THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF COLLECTIVE EFFICACY WITH A WOMEN’S COMMUNITY COLLEGE BASKETBALL TEAM

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE OF EXERCISE SPORT SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2003
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by

Amber Christine Stegelin
“The longer the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder.”

-Ralph W. Sockman
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my committee members, Drs. Milledge Murphey, Heather Hausenblas, John Todorovich, and Peter Giacobbi, Jr., for their guidance and input concerning this thesis project. Their patience during this lengthy mission is to be commended. Furthermore, I would especially like to express gratitude towards my advisor, Dr. Giacobbi, for his direction in the understanding and development of qualitative inquiry as this experience deserved such attention.

I would also like to thank my parents, as well as my brother and extended family for their support throughout my academic experience. I appreciate their ability to adapt to my changing life pace and willingness to always go the extra mile when needed. I thank my life-long friends for offering advice and words of encouragement throughout all of my endeavors, no matter where these adventures take me. Thanks go to all of those individuals at the University of Florida who helped to put my mind at ease concerning the process of the thesis project. And to Brad and Taryn, as fellow members of the qualitative group meetings I want to thank them for joining me on this long journey of grounded theory discovery.

Lastly, I would like to thank the players and coaches for without their consent the following account would never have been possible. I am grateful for their willingness to, without reservation, permit me into their lives and share in this once-in-a-lifetime experience. During these many months I have had the opportunity to build sincere relationships and learn from those privy to the following documentation. Both on and off
the playing court I feel as though they have made an impact upon my life and I hope in some form or another that I have done the same for them.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interest</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Research</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Purposes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary of Terms</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION AND APPLICATION</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy Theory</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement Issues</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Efficacy</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Dimensions of Group Efficacy Construct</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Examining Group Efficacy</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Constructs</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Study Rationale</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophical Issues Related to the Current Study</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Research</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 METHODS</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants and Setting</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust and Rapport Building Procedures</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Procedures</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Interviews</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Interviews</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Use of a Reflexive Journal</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded Theory Data Analytic Procedures</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 RESULTS ..........................................................................................................................38

Player Biographies ..............................................................................................................38
Sources of Team Efficacy of a Women’s Basketball Team ..............................................41
  Preseason Interviews ........................................................................................................41
  Postseason Interviews .....................................................................................................51
Observed Changes in Team Efficacy Throughout the Season .....................................57
  Return from Holiday Break .........................................................................................61
  Changing Perceptions of the Coach ............................................................................62
Critical Influences on the Evolution of Team Efficacy: A Grounded Theory ............64
  Critical Incidents and the Reevaluation Period ...........................................................65
  Post-Juncture Beliefs .....................................................................................................68

5 GENERAL DISCUSSION .................................................................................................73

Efficacy Sources ................................................................................................................73
  Mastery Experiences ........................................................................................................74
  Vicarious Experience .......................................................................................................75
  Verbal Persuasion ............................................................................................................76
  Physiological States .........................................................................................................76
  Leadership Effectiveness ...............................................................................................77
Related Dimensions of Group Efficacy Construct ......................................................78
Group Efficacy Research .................................................................................................79
Related Constructs ...........................................................................................................81
Methodological Considerations .....................................................................................84
Methodological Weaknesses .........................................................................................85
Applied Implications .......................................................................................................88

APPENDIX

A PRESEASON GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE .................................................................91
B POSTSEASON GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE ............................................................92
C PRESEASON PLAYER INTERVIEW GUIDE ..............................................................93
D POSTSEASON PLAYER INTERVIEW GUIDE ............................................................94
E INFORMED CONSENT ...............................................................................................95
F POSTSEASON INTERVIEW THEMES .......................................................................100
G CRITICAL INFLUENCES ON THE EVOLUTION OF TEAM EFFICACY: A GROUNDED THEORY .............................................................................................................103
LIST OF REFERENCES .................................................................................................105
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH ............................................................................................112
The current study utilized self-efficacy theory to explore the development and maintenance of collective efficacy on a community college women’s basketball team throughout the course of a competitive basketball season. Collective efficacy is defined as a group’s shared beliefs in its capacities to organize and execute actions to produce a desired goal. Despite numerous studies published on self-efficacy theory related to sport performance, little research has been conducted concerning collective or group efficacy in sport. Group assessment is considered to be a complex phenomenon containing a multitude of ambiguities. Factors such as team interdependency, group cohesion and the influence of social factors have important implications for the assessment of efficacy within the sporting context. As such, a qualitative research approach was used to explore the building of collective efficacy within a highly interdependent sports team. Specifically, a grounded theory approach was implemented to understand how individual and team members’ perceptions of group efficacy developed throughout a season. Initial
open-ended interviews were transcribed verbatim and relevant themes were categorized. As themes emerged from the data, subsequent interviews were completed to clarify the researcher’s perceptions of the team’s efficacy and to gain a further understanding of participants’ responses. The interview text established a foundation for group efficacy theory and allowed for further expansion of its components and related constructs.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Much of sport psychology research has sought to explain the relationship between athletes’ motivation and accomplished performance (Feltz, 1988; Miller, 1993; Vallerand & Bissonnette 1992). Self-efficacy, as theorized by Bandura (1977), is one mechanism that mediates this relationship. However, it has been suggested that this theory does not generalize to the group domain (Bandura, 1997). Many physical activities are organized on the basis of groups including sports teams consisting of elite and recreational athletes, and, those pertaining to instructional classes. Furthermore, many sports involve groups, ranging from those of low interdependency (i.e. golf, bowling) to those of high interdependency (basketball, volleyball). Within the athletic setting, questions arise concerning how efficacy within a group or team develops. The present study addresses these issues.

Collective efficacy focuses on the group’s shared beliefs in its capacities to organize and execute actions to produce a desired goal (Bandura, 1997). Collective efficacy is considered to be rooted in self-efficacy in that knowledge of personal efficacy is not unrelated to perceived group efficacy (Bandura, 1982). However, the aggregate performance of a group of athletes does not appear to be simply the sum of individual efforts but a more complex interaction of interpersonal and situational factors (George & Feltz, 1995). For instance, in a sport such as basketball where teammates depend on each other’s performance to achieve overall success, individual miscues or lack of confidence
(missing a free-throw) can disrupt a team’s ability to achieve specific goals (e.g., winning the game).

Although it appears self and collective efficacy involve different psychological processes, they do share some common characteristics. For instance, both constructs are task-specific in that beliefs of attaining success are related to specific goals. Additionally, comparisons can be made between the similar sources of information for self and collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997). For instance, vicarious experience is regarded as a source of efficacy. Therefore, observing another athlete with similar athletic attributes succeed in sport may have similar effects as observing another team with similar characteristics achieve success. To date, few empirical studies have addressed these issues.

Collective efficacy also has important implications for motivation at the group level, particularly with regards to group cohesion (Zander, 1971). Spink (1990) states the factors of efficacy and cohesion are correlated when established as precursors to performance success. To date, few studies have assessed the influence of motivational factors on performance accomplishments at the group level. This research is considered difficult to conduct since data accumulated from members of a team consist of individual perceptions and perceptions assumed from the team as a whole. For instance, an aggregation bias can develop if within-group variability is not taken into account when assessing group phenomenon at the individual level (James, 1982). This will be discussed in more depth in an upcoming section.

According to Wood and Bandura (1989), the effective exercise of collective action involves more complex socially-mediated paths of influence than does individual self-
direction. Therefore, studies in collective efficacy should first consider the research question to determine the proper level of analysis. Due to the complexities related to group research, a greater understanding of factors related to the development and maintenance of collective efficacy need to be studied. Exploratory research with specific athletic contexts could provide invaluable information concerning the interactive properties that develop within a team. Similarly, it has been suggested that for group cohesion research to advance, studies should be completed over the course of one or possibly, a multitude of seasons as opposed to single assessments of a team (Widmeyer, Carron & Brawley, 1993). In other words, longitudinal studies would allow for a closer examination of how group characteristics develop over an extended period of time and to be fully considered.

In addition, research involving group constructs has not sufficiently addressed differences between individual and group perceptions. The majority of studies involving collective efficacy have attempted to understand the construct through survey questionnaires completed by individual team members (Feltz & Lirgg, 1998; Watson & Chemers, 1998; Spink, 1990). Because individuals within the team separately respond to these questionnaires, it is possible that team members will not be swayed by the perceptions of influential members or those with more prestige or those in positions of authority (Bandura, 1997). However, it is possible that through a complex process of social interaction individuals form collective efficacy beliefs that are influenced by important individuals on the team. Therefore, validity concerns arise because questionnaires attempt to assess perceptions about the group from answers given by individual members of the team.
Group efficacy is conceptually similar, and related to, constructs such as confidence, team cohesion, and group interdependence. According to Bandura (1997), group cohesiveness can largely reflect a team’s sense of efficacy by strengthening the team’s beliefs in their ability to remain united through difficult times. Teams with increased efficacy are less likely to split when faced with obstacles that might otherwise hinder a team with a low sense of efficacy. A team’s level of cohesion can also be attributed to actions outside of the actual playing field, such as mutual liking and affiliation (Bandura, 1997). These issues will be discussed in an upcoming section.

Sport confidence (Vealey, 1986) is a sport specific modification of Bandura’s efficacy theory. Both constructs define one’s beliefs in their own ability to perform as a key component to success. Similar to efficacy, sport confidence considers the importance of specific influencing factors and related sources for assessing one’s beliefs about his performance. Further examination of the construct will follow in the next section.

A construct related to group activity involves group cohesion. Within the sport setting, cohesion, as defined by Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley, (1985), considers specific individual and group mechanisms in that individual member perceptions and beliefs will influence what is considered meaningful to the group (Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley & Carron, 2001). A positive relationship has been demonstrated between cohesion and efficacy such that as a team’s cohesion rises so does its sense of efficacy (Dorsch, Widmeyer, Paskevich, & Brawley, 1995; Paskevich, 1995). This relationship will be discussed further in an upcoming section.

A close examination of the research literature indicates that the study of collective efficacy is in the early stages. There exists ambiguity concerning social influences,
appropriate measures for assessment, and associations with related constructs (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001; George & Feltz, 1995). The influence each of these roles will have over efficacy beliefs is not clear. For instance, questions exist concerning the credibility of specific social influences, how to assess a group phenomenon with individual responses, and how related constructs (e.g., collective task efficacy, collective interdependence effect) can influence actual performance.

There are a variety of practical implications that might arise from research on group efficacy in sport. Research involving Bandura’s theory of group efficacy has practical implications for players and coaches. According to Feltz and Lirgg (1998), it might be possible that group efficacy is a more important predictor of performance than individual efficacy. If this were to be the case, team leaders should focus more attention on techniques to build group efficacy. Secondly, sources of efficacy information may differ in regards to the individual and the group in addition to other sources being present. Because ambiguity exists within the construct of group efficacy, this qualitative study will address the issues raised within this chapter.

**Personal Interest**

I am a coach, university instructor, and participant in the game of basketball. My experiences as a player began as a novice in middle school and progressed to a collegiate player at the Division I level. I currently play recreationally as well as coach basketball and see it being a part of my life for a long time to come. Throughout my playing years, I have been privileged to be a member of numerous teams and have traveled to many different places for the opportunity to play the game. In some instances, a team was formed and played together for months at a time (e.g., length of a playing season). In other instances, teams were formed hastily and played together for a short period (e.g., a
weekend tournament). Reflecting back on my experiences with these teams, the interactions between team members and the playing situations remain the most salient features for me. Basketball is a game where player interaction on and off the court is necessary and can often influence a team’s level of success. The connections formed amongst team members who play together for an extended period of time are strong predictors of successful play. In today’s society where the careers of coaches and players are often dependent upon the level of success of a team, the importance of group effects is undeniable.

In my experience as a player, the level of confidence a team exuded often influenced outcome of play, regardless of differences in skill level of the two competing squads. I have been part of teams that appeared to be severely overmatched and yet the combined beliefs in our abilities to succeed contributed to victory. Conversely, I have also been a part of teams where our skill level appeared to overwhelm that of an opponent, however their unwavering confidence outlasted our level of play. This phenomenon is always intriguing to me, as it appears unpredictable, and yet pronounced. In my eyes, the beauty of a team exists because of the interaction amongst its members. One person cannot hold more influence over the team than the collective authority of the team itself. However, the interplay amongst members differs within every team and every situation. While I do not believe group efficacy to be the only determinant of team play, I do believe its existence can strongly influence a team’s level of success.

From a research perspective, there is not a viable method of splitting the intact interactions between teammates into singular experiences. However, quantitative methodology evaluating group efficacy focuses on separating the individual component
of this group effect. While this method assesses the construct in an objective manner, one must question the validity of participant responses. The context of a team situation encompasses the response of its team members. However, in the case of a highly interdependent sport like basketball, a sum of the individual parts does not equate that of one collective response. Additionally, the majority of previous studies have occurred at one specific time, without regards to the influence of an extended season or additional factors that can sway a team’s level of efficacy. As previously suggested, group efficacy is not a construct that can be analyzed based on one response given during one intermittent time of play.

Proposed Research

Research Purposes

The researcher’s primary interest was to assess the formation and development of group efficacy within a community college women’s basketball team over the course of a playing season. A secondary purpose was to examine the dynamic characteristics (e.g., group cohesion, role related behavior) existing within a formed group that influenced a team’s level of efficacy.

Glossary of Terms

The following terms are included in this study as defined below:

**Axial coding**: the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed “axial” because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

**Collective efficacy**: group’s shared beliefs in its capacities to organize and execute actions to produce a desired goal (Bandura, 1997)

**Constant comparative method**: similarities and differences in participants’ experiences are fully explored through comparisons between (a) different participants, (b) information in the form of quotations derived from the same individual, (c) critical incidents with other incidents experienced by the same and different participants, (d) data derived within
a general dimension or category, and (e) data derived between different dimensions with other dimensions (Charmaz, 2000)

**Grounded theory**: theory derived from data and systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

**Group cohesion**: tendency of a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998)

**Group efficacy**: a group’s consensus about that group’s abilities (Gibson, Randel, & Earley, 1996)

**Open coding**: the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

**Self-efficacy theory**: the belief one has in being able to execute a specific task successfully to obtain a certain outcome (Bandura, 1986)

**Sensitizing concepts**: points of departure from which to study the data (Charmaz, 2000)

**Sport confidence**: the belief or degree of certainty that individuals possess about their ability to be successful in sport (Vealey, 1986)
CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION AND APPLICATION

Bandura (1997) developed “collective efficacy” as a group phenomenon rooted within the tenets of the self-efficacy theory he proposed twenty years earlier. He discerns the difference between efficacy theory and the term “confidence” that is commonly used in its place (Bandura, 1997 p. 382):

It should be noted that the construct of self-efficacy differs from the colloquial term confidence, which is widely used in sports psychology. Confidence is a nondescript term that refers to strength of belief but does not necessarily specify what the certainty is about. Perceived self-efficacy refers to belief in one’s power to produce given levels of attainment. A self-efficacy assessment, therefore, includes both the affirmation of capability and the strength of that belief.

Because Bandura (1997) places the collective efficacy construct at the level of the group, it is questionable whether the averaging of individual data is justified. The sport of basketball is strongly interdependent in nature. Therefore, the term “group efficacy”, or a group’s consensus about its abilities, may be more appropriate (Gibson, Randel, and Earley, 1996) for the purposes of this project.

While the researcher recognizes the distinction between the construct definition of efficacy and the frequently associated word “confidence,” application of the former’s use within the given athletic setting is not suitable. Within the context of this thesis project, interview text does not follow the efficacy terminology as defined by Bandura (1997). Team members repeatedly mentioned “confidence” when asked questions concerning
group efficacy. Therefore, for purposes of this research project the researcher employed the terms “group efficacy” and “team confidence” interchangeably. During the interviews, the term “confidence” was used to describe the phenomenon occurring within the team. Using appropriate qualitative procedures, the researcher noted the difference in vocabulary used by team members yet did not attempt to correct their terminology.

**Self-Efficacy Theory**

Self-efficacy theory, which originated from Bandura’s social-cognitive theory (1977, 1986), stressed the interaction among cognition, behavior and the environment in determining causation for action (Bandura, 1986). The theory places emphasis on the influence humans have over events in everyday life. As humans attempt to establish control over behaviors through thought (cognition), these considerations can then influence the social environment and subsequently impact our affective and biological states (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, one’s self-efficacy, a cognitive state, has a direct impact on how well subsequent actions will be performed.

Self-efficacy theory poses efficacy as a common cognitive mechanism for mediating people’s motivation, thought patterns and behavior (George & Feltz, 1995). According to Bandura (1990), the theory details how to empower people with the competencies, self-regulatory capabilities and resilient self-belief that enable individuals to enhance their psychological well-being and accomplishments. Therefore, the more efficacy individuals have in their own capabilities to experience success, the more likely successful performance will follow. As such, self-efficacy is considered the most influential aspect on people’s everyday lives (Bandura, 1990).

According to Bandura (1997), efficacy expectations for performance vary according to three dimensions: magnitude, generality, and strength. The magnitude of
efficacy beliefs can range according to simple or complex tasks. Thus, when tasks are ordered according to level of difficulty, the efficacy expectations may be limited to the simpler tasks (e.g., running down the basketball court), extend to moderately difficult ones (dribbling around a defender), or include even the most taxing performances (scoring a basket while simultaneously being fouled). The range of perceived capability for a given person is measured against levels of task demands that represent varying degrees of challenge or impediments to successful performance (Bandura, 1997). Thus, if there are no obstacles and the activity is easy to perform, then one would expect higher perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

Secondly, Bandura states the generality of efficacy expectations concern the number of domains in which an individual believes he or she is efficacious. These expectations can range from specific mastery skills necessary to achieve success or on the converse, a more general sense of efficacy involving individual trait characteristics. Generality can also vary on a number of different dimensions, including the degree of similarity of activities, the modalities in which capabilities are expressed (behavioral, cognitive, affective), qualitative features of situations, and the characteristics of the persons toward whom the behavior is directed (Bandura, 1997). It should be noted the inclusion of generality expectations are rarely included within sport studies due to the complexity of assessing the degree of congruence between self-efficacy and performance at the level of individual tasks (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001). Instead, researchers have adopted the method of correlating the aggregate of self-efficacy strength scores and aggregate performance scores (Feltz & Chase, 1998). This procedure raises validity questions given the complexities of assessing the phenomenon at multiple levels (Feltz & Chase, 1998).
Lastly, the strength of these expectations is defined as the certainty that one can attain a given level of performance (Felt & Lirgg, 2001). These convictions can result in an individual experiencing a weak sense of perseverance or conversely an aptitude to be successful in any situation. The stronger the sense of personal efficacy, however, the greater the perseverance and the higher the likelihood that the chosen activity will be performed successfully (Bandura, 1997).

**Sources of Self-Efficacy**

Bandura’s (1990) theory states the development of efficacy information originates from four sources. Mastery experiences are predicted to be the most powerful source of self-efficacy through the cognitive processing of information. These experiences are the most influential sources of self-efficacy because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997). Past performances, in terms of perceptions concerning success and failure, influence subsequent self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore, if one has repeatedly viewed these experiences as successes, self-efficacy beliefs will increase; if these experiences are viewed as failures, self-efficacy beliefs will decrease (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001). According to Bandura (1986), the weight given to new experiences depends on the nature and strength of the preexisting self-perception into which they must be integrated. For instance, individuals who experience periodic failures but continue to improve over time are more apt to raise their perceived efficacy than those who succeed but see their performances leveling off compared to their prior rate of improvement.

A second source of efficacy information involves vicarious experiences of observing others achieve success. In other words, when individuals observed others perform, they note the consequence of their performance and then use this information to
form judgments about one’s own performance (Maddux, 1995). This form of information can be strongly influenced by the observer’s level of experience with successful performance and their perceptions about personal similarity with the model. Efficacy appraisals are considered to be especially sensitive to certain situations. For instance, the amount of uncertainty an individual has about his own capabilities and the criteria by which personal ability is based can strongly influence personal efficacy beliefs. Minimal prior experience and ambiguous standards for successful performance can lower or increase perceived efficacy because individuals are more likely to depend on the performances of others to determine their own abilities. According to Bandura (1986), people develop preconceptions of their own performance capabilities based upon the age, sex, race, ethnic designation, and educational and socioeconomic level of the person(s) observed. These biases develop even though the performances of individuals within these observed groups are extremely varied. Cultural stereotypes and generalizations based on personal experiences can contribute to these presumptions.

Persuasion is considered to be another source of efficacy information. These techniques exist in several forms, ranging from verbal persuasion (evaluative feedback, expectations from others) to imagery (envisioning oneself performing in a successful manner). It has been suggested that persuasion can have the greatest impact on people who have some reason to believe that they can produce effects through their actions (Chambliss & Murray, 1979). However, efficacy beliefs can be lowered if performance expectancies expressed by the persuader are unrealistic. Factors such as the credibility, prestige, and trustworthiness of the persuader influence the effects of the information given. According to Bandura (1997), the debilitating effects of this information are more
powerful than the enabling effects. For instance, a coach who ridicules a player as a method of motivation may actually discourage further participation and this criticism may be more devastating than a coach removing a player from the given playing situation.

Lastly, perceptions of self-efficacy can be obtained from one’s physiological state. One’s perceptions of autonomic arousal, fatigue, windedness, aches and pains can influence efficacy in both a positive and negative manner (Taylor, Bandura, Ewart, Miller & DeBusk, 1985). Efficacy meanings will differ depending on one’s inclination to view arousal as facilitating or debilitating. For instance, interpreting autonomic arousal as a signal of being psyched up, or conversely, a sign of fear and doubt, can influence efficacy information. Therefore, within the athletic context, interpretations of physiological states can be a strong indicator of the perseverance and activity one will endure when subject to physical discomfort (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001).

Although the four sources of efficacy information are listed in hierarchical manner, it should be noted they are not concrete, especially in regards to responding to different types of activities. Additionally, research has not confirmed the ranking order for how individuals process multiple efficacy sources.

**Measurement Issues**

Measurement of self-efficacy exists at several levels. Self-efficacy is considered most useful when measures of self-efficacy and performance are specific to the performance domain and occur closely in time (Bandura, 1977). For instance, measuring one’s self-efficacy for golf performance could involve understanding a player’s beliefs about success of attaining a specific score or achieving a specific shot distance. In accordance with Bandura’s recommendations and past research, this measurement should
occur within 24 hours of competition (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001). Existing measures that assess self-efficacy have included hierarchical scales, nonhierarchical scales and one-item questionnaires.

Hierarchical scales are the most prevalent form used and include a listing of tasks varying in difficulty, complexity, and stressfulness (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001). From the listing, participants designate the tasks they have confidence in performing and ascertain the degree of certainty they have for executing the task. Nonhierarchical scales involve establishing a specific sport domain and including the subskills necessary to perform a particular situation within this domain. For instance, measuring free-throw shooting efficacy would require a player to list the elements required to successfully make a free-throw such as body position on the free-throw line, hand position on the ball, when to release the ball, etc. Lastly, one-item questions have been used where participants rate how certain they are of their performance or of beating an opponent’s performance. However, these ratings yield a restricted range of scores and often fail to differentiate between individuals who differ in their beliefs of personal efficacy (Feltz & Chase, 1998). For instance, two individuals who judge themselves equally inefficacious to fulfill a difficult task demand may differ in their perceived efficacy for lower level demands (Bandura, 1997).

The majority of self-efficacy measures have been constructed for the purposes of a given study. However, a more generalized measure of self-efficacy, designated as the Physical Self-Efficacy Scale was developed (Ryckman, Robbins, Thornton, & Cantrell, 1982). Items exist on a 6-point Likert scale, where responses can range from 1 strongly
agree to 6 strongly disagree. Criticisms of the scale include it not being task-specific or developed within a goal-striving context (Feltz & Chase, 1998).

Research derived from contrived athletic settings has demonstrated strong support for the effects of self-efficacy on performance (Feltz, 1982). For instance, Miller (1993) manipulated individual perceptions of self-efficacy for a 200-meter swim task. Individuals were placed into either a high or low efficacious group. Findings showed support for the hypothesis that efficacy strength would be positively related to performance regardless of skill level. High efficacious swimmers performed at a faster speed than low efficacious swimmers.

When making measurement comparisons between group and individual constructs, group efficacy appears to include more elements than assessing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). As with any research conducted with groups, participant responses will contain both individual and group components. Efficacy collected at the group level, comprised of one rating representing the group’s consensus about its collective abilities, can be fallible because certain members of the group may influence the overall response given. Thus, group level ratings may not represent the group’s self-efficacy beliefs. Rousseau (1985) stated that individual responses can be averaged to represent that of the group when group members perceive their abilities within the team to function in the same way. An average may also be appropriate with teams of low interdependency, such as golf or gymnastics (Bandura, 1997). However, according to James (1982), when group differences are not taken into consideration, aggregation biases can ensue. For instance, if within-group variation is not taken into account, accumulating data at the individual level will result in a bias unrepresentative of the data.
Finally, it should be noted that few qualitative studies have been reported that have assessed collective efficacy. This is an important shortcoming because of the noted difficulties of assessing group level constructs using surveys designed and validated on individuals. Furthermore, due to the exploratory nature of most studies that have examined collective efficacy and the established acceptance of qualitative methods in sport and exercise psychology, it could be argued that qualitative methods are the most appropriate approach to the study of collective efficacy in sport (Sparkes, 2002). These issues will be discussed in an upcoming section.

**Collective Efficacy**

Bandura (1990) addressed the efficacy of the individual athlete with self-efficacy theory. However, many sports require the interactions of members within a team to achieve athletic success. Therefore, Bandura (1997) theorized about the nature of group level beliefs (i.e., collective efficacy). From this perspective, members’ perceptions of the group’s ability as a whole is considered more relevant than how they perceive their individual capabilities and is considered more complex than simply summing individual efforts (Bandura, 1997). Within a team, judgments about a group’s capabilities are influenced by “what people choose to do as a group, how much effort they put into it and their staying power when the group efforts fail to produce results” (Bandura, 1986, p.449). Therefore, because many physical activities within the sport setting involve groups or teams, sport and exercise psychology researchers should give consideration to the role of collective efficacy.

Because collective efficacy has its roots in self-efficacy, it has been suggested that these two constructs share similar sources of efficacy development (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001). For example, mastery experiences are predicted to be the most powerful source of
information for both self and collective efficacy beliefs. According to Bandura (1997),
coaches may structure mastery experiences for their teams in order to cultivate percepts
of group efficacy creating styles of play that capitalize on the players’ unique talents.

According to Bandura (1997), the perceived collective efficacy of a team can also
be influenced by social comparison processes with other teams. These vicarious
experiences could involve watching teams with a similar composition in terms of number
of players, style of play, and situational influences. Teams can compare their abilities
against other groups without having to single out individual members for social
evaluation. Therefore, group members are less susceptible to individual criticism when
compared with individuals of similar teams.

Watson and Chemers (1998) discussed the importance of leader effectiveness as an
influence over the team’s overall sense of efficacy. Leaders who are highly regarded by
the team are believed to be especially important. Exceptional leadership will influence a
group’s collective efficacy through modeling (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1992). Leaders
can use this approach to help overcome insecurities felt by other team members
concerning team performance (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001). Conversely, negative coaching can
discourage the resiliency and achievement beliefs of the team (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001). For
instance, both verbal persuasion and dissuasion directed toward the group could be a
source for efficacy, especially if individual members observe their teammates being
strongly affected by the information (Bandura, 1990).

In conjunction with verbal persuasion, social influences can impact team
performance. Social influences may take the form of perceived attitudes or expectations
of significant others in an individual’s life (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1981). In addition to the
social influence of teammates and coaches, persuasive information can originate from spectators and the media. Teams that can see and hear the support of their fans may have a stronger belief in their team’s prospects for success than when they are playing in front of a hostile home crowd. Likewise, teams whose performances are harshly criticized by the media over time may increase their own self-doubt about their abilities (George & Feltz, 1995).

Lastly, the physiological condition of the team could influence how members perceive their capabilities for performance. For instance, how teammates perceive a team’s calm demeanor before competition in terms of facilitative or debilitative effects could impact the ensuing performance. Additionally, the overall sense of a team’s emotional state can overshadow that of an individual member. Therefore, positive team effects can alter an individual team member’s negative perceptions. Conversely, negative team effects can bring down the positive emotions of one of its athletes.

**Related Dimensions of Group Efficacy Construct**

The group efficacy construct includes the related factors of collective task efficacy and collective interdependence effect (Mischel & Northcraft, 1997). The former concerns members’ beliefs of their group’s knowledge related to the task, skill, and abilities in order to perform a specific task in a successful manner. For instance, a basketball team may set a goal of achieving a specific team field goal percentage for a game and will base success on reaching or surpassing this number.

The collective interdependence effect, on the other hand, refers to members’ beliefs about the level of knowledge, skill, and ability a group has to perform a specific task through effective interaction. Thus, when a basketball team applies full-court defensive pressure, all players on the floor must commit to their roles in order to make a successful
steal or force a disruptive possession for the offense. Bandura states these two elements (e.g., collective task efficacy and collective interdependence effect) moderate relationships between perceptions of a team’s capability and actual performance (1997). Therefore, how a team expects to perform (e.g. setting a goal for team field goal percentage, full-court defensive pressure forcing turnovers) before competition will influence their subsequent performance. Because basketball is considered a highly interdependent sport (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001), individuals within a team rely on one another to achieve success. The ability of the team to achieve success will inevitably be influenced by their collective beliefs “to organize and execute actions to produce a desired goal” (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, the level of interdependence existing within the team will influence and be influenced by the group’s efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, the ability of a team to reach a specific goal (e.g. achieving a specific field goal percentage for a game) will influence the team’s efficacy beliefs for achieving success. Their ability to reach this task-based goal will constitute the team’s collective task efficacy. These constructs can influence whether a team achieves actual and/or perceptions of the team’s ability to reach full athletic capacity (Bandura, 1997).

Research Examining Group Efficacy

As stated previously, few studies in sport psychology literature have examined group efficacy. However, the research that does exist has provided significant insights into collective efficacy (Feltz & Lirgg, 1998; Hodges & Carron, 1992; Paskevich, 1995; Watson & Chemers, 1998). Before Bandura defined efficacy with motor performance, Zander (1971) completed a study that examined performance on a task and the effects of bogus feedback. Participants completed short questionnaires and groups were formed based on the false scoring of these questionnaires by the experimenter. Individuals were
placed into groups having a strong desire for group success and those having little interest for group success. Assigned groups were then subject to a hand dynamometer strength task. Subsequent performance revealed the high collective efficacy groups consistently outperformed the low efficacy groups.

Weinberg and colleagues (Weinberg, Gould, Yukelson & Jackson, 1981) extended Zander's study by combining the existing hand dynamometer task with an additional medicine ball task. After participants completed the dynamometer strength test, efficacy was manipulated by bogus feedback from an experimenter. High efficacy groups were led to believe they were substantially superior to those of the confederate group. Conversely, low efficacy groups were informed their total group scores were substantially inferior to those of the confederate group. Once the efficacy perceptions were produced, groups completed a medicine ball task where participants were positioned to hold the ball adjacent to their bodies. Members of the high efficacy group maintained ball position without dropping significantly longer than those in the low efficacy group. These findings supported Bandura's theory of high efficacy groups persisting longer than low efficacy groups.

The first study to examine team efficacy with actual sports teams over the course of a season was conducted by Feltz and Lirgg (1998). Questionnaires completed by intercollegiate hockey players within 24 hours of competition showed that aggregated team efficacy beliefs (beliefs strictly concerning the team) were a stronger predictor for performance than aggregated player efficacy beliefs (beliefs strictly concerning the individual athlete). In concordance with Bandura's theory (1997), past team performance was shown to influence team efficacy beliefs to a greater extent than player efficacy
beliefs. Also in agreement with Bandura's theory (1997), collective efficacy was a stronger predictor of team performance for teams with high levels of interdependency (e.g., hockey) than it is for less interdependent teams (e.g., collegiate team swimmers).

Because the study lasted the duration of a playing season, the team’s fluctuating efficacy beliefs were also observed. The results showed that hockey coaches interpreted end of semester worries and distractions as factors influencing their team's efforts. Unless part of the first-place team, players felt as if they had not fulfilled the team's expectations for success (Feltz & Lirgg, 1998).

Myers, Short and Feltz (2003) also observed the efficacy phenomenon over the course of a season with intact sports teams. Using quantitative methods, this study assessed collective and individual efficacy beliefs for ensuing offensive performances for American football teams. Furthermore, as advocated by Bandura (1997), questionnaires were completed within 24 hours of competition. Results showed collective efficacy beliefs were a stronger predictor of passing performance than were self-efficacy beliefs and that a reciprocal relationship between collective efficacy and passing performance existed over the course of the season. Furthermore, early and late season collective efficacy beliefs appeared more homogeneous than midseason beliefs.

Zhang, Hausenblas, Barkouras, and Pease (2002) attempted to examine individual and group properties related to collective efficacy within the sport setting. In order to adjust for individual and group correlations, researchers separated the elements into two units of analyses. The procedures developed by Kenny and La Voie (1985) allow for the computation of individual and team correlations without the influence of one unit of analysis on the other. These procedures differ from the general linear model (Jackson,
1989; Pedhazur, 1982; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991) and HLM (Zhu, 1997) because calculations are made for overall adjusted correlations, instead of examining the equivalence of regression coefficients over groups or identifying the variables contributing to correlations at individual and group levels (Zhang et al., 2002). Varsity high school male basketball players completed the Basketball Collective Efficacy Questionnaire, a design measuring individual perceptions of group competence (Zhang et al., 2002). Respondents answered a total of 48 questions on a 7-point Likert scale with answer alternatives ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Head coaches completed the Team Winning Index measuring team-winning capacity utilizing several variables including league standings and winning percentage rate (Zhang et al., 2002). Both measures were constructed by the authors of the manuscript utilizing findings from previous research (Bandura, 1977; Mischel & Northcraft, 1997; and Zaccora, Blair, Peterson, and Zazanis, 1995). Significant intercorrelations at the individual and team levels, as well as significant intraclass correlations justified the need to simultaneously study individual and group effects. Findings showed correlations at the team level increased while conversely decreased at the individual level. Comparing the adjusted coefficients with those unadjusted correlations, it appears that team efficacy may be more a function of team norm (Zhang et al., 2002). Rather, group efficacy may be more accurately assessed utilizing group, rather than individual responses.

**Related Constructs**

If it can be assumed that collective efficacy is something more than the sum of individual efficacies, then perhaps a relationship exists between additional group processes and collective efficacy (Spink, 1990). According to Bandura (1997), group cohesiveness largely reflects a team’s sense of collective efficacy through such factors as
motivation, regulation of effort and strategy of thinking. Both constructs have been positively linked to performance success and increased persistence in pursuing group tasks (Hodges & Carron, 1992). Collective efficacy fulfills the aspirational element of group cohesion in that a strong commitment to common desires and a persistent belief in the group’s ability to achieve important goals are the main influences on team performance (Mullen & Copper, 1994). Examining the relationship between group cohesion and collective efficacy, Spink (1990) found volleyball teams high in collective efficacy were found to be more cohesive than teams low in collective efficacy.

A team’s collective efficacy may also be related to individual level motivation. Perceptions of the motivational climate operating on sport teams have been shown to influence player satisfaction with team membership, intrinsic motivation, beliefs about the determinants of success, self-efficacy, and perceived functions of sport participation (Kavussanu, M. & Roberts, G.C. 1996; Treasure, 1997; Walling et al., 1993). Specifically, an environment emphasizing the importance of performance success is linked with less adaptive motivational/affective responses as opposed to one involving sport participation (Ntoumanis, N. & Biddle, S.J.H., 1999). Zander's study (1971) illustrated that groups with a strong desire for success outperformed groups with a weaker desire for success. By manipulating the perceived roles of an experimental group, Zander (1971) found those individuals placed in a central role, such as a team captain or coach, felt greater responsibility for the fate of the group, than individuals who were dependent on them. Additionally, when a group has succeeded more often than it has failed over a significant period of time, members of that group are more interested in the activity and have a stronger desire for their group to perform well (Zander, 1971). Similar
to self-efficacy, teams who perform successfully influence the perceived collective efficacy, which could then affect future behaviors directed toward group success.

Additional considerations in the study of collective efficacy involve the effect of group efficacy on teams with different skill levels. Because elite athletes must be highly skilled in order to be a team member, a strong sense of cohesion may improve beliefs about a team's potential to interact and perform successfully (Spink, 1990). However, recreational teams may be created for various personal and social reasons. Because skill is not a requisite for group membership, a high sense of cohesion will not always translate into heightened beliefs of the team's ability to perform (Spink, 1990). Therefore, reasons for a group’s formation should be considered in order to understand how efficacy may influence its members’ thoughts and actions (Bandura, 1997).

Because self-efficacy theory originated as part of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), its transference to the athletic setting deserves further examination. The sport confidence (Vealey, 1986, 2001) model adopted Bandura's (1986) theoretical framework for self-efficacy to the unique nature of the athletic setting (Vealey, 1986). Its relevance to the sport setting is further supported by the use of confidence in everyday language and as a “catchword in sports” (Bandura, 1997, p. 382). The construct, as defined by Vealey (1986), is the belief one has about being able to execute a specific task successfully to obtain a desired outcome.

Several components of Vealey’s (2001) most recent sport confidence model help to distinguish an individual's level of sport confidence: a single sport confidence construct, the inclusion of organizational culture unique to the athletic setting, and source allocation of confidence unique to sport (Vealey, Hayashi, Garner-Holman, & Giacobbi, 1998). The
inclusion of a single construct, as opposed to trait and state confidence constructs, was
designed to remove the influence of dispositional traits of individual athletes and instead
focus on the role of the kinds of situations that enhance or decrease confidence in athletes
(Vealey, 2001). Organizational culture refers to the level of competition, motivational
climate, and the goals and structural expectations of particular sport programs (Vealey,
2001). For example, teams created within a recreational environment will have different
performance expectations than a collegiate team with scholarship and coaching resources.
Similar to self-efficacy, performance accomplishments are considered an important
source of confidence. Additionally, vicarious experience, in the form of watching others
perform successfully, is considered a source influencing both self-efficacy and sport
confidence. Currently, four inventories exist that assess the sport confidence model: the
Trait Sport Confidence Inventory, the State Sport Confidence Inventory, the Competitive
Orientation Inventory, and the Sources of Sport Confidence Questionnaire (Roberts &

Based on research developed within self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1990), a four-
phase research process ensued to examine the sources of confidence unique to athletes
within the sporting context (Vealey, 2001). This research project produced the Sources of
Sport Confidence Questionnaire that identified nine sources of confidence in athletes
(SSCQ; Vealey et al., 1998). Through the process of validating the SSCQ, the authors
found that mastery, social support, physical/mental preparation (feeling physically and
mentally prepared with an optimal focus for performance), coach’s leadership, and
demonstration of ability as the top five sources of sport confidence (Vealey et al., 1998).
Considering that four of the five salient sources are conceptually similar to the efficacy
sources as proposed by Bandura (1986), it would appear that the efficacy and sport confidence constructs share a certain degree of congruence.

**Current Study Rationale**

An abundance of research surrounds group activity in sport (Spink, 1990; Watson & Chemers, 1998; Zhang et al.; 2002). Previous discussions have underscored numerous constructs interacting with Bandura’s group efficacy theory (1997). These include cohesion, motivation, sport confidence, and reasons for group formation all of which are important within the sporting context. Group efficacy stands alone, however, in its attempt to understand how cognitive processes at the individual level are influenced by social interactions within a sport context which further influence how much effort players put forth together, their ability to remain perseverant and task oriented during periods when the team is struggling, and their capability to bounce back from setbacks (Bandura, 1997). Previous research has been scrutinized because of difficulty attempting to separate individual and group influences on group efficacy beliefs (Feltz & Lirgg, 1998; Zhang et al., 2001). Existing self-efficacy measures use hierarchical, non-hierarchical, and one-item questionnaires. At the present time, these measures do not sufficiently assess efficacy at the group level. The complexity of group phenomena influences the development of these measures. Bandura (1986) notes the future success of the concept hinges upon the development of reliable measures to assess collective efficacy. Perhaps a better understanding of group efficacy can be gained using qualitative methods where the interaction between, as opposed to the separation of, individual and group components can be further explored. The question remains what research methodology can further the progression of understanding collective efficacy? Conceptual and theoretical development is necessary to evaluate the characteristics and components existing within
group efficacy. Because it has been hypothesized that efficacy beliefs may contribute to persistence, effort, choice of activities and mastery attempts (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001), future exploration of these behaviors may provide significant advancement to the field.

**Philosophical Issues Related to the Current Study**

The research methods chosen by researchers are implicitly linked to deeper philosophical issues (Martens, 1987). Therefore, the techniques chosen by the researcher should be thoroughly scrutinized for their applicability to the proposed project. When beginning the research process, two questions should be attended to: (1) what methodologies and methods will be employed and (2) how do we justify this choice (Crotty, 1998)? Because this thesis project attempted to understand team efficacy in a qualitative manner, the researcher’s motives and choices regarding the methodology deserve particular attention. Furthermore, the underlying philosophical assumptions (e.g., epistemology) guiding the research process should be clearly stated (Creswell, 2003). The following sections will outline the guiding epistemological viewpoints in the current research project.

As discussed, group efficacy is considered to be a complex phenomenon in that individual components do not completely reflect the beliefs of the group as a whole. Furthermore, the researcher’s documentation of this team is specific to the 2002-2003 playing season and explicitly involves members of the team and other important individuals in this context (e.g., coaches, administration, family). Therefore, the researcher and participants worked together as co-participants in the field.

Adopting a paradigm remains an essential component to understanding a researcher’s reasons for studying a specific phenomenon. This researcher’s chosen paradigm, or belief system, originates from social constructivism. A major tenet of this
viewpoint states that human behavior is created and thus not pre-existing. In the words of social psychologist George Herbert Mead, “every person is a social construction. We come to be persons in and out of interactions with our society” (1934). Stanley Fish, cited in Crotty (1998), described the reality of our social constructions, fittingly within a sporting context:

“Balls’ and ‘ Strikes’ are certainly socially constructed. They exist as such because of the rules of the game. Yet they are real. Some people are paid as much as $3.5 million to produce them or prevent their production. They are constructions, and may change in their nature tomorrow if the powers-that-be decide to change the rules, but they are real, nonetheless.”

The experiences of this women’s basketball team during the 2002-2003 playing season were considered real to the individuals involved. Furthermore, these occurrences were distinct to this particular place and time. Members’ beliefs were created according to the different social and playing situations happening within and surrounding the team. As the primary researcher observing the team in all of these team contexts, I was privy to specific situations and the circumstances in which they occurred. Any attempt to recreate these experiences in another context is fallible and may not accurately portray what truly occurred within the team. However, certain characteristics of this situation may generalize to other athletic contexts. Possibilities include, and are not limited to, comparisons with highly interdependent teams, gender-specific sports, and athletic contexts with varying lengths of playing seasons.

Within the research process, the chosen epistemology will provide a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and are adequate and legitimate (Maynard, 1994). This component concerns a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know (Maxwell, 1996). Constructivism, the category enveloping social constructivism, states no objective truth awaits our discovery. Instead,
meaning is constructed by the mind. In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that
different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same
phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). Thus, any findings related to this study can only be linked to
my personal interpretations of how I saw group efficacy occurring.

According to Crotty (1998), one’s ontological views are linked to their
epistemological views in order to inform the researcher’s chosen theoretical perspective.
Therefore, the researcher’s assumptions about the ensuing research, as well as the
methodology chosen, are prominent features existing within a theoretical perspective.
Although I had no prior hypotheses stated, I did have assumptions about the direction the
individual and group interviews were leading. As such, it was important that I 1) be
aware of these biases and 2) not let these postulations hinder the research process. This
reflexive process formed the foundation for my interpretations of how team efficacy
developed within this team.

**Qualitative Research**

From a social constructivist perspective, several characteristics lend themselves to
the adoption of a grounded theory or qualitative methodological approach. According to
Charmaz (1990), following a social constructionist perspective fosters creating categories
of the research participant’s beliefs and actions. In order to create these categories, the
researcher must have a firm grounding in sociological concepts without being wedded to
them (Charmaz, 1990). The research process was largely inductive where the study’s
findings were based upon particular findings from this season and in the future may be
subject to possible generalizations at a later time (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992).
Additionally, the researcher’s personal beliefs interacted with other members’
interpretations of team confidence in a reflexive manner. The socially constructed
environment created by members of the team was based on the combination of individual perspectives to form one that exists within this particular time and place. The interaction between the researcher and the data resulted in a discovery process with the eventual goal of constructing analyses. Hence, this constructionist approach offered an open-ended and flexible means of studying both fluid interactive processes and more stable social structures (Charmaz, 1990).

Numerous exploration possibilities pervade the field of collective efficacy research. However, the studies that have examined collective efficacy adopt either quantitative measures for assessment or consist of manufactured teams in a contrived athletic setting. Because the themes undermining efficacy are just beginning to emerge, a fruitful line of research includes the exploration of the salient ideas pertaining to the concept. As such, the following grounded theory approach explored the development of collective efficacy within a women’s basketball team throughout the course of a competitive season. This study examined individual, social, and contextual influences on individual and group levels of efficacy as it developed and changed throughout the course of the season. Specifically, the gathering of data through the researcher’s observations, individual and group interviews, reflexive journaling, informal conversations, and tape-recorded reflections were conducted to assess the development of the collective efficacy construct. This paper has important implications for assessing collective efficacy in several research areas, including perceptions of a team’s resiliency to failure as assessed by its team members during pivotal junctures in the season.
CHAPTER 3  
METHODS

Participants and Setting

Participants included 11 collegiate female basketball players attending a community college located in the southeastern United States. Members originated from the southern region of the country and all were classified as either collegiate freshman or sophomores. All members of the team were included in the study and ages of players ranged from 18-21 years (M=19.26). Racial demographics of the team included 6 African-Americans, 3 Caucasians and 2 players of Latin-American descent. Years of basketball experience varied greatly among players, ranging from 10 years to less than 4 years of competitive experience. Many players fulfilled pivotal roles within their high school teams (e.g., Most Valuable Player, Team Captain, Best Defense, Hustle Award) and earned recognition for exceptional play (e.g., Tournament MVPs; All-County and All-State Honors). All members received athletic funding for their participation and thus were considered “scholarship-athletes.”

Procedure

For the purposes of this thesis project, I utilized group and individual interviews as the primary source of data. These methods were guided by the work of Charmaz (1990, 2002) and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998). In addition, other forms of information were included (e.g., media artifacts, game statistics, and observational data). These methods and procedures will be discussed in an upcoming section.
Trust and Rapport Building Procedures

This qualitative study utilized a grounded theory (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) approach to explore the development and maintenance of group efficacy with all members of a highly interdependent sports team. Because the researcher and members of this team acted as co-participants in the field, the intimate familiarity shared between the researcher and team members was considered of utmost importance (Lofland, 1984). In order to establish rapport with the players, the researcher assumed a volunteer coaching role with the team. As such, the researcher was present for every home game and approximately 80% of the team’s away games. Additionally, the researcher observed team practices throughout the season. Previous experience as a collegiate player and university instructor in the specified sport contributed to the accuracy of the researcher’s perceptions of experiences occurring within the team. In addition to offering expertise, the situation allowed the researcher to form relationships with players in order to facilitate the building of trust. Finally, all participants received information about their rights as research participants and informed consent procedures were followed throughout the entire investigation (See Appendix E). These steps were taken in order to ensure reliability of data sources, including members’ interview responses.

Interview Procedures

The head coach for the community college team was contacted and permission was granted to interview individual players for the purposes of this project. Participants received information concerning the study rationale, the use of interview data, and issues of confidentiality prior to the start of each individual interview. The necessity of tape recording each interview was also explained as was the future examination of interviews in the transcription process. These steps, in addition to the specified coaching role taken
by the interviewer, contributed to the trust building process between the researcher and the participants (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

**Group Interviews**

A series of group interviews were conducted to examine individual and collective beliefs involving efficacy occurring within the team. Two pilot group interviews were conducted, one during the first week of preseason training and a second during the first week of the regular season. The purposes of these pilot group interviews were to establish trust and rapport with the participants and to refine the existing interview guide (See Appendix A). Prior to each group interview, team members were gathered and interview procedures were reiterated including issues of confidentiality and anonymity. During the first interview, players responded to open-ended questions involving team confidence levels, perceived team characteristics and efficacy sources. The initial team interview lasted approximately forty minutes\(^1\).

The second group interview allowed the researcher to review individual interview responses from the first group interview. Also discussed were any discrepancies existent in the recorded interviews in an effort to seek clarification. The second interview lasted approximately sixty minutes. Both group interviews were tape-recorded. Additionally, the second group interview was video-recorded in order to assign voice recognition to appropriate members and to observe individuals within the group environment. These responses were then expanded upon in order to gain a thorough understanding of the relationship existing between individual and group efficacy beliefs occurring prior to the competitive season.

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\(^1\) It should be noted the researcher experienced “technical difficulties” when videotaping the initial group interview. A tape recorder was used to retain participant responses for subsequent transcription purposes.
A third group interview occurred following the conclusion of the competitive playing season. Players were assembled to reflect upon the team’s past experiences and to discuss current efficacy beliefs. This interview occurred upon the completion of the individual player interviews and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Responses from the postseason interview served as a method of constant comparison between different players as well as various experiences that occurred throughout the year (See Glossary of Terms).

**Individual Interviews**

A series of individual player interviews allowed for comparisons between player responses along differing time contexts. The individual player interview guides (See Appendices C and D) were developed in conjunction with existing research examining collective and group efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Feltz & Lirgg, 1998). Open-ended questions involving player’s efficacy beliefs and probes were administered at the discretion of the researcher in order to facilitate question understanding and answer clarification. The duration of individual interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 1 hour. After completion of the interview, all interviews were transcribed verbatim and a brief summary of the interviewer’s observations were made available to respondents in order to clarify researcher’s interpretations of players’ statements. This procedure served as a member check (See e.g., Sparkes, 1998).

**The Use of a Reflexive Journal**

In addition to individual and group interviews, the primary researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the data collection process in which reflections concerning personal observations, conversations, and game scenarios were recorded. This method
lays a paper-trail for later scrutiny by external researchers and further public examination (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992).

**Grounded Theory Data Analytic Procedures**

According to Charmaz (2000), grounded theory permits the initial research questions to be concrete and descriptive, but the researcher can develop deeper analytic questions by studying his or her data. This approach to theory development includes, but is not limited to, observations, conversations, formal interviews, public records, respondents’ diaries and journals, and researcher’s tape-recorded reflections (Charmaz, 2000). Therefore, multiple strategies exist to re-create the socially constructed world of the participant(s). This technique allows the researcher to offer “analytic explanations of actual problems and basic processes in the research setting” (Charmaz, 2000). This inductive process was adopted for the purposes of this study. The interview procedures are discussed below (as stated in Giacobbi, Hausenblas, Fallon & Hall, 2002).

1. The first author transcribed all tape-recorded individual and group interviews. The purpose of this transcription process is to provide written documentation of the players’ experiences with the inclusion of specific terminology and language as spoken by the participants. It should be noted the researcher is not able to analyze data through this process.

2. Individual and group interview transcriptions were further evaluated by a research group consisting of individuals knowledgeable in grounded theory processes. These researchers initiated a theme coding process, similar to the one instigated by the primary researcher, as a method of analyzing the data. This process included a line-by-line coding of the interview text and developed raw data themes in the form of quotations from the participants (Charmaz, 2000). Comparisons were made between the primary researcher’s understanding of interview responses and those made by the research group. Upon agreement, the relevant themes underscoring the development of group efficacy were visually represented in figure format.

3. Throughout the line-by-line coding process, a form of “sensitizing concepts” guided the researchers’ interpretations for the emerging theory of group efficacy. These “points of departure” from which future analysis can evolve include previous group efficacy research and additional forms of group interactions (Charmaz, 2000,
In addition, research pertaining to self-efficacy and sport confidence is also considered.

4. Upon completion of the line-by-line coding process, the text then underwent a constant comparative method whereby similarities and differences in the participants’ responses were fully explored (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). While this progression allowed for the consolidation of analogous themes, the coding process also allowed irrelevant categories to be discarded. Further analysis of these codes allowed for the comparisons of different people, comparisons of the same people at different points in time, comparisons of incidents, comparison of data and category, and comparison of one category with other categories in existence (Glaser, 1978). After identifying these initial codes, otherwise referred to as tags (Cote, Salmela & Baria, 1993), those with similar meanings were assembled together with a label capturing the substance of the topic (Miles & Huberman, 1984). This process permits the creation of categories that depict the information subsumed by the initial tags (Cote et al., 1993).

5. Once the raw data themes have been extracted from the text, these units of analysis were then placed into more general and abstract dimensions through the process of axial and open coding (see Glossary of Terms for further explanation). The purpose of these procedures is “to make researchers’ emerging theories denser, more complex, and more precise” (Charmaz, 2000 p.515).

6. The research group played an intricate part in the development of theory as these members questioned the researcher’s observations and interpretations of the interview text (Dale, 1996). For instance, research meetings involved two members reading aloud the interview text where each individual played the role of interviewer or participant. By playing the role of “devil’s advocate” (Dale, 1996), this group served as a form of validation for the researcher’s interpretations throughout the analysis process.

The researcher’s previous experiences and present role within the sport setting undoubtedly influenced the analysis of interview text. As such, the adoption of grounded theory procedures allowed the researcher’s previous beliefs to aid in the development of new theories emerging from the data (Charmaz, 1990). Every effort was made to assimilate the actual experiences of the participants with those of the researcher’s interpretations. The emerging framework from these interpretations formulated a theory concerning the formation and development of group efficacy.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of inductive analyses that resulted from individual player and team interviews. Information from these interviews was organized into two conceptual frameworks that represented the major influence on the team’s efficacy during the 2002-2003 playing season. Appendix F shows the themes produced from the preseason interviews while Appendix G represents the themes produced from the postseason interviews. The frameworks were constructed such that raw data themes (the most basic units) are categorized in more abstract groups (first order themes) and finally described in terms of general dimensions of team efficacy. Then, a grounded theory was developed that demonstrated how the various sources of efficacy influenced team interaction across the length of the season (See Appendix H).

Player Biographies

The following labels and member descriptions are intended to provide the reader with background information concerning the specific individuals involved in the creation and development of efficacy within this team. In addition, these labels should aid the reader in separating member perceptions as displayed by the quotes throughout Chapters 4 and 5.

Player A: 2nd year veteran residing within the state; developed scholarship status this season after maintaining “walk-on” status the previous season. This member played the point guard position and was considered a role player who relieved those members receiving more playing minutes during games.
**Player B:** 2
d year veteran residing within the state; recruited to play for the community college. She was elected team captain by team peers and played a significant role as a starting guard expected to contribute leadership and offensive skills to the program.

**Player C:** 1
st year player returning to the state after attending high school in another state. As one of the few post players on the team, this player found her role and playing minutes significantly increased due to the season-ending injury occurring to a fellow teammate.

**Player D:** 2
nd year player residing within the state. Prior to the start of the school year, this guard transferred from another successful community college program within the conference. She cited lack of playing time and problems within player/coach dynamics as reasons for the transfer.

**Player E:** 1
st year player residing in a neighboring state; one of the first players recruited to play for the college by the newly hired coach. This post player was a significant contributor to the team’s efforts as she was the first substitute coming off the bench during games. She was one of the few players to publicly announce her homosexual orientation.

**Player F:** 2
nd year player residing within the state; played a significant role as a starting post player until a knee injury unexpectedly ended her season. She returned to the team after surgery as a vocal leader during practice and games.

**Player G:** 1
st year player and former in-state high school teammate of Player B. This member was a significant contributor at the point guard position until her early departure from the team during Christmas break. Upon returning to the team, this player’s
contributions to the team were lessened as observed through decreased playing time and individual efforts.

**Player H:** 1st year player residing within the state; recruited to play for the college. This member was a significant contributor as a starting post player throughout the season. Her athleticism, strong work ethic and vocal leadership led to her election as the only freshman team captain.

**Player I:** 1st year player residing within the state; recruited to play for the college. This member was initially hesitant during practice and games but continued to improve as the season progressed. She became a regular starter and focal point of the team’s offensive strategy, as well as a member who added humor to the group atmosphere.

**Player J:** 1st year player residing within the state; was a late addition to the team. This member played significant minutes at the point guard position until poor academics during the first semester created her ineligible status for the remainder of the season. She continued to practice and attend all team functions as her membership status did not change. Despite the disappointing situation, this player continued to practice with high levels of intensity and became a vocal leader during games.

**Player K:** 2nd year player residing within the state. This member was considered the most dominant team player as modeled by her level of play and vocal capabilities. As a starting guard, she was expected to be an offensive threat as a scorer and primary ballhandler. She also acted as a liason between the players and coaches as she often voiced the information/concerns of these two sides.
Sources of Team Efficacy of a Women’s Basketball Team

The main purposes of this study were to explore the formation and development of team efficacy within a community college women’s basketball team. As shown in Appendix F, the inductive analysis revealed three general dimensions that influenced preseason team efficacy beliefs: (a) team exchanges, (b) preseason training and (c) positive leadership influence. The influences perceived by players as being positive (+) and negative (-) are labeled in Appendices F and G. Further analysis of the general dimensions, including representative player quotes, will be discussed in the following sections.

Preseason Interviews

Team exchanges(-). Fifteen raw order themes defined the general dimension of team exchanges between team members. Individual and team interviews described this general dimension in terms of perceived concerns about the number and intensity of team obligations. These expectations required members to participate collectively in most, if not all, of the team activities. The raw data themes emerging from this dimension were primarily based on perceptions that “we’re always together all the time” and “we are spending too much time together.” With regard to specific activities, scholastic duties where expectations of “three or four study halls so our whole day is occupied” and living situations where “you just get frustrated with your roommates to the point that you just don’t want to be there” appeared to influence player interaction off the court. Additional team interactions also appeared to unfavorably influence efficacy beliefs: “I think we had so many demands to be these ideal athletes and community citizens, we had so many commitments.” For some members, the living situation proved taxing: “I don’t really hang out with them because I don’t think we have anything in common…”. Furthermore,
some people [teammates] liked each other and some people [teammates] were dating each other, that probably wasn’t good.” Further analysis defined the category of team exchanges into the following first order themes: living arrangements, school requirements, team activities and social interactions. Players perceived these themes as negatively impacting the team due to the number and array of expectations these activities incorporated. Members expressed the unfavorable emotions felt for other team members would be lessened if given the opportunity; however, the required time commitment made this ideal situation difficult. Therefore, the negative team exchanges experienced off the court then emerged throughout other group interactions. The four first order themes will now be discussed in more detail.

**Living arrangements**(-). The twelve scholarship players were required to reside in a nearby apartment complex with designated teammates assigned by the head coach. Thus, many members of the team shared dual teammate/roommate roles. Many players perceived this situation as negatively impacting the team. For example, Player H described her inability to stay situated within an assigned apartment, specifically citing her roommates’ cleanliness issues and wanting to socialize with those unaffiliated with the team as her main reasons for escape.

I don’t live in my apartment. I don’t know, I don’t even like being over there…you just get frustrated with your roommates to the point that you just don’t want to be there. I have no problem with my roommates, it’s just that I’m a very clean person so I don’t like when someone’s nasty and when you tell them repeatedly and they don’t care so why should I care? I’m not going to clean up after you, that’s how I feel. You left your Momma at home so if you want her to clean up, you call her to come out here and clean up . . . Most of the people who did everything together, they don’t live together. It’s like everyone lives in different apartments . . . everybody has their little people they hang out with. In season, you have to be around them because you see them all the time. I talk to my teammates but I don’t just sit around and hang out with people, hang out with the ones I could care less about cause they want to do stuff that’s ridiculous.
In addition, the actions of team members during “free time” proved unfavorable to those roommates not participating in these selected activities. For instance, one apartment received alcohol fines by their landlord for underage drinking. Those members not participating in the illegal activity were also subject to punishment. Due to these events, some members expressed interest in finding a living environment separated from teammates as voiced by Player D.

And living together? That’s another thing. If I wasn’t on scholarship and I didn’t live with them [teammates]. You know, even if I am on scholarship and I was like Joan and getting to live somewhere else, I would choose that. I would honestly choose that because I am in an environment where I can’t win. No matter what I do, no matter if I’m sitting in my room being innocent, I’m still guilty because I’m in the room. I’m in that house and that, how fair is that to me? That’s not fair to me at all and so, outside of basketball, no, no relationship with anybody on the team at all.

The effects of the living situation appeared to surface in the home environment, but also within the playing environment. Events that would occur on the court would be transferred to situations occurring at home and vice-versa. Player E described the consequences of the alcohol punishments as they appeared to influence the team within several contexts.

At first we started off good but I think it’s because nobody knew each other and we were just getting to know each other. Then we just recently had a huge confrontation on the team that is kind of over and kind of not. And, um, right now everybody would say like, our team, we started off everybody got along really good and I don’t know what happened. But now, it’s like everybody has these two people they can’t stand so it cause a lot of arguments and stuff on the team. Like at home we fight a lot.

School requirements(-). Similarly, academic demands appeared to provide another adverse example of time shared together between teammates. This is illustrated through the number of mutual classes and study halls players were required to attend. One player described her perceptions of the unfair expectations placed on her teammates: “I feel like
some of the people on our team, they have like three or four study halls or whatever. I know it sounds like I’m exaggerating, but they have their whole day occupied.”

In addition, a daily routine developed in which members were interacting in numerous environments including those related to home, school, and basketball. Many players described these activities in relation to everyday “chores.” For instance, the following member illustrated the breakdown of these requirements and the adverse effect they created between teammate/roommate relationships.

I see them in the morning in the cafeteria and I see them at school. Then we go back to the apartment and I see them there you know. And I see them when we come back to the apartment and I see them there you know. And I see them when we come back from the gym. I see them in study hall from 1:30-3:30. We all come back in the locker room from 3:30-4 and we go to practice from 4-6:30. And then depending on what night it is depends on what we eat. You know we go back to the apartments and it’s 7:30 or 8 and we’ll still see them. And then you just kinda, like I’ll go in my room and shut my door and I can still hear them. Because the walls are so thin and they’ll be so loud next door. I can still hear Lisa and all them. I mean it doesn’t really bother me, but I just gotta get some of my own space sometimes cause I see them so much.

Social interactions(-). In addition to the interactions already mandated by the nature of shared residence, academics and sport, the team environment fostered the unexpected development of various cross-cultural and sexual issues occurring within the team. Team members chose to engage in various sexual activities with one another and the emotions culminating from these experiences in turn influenced teammate/roommate interactions. Player E explained her views concerning the various activities engaged by her teammates and their overall effect on team relationships.

I think with certain people that was negative, and with two people in general, it wasn’t…Everybody knows about Julie and Jenny. I didn’t have a problem with that, everything else that was going on . . . I had a big problem with that. There was just a big circle of people doing what they didn’t need to be doing with teammates just for the heck of it and I didn’t like that at all. Cause that caused problems and they got mad and you’re talking to her and you’re not talking to me. This is ridiculous, I didn’t like that.
Although some members chose to engage in these activities, other members separated themselves from the previously mentioned behaviors. These members experienced personal discomfort of how to handle teammate interactions, and responded with various coping strategies. Specifically, Player B chose to join in alcohol consumption with other members not participating in team relations, and then in contradicting fashion expressed certainty that the sexual activities had little effect on the team as a whole.

We’re just going to sit here and drink because everybody was gay. We didn’t hang out with them. It would be me, Janet, Joyce . . . and that was it. Us five, the five white girls basically. They didn’t care, it’s just not what they did. I don’t think it hindered the team. I don’t think it did anything. I think it affected them in a positive way and it didn’t affect them in a negative way. It was just something that happened.

Players discussed the role of racial divisions between the African-American and Caucasian team members. This separation was most evident in the social environment, including roommate interaction and “free time” activities. Player G, a Caucasian member, expressed discomfort while watching a television program critical of her race.

They’re just, pretty much everybody is an acquaintance to me except for Jenny, Joyce and Sheila. Everybody else, I just see them on the court. But the other people I named, I know them. But I try not to let that bother me. I’m just here to do my job and not try to make friends with them. I’m not going out of my way to hang out with them cause I don’t want to. I mean, I could have pretended to enjoy BET and laugh at the T.V. about something that’s not funny, making cracks about white people.

Preseason training(+). The general dimension of preseason training consisted of six raw data themes that included influences of “noticeable muscle tone” and the capability of “running gassers successfully” that culminated in “feeling in better shape.” Many members had little or no previous experience with a preseason basketball conditioning program and this resulted in some skepticism from the players. Upon
observing visible body and cardiovascular results, the conditioning program was received favorably by team members: “I liked it because it got me strong. I like muscles.”

Specifically, team members discussed the significance of the elected team captains during the preseason conditioning. “We were all out of shape and we just didn’t think we could do it, but [Player K] would say something like, ‘Come on girls, we can do it’ and then everyone else would start doing it.’ Further analysis of the preseason training defined this category into two first order themes: conditioning program and modeling.

**Conditioning program (+).** Preseason interviews revealed players interpreted the conditioning program as the most prominent positive influence on team efficacy. Because the majority of players distinguished these conditioning sessions as positively affecting the team, the elevated efficacy beliefs experienced during this time were not surprising. For instance, Player H reported the influence of verbal collaboration between team members concerning the successful completion of timed sprints, otherwise referred to as “gassers.”

During the conditioning ‘cause it was really hard and sometimes we didn’t really feel like doing it. Some days . . . it’s not even the workout part, it was the end part. We had to motivate each other to get through those gassers, they are really, really hard. They are really, really tiring. That’s the part I think when everybody had a lot of confidence in each other, boosting each other up.

Furthermore, as the preseason progressed, the expectations for the number of “gassers” completed also increased. As the team continued to achieve or surpass these goals, efficacy among members continued to rise. Player K expressed her thoughts concerning preseason success and its influence on the ensuing regular season.

I mean, we basically did like a month, I wouldn’t say hell, but physically it felt like hell. Even though you were accomplishing something, it wasn’t that mental thing that got to you, it was that physical thing that you felt. And I think when we had to do five gassers at the beginning of the season, we were like, “you gotta be playing with me!”’, that’s like forty down and backs or something. So we took it for
granted, I think at the end of the season when we already knew we had moved up to two, we did three, we did four, we came into that thing in like, if we did four, we're going to do five, we can do this you know. And I think everybody pulled through and we did those five and after that knowing at the beginning, we were doubting ourselves... and then to do that, that was real cool. I think we were hyped about getting to practice, but we're not a team that just shows how excited we are... I mean that kinda like, things like that, we was like dang, we made it we can do anything with that cause those five gassers, those gassers will kill you. So that was kinda, confidence was a really good thing and everybody was picking each other up so if you were down, you were going to get up, you know. So that’s cool too.

Many players used the preseason success as a source for high expectations in the regular season. For instance, some members discussed the team achievement as a method of comparing themselves against upcoming opponents. Player B described the team’s successful completion of wind sprints in relation to potential future team performance.

We’ll be in good shape compared to some of our other teams because we were working so hard and during preseason we gave it all we had, wanting that it could only get better. It can’t get worse I don’t think. Cause you’ve worked so hard, now all of a sudden you’re going to be out of shape in two days? No. So working that hard will pay off in the end because we’ll be able to go harder, longer then maybe some other teams.

**Modeling(+)**. In addition to observing physical benefits during the pre-season conditioning, players cited the dialogue between team members during these practice sessions as positively influencing efficacy beliefs. The initial encouragement of one teammate would transfer to other team members, thus contributing to a positive team performance. Player H believed this phenomenon was noticed by all members as everyone shared in the emotional experience.

Once one person starts to talk it up and then cheers and then everybody else starts jumping in then we all start getting motivated, saying we can do this, we can do this. We just get confidence in ourselves and we just pull through it together as a team, not like by one person. Everybody starts jumping and cheering and pushing each other along.

In addition, members described the influence team captains’ modeling practices had on preseason conditioning performance. Especially for those players who were new
to the program and its expectations, the vocal support of veteran players during the strenuous conditioning practices was appreciated. For Player C, the ability of a captain to motivate the remaining players inevitably contributed to the team’s cardiovascular improvement.

Team confidence, um... maybe at the beginning when we were doing conditioning. Yeah, I really think in the beginning when we were doing conditioning. We were all out of shape and we just didn’t think we could do it, but [Player K] would say something like, “Come on girls, we can do it” and then everyone else would start doing it...And so, I think at the beginning we were all together and just trying our best to get in shape, to push each other and get in shape too.

**Positive leadership influence (+).** Nine raw data themes emerged from preseason interviews involving the role of positive leadership on team efficacy beliefs. Those members holding influential power within the team (e.g., coaches, captains) appeared to sway the beliefs of the team as a whole. Preseason player interviews cited the hiring of a first-year collegiate coach as a significant influence on efficacy beliefs. Specifically, returning players noted the difference between the management of the previous year’s team and how the present team was organized: “I think it was positive because the coach before us couldn’t get the job done and try new things.” Many players cited the coach’s encouraging attitude as contributing to the optimistic atmosphere surrounding the program. For instance, one member felt the program benefited from the new coach and credited the attitude of the new coaches as the main reason: “the coaching style and the coaching staff this year will be better ‘cause it brings positive attitude to the whole team.” Furthermore, the coaching style, especially in regards to the head coach’s ability to relate to team members, appeared, early in the season, to positively influence efficacy beliefs. In particular, the coach’s previous experience as a collegiate player, as well as her understanding of a “woman’s point of view” contributed to the positive judgments
adopted by team members. Further analysis defined the category of positive leadership influence into the first-order themes of (a) positive attitude and (b) positive coaching style.

**Positive attitude**(+). Specific to the preseason, players perceived the coach’s encouraging language and supportive actions as helping to create a positive outlook surrounding the team. Most notably, veteran players familiar with the previous season’s coach expressed excitement with the coaching change. As Player K attests, the ability of the new coach to effectively interact with players contributed to their willingness to seek her for meaningful relationships.

... when you go in the coach’s office last year was more like you go in the coach’s office to a person that already had her mind made up and no matter what you said it was going to be that way. So it was almost like you’re talking to a brick wall with rules, this is how it’s gonna be done. You can tell me whatever you want but I’m not gonna respond. I’ll take it in but this is how it’s gonna be regardless. I feel like I can go in the coach’s office, she may not agree, she may not say yeah you’re right or whatever, but at least it sunk in you know. And she’s taking it into consideration whatever you said. She may not agree or change anything but at least she gave it a chance before she just shut the door in your face. So it’s better than going in and opening up you know. I’m not a person that opens up to anyone really a lot. So, just the type of person she is makes it easier for you to go in there and open up and tell her things.

In comparison to previous coach/player relationships, some members of the team appreciated a “woman’s point of view” as opposed to those stereotypical of being male. Specifically, the following community college transfer (Player D) discussed her impressions of the new coach in relation to her previous community college male coaches.

... and then I talked to Coach Barnes and she seemed like a more understanding coach and I thought hey, maybe a woman coach would be better because I’ve had male coaches my whole life and they can’t relate to a female like a female can relate to a female.
New team members were made aware of the positive differences in the program, mainly from conversations with veteran players. Four current players were present for the former season and relayed many of these experiences to the freshman entering the program. Player F echoed the sentiments expressed by many team members as she perceived the coaching change as positive, and thus a source for increased efficacy beliefs emerged.

She’s already like completely turned everything around, like completely different than last year. Like way more organized, way more structure, she’s gonna turn it around. She’s gonna turn the program around I think.

**Coaching style(+)**. Players also cited the teaching style of the first-year coach as a positive influence, specifically citing previous playing experience and coaching ability as factors that contributed to these beliefs. For players familiar with last season’s team, the new coach’s ability to relate her past playing experiences to the present situation proved invaluable. Players perceived the previous coach as lacking this expertise. For instance, the new coach purchased new clothing for the team (e.g., socks, shorts, sports bras) in addition to the mandated team jerseys and shorts. The coach’s previous playing experiences informed her of the need for extra gear. Furthermore, as Player D explained, the desire of the new coach to return to the basketball environment in a coaching capacity contributed to her positive beliefs about the season.

Coach Barnes to me is . . . the only thing I like about her is that she wants to be the best, like she has the same aspect to me as that you can’t ever be the best, you know. Like you can keep working on it, but you can never be the best, you can never be perfect but it’s all about all the things you do to get to that point. Which you know it’s never gonna get there, but still, you still try. So like, just knowing that she’s played basketball and she’s played for a good team and she played good, you know. That’s in the past but still, for her to come back and want to give back to other female basketball players who want to be something.
The influence of the new coach emerged in areas outside of the basketball environment. Because of her strong educational background as a former elementary school teacher, player academics were considered a main focal point. Consequently, players were subject to frequent study halls and GPA requirements. Although some players voiced initial disproval over these mandated activities, Player E felt these requirements were beneficial to their student existence.

I think the coaches are actually doing a good job because I like the study halls and stuff because I think if we didn’t have those, and having us write down homework and stuff, then we wouldn’t do it. So I like that.

Postseason Interviews

Christmas/semester break. The general dimension of Christmas/semester break consisted of six raw data themes described by team members as hurting team efficacy beliefs. Overall, efficacy beliefs were maintained throughout the preseason, remained relatively stable throughout the pre-conference game season, and then decreased upon returning from the 10-day Christmas break.

Member loss(-). Players perceived the five-player loss accrued during this time period as impairing efficacy beliefs. Those members returning from the Christmas break unexpectedly found several players had left or been removed from the team. Several of these former members played pivotal roles within the team during the pre-conference season (e.g., starting roles, played significant minutes). In addition to the loss of teammates in the sport environment, the circumstances also created change within the living environment. For instance, after the Christmas break one former member continued to retain personal belongings at the apartment residence, yet rarely participated in roommate activities. Within the basketball setting, member loss resulted in fewer practice and game participants. This loss was perceived by players as detrimental to the
team. For instance, Player E described the decreased team efficacy beliefs throughout the season in relation to the loss of important team members.

Everybody’s morale went down big time cause we were like ‘oh my gosh’, we started off with 15 players and we’re down . . . every week we were losing somebody and by the end, we’re going to end up with five players . . . We’re not going to have any players and how are we going to work with this many players? And Coach didn’t play everybody and they just weren’t working hard at all and that hurt the team a lot, losing players.

Those members initially providing minimal game contribution found their roles changing due to the aforementioned member loss. Some players interpreted this situation as a positive (e.g, more playing time), yet also recognized the larger impact the departures had on the team as a whole as further expressed by Player A.

But I think our bench was pretty strong, like we had a lot of people on the bench who could give them a rest. I think that worked out pretty good until the end of the season when people started dropping, it was a lot harder . . . Probably on paper you could tell it hurt the team because our record went down a lot more. We only won one game the rest of the season and there was a good 3 or 4 people that were playing a lot of minutes that we lost and maybe not everyone played in the beginning that didn’t have the experience in the beginning and they didn’t get the job done there as well in the beginning of the season.

Players who watched from the sidelines due to injury or academic ineligibility were also aware of the impact member loss had on team efficacy beliefs. For instance, Player F suffered a season-ending knee injury during the last game prior to Christmas break. As an observant from the sidelines, her interpretations of decreasing team efficacy matched the thoughts of those members still involved in the playing environment.

. . . when we beat JBCJ. That’s when team confidence was pretty high because it wasn’t before Christmas. It was low before Christmas because we were losing a lot to teams we should have been beating. And then at the end, when we came back from Christmas it wasn’t that good because I was out, Susie was ineligible and we had some people quit.

**Minimal exercise requirements(-).** In addition to loss of team members, the Christmas break proved detrimental to players returning for the remainder of the season.
Many members used this time away from the team as an excuse to alter daily school and exercise routines. For instance, Player G described the break as an opportunity to not exercise and instead engage in unhealthy eating habits: “Everybody went home, got fat and got out of shape, came back and did we even win any games after Christmas? . . . It went downhill from there.”

Some players claimed that an “I don’t care attitude developed after the Christmas break and this mood appeared to linger for the remainder of the season. Specifically, Player K cited the indifferent attitude of another teammate and how it resonated throughout the remaining players and ensuing team performances.

But then we had break and came back and we thought we had our heads together but people would talk. “I just want to get this over with”, you know. And a bad apple can spoil the whole bunch. Slowly but surely, it wore out everybody else. There was this nonchalant feeling like, “I don’t care if we win or lose, let’s just get it over with.”

**Team performance.** Sixteen raw data themes emerged from postseason interviews describing the influence of the team’s performance record in determining efficacy beliefs.

The majority of responses credited the win/loss record for changes in team beliefs. In addition, members interpreted player interactions between one another, coaches, and the relaxing of effective modeling practices as negative influences. These observations were evident in both the practice and game playing environments.

**Wins/losses(-).** All team members cited efficacy as a fluctuating phenomenon, largely dependent upon the team’s win/loss record. The following testimonial by Player A illustrated the beliefs expressed by many players that concerned the role of the win/loss record.

I think pretty much in the beginning half of the season it was looking kinda rough and everyone started to get down and then we came back from Christmas and we were missing key people and that kinda brought people down. Like we came back
and won our first conference game and that brought everyone up again but after we started losing a couple more everyone just started going down. They didn’t think we were going to do this I guess.

Player K cited the previously mentioned “I don’t care” attitude that developed within the team as a consequence of the win/loss record. She felt that the effort and talent on the team were present but the losses continued. These components appeared to substantiate the fluctuating beliefs many members noted developing within the team.

We weren’t winning as many games as we thought we should in the beginning and it kinda bottomed out a little bit but then it bottomed down and then eventually got back up. Like in the middle of the season we started winning a few games and kinda got our confidence back. But then conference came and we started off horrible with our first game but then we won our second game and we thought we were pretty much going to get it together because we basically did everything we should. So we deserved to win but then it happened again. We kinda like drifted off and everybody was like, oh well and accepted defeat. So it was a big rollercoaster the whole time.

While the majority of team members believed team confidence varied throughout the season, some players stated the experience occurred only in the preseason and then dropped, never to return to previous form. The losses also contributed to conflict within the team, based largely on where the blame for losing should be placed. Player E specifically cited the team conflict as a significant contributor to team performance.

I am pretty disappointed because we started off really excited, we were playing as a team, and I don’t know, we started losing and it got bad. And everyone was blaming everybody else. There was fighting and arguing. I think because we kept that up instead of coming together, then we lost the rest of our games.

For Player G, the experience of playing basketball at the collegiate level was not congruent with personal expectations for college athletics. After a momentary exit from the team at Christmas, she formally left the team at the season’s conclusion. She specifically cited the lack of wins as reason for her departure.

I don’t remember the wins feelings. I remember the SVCJ win, our last win, when I hit the lay-up. And that felt great because it was a conference game . . . we made
history. I don’t remember the last time (we) won a conference game. So I think that’s why it was so big that we won that game. But after losing, I don’t think it really bothered anyone . . . it bothered people inside a little bit but it was just easy to let go . . . It probably just got that way, I don’t think it was that way all along. My plan wasn’t to come here and lose. I’ve never been on a losing team until I came here . . . (winning) would have made it a lot more fun. Who knows? If I were on a winning team, maybe I would have been doing a lot better, I don’t know.

Modeling(-). Postseason interviews revealed players perceived the modeling practices, specific to those members with influential power within the team, as a negative influence on team performance. Although this theme initially emerged as a positive influence, the relaxing of these duties was apparent to players and coaches alike. These components appeared to emerge in a cyclical fashion where observations of this maladaptive behavior in both practice and game arenas would influence subsequent team performance. Results of these performances in turn would determine the actions and emotions expressed by team members. Because the majority of game performances resulted in negative outcomes, subsequent player attitudes were also negative as discussed by Player G.

We talked about the game after the game sometimes. But most of the time, like me, I would talk about it for like 5 minutes then it would be over with. I don’t like the whole grudges thing with wins and losses . . . some people came in with bad attitudes at practice after a game. I mean, we’re females, every female has a bad attitude now and then. It’s just the way it goes.

The unsuccessful team performances resulted in perceptions that some team members were playing selfishly. Player A described these events occurring in a domino effect where the futile on court behavior of one member would cause similar attempts by others on the team. These acts resulted in a singular, instead of a collective approach, to game strategy.

I think a lot of people tried to do it on their own or when we got down enough, one person would just start taking the ball, the next person’s gonna get mad cause they
never got the ball. Then everybody’s like, well I’m just gonna take it and then as a
team, we never worked together. We just tried to be all individuals.

**Practice(-).** Although team performance within the competitive arena was
repeatedly mentioned as a strong influence on team efficacy, the events that occurred
during practice appeared to also affect member beliefs. The monotony of practice drills,
in combination with perceptions of minimal effort, was perceived to influence subsequent

| team performance. For those members unable to contribute in game situations (e.g.,
academic ineligibility), practice sessions were their only chance to actively participate in
team activity. Player D described the team’s attitude and its effect on subsequent game
performance.

I mean, what you do in practice, it shows in the game. So the lack of interest
showed in practice showed in the game of how they didn’t want to listen and it just
rubbed off into the game. So that’s why I think we lost a lot of our games ‘cause
they didn’t want to listen to what the coach had to say.

The relaxed effort in practice was evident to team members, but also to the
coaching staff. The coaches’ attempts to stimulate team spirit were apparently
unsuccessful. Because the team was reduced to a minimal number of eligible players at
the end of the season, many members understood their playing roles would not be
reduced despite personal decreases in effort. Player E illustrated this point in describing
the coach’s futile attempt to arouse members’ efforts during practice:

... every week we were losing somebody and by the end, we’re going to end up
with five players. And we kind of took that as a reason not to work hard. I think
that’s why we stopped working hard. I mean there were practices when we didn’t
even work hard. I remember the practice when Coach kicked us out of the gym.
That was kind of funny. People just didn’t want to work hard anymore.

**Previous experience(-).** The amount of playing experience of team members
varied according to freshman/sophomore eligibility status. With the addition of one
transfer player, five sophomores had previous community college competition
experience. The remaining six players were not familiar with the league’s playing environment. Upon reflection, veteran players admitted that as the year progressed, the disappointing experiences of the previous season negatively impacted efficacy beliefs. With initial conference losses, players referenced back to the previous season’s losing record as a source for present beliefs about the team’s playing performance. As Player E attests, the culmination of numerous losses resulted in a decrease in team efficacy.

Cause we were just starting and we knew we were really good and we were really excited to start the year and everything. Once we were ready to start the conference, it went down because everybody was like, last year JBCC wasn’t that good in the conference and this year’s going to be really hard. So they were like I don’t know about the conference, especially after we lost to East Central. They were like, I don’t know about the conference. And after we beat ECJJ, our confidence went really high. And we were really disappointed when we lost conference games after that game when we knew we should have won.

Because newcomers had not yet experienced community college competition, their initial efficacy beliefs were based solely on the pre-competition experience (e.g., pre-season conditioning, pick-up games with other teammates). Many players expressed feelings of apprehension after initial conference losses. The reactions of the freshman and sophomores contributed to the team’s inability to recover and improve as Player C stated during a postseason interview. Instead, the losses continued throughout the conference season.

I think everybody believed it because we had a good team, it was like they just got scared once we started playing competition and that’s what basketball is. Cause we could have beat so many of these teams but it’s like they got scared. I don’t understand it…I will say it was at the beginning when we really wasn’t playing anybody that our confidence was high.

**Observed Changes in Team Efficacy Throughout the Season**

The majority of players entered the pre-season with a freshman student/playing status. As such, many team members had yet to endure experiences characteristic of
college scholastics and athletics (i.e., living away from home, managing course schedules, increased competition). Once players had established regular living patterns, the Christmas break provided team members with an opportunity to break away from these daily routines, resulting in decreased exercise levels and increased unhealthy eating practices. This instance was observed when players submitted individual workout forms showing amounts of physical activity engaged in over the break. Members either admitted to no exercise participation or submitted forms showing minimal exercise was completed. In addition, five players were removed from their regular playing statuses during the semester break: three members permanently left the team, one member suffered a season-ending knee injury and one member was lost due to academic ineligibility. In the following paragraphs, the evolution of team efficacy beliefs will be illustrated further and particular attention will be paid to how specific critical incidents were observed to influence team efficacy.

The implementation of a new conditioning program was considered novel for both returning lettermen and those members recently joining the team. As discussed above, team members perceived the program as beneficial to individuals’ cardiovascular and strength capabilities. Players initially experienced uncertainty when attempting to complete the sprinting portion of the conditioning program. Members had expressed concern and doubt involving their ability to complete the program. In response, individuals offered support and encouragement to one another all of which was demonstrated in the following quote: “the conditioning was really hard and sometimes we didn’t feel like doing it. We had to motivate each other to get through it ‘cause those gassers are really, really hard.” Once favorable results were attained, members noticed a
physical difference from the initial start of conditioning training and towards its completion. The impact of the conditioning program on the following players’ sense of team efficacy was made evident during initial interviews. Player E noted the improved physical performance coincided with increased team efficacy.

I think right now it’s gotten really high now because we’re starting to get in shape and we’re able to, instead of like dying, like trying to keep ourselves alive, we’re able to pick other people up and help them and we’re starting to do more of that and take care of each other and pull everybody through.

While the majority of comments noted the positive changes that occurred within the team, players also discussed the lack of outside competition during the preseason as a positive influence on efficacy beliefs. During this time there was no opportunity to perform poorly and the team instead responded favorably to their one source of performance judgment: achievement in preseason conditioning. Comments about this phenomenon included: “team confidence first started out high because we didn’t play any games and we thought we were a good team.” These observations were shared by another player who shared the following: “preseason was something different and we were working real hard and everybody was motivated because we all wanted to win. I think it was real high but then the season came.”

Other incidents that occurred during the season appeared to influence team efficacy as well. As the season progressed, player turmoil surfaced within many contexts (e.g., living situations, on-court interactions, academic requirements). Once these distractions mounted, players allowed their emotions to extend into other team environments. For instance, events occurring at home between roommates would then transfer onto the playing court between teammates. As a coach, these incidents were observed by hearing players openly complain about food ownership issues and subsequently observing their
unwillingness to interact effectively during practice (e.g., not passing ball to isolated teammate). Player B disclosed her beliefs about the mounting tension that occurred in relation to the dual teammate/roommate living situation:

Everybody was getting along in the beginning. It basically came down to everybody doing good in the beginning and then once the little side girl stuff started happening, everything went down from there. I think if we didn’t live all together, I think it would be better. I think you could even tell this to Coach for next year . . . I don’t think she needs to put them all together. Maybe you could have them living in the same apartment complex but don’t put them in the same building . . . that’s all you see all day, everyday. Because that just gets so old after awhile. Cause you just see them. At the beginning of the year, that’s all we saw was each other. Whether it was in here, whether it was somewhere else. It’s all we knew. It just got old after awhile and everybody couldn’t take it anymore.

While some players found ways to avoid uncomfortable living situations (see preseason section), interaction in the playing environment proved inevitable. As a way to cope with these difficulties some players developed ways of “faking” teammate communication in order to endure practice sessions. Although team chemistry was presented in a deceiving manner, many members preferred this method of avoidance over assumed punishment as further described by Player I.

We put on a gameface and acted like we liked everyone during practice so we wouldn’t have to run. And then off the court we all just, well some people just went their own ways. They didn’’t want to associate with the team. And then once off the court they really didn’t associate where as on the court we kinda had to. Like we had a job that we didn’t want to do but we had to do it to get it done.

As the season progressed the players discovered that same-sex relationships became a harder subject to ignore. Postseason interviews revealed that some players were initially shocked by this situation but as the season progressed there was less concern. Although intimate bonds formed between members were still evident (e.g., sitting arrangements on bus, expressions of jealousy), those members not engaging in same-sex
relationships became more relaxed and stated its effect on the overall team experience was minimal as described by Player F.

Because some people liked each other and some people were dating each other, that probably wasn’t good. That affected team confidence because in the beginning of the year we were saying, “they’re dating, they’re doing this or whatever” so then you’re talking about your team and then when it’s all out you feel kind of weird about it. I do anyway. It makes you feel kinda funny at first but then you’re like, it’s normal after you’re around it so long. Just like in the middle of the season it was like that and by the end of the season, everyone was like, oh well, forget it. Who cares? You know. I guess it was old news, relationships like that.

**Return from Holiday Break**

Prior to the conference season, the team had improved dramatically relative to their performance at the same time during the previous season. However, after the Holiday break there were several critical incidents that appeared to greatly influence the team’s efficacy. For the majority of players, this break would be the first significant amount of time spent away from their student/athlete/roommate environment. Upon returning from the break, the team won their first conference season game and then ended the season with a prolonged losing streak.

The postseason interviews exposed a significant change in efficacy beliefs as every 1st order theme emerged as a negative influence (see Appendix G). During this time period, the modeling practices of teammates, especially by those considered to have considerable authority within the team, appeared to unfavorably sway the team’s beliefs. Most notably, the negative actions of elected team captains significantly influenced the beliefs of the remaining team members. In addition to game performances, the influence of modeling practices was evident throughout daily practice sessions. Moreover, the amount of competitive experience by team members also influenced efficacy beliefs. For instance, the loss of team members during the Christmas break forced those with little
playing experience into unfamiliar playing roles, thus influencing personal and group efficacy beliefs. The impact of losing team five members at Christmas was made evident by the following quote as described by Player I:

I’m pretty sure if we had some of them now we could have probably won a few more games I think. When Tina left, I know there was a confrontation between her and coach and then she brought it home and started talking about it and then a lot of people saw how coach was treating her and I guess took it upon themselves to react to coach in a different way. We could have won more games with more subbing in, more subbing out and we wouldn’t be so tired if we had June or Lisa or Tina. They could have taken one of our spots.

**Changing Perceptions of the Coach**

The most significant change involved perceptions of the first-year head coach. Preseason interviews (1) illustrated the coach as a positive influence impacting the team and (2) described the coach as one of many components contributing to increased efficacy. Postseason interviews overwhelmingly credited the disappointing season to one sole factor: coaching incompetence. The majority of players described the evolving personality of the coach throughout the season. The initial persona surrounding the coach was characterized by the players as those representing an “ideal” coach. Elements of focused effort, punctuality and respectfulness were emphasized (i.e., rewards for task completion during practice, penalties for tardiness and disrespect). However, as the season progressed players noticed the consistency of this coaching behavior changed. Instead, they described major changes in attitude, coaching style and modeling (i.e., increased assessed punishments, disgruntled facial expressions). This transformation resulted in damaging coach/player relationships and a decline in team efficacy. These changes were evident in several contexts, not solely within the playing environment. For instance, Player I described how the coach’s change in classroom-monitoring behavior resulted in the player’s lowered class attendance.
Just like slacking off cause I know in the beginning coach used to be on top of things like peeking in our class and making sure we were there and like we all went cause we knew she was strict. But I guess she started slacking off, she didn’t come to classrooms and then they just thought she’s not going to class and checking up on us so maybe we could just sleep in and she won’t know and just started slacking off.

In addition, the once firm beliefs in coaching ability later became the source for criticism for team losses. Players perceived the continued decline of the program due to the coach’s unwillingness/inability to alter playing line-ups or drills. Several individuals voiced distress over the sudden incapacity to effectively communicate with the coach. Instead, players felt she no longer respected their opinions or believed in playing capabilities. Player B described several domains involving perceived coaching incompetence.

. . . I just think it needed to be changed up towards the end of the year. You can’t do the same thing for a whole year. It’s not possible. No matter how good a coach or how many books you read, you gotta go out and watch. You gotta see different things. I think maybe if we would have changed up some things, I think we would have been better. We were still running drills at the end of the year. You don’t run drills. I mean, maybe you do. I don’t really know, I’m not a coach, I don’t know. But I’m saying there were more specific things we needed to be doing than running drills and running all the time. I haven’t seen what other big schools, big time schools do. We didn’t know anything about our opponents really, except like little stuff. But we didn’t sit down and go over specifics. In our walk-through, it would be at 7 o clock in the morning for 15 minutes going over the same thing, over and over. In the game, you still don’t know what you’re doing. I think that it benefited us from the beginning but when at those crucial moments, nothing changed and that definitely hurt us . . . the coaching style never changed and when you’re losing all the time, something’s gotta give. I think that’s what got real hard is that both sides were real stubborn . . . coach’s style was stubborn and the players’ style was stubborn so it was tug-of-war. Nobody was going to let the other one get in. One day we would come in with a good attitude and coach would come in, the thing is she would fire us up but really just pissing everybody off. And everybody’s like “whatever”.

In summary, player efficacy beliefs changed over the course of the season based on a number of different factors (see Appendices F-H). More specifically, the timing of significant events appeared to influence many of these issues. For instance, the midseason
break emerged as the largest influence contrasting preseason and postseason beliefs. The loss of important members and the minimal exercise requirements influenced the returnees in a negative manner. The ten postseason themes were perceived as negative influences and thus efficacy beliefs never resumed to their previous preseason high.

**Critical Influences on the Evolution of Team Efficacy: A Grounded Theory**

Consistent with the analytic procedures described by Charmaz (2000, 2002) and Strauss and Corbin (1998), a grounded theory will now be presented to demonstrate how the various sources of efficacy, and other events, influenced team interaction and the quality of the group’s experiences across the length of the playing season (See Appendix H). This portion of the investigation explicates how the highly contextualized process of team efficacy was linked to individual meanings attached to group experiences that occurred throughout the course of the basketball season. The grounded theory that follows was developed from interview responses (individual players and team format), personal observations (including reflexive journaling), and media artifacts (game statistics). Due to the complexities associated with group processes, the current theory will highlight the interaction between individual meanings of the player’s experiences and collective beliefs. More specifically, the theory that follows is an attempt to delineate how the participants in this study cognitively evaluated their individual experiences which in turn influenced their views about the team and the quality of their experiences as the season progressed. As shown in Appendix H and reviewed above, the most general sources of efficacy for this team included team compatibility, leadership styles, and perceptions of talent levels. These findings were consistent with sources of collective efficacy theorized by Bandura, (1997) and sources of sport confidence found by Vealey et al., (1998). Within the present study, a prevalent theme revealed how and why team
efficacy evolved and changed along with the player’s interactions and levels of motivation and satisfaction throughout the course of the season (See Box E in Appendix H). Further examination of these influences and subsequent interactions will follow.

Previous discussion has noted the many changes in team performance beliefs as the season progressed. Throughout the team’s pre conference schedule, team efficacy beliefs remained relatively high despite a mediocre performance record. Player efforts continued within the practice setting (e.g., teammate encouragement, persistence in workouts) and player satisfaction remained high (i.e., excitement over upcoming competition, increased team cohesiveness). As a coach and researcher with this team, I observed the players’ efforts on a daily basis. However, critical incidents that occurred during and after the Christmas break influenced subsequent player evaluations of the team’s performance and thus efficacy beliefs.

**Critical Incidents and the Reevaluation Period**

Upon completion of the fall semester, two weeks remained before the first conference game. Players received a 10-day break from scholastic and academic duties and returned home to see family/friends. During this time period, two significant phenomena occurred. First, five players were removed from regular playing roles: one veteran player suffered a season-ending knee injury, one freshman became academically ineligible and three players quit or were permanently removed from the team. Second, many of the remaining players used the time away from the basketball setting to engage in little or no physical activity. Furthermore, members used the break to wean themselves from diet restrictions formerly imposed during the season by the head coach.

As discussed, the players credited the abrupt removal of teammates and resulting changes in role expectations (i.e., increased accountability, more playing time) as the
most salient influence of team efficacy across the season. This significant loss of important team members, combined with the recent letdown in training rigor, were critical incidents that influenced this team’s efficacy (See Box B of Appendix H). From my perspective as a coach, the sudden loss of team members strongly influenced the practice and game environments. Fewer players resulted in fewer drill repetitions and modifications in game strategies (i.e., less emphasis on team speed). Therefore, changes experienced in the playing environment consequently altered the team’s style of play.

As shown in Box C of Appendix H, the members engaged in a reevaluation process where team efficacy beliefs, including goals established during the preseason, were compared against present team performance. Discrepancies between these pre-existing team beliefs and current team success were apparent. The impact of this realization, combined with the players’ reactions to a variety of critical events, resulted in a “who cares?” attitude pervading the team. During this time, my concerns as a coach began to grow. The emergence of pessimistic attitudes was frustrating to observe as I felt the sudden decrease in persistence would inevitably impact later team performances. Players’ negative perceptions coincided with the commencement of the conference-playing season and were present throughout the remainder of the season (e.g., team playing environment).

Previous research has noted changes in role involvement can detract from performance potential and is considered more pronounced within a team environment (Brawley, Carron & Widmeyer, 1987). The present study supported these findings as several critical incidents occurring during and after the Christmas break influenced how players appraised their performance roles. For instance, player reaction to the loss of
members contributing significant minutes was apparent. Without the assistance of key players, previous wins appeared to lose their meaning as the remaining members now looked ahead to the conference schedule with pessimism. This reevaluation process resulted in individual and collective judgments about failing to meet preseason efficacy expectations. Mediocre pre-conference performances, the sudden loss of team members and the development of the team’s lackadaisical outlook contributed to this change in attitude. Furthermore, the high confidence players initially placed in the team’s ability to perform, as established in the preseason, combined with the influence of the previously mentioned critical events, resulted in negative team perceptions that persisted throughout the remainder of the season. In other words, because the strength of initial player beliefs was elevated to such an increased level, the impact of the critical events and reevaluation period contributed to a dramatic decrease in efficacy. For my participants, member evaluations were based upon comparisons between efficacy sources established in the preseason and their consequent reassessments that occurred during the pivotal juncture of the season (See Boxes A, B, and C of Appendix H).

Consistent with Bandura’s (1977, 1986) self-efficacy theory, the direction team efficacy beliefs follow is largely dependent upon the magnitude of preseason beliefs. For those teams whose beliefs have little strength or are originally negative, performance expectations are not as difficult to attain. If perceptions of team performance during the pivotal juncture are positive, then team performance would meet or exceed their original beliefs. However, for those teams with originally elevated efficacy beliefs, the margin of error increases. If team performance during the pivotal juncture has failed to meet original expectations, negative efficacy beliefs will ensue. Teams undergoing such a
realization process experience consequences for a significant amount of time after the fact. Two situations can emerge from the aforementioned comprehension and the present study supports one of these predictions. First, team members can perceive the team performance to equal or surpass efficacy beliefs set in the preseason and consequently, positive beliefs will develop or continue into the later stages of the season (Box D). Second, team members can perceive the team performance to not meet or fall below efficacy beliefs set in the preseason and consequently, negative beliefs will develop or continue into the later stages of the season (Box F). The impact of these comprehensions will be further discussed in regards to their influence upon player satisfaction and motivation.

As previously discussed (see Chapter 2), reasons for sport participation are linked to player motivation/satisfaction within the playing environment (Kavussanu et al., 1996). Given the motives for this team’s formation (e.g., intercollegiate athletic team), the impact of a losing season may have substantial implications for the satisfaction and motivation of members within several contexts. The decline in efficacy beliefs resulting from the reevaluation process subsequently influenced player attitudes/behaviors across the following dimensions: practice sessions, cohesion, player/coach relationships and game performance (Box E of Appendix H).

Post-Juncture beliefs

As depicted in Appendix C, athlete reevaluations had strong implications for player satisfaction and motivation along the aforementioned contexts. During the reevaluation process (Box C), team members assessed current efficacy beliefs about performance capabilities against those set prior to the pivotal juncture. Because the outcome of this stage impacted the team environment along several contexts, these appraisals influenced
team climate for the latter portion of the season and beyond (Box G). From an applied perspective, how player reevaluations influence psychological climate and team performance is crucial to understand (Box H). Those teams who can maintain or increase efficacy beliefs at this critical time will influence positive team performances in the latter portion of the season. Conversely, those teams unable to recover from pivotal juncture-related events will continue a downward performance slide until a final season conclusion. Discussion of these components will be described in the following sections.

Game performance outcomes (e.g., versus conference opponents) will often determine rankings for postseason tournaments and/or the amount of success experienced by a team for the current season. Furthermore, because the ending regular season games and postseason tournaments may be the last played by graduating seniors or for those permanently leaving the team, these memories may be considered the most salient. In a sense, the season begins again with the conference tournament. Every team has a chance to capture the coveted first prize and efficacy beliefs can strongly influence a team’s intensity and effort during this critical period. Performances during this time are more susceptible to game upsets as a lesser-ranked team may have higher efficacy beliefs than a supposed better team (Paskevich, 1995).

In the present study, player reflections during the pivotal juncture of the season resulted in decreased efficacy beliefs for the remainder of the competitive season. The culmination of a prolonged losing streak, in addition to an early exit from the conference tournament, resulted in the ending of the team’s competitive playing season. During the second half of the season, player frustration and disappointment were observed as initial team unity later fell to member separation and coaching blame. These expressions were
observed along several team contexts including practice sessions, game performances, player to–player and –coach interactions. Unable to regroup and improve upon their current status, the ideal situation for a declining team did not occur; the team was unable to recover from the pivotal juncture and improve upon current team performance.

Upon the conclusion of competitive play, teams have a chance to regroup and begin preparation for the following season. It has been well-versed that better players are “made” during off-season training. Therefore, how athletes perceive the overall experience (i.e., Did the team reach playing potential?) will often determine amounts of effort, persistence and motivation to prepare for future competitive opportunities. Furthermore, as previously discussed, the consequences of performance beliefs can surface in and outside of the playing environment. Thus, player satisfaction/motivation, as well as interactions between team members and coaches, will be impacted during the significant break between the conclusion of one competitive year and the commencement of another season.

Specific to this team, turmoil experienced between team members during the competitive season eroded shortly after the conclusion of postseason play. Player relationships resembled those common during the preseason training and period of increased efficacy beliefs. First-year players began preparation (e.g., academic coursework, postseason workouts, rooming decisions) for the following season as veterans were left to contemplate future athletic/academic endeavors. For those players choosing to continue further participation with the sport, their involvement in postseason activities was prevalent (e.g., attendance in weightlifting and conditioning sessions).
However, those members choosing pursuits outside of sport disregarded postseason team activities altogether (e.g., absence from postseason workouts, team meetings).

The direction of player post-juncture beliefs (e.g., negative or positive perceptions of meeting or failing to meet preseason goals) has significant implications for various sport settings as described along the aforementioned contexts (see Box G). Specific to this study and other teams experiencing a letdown during a pivotal juncture in the season, declining beliefs about performance success will result in either one of two scenarios (see Box H):

1. The season concludes with the team never achieving a positive performance after the pivotal juncture. Within this scenario, a “bounce back” period never occurs in which the team is able to recover and actually improve on previous performances. Instead, competitive games continue to be played and losses continue to accumulate; therefore players fail to see the outcome merits of their efforts (i.e., continued practice without experiencing a competitive match win). Eventually, the negative experiences associated with team performance will end as the playing season concludes with the inevitable completion of scheduled competitions and no prospects for continued postseason play.

2. The team’s season progresses and members observe positive advancements toward performance capabilities (e.g., significant win or enhanced performance). Therefore, the direction of fallen efficacy beliefs is reversed. Subsequent player interactions within and outside of the sport environment will be altered, thus impacting various athlete contexts (e.g., player satisfaction/motivation, group cohesion). Within the performance context, teams may be able to extend playing seasons due to exceptional play during ending regular season games or post-season tournaments. In this scenario, elevated efficacy beliefs outlast opponents’ perceived superior playing abilities. As described above, the positive outcome of this experience will influence members along numerous contexts (e.g., player to –player and –coach interactions, player satisfaction/motivation, beliefs about postseason training).

As previously described, team members perceived the outcome of the playing season in a negative manner as directly evidenced by the team’s inability to improve upon post-juncture team performances (i.e., season concludes with extended losing streak). As described above, the impact of this outcome surfaced within several contexts
including interactions between players and the head coach. As an assistant coach situated between the players and head coach, interaction differences between participants became increasingly noticeable as less communication and maladaptive body language from both parties was observed. In the postseason, players faulted negative coaching techniques for the team’s lackluster performance. For instance, members believed game strategies (e.g., questionable substitution patterns) and the handling of team incidents (i.e., player dismissals) contributed to the accumulation of team losses. As previously addressed, communication between both parties became less frequent as players separated themselves from the playing environment (e.g., less visitations to gym and coach’s office).
CHAPTER 5
GENERAL DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of the present study was to document the development and maintenance of collective efficacy within a community college women’s basketball team. A second purpose was to observe changes in group behavior (e.g., team cohesion, role related behaviors, leadership characteristics) throughout the course of the season. The results showed the emergence of several factors that influenced efficacy experienced by the team and its members. The participants perceived off the court exchanges, preseason conditioning and positive leadership to strongly impact the efficacy beliefs experienced prior to the competitive playing season. The ensuing positive outlook occurred due to the impact of physical conditioning and positive modeling by influential members (i.e., coaches and team captains). Moreover, players perceived the Christmas/semester break, team performances and negative leadership to contribute to declining efficacy beliefs experienced during the latter portion of the season. Furthermore, a grounded theory was developed that elucidated the interdependent relationships observed between the described sources of efficacy and various outcomes in sport. What follows is a discussion of the theoretical and empirical relevance of the present study and a discussion of some applied implications from the results. Then, I will offer a discussion about study weaknesses and shortcomings along with future research directions.

**Efficacy Sources**

The results of the present study suggest similarities and departures from existing research. Few studies have assessed team efficacy beliefs across the length of a playing
season. The present study strengthens the current literature with the assessment of this phenomenon utilizing (1) a qualitative framework implementing grounded theory techniques and (2) a longitudinal examination of the dynamic phenomenon. The present findings substantiate existing team efficacy research with the inclusion of established sources of efficacy and/or confidence suggested to influence group beliefs. A discussion about the relevance of the present findings with regard to Bandura’s (1997) theoretical writings and Vealey’s (2001) sport specific conceptualization of sport confidence will now be discussed.

**Mastery Experiences**

With regard to Bandura’s theory of collective efficacy (1997), the current study supports the influence of previous performance experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and perceptions of physiological states as important belief sources.

Bandura (1997) asserts that mastery experiences are the most powerful source of efficacy beliefs because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can accomplish on a task (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, perceptions of successes and failures will then influence subsequent efficacy beliefs. As previously discussed, the initial interview responses and efforts observed during the preseason conditioning workouts underscored the increased efficacy beliefs described by many players concerning the upcoming playing season. For instance, players described how successes achieved during the preseason conditioning were believed to contribute to positive game outcomes. In addition to forming beliefs based upon past practice performances, players often inquired about the win/loss records of forthcoming opponents. These queries aided players in forming judgments about the outcomes of subsequent competitions.
Conversely, the culmination of multiple game losses as the season progressed then resulted in perceptions of performance failure. Players assumed these inadequacies despite obvious skill improvements observed across the season. Instead, players focused on the negative performance outcomes and thus individual player and team development was overlooked. The lack of mastery experiences resulted in declined efficacy beliefs as members admitted, “the confidence went down as soon as we started losing.”

**Vicarious Experience**

The inclusion of this source of efficacy occurred at two levels: (1) observations between competitive teams and (2) observations between team members. Bandura (1986, 1997) states the emergence of vicarious experience develops within self-efficacy theory and collective efficacy theory, respectively. Because the conference season demanded the playing of two regular season games per opponent, the players evaluated upcoming opponents between the first and second playing competitions. These time lapses allowed for comparisons between opposing teams, opposing players, styles of play and coaching techniques. As a second competition approached, players recalled various people and/or events involved from the initial competition. Beliefs concerning the outcomes of approaching competitions were based upon these reflections.

In addition, members used vicarious observations within the team to create beliefs about potential performance success. As previously discussed, newcomers would observe veterans throughout the year as a method of increasing knowledge of the game (watching more experienced players), to learn information specific to team play (offensive and defensive strategies) and to create beliefs about personal playing capabilities (how others perform will inform self of own ability). Furthermore, veterans cited the exceptional skill
level of the freshman in addition to their ability to outlast the difficult preseason training as contributing to the positive beliefs established prior to the competitive season.

**Verbal Persuasion**

Two themes emerged from the conceptual framework that emphasized the relevance of verbal persuasion within the team’s efficacy experiences. In the pre-season, players perceived persuasion from several sources to positively influence team beliefs. Most notably, positive comments from the head coach swayed beliefs/actions involving player effort, satisfaction and team cohesion. In accordance with Bandura’s efficacy theory, factors such as the credibility, prestige and trustworthiness of the persuader influence the effects of the information given (1986). It can be assumed players perceived the head coach as holding substantial authority within the team and thus valued her opinion concerning performance potential. In a similar fashion, players utilized the team captains as credible sources for future performance success. Initially, the language and actions of these select individuals provided positive support for the team’s increased efficacy beliefs. However, as the season progressed and perceptions of coaching/captain responsibilities changed (e.g., observations of negative behavior), existing efficacy beliefs were altered. For instance, players cited captains’ lack of effort during practice and the coach’s negative outlook concerning impending game outcomes to transform the existing increased efficacy beliefs.

**Physiological States**

Bandura’s theoretical discussions and previous research (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001; Taylor et al., 1985) showed that interpretations of physiological states can be a strong indicator of perseverance and activity one will endure when subject to physical discomfort. During the season, perceptions of physiological states related to conditioning
levels emerged on two occasions. Team performance during the pre-season conditioning workouts was perceived to positively influence efficacy beliefs. Many members described the team’s ability to reach or surpass effort expectations as the primary motive for the positive outlook concerning the upcoming season. Conversely, the Christmas Break resulted in decreased fitness levels that contributed to negative perceptions of the team’s ability to successfully compete.

**Leadership Effectiveness**

In addition to Bandura’s recommendations (1986), Watson and Chemers (1998) included leadership effectiveness as a significant source for group efficacy. These members (i.e., team captains, coaches) will largely impact the team through various modeling practices. Positively viewed modeling can improve the uncertainties expressed by insecure members while negative modeling can depress the efforts and encouraging actions of the team (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001). Watson and Chemers (1998) found leader evaluation to be positively related to collective efficacy, especially for those teams that experience little success in the previous season. In previously unsuccessful teams, players who believed they had effective leaders were more confident in their teams. As pre- and postseason interviews revealed, both the elected team captains and newly hired head coach existed as dominant efficacy sources within the team. For instance, the participants described the coaching and captain leadership during the preseason as positively influencing the team’s efforts. These components emerged through the verbal remarks and observed determined actions of both parties.

Conversely, during the postseason, the participants negatively described the coaching methods utilized. While the captains’ actions were also perceived negatively, the players predominantly described negative coaching as a prevalent source for the
declining efficacy beliefs. Specifically, the players noted the inconsistencies in verbal statements and coaching actions as well as questionable coaching choices (i.e., substitution patterns, practice drills, style of play) as contributing to the aforementioned changes. Furthermore, several players described perceptions of coaching incompetence as a principal motive for the team’s overall losing record experienced throughout the season (e.g., unwilling to alter playing style despite continued losses).

The present study furthers existent research with the inclusion of a pivotal season juncture in which existing efficacy beliefs are reassessed. The outcome of this reassessment process influenced subsequent beliefs for the remainder of the season and beyond (e.g., postseason training, perceptions of following year). Thus, how members viewed the impact of the pivotal juncture influenced group perceptions along a multitude of contexts that included player satisfaction/motivation in the competitive environment and interactions between coaches and teammates (see Chapter 4). For example, a negative outlook lead to decreased diligence in the playing environment as well as less interaction between group members.

**Related Dimensions of Group Efficacy Construct**

Collective task efficacy (Mischel & Northcraft, 1997) involves members’ beliefs of the group’s knowledge related to the task, skill and abilities to perform a specific task in a successful manner. Throughout the season, this element remained relatively stable as the team continued to set team goals prior to each contest despite numerous losses. The captains announced these objectives (i.e., maximum number of team turnovers, maintain specific field goal percentage/number of rebounds for game) in the locker room preceding competitions. Members did not modify their beliefs regardless of perceptions of various uncontrollable and controllable factors influencing game outcomes (i.e., level
of opponent, efforts exerted). Despite the observed fluctuations in performance, the players continued to set optimistic goals before each contest.

Furthermore, previous research has shown that effective interactions facilitate a team’s collective interdependence or team members’ beliefs about the level of knowledge, skill and ability a group has to perform a specific task (Mischel & Northcraft, 1997). Within the present study the collective interdependence phenomenon fluctuated throughout the season based largely on various off-court interactions between team members. For instance, the status of roommate and intimate relationships between members influenced the exchanges of these players on the court. Specifically, players cited arguments occurring between these parties as negatively impacting team interaction in practice and games (i.e., selfish play, not passing ball to specific teammates).

**Group Efficacy Research**

Although few studies have examined group efficacy within the sport setting, associations between existing research and the current project are evident. Specifically, the previously discussed hockey study by Feltz & Lirgg (1998) examined efficacy across a season utilizing data ascertained from player questionnaires. In accordance with this study’s findings it was found here that a pivotal juncture and reevaluation process during the season had a pronounced impact on subsequent efficacy beliefs. The outcome of the reassessment process during Christmas break influenced player beliefs for the remainder of the season and beyond (e.g., postseason training, perceptions of following year). Thus, how members viewed the impact of the pivotal juncture was shown to influence group member perceptions along a multitude of contexts including player satisfaction and motivation in the competitive environment and interactions between coaches and teammates (see Chapter 4). The players perceived team member loss as negatively
impacting the team due to the reduced number of eligible players and the loss of significant game contributors (i.e., points scored, leadership roles). Furthermore, additional “distractions” involving various roommate and intimate relationships issues appeared to impact the team’s efforts on the court throughout the season. As previously discussed, players became selective with ball-passing practices as some members chose to ignore those individuals perceived to negatively impact member interactions (i.e., roommate or intimate partnerships).

Previous collective efficacy research has cited beginning-of-season high collective efficacy as a negative predictor of end-of-season performance (Watson & Chemers, 1998). In a study addressing the individual and collective beliefs of high school basketball players, efficacy measures taken before the season and before postseason play showed players who had higher optimism scores also had higher collective efficacy beliefs. By the end of the season, this relationship was not apparent. The experiences related to this team support these findings as increased efficacy beliefs in the preseason later fell to negative beliefs about possible performance success. Thus, a negative relationship existed between member beliefs experienced in the preseason and those experienced after the pivotal Holiday break.

An additional finding of the aforementioned study showed leadership evaluation was positively related to collective efficacy for teams unsuccessful in the previous season (Watson & Chemers, 1998). Thus, players of previous losing teams who believed they had effective leaders were more confident in their teams (Feltz & Lirgg, 2001). Within the present study, members cited the positive leadership of the new coach as contributing to the elevated efficacy beliefs experienced during the preseason. Members believed the
actions of the newly hired head coach would reverse a lackluster performance record from the previous season. However, upon postseason reflection, players cited the actions of the coach as negatively influencing the team’s playing experience and poor performance record.

Lastly, the relationship between early and late season collective efficacy beliefs has been observed with the aforementioned study of American football offensive performances and team efficacy beliefs (Myers et al., 2003). In their study, questionnaires completed prior to competition throughout a playing season noted that early and late season collective efficacy beliefs appeared more homogeneous than midseason beliefs. As previously described, player attitudes during postseason training resembled those observed during preseason training. The negative attitudes existing throughout the latter portion of the season were replaced with positive beliefs about upcoming competition (e.g., postseason training, following season games).

**Related Constructs**

As previously discussed (Chapter 2), collective efficacy and other forms of group processes are believed to share similar components. Specifically, high levels of collective efficacy and group cohesion are associated with (1) a strong commitment to common desires and (2) a persistent belief in the group’s abilities to achieve important goal (Mullen & Copper, 1994). Bandura (1986, 1997) contends that collective efficacy acts as a mediator between cohesion and performance. The examination of perceived collective efficacy and cohesion have demonstrated positive relationships over the course of a successful playing season (Paskevich, 1995). Utilizing a collective efficacy measure designed for this study, Paskevich found that collective efficacy mediated the relationship between task-oriented cohesion (e.g, attaining field goal percentage for game) and team
performance at early season but not later season. Specific to the present study, members repeatedly described the successes achieved during the conditioning program as contributing to the unity experienced by the team as a whole. Perceptions of cohesion remained relatively positive until encountering the fluctuations associated with negative game outcomes and the unexpected player losses during Christmas break.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the sport confidence model and its transference to Bandura’s efficacy theories (1986, 1997) deserve further consideration. For instance, Vealey and colleagues (1996, 1998, 2001) focused on the role of the kinds of situations that enhance or decrease confidence in athletes (Vealey, 2001). Of the nine sources embedded within the Sport Confidence Model, seven emerged throughout the present study. These sources included mastery experiences, demonstration of ability, physical/mental preparation, social support, environmental comfort, coaching leadership and situational favorableness. Specifically, the model’s inclusion of mastery experiences and demonstration of ability have considerable similarity to Bandura’s efficacy source of previous performance accomplishments (Vealey, 2001). For example, during the conference season players referred to previous game performance outcomes as a source of beliefs about subsequent competitions.

In addition, the role of physical/mental preparation involves feeling physically and mentally prepared with an optimal focus on performance and can be likened to Bandura’s efficacy source of physiological arousal (Vealey, 2001). As the present study and previous research attested (Gould, Hodge, Peterson and Giannini; 1989; Vealey et al. 1998), physical conditioning was considered a significant source for developing self-confidence in athletes. Member perceptions of the locker room environment as well as
knowledge of the opposing team before competition appeared to impact player beliefs about possible performance success.

The sources involving social support and environmental comfort emerged across various off the court events. Specifically, the intimate relations that occurred between team members impacted both participants and non-participants’ level of comfort with the playing environment. Observable on the court interactions were influenced by the emotions experienced between team members, specifically involving various ball-passing practices (see Chapter 4). Member perceptions of social support (e.g., coaches, family and teammates) were also impacted by experiences occurring outside of the sport environment. For instance, various living situations (e.g., roommate concerns) as well as the role of the coach’s involvement impacted player confidence levels.

Furthermore, coaching leadership emerged as a dominant source within this team experience. As represented in Appendices F and G team efficacy beliefs coincided with perceptions of leadership influences. For instance, increased efficacy beliefs in the preseason were associated with positive beliefs about coaching capabilities. Player beliefs were reversed in the latter portion of the season as declined efficacy beliefs coincided with decreased confidence levels in coaching competence.

Lastly, situational favorableness, or “feeling that the breaks of the situation are in one’s favor” (Vealey, 2001; p.553) emerged as a source specific to the incidents occurring during the pivotal juncture in the season. Players perceived player loss as an uncontrollable factor that negatively impacted team interactions and subsequent competitive performances. The resulting “who cares?” attitude (see Chapter 4) lasted the duration of the season and never returned to its once positive state.
Methodological Considerations

Numerous future recommendations have emerged across the existing collective efficacy research. Most notably, authors have described the need for (1) season-long studies with (2) intact sports teams assessing (3) the complex interactive nature of individual and group processes (Feltz, 1992, 1994; Widmeyer et al., 1993). The present study addressed these three proposals as various information sources (i.e., player interviews, personal observations) emerged throughout a lengthy playing season with a women’s community college basketball team. Individual and group interviews occurred in order to detail the multifaceted relationships associated with the construct. In addition, the primary researcher maintained a participant/observer role as a volunteer assistant coach for this team. Her main roles as academic advisor and practice drill implementer, including her previous personal experiences with the sport (see Chapter 1) facilitated the development of a trusting environment for player disclosure. These strengths will now be discussed in further detail.

The primary researcher joined the staff in August of 2002 and continued participation with the team for the following ten-month period. Throughout this time period, the researcher maintained an active role in the coordination of academic advisement, practice drills and game travel for the aforementioned team and its members. This experience allowed for the development of coach to –player and –to coach relationships. In addition, this prolonged involvement allowed for the development of trust and rapport between the researcher and the participants; an important consideration in qualitative inquiry (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

The present study addressed an experience involving both individual and collective beliefs concerning a group phenomenon; therefore interview questions entailing team
efficacy beliefs were addressed at the individual and group level. As part of grounded theory procedures (Charmaz, 1990), researchers take substantive analysis from one area and conduct theoretical sampling in another. For instance, player interviews questioned individual views about team efficacy in addition to group beliefs about the team specific to the playing environment (e.g., potential performance success, coach’s leadership). Subsequent team interviews inquired about the collective thoughts concerning efficacy for potential performance success. By including both individual and group influences, the imminent interaction between individual player thoughts and the collective beliefs of the team was addressed.

**Methodological Weaknesses**

The present study also has some weaknesses. First, group interviews were dominated by those members most involved in verbal/modeling practices within the playing environment (e.g., appointed captains, starters). Therefore, their opinions predicted group beliefs despite possible differing views by those members with less power. As a result, individual interviews were conducted to gain the views of these lesser-voiced members due to increased comfort involving discussions about the team. Because player and team responses fluctuated according to the team’s playing performance throughout the season (e.g., win/loss record), the relationship between preseason and postseason efficacy beliefs is not clearly defined. Player beliefs were predominantly affected by game outcomes, therefore accounting for the drastic change in preseason and postseason efficacy beliefs. Previous research has noted the influence of performance outcomes in determining beliefs about team success (Licacz & Partington, 1996; Paskevich, 1995; Watson & Chemers, 1998).
Limitations associated with the present study include (1) assumptions based upon the experience of one team and (2) the development of possible biases associated with the primary researcher’s role within the team. In addition, player skepticism associated with confidentiality issues (i.e., playing time influenced by interview responses, teammate relationships harmed by discussing various interactions/incidents) may have influenced impending interview responses. These weaknesses will now be discussed in further detail.

Due to the exploratory nature of this project, the generalizability of the study’s findings to other sport settings with varying characteristics (e.g., individual sports, decreased interdependency, male-specific teams) is debatable. Due to minimal research associated with group efficacy, the development of additional belief sources and possible interactions with other group processes appears to be most beneficial in understanding the construct and related phenomenon. The development of a grounded theory forms the framework for further discovery involving various influences and/or sources contributing to the construct’s applicability within the athletic setting. In addition, because this study focused on a women’s team that had a losing season, future researchers may wish to study how winning or more successful teams respond throughout a playing season. Furthermore, future research should also focus on male athletes.

The social constructivist stance adopted by the primary researcher mandates the understanding of the season’s experience through the observations/experiences of the researcher within this team. By starting with data from the lived experience of the research participants, the researcher can attend to how they construct their worlds. That lived experience shapes the researcher’s approach to data collection and analysis.
(Charmaz, 1990). Future researchers attempting to replicate this study will be fallible to differing circumstances along several contexts (e.g., social interactions team members, playing style among members, talent of outside competition). These situations will account for varying perceptions among athletes in a sport-specific setting.

Finally, my own biases as a researcher need to be addressed. Due to the exploratory nature of the project, the researcher assumed an assistant coaching position within the team. This position commenced during the team’s preseason training and ended with the conclusion of the spring semester. During this time, the researcher developed close bonds with the players and coaches in order to gain a complete understanding of the efficacy phenomenon and influencing factors. The researcher’s previous experiences as a player and instructor, in addition to situations developing throughout the year, helped to formulate her perceptions of efficacy occurring within the team. In an effort to address these biases, I used an outside research group familiar with the adopted methodology to inform me of possible biases I may have experienced. However, the actual experience is one only familiar to a participant-observer. As noted by qualitative researchers, such a constructionist view assumes an emergent reality fundamentally shaped by social interaction (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Charmaz,, 1990). Therefore, a constructionist approach offers “an open-ended and flexible means of studying both fluid interactive processes [individual and group efficacy beliefs] and more stable social structures [sports team]” (Charmaz, 1990; p.1162). Furthermore, the players may have perceived the researcher’s dual role of coach and confidante as a possible hindrance to subsequent performance decisions (player beliefs will influence playing minutes). Thus, some members may have been less inclined to disclose negative team
revelations due to concerns about a decreased playing status within the team. Future research should address methods of increasing player disclosure concerning emotionally-bound influences of group sport.

**Applied Implications**

The present study has important implications for practitioners. Based on the findings of the current study, several avenues for applied discussion can emerge. Specifically for coaches, the study gives insight into the various factors influencing the development of efficacy within a team and the multiple elements that may hinder its continuance. By understanding the underlying factors influencing a team’s efficacy beliefs, coaches may facilitate the sport context to create a positive performance experience. The culmination of these accomplishments can aide coaches in fielding potentially successful teams and also facilitates extended coaching careers.

First, coaches can model an optimistic outlook which might contribute to overall positive team experiences; whereas negative beliefs may depress confidence in team well-being (Paskevich et. al, 2001). For instance, elevated efficacy beliefs can impact players’ motivations to place group aspirations ahead of personal glory. The present study offered the following suggestions for the maintenance of wellness within a team: separate existences in and outside of the playing environment (e.g, living arrangements, sexual relationships), consistency between coach’s expectations and player performance, and continued engagement in physical activity despite training breaks in season competition.

As previously discussed, the last component (otherwise referred to as the pivotal juncture) contributed greatly to the reversal of previously elevated efficacy beliefs. The ability of teams to recover from the critical point in the season will influence play during
the latter portion of the season and beyond. In addition, these elevated beliefs may contribute to a team’s ability to withstand the effects of unanticipated events or turmoil occurring along various sport situations (player interactions, lengthy playing seasons). The avoidance of these events may inevitably create an environment suitable for the development and perpetuation of elevated efficacy beliefs. One proposed method involves teams addressing both positive and negative outcome situations that could develop over the course of a season (e.g., “what if” scenarios) in order to increase preparation for unexpected events occurring in the performance environment.

For those teams experiencing the impact of a losing season both in and outside of the sport setting (e.g., member interaction, player satisfaction/motivation), suggestions can be made for how to halt or improve upon a team’s decreased efficacy beliefs. Specifically, team members’ beliefs may improve upon a reassessment of preseason performance goals. For example, a team may find the winning of a conference championship no longer statistically viable due to an accumulation of game losses. Thus, teams can reevaluate and adjust their goals in a more realistic manner to account for their current performance situation. For instance, suggestions include establishing goals that are based upon the process leading to performance as opposed to the outcome itself. Supporting evidence has noted that procedural goals are considered more flexible and controllable than those focusing on performance outcomes (Burton, Naylor and Holliday, 2001). Teams may then experience more autonomy within the playing environment which has been associated with positive affective experiences (McAuley & Tammen, 1989). The impact of these affective states will then contribute to existing team environments (e.g., living situations, practice sessions).
The situations experienced by this team during the 2002-2003 playing season have strong implications for team sports and additional athletic contexts. The preceding grounded theory lays a framework for teams experiencing a letdown in efficacy beliefs during a pivotal juncture in the season. As suggested by Bandura (1986, 1990), experiences with failures and setbacks are necessary to develop a robust sense of efficacy. These findings suggest scenarios for how other sport circumstances may develop. Using this structure, coaches may be able to prevent or discontinue decreased efficacy beliefs and instead create a positive aura surrounding the team. As previously suggested, coaches may structure mastery experiences in practice and game situations in an effort to enhance team efficacy. These encouraging beliefs may then transfer to the ultimate goal attainment of performance success.
APPENDIX A
PRESEASON GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

The attached interview questions were used to evaluate team members’ perceptions of group efficacy during the initial pilot group interviews. Members consisted of 14 female collegiate basketball players, ranging in ages 18-21 years. A series of group interviews ensued in order to allow for the clarification of ambiguous answers and to illuminate team concerns. Open-ended questions guided the interview process where the researcher’s hunches initially guided the questions posed. These responses then initiated subsequent queries.

• All of you have spent a lot of time together, on and off the court, as the season has progressed. Speaking in terms of the upcoming playing season, how confident are you in the team’s abilities to be successful?

• What basketball characteristics most accurately describe this team at the present moment?

• Who or what are you basing these judgments upon?
APPENDIX B
POSTSEASON GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following interview questions were used to evaluate team members’ perceptions of group efficacy upon the conclusion of the competitive season. The postseason group interview allowed for the illumination and comparison of efficacy beliefs occurring throughout the year. Questions were guided by player responses from the preseason interviews as well as the researcher’s observations of the efficacy phenomenon and related constructs. These responses then initiated subsequent queries.

- Now that I’ve met with each of you individually about your beliefs concerning the season, I want to discuss some of these issues within a group format. Specifically, describe the team’s efficacy beliefs as they are in the postseason. Do these beliefs differ from those set in the preseason? If so, how?
- What events or situations contributed to these efficacy beliefs?
- How did the team perceive efficacy beliefs to exist? For instance, did they fluctuate or stay relatively stable throughout the season?
- What are your beliefs concerning postseason training and the upcoming competitive season?
APPENDIX C
PRESEASON PLAYER INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following interview questions were used to evaluate individual player efficacy beliefs during preseason interviews. Initial questions allowed for the development of trust and rapport between the primary researcher and participant. The subsequent queries targeted individual beliefs about the team and playing environment.

- Describe how you initially became involved in playing basketball.
- What people or factors influenced your decision to play college basketball for this school?
- How would you describe your present relationship with the coaching/support staff?
- How would you describe the present relationship with your teammates? How often do you see each other outside of basketball (e.g., socializing, classes, living situations)?

We’ve been talking about your personal experiences with basketball in general and specifically, within this team. Now I’d like to ask you some questions about your beliefs about the team. Remember that your answers should describe the team, and not beliefs about your own ability.

- Specifically, has there been a time during this past pre-season when you remember the team feeling confident? Can you describe these experiences in terms of what or who was the source of this confident feeling?
- What emotions or feelings would you associate with this event?
- What about a time during this preseason when you felt team confidence was relatively low? What emotions or feelings would you associate with this event or another one low in confidence?
- How do you view the upcoming basketball season in terms of your beliefs about the potential success of this team? What is the basis for these beliefs?
APPENDIX D
POSTSEASON PLAYER INTERVIEW GUIDE

The following interview questions were used to evaluate individual player efficacy beliefs as described during postseason interviews. Questions were guided by responses from the individual player and group interviews occurring during the preseason. In addition, the primary researcher’s observations and hunches directed subsequent queries.

• Over the past year, I have been interested in seeing how group efficacy has developed over this past playing season. I want to get a feel for how you see team confidence evolving over the past season. How do you think the team’s beliefs have evolved over the past few months?

• From the group interview, players described the amount of time spent off the court together and the new coach as positive aspects influencing team confidence. Do you agree with these themes? Should additional themes be included?

• Do you perceive that any themes may be decreasing team confidence?

• Can you describe specific incidences from this season that have influenced team confidence in either a positive or negative manner?
TO: All Research Participants
FROM: Amber Stegelin
RE: Informed Consent

STUDY TITLE: A Grounded Theory Approach to Collective Efficacy in Sport

PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT: The purpose of this statement is to summarize the study I am conducting, explain what I am asking you to do, and to assure you that the information you and other participants share will be kept completely confidential to the extent permitted by law. Specifically, nobody besides the Principal Investigator will be able to identify you in this study and your name will not be used in any research reports that result from this project.

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two 30 minute interviews between May 1st 2002 until April 1st 2003. These interviews will be audio tape-recorded and you will be asked a series of questions about how you view confidence within your team developing and changing over the course of the playing season. In addition, you will be asked to participate in two group interviews with other members of your team concerning the same issues. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Your responses during these interviews will be kept completely confidential to the extent permitted by law. I, as the principal researcher will transcribe your interviews and the tape-recorded interviews will be kept in my office in a locked file cabinet. After your interviews are transcribed, the tapes will be destroyed.

TIME REQUIRED: Approximately 30 minutes for each individual interview for a total of 60 minutes. Approximately 45 minutes for each group interview for a total of 90 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no risks expected from participating in this study. As a result of your participation, you may develop insights about yourself that could help your future development as an athlete. No more than minimal risks are anticipated from participation in this study.

COMPENSATION: No compensation is given as a result of this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your transcribed interview will be assigned a code number and all surveys
will be kept in my office (Room 206-E Florida Gym) in a locked file cabinet. Your name will not be used in any report.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You should not feel compelled in any way whatsoever. There is no penalty for not participating.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

WHOM TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY:
Amber Stegelin, Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences, 100 Florida Gym, PO Box 118207, Gainesville, FL, 32611; ph. (352) 392-0580.

WHOM TO CONTACT ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT IN THE STUDY:
UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; ph. 392-0433.

AGREEMENT:
I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant:_______________________________________ Date:___________

Principal Investigator:____________________________ Date:___________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Order Themes</th>
<th>First Order Themes</th>
<th>General Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing same apartments</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Roommates stealing food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleaning up after roommate</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wanting to hang out with new people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeing each other getting “old”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Seeing others’ “true colors”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Roommate’s poor decision-making affecting rest of roommates</td>
<td>Living Situations (-)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Excessive study hall sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Class schedules pre-decided</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excessive number of credits/semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coworkers, not friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inability to communicate with each other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teammates dating each other</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Little in common (i.e., TV shows)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Raw Order Themes</td>
<td>First Order Themes</td>
<td>General Dimension</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticeable muscle tone</td>
<td>Conditioning Program (+)</td>
<td>Preseason Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Running gassers successfully</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Felt in better shape</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Encouraging each other</td>
<td>Modeling (+)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No opponent comparison</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captains motivating players</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings positive attitude to team</td>
<td>Attitude (+)</td>
<td>Positive Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideration for player views</td>
<td></td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding female point of view</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wants to be the best</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Set up free meals, better locker room, more “stuff”</td>
<td>Coaching Style (+)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Impression of good coach</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Good teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brought structure to program</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Former good player</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G
POSTSEASON INTERVIEW THEMES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Order Themes</th>
<th>First Order Themes</th>
<th>General Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Season-ending knee injury</td>
<td>Member Loss (-)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Members quitting team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Everything different</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No competition for playing time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Got out of shape</td>
<td>Minimal Exercise (-)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Got fat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing bring confidence down</td>
<td>Wins/losses (-)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>One conference win</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wanting season over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Blaming each other for losses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Players taking game into own hands</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Purposely ignoring coach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Members stopped caring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captains slacking in duties/roles</td>
<td>Modeling (-)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Talking (positively) just to talk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting along for practice sake</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monotonous drills</td>
<td>Practice (-)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of interest in practice transferring to games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-starters not giving effort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inexperienced players playing due to people dropping out</td>
<td>Previous Experience (-)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scared of competition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Last season’s disappointing season</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas/Semester Break</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Performance</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Raw Order Themes**

- First year coach (inexperienced)
- Responsible for team’s losses
- Lack of effective plays
- Lost confidence in teaching ability
- Questionable substitution patterns
- Inconsistent coaching style
- Pissing everybody off trying to motivate players
- Accepting lackluster effort from team
- Too friendly with players
- Too much control over players

**First Order Themes**

- Coaching Style (-)
  - Inconsistent coaching style
  - Pissing everybody off trying to motivate players
  - Accepting lackluster effort from team
  - Too friendly with players
  - Too much control over players

**General Dimension**

- Negative Leadership
- Influence

**Attitude (-)**

- Bringing negativity to locker room before/during games
- Assuming player wrongdoing

**Personal Actions (-)**

- Showing favoritism
- Slacking on coaching duties
- Handling of player dismissal
- Perceived insincere compliments
- Criticizing players who couldn’t take it
APPENDIX H
CRITICAL INFLUENCES ON THE EVOLUTION OF TEAM EFFICACY:
A GROUNDED THEORY
Preseason Beliefs

BOX A
Efficacy Sources
(1) Team compatibility
(2) Leadership style
(3) Talent levels

BOX B
Critical Incidents
(1) Loss of team members
(2) Minimal Exercise/Changes in Diet
(3) Changing role expectations

BOX C
Reevaluation Period:
Team members' reassessment of efficacy beliefs

BOX D
*If team performance meets or exceeds efficacy beliefs set during the preseason, then positive beliefs develop/continue

BOX E
Player satisfaction/motivation
Practice sessions
Cohesion
Player/coach relationships
Game performance

BOX F
*If team performance is less than or does not match efficacy beliefs set during the preseason, then negative beliefs develop/continue

BOX G
Influences beliefs for end of season performances, including:
Final regular season games
Postseason tournaments
Postseason training

BOX H
2 performance situations can evolve:
Negative performance can continue until season ends
Team can recover and improve performance
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Amber C. Stegelin was born in Norman, Oklahoma, on April 26, 1979. After receiving her Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from the College of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina, she relocated to the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida to pursue a Master of Science degree in Exercise and Sport Sciences, with a concentration in sport psychology. During her tenure as a graduate student, Amber has had the opportunity to serve as a graduate teaching assistant in the Department of Exercise and Sport Science’s sport and fitness program. In addition, Amber has had the opportunity to represent the College of Health and Human Performance in Daarmstadt, Germany, as part of a cultural exchange program between the University of Daarmstadt and the University of Florida in the summer of 2002. Amber is seeking future opportunities in the sport and exercise field.