus was about gaining a richer and deeper understanding of the experiences of the

study's participants and learning about the essence of passion through their understandings. As such, the theoretical framework was also influenced by phenomenological and feminist perspectives focusing on understanding the essence of passion's development by learning about and hearing from females who are currently experiencing collegiate athletics. Furthermore, Allen-Collinson (2011) suggests "feminist phenomenology can provide rigorous, grounded and insightful analyses of female sporting embodiment, and effectively portray the complexities of sporting experiences" (p. 299). Therefore, this theoretical framework and qualitative approach enabled the ten participants' to share their stories of passion's development within the complex arena of sports while simultaneously providing a voice for each participant in environments that have historically limited their opportunities (academia and athletics). The themes that emerged from the interviews and focus group data included: 1) personal connections, 2) rising to challenges, 3) effort intensive, and 4) for the love of the game resulting in passion in action.

As these categorical themes emerged, they seemed to bring me full circle and back to the tension evident between psychology's and philosophy's definitions of passion that were highlighted in Chapter Two of this dissertation. To reiterate, psychology's definition generally surrounds motivation and clearly is at the forefront of the results of this study. The psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness leading to self-determined behavior as highlighted by SDT truly enable passion to flourish for the participants in this study. Yet, philosophy's definition is of value too. Interestingly, as was stated in the second chapter of this dissertation, the word passion derives from the Latin, 'patoir', which is associated with enduring and suffering (Peterson, 2010). Additionally, Peterson suggests, the word passion in philosophy

“came to mean, more generally, very strong emotions, not only suffering, but also what sustained the person who suffered” (p. 1).

The journey of passion’s development and its continuity, based on the ten participants’ stories, seems to begin in the intimacy of their families. This *personal connection* fulfills the need of relatedness leading to self-determined motivation and eventually passion’s development. For example, Deci and Vansteenkiste (2004) explain, “the need for relatedness concerns the universal propensity to interact with, be connected to, and experience caring for other people” (p. 25). As such, for the females in this study, relatedness to their biological families are just the beginning of interaction, connection and caring for people through sport. Such connection to and caring for others is not lost in the competitive arena of athletics for these participants. In fact, as their stories told, such connections seem to be nourished, challenging what it means to be an athlete. Eventually, the experiences they share through sports with teammates and coaches help cultivate their passion and sustain it by their interactions with and connections to those who care about them and those about whom they care. For the women in this study, relatedness was a powerful factor in their athletic experiences and development of passion.

In addition to personal connections, *rising to the challenge* was another theme that emerged from the women’s stories. Through challenges, they learn they are capable and they learn to compete. Such challenges are motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Furthermore, according to SDT, gaining the psychological need of competence leads to greater self-determined behavior. For example, Deci and Vansteenkiste (2004) suggest, “Throughout life, people engage their world in an attempt to master it and to feel the sense of effectance when they do” (p. 25). When individuals feel they are capable of completing and mastering challenges,

they are arguably more self-determined. On the other hand, wanting to win is a challenge for which the females of this study strive. Clearly this is most often seen as an extrinsic motivator. Although this ideal of beating the competition is an extrinsic motivation, it too is a powerful force in the participants of this study's development of passion. Yet, Vallerand, Guavin and Halliwell (2001) suggest, if the "fluctuations of intrinsic motivation in competitive situations are accurate, the numerous competition losers may perceive themselves as being less competent and may experience decreased levels of intrinsic motivation whereas only the winner of the competition may feel competent and intrinsically motivated" (p. 467). Therefore, competition may have an impact on perceptions of competence that lead to increased or decreased self-determination impacting passion's development. The females in this study win a lot, yet they also experience loss. Therefore, their perceived competence may fluctuate resulting in their varied self-determined motivation. As such, gaining a more thorough understanding of the complexity of motivation and its impetus has been an important component of the present study. Interestingly, the environments of sport and academia have seemingly provided challenges for these participants that help them overcome difficulties and rise to challenges they may face in historically male dominated venues. In short, rising to the challenge seems to be a motivating influence that helps develop and sustain passion for sport in the lives of these participants.

Likewise, the *effort intensive* motivation calls to action the need for autonomy. These females choose to work hard. The daily grind and rigors of being a student-athlete are not lost on these participants. They understand the demands and choose it anyway. This choice, then, is also a powerful intrinsic motivator that leads to passion and its continuity. As Deci and Vansteenkiste (2004) suggest, "To be autonomous does not mean to be independent of others, but rather it

means to feel a sense of willingness and choice when acting, whether the actions are independently initiated or in response to a request from significant others” (p. 25). As these student-athletes work hard, they do so in cooperation and conjunction with their teammates. Their effort is an independent choice, yet their understanding of how their individual efforts impact each other demonstrates the cooperative nature of their motivation to try. In short, the choice to work hard fulfills the need for autonomy as highlighted in SDT and enables self-determined motivation, as well as passion’s growth in the participants of this study. Entangled in this ethic of work and autonomy is the knowledge that each of their individual efforts impact the team dynamics about which they care greatly. They can be at once powerful and compassionate, wanting to win and wanting to assist their teammates, challenging the notion of what it means to be an athlete.

Amongst the struggle and the hard work, there is also a joy and a *love of the game* that stems from the pure fun that playing sports provides. With all the research that has been done on sports, having fun is still the number one reason kids participate. For example, Hedstrom and Gould (2004) state, there are a multitude of reasons children play sports, yet “First, regardless of gender, the most important reason for participating is to have fun” (p. 21). Fun may also be a top motivator for the female participants in this study. Indeed, their stories talked about the dedication and hard work they had employed and continue to experience in sports. However, within that context, there seemed to still be a child inside each of the participants in this study that plays sports because it is just so fun. That fun leads to the passion in action that these females experience in their lives as college, student-athletes. They are living their passions and this infiltrates every aspect of their lives. Living their passions allows these participants to rise

above challenges that may be experienced from their status as ‘female’, their status as ‘student-athlete’ and their combined status as ‘female, student-athlete’.

Implications for Education

In its purest sense, education may be about becoming, and understanding one’s self in relation to the world (Dewey, 1915). Athletics is one place within university settings to learn about the self in relation to others. The playing field, like life, is a teacher. As such, the lessons learned in sport such as sports-person-ship, leadership, teamwork, etc. are important components of a student-athlete’s development. Personal connections, rising to challenges, effort intensive activities, and love of the activity can lead to passion in action that can be developed and maintained for positive life experiences. As Solomon (1976) stated, “It is our passions and our passions alone that provide our lives with meaning” (p. xiv). For those individuals whose passion is for sport, how they learn and what they learn as they develop their passion will give their lives meaning. And hopefully, each will learn lessons, grow mentally, physical and spiritually, as well as understand life more fully, as a result of this process. In short, the playing field is synonymous with the classroom, and both are places where individuals have the chance to learn and places where transformation can and does occur. They are also places filled with possibility.

For the women in this study, becoming athletic reaches beyond gendered assumptions within hegemonic discourse of what it means to be female and to be athletic, providing a space for new possibilities. Being on an athletic team and playing sports allows each of these participants to collaborate with other women, developing a safe community where they are validated and supported. In the team setting, they are free to learn and discover their bodies’ full potentials and what is possible, rather than what is foreclosed. As a result, becoming a ‘baller’

and identifying as a basketball player was made possible through the pursuit of each participant's passion for sports.

The infiltration of sports, or 'basketball player', into their identities impacts the way the females in this study approach their everyday lives. Such internalization of basketball into their identities may be explained as part of the development of passion for sport. For example, Vallerand (2006) explains, "the representation of an activity that a person likes and engages in on a regular basis will be incorporated in that person's identity to the extent that the activity is highly valued" (p. 456), thus resulting in passion toward that activity (Aron, Aron & Smolan, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993). While being highly valued, a passionate activity may become a part of a person's identity. However, work by Coakley (1992) has examined the idea of a unidimensional identity for people in areas like sports, as problematic. Black and Smith (2007) elaborate saying, "a sport social structure that can result in the development of a narrowed or uni-dimensional identity and also a restriction of opportunity to exert control over one's life" (p. 419) is cause for concern in some young athletes who become obsessive about their athletic participation and passion for their sport. Interesting, Black and Smith (2007) also suggest, "Possessing a strong athlete identity does not necessitate exclusive identification with the athlete role" (p. 420). As such, it is critical for educators, like teachers and coaches, to encourage athletes to explore a variety of passions and create environments where identities can be explored and encouraged to grow and develop in a healthy fashion where positive passion and sports identification are highlighted. For the females in this study, it is evident that their passion for sport is at times uni-dimensional and obsessive – the 'losses will stick with them the rest of their lives' and they 'HAVE to play'. Yet, they also value and identify

with other aspects of their lives like school, family and friends, making their passion for sport harmonious, as well.

Clearly, the females of this study highly value their sport and, in turn, the sport of basketball has become a part of who they are. The present study identified several themes that highlighted such development and maintenance of passion for sports. Each of the themes evident in this study connects to the literature on passion for an activity, as well as provides a unique understanding about the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors on passion's development and what it means to be a female, student-athlete. But what does this mean for the broader context of education?

One answer may come from the participants of this study who generally felt that their passion for basketball impacted their pursuit of excellence in every area of their lives, including school. For example, CC stated how her pursuits on the court transfer to the classroom by saying, "Well, if I'm going to achieve the highest I can in basketball, I'm going to try to shoot for the highest I can in my education. I work hard on the court; I'm working hard off the court"; meaning she expects to be exceptional in the classroom, just like she is on the basketball court. That said, as educators and coaches, it is critical that we help our students discover their passions - what activities truly resonate with them - and then help them understand the transferable skills necessary to pursue excellence and a love for learning in all areas of life including school and extra-curricular activities that may become passionate ones.

Similarly, applying Self-Determination Theory to the classroom is another way to connect this research to the broader educational context. For instance, incorporating the three psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness into the classroom environment

may increase students' self-determined motivation for school. If students feel that they are capable of completing the task at hand (competence), they have a choice in the learning process (autonomy), and connect to their peers and teachers (relatedness), self-determination for school should advance. Furthermore, according to Leptokaridou, Vlachopoulos and Papaioannou (2014), "Autonomy-supportive teaching leads to enhanced levels of motivation" (p. 1). As such, finding autonomy-supportive ways to motivate students in classroom environments, by employing the three psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness can lead to more self-determined motivation and may help develop a passion for learning in many students. Likewise, people are motivated for a variety of reasons including extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Finding unique ways to inspire every student should be the goal of all educators, coaches and administrators. These motivations should not be singularly extrinsic (test scores or points scored) or intrinsic (joy for joy sakes); rather, providing spaces for students to be challenged, work hard and engage with each other in cooperation and care can lead to a love of learning that can last a lifetime.

In addition to classroom settings as environments where students learn and develop passions, much can be gained through extracurricular activities provided in schools. Giroux (1988) suggests, "Radical education is interdisciplinary in nature" (p. 2). The unique combination of classroom settings along with other interdisciplinary areas within schools such as art, music, theater and/or athletics, provides a unique opportunity for educators and students alike. However, with the impact of Common Core, arguably teacher creativity may be limited as educators are required to strictly comply with federal standards. This, hypothetically, could debilitate a teacher's potential to reach the distinctive needs of each student. However, extra-

curricular activities, led by teachers in cooperation with their students, are spaces where creativity and innovation still resonate.

The gymnasium, the stage, or the conservatory may offer the perfect space for teachers and students to exercise their imaginations and live out their passions because the standards in such spaces are not limited by federal guidelines or standardized testing. Gyms, playing fields, music and theater venues are still spaces in our educational systems where the students and teachers can be innovative, can dream and develop passions. As teacher education programs are preparing the teachers of tomorrow, who will undoubtedly impact the students' of tomorrow's love of learning and passion, much should be done to encourage teachers to coach or sponsor extra-curricular programming in schools where they can still create democratic educational environments for students that fulfill the needs necessary for critical thinking and self-determined behavior in a caring and cooperative democratic environment.

Additionally, in our world today, females still have a long way to go in educational settings, among other institutions, before there is equity. Because historically, "expanding access to higher education for women, (was) usually seen as an extremist activity," the ramifications of such hesitations are still evident especially when it comes to opportunities for women's voices to be heard (Thelin, 2004, p. 84). Furthermore, Flinders and Thornton (2004) suggest, "whether one looks at preschools or university lecture halls, at female teachers or male teachers, research spanning the last twenty years consistently reveals that males receive more attention than do females" (p. 211). This lack of attention results in missed opportunities for female's voices to be heard and often leaves them out of policy making decisions, further educational opportunities and chances to obtain wealth. It also impacts education's and society's interpretation of a

‘woman’s place’. If female voices are not heard in the college classroom or other arenas, they are certainly not heard in the venue of college sport. Therefore, educators, like teachers and coaches, must be aware of potential discrepancies and provide times and spaces for female voices to be heard.

Even though, “the ascendancy of women, in terms of both numbers and skill, as intercollegiate athletes was one of the remarkable transformations in American higher education,” there is still a lack of understanding and appreciation for female, student-athletes (Thelin, 2004, p. 347). Within the approximate 5% of sports media coverage dedicated to women, is the amount of time dedicated to female *college* athletes. Women’s basketball receives the majority of sports coverage for females (less than 2%), and this coverage includes both professional and college basketball games. As sports become a larger part of our culture, we cannot continue to leave females behind. Maybe the classroom is the space where dialogue can begin and change can be initiated. Classrooms are missing out by limiting female voices and perspectives. As educators, we must be aware of gender differences and give time and permission for female viewpoints. Fans are missing out by not taking a closer look at the intensity and competitiveness with which females live out their passion for sports. As consumers and citizens, we must demand to see more girls and women as super heroes, adventurers and athletes. The world is missing out by not giving females more equitable spaces. It is critical that we give females spaces in classrooms and gymnasiums, and all arenas, to be seen and heard. We should also encourage their passions; as Roxi stated in her story for this research, her passion for basketball, makes her “invincible.” Females deserve to feel invincible rather than vulnerable. Sports and education should give them a time and a space to feel that way. And, perhaps, we

should go watch them play too, because in watching them, we, as Char suggested in her story, “get to see their hearts” and see their passions in action and their invincible determination that allows them to feel fully alive.

Implications for Future Research

Because of the limited scope of this study, future studies should try to replicate the findings surrounding the development and sustainment of passion that this study found. Regardless of the limited scope, and restricted generalizability, themes emerged from the data and stories of the participants that provide a deeper understanding of the essence of passion and its development. Such a rich understanding of passion is the benefit of qualitative research.

Because there is limited qualitative research surrounding Self-Determination Theory in athletics, more studies should be conducted using qualitative methods in the future to continue to unravel passion’s essence and its complexity by digging deeper into our current comprehension of the constructs of motivation and passion. Such studies should be open to collegiate athletes who participate in other sports, besides basketball, to gain an additional diversity of experiences and understandings from unique perspectives. While basketball provided a unique perspective in the present study, other voices of athletes from individual or team sports may provide further insight into passion’s development and sustainment.

Additionally, other demographics besides gender, such as race or sexual orientation, should be employed in future studies to help provide a greater understanding of what it means to be passionate from varying perspectives. Since athletics is a space where homophobia is prevalent (Andersen, 2008) and biases exist, further studies involving additional demographics

may add to our understanding of passion's development and continuity by examining the intersectionality of various demographics.

Of interest, as well, may be to hear from alumni female, student-athletes who no longer participate in sports. Learning from them about how their passion for sport translated into their current life positions would be interesting. Reflections and historical review of passion's development might provide another perspective and greater insight into the construct of passion as it revolves around sports and life.

Likewise, many females choose not to pursue sports at the college level. They may enjoy sports at the high school level, even pursue them passionately, and then choose not to play. What constructs are at play that allows them to withdraw from sport and perhaps pursue other interests? Learning more about such circumstances may provide greater insight into burnout, as well as passion's continuity.

In addition, the examination of female coaches in university athletic environments would add to our understanding of passion for sport. Most have participated in sport and continue to teach and coach their sport at a high level. Learning from them how their passion continues to evolve would be of great interest.

Of great interest too, is the development of care in the masculine environment of sport. The participants in this study continually expressed this ideal as part of their love of the game and development of passion for sport. Yet historically, sport has marginalized feminine aspects, like caring, as such practice does not conform to the hyper-masculine milieu of athletics. As coaches are being trained, is it possible to educate them on this ideal in order to diminish the binary of masculine/feminine ideologies in sport? Fisher (2014) suggests, "In my vision for the

future of collegiate sport, it would be a place where consciousness, caring, and connection is used as the standard for what it means to be an excellent coach, athlete, and administrator” (p. 7). To be excellent, Fisher argues, caring is critical. As such, in teacher and coaching education courses, we must find ways to teach and learn about the importance of caring for each other in all environments, even in athletics where such lessons have often been marginalized.

Finally, because this study was influenced by feminist frameworks, women were placed at the forefront, and this research allowed a space for female athletes to share their stories. Yet, quantitative methods have shown that both males and females experience passion and can benefit from developing positive passions. As such, future studies should also consider understanding men’s development of passion more deeply through qualitative methodologies. Such studies may provide a greater understanding of the similarities or differences in which males and females develop their passion for the game. These potential studies may also further open the door to equity in sport, as well as transform what it means to play passionately in athletics.

Overall, as university student-athletes, the women in this study participate passionately in environments that have historically limited their opportunities (academics and athletics). Regardless of such historic limitations, these women persist. Through an understanding of Self-Determination Theory, it is evident that relatedness, autonomy, and competence impact passion’s growth and permanence. Likewise, females who participate in collegiate sports are using their bodies as agents to re-define what it means to be student-athletes.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

At the beginning of the interview (and before the recording begins), I will say, “This conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time.”

If the participant does not agree to be recorded, I will continue the conversation without recording and take notes during our conversation. If the participant consents, or does not object, I will move forward with the recorded interview using the following protocol.

Initial Questions

1. When did you first start playing sports?
 - a. Why did you start playing sports?
 - b. How did it make you feel to play sports?
2. Did someone encourage you to participate in sports? If so, who?
 - a. How did they encourage you?
3. If you saw someone who was passionate for his or her sport, what would that look like?
 - a. What does passion for sport mean to you?
 - b. Are you passionate for your sport? If so, how?
4. What are your most vivid memories from when you started playing basketball?
 - a. How did you know that this was ‘your sport’?
5. In our society, do you see gender influencing sport? If so, How?
 - a. When you first started playing sports as a child, were you aware of any gender differences?
 - b. What is it like as a woman today competing in DI athletics? Have there been changes from when you first started until now for females? If so how and why?
 - c. Besides physical differences, are there any obvious differences in how men and women *compete* in sports; explain? Or pursue their passion for sports; explain?
6. How did and how does basketball influence your other relationships?
 - a. With your friends?
 - b. With your family?
 - c. With school/academics?
7. Why did you choose to play in college and how did you know that was something you would like to pursue?
 - a. Was there any angst or uncomfortable aspect to pursuing playing college sports? Explain.
8. Remember when you were young and first started playing basketball; how do you feel now compared to then in terms of your passion for the game?
9. It takes a great deal of dedication to train, compete and attend school at the Division I level.

- a. How do you prioritize? What is it like managing all of your commitments?
 - b. Tell me about the challenges in prioritizing your time?
 - c. What are the benefits to pursuing your passion for basketball?
 - d. What role do sports play, if any, in your academic pursuits?
 - e. Do you compete in the classroom, if so how?
10. Overall, what role has basketball played in your life? How would life be different without having played?
11. What else, if anything, would you like to share with me about your experiences in athletics?

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group(s) will be recorded. At the beginning of the focus group (and before the recording begins), I will say, “This conversation is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time.”

Although questions may arise during Individual Interviews that I can address during the Focus Group, generally, the following prompts may be used to begin the discussion:

Possible Focus Group Prompts:

1. What are the greatest rewards of being a student-athlete?
2. Who has influenced your participation in sports? How?
3. What role do sports play, if any, in your academic pursuits?
4. How would life be different without having played basketball?
5. What else, if anything, would you like to share with me about your experiences in sports?

Additional Focus Group Prompts:

1. Talk to me about the effort it takes to train, compete and go to school at this level
2. Take away the wins and the losses; how do you know your good at basketball?

APPENDIX C: POEM

Tribute to the Women of ISU Athletics
By PeeWee Hollembeak

As we honor these women athletes from years gone by,
their accomplishments and triumphs bring a tear to our eyes.

Some are gray haired and have the wisdom of many years,
yet some still have the look of youth as they sit amongst their peers.

Many played in the corner gym or some secluded playing field,
and usually with very small crowd appeal.

As most of you know they only had one sin,
that was to play or compete in the shadows of men.

Yet these women persisted and gave it their all.
And slowly the walls of prejudice began to fall.

I had the pleasure of watching my daughter Jill reap the harvest of these
precious few;
the doors that were opened not many of you knew.

So, all of you young athletes sitting here tonight,
look around at these ladies and know that what you have is because of their fight.

Most athletes know there is no such thing as a free ride;
the aching muscles, sore backs, the mental fatigue; that's hard to hide;
all of these things really push one's pride.

So, ladies our hats are off to each of you.
All of the hard work, dedication and competition that you went through,
the true meaning of ISU Women's Athletics is finally shining through!

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR VARSITY AWARDS!