

2005

Factors that influence the confidence of elite Junior Olympic female volleyball players

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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CONFIDENCE OF ELITE JUNIOR OLYMPIC
FEMALE VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate Program
in Exercise and Sport Sciences
Ithaca College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree Masters of Science

By
Carolyn Bell

December 2005

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CONFIDENCE OF ELITE JUNIOR OLYMPIC
FEMALE VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS

By

Carolyn Bell

An Abstract

of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Exercise

and Sport Sciences at

Ithaca College

December 2005

Thesis Advisor: Greg A. Shelley, Ph.D.

Abstract

Positive emotional state prior to competition is a crucial factor contributing to the success of an athlete's performance. Confidence, one example of a positive emotional state, has been reported as one of the most identifiable and prevalent characteristics in a successful athlete at any age. The purpose of this study was to assess and describe those factors that influenced the confidence of elite level Junior Olympic female volleyball players 18 years of age. These factors have not been studied to date in this group; therefore, this study qualitatively explored, through a semi-structured online interview developed for this study, factors that influenced these players' confidence. To triangulate the data, one parent of each athlete and the athlete's head coach were interviewed using the same interview format and content. The study was conducted in Rochester, Minnesota at the National Volleyball Center. The participants were three female volleyball players, and a parent and the coach of each player (9 total participants). All players were members of the Southern Minnesota Volleyball Junior Olympic club for females age 18. Common themes from each group (i.e., athlete, parent, and coach) were compared and as a result of across group comparisons, three common themes emerged from the data: (1) Confidence was defined as a strong belief in the athletes' abilities to be successful, (2) Confidence was strongly influenced by people in the athletes' day to day environments, and (3) Positive self-talk was a primary technique used to increase and regain confidence. Results from this study can begin to help coaches and sport psychology consultants understand, prepare, and devise and implement, more effective strategies to help young female volleyball players gain more confidence, thus positively influencing performance outcomes.

Ithaca College
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS

This is to certify that the Thesis of

Carolyn Bell

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in Exercise and
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A variety of factors affect the outcome of an athlete's performance in competition. One consensus is that a positive emotional state prior to competition is a crucial factor contributing to the success of an athlete's performance. In other words, the ability to develop and maintain positive emotion before competition is recognized by many sport scientists as one of the most important factors contributing to successful and consistent athletic performance (Prapavessis, 2000).

Confidence, one example of a positive emotional state, has been reported as one of the most identifiable and prevalent characteristics in a successful athlete at any age (Williams, 2001). In fact, "research has indicated that the most consistent factor distinguishing highly successful athletes from less successful athletes is confidence" (Weinberg, 1988, p. 128). Therefore, if an athlete is not confident in his or her ability to master a skill, then the resulting performance is often less than desirable. Confidence is deemed the foundation of success in sport performance.

When asked to define confidence, many individuals report a particular thought they have during a peak performance or describe how they mastered an activity when they were feeling confident. In the literature, however, confidence is often defined as a belief that a desired outcome will result during an upcoming personal performance (Smith, 1999; Weinberg, 1988). Therefore, if a female gymnast believes that she will "stick" her landing during an individual competition on the uneven bars, her chances of

success are higher. When one believes in his or her personal ability, or in other words when a player possesses high levels of confidence, positive performance outcomes may be more likely.

Confidence is also defined as a positive framework from which the athlete views his or her perceived ability (Fox & Corbin, 1989). For example, a female soccer player who is confident in her athletic ability will score a goal because she is assertive and looking for that opportunity during competition. This concept of believing in personal ability and seeking opportunity is called optimism (Zinsser, Bunker, & Williams, 2001), a component that is said to be present in someone who is confident.

Confidence has also been defined within the context of Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory. The self-efficacy theory asserts that one must believe "whole heartedly" that he or she can accomplish a goal, with the result being the desired outcome. The self-efficacy theory focuses more on a specific component of the performance (e.g., making more than 75 percent free throws), rather than on a general outcome (e.g., winning the gold medal in the gymnastics all-round competition) (Zinsser et al., 2001). According to Bandura (1986), individual beliefs and expectations are derived from several different sources of information; performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional/physical arousal (Manzo, 2001).

Performance accomplishment relates to when an athlete has performed well during a previous competition, leading that athlete to be more confident about future performances. In other words, past performance success equals increased probability of future performance success. Vicarious experience is another avenue that can increase levels of confidence (Bandura, 1986). If an athlete sees peers or mentors succeed in the

same or a similar event, there will likely be a perceived greater chance of success in that same event for that particular individual. In other words, seeing success in others helps the athlete feel more confident that he or she too can succeed in the same situation.

Support from family, friends, teammates, and the coaching staff is another factor that can impact successful performances. If athletes feel that they are receiving sincere encouragement and support from significant others they will more likely succeed during performance. For example, a player will likely perform better if a coach is telling her that she is doing a phenomenal job with ball control, compared to a time when that coach communicates critically that she cannot make a good pass. In sum, support and encouragement can lead to enhanced performances.

Finally, the way an athlete perceives his/her emotional and physical state during a competition impacts success. For instance, if sweaty palms, a pounding heart, and butterflies are considered motivators to the athlete, he or she would more likely have a successful performance when these physiological responses are experienced (Bandura, 1986). The opposite is also true whereby these same physical symptoms could be perceived as a manifestation of anxiety which could result in a negative performance.

Confidence is something that is possessed by most successful athletes despite varying perceptions of what confidence means and from where confidence is derived. In short, if athletes believe in their ability to complete a task before it happens (which is defined by many as confidence), then their chances of success during that activity often increase significantly. Whether this belief is derived from personal success, watching the success of others, or perceived positive emotion, the resulting performance is generally positive.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess and describe those factors that influenced the confidence of 18 year old elite level Junior Olympic female volleyball players.

Statement of the Problem

Factors influencing the confidence of elite level Junior Olympic female volleyball players have not been studied to date, either quantitatively or qualitatively. Therefore, this study explored qualitatively, through a semi-structured online interview, those factors that influenced confidence.

Benefits

This study explored those factors that impacted Junior Olympic female volleyball players' level of sport confidence. These factors were assessed based on the athletes' reported thoughts, feelings, and experiences, as well as each parent's and coach's perception of what impacted the player's confidence. By identifying these factors, coaches and sport psychology consultants may better understand, prepare, and devise and implement, more effective strategies to help young female volleyball players gain more confidence, thus positively influencing performance outcomes.

Research Question

What factors influence the confidence of 18 year old elite level Junior Olympic female volleyball players?

Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in Rochester, Minnesota at the National Volleyball Center. The participants were members of the Southern Minnesota Volleyball Junior Olympic club for females age 18. In addition, each player's parent and head coach were

questioned for what they perceived impacted the respective player's confidence. A semi-structured online interview was used as the assessment tool. The interview questions were developed by the investigator for this study.

This study provided a description of each player's perspective about her own confidence, as well as insight about her coach's and parent's perceptions of her source of confidence. Because this topic has never been explored qualitatively, a newly developed online interviewing technique was used to gather fundamental answers to the research question: What factors influence the confidence of 18 year old elite Junior Olympic female volleyball players?

There are many potential benefits to using qualitative rather than quantitative methodologies. Dale (1996) purported that individual perceived experience is invaluable and a source of information that is reliable and valid. The non-structured, semi-structured, and structured interviewing processes, unique to qualitative study, push the individual to independently derive answers about their personality without forced-choice inventories (Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1992). Moreover, qualitative methods can provide detailed and enriched information which provides the researcher the opportunity to better understand individual athlete perceptions and affect. Finally, qualitative analysis emphasizes understanding rather than quantification of results, and provides a chance for the researcher to look at the complexities of subjective phenomenological states.

Delimitations

1. The sample size of three 18 year old female Junior Olympic (JO) volleyball players may limit the results.

2. Female volleyball players were the only class of athletes assessed; therefore, any generalizations may apply only to this cohort.
3. The perspectives of the coaches and parents limit the generalizability of the results since they only reported observations rather than actual fact about the players' thoughts and feelings.
4. Only athletes who participated on the same junior elite level team for one season or more were assessed; therefore, these results generalize to junior elite level athletes and not developmental or recreational athletes.

Limitations

1. Results from this study may be generalized only to female Junior Olympic elite level volleyball players who are 18 years of age.
2. The results obtained from the interviews are limited to how accurate and truthful the participants' thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and experiences were reported.
3. The online interviewing technique used in this study has not been rated for reliability or validity.

Definition of Terms

Confidence - is a belief that a desired outcome will result during an upcoming personal performance (Smith, 1999; Weinberg, 1988).

Generalizability - is the extent to which results can be generalized from the part (e.g., individual person) to the whole (e.g., a group or general population) (Knapp, 1998).

Phenomenology – focuses on how human beings make sense of an experience (Quinn, 2002).

Semi-Structured Online Interview – a method of data collection whereby participants are asked to write short answers to pre-determined open-ended questions in an online format.

Triangulation – a way to add rigor to a study by combining the data from multiple interviews, questionnaires, and/or observations (Shelley, 1998).

Qualitative Study – The aim is to "study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Black, 1994). Qualitative study uses "a holistic perspective which preserves the complexities of human behavior" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Delimitations – a way to describe the populations to which generalizations may safely be made (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1987).

Limitations - refer to limiting conditions or restrictive weaknesses (Locke et al., 1987).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many factors influence whether or not an athlete will be successful in his or her performance. One factor that is invaluable to successful athletic performance is confidence. Confidence has been studied extensively across a variety of sports and the amount of self-confidence that an individual possesses obviously varies greatly among athletes (i.e., by sport and skill level). For example, researchers have found that the more highly skilled and advanced tennis players tend to possess higher levels of self-confidence (Perry & Williams, 1998). This finding has also been paralleled with gymnasts (Bejek & Hagtvet, 1996) and swimmers (Jones, Hanton, & Swain, 1994). There have also been several attempts to identify predictors of high self-confidence. These factors include level of preparedness and perceptions of external conditions (Jones, Swain, & Cale, 1990). However, it has been purported that the strongest predictor of self-confidence is the perceived ability an athlete possesses about his or her personal aptitude to successfully perform in a competition (Gould, Petchlikoff, & Weinberg, 1984). Despite these findings, it is still relatively unknown what impacts an athlete's confidence. The following chapter discusses factors found to influence athletes' confidence in and across several different sport settings, which include the use of imagery, self-fulfilling prophecies and self-talk, mental and physical preparedness for competition, and previous sport experience. Hockey, tennis, golf, gymnastics, and volleyball sport confidence is discussed.

Imagery

Imagery is one technique utilized by many athletes to induce confidence prior to performance. If an individual mentally prepares herself to win an event by seeing exactly how she will do it in her “minds eye”, greater confidence may result. For example, Abma, Fry, Li, and Relyea (2002) examined how high and low confident track and field athletes differed in their imagery capabilities. In this study, 111 NCAA Division I track and field athletes took the Trait Sport Confidence Inventory (TSCI), Sport Imagery Questionnaire (SIQ), and Movement Imagery Questionnaire-Revised (MIQ-R). Results showed that the highly confident athletes utilized all forms of imagery (visual, auditory, and olfactory) while the lower confident athletes used imagery less frequently and used fewer forms when actually engaging in the activity. Interesting, however, was that both of the groups possessed the same amount of imagery skill. Overall, this study found that high confident athletes used imagery more often when compared to low confident athletes despite the fact that both groups possessed the same ability for using imagery as a mental training tool. These results might indicate that imagery promotes higher confidence in those athletes who utilize the skill with high frequency.

In a similar study looking at elite level roller skaters ages 12 to 18 years of age, confidence was again found to be associated with the use of imagery. In this study, 57 roller skaters took the Movement Imagery Questionnaire-Revised, the Sport Imagery Questionnaire, and the State Sport Confidence Inventory (SSCI) prior to competition. The author concluded that roller skaters who used imagery had high sport confidence

relative to those individuals who did not use imagery (Moritz, Hall, Martin & Vodocz, 1996).

In another study, 36 college basketball players and skiers were asked to discuss how they prepared themselves for competition. Specifically, participants were asked to describe in detail the preparation that went into their pre-competitive routines. The results showed all athletes used vivid imagery techniques which included the use of vision, kinesthesia, and tactile sensory. In addition to the use of these senses, some of the athletes reported hearing, tasting, and smelling as a part of their imagery experience. In sum, those athletes who reported using vivid imagery, especially using imagery that utilized a variety of senses, felt most satisfied and confident in their sport performance (Madigan, Frey, & Matlock, 1992).

Savoy (1997) assessed how the development of a mental training program tailored exclusively for each individual player could improve performance and impact anxiety and confidence. The participants were two NCAA Division I female basketball players who were both interviewed by the investigator and given the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2). The assessment examined state somatic and cognitive anxiety, and self-confidence. Results showed that with the use of the training program, which included centering, focusing, and imagery, the subjects reported a significant improvement in self-confidence and subsequently, decreases in both state cognitive and somatic anxiety. Savoy also noted that both athletes statistically improved during game performances (e.g., more points scored during the game and increased free throw percentages) and the coach reported higher levels of satisfaction with both of the athletes performance outcomes (Savoy, 1997).

Imagery, and the effect it has on confidence, can also be assessed through the use of audio mastery rehearsal tapes. Mastery tapes are designed as an intervention to enhance competitive performances. In the following study, 48 male and female NCAA Division-I swimmers were assessed to identify how audio mastery rehearsal tapes and the use of imagery impacted cognitive and somatic anxiety and self-confidence. Before and after competition, subjects were administered the CSAI-2 and asked questions about their personal thoughts on how the rehearsal tape impacted their performance. Results indicated that after performances there were significant decreases in levels of anxiety and subsequently, increases in pre-competitive self-confidence. In short, analysis showed that in the opinions of the athletes, the tape and use of imagery made a significant difference in pre-competitive confidence and increased the potential for successful performance outcomes (Ward, 1997).

Not all studies have found that imagery increases self-confidence. For example, a study assessing 40 female intercollegiate swimmers found using one session of imagery prior to performance did not significantly impact self-confidence (Page, Sime, & Nordell, 1999). To assess this, the Competitive Anxiety Perception Scale (CAPS) and the CSAI-2 were administered to all the swimmers each week, over the course of five weeks. During this time, one-time imagery exposure was randomly assigned to the swimmers. For the athletes that were exposed to the imagery, there were no significant changes in anxiety and self-confidence, but the researchers did find significant differences related to how one perceived the anxiety. This study suggests that the use of imagery may not be a tool to increase self-confidence and decrease anxiety, but rather could be used to help modify or change how one perceives anxiety, and therefore, self-confidence. In other words,

some athletes view competitive anxiety as disadvantageous and negative during performance. On the other hand, some athletes perceive anxiety as a motivator, performance enhancer and self-confidence booster. If one could use imagery to aid the change of an athlete's perception of anxiety, the athlete may gain more successful performance outcomes and as a result, more positive self-confidence.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy and Self-Talk

Other factors influencing confidence include the thoughts and perceptions an athlete possesses about his or her ability and competition. Sometimes, these thoughts impact what is called a self-fulfilling prophecy. A self-fulfilling prophecy occurs when an individual consciously thinks about a future activity and believes in personal success in that particular activity, which then leads to higher probability of successful execution during the activity. The self-fulfilling prophecy is essentially the study of the effect of one's expectation on behavior (Eden, 1990).

Research has demonstrated the strong effect of expectations on behavior in the study of self-fulfilling prophecies (Cox, 2002). One skill that has been repeatedly found to enhance a self-fulfilling prophecy is self-talk, as long as it is positive and reinforcing. Self-talk can be an effective skill for controlling thoughts and influencing feelings, both of which can influence self-confidence (Cox, 2002). In sum, self-talk is viewed as that which an athlete expresses in thought (either overtly or covertly) to influence his or her actions and impact performance.

There are two types of self-talk, positive and negative. Positive self-talk is when athletes think about affirmative, encouraging circumstances involving their future performance. Negative self-talk, on the other hand, is often defined as illogical,

inappropriate and counterproductive to the situation. Negative self-talk can impede performance and positive self-talk has repeatedly been found to facilitate good performance (Theodorakis, Weinberg, Matsis, Douman, & Kazakas, 2000). Overall, positive self-talk has been reported by several researchers as a technique (i.e., a skill) for building confidence (Mahoney & Avenier, 1977; Meyers, Schlessler, Cooke, & Culliver, 1979; Rushall, 1984; Van Raalte, Brewer, Rivera, & Petitpas, 1994; Weinberg, Grove, & Jackson, 1992).

In sport, however, self-talk is a skill that likely “increases and reinforces your self-confidence even in the most adverse situations” (Miner, Shelley, & Henschen, 1999, pg. 126). For example, an athlete may want to enhance their confidence by saying to him or herself before the competition, “I am going to win this match no matter what it takes” (Weinberg, 1988). A similar yet simpler technique would be to say one positive word (cue word) repeatedly, either out loud or silently, before the event. For example, an athlete might say the word “calm” repeatedly until he is relaxed and prepared to engage in competition with confidence (Miner et al., 1999).

Several authors have identified positive self-talk as a means for helping improve performance (Kendall, Hrycaiko, Martin, & Kendall, 1990; Rushall, 1990; Rushall, Hall, Roux, Sasseville, & Rushall, 1988; Rushall & Shewchuk, 1989). With respect to self-talk strategies, the sports which have been studied most extensively are tennis, figure skating, basketball, golf, hockey, diving, wrestling, and endurance running. Rogerson and Hrycaiko (2002) examined the effectiveness of self-talk with ice hockey goaltenders. Participants were five male junior A hockey players ages 16 to 18 years. The number of saves for each participant was monitored and recorded at several different points in time

during the study using a single-subject multiple baseline across individuals design.

Between each point in time, self-talk and relaxation skills were practiced by the goalies. To examine the effects of these interventions the goal save percentages for each athlete were compared overtime. The results indicated that mental skills training, especially the use of self-talk, was effective in producing improvements in the save percentages of the goalies. The assumption here is that self-talk increased levels of self-confidence which in turn, impacted performance positively.

In a similar study with tennis players, Van Raalte et al. (1994) confirmed that positive self-talk influenced sport outcome positively, and conversely, negative self-talk influenced sport outcome adversely. This study examined the effect of self-talk on the match performance of 24 junior tennis players. Their observable self-talk, gestures, and match scores were recorded by an outside viewer on a data recording sheet. Players were also asked to describe all thoughts on a post-match questionnaire. It was found that negative self-talk was associated with losing and players who reported believing in the utility of self-talk won more points than players who did not. These results again suggest that self-talk can positively influence competitive sport outcomes. The implication is that athletes should know why and how to engage in positive self-talk as part of their competition conduct, with the intention that self-talk will positively influence confidence, and subsequently performance outcomes.

In another study assessing self-talk strategies and performance enhancement, Rushall et al. (1988) instructed 18 professional ski team members to use positive self-talk while performing training loop repetitions. To do this, the subjects were taught to use positive self-talk for the duration of a loop which ranged between 70 and 100 seconds.

On the alternate loops, the skiers used the type of thought processing that they would normally engage in while performing the task ("training thinking"). Results showed that all skiers improved their times when using positive self-talk and these increases were attributed to change in effort (as impacted by positive self-talk strategies). This study once again demonstrates that normal thought content generally is not conducive to the best outcomes in training and competition but rather, positive thought content is best for building confidence and positive performance outcomes.

Rushall and Shewchuk (1989) conducted a study using a similar experimental design but with six swimmers. Each swimmer was trained to use positive thinking. The participants practiced for a brief time, then used the positive thought technique in one training set and then alternated it with their normal thinking (i.e., what they would usually use during practice) for another set. To test the hypothesis that positive self-talk would enhance performance, two 400 meter swims were completed by each of the six individuals. Each swim was divided into 100 meter segments and the two types of thinking were alternated in each trial for each segment. As a result, four of the six swimmers improved performance, one did not change, and one did worse in the positive thinking segments. Similarly, a second task was to complete eight 100 meter swims. There was a positive thinking trial and a normal thinking trial that was alternated between each swim. In this second task, all swimmers improved their times when utilizing positive thinking rather than normal thinking. As a result, Rushall & Shewchuk (1989) concluded that swimmers can improve their confidence and performance by using practiced and planned positive self-talk techniques.

Preparedness

Physical condition also impacts confidence and performance outcomes. For example, “research indicates that a belief in personal confidence will positively influence performance, assuming that an individual has the necessary physical skills” (Smith, 1999, p. 87). In other words, confidence is assumed to be strengthened if a player knows he or she is better prepared to compete or can endure a physical activity longer than his or her opponent. Peak performance is attained by both psychological and physical conditioning (Persley, 1998). In short, to excel in sport one must engage specific mental training skills and be physically fit.

To demonstrate this effect, Dale (2000) studied elite decathletes by conducting a qualitative interview assessing the participant’s most memorable performances. Issues related to injury and lack of self-confidence emerged as dominant themes for some athletes. These athletes reported that preparation for competition was a significant factor that impacted their level of confidence during performance. When they were injured, they could not physically train as hard or in some cases, they could not train at all. Consequently, their level of self-confidence was significantly impacted. In fact, it was reported that this lack of preparation, due to the athlete’s inability to engage in physical activity, was extremely discouraging and negatively impacted self-confidence levels.

Practicing with a set strategy (e.g., a game plan) for competition is another factor than can positively influence confidence. For example, developing a “plan of attack” prior to the event, which includes assessing individual and opponent strengths and weaknesses, can help increase confidence (Weinberg, 1988). Again, in Dale’s (2000) study assessing the coping strategies of elite decathletes, time spent training was

identified as one experience which increased self-confidence. All athletes in the study reported that more training made them feel better prepared for the event; therefore, positively impacting their level of confidence. In addition, training played a major role in how consistent their performances were on a day to day basis. When athletes doubted their ability to perform well, they reported that they would remind themselves they had repeatedly prepared for the event, thus restoring levels of self-confidence.

Overall, knowing what to expect and having a set plan for how to deal with an event tends to lead to greater confidence. If one can minimize the unexpected consequences of a behavior, the stresses related to the unidentified event are often lessened, resulting in confidence being increased.

Previous Experience

Previous experiences in sport often impact whether or not an athlete is able to perform at his or her peak level in a future performance. In short, positive experiences likely increase levels of confidence related to future performances. To demonstrate this concept, a group of 37 female and 47 male volleyball players were administered the CSAI-2 prior to and after each match during a tournament. The researchers examined the relationship between performance expectations, anxiety, and athletic performance. The authors found that there was a difference between levels of confidence based on the outcomes of the previous match (Alexander & Krane, 1996). Therefore, if athletes perceived that they performed well in a previous match then it was easier for them to have confidence about their performance abilities in the following match. In other words, if an individual has had previous success in an activity, the likelihood that he or she will

succeed in the future is increased due to the fact that he or she possesses confidence from the preceding experience of success.

Belciug (1992) asked 98 athletes to identify what influenced the outcome of their performance in two separate, yet consecutive athletic contests. To identify what the athletes believed impacted their performance outcome, researchers used the Causal Dimensional Scale – II (CDS-II). The CDS-II identifies causal attributions about an event (e.g., athletic contest) on the dimensions of locus of causality, stability, and controllability (Furst, 1989). The goal when using this measure is to obtain a clear understanding of what athletes believe causes success or lack of success during their individual performance (Santamaria & Furst, 1994; Weiner, 1985). In addition to the administration of the CDS-II, participants were asked to rate future expectancy of success (on a 13-point scale) prior to each event.

Overall results indicated that a positive outcome (e.g., winning) reinforced the athletes' belief that they had control over future success. However, when a failure occurred (e.g., losing) causes for the failure were hard to pinpoint and excuses for failure contained varying and ambiguous subject matter. Thus, it is recommended that coaches and trainers encourage athletes to anticipate performance outcomes based on justifiable outcomes from previous experiences, especially reflected by their previous training and performance accomplishments.

Summary

It is evident there are several factors that can impact level of sport confidence. These factors can be both internal (e.g., perceptions and thoughts) or external (e.g., performance outcomes and personal relations with others). Even though these factors are

person and situation specific, it is clear that the goal of any athlete who is seeking success in sport should be to create higher levels of perceived confidence. How one consistently accomplishes this, remains in question.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to assess and describe those factors that influenced the confidence of 18 year old elite level Junior Olympic female volleyball players. In addition to interviewing each athlete, one parent and the head coach of each athlete were asked to provide their insight into what they perceived impacted the player's confidence. A new online qualitative interview design was piloted to assess the experiences, perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and emotions of this cohort. Following is an explanation of the justification and rationale for the qualitative design, selection of participants, instrumentation and procedures, and data analysis.

Justification and Rationale for the Qualitative Design

This study was designed to explore the phenomenological or subjective experiences of the participants. Qualitative methodology was the most appropriate means to solicit this information, as such methods allow the researcher to understand the human experience (Myers, 2000) by assessing the experiences, perceptions, feelings, and emotions of the athlete (Gorbett, 1985). To date, there have been no quantitative or qualitative studies assessing the factors affecting young female volleyball players' sources of confidence in sport. Therefore, it was initially important to gain a broadened sense of what these athletes were feeling and thinking. It was important to not only understand what the players thought, but also why. By allowing athletes the opportunity to explore their perceptions about personal confidence in an open-ended online format, it

was possible to better identify specific areas impacting confidence.

The value of the non-experimental design is the connection that it has with the real world experience of the participant. The qualitative paradigm aims to understand the participants view of the social world through personal accounts of both thought and feeling, and through the valuable meaning associated with self reported behavior (Wildemuth, 1993). This study attempted to triangulate the data by asking one of each player's parents and their head coach to fill out the same online interview that the athlete completed. The coaches and parents provided an "outsiders perspective" of what impacted the confidence of the athlete. Even though the perspective of the coach and parent varied somewhat from the athlete, the value of obtaining several different perspectives on the same topic (i.e., triangulation of data) enhances the accuracy and depth of the data. In sum, regardless of the online interview having never been piloted in any previous confidence research, this method allowed for convenient and timely data collection while still obtaining information that was qualitative in nature.

Selection of Participants

The United States Junior Olympic (JO) girls volleyball is a nationwide organization that was established by the United States Volleyball Association to assist the development of preadolescent and adolescent girls (ages 10 and under, and up to 18 years of age) across all skill levels. Junior Olympic volleyball programs are for those athletes who desire more skills training and competition than is available during a regular school season. The level of play varies within and between programs, from beginner to the elite level.

The elite level play in JO volleyball is extremely competitive. Most Division I university volleyball coaches attend JO regional tournaments to identify potential college players, some as young as the 8th grade. Although the players cannot be recruited until they are juniors in high school, the level of competition between clubs and players remains “cutthroat”. In many cases, JO clubs require athletes to play only volleyball, and not any other youth sports, because the season typically runs from November to July each year. The level of commitment at the elite level is very intense because teams travel to both in state and out of state tournaments at least two times per month. Some travel nearly every weekend through the months of January to July. As a result of the intensity of most JO volleyball programs, the level of family earnings is typically in the middle to upper income brackets on the socioeconomic ladder in the United States.

Athletes volunteered to participate in the study. Each player met in private with the researcher and was read the player recruitment statement (Appendix A). If the player was interested in hearing more about the study, she was asked to read the consent form (Appendix B) and sign it if she agreed to participate. The player was reminded that she had no obligation to participate in the study and that all information was to remain confidential. The athlete was told that after she completed and returned the online interview she would be sent a ten dollar gift certificate as payment for her time.

Each parent was contacted over the phone by the investigator and asked if he/she would be willing to hear about a research study that the investigator was conducting on female volleyball athletes. If he or she agreed to hear more, they were read (by the investigator) the parent recruitment statement (Appendix C) and sent a consent form (Appendix D) to an address they provided over the phone. Only one parent of each

athlete was needed to fulfill the parent participation requirement. The parent was reminded that he or she had no obligation to participate in the study, and that all information was to remain confidential. The parent was told that after he or she completed and returned the online interview, he or she would be sent a ten dollar gift certificate as payment for his or her time.

The head coach of each athlete was approached after a practice and asked if he or she would like to hear about a research study that the investigator was conducting on female volleyball athletes. The investigator specified that she needed approximately 15 minutes to describe the project. If the coach agreed to participate in the study, he or she was read the coach recruitment statement (Appendix E). After the researcher described the study in detail, the coach was then asked to read and sign the consent form (Appendix F). The coach was reminded that he or she had no obligation to participate in the study and that all information was to remain completely confidential. The coach was told that after he or she completed and returned the online interview, he or she would be sent a ten dollar gift certificate as payment for his or her time.

For athletes and coaches to be eligible for participation in the study, the following criteria had to have been met: (a) all of the players and coaches must have been members of the Southern Minnesota JO elite level volleyball program, (b) each player must have participated in at least five tournaments (approximately 30 matches) within the last six months, (c) the coach must have coached the player for approximately two months prior to participating in this study, and (d) the player must have been 18 years of age.

*Instrumentation and Procedures**Online Interview*

Despite online interviewing being a relatively new data collection procedure within the last decade, existing literature does show support for this methodology. For example, in a study assessing electronic mail surveys, researchers found that online data collection was a relatively cost and time efficient means of gathering participant information (Anderson & Gansneder, 1995; Schmidt, 1997). In a study conducted by Anderson and Gansneder (1995), approximately 488 internet users were randomly sampled to fill out a 720 item electronic e-mail survey. Not only did the study find cost and time efficient results, but it also discovered that the response rate exceeded the average rate for mailed questionnaires. The study investigators did note, however, that data may have been skewed because respondents were on average more experienced computer users; consequently they viewed this system as very user friendly and accessible.

Another study evaluated multimodal strategies of data collection that included web-based surveys, e-mail surveys, and standard postal methods as a means to collect data. The information collected in this particular study was with bankers from over 100 different countries. This study found similar results as Anderson & Gansneder (1995), but also found several other advantages of online surveys. These included low costs due to limited use of paper and postage, short response times due to the participant's ability to immediately submit survey data, and minimal error due to one less step in the translation of data to spreadsheets (Ilieva, Baron, & Healy, 2002). One disadvantage, as noted

previously, was that some participants were not technically savvy; therefore, the potential for error and losing data was increased.

Overall, it appears that there may be many advantages to conducting web-based survey research. However, a few disadvantages are noted. For example, some individuals may not know how to navigate a website well or understand the process of saving and submitting entered data. As a result there is the potential for missing data, unacceptable responses, duplicate submissions, and overall Web abuse. However, many measures are currently being developed and implemented to minimize the frequency of these consequences (Schmidt, 1997).

In short, data collection via online methodology presents survey researchers with an unprecedented tool for the collection of data (Schmidt, 1997). This support provided the rationale for the development of the online survey methodology used in the current study. All participants in the present study received the online interview which included variations of each question to accommodate how the questions were asked to the athlete, parent, and coach. The online questions were derived from the researcher's personal experience with athletes of this age group and skill level, as well as, a review of the existing confidence literature (Belciug, 1992; Callow & Hardy, 2001; Chie-der, Chen, Hung-yu, & Li-kang, 2003; Dale, 1994; Dale, 2000; Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1992; Jones, Swain, & Cale, 1990; Madigan, Frey, & Matlock, 1992; Mahoney & Avenir, 1977; Manzo, 2001; Mamassis & Doganis, 2004; Moritz, Hall, Martin, & Vodocz, 1996; Smith, 1999; Ward, 1997; & Zinsser, Bunker, & Williams, 2001). The participants were asked to fill out the interview during the third month of the JO season to insure that all

participants had ample time to evaluate those factors that they perceived to impact confidence.

Athletes

Athletes were asked questions (via the online interview) about the factors impacting their confidence (Appendix G). In addition, the athletes were asked to be as honest as possible in their answers since a goal of the project was to obtain information that may be helpful to other athletes in the future. They were also asked to answer the questions alone, not taking input from anyone else, including their parents or coach.

Coaches and Parents

The coaches and parents online interview was administered in an attempt to triangulate the data and add depth to the athletes' responses. The coaches and parents received the same online interview as the athletes, however, the coach's and parent's interview was geared towards what each believed impacted the athlete's confidence (Appendix H). In short, the coach and parent interviews were designed to assess the perceptions held by the coaches and parents as to what they believed to be the factors that influenced the confidence of the athlete.

Data Analysis

Final data analysis included three athletes, three parents, and three coaches (all from the 18 age level teams), for a total of nine participants. Data analysis was conducted in the following manner:

1. The data was typed into the online document by each participant; therefore, no transcription was necessary.

2. All answers for each question from the online interview were reviewed several times by the researcher to identify what general confidence factors were being reported. The repeated review helped the researcher identify general concepts that emerged from the verbatim responses of the participants.
3. The researcher examined all data (i.e., interviews) from each participant to identify significant statements of interest (Appendix I). Level of significance was determined by the type of response as it related to confidence. Therefore, if the response was directly related to the research question and the participant's phenomenological experience related to confidence, the statement was considered significant. All significant statements were extracted from the data and placed in a separate data set for each individual participant (i.e., athlete, parent, coach).
4. The significant statements from each participant were placed into groups of similar significant statements to create a category (Appendix J). In other words, within each category were similar significant statements from each group member (e.g., one group equaled a player, her parent, and her head coach), and these significant statements supported the researchers development of the respective category. Each of the five resulting categories was labeled according to its relationship to confidence.
5. Categories were then grouped into clusters of common themes within groups (Appendix K). A common within group theme was created when there were two or more significant statements from a player, parent, and/or coach, addressing the same issue within a category. This step followed the previous two steps in that

respondent's words and phrases were used as much as possible to develop the theme.

6. Once all interviews were assembled into common within group themes, across group comparisons were conducted. All themes resulting from this cross examination of within group comparisons are discussed as common themes across groups (Appendix L) in chapter 4. These common themes across groups represent the answer to the overall research question.

Examining the data using the aforementioned process for identifying individual themes is useful for determining the individual athlete lived experience; however, by examining the themes across participants, the results can provide greater depth and a more thorough description of those factors that influence confidence in elite level JO female volleyball players.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Each of the three groups discussed in the results section of this paper consist of a player, her parent, and her coach and is labeled as the following:

Group 1 = Participant 1, her parent, and her coach

Group 2 = Participant 2, her parent, and her coach

Group 3 = Participant 3, her parent, and her coach

The entire results section is divided into three main areas:

Section 1 = Categories

Section 2 = Within Group Themes

Section 3 = Across Group Themes

Section one provides a list of five categories for each group. A category was created only when a specific topic was addressed by all three members of the group. For example, if all three members of the group (player, parent, and coach) defined the word confidence in the answer to any question asked, then the category was labeled "Definition of Perceived Confidence". The category would then list each group member's significant statement about their definition of perceived confidence.

Section two is the list of common themes within each of the three groups. To develop a common theme within a group, there had to be two or more similar significant statements in a category. For example, each group had five categories listed, but because there were only a few similar significant statements within each category, group one had four within group common themes, and groups two and three had three within group

common themes.

Section three is the list of common themes across each of the three groups. To develop an across group theme, all three groups had to have the same within group theme; therefore, only three common themes across groups were derived from the data.

SECTION 1: CATEGORIES

CATEGORY # 1: DEFINITION OF PERCEIVED CONFIDENCE

Group 1

Player: Confidence was defined as self-affirming thoughts and a belief in personal ability.

This athlete's definition of confidence was influenced by her belief in her skill and ability in competitive volleyball. This theme was demonstrated by the following statement:

I define confidence as knowing, believing, and trusting in your ability and talents. When I experienced a strong sense of confidence, I felt like I could handle anything that would come my way and that I was unstoppable. Also, I wanted to touch every ball because I knew I could do something with it and that it would help my team. Basically, I had faith in myself that I could achieve what I wanted to (Participant 1).

Parent: Confidence was defined as knowing that you can deliver a predetermined outcome during a competition.

This parent's thoughts were demonstrated by the following statement:

My daughter would define confidence as stepping up to a serve on a game point and delivering a key serve under pressure. Everyone focuses on "end-of-game situations" and who steps up and wins the game. You need to make the key play at the key time, and when you do, you are confident (Participant 1 Parent).

Coach: Confidence was staying focused and level headed during a time of intense competition.

The coach expressed that the athlete's perception of confidence was derived from being in control of the outcome of each point against a strong opponent. The following quote about the coach's perception of the athlete's confidence was derived from this statement:

She defines confidence as staying calm while under stress. She seems to strive to stay calm during intense situations (Participant 1 Coach)

Group 2

Player: Confidence was defined as a personal belief in herself and this belief was instilled by her parents.

This athlete's definition of confidence was influenced by her belief in her own ability to achieve success. This was demonstrated by the following excerpt:

Confidence is to believe in yourself and know you can accomplish something. I usually know that I can do it because I have done it before. I was taught this growing up (Participant 2).

Parent: Confidence came from an internal belief that she can succeed.

The player's confidence was derived from within herself and from past experiences that have been positive. This was concluded from the following statement:

Confidence is feeling good about doing something, being successful, performing well, liking yourself, and telling yourself that you can do it and will do it. Because we have been positive in our home, she feels a lot of love and support for her actions. We support her athletic career. Our lives basically revolve around sports (Participant 2 Parent).

Coach: Confidence was a perceived feeling of power and control, and was derived from positive support from significant others.

The coach believed that this player would define confidence as a feeling of invisibility and being unstoppable in a competitive situation. He implied this by stating the following:

Confidence is something that this player finds easily. She has tons of family support that helps her find confidence. She finds confidence easily because she is a talented player that does not become intimidated by the opponent. As a result, she pushes through hard competition and when she is successful in those situations, she pushes harder (Participant 2 Coach).

Group 3

Player: Confidence was a belief in personal capability.

This athlete's definition of confidence was influenced by her perceptions of personal worthiness and a belief in her capabilities. She stated:

Confidence is the belief that one is a worthy and competent person. This is what I've been taught. My parents have always taught me that everyone wants to believe and know that they are worthy (Participant 3).

Parent: Confidence was an internal motivation.

This parent stated that personal expectations and motivation drive confidence.

This was demonstrated by the following statement:

Confidence is the expectation of success. Because she's a successful driven person, she wants to succeed at what's important to her, and she's used to having expectations to live up to (Participant 3 Parent).

Coach: Confidence was a belief in an ability to do a task successfully due to past accomplishments.

This coach believed that this player would define confidence as a thought or feeling that was derived from achievement in the past (in the same activity). The coach expressed this thought by stating:

She defines confidence as knowing she can do something because she has done something similar before. She seems much more comfortable in familiar situations and plays with more confidence against teams that she has had success against in the past (Participant 3 Coach).

CATEGORY # 2: RATIONALE FOR PERCEIVED LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE

Group 1

Player: She did not consider herself to be a confident athlete because she had a tendency to become intimidated by more skilled athletes.

This athlete was influenced by her opponent's capabilities. In other words, if she was against a challenger that she perceived to be more skilled than her, her level of confidence was negatively impacted. The following quote demonstrates this concept:

I tend to become timid when faced with challenging opponents and I underestimate my ability. I'll be confident when I'm playing against lesser or equal skilled teams (Participant 1).

Parent: She was not a confident athlete because she did not believe in her ability against tough opponents.

The parent of Participant 1 was convinced that her daughter lost confidence when faced with a challenging opponent who dominated the outcome of the game. She becomes timid and then ends up "backing off" her level of aggressiveness. This theme was demonstrated by the following statement:

She shows confidence in some areas, and will surprise me sometimes under pressure, but she does doubt her abilities more than she should, and when the team is struggling she lets her collective struggles affect her. Also, I don't think she realizes how good she is and what natural senses she has for the game. She can be intimidated by opposing players and thinks she doesn't belong on the same court (Participant 1 Parent).

Coach: She was a confident athlete due to her ability to stay focused and not get "rattled" in tough competitions.

The coach believed that the athlete was confident because she could stay focused and affect the outcome of a situation positively with self-assurance. This assumption was derived from the following excerpt:

Her emphasis seems to be on always improving the play on the ball. When she feels confident, she feels like she can make a play on the ball that will put it in the perfect spot. To do this, she works hard on her skills at both practice and competition. She is not afraid to play or practice at any position at any given time because she tells herself that she can do something and she believes in her ability to do something she wants to do at anytime (Participant 1 coach).

Group 2

Player: She considered herself to be a confident athlete due to positive role models in coaching.

This athlete derived much of her confidence from the interactions she had with her coaches in Junior Olympic volleyball. This theme was exemplified by the statement:

I would say more often than not I am a confident volleyball player. This confidence that I have is a new thing this Junior Olympic season that I didn't have very much of during the high school season. During the high school season I wasn't the star player and I didn't always do everything right, which led to the coach yelling at me. Him yelling at me made me less confident. But in the off-season, I have found confidence, thanks mostly to the coaches, who are encouraging and constructive (Participant 2).

Parent: She was a confident athlete because of her level of skill, belief in personal ability, close friendships on the court, and positive role models.

This parent listed the aforementioned factors in the following statement:

She is confident because of good coaching, skills, and sportsmanship. She likes herself and has great friends. She devotes a lot of time and energy into her sport, and it has paid off for her (Participant 2 Parent).

Coach: This player was confident because she remained in control.

The coach believed that the player was in control of herself because she believed in her ability to affect the outcome of a competition. This theme was reflected in the following comment:

She is able to calm others by showing her confidence in herself and in her team. She always appears in control (Participant 2 Coach).

Group 3

Player: She considered herself to be a confident athlete because she was competitive and believed in her personal ability to affect others.

This athlete was focused on the competitiveness of sport and seemed to thrive on the team atmosphere and personal success. This theme was expressed in the following description:

I believe that I can compete and affect the game and the team in a positive way (Participant 3).

Parent: She was a confident athlete because of her personal goals that had been met and the experience of past successes.

This theme was derived from the following statement:

She is a confident athlete because of past expectations and experience of success (Participant 3 Parent).

Coach: She was confident because of a desire to prove she could come through for the team in a tough situation.

The coach believed that this athlete was a hard worker that thrived on challenge and welcomed the opportunity for new ways to build skill and technique. This theme was expressed in the following narrative:

She is perpetually trying to do new things. She wants to handle the ball when the game is on the line. She openly measures her skill and success against her opponents as well as her teammates. She is a hard worker and visibly enjoys

building skill and trying new things in practice, and also looks forward to playing against difficult competition to measure her skill (Participant 3 Coach).

CATEGORY # 3: SOURCES OF CONFIDENCE

Group 1

Player: **Her level of confidence was a result of a past experiences.**

Participant 1 affirmed this by saying:

It's hard to pinpoint a certain person or event that helps my confidence. Probably it's just from experiences in athletics and in school (Participant 1).

Parent: **Her confidence was derived from the support of her father.**

The mother of Participant 1 attributed her daughter's sense of confidence to be derived from the guidance of her father. This theme was summarized by the following statement:

She learned to say and think the way she does when she is feeling confident probably because of her father and what he says to her (Participants 1 Parent).

Coach: **This player's level of confidence stemmed from experiences off the court that translated into confidence on the court.**

The coach expressed that the confidence of this athlete began with her successes outside of sport. The coach stated this in the following quote:

Her confidence comes, I believe, primarily from academic success. She has learned to believe in herself off the court and carries it onto the court with her (Participant 1 Coach).

Group 2

Player: **When she felt confident, she felt in control of the events around her and used positive self-talk.**

Feeling in control and having positive internal dialogue increased the confidence of this athlete. This feeling of control and use of self-talk was demonstrated by the following interview excerpt:

When I am confident I feel like I'm running the show. I want to touch the ball more and I think I'm more vocal and more likely to call someone off if I am playing well. I am also more aggressive. When I am confident it also usually means I am playing well or I just made a good play, so I say words of encouragement to myself; things like "yes!" and "set me again!"(Participant 2).

Parent: When she was confident, she was hard to "shake" and thrived on being "tough".

This parent believed that his daughter exuded invincibility when she was confident. This feeling was illustrated by the following statement:

She describes the feeling of confidence as a good feeling. Nothing can get you down and you are in the groove. She feeds on energy and confidence. She knows she can do it, has done it, and if something doesn't go her way, she'll try again. She is a fighter and thrives on it (Participant 2 Parent).

Coach: Confidence was feeling in control and the athlete focused on what was important for each particular instance.

The coach believed that this player kept her attention on small segments of the game to insure she was focusing on what was necessary to improve her performance the most at that time. This was indicated in the following statement:

I believe that she focuses on the little things that she can control when she is most confident. She does not interpret the whole game, just where she needs to be on defense, serve receive, and transition. All are separate areas that she focuses on as needed (Participant 2 Coach).

Group 3

Player: When she felt confident, she had a personal belief in herself and the outcomes she could affect.

This player's confidence was derived from an internal belief that she could do something positive for the team and she welcomed the opportunity to try to prove that she could do it. She stated the following:

When I am confident I believe that I can compete and affect the game and the team in a positive way. I'm telling the other team to serve it to me or hit it to me and I'm telling myself where to hit to and how to hit the ball (Participant 3).

Parent: Confidence was to know the plan of action.

This player's parent believed that her daughter was confident because she believed in her own personal ability to complete a task and knew how she was going to actually obtain the desired result. This theme was expressed in the following description:

She knows what to do and how to do it. She says to herself, "I know what to do, and I can do it" (Participant 3 Parent).

Coach: Confidence was being relaxed and prepared for any opportunity.

The coach believed that the player's confidence was derived from an inherent ability to stay calm and not be rattled by challenge. Note the following statement by the coach regarding the player's confident feelings:

When she is confident, she is ready for anything. She is not easily intimidated. For example, she was playing at home in a tournament and had just finished serving five consecutive points to end the game against a very good team. She came off the court with a big smile and said, "I don't know why, but I feel like I can put the ball anywhere I want to!" She is a player who engages in a large amount of philosophical introspection. Her confidence is based in a logical pattern and is difficult to influence externally. Her confidence tends to wax or wane over time measured in days or hours, rather than minutes or seconds like some athletes (Participant 3 Coach).

CATEGORY # 4: TECHNIQUES USED TO REGAIN CONFIDENCE

Group 1

Player: To regain her confidence, she used internal positive self-talk.

The player relied heavily on positive self-talk and a belief in personal abilities to regain her confidence. This thought was summarized by the following statement:

I try to calm myself down and tell myself that I know that I can handle the situation with ease. I have all the ability if I give it my all (Participant 1).

Parent: To regain her confidence she relied on external reinforcement and support.

The athlete's mother believed that she and her husband influenced the daughter's ability to bounce back from low confidence. The mother implied this by saying:

She doesn't regain [confidence] well - usually she regains her confidence after a pep talk from her father (Participant 1 Parent).

Coach: To regain her confidence the player used positive self-talk.

The coach believed that this player's confidence was impacted by her internal dialogue during the time of performance. This theme was evident in the following statement:

She tells herself that she is doing her best and will keep trying (Participant 1 Coach).

Group 2

Player: To regain confidence she thrived on support from others and positive performance outcomes.

This athlete could obtain confidence instantly by having a successful performance outcome accompanied by verbal praise from fellow teammates on the court. The following quote depicted her thoughts about reacquiring confidence:

To regain my confidence I usually have to make a good play and hear praise for a play that I made. I think it's hard to regain confidence if I'm playing poorly and then because of that I don't get the ball very much, so when I do there is a lot of pressure not to mess up (Participant 2).

Parent: To regain her confidence, she turned to her parents for support and accepted the reality of not always being at the top of her game.

This athlete's parent believed that his daughter had realistic expectations about performance and used her parents to gain perspective on any situation. This is implied from the following statement:

To regain her confidence, she refocuses. She also just accepts there may be bad days. Often, she has talked to her mom about the situation at hand to help resolve any issues (Participant 2 Parent).

Coach: Confidence was regained by centering attention on the important fundamentals of the game.

The coach believed this athlete determined what was important at each segment of time and used that as a focal point for her attention. This thought was noted in the following statement:

She focuses on one small part of her game, the part that she is doing well. Then she builds confidence from that particular instance. She also focuses on successes. When she is scoring and serving well, she becomes confident. When she is not doing those things and the team is down, it is difficult for her to remain confident (Player 2 Coach).

Group 3

Player: Her technique for regaining lost confidence was to redirect her attention to fundamentals.

This player believed that going back to the basics would assist her performance and as a result, help her regain confidence. She stated the following to demonstrate this point:

When I have lost my confidence I refocus. When I really lost my confidence one time, I took a few days off then took my sister to the gym and just worked on fundamentals. She was brutally honest about what I was doing wrong so I was forced to rethink everything I knew (Participant 3).

Parent: To regain her confidence, she looked to herself and others for feedback.

This player's parent believed that she looked to the family and coach to assist her with confidence boosting. This theme was demonstrated by the following statement:

She looks inside herself to think about what she's doing that isn't working. She also looks to us and the coach for direction, and she expects to hear some critique along with positive reinforcement (Participant 3 Parent).

Coach: She regained her confidence by using self reflection.

The coach stated that the player was a person who can realistically assess a situation in order to see the situation with sensible views, rather than emotionally submerge herself in the issue of losing confidence. As a result, this player had the ability to bounce back from lost confidence with relative ease. Note the following statement:

She sometimes has difficulty regaining her confidence once it is lost; however, I have seen her take a few minutes on the bench to emotionally detach from the situation and return appearing more confident. She has been such a successful athlete that she is not very comfortable with failure. She is confident because of her past successes in similar situations; however, she has not had many situations where she has failed (Participant 3 Coach)

CATEGORY # 5: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CONFIDENCE

Group 1

Player: Her confidence was influenced by other people in her environment, especially her coach.

The player's confidence in sport was easily disrupted or enhanced by people in her environment. This assumption was supported in the following interview excerpt:

People's thoughts and opinions impact my ability to gain and stay confident. Mainly coaches, parents and teammates influence my confidence. I think confidence stems from experience and positive interactions. I think that when I had a negative coach, who often criticized without giving much positive input, my confidence level was very low. It took me a while to regain my confidence. He would bring me down a lot and hardly ever compliment me. I felt like he didn't

believe that I was any good, so I began to think that it was true. Some coaches can have a really positive impact on a player's confidence because they will compliment a player when they've done something good, or encourage them for trying hard. I truly believe that coaches have a large effect on a player's confidence (Participant 1).

Parent: Confidence was influenced by people in the player's environment.

This parent believed that the player's confidence in sport was impacted by individual interactions with the player on and off of the court. This conclusion was derived from the statement:

Being taken out of the game at the first mistake is a tremendous confidence killer. Some of the worst coaching I've seen is to put a kid in cold, and then yell at them and yank them out if they don't handle the first play perfectly (Participant 1 Parent).

Coach: Confidence was impacted by people in the environment and her physical condition.

The coach believed that the player's ability to stay confident and become confident was impacted by how significant individuals in her life provided support and encouragement. She was also impacted by chronic injury. These feelings were reflected in the following comments:

Those who impact her confidence are herself, her parents, teammates, and the coach. She also has a chronic low back injury which affects her confidence at times because it slows her down. She is a very good student and her academic success adds to her confidence. Other factors include success, the task she is asked to do, and past and present coaching (Participant 1 Coach).

Group 2

Player: Her level of confidence was influenced by people who she interacted with in her life.

This player said that her confidence was impacted by what others thought about her performance and abilities, especially the coaches. This was expressed in the following excerpt:

My performance and the coaches' belief in me impact my ability to stay confident. The people who influence my confidence are coaches, teammates, parents and recruiters watching. I really think the coaching environment makes a great difference on my confidence. Within a two month time period my confidence greatly improved, while my skill probably improved too, but not as much as my confidence and it was because of the welcoming and encouraging training environment (Participant 2).

Parent: Her level of confidence was influenced by physical and environmental factors.

The parent of this athlete thought that a variety of factors on and off of the court impacted the player's confidence. This was found in the following statement:

Energy, team play, support from players, coaches, parents, fans, referees, and even the other team impact confidence. Also, getting enough sleep, eating right and resting between competition influences confidence (Participant 2 Parent).

Coach: Confidence was influenced by many internal and external factors.

The following quote illustrated a variety of factors that influenced the player's experience of confidence:

Factors that influence her confidence are success, rhythm, self-talk, focus on the little things, confidence in her teammates, positive feedback from the coaches, hard work in practice, and fatigue. For example, the team was playing in a tournament in Waterloo, IA. They had made it into the top flight for the play-offs and had a chance to win the whole event. Her team was the last seeded team in the bracket and so had drawn the first seed in the first round. There was nothing to lose and so the team, including [the player] were told to go all out and to take chances. They were told that they could beat anyone at the tournament and instructed to do what they knew how to do. The team was impacted by injury, so only 7 players were playing. [The player] specifically was instructed to challenge the block when attacking. Her team was crushed in the first game. Following that game, she demonstrated the most confidence I have ever seen following a loss. Her team rallied around several ace serves and spectacular defensive plays. She challenged the block and scored nearly every time she attempted to. Her

passing was truly great, and her smile was very big. Her team fed off of her (and other's) confidence and won the next five games against three different opponents. Aggressive serving and hitting were the common theme. When the team finally lost in the finals, she seemed more surprised than dissatisfied (Participant 2 Coach).

Group 3

Player: Her level of confidence was influenced by other people.

This player derived confidence from a core group of individuals whom she considered to be important to her. She stated the following to demonstrate this point:

My CSG (Core Support Group), my mom, dad, sister, friends and coach influence my confidence (Participant 3).

Parent: Her level of confidence was influenced by other people and their expectations of her.

This athlete's parent believed the player's confidence was a result of the constructive criticism that she had received from the people she interacted with the most.

This theme was derived from the statement:

Her level of confidence is influenced by parents, siblings, coaches, and friends. We've worked with her (not just sports) to have expectations just beyond what she's doing, and she's just had a lot of positive feedback both verbal and from video taping (Participant 3 Parent).

Coach: This player's confidence was influenced by those who are closest to her, by her perception of past success, and by her commitment to hard work and success.

This was illustrated by the following excerpt:

The people who influence her are her mother, father, sister, brother, and current coach. She is also influenced by her success, history of success, her family environment, her teammates, hard work, being prepared, and the coaching style of her coach (Participant 3 Coach).

SECTION 2: WITHIN GROUP THEMES

Common themes were the result of comparing the responses of each athlete with her parent and her coach's response; therefore, three clusters of data were analyzed for these groups:

Group 1 = Participant 1, her parent, and her coach

Group 2 = Participant 2, her parent, and her coach

Group 3 = Participant 3, her parent, and her coach

Group 1

COMMON THEME # 1

The athlete was not confident because she was intimidated by opponents who she perceived to be more skilled than her.

Both the player and parent suggested that she was not a confident athlete due to a lack of self-assurance that she could compete at a high level and still be an effective player on the court. Both attributed her lack of confidence to the player's tendency to become less aggressive when she perceived her opponents to be more skilled than her. She often felt like she was going to make more mistakes; therefore, she "backed off" her level of intensity. Both the parent and player also alluded to the fact that she would proceed onto the court with confidence initially, but if the challenger was dominating, she would "back down" and concede to the challenger, often resulting in a loss of good performance. This theme was reflected in the following comments:

I tend to become intimidated when faced with challenging opponents and I underestimate my ability. I'll be confident when I'm playing against lesser or equal skilled teams (Participant 1)

She shows confidence in some areas, and will surprise me sometimes under pressure, but she does doubt her abilities more than she should, and when the

team is struggling, she lets her collective struggles affect her. Also, I don't think she realizes how good she is and what naturally senses she has for the game. She can be intimidated by opposing players and thinks she doesn't belong on the same court (Participant 1 Parent).

COMMON THEME # 2

Confidence was a result of success both on and off of the court.

Both the athlete and coach stated that the confidence of this athlete stemmed from overcoming challenges successfully both on and off of the court. The player attributed confidence to be more centered on successful experiences from the past, and the coach attributed the athlete's sport confidence to be translated from her success off of the court. Therefore, the player said she was confident because she experienced a triumph in a similar situation in the past. The coach, however, implied that she felt good about herself due to achievements outside of sport. This contentment from non-sport success seemingly translated into ease on the court. Both the player and coach attributed the athlete's confidence to past success, but the area in her life where success had occurred was different. These similar thoughts were expressed in the following comments:

It's hard to pinpoint a certain person or event that helps my confidence. Probably it's just from experience in athletics and in school (Participant 1).

Her confidence comes from, I believe, primarily from academic success. She has learned to believe in herself off the court and carries it onto the court with her (Participant 1 Coach).

COMMON THEME # 3

Confidence could be obtained through positive self-talk.

The player and coach reported that internal dialogue that was positive, supportive, and reinforcing was the most effective way to re-build lost confidence. The self-talk must consist of "pep-talk" type dialogue and self-affirming messages such as "I know I

can do this” or “I need to keep trying because I can win”. In this particular case, the parent reported an opposite opinion of the athlete and coach; in short, the mother suggested that her daughter expected external reinforcement to assist her with the regaining of lost confidence. For example, the parent actually suggested that her daughter regained confidence only after she “gets a pep talk from her father”. Regardless, the athlete and coach both exemplified this theme in the statements following:

I try to calm myself down and tell myself that I know that I can handle the situation with ease (Participant 1).

She tells herself that she is doing her best and will keep trying (Participant 1 Coach).

COMMON THEME # 4

Confidence was positively and negatively influenced by significant others in the player’s environment.

The player, parent, and coach all agreed that the player’s confidence was impacted by what other people said and did. Significant others included family, friends, teammates, and coaches. Non-constructive criticism was mentioned by all three individuals as being detrimental to the player’s confidence. If a coach, for example, was verbally berating the player and not providing constructive feedback with positive encouragement, her level of confidence was shattered.

People’s thoughts and opinions impact my ability to gain and stay confident. Mainly coaches, parents and teammates influence my confidence. I think confidence stems from experience and positive interactions. I think that when I had a negative coach, who often criticized without giving much positive input, my confidence level was very low. It took me a while to regain my confidence. He would bring me down a lot and hardly ever compliment me. I felt like he didn’t believe that I was any good, so I began to think that it was true. Some coaches can have a really positive impact on a player’s confidence because they will compliment a player when they’ve done something good, or encourage them for

trying hard. I truly believe that coaches have a large effect on a player's confidence (Participant 1).

Being taken out of the game at the first mistake is a tremendous confidence killer. Some of the worst coaching I've seen is to put a kid in cold, and then yell at them and yank them out if they don't handle the first play perfectly (Participant 1 Parent).

Those who impact her confidence are herself, her parents, teammates, and the coach (Participant 1 Coach).

Group 2

COMMON THEME # 1

Confidence was defined as a strong belief in her ability to achieve.

All of group 2 participants (player, parent, and coach) believed that confidence was a self-assurance and faith that the athlete could compete head to head with an opponent and win. Essentially, if she could believe that she could achieve and feel self-assured that she could positively affect the outcome of a match, she would. The overall theme was she had to tell herself that she had conviction enough to be successful in order to accomplish a winning outcome. This belief in success and conviction to win was demonstrated through the following statements:

Confidence is to believe in yourself and know you can accomplish something (Participant 2).

Confidence is feeling good about doing something, being successful, performing well, liking yourself, and knowing that she can do it and will do it (Participant 2 Parent).

She finds confidence easily because she is a talented player that does not become intimidated by the opponent and believes in herself. As a result, she pushes through hard competition and when she is successful in those situations, she pushes harder (Participant 2 Coach).

COMMON THEME # 2

Confidence was impacted in a positive way by the coach as a role-model.

This athlete and her parent both reported that her confidence stemmed from positive interactions that she had repeatedly experienced with her coach. She found support and guidance from the coach and believed in what the coach had to say to help her succeed. The coach provided advice that was beneficial to the athlete and through role-modeling, demonstrated positive, confident behavior. The statements below provided examples to support this common theme:

I would say more often than not I am a confident volleyball player. This confidence that I have is a new thing this Junior Olympic season that I didn't have very much of during the high school season. During the high school season I wasn't the star player and I didn't always do everything right, which led to the coach yelling at me. Him yelling at me made me less confident. But in the off-season, I have found confidence, thanks mostly to the coaches, who are encouraging and constructive (Participant 2).

She is confident because of good coaching, skills, and sportsmanship (Participant 2 Parent).

COMMON THEME # 3

Confidence was derived from feeling in control.

The player and coach both believed that when the athlete was feeling confident she felt in control of the situation. She thrived on having a feeling of power and this was from dominating and influencing the outcome of the game. These feelings can be found in the statements below:

When I am confident I feel like I'm running the show. I want to touch the ball more and I think I'm more vocal and more likely to call someone off if I am playing well. I am also more aggressive. When I am confident it also usually means I am playing well or I just made a good play, so I say words of encouragement to myself; things like "yes!" and "set me again!" (Participant 2).

I believe that she focuses on the little things that she can control when she is most confident. She does not interpret the whole game, just where she needs to be on defense, serve receive, and transition. All are separate areas that she focuses on as needed (Participant 2 Coach).

Across Groups Common Theme # 1: Self-Belief

Confidence was defined as a strong belief in the athletes' abilities to be successful.

The theory that has been used repeatedly in the literature to describe self-confidence is Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory (Callow & Hardy, 2001). According to this theory, an athlete that believes in his or her ability to execute an action and impact an outcome conducts him/herself in a manner that allows him/her to achieve success. In other words, by conducting behavior in an organized fashion with a prescribed course of action, a desired performance may result. Based on these thoughts, self-efficacy is often described as a "sense that one is competent and effective" (Meyers, 1993, p.101).

Participant 3 defined confidence using the term competency when she stated:

Confidence is a belief that one is a worthy and competent person. My parents have always taught me that everyone wants to believe and know that they are worthy (Participant 3).

The self-efficacy theory purports that a belief in the self is grounded in four sources of information: past success during the same or similar event, seeing others succeed in the same or similar event, support from others (by them showing or verbalizing encouragement), and physical readiness (Manzo, 2001). It is postulated that self-efficacy beliefs influence how one makes choices during a task, the amount of effort put forth during the task, one's ability to persist, resiliency, and achievement motivation (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1995). Consequently, if players believe that they can achieve, they will conduct themselves in a manner that will help them succeed, and as a result, have high self-confidence.

The athletes in the current study implied that their self-confidence was in fact very similar to self-efficacy. As mentioned previously, the self-efficacy theory purports

that a belief in “self-ability” or the thought “I know I can and will do this” is impacted by previous performance accomplishments. If athletes have success in a prior experience similar to what they will or are currently engaging in, their belief that they can accomplish that task is stronger, consequently their perceived level of confidence is higher. Participant 2 expressed her confidence and herself to be impacted by her previous positive sport experiences. For example, she stated:

Confidence is to believe in yourself and know you can accomplish something. I usually know that I can do it because I have done it before (Participant 2).

Another concept derived from the self-efficacy theory is that the sport environment can significantly influence the individual’s belief in his or her ability to accomplish a task. This has been termed “verbal persuasion” by Bandura (1997). Verbal persuasion essentially implies that the belief about oneself is influenced by the verbal and non verbal messages that are conveyed to the athlete by other people. Examples of this would include encouragement, constructive criticism, and expectations explicitly defined (Swanson & Woitke, 1997). In this study, support and verbal persuasion were demonstrated by the following statements:

She learned to say and think the way she does when she is feeling confident probably because of her father and what he says to her (Participant 1 Parent).

She doesn’t regain [confidence] well – usually she regains her confidence after a pep talk from her father (Participant 1 Parent).

People’s thoughts and opinions impact my ability to gain and stay confident. Mainly coaches, parents, and teammates influence my confidence. I think confidence stems from experience and positive interactions. I think that when I had a negative coach, who often criticized without giving much positive input, my confidence level was low. It took me a while to regain my confidence. He would bring me down a lot and hardly ever compliment me. I felt like he didn’t believe that I was any good, so I began to think that it was true. Some coaches can have a really positive impact on a player’s confidence because they will compliment a

player when they've done something good, or encourage them for trying hard (Participant 1).

Some of the worst coaching I've seen is to put a kid in cold, and then yell at them and yank them out if they don't handle the first play perfectly (Participant 1 Parent).

I have found confidence, thanks mostly to the coaches, who are encouraging and constructive (Participant 2).

To regain my confidence I usually have to make a good play and hear praise for a play that I made (Participant 2).

Because we have been positive in our home, she feels a lot of love and support for her actions (Participant 2 Parent).

Factors that influence her confidence are positive feedback from the coaches (Participant 2 Coach).

When I really lost my confidence one time, I took a few days off then took my sister to the gym and just worked on fundamentals. She was brutally honest about what I was doing wrong so I was forced to rethink everything I knew (Participant 3).

Confidence is an expectation and belief in success. Because she's a successful driven person, she wants to succeed at what's important to her, and she's used to having expectations to live up to [from self and others] (Participant 3 Parent).

Across Groups Common Theme # 2: Influence from Others

Confidence was strongly influenced by people in the athletes' day to day environments.

An athlete's confidence can be significantly influenced by how the player perceives the intention of others' verbal communication as well as, how people respond to the athlete's thoughts, behaviors, and actions. Dale (1994) conducted a phenomenological study investigating "best-ever performances" of an elite decathlete and found that the awareness of others, which included family members, coaches, and the crowd watching, all positively impacted the athlete's performance. Meaning "his

awareness of others was experienced as an asset to his performance. His family and coaches served as a comfort to him. He only noticed the crowd in one event, and they served to heighten his arousal level by chanting his name” (Dale, 2000, p. 18).

In the present study, Participant 3 stated that how people react to her behavior influenced her confidence. This is implied in the following comment:

My CSG (Core Support Group), my mom, dad, sister, friends, and coach influence my confidence. My physical abilities, whether other people seem to respect me, things that people say, what kind of reactions I get when I talk to people or see people, and how well I think I perform at given tasks compared with others all influence my confidence (Participant 3).

Two participants suggested that their coach’s behavior and communication style, both verbal and non verbal, impacted their ability to become and stay confident. For example, Participant 2 attributed her increase in confidence to her current coach’s positive attitude and encouragement, and stated that her previous coach negatively impacted her confidence because he yelled at her. For example, she said:

I would say more often than not I am a confident volleyball player. This confidence that I have is a new thing this Junior Olympic season that I didn’t have very much of during the high school season. During the high school season I wasn’t the star player and I didn’t always do everything right, which led to the coach yelling at me. Him yelling at me made me less confident. But in the off-season, I have found confidence, thanks mostly to the coaches, who are encouraging and constructive (Participant 2).

Participant 1 had a similar feeling:

People’s thoughts and opinions impact my ability to gain and stay confident. Mainly coaches, parents and teammates influence my confidence. I think confidence stems from experience and positive interactions. I think that when I had a negative coach, who often criticized without giving much positive input, my confidence level was very low. It took me a while to regain my confidence. He would bring me down a lot and hardly ever compliment me. I felt like he didn’t believe that I was any good, so I began to think that it was true. Some coaches can have a really positive impact on a player’s confidence because they will compliment a player when they’ve done something good, or encourage them for

trying hard. I truly believe that coaches have a large effect on a player's confidence (Participant 1).

The role of parents and other significant individuals, such as coaches and peers, can directly affect the development of a girl's self-perceptions, which in turn can impact self-confidence. In studies conducted by Jaffe and Manzer (1992) and Jaffe and Ricker (1993), differences were found between older and younger girls regarding who the girls chose to hear encouragement from when physically active. Essentially, younger girls tended to listen to their parents' feedback and older girls tended to listen to peers' feedback. The oldest age group, age 16 to 18, tended to evaluate themselves based on a self-reference. In other words, they cared only for what they thought, and not what others thought of them. Weiss and Ebbeck (1996) supported this finding as they too have found that children of different ages utilize separate resources for feedback. Despite the finding that older age groups use peer and personal judgment to form opinions about the self, the participants in the current study seemed to still have a large focus on parent and coach support. This is evident by the following comments:

Her level of confidence is influenced by parents, siblings, coaches, and friends (Participant 3 Parent).

The people who influence her are her mother, father, sister, brother, and current coach (Participant 3 Coach).

Being taken out of the game at the first mistake is a tremendous confidence killer. Some of the worst coaching I've ever seen is to put a kid in cold, and then yell at them and yank them out if they don't handle the first play perfectly (Participant 1 Parent).

Those who impact her confidence are herself, her parents, teammates, and the coach (Participant 1 Coach).

In short, coaching style and parental support have been found to be important for positive self-image and positive self-confidence. First, Brustad (1996) believed that parents, in particular, play a very important role in how a young child perceives him or herself. “Children are more likely to enjoy their sport experience if they perceive that their parents have realistic expectations, provide support and encouragement for their efforts and respond infrequently with negative evaluations of their performance” (Brustad, 1993, p. 114).

Coaching behavior that is supportive in nature may be just as important as positive parental reinforcement. For example, Magyar and Feltz (2003) examined the sources of female athletes’ sports confidence. Results indicated the coach to be the person who established a climate that assisted the female athletes to build self-confidence. If a coach demonstrates behavior that is considered berating, negative, or hurtful, female athletes’ confidence may be hindered. Likewise, in another study assessing the effects of coaches’ expectations and feedback on the self-perceptions of athletes, Sinclair and Vealy (1989) found that if a coach routinely reacts negatively towards a player, it only hinders the level of athlete confidence (Sinclair & Vealy, 1989). In sum, it is essential that coaches react in a positive manner toward athletes in order to help increase positive feelings towards their sport and increase players’ self-confidence.

Across Groups Common Theme # 3: Positive Self-Talk

Positive self-talk was a primary technique used to increase and regain confidence.

Self-talk is technique that can be used to enhance self-confidence, consequently, “the role of self-talk in sport performance has been discussed extensively in the literature” (Rogerson & Hrycaiko, 2002, p. 14). Studies have shown that athletes claim

their best performances have followed the use of mental preparation techniques, which often include positive self-talk (Cohn, 1991; Gould, Eklun, & Jackson, 1992). The use of internal dialogue prior to and during competition is vital because it can enhance the preparation of the athlete's physical state and encourages psychological motivation (Miller & Donohue, 2003). In addition, it provides the athlete with an internal guide that enhances skill deployment (Zinsser et al., 2001). More importantly to some, is the assertion that positive self-talk functions to reduce nervousness and anxiety, increase effort and exertion, and ultimately increase self-confidence (Miller & Donohue, 2003).

Participants in the current study also claimed to use some form of self-talk to assist them in gaining or regaining confidence. For example, Participant 1 used her internal dialogue as a way to reduce her anxiety. She stated:

I try to calm myself down and tell myself that I know that I can handle the situation with ease (Participant 1).

The coach of Participant 1 had the same perception of what the athlete said to herself when she was trying to regain or maintain her self-confidence. The coach said:

She tells herself that she is going to do her best and will keep trying (Participant 1 Coach).

Motivational type statements seem to enhance performance outcomes by providing a foundation for a positive mood state and to arouse greater effort. Positive mood states and increased efforts may transpire into enhanced feelings of confidence (Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996). The following statement by Participant 2 is an example of how she felt when she was confident and using positive self-talk:

When I am confident it usually means I am playing well or I just made a good play, so I say words of encouragement to myself; things like "yes!" and "set me again!" (Participant 2).

In sum, many athletes have been studied for their use of positive self-talk (Dale, 2000; Magyar & Feltz, 2003; Mamassis & Doganis, 2004; Rogerson & Hrycaiko, 2002; Ryska, 1998). In each case, positive self-talk influenced or contributed to increased self-confidence.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that there are many factors that can have an impact on self-confidence; however, three common factors that influence self-confidence emerged from this group of 18 year old female elite level volleyball players. The three factors were 1) self-belief, 2) influence from others, and 3) positive self-talk. Each factor has been supported in the literature as impacting self-confidence. As noted, the evaluation of self-confidence in sport has been generally developed based on the self-efficacy literature (Manzo, 2001). Two of the athletes (i.e., athletes 2 and 3) confirmed that self-efficacy does actually impact self-confidence. They reported that their self-confidence was impacted by their belief in themselves and their ability to succeed in competition.

The impact of family, friends, coaches, and opponents on self-confidence has also been supported (Dale, 2000). All three participants (i.e., athletes 1, 2, and 3) reported that people in the environment significantly affected their self-confidence. In addition, two of the participants (i.e., athletes 1 and 3) had both their parent and head coach report that they too perceived the athlete's confidence to be significantly influenced by those she interacted with in her day to day life, both on and off of the court.

Last, self-talk is used by many successful athletes to increase confidence and consequently improve performance (Rogerson & Hrycaiko, 2002). Again, two

participants (i.e., athletes 1 and 2) reported using internal dialogue to encourage and motivate themselves to perform with confidence. In addition, the coach of Participant 1 also thought that the athlete relied heavily on her internal dialogue to keep herself focused on the game and influence her self-confidence.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored perceptions about self-confidence of three 18 year old female elite level Junior Olympic volleyball players, as well as, a parent and the head coach of each player. The purpose of this study was to assess and describe those factors that influenced these players' confidence. This chapter provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Summary

Each athlete, a parent, and the athlete's head coach were interviewed to determine their perceptions of self-confidence using a newly developed online qualitative interview. There were a total of three matched pairs of data used in the final analysis, which included three athletes, one parent of each athlete, and the head coach of each athlete. Three common themes resulted from the analysis. Two of the three athletes and one parent all suggested that confidence was derived from and defined as a belief in oneself to successfully complete a task. All the participants, two of the parents, and two of the coaches reported that the athletes' confidence was impacted negatively and positively by what was said to the athlete, and what the athlete perceived other people thought about their ability to succeed, as well as their performance capabilities. Two of the three athletes reported using positive self-talk to assist them with obtaining and reacquiring self-confidence both prior to and during performances. One of the coaches also reported an athlete's use of positive self-talk to gain confidence.

Conclusions

Confidence is derived from and impacted both negatively and positively by three different factors; belief in the self, impact from others, and positive self-talk.

Three overriding themes emerged to help clarify athletes' perceptions of what factors influenced their self-confidence in sport.

(1) Confidence was defined as a strong belief in the athletes' abilities to be successful,

(2) Confidence was strongly influenced by people in the athletes' day to day environments, and

(3) Positive self-talk was a primary technique used to increase and regain confidence.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations should be considered when further investigating the factors that influence the confidence of 18 year old female elite level Junior Olympic volleyball players. First, the present study should be replicated. Replication will better determine if the online interview method is a valid way to assess perceptions of participants' experiences surrounding self-confidence. Second, more participants ($n > 9$) that are representative of a diverse athletic population and age cohort, and that represent a variety of sports and levels, will provide more validity to the measure and data outcomes; this will also allow for the results to be generalized to other populations in sport. Furthermore, selecting a more diversified population of athletes will provide a more meaningful and in-depth understanding of the results.

The literature does not speak to gender differences with respect to confidence in volleyball athletes; therefore, assessing males may prove to be very beneficial. In short,

future studies should assess gender differences in relationship to the factors affecting self-confidence in the sport of volleyball.

To further address the issue of validity in this study, extended fieldwork should be implemented. For example, in the future it may be necessary to collect data over an extended period of time to gain a more accurate picture of the phenomenon of confidence. Potentially, what the athletes reported during the limited time of this study may have been influenced by confounding factors (e.g., school schedules, family conflict, social activities). If participants are asked the same questions repeatedly, over an extended period of time, it is more likely that the most consistent patterns of behavior representing the true individual would emerge overtime.

This study neglected to gain participant feedback or in other words, conduct the process of member checking. Essentially, to validate data collected from participants, future researchers should ask participants to review their answers to check for researcher accuracy in interpreting their responses and to verify the precision of the researcher's conclusions. In other words, the investigator should ask participants if what was concluded was what they actually meant to convey.

Future study processes should include peer reviews or debriefing. In other words, the researcher should discuss his or her interpretations of the respondent's answers with other people, which may include a peer and/or colleague that could be critical of the interpretations and challenge the researcher's data and conclusions.

Another weakness of the current design was that only one researcher collected and interpreted the data. In the future, researchers might utilize the opinions of other investigators when collecting and interpreting the data. This would allow several

different perspectives to be collected, collated, and summarized, and one could then see a variety of patterns emerge from each set of interpretations to provide support for the conclusion. This would also help eliminate investigator interpretation bias.

Another recommendation would be to add an observational component to the study. Even though the investigator attempted to strengthen the data through triangulation, only one method of data collection was ultimately used. In other words, it was effective to use a questionnaire with several sources of data (i.e., players, coaches, and parents) to collect information, but to strengthen individual survey results, future research should add an observational component to the study. Observation would compliment information collected from participants, either by strengthening conclusions, since observation would ideally obtain the same or similar findings, or on the other hand, dispute conclusions because observation may not provide congruent information. Either way, more information collected from a variety of sources would only add to the depth of study results.

Last, the primary researcher was heavily involved as a coach with female elite level JO volleyball players; therefore, interpretations may have been skewed due to previous coaching biases. However, the researcher did critically examine the interpretations to detect potential biases and inclinations that may have affected the conclusions. Objectivity was a goal and in the forefront of the researcher's mind throughout the entire data collection process.

To strengthen the conclusions of the study, the researcher used descriptions and phrases that were verbatim or at the very least, close to the participants' exact responses. Second, the study cross-checked information and conclusions by data triangulation.

Meaning, multiple data sources (e.g., players, parents, and coaches) were utilized to help understand the phenomenon of confidence. Third, because the data was collected online, the researcher was not physically present during the interviewing process. The strength of this methodology was that interviewer bias, or the effect of the interviewer on the interviewee, was nonexistent. Last, the researcher's advisor served as a study auditor to insure that rigorous methodology was used.

Appendix A
Player Recruitment Statement

To (Player Name):

My name is Carolyn Bell. I am a graduate student in the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences at Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York, and I am currently the coaching director for SMV (you may already know me). I am conducting a research project as a part of my Master's thesis, looking at factors that influence the confidence of female volleyball players. The goal of my study will be to help coaches, players, and sport psychology consultants assist female volleyball players develop better confidence during competition. I am talking to you because I'd like to see if you would like to take part in my study. Do you want to hear more about it? *[IF YES, continue with following paragraph. If NO, thank them for their time and discontinue discussion.]* If you want to participate, I will ask you to sign a document that describes the study and states that you are willing to participate. What I will ask you to do after you sign this document, is fill out an online interview that I will send to you electronically. The online interview will ask you specific questions about your confidence. Hopefully, you will fill out your interview alone and be as honest as possible. When you have completed the interview, I will have included instructions on how to send it to me by email. The interview should take you about 20 to 30 minutes to fill out. After you have completed the online interview and I have received it over email, I will send you a 10 dollar gift certificate to Target Inc. as payment for your time. Taking part in this study is completely up to you. If you start the study, you can decide to stop at any time without penalty. Your participation in this study is also completely confidential; therefore, your parent(s) will not know if you participate in the study (unless you tell them). If you have questions, contact me at 538-

1583 or 252-5985. Otherwise, if you'd like to read the consent form now, we can do that, or if you'd like to take it home to read it, and then bring it back at the next practice to discuss, that is fine too. I greatly appreciate your help with my project.

Appendix B
Player Consent Form

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

TITLE: Factors that Influence the Confidence of Elite Junior Olympic Female Volleyball Players

RESEARCHER: Carolyn Valone Bell

This is an important form. Please read it carefully. It tells you what you need to know about this research study. If you agree to take part in this study, you will need to sign this form. Your signature means that you have been told about the study and of any potential risks. Your signature on this form also means that you agree to take part in this study.

Why is this research study being conducted?

This study is being conducted to help identify what factors influence the confidence of female athletes who play Junior Olympic volleyball. The goal of the study is to help coaches, players, and sport psychology consultants assist female volleyball players in developing better confidence during competition. If the researcher can identify what helps volleyball players be confident in volleyball, coaches and consultants can then begin to help other volleyball players improve their own personal confidence.

How many people will take part in this research study?

A total of 18 to 26 players (18 years of age or older), parents, and coaches from the Southern Minnesota Volleyball club will be asked to participate in this study.

What will happen in this research study?

You will be asked to sign this consent form after you have read it carefully, had all questions answered, and agree to participate. If you choose to not participate, you will not be asked to sign this form. If you choose to sign this consent form, you will be asked to

fill out an online interview. The interview will ask you questions about your confidence. Once complete, you will send it to valonebell.carolyn@mayo.edu. You will be asked to be as honest as possible when filling out the interview. This will be the only time you will have to fill out an interview. It should take you 20 to 30 minutes to fill out the entire interview. After you have completed the online interview, you will be sent a 10 dollar gift certificate to Target Inc. (via mail) as payment for your time.

How long will I be in this research study?

The amount of time you will be in the study will be the time it takes you to read and sign this consent form and fill out the online interview. The estimated maximum time is 45 minutes.

Are there reasons might leave this research study early?

Taking part in this research study is your decision. You may decide to stop at any time without penalty.

What are the risks of this research study?

There are no serious risks involved with participation in this study.

Are there benefits to taking part in this research study?

This study may not improve your levels of confidence. However, it is likely that you will gain insight into those factors that improve your confidence. Also, the results from this study may be used by other athletes in the future to better their confidence, skills, and/or performance.

What other choices do I have if I don't take part in this research study?

This study is being conducted to gather information. You may choose not to take part in this study.

What is the amount of compensation I get for being in this study?

If you finish the study, you will receive a \$10.00 gift certificate to Target Inc. This money is payment for your time in this study. If you start the study but stop before finishing the study, you will still receive this amount.

What are my rights if I take part in this research study?

Taking part in this research study does not take away any other rights or benefits you might have if you did not take part in the study. Taking part in this study does not give you any special privileges, except those already specified. You will not be penalized in any way if you decide not to take part or if you stop after you start the study.

Who can answer my questions?

You may talk to Carolyn Bell at any time about any questions or concerns you have about this study. You may contact Carolyn by calling during the day at 507-538-1583 or during the evenings at 507-252-5985.

Confidentiality/Anonymity of Responses

Your online interview will be reviewed by the investigator and the investigator's advisor only. No other individual will be able to access your responses; therefore, all information will remain confidential by being placed in a locked cabinet that only the investigator will have access to. Immediately upon receipt of the interview via email, the interview will be printed off of the computer on to a hard copy, and the electronic copy will be immediately deleted. Once the data collection and analysis process has been completed, all hard copy interviews will be destroyed in a paper shredder. All information shared with the advisor will be completely anonymous and you will not be identified in any document related to this study.

READ CAREFULLY: I have had an opportunity to have my questions answered. I have been given a copy of this form. By signing the document below, I agree to take part in this research study and I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.

(Date / Time)

(Printed Name of Participant)

(Signature of Participant)

What is your email address?

What is your mailing address?

Appendix C
Parent Recruitment Statement

To (Parent Name):

My name is Carolyn Bell. I am a graduate student in the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences at Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York, and I am currently the coaching director for SMV (you may already know me). I am conducting a research project as a part of my Master's thesis, looking at the factors that influence the confidence of female volleyball players. The goal of my study will be to help coaches, players, and sport psychology consultants assist female volleyball players develop better confidence during competition. I am calling you today because I'd like to see if you would like to take part in my study. Do you want to hear more about it? [*IF YES, continue with following paragraph. If NO, thank them for their time and discontinue discussion.*] If you decide to volunteer your time to participate, I will send you a consent form by mail that describes the study. Once you have read the entire document and if you agree to participate, you will be instructed to sign this consent form and send it to me through the mail. Once I receive this document back from you, I will send you an online interview over email to be completed electronically. The online interview will ask you specific questions about your daughter's confidence. You will be asked to fill out your interview by yourself (alone) and be as honest as possible in doing so. The interview should take you about 20 to 30 minutes to fill out. After you have completed the online interview, I will send you a 10 dollar gift certificate to Target Inc. as payment for your time. Taking part in this study is completely up to you. If you start the study, you can decide to stop at any time without penalty. Your participation in this study is also completely confidential; therefore, your daughter will not know if you participate in the study (unless you tell them). Would you

like me to send you a consent form outlining the details of the study? (*If yes, obtain mailing address.*) If you have questions, contact me at 538-1583 or 252-5985. I greatly appreciate your help with my project.

Appendix D
Parent Consent Form

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

TITLE: Factors that Influence the Confidence of Elite Junior Olympic Female Volleyball Players

RESEARCHER: Carolyn Valone Bell

This is an important form. Please read it carefully. It tells you what you need to know about this research study. If you agree to take part in this study, you will need to sign this form. Your signature means that you have been told about the study and of any potential risks. Your signature on this form also means that you agree to take part in this study.

Why is this research study being conducted?

This study is being conducted to help identify what factors influence the confidence of female athletes who play Junior Olympic volleyball. The goal of the study is to help coaches, players, and sport psychology consultants assist female volleyball players in developing better confidence during competition. If the researcher can identify what helps volleyball players be confident in volleyball, coaches and consultants can then begin to help other volleyball players improve their own personal confidence.

How many people will take part in this research study?

A total of 18 to 26 players (18 years of age or older), parents, and coaches from the Southern Minnesota Volleyball club will be asked to participate in this study.

What will happen in this research study?

You will be asked to sign this consent form after you have read it carefully, had all questions answered, and agree to participate. If you choose to not participate, you will not be asked to sign this form. When this document is signed by you, please send to the

address located at the bottom of the signature page. A pre-addressed stamped envelope is provided for your convenience. If you do choose to be in the study, you will be sent over email an online interview. The interview will ask you questions about your perceptions of your daughter's confidence. Once complete, you will send it to valonebell.carolyn@mayo.edu. You will be asked to fill out your interview by yourself and as honestly as possible. This will be the only time you will have to fill out an interview. It should take you 20 to 30 minutes to fill out the entire interview. After you have completed the online interview, you will be sent a 10 dollar gift certificate to Target Inc. (via mail) as payment for your time.

How long will I be in this research study?

The amount of time you will be in the study will be the time it takes you to read and sign this consent form and fill out the online interview. The estimated maximum time is 45 minutes.

Are there reasons I might leave this research study early?

Taking part in this research study is your decision. You may decide to stop at any time without penalty.

What are the risks of this research study?

There are no serious risks involved with participation in this study.

Are there benefits to taking part in this research study?

This study may not improve your daughter's confidence. However, it is likely that she will gain insight into those factors that improve her confidence. Also, the results from this study may be used by other athletes in the future to better their confidence, skills, and/or performance.

What other choices do I have if I don't take part in this research study?

This study is being conducted to gather information. You may choose not to take part in this study.

What is the amount of compensation I get for being in this study?

If you finish the study, you will receive a \$10.00 gift certificate to Target Inc. This money is payment for your time in this study. If you start the study but stop before finishing the study, you will still receive this amount.

What are my rights if I take part in this research study?

Taking part in this research study does not take away any other rights or benefits you might have if you did not take part in the study. Taking part in this study does not give you any special privileges, except those already specified. You will not be penalized in any way if you decide not to take part or if you stop after you start the study.

Who can answer my questions?

You may talk to Carolyn Bell at any time about any questions or concerns you have about this study. You may contact Carolyn by calling during the day at 507-538-1583 or during the evenings at 507-252-5985.

Confidentiality/Anonymity of Responses

Your online interview will be reviewed by the investigator and the investigator's advisor only. No other individual will be able to access your responses; therefore, all information will remain confidential by being placed in a locked cabinet that only the investigator will have access to. Immediately upon receipt of the interview via email, the interview will be printed off of the computer on to a hard copy, and the electronic copy will be immediately deleted. Once the data collection and analysis process has been completed,

all hard copy interviews will be destroyed in a paper shredder. All information shared with the advisor will be completely anonymous and you will not be identified in any document related to this study.

READ CAREFULLY:

I have had an opportunity to have my questions answered. I have been given a copy of this form. By signing the document below, I acknowledge that I will take part in this research study.

(Date / Time)

(Printed Name of Parent or Legal Guardian)

(Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian)

What is your email address?

What is your mailing address?

Please send signed consent form (using the pre-addressed stamped envelope) to:

Carolyn Valone Bell
1405 9th Ave NE
Rochester, MN 55906

Appendix E
Coach Recruitment Statement

To (Coach Name):

I am currently a graduate student in the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences at Ithaca College, Ithaca, New York. I am conducting a research project as a part of my Master's thesis, looking at the factors that influence the confidence of female volleyball players. The goal of my study will be to help coaches, players, and sport psychology consultants assist female volleyball players develop better confidence during competition. I am talking to you because I'd like to see if you would like to take part in my study. Do you want to hear more about it? [*IF YES, continue with following paragraph. If NO, thank them for their time and discontinue discussion.*] If you want to participate, I will ask you to sign a document that describes the study and states that you are willing to participate. What I will ask you to do if you sign this document, is fill out an online interview that I will send to you electronically. The online interview will ask you specific questions about (*insert each player's name*) confidence. Hopefully, you will fill out your interview alone and be as honest as possible. When you have completed the interview, I will have included instructions on how to send it to me by email. The interview should take you about 2 hours to fill out. After you have completed the online interview, I will send you a 10 dollar gift certificate to Target Inc. as payment for your time. Taking part in this study is completely up to you. If you start the study, you can decide to stop at any time without penalty. Your participation in this study is also completely confidential; therefore, your player will not know if you participate in the study (unless you tell them). If you have questions, contact me at 538-1583 or 252-5985. Otherwise, if you'd like to read the consent form now, we can do that, or if you'd like to take it home to read it, and

then bring it back at the next practice to discuss, that is fine too. I greatly appreciate your help with my project.

Appendix F
Coach Consent Form

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

TITLE: Factors that Influence the Confidence of Elite Junior Olympic Female Volleyball Players

RESEARCHER: Carolyn Valone Bell

This is an important form. Please read it carefully. It tells you what you need to know about this research study. If you agree to take part in this study, you will need to sign this form. Your signature means that you have been told about the study and of any potential risks. Your signature on this form also means that you agree to take part in this study.

Why is this research study being conducted?

This study is being conducted to help identify what factors influence the confidence of female athletes who play Junior Olympic volleyball. The goal of the study is to help coaches, players, and sport psychology consultants assist female volleyball players in developing better confidence during competition. If the researcher can identify what helps volleyball players be confident in volleyball, coaches and consultants can then begin to help other volleyball players improve their own personal confidence.

How many people will take part in this research study?

A total of 18 to 26 players (18 years of age or older), parents, and coaches from the Southern Minnesota Volleyball club will be asked to participate in this study.

What will happen in this research study?

You will be asked to sign this consent form after you have read it carefully, had all questions answered, and agree to participate. If you choose to not participate, you will not be asked to sign this form. If you do choose to be in the study, you will be sent over email an online interview. The interview will ask you questions about your perceptions of your

player's confidence. Once complete, you will send it to valonebell.carolyn@mayo.edu.

You will be asked to fill out your interview by yourself and as honestly as possible. This will be the only time you will have to fill out an interview. It should take you approximately 2 hours to fill out the entire interview. After you have completed the online interview, you will be sent a 10 dollar gift certificate to Target Inc. (via mail) as payment for your time.

How long will I be in this research study?

The amount of time you will be in the study will be the time it takes you to read and sign this consent form and fill out the online interview. The estimated maximum time is 45 minutes.

Are there reasons I might leave this research study early?

Taking part in this research study is your decision. You may decide to stop at any time without penalty.

What are the risks of this research study?

There are no serious risks involved with participation in this study.

Are there benefits to taking part in this research study?

This study may not improve your players' levels of confidence. However, it is likely that your players may gain insight into those factors that influence their confidence. Also, the results from this study may be used by other athletes in the future to better their confidence, skills, and/or performance.

What other choices do I have if I don't take part in this research study?

This study is being conducted to gather information. You may choose not to take part in this study.

What is the amount of compensation I get for being in this study?

If you finish the study, you will receive a \$10.00 gift certificate to Target Inc. This money is payment for your time in this study. If you start the study but stop before finishing the study, you will still receive this amount.

What are my rights if I take part in this research study?

Taking part in this research study does not take away any other rights or benefits you might have if you did not take part in the study. Taking part in this study does not give you any special privileges, except those already specified. You will not be penalized in any way if you decide not to take part or if you stop after you start the study.

Who can answer my questions?

You may talk to Carolyn Bell at any time about any questions or concerns you have about this study. You may contact Carolyn by calling during the day at 507-538-1583 or during the evenings at 507-252-5985.

Confidentiality/Anonymity of Responses

Your online interview will be reviewed by the investigator and the investigator's advisor only. No other individual will be able to access your responses; therefore, all information will remain confidential by being placed in a locked cabinet that only the investigator will have access to. Immediately upon receipt of the interview via email, the interview will be printed off of the computer on to a hard copy, and the electronic copy will be immediately deleted. Once the data collection and analysis process has been completed, all hard copy interviews will be destroyed in a paper shredder. All information shared with the advisor will be completely anonymous and you will not be identified in any document related to this study.

READ CAREFULLY:

I have had an opportunity to have my questions answered. I have been given a copy of this form. By signing this document below, I agree to participate in this research study.

(Date / Time)

(Printed Name of Participant)

(Signature of Participant)

What is your email address?

What is your mailing address?

Appendix G
Online Interview Questions (Player Version)

Please type your answers in the grey boxes (unlimited text) or click on the box to check your answer:

1. Define confidence in your own words:

- a. Why do you define confidence as you do?

2. Do you consider yourself to be a confident volleyball player?

- a. *Yes*

- i. If yes, why are you a confident volleyball player?

- b. *No*

- i. If no, why are you not a confident volleyball player?

3. Describe how you feel when you are confident?

4. Do you have feelings of confidence in both practice and competition?

- i. Yes, in both practice and competition

1. Please explain

- ii. No, just in practice and not competition

1. Please explain

- iii. No, just in competition and not practice

1. Please explain

5. What are you saying to yourself when you are confident?

- a. Where did you learn to say and think the way you do when you are feeling confident?

6. Are there any rituals (repetitive routines) you go through before a game that make you more confident?

- a. *Yes*

- i. If yes, please explain what you do for a pre-competitive routine.

- b. *No*

i. If no, have you used rituals in the past that did not work for you and why do you think these rituals did not work for you?

1. Yes

a. If yes, what were these rituals that did not work?

2. No

7. **What do you do to regain your confidence when you have lost your confidence?**
8. **What makes it hard to regain your confidence when you have lost it?**
9. **What makes it hard for you to become confident when you don't have it to begin with?**
10. **What impacts your ability to stay confident?**
11. **What people influence your confidence (list all that apply)?**
12. **Please list all those factors that impact your confidence (please list as many factors as possible).**
13. **Describe a time when you experienced a strong sense of confidence in a practice and/or competitive situation. What were your thoughts, feelings, and emotions surrounding this situation (please be specific and provide as much detail as possible)?**
14. **Please make any other comments about your confidence that you feel are important:**

Appendix H
Online Interview Questions (Parent and Coach Version)

Please type your answers in the grey boxes (unlimited text) or click on the box to check your answer:

1. How do you think [the player] defines confidence?

- a. Why do you think she defines confidence this way?

2. Do you consider [the player] to be a confident athlete?

- a. *Yes*
- i. If yes, why is she a confident athlete?
- b. *No*
- i. If no, why is she not a confident athlete?

3. How do you think [the player] describes how she feels when she is confident?

4. Do you believe [the player] has feelings of confidence in both practice and competition?

- i. Yes, in both practice and competition
1. Please explain
- ii. No, just in practice and not competition
1. Please explain
- iii. No, just in competition and not practice
1. Please explain

5. What do you believe [the player] says to herself when she is most confident?

- a. Where did she learn to say and think the way she does when she is feeling confident?

6. Have you noticed any rituals (repetitive routines) [the player] engages in before a game that makes her more confident?

- a. *Yes*
- i. If yes, please explain what she does for a pre-competitive routine.
- b. *No*

i. If no, has [the player] used rituals in the past that did not work for her and why do you think these rituals did not work?

1. Yes

a. If yes, what were these rituals that did not work?

2. No

7. **What do you think [the player] does to regain her confidence when her confidence has been lost?**
8. **What do you believe makes it difficult for [the player] to regain confidence when it has been lost?**
9. **What do you believe makes it difficult for [the player] to become confident when she does not have confidence to begin with?**
10. **What do you believe impacts [the player's] ability to stay confident?**
11. **What people do you believe influence [the player's] level of confidence (list all that apply)?**
12. **Please list all those factors that you think influence [the player's] confidence (please list as many factors as possible).**
13. **Describe a time when [the player] experienced a strong sense of confidence in a practice and/or competitive situation. What do you think [the player's] thoughts, feelings, and emotions were surrounding this situation (please be specific and provide as much detail as possible)?**
14. **Please make any other comments about [the player's] confidence that you feel are important:**

Appendix I
Significant Statements of Interest (SS)

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS FOR GROUP 1

Participant 1 SS

I define confidence as knowing, believing, and trusting in your ability and talents. When I experienced a strong sense of confidence, I felt like I could handle anything that would come my way and that I was unstoppable. Also, I wanted to touch every ball because I knew I could do something with it and that it would help my team. Basically, I had faith in myself that I could achieve what I wanted to (Participant 1).

I tend to become timid when faced with challenging opponents and I underestimate my ability. I'll be confident when I'm playing against lesser or equal skilled teams (Participant 1).

It's hard to pinpoint a certain person or event that helps my confidence. Probably it's just from experiences in athletics and in school (Participant 1).

I try to calm myself down and tell myself that I know that I can handle the situation with ease. I have all the ability if I give it my all (Participant 1).

People's thoughts and opinions impact my ability to gain and stay confident. Mainly coaches, parents and teammates influence my confidence. I think confidence stems from experience and positive interactions. I think that when I had a negative coach, who often criticized without giving much positive input, my confidence level was very low. It took me a while to regain my confidence. He would bring me down a lot and hardly ever compliment me. I felt like he didn't believe that I was any good, so I began to think that it was true. Some coaches can have a really positive impact on a player's confidence because they will compliment a player when they've done something good, or encourage them for trying hard. I truly believe that coaches have a large effect on a player's confidence (Participant 1).

Participant 1 Parent SS

My daughter would define confidence as stepping up to a serve on a game point and delivering a key serve under pressure. Everyone focuses on "end-of-game situations" and who steps up and wins the game. You need to make the key play at the key time, and when you do, you are confident (Participant 1 Parent).

She shows confidence in some areas, and will surprise me sometimes under pressure, but she does doubt her abilities more than she should, and when the team is struggling she lets her collective struggles affect her. Also, I don't think

she realizes how good she is and what natural senses she has for the game. She can be intimidated by opposing players and think she doesn't belong on the same court (Participant 1 Parent).

She learned to say and think the way she does when she is feeling confident probably because of her father and what he says to her (Participant 1 Parent).

She doesn't regain [confidence] well - usually she regains her confidence after a pep talk from her father (Participant 1 Parent).

Being taken out of the game at the first mistake is a tremendous confidence killer. Some of the worst coaching I've seen is to put a kid in cold, and then yell at them and yank them out if they don't handle the first play perfectly (Participant 1 Parent).

Participant 1 Coach SS

She defines confidence as staying calm while under stress. She seems to strive to stay calm during intense situations (Participant 1 Coach)

Her emphasis seems to be on always improving the play on the ball. When she feels confident, she feels like she can make a play on the ball that will put it in the perfect spot. To do this, she works hard on her skills at both practice and competition. She is not afraid to play or practice at any position at any given time because she believes in her ability to do something she wants to do at anytime (Participant 1 coach).

Her confidence comes, I believe, primarily from academic success. She has learned to believe in herself off the court and carries it onto the court with her (Participant 1 Coach).

She tells herself that she is doing her best and will keep trying (Participant 1 Coach).

Those who impact her confidence are herself, her parents, teammates, and the coach. She also has a chronic low back injury which affects her confidence at times because it slows her down. She is a very good student and her academic success adds to her confidence. Other factors include success, the task she is asked to do, and past and present coaching (Participant 1 Coach).

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS FOR GROUP 2

Participant 2 SS

Confidence is to believe in yourself and know you can accomplish something. I usually know that I can do it because I have done it before I was taught this growing up (Participant 2).

I would say more often than not I am a confident volleyball player. This confidence that I have is a new thing this Junior Olympic season that I didn't have very much of during the high school season. During the high school season I wasn't the star player and I didn't always do everything right, which led to the coach yelling at me. He yelling at me made me less confident. But in the off-season, I have found confidence, thanks mostly to the coaches, who are encouraging and constructive (Participant 2).

When I am confident I feel like I'm running the show. I want to touch the ball more and I think I'm more vocal and more likely to call someone off if I am playing well. I am also more aggressive. When I am confident it also usually means I am playing well or I just made a good play, so I say words of encouragement to myself, things like "yes!" and "set me again!" (Participant 2).

To regain my confidence I usually have to make a good play and hear praise for a play that I made. I think it's hard to regain confidence if I'm playing poorly and then because of that I don't get the ball very much, so when I do there is a lot of pressure not to mess up (Participant 2).

My performance and the coaches' belief in me impact my ability to stay confident. The people who influence my confidence are coaches, teammates, parents and recruiters watching. I really think the coaching environment makes a great difference on my confidence. Within a two month time period my confidence greatly improved, while my skill probably improved too, but not as much as my confidence and it was because of the welcoming and encouraging training environment (Participant 2).

Participant 2 Parent SS

Energy, team play, support from players, coaches, parents, fans, referees, and even the other team impact confidence. Also, getting enough sleep, eating right and resting between competition influences confidence (Participant 2 Parent).

Confidence is feeling good about doing something, being successful, performing well, liking yourself, and knowing that she can do it and will do it. Because we have been positive in our home, she feels a lot of love and support for her actions.

We support her athletic career. Our lives basically revolve around sports (Participant 2 Parent).

She is confident because of good coaching, skills, and sportsmanship. She likes herself and has great friends. She devotes a lot of time and energy into her sport, and it has paid off for her (Participant 2 Parent).

She describes the feeling of confidence as a good feeling. Nothing can get you down and you are in the groove. She feeds on energy and confidence. She knows she can do it, has done it, and if something doesn't go her way, she'll try again. She is a fighter and thrives on it (Participant 2 Parent).

To regain her confidence, she refocuses. She also just accepts there may be bad days. Often, she has talked to her Mom about the situation at hand to help resolve any issues (Participant 2 Parent).

Participant 2 Coach SS

Confidence is something that this player finds easily. She has tons of family support that helps her find confidence. She finds confidence easily because she is a talented player that does not become intimidated by the opponent. As a result, she pushes through hard competition and when she is successful in those situations, she pushes harder (Participant 2 Coach).

She is able to calm others by showing her confidence in herself and in her team. She always appears in control (Participant 2 Coach).

I believe that she focuses on the little things that she can control when she is most confident. She does not interpret the whole game, just where she needs to be on defense, serve receive, and transition. All are separate areas that she focuses on as needed (Participant 2 Coach).

She focuses on one small part of her game, the part that she is doing well. Then she builds confidence from that particular instance. She also focuses on successes. When she is scoring and serving well, she becomes confident. When she is not doing those things and the team is down, it is difficult for her to remain confident (Player 2 Coach).

Factors that influence her confidence are success, rhythm, self-talk, focus on the little things, confidence in her teammates, positive feedback from the coaches, hard work in practice, and fatigue. For example, the team was playing in a tournament in Waterloo, IA. They had made it into the top flight for the play-offs and had a chance to win the whole event. Her team was the last seeded team in the bracket and so had drawn the first seed in the first round. There was nothing to lose and so the team, including [the player] were told to go all out and to take chances. They were told that they could beat anyone at the tournament and

instructed to do what they knew how to do. The team was impacted by injury, so only 7 players were playing. [The player] specifically was instructed to challenge the block when attacking. Her team was crushed in the first game. Following that game, she demonstrated the most confidence I have ever seen following a loss. Her team rallied around several ace serves and spectacular defensive plays. She challenged the block and scored nearly every time she attempted to. Her passing was truly great, and her smile was very big. Her team fed off of her (and other's) confidence and won the next five games against three different opponents. Aggressive serving and hitting were the common theme. When the team finally lost in the finals, she seemed more surprised than dissappointed (Participant 2 Coach).

SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS FOR GROUP 3

Participant 3 SS

Confidence is the belief that one is a worthy and competent person. This is what I've been taught. My parents have always taught me that everyone wants to believe and know that they are worthy (Participant 3).

I believe that I can compete and affect the game and the team in a positive way (Participant 3).

When I am confident I believe that I can compete and affect the game and the team in a positive way. I'm telling the other team to serve it to me or hit it to me and I'm telling myself where to hit to and how to hit the ball (Participant 3).

When I have lost my confidence I refocus. When I really lost my confidence one time, I took a few days off then took my sister to the gym and just worked on fundamentals. She was brutally honest about what I was doing wrong so I was forced to rethink everything I knew (Participant 3).

Participant 3 Parent SS

Confidence is the expectation of success. Because she's a successful driven person, she wants to succeed at what's important to her, and she's used to having expectations to live up to (Participant 3 Parent).

She is a confident athlete because of past expectations and experience of success (Participant 3 Parent).

She knows what to do and how to do it. She says to herself, "I know what to do, and I can do it" (Participant 3 Parent).

She looks inside herself to think about what she's doing that isn't working. She also looks to us and the coach for direction, and she expects to hear some critique along with positive reinforcement (Participant 3 Parent).

Her level of confidence is influenced by parents, siblings, coaches, and friends. We've worked with her (not just sports) to have expectations just beyond what she's doing, and she's just had a lot of positive feedback both verbal and from video taping (Participant 3 Parent).

Participant 3 Coach SS

She defines confidence as knowing she can do something because she has done something similar before. She seems much more comfortable in familiar situations and plays with more confidence against teams that she has had success against in the past (Participant 3 Coach).

She is perpetually trying to do new things. She wants to handle the ball when the game is on the line. She openly measures her skill and success against her opponents as well as her teammates. She is a hard worker and visibly enjoys building skill and trying new things in practice, and also looks forward to playing against difficult competition to measure her skill (Participant 3 Coach).

When she is confident, she is ready for anything. She is not easily intimidated. For example, she was playing at home in a tournament and had just finished serving five consecutive points to end the game against a very good team. She came off the court with a big smile and said, "I don't know why, but I feel like I can put the ball anywhere I want to!" She is a player who engages in a large amount of philosophical introspection. Her confidence is based in a logical pattern and is difficult to influence externally. Her confidence tends to wax or wane over time measured in days or hours, rather than minutes or seconds like some athletes (Participant 3 Coach).

She sometimes has difficulty regaining her confidence once it is lost; however, I have seen her take a few minutes on the bench to emotionally detach from the situation and return appearing more confident. She has been such a successful athlete that she is not very comfortable with failure. She is confident because of her past successes in similar situations; however, she has not had many situations where she has failed (Participant 3 Coach)

The people who influence her are her mother, father, sister, brother, and current coach. She is also influenced by her success, history of success, her family environment, her teammates, hard work, being prepared, and the coaching style of her coach (Participant 3 Coach).

Appendix J
Section 1: Categories

CATEGORY # 1: DEFINITION OF PERCEIVED CONFIDENCE

Group 1

Player: **Confidence was defined as self-affirming thoughts and a belief in personal ability.**

Parent: **Confidence was defined as knowing that you can deliver a predetermined outcome during a competition.**

Coach: **Confidence was staying focused and level headed during a time of intense competition.**

Group 2

Player: **Confidence was defined as a personal belief in herself and this belief was instilled by her parents.**

Parent: **Confidence came from an internal belief that she can succeed.**

Coach: **Confidence was a perceived feeling of power and control, and was derived from positive support from significant others.**

Group 3

Player: **Confidence was a belief in personal capability.**

Parent: **Confidence was an internal motivation.**

Coach: **Confidence was a belief in an ability to do a task successfully due to past accomplishments.**

CATEGORY # 2: RATIONALE FOR PERCEIVED LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE

Group 1

Player: She did not consider herself to be a confident athlete because she had a tendency to become intimidated by more skilled athletes.

Parent: She was not a confident athlete because she did not believe in her ability against tough opponents.

Coach: She was a confident athlete due to her ability to stay focused and not get “rattled” in tough competition.

Group 2

Player: She considered herself to be a confident athlete due to positive role models in coaching.

Parent: She was a confident athlete because of her level of skill, belief in personal ability, close friendships on the court, and positive role models.

Coach: This player was confident because she remained in control.

Group 3

Player: She considered herself to be a confident athlete because she was competitive and believed in her personal ability to affect others.

Parent: She was a confident athlete because of her personal goals that had been met and the experience of past successes.

Coach: She was confident because of a desire to prove she could come through for the team in a tough situation.

CATEGORY # 3: SOURCES OF CONFIDENCE

Group 1

Player: Her level of confidence was a result of a past experiences.

Parent: Her confidence was derived from the support of her father.

Coach: This player's level of confidence stemmed from experiences off the court that translated into confidence on the court.

Group 2

Player: When she felt confident, she felt in control of the events around her and used positive self-talk.

Parent: When she was confident, she was hard to "shake" and thrived on being "tough".

Coach: Confidence was feeling in control and the athlete focused on what was important for each particular instance.

Group 3

Player: When she felt confident, she had a personal belief in herself and the outcomes she could affect.

Parent: Confidence was to know the plan of action.

Coach: Confidence was being relaxed and prepared for any opportunity.

CATEGORY # 4: TECHNIQUES USED TO REGAIN CONFIDENCE

Group 1

Player: To regain her confidence, she used internal positive self-talk.

Parent: To regain her confidence she relied on external reinforcement and support.

Coach: To regain her confidence the player used positive self-talk.

Group 2

Player: To regain confidence she thrived on support from others and positive performance outcomes.

Parent: To regain her confidence, she turned to her parents for support and accepted the reality of not always being at the top of her game.

Coach: Confidence was regained by centering attention on the important fundamentals of the game.

Group 3

Player: Her technique for regaining lost confidence was to redirect her attention to fundamentals.

Parent: To regain her confidence, she looked to herself and others for feedback.

Coach: She regained her confidence by using self reflection.

CATEGORY # 5: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CONFIDENCE

Group 1

Player: Her confidence was influenced by other people in her environment, especially her coach.

Parent: Confidence was influenced by people in the player's environment.

Coach: Confidence was impacted by people in the environment and her physical condition.

Group 2

Player: Her level of confidence was influenced by people who she interacted with in her life.

Parent: **Her level of confidence was influenced by physical and environmental factors.**

Coach: **Confidence was influenced by many internal and external factors.**

Group 3

Player: **Her level of confidence was influenced by other people.**

Parent: **Her level of confidence was influenced by other people and their expectations of her.**

Coach: **This player's confidence was influenced by those who are closest to her, by her perception of past success, and by her commitment to hard work and success.**

Appendix K
Section 2: Within Group Themes

Group 1

COMMON THEME # 1

The athlete was not confident because she was intimidated by opponents who she perceived to be more skilled than her.

COMMON THEME # 2

Confidence was a result of success both on and off of the court.

COMMON THEME # 3

Confidence could be obtained through positive self-talk.

COMMON THEME # 4

Confidence was positively and negatively influenced by significant others in the player's environment.

Group 2

COMMON THEME # 1

Confidence was defined as a strong belief in her ability to achieve.

COMMON THEME # 2

Confidence was impacted in a positive way by the coach as a role-model.

COMMON THEME # 3

Confidence was derived from feeling in control.

Group 3

COMMON THEME # 1

Confidence was defined as a belief in herself that she could do something because she had done it before.

COMMON THEME # 2

To regain confidence that had been lost, the athlete focused on rudimentary skills and actively solicited feedback about her performance.

COMMON THEME # 3

The athlete's confidence was influenced by those she interacted with the most.

Appendix L
Section 3: Across Group Themes

COMMON THEME # 1

Confidence was defined as a strong belief in the athletes' abilities to be successful.

COMMON THEME # 2

Confidence was strongly influenced by people in the athletes' day to day environments.

COMMON THEME # 3

Positive self-talk was a primary technique used to increase and regain confidence.

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