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Self-Esteem in Adolescence Females: The Athletic Connection

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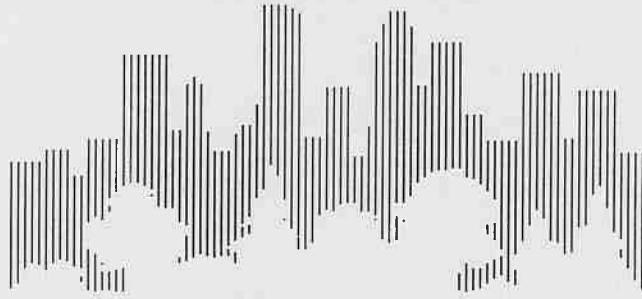
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**MASTERS IN SOCIAL WORK
THESIS**

Debra Smith Wagner

**Self-Esteem in Adolescence Females:
The Athletic Connection**

1999

**MSW
Thesis**

Thesis
Smith

**Self-Esteem in Adolescent Females:
The Athletic Connection**

Debra Smith Wagner

Submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the degree of
Master of Social Work
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
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May, 1999

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK
AUGSBURG COLLEGE
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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Date of Oral Presentation: May 11, 1999

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Thesis Reader, John Shaffer, MSW, MPH

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Dedicated to my husband and best friend, Lantz,
and to my wonderful children, Jacob and Andrea,
you three gave me the time and space
to achieve my goals

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."

Robert Frost

Abstract

This study investigated the self-esteem, feelings, and experiences of five exceptional skill level and five average skill level female adolescent athletes. Although mainly a qualitative study, with emphasis given to in-depth interviews, this research design also used a quantitative instrument in order to record the self-esteem of each subject. Both methods were used to generate themes and analyze concepts relating to the self-esteem and experience of female adolescent athletes. The quantitative instrument revealed that all athletes had self-esteem scores in the average to very high categories. Exceptional skill athletes did have higher mean scores than the regular skill athletes and their self-reporting was consistent with those findings.

Low participation in risk-taking behaviors, challenging academics, support of family and friends, recognition, and positive relationships with coaches emerged as the central themes for all athletes. More athletic opportunities, increased stress and higher personal standards were additional topics reported by exceptional athletes. All athletes agreed that improvements could be made to female adolescent athletics through improved promotion and advocacy for girl's sports, improved coaching, and better recruitment to increase the number of athletes.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Adolescence is the time of life between childhood and adulthood. It is when girls and boys progress through puberty, encounter new social situations, and face personal and public challenges. The successes they have and the struggles they face during this developmental phase may very well determine their prospective opportunities and personal well being. Many youth are already at risk. A report by the National Research Council found that one-fourth of youths between the ages of 10 and 17 are "growing up in circumstances that limit their development, compromise their health, impair their sense of self, and thereby restrict their futures" (Children's Defense Fund, 1994, p. 55). From 1970 to 1990 the Index of Social Health for Children and Youth has steadily declined about 20 points (Social Work Almanac, 1995). This Index measures social health in eight areas, some of which include high school dropouts, scholastic achievement test (SAT) scores, drug abuse, teen suicide, and deaths by homicide.

For many girls the journey into puberty and adolescence lowers their self-esteem (Bolognini et al., 1996; Steptoe & Butler, 1996; Pipher, 1994) and puts them at risk for unhealthy behaviors (Ellenbogen & Chamberland, 1997; Plancheral & Bolognini, 1995). Researchers report that involvement in extra curricular activities can enhance self-esteem (Steptoe & Butler, 1996; Taub &

Blinde, 1992; Blythe, 1982; Snyder, 1972). One major extra curricular activity is school-sponsored athletics.

It is only in recent history that girls have significantly participated in school-sponsored athletics. In 1971, a year before Title IX was passed eliminating sexual discrimination in schools, "only 7% of interscholastic athletes were girls. Twenty years later, in 1992, 37% of those athletes were female" (Feminist Majority Foundation, 1998, p. 1). Today, about 58% of high school senior girls say they participate in athletics almost every day or at least once a week (Statistical Handbook on Adolescents in America, 1996). Research has shown that girls who participate in athletic activities have higher self-esteem, better body image, and lower risk for unhealthy behaviors (Miller, Sabo, Farrell, Barnes, & Melnick, 1998; Steptoe & Butler, 1996).

Statement of the Problem

Many studies have made the connection between athletics and fitness (Zaichkowski & Larson, 1995) or between athletics and emotional well being (Steptoe & Butler, 1996; Taub & Blinde, 1992). But, information is almost nonexistent regarding female adolescents who are extremely successful in their athletic endeavor. Most people would assume that star athletes achieve in other areas of their life, too. For adolescent girls this would mean success in the academic, personal, and social arenas. Girls who are exceptional athletes must

spend extra time perfecting their sport, yet they still have the responsibilities of schoolwork and family life, as well as the pull of social events. Young female athletes are not immune to either the influences or risks of adolescence (Skolnick, 1993).

Significance and Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the self-esteem and experiences of two groups of adolescent females who participate in school sponsored sports; those who are classified as exceptional or "star" athletes and those who are thought of as regular skill athletes. By analyzing the similarities and differences of their self-esteem, feelings, and athletic prowess, one may better understand the special challenges of these athletes and the risks they run of succumbing to unhealthy behaviors.

Counselors and social workers in practice with adolescent girls will benefit from the additional knowledge about adolescent self-esteem. Adults who organize athletic programs and adults who coach girls can use this information to structure their programming, coaching styles and help girls. The results will also show if this group of adolescents follows the normative pattern for all female adolescents as far as self-esteem and at-risk behaviors are concerned.

Research Questions

This study was designed to address the following questions regarding the self-esteem and experiences of female adolescent athletes:

1. How do athletes fit or not fit the normative female adolescent self-esteem?
2. Are there similarities and differences in self-esteem of exceptional skill adolescent athletes and regular skill adolescent athletes?
3. Do athletes perceive an increase or decrease in their self-esteem based upon their participation in sports?
4. What are the unique experiences of female adolescent athletes?
5. Are there additional experiences that exceptional athletes encounter because of their ability and accomplishments, and what are they?
6. What can be done to improve athletics for female adolescents?

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

A phase of adolescence, puberty is defined by the onset of the ability to procreate. Significant biological, cognitive and social changes make this a time of new experiences, chaos, and joy. Girls and boys mature differently and not just in the physical realm. This section speaks about the unique development of female adolescents, both physically and emotionally, their self-esteem, and the role of athletics. But first, self-esteem is defined and the theoretical perspective encompassing this research is explained.

Self-esteem Defined

As used here, the term self-esteem is interchangeable with terms such as self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-worth. Because of its' intangibility, it is a difficult concept to explain. There is no one correct definition. Some are very simple. Webster's (1974) New Collegiate Dictionary offers "a confidence and satisfaction in oneself" (p. 1049). Other definitions get more complicated. According to Branden (1995) self-esteem is: 1) "confidence in our ability to think and to cope with the challenges of life, and 2) confidence in our right to be happy, the feeling of being worthy, deserving, entitled to assert our needs and

wants and to enjoy the fruits of our efforts” (p. 6). Marshall (in Guinn, 1997) states that it is the “evaluative component of self-image, the positive and negative manner in which a person judges herself or himself” (p. 517).

For purposes of this study, the official definition of the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility was used. Self-esteem is “appreciating my own worth and importance and having the character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly toward others” (Steinem, 1990, p. 26). The two key components are accountability and responsibility. “Accountable for myself” promotes the healthy behavior of a mature individual. And acting “responsibly toward others” encourages respectful treatment toward other people. In this context, self-esteem is seen as a positive perspective towards oneself and other individuals.

Social-Cognitive Theory

Social-Cognitive theory was the theoretical framework used in this study. It provides an explanation for human behavior by looking at the ways “people perceive, interpret, remember, and use information about themselves and the social world” (Nurius & Berlin, 1995, p. 513). Anderssen & Wold (1992) used this framework for their study of parental and peer influences on physical activity in adolescents. And Guthrie et al. (1994) recommends this approach for studying adolescent health behaviors. Social-Cognitive theory combines two

principal themes, cognition and socialization.

Cognition is the accumulated beliefs, ideas, and information we gather from our past experiences, environment, and mental activities. Cognition is not “independent of the linguistic categories, rules, values, and goals of our culture” (Nurius & Berlin, 1995, p. 513). Cognition is formed by our own unique situation in society and by the way in which we process information. Cognitive theorists believe that “most social and behavioral dysfunction results directly from misconceptions that people hold about themselves, other people, and various life situations” (Hepworth, Rooney, & Larsen, 1997, p. 395). For example, adolescents who perceive themselves as weighing more than they should, when in actuality they are within normal parameters, have accepted into the message that thin figures are the best.

Socialization or social learning is the “...progressive and cumulative process through which a child...” is supposed to learn the roles, norms, values, rituals, rules, and customs that “...regulate behavior appropriate to their socio-cultural environment” (Alsaker, 1995, p. 429). The values and beliefs of our culture especially affect adolescent girls. For example, traditional values hold that girls and women should not sweat. We give it “pretty” names like glow or glisten. Since sweating is a definite byproduct of rigorous exercise, some individuals would not engage in rigorous exercise because they would sweat and feel less attractive.

Social-Cognitive theory is especially relevant to this study because

participation in sports by adolescent females is a byproduct of social norms and modeling, support and encouragement from significant others, and an inner drive fueled by self-esteem (Bandura, 1977; Anderssen & Wold, 1992). Bandura (1977) emphasizes that modeling is the way most of us learn how to react and behave. He talks about a "perceived self-efficacy" in which we all expect certain outcomes from our behavior and can estimate our level of performance. Social-Cognitive theory provides a framework of understanding for the unique issues facing adolescent females today.

Physical Development

As noted earlier, adolescence is usually defined as the "period of growth beginning about 10-12 years of age and ending around 21-22 years of age" (Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 1997, p.315). Boys and girls both experience height and weight gain, secondary sex characteristic development (i.e., body hair, body frame enlargement, external genitalia growth), and the release of sexual hormones. But, two important differences in the nature of puberty make it more difficult for young girls.

What is unique to girls is the fairly sudden onset of menstruation and the earlier beginning of puberty (Romer, 1981). Boys experience a more gradual puberty process. They have more time to adjust to their bodies' changes. Girls begin puberty an average of two years earlier than boys (Ashford, 1997). The

obvious outward signs of physical development, budding breasts, can make girls especially anxious when they are the first of their group to change (Caissy, 1994). "Early-maturing girls are self-conscious and see themselves as awkward and embarrassed, while early-maturing boys have good self-images and see themselves as popular and athletic" (Romer, 1981, p. 49). Society considers a girl a woman once the menarche has begun. Now it is possible to become pregnant and give birth. Young girls become part of the culture of womanhood, comparing their appearances to those of women in fashion magazines, on television, and in the movies (Pipher, 1994; Bingham & Stryker, 1995).

Girls in our society see an image of the ideal female as thin and beautiful. "Just when they begin to want the ideal, their body undergoes the changes of puberty and provides them with unwanted weight and a thicker silhouette" (Pipher, 1994, p. 184). Many girls worry about being too tall or too fat. They often perceive themselves as overweight even when they are in the healthy and normal weight range for a person of their height and body structure (Rhea, 1998; Richards, Peterson, Boxer, & Albrecht, 1990).

This warped and inaccurate body image has led to two disturbing trends for adolescent females: "...to become either dramatically more inactive or more involved in extreme dieting behaviors and extensive exercise" (Rhea, 1998, p. 27). Feelings of a lowered body image also contribute to feeling less attractive (Thorton & Ryckman, 1991) and a decrease in self-esteem (Guinn, Semper, & Jorgenson, 1997). These physical and emotional red flags may be precursors for

risky and unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse, smoking, and early sexual contact or for mental illness such as depression and eating disorders (Taub & Blinde, 1992; Vilhjalmsson & Thorlindsson, 1992; Skolnick, 1993; Rhea, 1998).

Cognitive Development

Cognitive development in adolescence is the process of going from concrete thinking to logical problem solving or hypothetical-deductive reasoning. Adolescents begin to understand abstract propositions and try to reason logically about them (Ashford et al., 1997, p. 320). Another major goal of adolescence is the development of a personal identity: "...determining who one is, in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others, and who one wants to be" (Romer, 1981, p 48). Adolescents with a better self-concept are more thoughtful and have extended their thinking further into the future (Nurmi & Pullianinen, 1991).

Gilligan (1982) suggests that females proceed along a different cognitive pathway than boys and have different developmental needs such as intimacy, connectedness with others, and caring. Whereas boys develop their identity through a "...process of separation and autonomy, a girl's identity is one of becoming a person of relationships, a self with others" (Bolognini et al., 1996, p. 241). Girls do expect more from friends and their level of attachment is greater (Claes, 1992). Coping strategies vary along adolescent gender lines, too. Males

use a sense of humor or practice a hobby or sport to deal with stress. Females use adult consumption habits such as shopping or eating in order to handle their negative feelings (Plancheral & Bolognini, 1995).

Emotional Development: Self-esteem

Self-esteem is an integral piece of personal identity and the cognitive process. It evolves when children are "...able to master age-appropriate tasks in a positive way and receive acknowledgement and appreciation..." for their efforts (Bingham & Stryker, 1995, p. 10). Significant others can help self-esteem grow by providing guidance, support, and encouragement, but a child must build her own self-esteem (Caissy, 1994). Bingham & Stryker (1995) list six developmental tasks they believe children must accomplish in order to achieve positive self-esteem:

1. Feel autonomous, yet have the ability to connect.
2. Be self-sufficient.
3. Feel she can master new skills.
4. Build character and willpower.
5. Be true to her authentic self.
6. Feel valued (p. 14).

Somehow many adolescents, especially girls, lose a big chunk of their self-esteem as they journey through this period of their life (Bolognini et al., 1996; Shaw, Kleiber, & Caldwell, 1995; Steptoe & Butler, 1996; Pipher, 1994). "In elementary school 60% of girls and 67% of boys say they are 'happy the way I am'. By middle school it has changed to 29% of girls and 46% of boys" (American Association of University Women, 1991, p. 4). When asked whether they agreed with the statement, "I take a positive attitude toward myself", 79% of senior high females were in agreement as compared to 86% of males (Ashford, et al., 1997). Race also exhibits an interesting influence as 65% of African American girls and 68% of Hispanic girls have the highest self-esteem in elementary school. Most African American girls retain that feeling, but Hispanic girls record the biggest drop of all – down to 30% (AAUW, 1991).

Experts agree the reasoning for a girl's drop in self-esteem is a combination of the physical changes of puberty and the psychological consequences of our society's ever changing values and norms (Ashford, et al., 1997; Caissy, 1994;). As noted earlier, female adolescent physical development can make girls very conscious of their appearance and the value our society places on looks. Since they rate themselves against society's ideals and personal criteria, the goals they have set will be awfully hard to attain. Boys, on the other hand, "attach more importance to how their achievements compare with their peer's achievements" (Bolognini, Plancherel, Bettschart, & Halfon, 1996, p. 241). Male adolescents have higher self-esteem (Shaw et al., 1995) and rate

themselves higher in physical attractiveness and effectiveness than female adolescents (Thorton & Ryckman, 1991). "Adolescence is a time when, on the one hand, well founded self-esteem is especially necessary in order to enable the person to make adequate choices, but when, on the other hand, self-esteem may be especially liable to fluctuate" (Bolognini et al., 1996, p. 234). In fact, the normal adolescent can move down from extreme happiness or up from extreme sadness within 45 minutes (Ashford et al., 1997).

Factors that influence self-esteem have been studied for years. Parents and peers do have a profound effect in the forming of a female adolescent's self-concept (Claes, 1992; Nurmi & Pulliainen, 1991). "Adolescents with the lowest level of support report the lowest self-esteem, and those receiving the most support hold themselves in highest regard" (Harter in Bolognini, 1996, p234). Sports and vigorous exercise have been shown to increase self-esteem and emotional wellbeing (Steptoe & Butler, 1996; Taub & Blinde, 1992). One study of Mexican American female adolescents found that those girls reporting a higher self-esteem were more satisfied with their body and more physically active (Guinn et al., 1997).

Researchers have shown that good self-esteem benefits adolescents. The higher the adolescent's self-esteem the less likely he or she will be influenced by peers and their demands (Caissy, 1994). They are also less likely to smoke or abuse alcohol and drugs (Gordon & Caltabiano, 1996). When they have good self-esteem, adolescents think more about their future (Nurmi & Pulliainen,

1991). Those with lower self-concept have more traditional role expectations of themselves. Whereas young people with a higher self-concept have the courage to break with traditional values and go for their dreams (Salminen, 1994). "A strong sense of self-efficacy can help a person engage and persist in new situations" (Ashford et al., 1997). Athletics are traditionally male oriented, so even in the 1990's it takes courage and high self-esteem for girls to break the role expectation and achieve in sports (Salminen, 1994).

The Role of Athletics

Girls become involved in athletics for a number of reasons. Parents, through their encouragement and modeling, can exert an influence on female adolescents' participation in leisure time physical activities (Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Claes, 1992). Friends also play a major socializing role for adolescent involvement in athletics (Anderssen & Wold, 1992). Individual self-esteem is another determining factor for sport involvement. Those who believe they have an aptitude for physical activity are more likely to become involved in sports (Gordon & Caltabiano, 1996). And when opportunities increase, as they have since the passage of Title IX, there are more choices and therefore more participation (Feminist Majority Foundation, 1998).

Physical activities and athletics have many benefits. Obviously one of the greatest advantages of athletics is the increase of fitness and skill (Zaichkowsky &

Larson, 1995). Sports can play a role in adolescent development by providing an identity (volleyball player or runner) based on a competence or membership in a group (Shaw et al., 1995). Many athletes believe that popularity is a direct result of their sports involvement (Butcher, 1986; Holland & Andre, 1994). Body image may improve as a result of sport participation (Richards et al., 1990). Girls who engage in athletic activities report significantly lower rates of sexual activity, smoking and substance abuse (Vilhjalmsson & Thorlindsson, 1992; Skolnick, 1993; Miller et al., 1998). Butcher (1983) found that girls who participated in sports were more satisfied with their movement and gave themselves self-confident, independent, and assertive self-descriptions.

Some would question the readiness of young adolescents to become "instant successes or failures on the playing field" (McEwin & Dickinson, 1996, p. 218). One of the most important cautions for female adolescents in athletics is the possibility that the striving to be perfect will lead to obsessive behavior exhibited by excessive exercising or eating disorders (Taub & Blinde, 1992; Rhea, 1998). Some studies suggest that being in athletics does not necessarily guard against unhealthy behaviors (Skolnick, 1993). Some sports are simply too rough and put adolescents at risk for severe injuries (McEwin & Dickinson, 1996).

Summary

Girls are at-risk for low self-esteem and unhealthy behaviors during the adolescent years. Experts agree that for female adolescents, participation in athletics may provide "...both physical and mental challenge, while at the same time provide a new way of thinking about themselves which challenges traditional notions of femininity" (Shaw et al., 1995, p. 247). The Search Institute of Minneapolis (1997) has identified 40 assets (concrete positive experiences and qualities) that have a tremendous influence on young people's lives. Two are particularly relevant to this study. First, a young person needs to spend three or more hours a week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school or in the community. And second, a young person needs to report having high self-esteem. Female adolescent participation in school-sponsored sports would seem to be an excellent method for helping girls navigate the journey of adolescence.

Chapter III

Methodology

Research Design

This study is primarily qualitative, but uses a quantitative instrument to correlate actual self-esteem scores with perceived self-esteem and experiences revealed through the interviews. The Self-Esteem Index (SEI) is an 80-item self-administered normed instrument that scores the self-esteem of adolescents (Mueller in Kramer & Conoley, 1992). It is described in more detail on page 23 of this study. The qualitative aspect of this research refers to in-depth interviews, which provide inductive analysis regarding the phenomena of female adolescent self-esteem and athletic participation. Inductive analysis probes the variables for specific information, looks for general patterns and synthesizes for common themes (Patton, 1987). The main variable examined was the skill level of individual athletes (regular or exceptional skill levels) and how it affected their self-esteem. Other independent variables that are covered in the interview data include role of significant others, socialization factors, cognitive perceptions, and personal challenges.

Both the SEI and the ten interviews were used to generate concepts and themes connecting self-esteem and life experiences for female adolescent athletes. Once the themes and patterns emerged, the research questions were revisited and evaluated to determine whether or not this study answered them in whole or in part.

Research Questions

The connection between self-esteem and athletics for female adolescents who participate in school sponsored sports was examined. The following are questions this research hoped to address:

1. How do athletes fit or not fit the normative female adolescent self-esteem?
2. Are there similarities and differences in self-esteem of exceptional skill adolescent athletes and regular skill adolescent athletes?
3. Do athletes perceive an increase or decrease in their self-esteem based upon their participation in sports?
4. What are the unique experiences of female adolescent athletes?
5. Are there additional experiences that exceptional athletes encounter because of their ability and accomplishments, and what are they?
6. What can be done to improve athletics for female adolescents?

Operational Definitions

As noted earlier, the definition of self-esteem used here is by the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem. It is "appreciating my own worth and importance and having the character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly toward others" (Steinem, 1990, p. 26). This was the operational definition used with each study participant. Again it is noted that self-concept and self-worth were considered interchangeable with self-esteem throughout the study.

"Exceptional" or "star" athletes included those athletes who have excelled at their sport and have received awards, honors, and accolades for their athletic ability, as well as those who have come to the attention of the public through various media reports. "Regular" skill athletes are members of a school-sponsored sport but do not stand out as exceptional athletes. While at Burnsville High School, they have not received awards or honors for their individual performance. The coaches or teachers who recommended these girls were given these definitions to guide their selections.

Characteristics of the Population

Purposeful sampling is a method of selecting research participants that provides "information-rich participants for in-depth study" (Patton, 1987, p. 52) Ten female adolescents, 14-18 years of age, constituted the study sample. All girls viewed athletic participation as meaningful in their life. For continuity, all subjects were selected from Independent School District 191 (Burnsville High School) in the southern metro area. Burnsville, the main community of the school district, is typical of the large and diverse suburbs in the Twin Cities.

Subjects were selected based on the following characteristics:

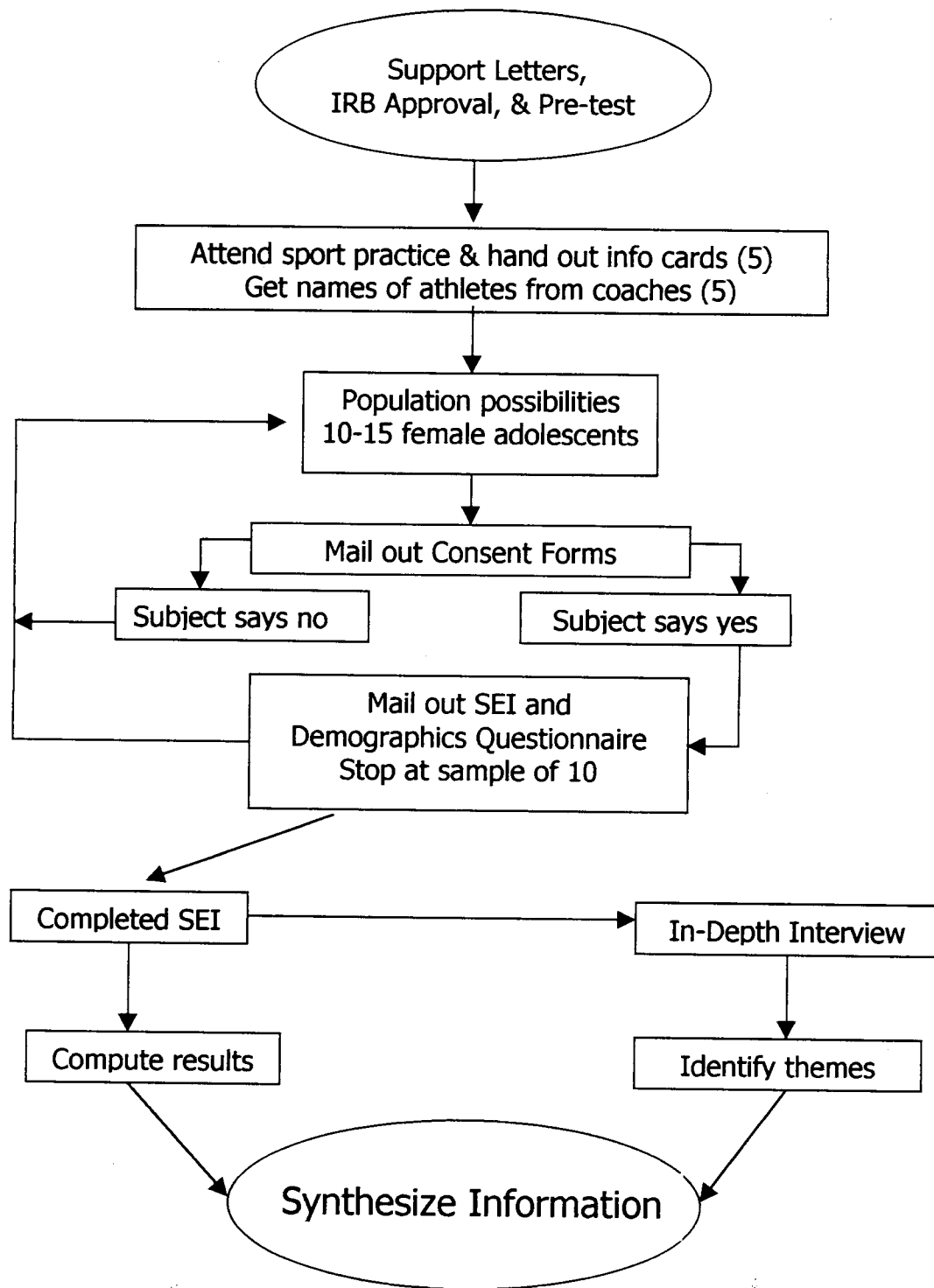
- Female adolescents
- 14 through 19 years old
- Grades 9 through 12
- High school athletic participation – varying sports
- Seeks to include minorities
- Five of whom are exceptional skill athletes
- Five of whom are regular skill athletes
- Attendance in same high school
- Recommended by a coach or athletic director

Procedures

A flowchart of this research procedure clearly outlines the process from initial letters of support and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to synthesis of information (see Figure 1). Letters of support for this study were obtained from Mr. Doug DeWitt, Principal and Mr. Jim Rohlik, Athletic Director, of Burnsville High School (Appendix C). Once the IRB granted approval (# 99-07-3), the research began. The contact people who provided names of candidates were Mr. Rohlik and three of his staff coaches. This researcher phoned the contact people and sent them a lay summary of the study (Appendix H) and a sample consent form (Appendix D). At two different sport practices the researcher handed out information cards (Appendix F) to all team members present. Five girls contacted this researcher as a result of the information cards and were willing to participate in the research. The contact people also provided additional girls' names and phone numbers. One young woman was referred by a friend and contacted this researcher independently. All subjects were informed about the research project, and asked if they wanted to participate. If they said yes, a consent form was mailed to them.

After the consent forms (Appendix D) were signed by each girl and a parent or guardian, they were sent the SEI (Appendix E) and demographic questionnaire (Appendix B). Then an interview time was established. The SEI

Figure 1. Research Design Flowchart



and demographic questionnaires were mailed to each participant's home to be completed before the interview took place. A self-addressed and stamped envelope was enclosed to make the return of the questionnaires as easy as possible.

Eight of the interviews were conducted in a private room of the Burnsville Public Library. The library was chosen because it is well known, convenient, and would provide privacy for the subjects. The girls had to provide their own transportation to and from the interview. Two interviews were held in the homes of the subjects due to library hour unavailability. Privacy was insured in any case, as the researcher and each participant were alone in a room. The interviews were audiotaped, assuring for accuracy and allowing the researcher to listen without the encumbrance of notetaking.

Fifteen dollars was given to the subjects for participation in the research project. It was intended to be both an incentive to participate and compensation for the cost of transportation to and from the interview.

Data Collection and Measurement Issues

It was hoped that by combining two research methods (in-depth interviews and self-esteem survey instrument), this study's validity was strengthened. "There are strengths and weaknesses to any *single* data collection strategy. Using more than one data collection approach permits the researcher

to combine strengths and correct some of the deficiencies of any one source of data" (Patton, 1987, p. 60). Methodological "triangulation" refers to the use of multiple methods to investigate one problem. It builds checks and balances into a system, strengthening the research design and helping to avoid systemic error (Rubin & Babbie, 1997). It was hoped that data from the SEI enhanced the ethnographic inquiry of the personal interview. A self-esteem score for each girl gave potency to the subjective information she provided.

Both the SEI and interview were pretested with one female adolescent athlete. The pretest helped the researcher evaluate the questions, determine the length of the interview, and practice her interview skills. In addition, pretesting helped assure a more reliable and valid instrument.

Self-Esteem Index – SEI

As noted earlier, the SEI (Appendix E) is the quantitative survey instrument that was employed to measure each participant's self-esteem. The usage manual states that it is a "...reliable, valid, and theoretically sound norm-referenced measure of self-esteem in school-aged children and adolescents" (Kramer & Conoley, 1992, p. 807). It consists of 80 self-report items, each scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale, "...that are combined into an overall standardized Self-Esteem Quotient and four subscales: Perception of Familial Acceptance, Academic Competence, Peer Popularity, and Personal Security" (p.

808). The time required to complete the SEI was estimated at 30-35 minutes. The SEI was mailed to each participant's home to be completed at her convenience and privacy. A self-addressed, stamped envelope made the return of the questionnaire as easy as possible.

Following sanctioned measurement procedures helps control for systematic and random error. The SEI was standardized in 1988 and 1989 on 2,455 students from 19 states. Over 100 students, ranging in age from 8 –18, were included for each of the eleven sample size age groups. It was found to be comparable to the U. S. population for "gender, age, domicile, race, geographic area, ethnicity, and parental education" (Kramer & Conoley, 1992, p. 809). Brooke (1996) recommended this tool for evaluation in a school setting. Goldberg (1994) used it in a study of female adolescents and their maternal relationship.

Social desirability bias is a type of measurement error in which the subject answers "through a filter of what will make them look good" (Rubin & Babbie, 1997, p. 163). It was hoped that by simply describing the SEI as a standardized test for adolescents, the subjects would not attach social desirability significance to the testing.

Interviews

In-depth interviews, lasting approximately 30-40 minutes, were conducted with each participant using a standardized open-ended question interview guide (Appendix A). The interview guide was intended to assure that “essentially the same information was obtained” from the participants by “covering the same material” (Patton, 1987, p. 111). A variety of questions were asked in order to gather as much information as possible. Since the emphasis of this study was on self-esteem, a majority of the questions were “feeling” questions, which helped the interviewer understand the emotional responses of the athletes to their experiences. Opinion questions were used to gain “...understanding of the cognitive and interpretive processes” of the athletes (Patton, 1987, p. 118), while factual questions provided concrete answers about the athletes, their sport, and their experience playing the sport. All audiotaped interviews were transcribed by a paid professional with whom confidentiality issues were arranged (Appendix G).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a creative process that requires thoughtful, interpretive work. A researcher uses inductive analysis to look for themes, patterns, and ideas that emerge from all the data. Two kinds of inductive analysis categorize and describe the themes: (a) indigenous typologies are the specific classifications that become apparent from the subjects' own words; and (b) analyst-constructed typologies are classifications developed and labeled by the researcher. Such typologies are more difficult to identify (Patton, 1987).

Protective Measures

Written materials, consent forms, and audiotapes were locked away when not in use for taping or listening by the researcher or transcriber. Additionally, the following actions were taken to assure confidentiality and safety of the participants:

1. Consent forms were signed by both the minors participating in the study and by their parents or guardians.
2. Participants were told that they could choose to stop the interview at any time.
3. Consent forms included requests for permission to audiotape the interview and quote, but not name the participants.

4. Participants were assured that all audiotapes and records were to be destroyed.
5. Confidentiality was consistent with all materials: Participants were not named or identified in the report, but written about in general terms in order to develop concepts.
6. Participants were provided with the names and phone numbers for Lutheran Social Service offices in case of adverse emotional or psychological reactions to the study.
7. Out of respect for the participant's feelings, they and their parents were informed that they had been chosen for this study because they are involved in school sports. Sources were asked to keep the nature of their recommendations (exceptional or regular skill athlete) confidential.

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

Characteristics of the Population

Ten female adolescent athletes participated in this research study. Five were identified as exceptional skill athletes and five were identified as regular skill athletes. Currently in grades 9 to 12, they ranged in age from 15 to 18 years. All play at least one varsity sport for the same suburban high school. Five of the girls participate in two sports and five were on the same team. Altogether, seven different varsity sports were represented by this group. They spend an average of 2-4 hours per day in conditioning, practice, or games. Eight of young women were Caucasian, one was African-American, and one was Asian-American. Nine of the participants lived with both parents and eight had at least one sibling still living at home. One girl's parents were separated and she lived with her mother and has no siblings.

Research Question One

How do athletes fit or not fit the normative female adolescent self-esteem?

Both the SEI and a self-rating scale were used to gauge the self-esteem of this population. SEI results show that 100% of the participants are in the

average to very high analysis categories, as opposed to 75% of the normative sample. (Table 1) In fact, 50% of the population was in the high and very high categories as compared to 9% of the normative sample. None of the population was in the below average, low, or very low categories. Yet, the normative sample shows that 25% are in that range. Therefore, this group does not resemble the SEI normative sample of adolescent self-esteem. They have much higher self-esteem.

A self-rating scale was used to help determine each girl's perception of her self-esteem. During the interview, each girl was asked to read the operational definition of self-esteem (page 6). This researcher also stated, "Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself". Then the participants were asked to rate their self-esteem using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest self-esteem and 10 being the highest self-esteem.

Four girls gave themselves a 7 and three rated themselves an 8. Ratings of 10, 9, and 5 were each chosen by one girl. (Table 2) The self-rating scale cannot be compared to a normative scale, because there is none. However, the results speak for themselves. None of the population rated themselves lower than a 5. The mean for all was 7.6, which this researcher believes is significant. The girl who rated herself a 10 explained:

"I'm adopted from South Korea and I sometimes take criticism. I do attend classes to raise my self-esteem and I think that self-esteem is a big part of your character or your personality as an athlete and an individual."

Table 1. SEI Participants and Normative Sample Results

Participants N = 10	Exceptional = X Regular = R	Analysis	*Normative Sample N = 2,455
10%	X	Very High	2 %
40%	X,R X,R	High	7 %
30%	R,R,X	Above Average	16 %
20%	X,R	Average	50 %
0%		Below Average	16 %
0%		Low	7 %
0%		Very Low	2 %

*Includes girls and boys, ages 8 to 18.

Table 2. Self-rating of Self-esteem

Exceptional (X) Skill	Personal Rating	Regular (R) Skill
X	10	
X	9	
X	8	
X	8	
	8	R
	7	R
X	7	
	7	R
	7	R
	5	R
Mean	7.6	

Other explanations of self-ratings included;

"I wouldn't want to say a 10 because that would be cocky!"

"There is always someone who is better than me."

"I am hard on myself. Sometimes I just feel that I should do better than most people. I should have more self-esteem."

They were not asked to do this, but two girls stated that "for sports" their self-esteem rating would actually be different and gave themselves a higher number based upon athletic involvement.

"Personally, I'm a 5. It's not high, but there are days when it's better. For sports, I would say 7. I am pretty confident and feel that sports have given that to me."

"In sports I rate my self-esteem 9, because I feel if I try my hardest I can do okay. In general, I'm a 7."

If I use these numbers "for sports" the mean now goes up to 8.7. It is clear that these young women have high self-esteems. These results are consistent with Chadwick & Heaton's (1996) in which 80% reported, "I am satisfied with myself", and 83% said, "I am a person of worth".

Research Question Two

Are there similarities and differences in self-esteem of exceptional skill adolescent athletes and regular skill adolescent athletes?

When looked at by exceptional or regular skill status, the SEI results show no significant difference. (Table 1) In the high/very high categories there are

three exceptional and two regular athletes. In the average/above average category there are two exceptional and three regular athletes. The mean SEI scores for both types of athletes are similar. (Table 4) Regular skill athletes had a mean raw score of 273 and exceptional skill athletes had 265. Regular athletes had a mean standard score of 13.2 and exceptional athletes had 14.4. It is interesting to note that exceptional skill athletes achieved both the highest and lowest SEI scores. The SEI evaluation found that the self-esteem for regular and exceptional skill athletes was more similar than dissimilar.

The self-rating of self-esteem is where this researcher finds a larger contrast. (Table 3) The mean for exceptional athletes is 8.4, a 1.6 increment over the regular athletes' mean of 6.8. One could presume that the participants perceived exceptional athletes as feeling more confident about themselves and their abilities. A regular skill athlete said of her exceptional teammate, " Her self-esteem is high because of all (the stuff) that is getting handed to her right now." And another responded, "She never loses, so she must have high self-esteem." Even an exceptional skill athlete commented:

"I was one of the fortunate players to be accepted (to the Olympic Development Program) and that was a huge change. My self-esteem went high. I was excited. I was pumped."

Some respondents thought regular athletes may have lower self-esteem "because they really want to play in the game" but don't always "get the opportunity". They are on the team, but not one of the top players. "Some don't want" to put forth the effort required to improve their skills, yet are still "more likely to become frustrated" when coaches "don't put them in" the game.

Table 3. Mean Self-esteem by Skill Level

Skill Level	Self-rating 0 – 10	SEI	SEI Raw Score
		Standard Score 1 - 19	
Exceptional	8.4	14.4	273
Regular	6.8	13.2	265
All	7.6	13.8	269

Table 4. SEI Results and Interpretation

*X or R	Raw Score	Analysis	SEI Standard Score
X	308	Very High	19
R	283	High	15
X	280	High	15
R	275	High	15
X	275	High	15
X	266	Above Average	13
R	263	Above Average	13
R	262	Above Average	13
R	242	Average	10
X	236	Average	10

Research Question Three

Do athletes perceive an increase or decrease in their self-esteem based upon their participation in sports?

Being on a team and participating in athletics has made a difference in self-esteem for nine of the participants. Many have seen an increase:

"I'm pretty confident and feel that sports have given me that confidence."

"I don't think my performance has ever made my self-esteem drop, but it has raised it."

"If you do something really good, you are all excited and feel great!"

"When I'm scoring a lot of points, it gets a lot higher!"

Others believe athletic participation has decreased their self-esteem.

"I used to be super-good. Even my parents will ask, 'What happened throughout the years? Why have you changed so much?' My self-esteem has gone down."

"Sometimes when I don't do well, I'm down on myself for a long time. I'm not the happiest person and no one wants to be around me."

"Sometimes you are playing in a game and you screw up and you feel really horrible."

Four athletic participation themes were identified that either increased or decreased the self-esteem of this population: individual skills, teammates, criticism, and trying out for the team.

1) **Individual skills** could include performances at specific games or the development of athletic skills. One girl found that her self-esteem decreased as her athletic prowess waned.

"I had a lot more self-esteem when I was younger. I was averaging 20 points a game. Now the competition is tougher and I'm not doing as well as I used to."

Others discovered that improved skills directly enhanced their self-esteem.

"My self-esteem has gotten better. When I was younger, I didn't know what I was doing. So, I decided to practice more. The more you practice, the better you get, and that's how my self-esteem just grew."

"My skills have improved and I'm a better player and that has built me up."

"I came to the game late, so I felt like I wouldn't be good enough. But, I got going, learned more and surprised the team and coach. That boosted my self-esteem – the fact that I knew I could do it."

"Athletes get to experience things like overcoming weakness, the good feeling when you win or do something you haven't done before..."

It is clear that these young women found athletic involvement does play an important role in their self-esteem. But, most girls strongly emphasized that "it all depends" on the girl's basic personality and "whether or not they have family and friends encouraging them". Those who believe they have an aptitude for physical activity are more likely to become involved in sports (Gordon & Caltabiano, 1996).

2) **Teammates** were often mentioned as playing a role in their confidence.

"When I was a sophomore, the older students scared me. Now, I'm friends with them and I don't care about age."

"I was in the boys program since I started and just these last two years have been in the girls high school program. It was a big booster for me to be with the girls."

"I have a couple of friends from the team who are always there for me. They are super supportive."

"If you're not on a team sport, then I don't think you understand what it's like to lay yourself on the line for a whole group of people."

3) **Criticism** from others has negatively affected some athletes and led to decreases in self-esteem.

"I got mad at my Dad this year and told him I didn't want him coming to my games anymore. He yelled something and it just set me off. He does it all the time."

"I used to take a lot of crap from everyone and let it affect my game."

"If someone criticizes you" that can effect your self-esteem.

"Coaches have discouraged me by yelling at me to do better without telling me how to improve."

4) Finally, **trying out for the team** can be a huge anxiety producing and self-esteem reducing time.

"I was worried about trying out for the team with a new coach."

"Only time it (athletic participation) ever hurt my self-esteem was when I tried out for a team and didn't make it."

Research Question Four

What are the unique experiences of female adolescent athletes?

The five themes that emerged, as unique experiences for this population, were determined by use of the following interview questions: *What are the challenging areas of your life? What are the strengths in your life? Does being an athlete provide any positive or negative experiences not faced by non-athletic teens? Does athletic involvement cause you any stress? Some teens participate*

in activities such as smoking, drinking alcohol, having sex, using drugs, and skipping school. Have you done any of these?

Low participation in risk-taking behaviors, academics, support of family and friends, recognition, and relationships with coaches were the main unique experiences of this group.

1) **Risky behaviors** were simply not worth the gamble or embarrassment for six of the ten girls. Many felt that risk-taking behaviors "are stupid" and "ruin" or "waste your life away" and that "life is short enough". Family and other people were considered in their decisions. "I don't want to let my parents down" and "I am a role model...setting an example for younger kids." They were proud to "just say no" and "I have not done any of that". Even though "a lot of people in our school" go to parties and drink, "it doesn't mean anything. But, if you say you don't drink it means more...my friends show respect in my decision." One girl cited her homework load as reason enough not to become involved.

Four girls admitted to a few of the behaviors; 3 had skipped school, 2 had drunk alcohol, and 1 had tried smoking. Skipping school was used to catch up on social activities, "once to go out to lunch with a friend" and "to go watch a movie". Another participant said, "Athletes skip school because they need to sleep in". One girl responded, "I tried smoking years ago and got drunk once, and will never do either again!" One participant will "only drink when I'm not in-season" and admits that she "is constantly in-season". These results are consistent with findings about the lower rates of sexual activity, smoking and

substance abuse by female athletes (Vilhjalmsson & Thorlindsson, 1992; Skolnick, 1993; Miller et al., 1998).

2) **Academics** posed special problems for student athletes who must spend so much time practicing, traveling, and at games. "Trying to go to practice and getting my homework done on time" was a sentiment echoed by all. When asked if they would rather be known as an outstanding athlete, outstanding student, leader of activities, or for their popularity, 80% indicated outstanding student and 10% said outstanding athlete. This was even higher than the 53% for outstanding student and 34% for outstanding athlete found by Goldberg & Chandler (1989).

"If you're not an outstanding student, you don't get into the college you want."

"My mom stressed school before other activities and basketball."

"Outstanding student, because I have to go to college now. I have friends who are really great athletes, but they can't get into schools because they don't have the grades."

Seven of the participants admitted that schoolwork is a challenge.

"It's hard when I have huge reports to do, but I'm also trying to concentrate on my sport."

"You try to get everything done in one day and sometimes you just feel like you can't do it anymore, but you can."

"I get good grades, but I have to work hard for them."

"My grades are very important to me. I'm not the smartest person, but I do work very hard for my grades."

"You have to motivate yourself to do well. I want to be a person who went to school (college) and received a high honor in academics."

"Grades don't come easily. I have to try hard and study a lot."

Many found that teachers "make assignment and homework adjustments" or "give an extra day" to get work done, when athletes have a game or tough practice schedule.

3) **Family and friends** do enthusiastically **support** these athletes, which is the same as other research (Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Claes, 1992). In fact, nine participants report that family is in full support of their athletic involvement.

"They like to see me so successful."

"They are happy that I have gotten better and have earned a scholarship to college."

"They like to watch me play."

"My parents like it a lot because it keeps me out of trouble. They know where I am."

"My dad and I are close, because of the sports."

"My parents are always there. If I'm having a bad day and don't want to talk about it, they will just sit there and hold me. They are strong for me and that makes me strong."

"I never question (their support)."

Eight of the sample mentioned their fathers as the primary familial encouragers. Vilhjalmsson and Thorlindsson (1998) also discovered this father connection and report that this encouragement is positively related to sport involvement. One young woman reports that her family believes, "It's good to a point. But, they think I'm never there for dinner or other family things."

Eight of the ten say that most of their friends are teammates or involved in other sports. A friend's emotional significance can influence sport's

participation (Vilhjalmsson & Thorlindsson, 1998). They share an understanding of the required time and energy commitments as well as encourage them.

"All my friends are in sports, so they support me."

"You can connect with them better, because they play the same sport."

"You have and get more friends by being in a sport."

"They love it too. They always want to bring me back up and make me smile, after a loss."

Even non-athletic friends can be a great support.

"Some non-athlete friends come to my games."

"They tease me, 'You're so good at everything! What aren't you good at?'"

"They say, 'I saw you in the paper or on TV today'."

"I try to make time for my non-athlete friends."

Four of the ten say some friends "kind of nag at you, for the time spent running back and forth to practices" and the missed social occasions. Another girl responded, "My best friends don't play sports. They say I'm always busy and I'm never home".

4) **Recognition** by their peers was mentioned by at least six of the participants. Most saw benefits to the athletic 'fame' and popularity of 'being known'.

"A lot of people know me..."

"People know who I am, but I don't know who they are. There was this girl on my traveling team. She knew who I was and was in love with me. Its kind of cool because people look up to you and just know who you are."

"It can depend on the sport. Some of them are famous."

"There are a lot of people who know who you are, what your name is, but you don't even know they exist. It's a good feeling."

"You get noticed more. You have and get more friends by being in a sport."

Others were nonchalant about the notoriety.

"I don't get all that much recognition, because there are others better than me, but they know. It makes me feel good knowing that I'm on the varsity team."

"It does give you fame, but I don't let it get to me."

"...it's not like it's a huge deal."

One even mentioned a drawback.

"I would rather not be (famous) because of the pressure that comes from being in the spotlight. If you're not at the top of you game, then everyone is aware."

5) Relationship with coaches were more often than not, a positive experience. Many looked upon coaches as friends, teachers, and substitute parents.

"I am very coachable. I take authority very well."

"They are basically like friends to me. I can go to them, even when they are not my coaches anymore, and talk and ask for help and they help me."

"I respect them and listen to them."

"I feel as if I can talk to them about anything."

"A coach can be like a father if you get really close. So that's really cool."

At least two have had negative experiences with coaches.

"I've had two bad coaches. One would throw things and yell."

"Men coaches are always yelling."

When one young woman (the pretest) commented that she liked “coaches who get in your face”, this researcher was astounded! Subsequently, each athlete was asked for their reaction to coaches who “get in your face” in an effort to inspire athletes. Eight of the ten participants did respond positively to this approach.

“I do like that. If they say nothing at all, it means that the coach just gave up on me and there is nothing else they can do. When he tells me what to do, it means he knows I can do better. It shows that the coach hasn’t given up on me.”

“I like them tougher. I want them to be able to tell me what to do.”

“There’s something about a coach who yells at you. If he doesn’t yell at you, you’re sitting on the bench with him. And I don’t want to sit on the bench. It pushed me to do my best.”

“I like that too, because it makes you want to prove them wrong. It may bother you sometimes, but it brings out the best in you. And then you are happy afterwards.

“It motivates you to go out and do better.”

“It helps me a lot when someone yells at me. It gets me so pumped up. If someone tells me I’m doing badly, it makes me think, ‘I’ll show you’.”

One possible reason for the positive response of coaches who “get in your face”, is that it is socially accepted behavior in male amateur and professional sports such as football, basketball, and baseball. This group of athletes was socialized to believe, as I’m sure many adults believe that it is normal for coaches to scream at athletes, other coaches, and referees. Social-Cognitive theory presumes that “people learn by copying the behavior around them” (Payne, 1977, p. 114). Adolescents, who view this type of coaching on the TV or on their home field, will normalize it. It is seen so often and not criticized that

we cognitively interpret it as okay: it's a coach who cares passionately. If female athletes are trying to become equal with male athletes, and this is how male athletics operate, then the females must do it that way, too. However, two athletes' felt it was a negative tactic that produced unjustified ridicule and afforded them no respect.

"Sometimes I like it, but most of the time it makes me feel really bad because they are yelling at me. They don't need to do that. They could just sit there and talk to me about it."

"The yelling part just makes me mad that they are yelling. It's like you have no right to yell at me."

When questioned about coach gender preference, five preferred male coaches, four had no preference and one preferred a female.

"I don't even like women referees."

"I even have a hard time dealing with female teachers."

One girl analyzed her male coach preference by stating, "Women coaches tend not to be so hard, probably because of the negative experiences they had when they were coached by men." If the negative coaching style of males disgusts adult women, why not these young women? How can adults promote and inspire more girls to participate in sports, when the ones that already do are biased against their future selves?

Research Question Five

Are there additional experiences that exceptional athletes encounter because of their ability and accomplishments, and what are they?

Asking the participants the following questions operationalized this topic:
Some athletes have exceptional skills and some are average skill players. Think of someone whose skills are different than yours. How does their experience differ from yours? Does athletic involvement cause you any stress? Does being an athlete provide any positive or negative experiences not faced by non-athletic teens.

Their responses can be grouped into three themes: increased opportunities, more stress, and high personal standards.

1) **Opportunities** are definitely increased for exceptional athletes. Colleges court them. They are starters, become captains, receive job offers to coach children, and are asked to try out for special teams.

"Being able, at my young age (15-years-old), to go to state, being accepted to the Olympic development program, becoming captain my first year..."

"I got to be captain and that is a positive thing."

"I have more opportunities and I get to play more."

"I tried out for a national team..."

"I'm learning to help younger kids..."

"My mom says, 'If you didn't have this scholarship, I'd be struggling to pay for college'."

"I got to be captain in both sports."

Even the regular athletes realize the increased opportunities of their exceptional teammates. One athlete said, "She has opportunities to go all over the world. And she has a full ride to college."

2) However, with greater opportunity comes **more stress**.

"The game is put on the shoulders of the players who play the most."

"Those that are more successful will feel more stress, because the coach expects them to carry the team."

"The more roles you have the more stress you get. I was also a scorer. There were some games where my shots weren't going in and I would just hang my head and the whole team did the same. It was like I let down my team. Others have a lower stress level than I do."

"If scouts are present during games, I definitely feel more pressure and stress. You have to do well, so they will recruit you."

As a captain, "I was always the ambassador between parents, practice, and teammates, which is really hard and I got really frustrated."

"You have to deal with a lot of outside stuff when you're captain."

3) Finally, exceptional players may hold themselves to **higher personal standards**. Leadership roles, academics, morals, and athletic skill were just a few of the areas in which these athletes felt they must achieve. "Being a successful student and athlete requires the academic ability and physical skill to balance both roles with equal success" (Goldberg & Chandler, 1989, p. 247).

"You have to commit yourself to school and to that sport, because those two things are making me go somewhere."

"I don't put myself in situations" (where there is drinking or taking drugs). Others "have something to lose, but not as much as I would if I had gotten caught drinking or something."

"I try hard to compete with other kids and get better grades."

"In the summer, I go to camps to try to improve. I don't just relax."

"I know that at every practice I try to give over 100%. If you don't give at practice, you won't become a better athlete. I feel that if I practice hard enough, I can get to where I want to get in life."

"I look at a game, as every shift, every second, every period, I need to go all out!"

"People don't want to work hard for it (athletic skills). You need to work for it as you grow older. I am always striving to get better."

"I'm always an extreme perfectionist. So even when my little brother doesn't play well, I get on him. He dies when I go to his games."

"Since I was captain, I have to be a leader. People looked up to me. I had to be enthusiastic."

Research Question Six

What can be done to improve young women's athletics?

The main ideas generated to improve athletics for female adolescents were increased promotion and consideration for their sports, better coaching, and encouraging more girls to participate or try out for the teams.

1) Lack of **promotion and consideration** for girl's sports was seen as epidemic in our culture.

"I think girl's sports should be talked about more."

"Girls athletics needs to be seen as important."

"I think we need to promote the sport more."

Many in the sample lamented about the attention, publicity, and financial advantage of boy's high school athletics.

"They always have nicer equipment."

"Boys get more stuff, like sweatshirts and watches for the seniors. They get more publicity, too."

"Guys get more publicity and way more fans."

"There are always more fans at the boy's basketball and baseball games, than at the girl's basketball or baseball games. It makes a big effect on the players."

"Boy's hockey gets the entire tournament on television. Girl's hockey just had the championship game televised."

"Everyone is so guy-oriented at our school. The girl's hockey team was better than the boys, but everyone prefers the guys."

2) **Coaching** was another area in which some athletes thought improvements could be made. Two athletes want more respectful treatment and anger management from their coaches and one young woman wants to see more female coaches.

"Coaching needs to be improved. They need to be positive and control their anger. Coaches need to do fun things with the team as well as make them hustle."

"We need more positive input from coaches. When you are having a bad day, they could help you out, instead of knocking you down all the time."

"More women coaches would encourage more girls to try out. The girls will know they can succeed, just like their coach has."

3) Some of the participants want to see **more girls try out** for the team and participate in skill building activities.

"More people should come out for the team. The opportunity is there. I have been totally invited."

"We need more camps. They are good opportunities and it really helps you perfect your skill."

Social-Cognitive theory suggests that human beings have cognitive activity before behavioral action. "An important part of the calculation women make in deciding to participate may be whether they believe they have the ability to handle their emotional responses" (Arch, 1992, p. 9). If coaches are seen as rough, and stereotypes are alive, girls may first consider whether they can manage in that environment before they decide to participate.

Summary

Generally, this was a group of athletically skilled, dedicated, smart, and upbeat young women. Nine of the ten had a passion for sports and the benefits therein.

"I love it. I live for sports!"

"It's a positive thing. I'm not sitting around being bored."

"I meet a lot of people and have a lot of fun."

"I've been doing it for so long...it's my lifestyle."

"If I could, I would just have basketball all day. Watching it, playing it...no school. Just basketball everything."

"I love it. It keeps me busy and active."

"Keeps me busy"

Only one athlete was completely negative about the time, energy and money required. She played basketball "all year around...not even a month

break” and found it “very tiring...it just physically wears you out”. During the week she didn’t get to “do anything except basketball, homework, and go to bed”. Her father had coached many of her teams, was an officer for the community youth league, and wanted her to play college ball. When she plays a game, she “pumps” herself up by thinking about the things she hates. “It’s my dad...he pushes too hard, I guess. It’s frustrating! Stuff just gets me so mad, I go out there and give it my all.” Pressure from her father and lack of notice for her efforts has overshadowed the athletic benefits. “I have already decided that I’m not going to play college basketball. It’s kind of sliding, but I have lost interest and it’s not fun anymore.” This young woman was the same one who believed her self-esteem had decreased in direct proportion to her athletic skill.

Goldberg and Chandler (1989) found that the dual performance expectations (academics and sports) of student athletes may be unrealistic or “beyond the adolescent’s reach” and could result in “role confusion, lowered self-esteem, and increased susceptibility to peer-group pressure” (p. 247). This was obviously true for one subject. Parents and coaches must be cautious concerning emphasis on perfection in all endeavors. But, for the overwhelming majority of participants in this study, high school athletics was a very positive, self-esteem enhancing, and worthwhile activity. These young women had a zest for life, a commitment to education, a love of sports and a sense of purpose. One would only wish the same for all our daughters.

Chapter V

Summary and Conclusions

This study was designed to examine the self-esteem and experiences of both exceptional skill and regular skill, female adolescent athletes. Although mainly a qualitative study, with emphasis given to in-depth interviews, this research design also used a quantitative instrument. Both methods were used to generate themes and analyze concepts relating to the self-esteem and experience of female adolescent athletes. The quantitative instrument revealed that all athletes had self-esteem scores in the average to very high categories. Exceptional skill athletes did have higher mean scores than the regular skill athletes and their self-reporting was consistent with those findings.

Low participation in risk-taking behaviors, challenging academics, support of family and friends, recognition, and positive relationships with coaches emerged as the central themes for all athletes. More opportunities, increased stress and higher personal standards were additional topics reported by exceptional athletes. All athletes agreed that improvements could be made to female adolescent athletics through enhanced promotion and consideration for girl's sports, improved coaching, and better recruitment to increase the number of girl athletes.

Strengths and Limitations

This study's strengths were its naturalistic approach and triangulation. A naturalistic approach allows the researcher to observe and gather information without manipulating the environment or the sample. The naturalistic method seeks inductive and holistic understanding of human phenomena (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). This researcher was able to make inquiries about past and present experiences, feelings, and thoughts of the athletes. The knowledge gathered from this specific group of adolescent athletes and their unique perspective was expansive and quite valuable.

Triangulation increased the study efficacy by using more than one method to gather information. The SEI provided a self-esteem score for each participant. The in-depth interviews examined their perceptions and asked them to self-report their self-esteem. The objective SEI score was cross-referenced with the subjective self-reporting score providing a better understanding of the outcome.

There are four limitations in this research. First, due to the small sample size, results of this study cannot be generalized to the wider female athletic population. Second, this was not a random sample as participants were recruited or volunteered. Third, qualitative research is subjective. Information is analyzed and interpreted by the researcher through his or her worldview, biases, and cultural programming. Finally, identifying patterns and classifications is

difficult work (Patton, 1987). A researcher must be tenacious in order to pin down the themes of her study.

Implications for the Field

Many social workers work with female adolescents and know the self-esteem issues they face. This study has attempted to provide insight about the unique experiences of female adolescent athletes and their self-esteem. Although generalizations cannot be made to all female adolescents, one might suggest that other school-based activities might be beneficial for all adolescents. A sense of belonging, enjoyable activity, physical health, emotional well being, and contact with adult models are the benefits that make these functions so attractive and healthy for young people and their parents. Social workers need to be aware of adolescent concerns and risky behaviors as well as the opportunities that help youth overcome them.

Future Research

Further study into the phenomenon of coaches who "get in your face" and the athletes who prefer that style definitely needs to be examined. One hypothesis already mentioned is the normalization of male aggression in the media and on the field. Following along the same lines is research into the styles

and methods of the men and women who coach our youth. Social-Cognitive theory would again provide the framework of understanding. And finally, duplicating this study on a larger scale or among broader demographic populations, perhaps using a survey to reach urban and rural adolescent athletes, would also seem reasonable.

Issues raised about coaching styles and promotion of girl's sports may motivate some toward social advocacy for female adolescent athletes. Title IX has brought equal funding to public institutions. We have statistics about the increase in female participation and money spent, but has anyone examined the individual policies and quality of programming? Has it accomplished what it set out to do?

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. I'd like you to think about the sport or sports you play and answer a series of questions.
 - ◆ How did you get started playing this sport?
 - ◆ Who encouraged you? Did anyone discourage you?
 - ◆ What was your learning curve like? Did the skills come easily or with lots of practice? How do you explain this?
2. Being in sports takes lots of time, energy, and money. For some people these costs can be significant. Thinking on this, please answer these questions:
 - ◆ How much time do you spend involved in your sport? (includes team practice, individual practice, games, and helping others)
 - ◆ How do you feel about your involvement? (includes time, money, and skill level)
 - ◆ How does your family feel about your involvement?
 - ◆ How do your friends feel about your involvement?
3. How would you describe your relationship with your coach(es)?
4. Do you prefer a female or male coach? Why?
5. During a typical practice how do you feel? What are your emotions?

6. During a typical game how do you feel? What are your emotions?
7. What is different when you lose or win a game? How do you feel?
8. What is different in a tournament, sectional, or championship game? How do you feel?
9. Given this definition of self-esteem (operational definition given here) how would you describe your self-esteem?
 - ◆ On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being very high and 1 being very low, how would you rate your self-esteem?
 - ◆ Has your athletic experience ever effected your self-esteem? How? Why do you think that?
 - ◆ When you think about the beginning of your athletic experience and your self-esteem back then, has your self-esteem changed from then until now? How?
10. Please rate the importance of each of these using most important, least important and average importance. (Outstanding Athlete, Leader in Activities, Popularity, or Outstanding student)
11. Some teens participate in activities such as smoking, drinking alcohol, having sex, using drugs, and skipping school. You don't have to answer, of course, but have you done any of these? Which ones? (Answer truthfully or don't answer)
12. Can you think of any experience that has changed your feelings about yourself? What was it and how did it change you?

13. What are the challenging areas of your life? (academics, family life, sports, social situations, emotions, physical problems, spirituality, job, others)
14. What are the strengths in your life? (see above list)
15. How would you describe your relationship with family members? (mother, father, siblings, & others)
16. Does athletic involvement cause you any stress? How?
17. Does being an athlete provide any positive or negative experiences not faced by non-athletic teens?
18. Some athletes have exceptional skills and some are average skill players. Think of someone whose skills are different than yours. How does their experience differ from yours? Do they face more or less stress? Do you think their self-esteem is higher or lower than yours? Why?
19. What could be done to improve girls' athletics?

Appendix B

Demographics Questionnaire

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your sport or sports? _____
3. What grade are you in? _____
4. What is your race/ethnic background? (circle all that apply)
African American Asian/Pacific Islander Caucasian
Hispanic Native American Other _____
5. What adults do you live with? (circle all that apply)
Both parents one parent both, separate households
Grandparents foster parents other _____
Biological Adoptive
6. If you live with parents, are they
Married Divorced Separated Never married
7. How many people, including you, live in your home? _____

Appendix C



BURNSVILLE • EAGAN • SAVAGE
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 191
Burnsville Senior High School • (612) 707-2100 • Fax (612) 707-2102
600 East Highway 13 • Burnsville, Minnesota 55337

NOVEMBER 25, 1998

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

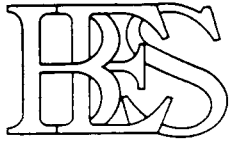
I give my consent for Burnsville High School coaches and physical education teachers to recommend female adolescent athletes for a research study conducted by Debra Smith Wagner. The coaches and teachers have my permission to provide her with the student athletes' names, addresses, and phone numbers.

Debra Smith Wagner has given me a summary of her research concerning the experiences and attitudes of adolescent girls involved in high school athletics. I understand that she will contact these girls and their parents or guardians and that they will be free to accept or decline participation in this study. I understand that no classroom time or school programming will be involved in this study. Each girl who agrees to participate will do so on her own time, outside of school or school activities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Rohlik'.

Jim Rohlik, Athletic Director
Burnsville High School



BURNSVILLE • EAGAN • SAVAGE
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 191
Burnsville Senior High School • (612) 707-2100 • Fax (612) 707-2102
600 East Highway 13 • Burnsville, Minnesota 55337

January 25, 1999

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that I have given my consent to Debra Smith Wagner to conduct a study of female adolescent athletes at Burnsville Senior High School. I am consenting to allow Debra Smith Wagner contact athletic coaches and physical education instructors to provide names of potential subjects.

My office will work with Debra to make the necessary contacts.

Debra Smith Wagner has provided me with a summary of her research concerning the experiences and attitudes of adolescent girls involved in high school sports. I understand that the girls and parents will be contacted and are free to decline participation in the study. I understand that no classroom time or school programming will be involved in this study. Each girl who agrees to participate will do so on her own time, outside of school and school activities.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Douglas M. DeWitt'.

Douglas M. DeWitt, Ph.D.
Principal

cc Jim Rohlik
Sue Moore

Appendix D

Consent Form IRB # 99-07-3

You are invited to be in a voluntary research study about female adolescent athletes. You are one of ten respondents selected from all the girls who contacted this researcher. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this study. This study is being conducted by me, as part of my Master's of Social Work thesis at Augsburg College.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the experiences and attitudes of female adolescents who participate in school-sponsored athletics. Information about female adolescents may provide knowledge that coaches, athletic directors, physical education teachers, social workers, counselors, and parents, find useful in their role with adolescent girls.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things. First, you will need to read and sign this consent form and return it to me. (Your parents must sign, too.) Second, you will be sent two questionnaire forms to be completed within a week and mailed back to me in an enclosed self-addressed and stamped envelope. The two questionnaires will take approximately 30-40

minutes. Then, I'll call you to arrange for an interview at the Burnsville Public Library. You will need to provide your own transportation to and from the library, however you will be given \$15.00 at the end of the study as a token of my appreciation and to help offset your transportation costs. I will be working alone with each participant, and will need to audiotape the interview, so that the interview can be done quickly and without the need to take notes. All tapes will be kept in a locked area (this will be explained more in the section on confidentiality).

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

This study has two risks. First, although unlikely, there is always the possibility that answering one or more questions might cause you discomfort. Second, since this research does ask questions about your life experiences and emotions, you may feel that this is an invasion of your privacy. Therefore, you are free to refuse to answer any of the questions asked and you are free to end the interview any time you wish, even if I haven't finished asking all of the questions.

In the unlikely event you feel a need for counseling services, you will be given the phone number for Lutheran Social Services. However, you or your health insurance provider must make payment for any services you receive.

Direct benefits for participation in this study will be payment of \$5.00 for the completed surveys and \$10.00 for a completed interview. You will receive payment in cash at the end of the interview. I may terminate the study at any

point, if in my opinion, continuing would be detrimental to you. You will still be paid for your effort.

Indirect benefits for participation in this study are the contributions made to the body of knowledge regarding female adolescent athletes.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records and audiotapes will be kept in a locked file; only the researcher, her advisor, and a transcriber will have access to the records. The transcriber is aware of the confidential nature of the research and will sign a statement ensuring confidentiality.

- (a) All data and tapes will be destroyed by September 1, 1999.
- (b) General information will be retained with all identifying information removed by September 1, 1999.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Augsburg College or Burnsville High School. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. If you complete only the surveys and not the interview, you will be paid \$5.00.

Contact and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Debra Smith Wagner. If you have any questions, you may contact her at (651) 454-3433 or by e-mail at

Lantzwagner@sprintmail.com. Ms. Smith Wagner's advisor is Dr. Edward

Skarnulis. He can be reached through Augsburg College, Department of Social Work, 612- 330-1759.

You will be given a copy of this form.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant, minor

_____ Date _____

Signature of parent or guardian

_____ Date _____

Signature of researcher _____ Date _____

I consent to be audiotaped

_____ Date _____

I consent to be quoted in the final paper. My name will not be used.

_____ Date _____

STUDENT RESPONSE BOOKLET

Subject's Name _____

	Year	Month
Date of Testing	_____	_____
Subject's Date of Birth	_____	_____
Subject's Age at Testing	_____	_____

Instructions

Read this list of sentences. Some of these sentences will describe you very well and some will not describe you at all. If you think a sentence is always true of you, put a mark in the circle or square under *Always True*. If you think a sentence is usually true of you, put a mark in the circle or square under *Usually True*. If you think a sentence is usually not true of you, put a mark in the circle or square under *Usually False*. If you think a sentence is never true of you, put a mark in the circle or square under *Always False*. Remember to answer all of the questions. If you do not know the meaning of any words in the sentences, ask the examiner. You may begin when the examiner tells you to.

	ALWAYS TRUE	USUALLY TRUE	USUALLY FALSE	ALWAYS FALSE
1. My parents and I have fun together.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I am a hard and steady worker at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I'm pretty popular with other kids my age.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Kids pick on me a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. My home life is pretty pleasant.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I am good at school work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I'm a lot of fun to be around.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I have nightmares almost every night.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. We have a very close family.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I am pretty good about doing my homework on time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. It's easy for me to make friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I often feel ashamed of myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. My parents don't listen to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I'm proud of my school work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. I am a leader in most of the games that my friends play.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. My friends don't have much confidence in me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I can go to my parents with my problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. I give the teachers a lot of trouble at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I don't have trouble talking to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. I exaggerate my troubles in order to get attention from other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. My parents understand me as well as most kids' parents do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. I like going to school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. I'm as nice looking as most other kids.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. I never feel like I'm part of the group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. My parents are proud of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. My parents are disappointed in my school grades.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. My friends think I have pretty good ideas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. It takes me a long time to get used to new things.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	ALWAYS TRUE	USUALLY TRUE	USUALLY FALSE	ALWAYS FALSE
29. My family is interested in me and the things that I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. I do as little work at school as I can get by with.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. I think I'm pretty easy to like.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. I'm usually the last one to be chosen for a game.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Nobody pays much attention to me at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. School work isn't very interesting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. I'm not shy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. I am often afraid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. I feel left out of things at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. My teachers like me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39. The other kids usually want me to take charge when we work on a school project together.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40. My friends let me take the blame for things they have done.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. My parents don't scold me unless I deserve it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42. I am slow when it comes to doing my school work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. I usually say what I think.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
44. Other kids think I'm a cry baby.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45. I don't trust my family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46. I find it hard to work in classrooms that have a lot of rules.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47. I think most people are pretty interesting to talk to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
48. I would rather play with children who are younger than I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49. My family doesn't trust me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50. I'm not doing as well in school as I'd like to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51. When I grow up, I will be an important person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
52. I am a klutz.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
53. My family will help me if I get into trouble.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
54. My teachers make me feel like I'm not good enough.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
55. I like being with other kids.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
56. I spend too much time alone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	ALWAYS TRUE	USUALLY TRUE	USUALLY FALSE	ALWAYS FALSE
57. I argue a lot with my family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
58. My behavior at school is okay.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
59. I'm not afraid of as many things as my friends are.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
60. I am uncomfortable in groups of people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
61. I don't have enough freedom at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
62. Most of my teachers are pretty fair.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
63. I'm not a very lonely person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
64. I wish I were younger.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
65. I am an important member of my family.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
66. Sometimes I play sick to get out of school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
67. I include other people in my plans.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
68. Sometimes I pretend to know more than I really do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
69. My parents expect too much from me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
70. My teachers give me school work that I cannot do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
71. I learn a lot from other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
72. I get a lot of headaches and stomachaches.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
73. The people in my family have quick tempers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
74. I like it when the teacher calls on me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
75. I don't have trouble making up my mind about things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
76. When things go wrong, I sometimes try to blame the other guy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
77. Things at home upset me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
78. It's fun to learn new things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
79. I have friends I can confide in.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
80. It is hard for me to talk in front of the class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional copies of this form (#0907) are available from PRO-ED, Inc., 8700 Shoal Creek Boulevard, Austin, Texas 78757

Appendix F

Female Athletic Research

I am conducting research involving the experiences and attitudes of female adolescent athletes. It is part of my Master's of Social Work Degree at Augsburg College. Principal DeWitt and Mr. Rohlik have approved this project. I will be asking ten participants to (1) sign a consent form, along with their parents, (2) complete two surveys in their own home (30-40 minutes total) and mail them back to me, and (3) be interviewed, for about one hour, by myself at the Burnsville Public Library. Participants will be compensated for their time and transportation with \$15.00.

If you are interested in participating in this research and want more information for yourself and your parents, please contact me at the following number or E-mail. I am limited to ten participants and will try to use those who contact me the quickest.

Debra Smith Wagner
651-454-3433
Lantzwagner@sprintmail.com

Appendix G

Riechia E. Ralston
3237 Rolling Hills Drive
Eagan, Minnesota 55121-2344

March 25, 1999

Dear Riechia:

This is a contract for your services as a transcriber for my thesis, research #99-07-3, "Self-esteem in adolescent females: The athletic connection". In signing this contract you confirm your awareness of the privileged nature of the research information and the assurance that you will keep all information strictly confidential. You may reveal no names, circumstances, dates, places, or other details about any of the participants to anyone outside of this researcher, her advisor, or yourself. In addition, the tapes used to transcribe the data and the transcriptions must be kept in a secured area unless they are in use by you or in transit between your workspace and the researcher's secured area.

It is the research's understanding that you will be paid \$ 15.00/hour for your services as a research transcriber, your hours tracked by you for documentation to be submitted to the researcher. Exchanges of voice tapes and transcribed data will be negotiated between researcher and you.

If you agree to the above terms, obligations, and expectations, please sign this document. Upon receipt of the signed copy, this researcher will begin to schedule time with you for the actual transcription work.

I, Riechia Ralston, understand the confidential nature of this research, the terms of this contract, and agree to abide by this agreement.

Riechia E. Ralston date 3/25/99

Debra Smith Wagner date 3-25-99
Researcher, Debra Smith Wagner, #99-07-3

Appendix H

Research Lay Summary

This qualitative research study concerns the experiences and attitudes of high school girls who are involved in school sports. It will focus on the similarities and differences between girls who are exceptional skill athletes and girls who are regular skill athletes, with regards to their self-esteem and life experiences. Following are the research questions:

1. How do athletes fit or not fit the normative female adolescent self-esteem?
2. Are there similarities and differences in self-esteem of exceptional skill adolescent athletes and regular skill adolescent athletes?
3. Do athletes perceive an increase or decrease in their self-esteem based upon their participation in sports?
4. What are the unique experiences of female adolescent athletes?
5. Are there additional experiences that exceptional athletes encounter because of their ability and accomplishments, and what are they?
6. What can be done to improve athletics for female adolescents?

Ten high school girls (14-19 years), who are involved in school sponsored sports, will be recommended by high school coaches and asked to participate in this study. Five will be regular skill athletes and five will be exceptional skill athletes. By analyzing the similarities and differences of their self-esteem and experiences, I hope to better understand the special challenges of female adolescent athletes and the risks they run of succumbing to unhealthy behaviors. Many studies have shown the downward trend of self-esteem once girls enter adolescence. This risk for a lower self-esteem may lead to a risk for unhealthy behaviors. Athletic participation, however, has been shown to increase self-esteem. This study will look at an otherwise unresearched population, exceptional skill female adolescent athletes, to determine whether or not these girls follow the tendency for adolescence self-esteem.

The methodology will consist of a personal interview and two self-administered surveys. One is a very short demographic survey (Appendix B) and the other is a standardized self-esteem assessment (SEI) for adolescents (Appendix E). Both surveys will be mailed to the participants to complete at home and should take about 30-40 minutes. Once I have received their completed surveys, I will set up an interview time and place. The participants will need to provide their own transportation to and from the interviews. The location of the interview will be the local public library, where a private study area for two persons is available. Approximate length of the interview is 30 minutes. The interview questions are open-ended and cover the girls' experiences and emotions surrounding their athletic activities. An interview guide (Appendix A) will be used to assure that the same information is obtained from each girl. As a reward and to help defray the transportation cost, each girl will be given \$5.00 for completed surveys and \$10.00 for the interview, for a total of \$15.00.

