

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: COMPLICATING THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL
CONVERSATION OF BASKETBALL AS AN EN-
GENDERED LIFE COURSE

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This hermeneutic phenomenological study explores the lived experience of basketball in the lives of collegiate women who claim to be scholar-athletes. The scholar-athletes were invited to unpack their scholastic and athletic life stories, not just as a mode of relevance for communicating with others, but more significantly, as a way of transacting what is embedded within their memories via the written narrative form. Through the corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational moments in basketball the meaning of the lived experience is illuminated. The question that compels my study is: What is the lived experience of basketball in the lives of collegiate women who claim to be scholar-athletes?

The philosophic works of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty provide the foundation for this lived experience study. The “grounding” that each of these philosophers impart is used to penetrate the hermeneutic nature of basketball as “play” via autobiographical application. Furthermore, van Manen’s phenomenological process provides a platform of engagement and writing through the reflective practice of Pinar’s *currere* method as a mode for slowing down the lived experience of play.

A group of eight former women basketball players who identified themselves as scholar-athletes were the participants in this study through a 15-week course entitled

EDPS 488B: *Complicating the Conversation of Basketball as a Life Course*. By analyzing their lived accounts of basketball through a variety of literary means, each scholar-athlete was able to gradually build her own autobiographical written narrative of basketball in relation to the social, political, and intellectual contexts of curriculum as lived. In this process, I develop a philosophical approach to examining the significance of sport through a revalidation of seasoned becoming, a transformation of athletic feat into scholarly thought, a deliberation of unrehearsed narrative, and a recognition of never-ending sanctity. Setting a scholarly life course into athletic motion suggests themes encompassing the challenge of bringing the body and mind into an even playing field, the return to a moment when identities were merely playful and time simply stood still, the value of the sporting space on the athlete's sense of community development, and the enlightenment of the self through the other via the discipline of heart and mind.

Drawing from the insights I gained from my participants, I suggest that the praxis of sports as a life course is reliant upon curricular transformation and not the isolation of academics from athletics. The notion of irrelevance has trapped our mindset into the anxiety of wanting to be accepted. For scholar-athletes and a multitude of other hyphenated forms of human existence, anxiety hovers over an ever-changing becoming, almost fooling the being out of existence and into an artificial realm of acceptance. Scholar-athletes can serve as powerful role models within society, and hence, their lived experience is consistently challenged by their actions. The *currere* process not only tells the scholarly story of athletic lives, but it allows others in the broader community to engage in the practice of complicated conversations from a variety of perspectives, both within and beyond the boundaries of the sporting space.

COMPLICATING THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL CONVERSATION OF
BASKETBALL AS AN EN-GENDERED LIFE COURSE

by

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DEDICATION

Just like a winning team within a sporting space, I am aware of the many players who helped me excel as a scholar-athlete and supported me to never give up until the final buzzer of life sounds ...

For my mother, Goli, and my father, Sia, who put aside so much of their life in order for me to pursue my dreams, and who never passed judgment upon the decisions I made personally and professionally;

For my brother, Kooros, who has always served as a strong pillar, sharing my love for sports and cheering me on from the bleachers;

For my sister-in-law, Melissa, who constantly reminded me that the academic journey is well worth it and the light at the end of the tunnel is near;

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For my childhood friend, Jeff, who first introduced me to the game of basketball and promised that I will reap its rewards in due time;

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And for Noelle, my girlfriend, who brought me back to school and felt the weight of this journey on a daily basis, consistently reminding me to keep my eyes on the prize.

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CHAPTER ONE:

SETTING A SCHOLARLY LIFE COURSE INTO ATHLETIC MOTION

Writing about your life brings you to strange places; you might be uncomfortable about what you learn about yourself and others. You might find yourself confronting serious ethical issues ... How different it feels when it is you and your world that you are writing about; how humbling and demanding. How up-front and personal-in-your-face become the ethical questions, the most important of all questions, I think. (Richardson, 2001, pp. 37-38)

How reliable is an autobiography that builds as opposed to crumbles? I

contemplate the notion of putting something together from the foundation up or stripping something down to its very roots in order to make sense of how basketball has influenced who I am and what I believe. It is more natural to build since one piece of life leads to and gets stacked on another. Yet, we are always looking forward toward a life course that is to become, instead of gazing back upon a life course that has already been. I often wonder how my experiences and actions from the past determine or manifest themselves in the present. Kerby (1991) points to this dilemma:

What we call the past may, for our purposes, be considered in two primary ways. First there is the linear and objective view of a past stretching away irretrievably behind me, behind the present; the hours, the days, the years I have lived through, and even an interminable past before that. Second there is the more phenomenological-existential approach which makes of the present a being-in-the-world whose richness is inseparable from the accumulated significance of my successive experiences. (p. 22)

I am fascinated by the impact that basketball has had on my life both on and off the court. I turn to the phenomenological-existential lens in order to complicate, but not mystify, the significance of basketball in relation to my self-assigned belief of living as a scholar, an educator, and an athlete within these experiences. How much of my persona can truly be unveiled to myself and the other through the analysis and synthesis of lived experience within the sport of basketball? As Kerby points out, "It is no accident that the

word person derives from the Latin *persona*, which has connotations of a character in a play. The full characterization of who someone is must wait until the play is finished (if it ever is!)” (1991, p. 37). Even though my story of basketball is not complete, I have lived a self-defined path as a student, athlete, scholar, and scholar-athlete within a narrative of basketball.

In the process of writing through my lived experiences I must be aware that “...in self-understanding the narrating self is always trying to coincide with, or be adequate to, the experiencing self, but this path is easily frustrated or becomes a matter of self-deception” (Kerby, 1991, p. 38). The battle that lurks within the speaking self and the writing self in the process of narrating a lived experience becomes the complicated notion that we seek to unravel through a phenomenological exploration. The inquiry into autobiographical renderings of myself and those of other student-athletes has “to be understood as a form of ‘transcendental voyeurism’ – as though the reader were getting a second-hand account of what the self, watching and overhearing itself, has seen and heard” (Gunn, 1982, p. 7). The dilemma with a hyphenated being such as scholar-athlete is how do we identify with the lived experience, and even more significant, why do we allow others, such as academic institutions, to define the duality of the experience for us.

The term student-athlete is casually used to refer to members of an academic institution who are participating competitively in the athletic programs. Unfortunately, the lived experience of basketball student-athletes in the United States, like many other high profile sports, has become the story of the athlete and not the student. Children as young as ten years of age are already being touted for their dribbling, shooting, passing, and jumping abilities, making each of them believe that he or she can rely on basketball

to come through as a profession before they have even entered middle school. In other words, the student part of an athlete may gradually become just a formality both on paper and in the mind of the child. To some extent, I seek to trouble the notion of what it means to be a student-athlete for an institution and replace it with the becoming a scholar-athlete intellectually through a sporting life – transforming the essence of athletic ability with a scholarly lens. In the process, the mind is not isolated from the body, but instead the two become reliant on each other, both on and off the court. Axtell (1991) claims:

The paucity of scholar-athletes is a function of the limitations of the 24-hour day, human energy, and our educational institutions. Training to excel in a sport and learning to master a scholarly discipline both require copious quantities of time, effort, focus, and motivation. Needless to say, it is difficult to maximize the development of both sets of skills in tandem without some personal sacrifices and major assistance in the mundanities of existence. (p. 71)

Hence, the lived experience of basketball for a scholar-athlete extends beyond the idea of doing everything it takes to get noticed by the other, into using the mind and body as a canvas for finding symmetry between academia and sports. An investigation into the lived experience of scholarship and basketball can begin with the following question: What are the common and atypical storylines that are formed in the written narrative of the self in comparison to the themes running fluidly within the lived experience of the other with the sport of basketball? Lived basketball silently craves to cut across barriers of race, gender, and social class as the game becomes one of superiority in skillfully maneuvering the corporeal, spatial, temporal, and relational realms of play. Yet, I often wonder how the other who may have lived a different narrative of basketball – in this case a gendered account – unpacks the corporeal, spatial, temporal, and relational moments of her life on and off the court.

Capturing a Moment of Basketball in the Lived Present

Basketball is often described as an art form which can be broken into quarters. One quarter revolves around the skills of the game which basically are required in order to score points on the opponent and stop the opponent from scoring points on you. This of course involves the numerous hours logged into practicing individual and team drills. A second quarter revolves around the smarts of the game which are required in order to understand how to read the play situations on the court. This often involves logging in hours of studying the playbook and the breaking down of videotape. A third quarter revolves around the notion of team camaraderie which is required in order to appreciate how your basketball strengths and weaknesses can be balanced with the traits of your comrades. This often starts with the actual leader of the team, the coach, as he or she positions the players on the court using a specific strategy, and requires the players to use their abilities to carry out the plan. A fourth and final quarter revolves around the passion and desire each player brings into both practice and game time situations. This often is displayed through the hustle and emotion that cannot be taught, but instead must grow through the joy of winning and the agony of defeat.

The art of written narrative can not only capture a resume of lived experiences with the other, but can also unveil a notion of individuality within those lived moments – both of which have been planted in the past and are being cultivated through the present. In capturing autobiographical renderings of the other, in relation to me, it is essential to appreciate that, “What is made present is not merely a past that is past. What is presented is a reality, always new, to which the past has contributed but which stands, as it were, in front of the autobiographer” (Gunn, 1982, p. 17). The significance lies not

merely in physically occupying space within a moment in time, but rather, living through the space and constructing a persona via the experience. “The physical body may well be the permanent locus of my insertion in the world, and it is indeed a fairly solid basis for continuity, but it is the events that unfold from this locus that generate the meaning of my existence, both through the habitualities it embodies and the history it exhibits” (Kerby, 1991, p. 40). I begin the narrative process by positioning myself, in a not so distant, lived moment of basketball and encountering the habituality of the experience, while fresh in my mind, unison to the ongoing historical storyline that brings me to the present.

On a humid Saturday evening in June, I encounter myself driving up route 301 toward Annapolis, Maryland. Usually this drive for me would occur on route 50 heading east in the direction of the Bay Bridge, but this is not a usual visit to Annapolis. Actually, this drive does not even technically count as a visit to Annapolis. If I were going to Annapolis with a leisurely intent, I would not be weaving through traffic at roughly ten miles above the speed limit. I also would not be wearing this 100% polyester uniform which is soaked with sweat due to the fact that I have been refereeing basketball since 8:00 a.m. that morning. No, this is definitely not a typical outing in the direction of Annapolis. I would most likely be dressed in lightweight cotton and would surely smell much fresher than this. Plus, the muscles in my legs would not be twitching on and off informing me that they have reached their daily performance quota. One of these days I will learn to listen, to stop and have a conversation with my body instead of pretending that I do not hear its burning cries. Days like this remind me that I have become addicted to the game of basketball, both as an athlete and a scholar. I cannot athletically participate like I used to, but I surely can appreciate how others play the game by running

with them, adjudicating the rules, instead of merely watching them from afar. I have learned, lived, and now love the game as both a scholar and an athlete, yet there is always more for which to listen.

I turn right into the neighborhood and notice a side of the greater Annapolis community that I am not familiar with at all. The small housing structures are in shambles, but the neighbors are lively and they all seem to be headed in the same direction. I slowly follow the trail of people that leads me straight to an action-packed playground filled with children of all ages and adult volunteers. All of a sudden I realize that my last game of the evening will be taking place on an outdoor concrete court very similar to the spaces that I so often inhabited as a young student of the game. With a surprised grin on my face, I gather my water bottle and whistle and head in the direction of the league director, an older African-American man with stern eyes and a confident smile. I extend my hand and introduce myself. He returns the favor with a crushingly firm hand shake that we hold for a full 5 seconds as he simultaneously penetrates into my soul with his drilling eyes. It was at this moment that I was reminded about the sanctity of basketball playgrounds – the corporeal constructions, the temporal traditions, the spatial strategies, and the relational ramifications. According to Reid (2002),

A developing sense of our desired selves can only be complete when it includes an understanding of our function in society. Conveniently, the sporting experience places individual athletes in a myriad of micro-communities, from teams working together to achieve particular goals to groups representing neighborhoods, colleges, cities, states, and even nations in the mini-United Nations that is international athletics. (p. 9)

Even though I had experienced basketball in all the capacities mentioned above, at that moment, on that playground, among a group of young African-American athletes, I was home again. As my partner and I prepared to toss the ball, I looked straight up into the

clear blue sky and realized that even though we are confined to the rules and boundaries within this concrete court – where students become athletes, athletes may become scholars, and scholars eventually become scholar-athletes – there is no limit to how much one person can learn about a complicated life course from this playground game that asks you simply to place the ball into a hoop. And if at first you do not succeed, the hoop invites you to return tomorrow because it will still be waiting there for you, silently “cheering” and never “criticizing.”

Basketball has sent me numerous invitations to engage with the other through both the physical and mental nature of play within a recreational and competitive space. In these moments of scheduled camaraderie with basketball, I realized that the conversation was not complicated. The rendezvous often craved similarities in experiencing the game in a shared moment in time, instead of variation in what basketball has done to and for a person beyond the communal rules of play. As the following four quarters of my basketball life will show, I have had opportunities to learn the game in a suburban setting, play the game in an urban setting, coach the game in a rural setting, and officiate the game in multiple settings. Each quarter brought forth a new experience, but the conversation was solely focused on basketball as played and not basketball as lived.

Now as a scholar, I turn once again to basketball, but not to strategically conventionalize the game to its Xs and Os (defense and offense), but rather to phenomenologically broaden the lived experience of basketball with a group of women who claim that basketball has and continues to be a big part of their lives. In the process of engaging with the written narrative of the other and personal reflections of the self, I am called by the following question: **What is the lived experience of basketball in the**

lives of collegiate women who claim to be scholar-athletes? To explore this question I turn to phenomenology for my research methodology and the curriculum practice of *currere* to help develop the reflective process. As I explore the written narrative of the other in search of themes that highlight the phenomenon of basketball as lived, I put into perspective Chase's (2005) claim:

...Narrative whether oral or written is a distinct form of discourse. Narrative is retrospective meaning making – the shaping or ordering of past experience. Narrative is a way of understanding one's own and others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of action and events over time. (p. 656)

In preparing to enter this journey of basketball as a life course, I stare at the picture of a cylinder on the basketball court. This round ring serves as the destination point in the game of basketball – a sacred hoop where points are attempted and in the process either accumulated or defied. Just below the cylinder hangs a net that captures the essence of a shot and the emotions of an outcome. It is the net that shows the complicated conversation of basketball through countless connections and symmetrical knots that engulf the sanctity of our experiences as we learn to play, compete, observe, and strategize basketball as lived. The life course becomes the experiential paths traveled by the self as a scholar and athlete and the many others one encounters along the way.

Hoopin' through the Process of *Currere*

Athletes rarely have opportunities to reflect upon their sport(s) in the written narrative form as they often are bombarded by others seeking strategically triggered succinct responses via rudimentary questions. In the process of delivering a quick response, the person is misled away from the self, and as a result, becomes weary of his or her intellectual conversation with sport as lived. Hirst (1982) reminds us that “To see

things is not just to register things for what they are, it is for them to be picked out or articulated in our consciousness ... what the development of understanding involves is, in fact, a progressive differentiation of our experience through the acquisition of new concepts under which it is intelligible” (p. 292). By unpacking basketball as a life course, I am returning to those learned and lived moments of play once again, but this time looking through and not just at the experience, and in the process, building a lived bridge between the past and the present. The voice given to the lived experience of the self by the self, through the written narrative form, is essential in giving validity to the emancipatory nature of sport beyond the notion of play. In capturing my own lived experiences through basketball, I realize that “Without narration the past would sink into an obscurity of forgetfulness wherein everything becomes equal” (Kerby, 1991, p. 54). By complicating the conversations of basketball as a life course, in an elective special topics course at the university where I teach, I enter a journey of exploration with no definitive destination, but rather, an opportunity to preserve the voices of scholar-athletes as they lived through basketball both on and off the court.

I turn to the narrative phenomenological process of *currere*, introduced by William Pinar in the 1970s, as a tool for penetrating lived basketball moments in the past (regressive) projecting them into the future (progressive), in order to analyze them into the present, and synthesize their significance upon the future. The practice of *currere* is not merely an autobiographical rendering of a life past, but reflectively, an active engagement with the lived course as it is actually taking place. According to Pinar:

Curriculum as a word is easily traced to the *Latin, currere*. *Currere* is the infinitive; it is translated ‘to run’, as in to run a course. Through the years the word has come to have elaborate meanings, but on the whole curriculum often is taken to refer to materials, intended learning outcomes, and experiences, but

experiences from the point of view of the other, whether this other be curriculum developer, designer, or teacher. Experience is what one senses, one feels, one thinks: it is, in a word, one's living through of one's life. So curriculum reconceptualized is *currere*; it is not the course to be run, or the artifacts employed in the running of the course; it is the running of the course. The course most broadly is our lives, in schools and out, and the running, is our experience of our lives. Because our lives tend to be progressive, we say that we evolve. This evolution is education; it is the synthesis of cognitive and psychosocial development. (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 18)

By meeting with women scholar-athletes who have accrued a significant amount of lived time through basketball, I am able to travel through their lived moments of basketball as I listen to a narrative version that may very well be quite different from my own. The challenge is to use basketball as a medium of conversation and move, as an athletic, intellectual team, beyond the notion of maintaining and containing a private voice. As Pinar (2004) reminds us:

To remain a private thinker means that one's scholarship, one's thinking, teaching, and writing, are engaged in self-overcoming, the surpassing of the historical, sedimented "self" one has been conditioned and, perhaps, required to be. In working to overcome the "self" conceived by others, one "works from within," from one's interiority, which is a specific configuration of the socius and therefore, by definition, a public project as well. (p. 22)

Currere as a classroom initiative offers the opportunity for each participant to pose questions, not criticisms, based on the written narrative of the other in order to open up the details of a self-lived basketball course. By exposing the lived basketball moments archived within the self onto a platform of complicated conversation inquiry, the classroom setting can move beyond the notion of instructor-desired outcomes into a realm of preserving the personal lived accounts of basketball corporeally, temporally, spatially, and relationally. Although objective ends too often set the modern tone within our homes, schools, and places of work, it must not be forgotten that practice continues to electrify the essence of social growth.

Over thirty years ago,

The method of *currere* reconceptualized curriculum from course objectives to complicated conversation with oneself (as a ‘private’ intellectual), an ongoing project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engaged pedagogical action – as a private-and-public intellectual – with others in the social reconstruction of the public sphere. (Pinar, 2004, p. 37)

Today, lived experiences are often anecdotal on the resumes and cyber pages that individuals create to offer the world a fast track version of the self as learned and liked, but not necessarily lived. Friedman (1988) suggests that we do not randomize autobiography as an independent form of written expression, but more so a dependent practice of reflection through the self with the other. Friedman (1988) emphasizes that autobiography becomes a transformative art when

[T]he individual does not feel herself to exist outside of others, and still is less against others, but very much with others in an interdependent existence that asserts its rhythms everywhere in the community ... [where] lives are so thoroughly entangled that each of them has its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere. The important unit is thus never the isolated being. (p. 38)

The shift away from the contemporary secluded self into a reflective state of being with the other, via written narrative form, invigorates a rethinking of the self. Hence, as scholars-athletes digging into our past in search of lived quarters within the journey, the *currere* process becomes “a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence – sober, in the sense that reflecting on experience must be thoughtful, and as much as possible, free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional intoxications” (van Manen, 2007, p. 11).

As I enter the four quarters of my lived experience with basketball and prepare to begin a journey of women’s basketball with my participants, I am reminded by van Manen (1997, p. xii) that “...we must dislodge and confront our unexamined

assumptions” and ask, “But what is this experience to which we turn? And how do I know that I experience things in the same way as does someone else? Is each of our experiences not unique, even though we may use the same words to describe those experiences?” Unpacking each of these questions initially leads to greater inquiry about why basketball is not merely a globally recognized recreational epidemic, but justly a lived phenomenon with progressive life course implications. By regressing upon basketball as lived, and not described from a third party perspective, I seek to encounter the other in her own basketball space, time, and relation. In the process, I have a rare opportunity here to analyze narratives of basketball that encompass overarching themes made of unique corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational ingredients. With these narratives in hand, I am obligated to synthesize the lived moments shared, by looking back upon the regressive and progressive nature of basketball, as it is played and lived, in order to explore the pedagogical implications upon scholars-athletes as a whole.

Although I am academically complicating the conversation of basketball at the collegiate level in an en-gendered form, the study can serve as an initiative to transform the notion of being student-athletes into becoming scholar-athletes, specifically within high profile sports such as basketball, starting as early as the secondary school level. “The growing gap between college athletics and educational values is a major, unavoidable, issue for the academy; it must be understood and addressed. The objective should be to reinvigorate the contribution of intercollegiate athletics to the achievement of educational goals” (Shulman & Bowen, 2001, p. 294). By empowering athletes as both intellectual and physical beings at an earlier age within the school setting, through a consistent scholastic and athletic resource program, and not merely random academic

intervention, it may be possible to pave a more successful path for future collegiate scholar-athletes.

First Quarter: A Student of the Game

Basketball is a journey that cuts across culture, race, gender, and social class by bringing people together with a ball and a hoop. Those moments of learning the game as children and young adults are the seeds that grow into a passion for living and loving the game as adults. What is it about how we learn the game of basketball that has such a tremendous impact upon how we live the game, not as professional athletes, but as philosophical athletes? “Put simply, philosophers ask questions – continually trying to discover the truth about a thing. They alter their perspective on an issue by stepping back and looking at the ‘big picture’ or zooming in to contemplate the details ... philosophers go asking questions where things are better left unexamined” (Reid, 2002, p. 4). Philosophical athletes think beyond the game itself by digging deeper into what the implications are of the moments lived within the game upon happenings beyond the game.

According to Webb (2007), “It used to be that being from a small town meant dreaming about doing something that was beyond one’s reach. Now Americans have apparently decided that every kid should be a Goliath and nobody should be faced with insurmountable obstacles like David” (p. 16). To look back upon the earliest invitations and confrontations each of us had within our individual basketball communities is essential to writing our own autobiographical tales of David and/or Goliath. Like school, we have a natural tendency to want to remember and relive the most detailed and intellectually stimulating moments in our unique basketball portfolio, and in the process

we forget that the game of basketball is governed by a set of written and unwritten rules, that with some minor exceptions, are actually quite universal. As Webb points out, “Philosophical liberals are more interested in those aspects of human nature that are shared by everyone, not the local customs, rituals, and beliefs that distinguish one group from another” (2007, p. 9). As students of the game we may have silently wondered but never did ask, are there common basketball virtues that are shared by playground culture, regardless of geographic location, and what are the bonds that keep playground cultures intact?

Sporting Spaces We Call Home Court

Some of our fondest memories of playing basketball can be traced via time and space to the childhood playgrounds that we practically lived on from dawn until dusk. These were the spaces that formed some of the earliest basketball relationships in our lives. For many young people in the United States, their fondest memories are embedded in the personal basketball hoop in the driveway that often was used with neighborhood friends or the neighborhood playground courts that had to be shared with older athletes and “drive-thru” players. Within those driveways and playgrounds identities are molded and lessons are passed down from one generation to another. Of course the art of dribbling, shooting, and passing are observed. But more significantly, even for the youngest participants, the sport of basketball, like any other form of fast-paced competition, asks you to put the skills that you have acquired to use immediately and build an identity. Reid (2002) captures the significance of these times spent within sporting spaces:

At the moment of challenge in sport, philosophical athletes confront the question of personal identity and begin to develop an authentic self-knowledge that will

become the foundation for their social and ethical existence. Here, we encounter the question of *reidentification* – finding a constant and unchangeable element to the self that represents “who you really are.” We also face the question of *individuation* – distinguishing ourselves from others like us. And finally, there’s the question of our inner and outer selves – in which we evaluate the origin and authenticity of who we have become. Indeed, the moment of challenge is itself a kind of question, a *lived question* that initiates the philosophical process of self-discovery in sport. (p. 19)

Within these crowded challenging spaces for ball and hoop, questions are raised about whether the student of the game is focused more internally or externally. How much is the student willing to sacrifice to build an identity as an athlete within this space? And once they are designated with a social role, do students of the game strive to maintain that role beyond the court? It is fascinating to think that as a student of the game you are merely feeding off the graceful or cocky flamboyance of the other – whether it is a recreational athlete who you admire in your neighborhood, or a professional athlete that you observe on television. As children we may often not realize it but, “One fundamental human desire is to distinguish ourselves from the herd we live in. We seek to discover ourselves as unique and to do this we must feel alone. In the athletic moment of challenge we are alone – even while dressed identically to our teammates on a crowded field or court. As soon as the ball comes sailing my direction, there’s no-one in the world but me and the challenge I face” (Reid, 2002, p. 25).

Scheduling Basketball into a Life Course

As a young teen I often enjoyed mapping out my academic and athletic life on a napkin while relishing my frosted Lucky Charms each morning. In those wonder years, life used to be so mysterious, yet, so simple. Wake up, eat breakfast, go to school, do homework, clean the house, play basketball outside, take a shower, play basketball inside on a Nerf hoop, and eventually pass out, only to wake up early the next day and do it all

over again. The savior of these monotonous childhood days was the physical, emotional, and mental adrenaline rush of basketball. As young students of the game we do not contemplate that

Basketball is a complex dance that requires shifting from one objective to another at lightening speed. To excel, you need to act with a clear mind and be totally focused on what everyone on the floor is doing ... The secret is not thinking. That doesn't mean being stupid; it means quieting the endless jabbering of thoughts so that your body can do instinctively what it's been trained to do without the mind getting in the way. (Jackson, 1995, pp. 115-116)

As students of the game we are merely sponges that absorb the physical up and down nature of basketball, only stopping to catch our breath or drink some water. It never crosses our minds that in these scheduled moments of jubilant play, "One becomes locked into a mode of life that may not change in any essential way for many years. We repeat the same routines. One's habitus, that fund of practical but implicit and corporeal wisdom, is like an ocean upon which our personal consciousness floats, and where even this consciousness is but a part of that same ocean" (Kerby, 1991, p. 38).

What is it about this game that makes it so addictive, regardless of whether you are involved with it habitually at a recreational level, or ritually in a competitive nature? Notice that I used the word "involve" instead of "play." That is what keeps me coming back to basketball; I stayed involved even when I did not actually play as a participatory member of a team. I often wonder whether I continued to play because I was chasing an opportunity to be associated in some capacity with the world of college basketball that I treasured deeply. Part of me always had the sense that I was too small to be a professional basketball player, but I had convinced myself that college basketball was definitely within reach. On the other hand, the journey of chasing these monumental basketball dreams could merely be my own version of what Hume (1826) implied as the

denial of the self because, “When I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at anytime without a perception and never can observe anything but a perception” (p. 821). By delving deeper into Hume’s notion of the perceived self, I realize that I have radiated toward the culture of basketball as merely play, not because I think of myself as a basketball subject or identity on the court, but more significantly, because of my spatial memories with heat and cold, temporal outings with light and shade, relational moments with love and hatred, and corporeal feelings with pain and pleasure. These memories, outings, moments, and feelings are the very foundation of how I define basketball, not just as something I learned to play, but something that I lived to learn.

Returning to a Space Twice Learned

In 2007, on a late winter evening, I found myself standing within an enclosed wooden boundary that many would not find appealing. I felt as if I was thirteen years old again and the coach was standing by my side, teaching me to hold the ball properly as I release it toward the hoop. As I turned to each direction of the gymnasium, I captured a soothing nostalgic glimpse of the moments lived in 1985 upon that enclosed space we called “P.E.” class. Those of us who have engaged with basketball for many years may claim the space as a sanctuary refusing to accept the place of our becoming as just any old basketball court. To me this was the very space where I first learned to shoot, dribble, pass, and play defense when I arrived in the United States. I had always admired the game of basketball from a distance, not really seeking to understand the philosophy, rules, and athleticism that the sport entailed; but it was not until I moved to Gaithersburg

that I started to make the move to participate on a routine basis. Coincidentally, it was at this school, after two years of intense physical and mental participation, that I made the basketball team as the twelfth and final athlete on the roster. “Snap out of it I told myself; that was over twenty years ago. Focus on officiating the game!” The basketball narrative line runs deep, and in that very moment I, the referee, could not seem to separate the notion of work and play. Kerby (1991) reminds us:

We are both experiencers and narrators (often pretty much at the same time), for the act of making intelligible is a more or less continuous one, even though the narratives may be appropriated from elsewhere. It is this continuity of our life story that constitutes the greater part of our experienced self-identity. Our identity is that of a particular historical being, and this identity can persist only through the continued integration of ongoing experience. Because we bring our history along with us, as a more or less clearly configured horizon, new experiences will tend to flow into this story of our lives, augmenting it and adapting themselves to it. (p. 45)

It was hard enough to keep up with these agile 7th and 8th graders and make the proper ruling as they played their version of basketball; but this all too familiar space, which had not been renovated at all, was flashing continuous, uncontrollable mental images of my basketball childhood. Then I thought to myself, while I am experiencing this glorious dilemma with basketball, what are the other people – players, coaches, and parents – seeing in their minds? Van Manen (1997) poses the question: “How do I know that I experience things in the same way as does someone else?” (p. xii). That is an unnatural assumption that we as human beings have been made to believe habitually. While this intense game of basketball is occurring, parents could be remembering their childhood; coaches could be contemplating their integrity, and players could be conjuring a future. As we all physically engage upon the immediate platform where the game is taking place, as a temporary basketball community, our minds drift into the more

definitive personal remembrance of basketball brought forth by this space. This makes me think that as adults we often ponder – how are the young players learning the rules of basketball – instead of considering how the players are experiencing the game of basketball?

In this intense athletic engagement of 32:00 minutes, I was becoming weary of what van Manen (1997) states as “my own mode of being, governed by unreflective consciousness” (p. 25). In other words, I could hear and feel what Sartre (1956) eloquently describes as being gazed upon through a keyhole by the comments and bodily language of the players, coaches, and parents. As with many other basketball games that I had officiated in the past, I was able to find my own solitude in capturing and interpreting the physical snapshots (the plays) and interpreting these images into poetic infractions and violations (rulings) based on the philosophy of advantage-disadvantage. For me, that was not just another basketball game, it was a lived tribute to what I had learned from basketball. “In acts of recollection I indeed seem to reactivate or at least contact in some important way moments of my past life, and I can also plot the general course of my life from a past moment up to the present, though often this is admittedly very sketchy” (Kerby, 1991, p. 21). Being enclosed in that unscathed space that I knew all too well as a student of the game brought back memories that were transparently detailed.

Second Quarter: An Athlete in the Game

Basketball students dedicated to learning and applying their skills on the court are often invited to the ranks of becoming an athlete, not necessarily an all-star, just an athlete. Within the sport of basketball, this distinction as athlete usually is shared by nine

others who simultaneously occupy that athletic stage. “One fundamental human desire is to distinguish ourselves from the herd we live in. We seek to discover ourselves as unique, and to do this we must feel alone. In the athletic moment of challenge we are alone – even while dressed identically to our teammates on a crowded field or court. As soon as the ball comes sailing my direction, there’s no-one in the world but me and the challenge I face” (Reid, 2002, p. 25). Yet, it is not the moments of practice and exercise alone that we tend to remember the most as basketball athletes; rather we remember having a role within the broader context of a community or a team. Young basketball players are bestowed leadership roles within communities, making their journey from student to athlete not an individual feat, but one shared by the community.

Webb’s (2007) deconstruction of the customs within the game claims, “Communitarians follow Aristotle in arguing that humans are naturally social creatures. People find value in life through their attachments to various groups, organizations, or teams. Communitarians argue that what makes one society good might differ from what makes another society good – just as too equally good basketball teams may have totally contrasting styles” (pp. 9-10). The value of a lived experience is often measured through the self, but the phenomenon moves beyond the individual, as he or she lives with the other through a team sport such as basketball. Ultimately, the camaraderie within the phenomenon becomes the source of the experiences we accrue, and not what we claim to have done with our bodies, in self-selected moments of space and time.

Turning the Notion of Play into Competition

I played on lots of good teams, not great, but good ones. Actually Brinklow was pretty great, especially when Tim played. He was like a shorter version of Michael

Jordan. Tim was a tremendous athlete with all the right moves, inspirational words, and a keen sense of humor to make everyone a better player in their element. I did not get much playing time, especially since our roster was twelve deep and I was by far number twelve. When some of the players did not show up, I had a chance to play one quarter, and that was fine with me because this District of Columbia Church League was tough, so tough, that in one game I got woman-handled severely. She was so quick and had all the fundamentals, and she used each drop of it to make me look like a brand new student of the game. “What an athlete I thought,” as the coach screamed at me to get back on defense. “Like that is going to help,” I thought. That is what I loved about Brinklow and the D.C. League: race, gender, and social class were not an issue – at least not in my eyes as a ninth grader. Actually I was probably one of three players who was not African American in the league. More importantly, the practice etiquette was harsh and tiresome, but that is what we did back then, play basketball whenever and however we could, even if the weather went south; our basketballs still went north toward the rim and the backboard.

“Just as Homer’s Greek warriors staged competitive games as a way to exercise their skills in isolation from the consequences of war, athletes can imbue their contests with life-or-death seriousness without ever risking their lives at all” (Reid, 2002, p. 69). In these moments of hypothetical basketball wars, we did not stop to doubt our athletic ability to triumph, because in Kiesling’s words, “The marvels of the body are short-lived, reminding us of our own mortality. Becoming an athlete is then the building of a new self confidence, a confidence exclaiming to the world that this body can withstand anything the world has to offer, but which can only briefly cover up the real sources of

insecurity” (1982, pp. 161-162). The hypothetical basketball wars become part of the lived phenomenon for survival beyond the court as the self discovers a new source of power through performance on the court, transforming the random chaos of play into an order of personal growth.

Modernizing the Purity of Organized Chaos

In our childhood and teen experiences, on the playground and in the gymnasium, we have all played with or against some basketball athletes who were *Purists*, and others who were *Modernists*. We may have admired or loathed these individuals based on how each of us were taught to play the game by an elder, how our friends played the game in the neighborhood, and how many different teams we played within the course of a season. Yet, for the most part, we may have kept our positive or negative analysis of the individual to ourselves. Jeff and I spent many days and nights shoveling the snow off the blacktop at Whetstone Park so that we could shoot around and practice for the upcoming recreational and scholastic games. He attended my recreation games and critiqued me, as well as being my number one fan, and I attended his scholastic games and took notes on how foolish he made the other players look with his court awareness, quick moves, immaculate jumpshots, suffocating defense, and jaw-dropping passes.

Jeff was of the purist athletic brand, a brand that I learned from as I transformed from my role as his basketball protégé to becoming my own purist athlete. The more time I spent playing basketball with Jeff, the more I appreciated how this game of ball and hoop was centered on team capability. Jeff was selfless on the court, and it showed in the way he made athletes suffer for paying too much attention to his skills and fundamentals instead of his teammate(s). He was the king of half-court play because he

was patient, yet agile, quick, and often deceptive. Even though I thought he was quite the athlete, when he played against others who were faster and stronger, he relied on his shooting skills and defense to elevate everyone's performance. Jeff epitomized the notion of the ancient Greeks single word, *arête*, for human excellence, moral, athletic or otherwise:

Arête was conceived as a kind of health that infused mind, body, and spirit. It could be manifest in sport, philosophy, art or science. What ancient Greeks called *arête*, medieval monks called virtue, and modern parents call character can be summed up as 'the disposition to do the right thing for the right reasons.' Plato conceived of virtue as the health of the soul, understood crudely as the harmonious function of head, heart, and gut. This idea is based on a *tripartite theory of the soul* – his belief that human beings have three competing forces within them: the rational or wisdom-loving part (logistikon), the spirited or honor-loving part (thymoeides) and the appetitive or pleasure-loving part (epithymetikon). The trick to virtue is getting all three to work together with reason in the lead. The head determines the proper goal, the heart summons willpower, and the gut provides that burning desire. (Reid, 2002, pp. 145-146)

I learned to live and love the game of basketball from Jeff Day, and since he was respected by so many others on the court, they respected me because he chose me first to be on his team, all the time. I always thought that he would go on to play at an Atlantic Coast Conference university and then on to the National Basketball Association, but like many other constantly active athletes, Jeff's knees took a turn for the worse in high school, causing him to put on some weight, get less playing time, and eventually come to differences with the coach. I remember he told me once when we first met back in 7th grade: "If you play with me everyday for the next two years, I guarantee you'll make the 9th grade school team." I did not believe it until the winter of 1986 when I saw my name on that prestigious list at Gaithersburg Middle School with the great ones. For two years straight, Jeff had seen something inside of me that I did not even fathom. Seeing my name on that list outside the coach's office equated to, "Basketball is Life!"

Playing for the Other, Branding the Self

The game of organized team basketball has changed dramatically in the past two decades, and the biggest concern seems to be the influence the powers that be are having on the hearts and souls of young athletes. According to Daniel Gallagher's (2007) analysis of Plato's *Republic*,

For a society to operate smoothly, he says, three separate social classes are needed. Workers are needed to build houses, grow food, make clothes, and provide other basic necessities. Warriors are necessary to protect the state from the threat of attack and to maintain internal order. Rulers are needed to oversee and coordinate the various functions of the working and soldiering classes, as well as to provide overall leadership and direction. The workers in the Republic correspond to the power of desire (the appetitive soul), the warriors to the power of courage (the spirited soul), and the rulers to the power of reason (the rational soul). Each of these classes is essential to a safe, stable, and well-governed state. Just as the state won't operate smoothly if any of them is absent, neither will the presence of any one of them alone be sufficient for a smoothly operating state. As Bill Bradley wisely reminds us, 'a player is only one point in a five-point star.' (p. 237)

Basketball athletes as young as ten years of age today are being used as pawns within the "republic." Through a grueling form of physical, mental, emotional, and sacrificial labor, they are made to believe that by performing as the hungry athletic warrior, their appetite and spirit will lead them rationally to a state of never-ending bliss. According to Sokolove (2009):

All youth sports now operate on fast-forward. Just about any kid with some ability takes road trips with his or her team by the age of 12, flying on planes and staying in hotels. That used to happen, if at all, only after an athlete was skilled enough to play in college. Now it occurs in just about any sport organized enough to form into a league. But basketball operates at a level beyond other sports, and in recent years, the attention, benefits and temptations that fall on top high-school players have settled on an ever-younger group. (p. 1)

Young athletes look up to their parents and amateur organizations to set a standard of expectations with regard to balancing basketball with other aspects of life. Unfortunately,

the adults in this equation, who to some degree can be labeled as the rational souls, too often prioritize accomplishment on the court and trivialize the necessities off the court. Hence, young minds falsely believe that the mere warrior, spirited soul, within their developing bodies will get them to basketball heaven. The feeling is so strong that the word injury has been to some degree erased from their minds. Could it be that these young athletes are merely being exploited by the rulers of society for their appetitive soul?

To think back to those moments that I spent with Jeff learning, and then playing the game for pure competitive pleasure is forever blissful; but to also realize that those long, fragile moments of jubilation can be tainted by a system's greed to exploit the purity of young athletes is disturbing. To write positively about childhood autobiographical renderings of sport in the present brings forth a rude awakening of a past that may no longer exist on the playgrounds and in the gyms today.

Philosopher John Huizinga noted that in the modern world, play is taken more seriously than ever while work acquires more and more play-elements. Maybe all those people investing their savings in the stock market or launching new e-businesses have learned to satisfy their appetite for risk outside of sport. But which risk is healthier? The payoff of self-knowledge gained in sport is at least as valuable as any financial gain. Sporting risk may allow us to face up to the truth about ourselves. (Reid, 2002, p. 104)

The bigger question here should be, have adults operating within these modern notions of work and play corrupted the young athletes' basketball experiences by turning a pure game into a commodity war or fantasy basketball game of sorts, where young athletes serve as the objects to be maneuvered, instead of subjects to be valued? By writing my basketball wishes on table napkins growing up, I was given the opportunity to dream,

while craving an uncertainty that awaited each workout on the playground, each weekly recreation game at the middle school, and each tryout for a scholastic team.

We humans seem to be fatally attracted to uncertain outcomes. Perhaps it's our ever-looming suspicion of hard determinism that makes us savor the uncertainty inherent in sport. Uncertainty also attracts and drives the individual athlete. Unlike an actor who has read the script of the play, an athlete never knows how the drama of sport will unfold. Athletes train for weeks in predictable and methodical cycles, trying to tame an uncertainty about their eventual performance in competition – an uncertainty that by its very nature can never be eradicated. (Reid, 2002, p. 63)

By interfering in the athletically learned and played moments of young basketball players, are we covering to some degree that uncertainty by making immediate promises via rewards, or worse yet, future guarantees via affiliations?

According to John Wooden's *Pyramid of Success*, "Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best of which you are capable" (<http://www.coachwooden.com>). What happens when we take the power of sporting lives out of the hands of each individual athlete and allow private athletic training programs to adjudicate when they should play, how they should play, and where they should play? Wooden thrived on putting the responsibility and power upon the individual because he or she will be the leader of the path he or she chooses to live. By giving athletes the guidelines, not an agenda, Wooden got each of them to perform at their peak, not because of a desire to outdo others, but the need to satisfy a personal craving for athletic achievement that carried into the bigger game of life.

"According to Frankl, man can endure almost anything except the lack of meaning. Athletic angst is a training ground for the urgency of real life. Philosophical athletes do not dedicate their lives to sport, they dedicate their sport to the pursuit of

meaningful lives” (Reid, 2002, p. 126). The definition of a meaningful life in relation to a game cannot be taken lightly here as dimensions such as race, gender, and social class can broaden the scope of desire and achievement from both within and beyond the phenomenon of lived basketball. The many versions of basketball taught, the variety of bodies that are built, and the availability of opportunities present are just a few of the dimensions that dictate the complexity of, and necessity for, researching basketball as a lived course by way of oral and written discourse with the philosophical athlete.

Feminizing the Notion of Warrior Athletes

It was not until my first year of college in 1990 that I even thought about the notion of organized coed athletics. It was not that I did not agree with the idea, but the opportunity to play competitively with female athletes was never really an option during middle school and high school. I must admit we always thought that when females played it was recreational, and when males played it was competitive. Well, I was in for a rude awakening in a coed intramural soccer league at the University of Maryland. It was the first game of the season and besides my immediate friends from high school, I did not know the other players on the team. By rule each team had to have at least two female athletes on the field at any given time. My duty on the team was to protect the goal. During warm-ups the two female all-stars on our team – I did not know this at the time – did a number on my hands, chest, and face, as they each delivered some of the fastest kicks I had ever experienced in my life. They must have each scored two to three goals on me. The true lesson came when the game began, and within the first ten minutes the female athlete on the other team had rocked my goal two times. I was truly frightened, not because “I got scored on by a girl,” but more so that it actually hurt quite a

bit trying to block her kicks. It was definitely what I call a positive rude awakening.

“John Wooden ... said a couple of years ago that the best pure basketball in the country was being played by women’s collegiate teams because the women relied on fundamentals – playing below the rim with grace and finesse – while the men had grown sloppy and showboaty, with too much traveling and wrestling under the basket, and too much emphasis on the highlight-reel-dunk” (Wallace, 2007, p. 170). Well, at that moment as I was flying back and forth between two goal posts on the soccer field, I was a victim of fundamental finesse. Why, as a society, are we so shocked or caught off guard by the superb athletic performance of female athletes? Worse yet, why do male athletes refuse to perform at a high caliber when playing with or against female athletes?

In my middle school experience, the gap of participation was much narrower, in that boys sought athletically-skilled girls during Physical Education class to be on their team because they wanted the ultimate prize of victory, but as soon as high school came about, the concept of “everything counts toward college” really separated consistent cross-gender participation in sports. Reid (2002) claims:

The issues of race and gender stereotyping point to an important paradox in modern sports: they try to promote equality while seeking inequality. On the one hand, it seems obvious that sport values equality. As in any worthwhile human community, players are given equal opportunity to compete on a level playing field and to be judged by unbiased standards. On the other hand, it seems just as obvious that sport is about inequality – the whole purpose of a contest is to point out differences in ability, performance, even virtues. Athletes strive to rise above their foes, to distinguish themselves from others, to stand alone on the winner’s podium. (p. 239)

It appears that the culture of athletics has warranted an ideology that encourages cross-gender participation in the realm of recreation. However, as soon as the athlete is to be judged for superiority, then, regardless of whether the athlete is involved in team or

individual sports, the process changes to the caliber of performance and separation of gender becomes a necessity, beginning with high school sports. We must not forget that “This pure game of sport is played in a sea of partisan spectators for whom the whole contest is an issue of proving one group of people superior to another. And who is to say that the spectators are wrong? After all, sports are defined in terms of winners and losers; they are built on a foundational belief that humans are unequal and their purpose is to publicly expose those inequalities” (Reid, 2002, p. 240). The dilemma arises when the view of women’s sports and the athletes who partake on the field, court, floor, or rink are not valued for their own individual feat.

“As athletes, women face a similar irresolvable contradiction: play as women are expected to play – with restraint, cooperation, teamwork – and they will appear to have resigned themselves to their weaker side of the feminine/masculine dichotomy; they will seem happy to have inherited a game whose slow pace and frequent passing of the ball were created by rules designed to limit women’s physical movement, and they will lose the attention of fans who, conditioned by men’s sports, want to see a more exciting game” (Wallace, 2007, p. 175). Simply put, humans like to live in the other, and at the same time, want to be the best in venues of competition. Once this simple formula is altered in the minds of a participant or spectator, disassociation and denial may set in and block any opportunities for fair competition. As Reid points out, “Gender is rarely a barrier to participation in sport these days but sex-segregation persists. Males and females play in separate leagues, run different distances, use different-sized balls, and in some cases play different versions of the same game (i.e. baseball and softball). Does such segregation violate the principle of equal opportunity?” (2002, p. 263). The barrier

has to some extent been broken as recreational leagues have down-sized, and hence, consolidated the boys and girls basketball programs, bringing forth coed teams during the learning stages of the game. The outcome remains to be seen as these athletes grow into the competitive nature of the sport in the years to come.

Third Quarter: A Scholar for the Game

Basketball invites us to open multiple windows of identity that all link back to the notion of floor leadership. As students of the game we step onto the court to hone our basic skills of dribbling, shooting, and passing, while getting accustomed to a space that we know others treasure and use as a platform for optimal display of talent. As athletes we physically, mentally, and emotionally feel every aspect of the space by logging in excessive hours as we learn to maneuver those learned skills optimally within a space we share with nine other participants. By opening the door of basketball philosophy, we enter a new realm by returning back to the sidelines as scholars, and intellectually observe the Xs and Os in order to achieve optimal performance with a group of athletes. According to Webb, “Communities determine meaning, not individuals. As the familiar example of team bonding in basketball illustrates, people value each other and the places they live because they have shared goals, common beliefs, and public rituals that bring them together. When people no longer feel like they belong to local communities, their basic human need for belonging is replaced with nostalgia for the past” (Webb, 2007, pp. 9 and 14). By revisiting our childhood memories of playing basketball, both recreationally and scholastically, we can explore how much the space of basketball determined our identity in comparison to how our actions filled the space of basketball.

Learning to Play from Community Sidelines

In 1992 I was taking an education class at the university when I was inspired to go back to the community by working with young athletes. I called the local recreation department and asked if I could volunteer as a basketball coach in the upcoming basketball season. The director was flabbergasted and said that he had just the team for me, a group of multicultural third and fourth grade girls, who had never played together. Actually, half of them had never played at all. As a first time scholar (coach) of the game I wanted to create a basketball academy of sorts by setting demanding goals, making hard work a passion, establishing good habits, being persistent, learning from adversity, and putting the team first. Those were some lofty goals considering the fact that many of these students of the game were making their first trip through the world of basketball. Our record at the end of the season was two wins, six losses. We learned a lot more about patience, effort, and smiling, than we did about dribbling, passing, and shooting.

As Porter and Foster (1986) remind us, “We can choose to learn from a less than perfect performance or event and go forward, using it to our advantage, or we can choose to become upset and tense. So often we defeat ourselves by adopting a negative attitude. We are totally free to see ourselves as important, competent, talented, and unique or as incompetent, unworthy, untalented and second best” (p. 7). That is exactly why I love this game; it trickles into life a lot more than people think. The girls were happy because they had made some new friends and helped each other learn to play basketball. As for me, the early seeds of a scholar may have been planted, and gradually the seeds bloomed into a blissful bouquet on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Road Games and Warrior Cultures in Motion

By stepping into the role as a scholar of sports, you are identifying yourself as one who has not only learned, played, and studied the game, but more significantly, knows how to lead a group of young athletes down that same path through the process of physical and mental application. The intellectual weight that a leader places upon players depends on a notion that,

Coaches, like teammates, share a common athletic destiny with their players. Team success can be especially important to them, since coaching careers are made according to win-loss records. Much has been said about how coaches should treat their athletes, but what about the relationship from the athlete's point of view? What is an athlete's obligation to the coach? When should the athlete obey and when (if ever) not? How can an athlete learn from the coach without sacrificing personal autonomy? (Reid, 2002, p. 178)

As the final beats of the drum echoed through Dizzy Trout gymnasium and gifts were exchanged, I saw clips from my year at Red Cloud Indian School flash before my eyes. I remember joyous moments such as watching Terran finally get a grasp on fractions by using what he could relate to best, a ball and a hoop. There were thrilling moments outside of the classroom such as my fifth and sixth grade boys' eighteen point triumphant rally and victory in the first round of the YMCA tournament. To see my own energy become contagious, both within the classroom and in the community, was the most powerful moment of them all. However, somber moments such as the funerals brought forth by poverty, alcoholism, and suicide seemed always to tame the exuberance on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Little did I know that, in the midst of all these positive and negative affairs, the birth and molding process of an educator was taking place.

You have to live on the “rez” to understand that each basketball game is as sacred as a warrior who counts his or her first coup, a “take all prisoners” notion of conquest seeking to send a strong message to the opponent. I was fascinated by the impact that this mere sport of ball and hoop had on the community as a whole. The gyms were packed with moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas, nephews and nieces, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters, all gathered in an elliptical formation very similar to an infamous pow-wow. It was actually one of the few places where it seemed that everyone left their worries at the door, seeking the blissful adrenaline of the competition on the hardwood floor. Within these confined boundaries of competition,

Athletes must police themselves ethically. We face many tollbooths on the road to athletic success where a price to continue must be paid. Many athletes give up their education or forgo personal relationships and family life in order to pursue their dreams. In basing our ethics on a complete vision of happiness, we commit ourselves to accepting truths about who we are. We must distinguish external appearances from internal reality. It’s not enough to fulfill the image of standing on the Olympic podium of your dreams, you have to be the person you hoped to be on the inside, too. (Reid, 2002, p. 156)

Yet, for many of the reservation athletes and their families the very dreams that would eventually die on that high school court were actually born on the dry, arid soil of sacred summer lands. Within those sacred spaces on the rez, scholarly basketball lessons begin at a young age and stretch immediately into the game of life. As Alexie (1995) eloquently phrases:

Basketball is like this for young Indian boys, all arms and legs
and serious stomach muscles. Every body is brown!
These are the twentieth-century warriors who will never kill,
although a few sat quietly in the deserts of Kuwait,
waiting for orders to do something, to do something.
There are veterans of foreign wars here
although their bodies are still dominated
by collarbones and knees, although their bodies still respond
in the ways that bodies are supposed to respond when we are young.

Every body is brown! Look there, that boy can run up and down this court forever. He can leap for a rebound with his back arched like a salmon, all meat and bone synchronized, magnetic, as if the court were a river, as if the rim were a dam, as if the air were a ladder leading the Indian boy toward home. (pp. 27-28)

Rez basketball is not merely a run, dribble, and shoot affair; it is an art form with lots of self-expression – the ball is your brush, the canvas is the soil, and the sky is truly one’s limit. Wars are waged, jokes are cracked, memories are rekindled, bodies are sculpted, bones are broken, and legends are retired. And that is just in the off-season for recreational ball players.

Turning toward Being a Coach on the Rez

I will never forget my triumphant eighteen point deficit rally in the YMCA Regional Tournament in Rapid City, South Dakota. The spring weather had just broken and teen angst was at an all-time high on the two-hour bus ride to the game site. Players had character both in appearance and in personality, and names like Braveheart, Buffalo Soldier, Her Many Horses, Eagle Bull, and Bear Robe, off-springs of tribesmen and tribeswomen who fought hard to preserve the ways of the medicine wheel for generations to come. Who was this rookie, volunteer coach, in the shadows of these tribal elders? If intellect is measured by life experience and survival, then these young tribal athletes defied scholarship to its limits. According to Reid (2002):

It’s not hard to see how athletes “lost their minds” in a dualistic world that has come to worship science and matter. It is the assumption of our culture and its philosophical heritage that thinking is superior to doing, the researcher superior to the runner. Society values physical activity insofar as it promotes health or yields financial rewards, but ultimately sports are something we should either “make money from” or “grow out of” as more pressing matters render us “too busy” to indulge the mind’s physical support system. Imagine if people neglected their minds as they routinely neglect their bodies. (p. 43)

As their head coach, I carried the title of basketball scholar – the one who had learned, played, and studied the game longer. Regardless, all that truly mattered was to bring home as many victories as possible. On the rez, the shame of losing a mere game of basketball was no less than the shame of losing at the game of life. It was as if the two were intertwined in a complex dance for daily survival.

My philosophy of teaching and coaching did not really fit in appropriately here, especially since I had a team that was twelve players deep, and everyone got an opportunity to play regardless of ability or lack of – for those who just wanted to live in the ray of glory. I wanted to give my players a chance to be successful, even if it meant just running up and down the court without collapsing. For all I knew, this may have been their only opportunity to exercise in the grueling winter of South Dakota. Backyard barn-burners were not really possible when the snow is blowing in your face at fifty miles per hour. The word of the day, everyday, was opportunity, and I the outsider, wanted to open up windows and doors in lieu of what happened on these sacred lands in the past.

On March 10, 1996 the Red Cloud boys rallied behind their coach, who happened to have a mild case of chicken-pox, to overcome an eighteen point deficit at half-time, and defeat in overtime a rival rez team, bringing home the consolation championship medal back to the lower gym. Hence, this time the scholar lived to see another day of Lakota citizens struggling for opportunities on the rez, and his students found a reason for defending their coach, beyond the realms of the hardwood, within the greater community. Had they truly won in the larger scheme of sport under my scholarship, or was that merely a resume moment for me to relish as a coach? Reid reminds us, “Since discipline and motivation depend ultimately on self-respect, athletes should declare independence

from convention and authority in setting the parameters of their goals. No penalty devised by a coach, referee, or governing board could be harsher than the loss of self-respect. Just as our personalized vision of happiness can push us to train on cold rainy mornings, that same vision should motivate us to act rightly. Like bodily health, health of the soul depends on action” (2002, p. 155). On May 1996, I left Pine Ridge a better man, a person that would forever be changed in my perspectives on life. Yet, I left behind a group of warriors, young men and women, my council of scholars, who taught me that basketball is not just a game of ball and hoop – it is a sacred balance between the past and the present.

Fourth Quarter: A Scholar-Athlete on the Game

One of basketball’s greatest scholar-athletes, Phil Jackson, claims that “Basketball happens at such a fast pace that your mind has a tendency to race at the same speed as your pounding heart. As the pressure builds, it’s easy to start thinking too much. But if you’re always trying to figure the game out, you won’t be able to respond creatively to what’s going on. Yogi Berra once said about baseball: ‘How can you think and hit at the same time?’ The same is true with basketball, except everything’s happening much faster. The key is seeing and doing. If you’re focusing on anything other than reading the court and doing what needs to be done, the moment will pass you by” (1995, pp. 50-51). As a student of the game you listen and absorb as much as possible. As an athlete in the game you put your skills to use and test out the boundaries of the game while learning to work as a team. As a scholar for the game you return the favor by physically stepping out and strategically stepping in to lead others on a similar athletic journey that you once embarked. As a scholar-athlete in the game you return to the floor, yet again, to put into

practice intellectually the corporeal, spatial, temporal, and relational aspects of organized play. By achieving the scholar-athlete distinction we arrive upon a new path, as philosophical athletes who live the game of basketball, both through our bodies and our minds. Reid (2002) states that upon entering the new path a philosophical athlete:

1. Values the sports experience as an opportunity to learn about himself as a person.
 2. Takes responsibility for her actions, her attitudes, and the pursuit of meaningful goals.
 3. Shows respect for himself, those around him, and the ideals of his sport.
 4. Understands the values of her sports community and seeks to preserve them.
- (p. 11)

I often wonder whether the chaotic playground version of basketball and the organized gymnasium version of basketball are set up, both informally and formally, as behavioral models of practice. Does every athlete at some point walk away from the lived basketball space thinking about some lesson beyond the triumph of victory and the agony of defeat? What determines a meaningful goal within the phenomenon of basketball as lived? To understand the nature of lived regression and progression within a sport such as basketball means moving beyond being an athlete in the game and looking at the lived experience with a self-exploratory and self-explanatory lens.

Walking the Endlines and Running the Sidelines

My biggest basketball accomplishment by far has been the success I have had as an International Association of Approved Basketball Officials (IAABO) member. Over the course of ten years I have officiated nearly 2000 games total in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area and at the Wide World of Disney Sports Complex in Orlando, Florida. The games have ranged from third graders all the way up to senior citizens. Officiating has brought me closer to my profession of teaching by making me even more responsive

to persons than I was before, via engagement with fellow officials, student-athletes, coaches, parents, administrators, teachers, and fans. Reid (2002) claims that

Being a sport's caretaker means recognizing and affirming the internal goods of one's sport, then using those goods as a basis for criticism of one's own behavior as well as that of other athletes, coaches, officials, and institutions. Being a caretaker of sport means honoring the customs and traditions of your sport, but it also means taking responsibility for changes in that culture – both as instigator and as critic. (p. 204)

Within these basketball moments and relationships, there is an escape from reality as the stage for play is set and all the actors/actresses, producers, and directors are put into motion in front of a live audience with an open-ended script. Even though the outcome is still unpredictable, “It is a place where we can savor uncertainty in an otherwise predictable world. Sport takes back and manipulates such seemingly untouchable elements as space, time, and gravity. It also releases us – if only temporarily – from our social contract with the community, personal obligations, and duty to authority. In sport, we can rise above our pretensions about ourselves and the prejudgments of others based on race, gender, ethnicity or social standing” (Reid, 2002, p. 60). I have always told myself before each game as I stretch out in the locker room, “This may be your last game so make it a good one and remember, it is not about you, it is about them, the athletes.” Yet, I am the bearer of knowledge with regard to the rules and violations of this game, and that is why everyone is always yelling at me.

Finding the Advantages and Disadvantages of Fair Play

In those moments of moving up and down the court, all who occupy space in that time and place are secluded in what Frankl (1959) calls an *existential vacuum*: a feeling of “inner emptiness, a void within themselves” created by a “lack of awareness of a meaning worth living for” (p. 106). Even though athletes are aware of the athletic space

and its function, the mind is not cognitively searching for relative meaning, but instead it is physically satisfying a desired outcome. “The problem is that instead of guiding ourselves toward meaning, most of us just conform to the will of the masses or submit to the authority of others. This is especially true of athletes. How much of what you do as an athlete is (1) because other athletes do the same thing, or (2) because a parent or coach told you to do it? These reasons may be characteristic of a modern athlete’s life, but they are fatal to the search for a *meaningful* life because individuals must find their meanings individually” (Reid, 2002, p. 125). When athletes step down from their platform of play, not necessarily as a mode of departure but as a reason for synthesis, they can become actively reflective upon their being through a scholarly mode of analysis.

I was trained for ten weeks and seven years of summer camp experience as an IAABO referee (1) to promote the welfare of the game of basketball, its players and officials, (2) to maintain the highest standard of basketball officiating, (3) to encourage the spirit of fair play and sportsmanship, and (4) to cooperate with all organizations officially connected with the game of basketball in furthering its interests and ideals.

According to Reid (2002):

Social practices are conceived of as cultural entities whose histories and traditions have, among other things, the important function of establishing standards of excellence ... Social practices have their own particular objectives, which are independent from the personal interests of the group’s members. In this way, sports as social practices can accommodate the formalists’ concern with the purpose of the contest and the spirit of the rules, without discounting the force and presence of a sport’s particular culture. At the same time social practices avoid the charge of relativism, since they have interests of their own that cut across social context and are distinct from the individual interests of practitioners. (p. 200)

If the fans only knew how much I cared about basketball philosophy and its impact on my life, maybe they would not be so crude. Why do I allow their words to penetrate? Do I enjoy the adrenaline rush of hundreds of people being against me while simultaneously cheering for the rulings that I make in favor of their team? Then, again, these are mere interpretations. Maybe it is just simply a ritual to go yell at the basketball referee at a game, similar to purchasing and eating popcorn at the theater. However you want to unravel the psyche, I know for a fact that I love being on the hardwood floor, running up and down with these great athletes showcasing their ability to dominate one another within the confines of basketball's rules and philosophies.

A Philosophy of Play Worth Living

As I have walked the line as a scholar-athlete for the past ten years, there have also been many instances where the humanity of the game has risen to the occasion and demonstrated the value of the basics – running, dribbling, passing, shooting, scoring, stealing, blocking, and simply smiling. That is the beauty of Special Olympics basketball, where some of the bravest athletes display their abilities by respecting the simplest aspects of this game – teamwork, passion, endurance, and fortitude. Just imagine an athlete scoring for the first time in an official game, high-fiving all his teammates on the court, the other five players from the other team, all the athletes on the bench, both coaches, and then singling me out – saving the best for last – he bear-hugged me 45 feet across the floor. The joy and excitement of basketball should not be mistaken with the glamour and fame that infects professional sports today.

Even though I no longer play basketball beyond just shooting around with family and friends, I have managed to maintain a strong identity as a true scholar athlete, finding

new corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational avenues to explore, while studying the game both on and off the court. Axtell (2009) reflects upon the essence of approaching an unfinished narrative by admitting that, “In recent years, as my own athletic past creaks toward oblivion, I've often wondered where these hybrid highflyers come from. Are they born or made? What are some of the costs and benefits of a dual identity? Do the two poles of that persona only repel one another or do they also attract and reinforce each other? Do scholar-athletes ever lose their bona fides or do they continue to draw sustenance from their young reputations and self-images?” (p. 74). There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about the journey and the lessons imbedded within the dual lived experience that invited itself upon me. It is not I that provide the fuel for these experiences to prevail, but as Reid states, “The boundaries of space and time give sport the possibility of meaning something: fields end, trails end, games end, seasons end, careers end. We care about what happens between these boundaries only as long as the boundaries are there” (2002, p. 121).

Basketball was a way of life for me as a child, but it was not until I started coaching on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation that I truly comprehended basketball as a lived experience. A Lakota friend recently told me that basketball may very well be the new “sacred hoop” on many reservations. Yet, within this often high-paced, aggressive, tenacious, agile, and relentless four quarter game of cat and mouse chasing after the nip and cheese, there exists a sense of responsibility as a player, coach, referee, and fan. This responsibility is to identify with the balance that is transmitted from the physical, mental, and emotional triumphs and failures on the competition floor, beyond to our individual personal journey here on earth. By regressing through these basketball moments I come

to the simplest conclusion, which is not ebb, but a flow of “the big game” – the game of life. “The object of the ‘game of life’ is quite simply, happiness. We all seek a good life full of challenge, satisfaction, friendship, and meaning. What’s wonderful about these meaningless games we play is that they help us to develop skills useful in the ‘big game’ with its ultimate payoff” (Reid, 2002, p. 279). The time is long overdue and needed more than ever for what Hans Lenk called “a program of enlightenment to emancipate athletes from social manipulation” (1979, p. 116).

I return to the initial question - What is the lived experience of basketball in the lives of collegiate women who claim to be scholar-athletes? – in order to commit myself to better understanding my own lived experience with basketball in relation to an experience that may be similar or different, as lived and complicated through conversations with the other. In Chapter One, I have turned to the phenomenon of my own becoming of a basketball scholar-athlete in four quarters. In the process of discovering the self I have come to understand how my own athletic journey, via multiple basketball beings, has led me to pursue scholarly interests through the sport of basketball. In Chapter Two, I turn to the written narrative and lived accounts of others in order to explore the hermeneutic nature of basketball as played and lived through the body, during specific time periods, within particular spaces, and with a variety of people. In Chapter Three, I justify why the autobiographical process of *currere* is essential to the phenomenological journey of basketball as lived by women who have embraced the notion of being scholars and athletes. I look to van Manen’s (1997) methodological grounding in human science research as I embrace the challenge of:

1. Turning to the nature of basketball as a complicated life course;
2. Investigating basketball as it is lived by collegiate women scholar-athletes;

3. Identifying and reflecting upon the essential themes that arise from our complicated conversations of basketball in both oral and written form;
4. Describing the complicated conversations of basketball as lived through the art of writing and rewriting.
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to basketball as lived by collegiate women scholar-athletes; and
6. Balancing the research contexts by considering how the complicated conversation of basketball as lived by collegiate women scholar-athletes may have broader pedagogical implications.

It is my hope that the phenomenological process opens up complicated conversations regarding the corporeal, spatial, temporal, and relational nature of play through the descriptive and interpretive narration by the scholar-athletes themselves, and not a prescriptive evaluation by the researcher. Empowering sporting lives through autobiographical practices such as *currere* unveils a hidden past waiting to be revealed in the present. The unveiling of lived moments, both cherished and loathed, becomes the first step in a journey toward the future. The lived moments encountered within the journey can help enhance anticipated athletic paths waiting to be paved scholastically.

CHAPTER TWO:
PENETRATING THE HERMENEUTIC NATURE OF BASKETBALL AS
“PLAY”

It always felt right to me. My love of basketball is innate. It just comes from a place deep inside my soul. I breathe it. I never tire of it. I embrace it. The answer is always yes. It never cheats. It's just a constant. It's a safe haven. Basketball is not my second nature. It's my first. I was born to play this game. I was born to share this game with other people. I've been given awards and rewards for playing this game. I do not let anything interfere with it. It's almost scary. Family, friends, or loved ones do not get in the way. They're second and they know they're second. (Dawn Staley, as quoted in Baker, 2008, pp. 142-143)

Is there a window of opportunity in phenomenology? If so, what happens if we decline to accept an extended invitation? A phenomenon may return, not in the same manner that you first met the phenomenon, but in a way that you would never have imagined when you initially came face to face with it, for the first time. Becky Hammon (2008) ponders upon the impacts of playing basketball for both the self and the other:

I play this game for many reasons now, not simply because I love it. I play it to inspire the 99 percent of people who are told they aren't good enough, tall enough, or didn't come from the "right program" ... I play because I want to see you scratch your head and wonder how the heck I made that shot into the basket. I play because every time I walk out onto the court I have the opportunity to blaze a trail through the minds of men, women, boys, and girls and show by example that we should judge an athlete not by the contour of their physique but by the character by which they compete. I play to honor those women who came before me who blazed a trail for me to have this singular opportunity. I play because I love destroying every stereotype, every cultural and gender barrier that our society argues doesn't exist anymore ... I play basketball because it reminds me that no matter what people say I can't do, God says I can. (pp. xii, xiii)

A lived experience with basketball could commence or have a rebirth with any or all of these aspects of play. Yet, what separates a player, coach, referee, or fan from the game itself is access to these multiple dimensions, all of which may bear a diminutive influence upon the more extensive lived experience of basketball. The passion that surrounds the phenomenon of basketball as lived never truly closes as athletes seem to

find openings in re-entering a game that consumed much more than 32:00 minutes of play on a consistent basis. I always pictured basketball to drift slowly away from me as my responsibilities accumulated, and when time took me away from playing basketball, I found a new reason to return to the game that I love.

I am standing erect in-between two team benches situated in an organized linear fashion, facing the rectangular American flag hanging from the right angled edge of where the wall meets the ceiling. This is an all too familiar realm for me to maneuver and monitor; yet, I am no longer one of the ten who is playing the game. The teams break out of their lines and form two circles in the middle of the court, players arm in arm, cajoling back and forth, up and down like a wave smashing against the side of a pier. And as the wave unpredictably breaks so do they, in preparation for participating in 32:00 minutes of what Coach Phil Jackson has named “sacred hoops” (Jackson, 1995). Sacred it is, to many of them, their coaches, their fans, and me, their referee for the night who must rule whether they stay within the linear confines of fairness as they engage upon a north to south, east to west game called basketball.

Basketball, just like any other phenomenon, is experienced in both similar and diverse modes of participation by individuals, teams, and communities. The similarities lurk in the individual scholarship of skills, the collaborative practice of rituals, and the communal attainment of victory. The differences dwell within a player’s temporal commitment, the team’s corporeal limitations, and the community’s relational opportunities. In other words, not everyone experiences the sport of basketball from a similar station in life, and as van Manen (1997) claims, while we penetrate the human

experiences which occur within a phenomenon,

We must dislodge and confront our unexamined assumptions. But what is this experience to which we turn? And how do I know that I experience things in the same way as does someone else? Is each of our experiences not unique, even though we may use the same words to describe those experiences? (p. xii)

The value of unpacking basketball from a phenomenological perspective not only gives personal voice to the actual experiences, but allows the human science researcher to penetrate those experiences in order to appreciate the complexity of being both a scholar and an athlete. By taking a step in the direction of opening up the conversation of basketball as a life course with the persons who are living it, instead of merely interpreting the second-hand prose of authors and journalists who have already packaged it, a phenomenologist is employing what van Manen (1997) calls, “modes of discourse that try to merge cognitive and non-cognitive, gnostic and pathic ways of knowing” (p. xiv). He goes on to specify, “Not only do we understand things intellectually or conceptually, we also experience things in corporeal, relational, enactive, and situational modalities” (p. xiv). The initial penetrating question for many researchers is where to begin and what to access.

In order to understand the lived experience of scholar-athletes, one must penetrate and journey through several narrative data spaces and reveal the inseparable camaraderie that exists between the corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational ways of being. As I prepare to toss the ball up before each game, I glimpse into the eyes of each player in order to construct a hypothetical addendum of how they are entering the game. Obviously, each one of them has put on their so called “game face” as their athletic duty, but what is the narrative script that is running in the players’ minds as their bodies seem to put into motion automatically all the skills they have acquired through the many years

of dedication? The narrative moments that occur immediately before and after a basketball game, scrimmage, or even practice can say a lot about what van Manen (1997) states is “the human world as we find it in all its variegated aspects” (p. 18). The notion of meeting the human subject in his or her lived environment is essential to preserving what van Manen stresses as the naturally engaged world where human science research identifies “its point of departure in the *situation*, which for purpose of analysis, description, and interpretation functions as an exemplary nodal point of meanings that are embedded in this situation” (p. 18). Returning to the nodal points of departure via lived situations becomes a disciplined task, for both the participant and researcher, as the canvas could exhibit a complicated script.

The question becomes how do I as a human science researcher help scholar-athletes access the departure points embedded within their experience(s) of encountering the game of basketball individually, learning to be part of a basketball team recreationally, interpreting the metaphoric messages of basketball organizationally, and encountering the notion of a dual-being scholastically? According to van Manen (1997), the process is quite detailed from the inside out, and requires active participation not merely on the part of the participants, but first, by the actual human science researcher and his or her prior and present engagement with the phenomenon. In thinking about my own lived experience with basketball as both a scholar and an athlete, I first refer to the question that phenomenology asks – “What is this or that kind of experience like?” and consider how this question “differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it” (van Manen, p. 9). As I start to ponder upon

this broad notion of dissecting my experiences in lieu of what society has misled me to accept, I feel quite overwhelmed by the task of mentally undoing some of my own learned processes in order to reach what van Manen (1997) calls the only access to the world – consciousness:

It is by virtue of being conscious that we are already related to the world. Thus all we can ever know must present itself to consciousness. Whatever falls outside of consciousness therefore falls outside the bounds of our possible lived experience. Consciousness is always transitive. To be conscious is to be aware, in some sense, of some aspect of the world. (p. 9)

I take a step back in both mind and body, trying to establish whether, by looking for the unique moments in my basketball experiences, I am actually manipulating my consciousness and attaching a false classification to my own lived experience(s). Yet, it is that mere gaze upon the factual that phenomenology frowns upon. As van Manen (1997) points out:

A universal or essence may only be intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experience ... The essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner. (p. 10)

What I am investigating in my own narrative, and the narrative of the scholar-athletes with whom I engage, is not what basketball experiences we have had and why, but more significantly, what each of the experiences have done to us intellectually, physically, and emotionally (then and now) that we revisit in the present. By reflecting upon our experiences beyond the mere context of the dimensions that initiated the happening, we are actually attempting “to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld” (van Manen, p. 11).

To engage with phenomenological research means to unpack what society has already prescriptively packaged through curriculum, scholarship, media commercialism, and policy. For scholar-athletes in a high profile sport such as basketball, the guidelines have been set and the expectations have been practically written. Phenomenology allows these generically silenced voices to be heard, based on a self-critical agenda of establishing narrative goals in order to come to terms with personal outcomes. As van Manen (1997) clearly states that the process: “is *intersubjective* in that the human science researcher needs the other in order to develop a dialogic relation with the phenomenon, and thus validate the phenomenon as described” (p. 11).

Providing a canvas for scholar athletes to be mindful and critical of the academic and athletic process empowers each of them to “edify the same attentive thoughtfulness that serves the practical tactfulness of pedagogy itself” (van Manen, 1997, p. 12), through narrative conversation with the self and the other. By examining what the sport of basketball means to the journey of one’s being, in absence of outside noise such as media representation of athletes, may allow the individual person to contemplate how he or she grows from and impacts the sport of basketball, instead of merely being a product of its hype. As van Manen (1997) highlights, by engaging in a complicated conversation with lived experience,

We come to a fuller grasp of what it means to be in the world as a man, woman, or child, taking into account the sociocultural and the historical traditions that have given meaning to our ways of being in the world. In phenomenological research description carries a moral force. So phenomenological research has as its ultimate aim, the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are. (p. 12)

As the canvas is decorated with the narrative voice of the actual scholar athlete as a human being, and not a pre-packaged high-profile variable in the realm of the sports

industry, it becomes the duty of a phenomenologist to provide the technicolor energy that will bring forth a full spectrum of poetic revelations. As human science facilitators and participants we must take care not to confuse poetry with poeticizing, for as van Manen (1997) warns, “Poeticizing is thinking on original experience and is thus speaking in a more primal sense. Language that authentically speaks the world rather than abstractly speaking of it is a language that reverberates the world, as Merleau-Ponty says, a language that sings the world” (p. 13). The basketball space has a lot to say and by listening to the corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational cry and murmur, one can appreciate why such a simple game of ball and hoop has complicated conversations written all over it.

Listening to Transient Phenomena through the Other

I am in a space that I know all too well: the squeaking of sneakers, the rattling of the rim, numbers being called out loud, and thumps of a ball dribbling off the wood. Yet, there’s a lot more going on here in this space. This is not just a game. Frustration sets in, tempers flare, insults are made, and egos better be checked at the door. I sit in this space that I am so familiar with, for one hour, and hear the voices of participants as they speak a different tone than what I am used to, a tone that may be much deeper than the game of basketball or the concept of competition. Regardless, I try not to look up at the faces that are providing me with sound bites, because as Eckhart (1969) claims:

Hearing brings more into a man, but seeing gives out more, even in the act of looking. And therefore we shall all be blessed more in the eternal life by our power to hear than by our power to see. For the power to hear the eternal word is within me and the power to see will leave me; for in hearing I am passive and in seeing I am active. (p. 108)

It is hard to be the observer of something for which one so often is being observed. Yet, I allow the pen to capture the emotions of these young recreational athletes, unfiltered and uncensored, in order to make greater sense of this space we call a court.

It does not take long for tension to occupy a space on the court. The big question that I often ask myself is whether the tension is initiated by the space, by the people, or by the personal issues that the athletes bring into the space. Regardless, the player's ear is mindful of the comments made, and indirectly it impacts not just the mind but the body as well. Tensions on the basketball court often dictate bodily reactions both positively and negatively. For example, a comment could lead to a push here and a shove there, and that becomes so psychological with regard to how you play the game that one's basketball soul is truly at jeopardy. If the mind and body do not balance themselves and achieve some sort of rhythm and harmony within an individual player, then the whole team may possibly suffer.

I can feel my own adrenaline rise as tensions build via the comments that are made. It is one thing to score and get back on defense. It is another to reaffirm continuously via comments that you are better than the other team after each shot that you make. Then there comes the asking for the foul. Since there are no referees present, the offensive player is in charge of calling his or her own fouls, and good basketball etiquette is to respect the offensive player's wishes, regardless of whether you agree or disagree. Sometimes, even the defender will call the foul, stating that he or she has fouled the shooter. Yet, often in a close game that determines who will go on to play the next team waiting, not an inch of courtesy is granted. Although I feel very comfortable with what I hear, my body's balance does seem thrown off at the pace of the game. The

verbal discussions that start right off the bat do not allow the body to develop a consistent up and down tempo. If I feel the tension as an observer, then the players must be headed for a long game. I glance up after the last comment and notice that the one female who is playing with the nine males has had enough of their arguing, which is possibly allowing her body to achieve optimal satisfaction by running up and down the court, at the least, getting a workout. She, too, is listening to the words and actions of the players on the court, hoping for a change in the rhythm of the game. So far, there has not been anything close to a flow other than the verbal taunting. Is it worth listening to even though it seems to be a big aspect of this lived basketball space? Should I get up and leave, predicting in my head what will become of this game? With these questions in mind, I am reminded of Levin's (1989) words:

How many opportunities for friendship, for peace, for a deeply meaningful intimacy, have we missed and lost, because we failed to lend an ear? How often and how well do we listen to other people? Do we in fact know how to listen to others in an open, welcoming, receptive way? Are we able to hear, to greet, what others tell us, no matter how painful it may be, no matter how threatening to our ego, no matter how demanding on our capacity to care and be compassionate? (p. 85)

As the game continues, I am reminded of my younger days playing at Whetstone. Just hearing certain sound bites makes me want to drop my pen and pick up a basketball. The words do not sound compassionate; the tone does not sound caring, and the pitch does not sound inviting. But these are often the entry points into an informal, recreational space of basketball. You enter the space listening to the other and playing through the self, and once the invitation is made, you begin to contribute to the script without any intent to harm the other participants verbally. The discussions echo in my mind over the score and how we got there, the overzealous attitude regarding a body's

defeat this time, and awaiting retaliation that lurks in the future. My hands are getting clammy just thinking about being out there and being motivated by the comments that are made. For some voices, the anger, profanity, and derogatory remarks are part of getting the body to perform optimally, while intimidating the other. Yet for others, it truly may be a release or ventilation from factors not necessarily related to basketball. Everyone wants to win, but some will do whatever they can, and if you listen to the voice of the other, it may threaten or consume your ability to achieve optimally.

As the game slows down and comes to an end, the real taunting seems to begin with an oral recap of the highlights played back with verbal flavor. As if the body has not received enough damage, comments are directed toward real ball players with strength, masculinity, and skills. Otherwise, your body and soul become just victims of the game. As a referee, my body is tempted to elevate as my chest protrudes forward. I need to step up with all due respect to the game of basketball and what it has done for me mentally and physically. But that is the beauty of basketball. Unless it is an official game, the rules often are tweaked slightly to fit the needs of the bodies, minds, and souls of the players who occupy that space for that moment in time. It is their blaze of recreational glory away from their real lives in that moment in time. And who knows, possibly “in listening to others, accepting them in their irreducible difference, we help them listen to themselves, to heed the speech of their own body of experience, and to become each one, the human being he or she most deeply wants” (Levin, 1989, p. 88). After all, it is not what I or they bring to the game that matters; it is an athletic angst that brings forth camaraderie or initiates hostility of the self upon others in the space. You

just sit back, listen, and hope that in the name of recreation, no bodies react to the words and gestures thrown onto the court.

Charging into the Corporeal

Giving yourself to the game, the team, and expecting the unexpected is the essence of basketball for the player. The bodily experience of playing the game of basketball is often overlooked by fans who logically expect supernatural performances by the athletes. To the fans it is logical because anything short of supernatural would classify the athlete's talent as being equivalent to the fan, who quite often is a recreational participant in the sport. The sense of urgency to entertain and meet the immediate desires of a gymnasium full of 50 fans or 15,000 fans may have an immeasurable impact on the athlete's body. Hence, basketball players who are involved in organized basketball as team members find their bodies physically, mentally, and emotionally torn between the desires of self, team, and the fans, in an attempt to maintain their modesty within a space, the gymnasium, which is under constant scrutiny. Merleau-Ponty (1962) captures the bodily dilemma that athletes at some point face when they project their glorified physical and mental abilities upon a tense, competitive platform:

If the subject is in a situation, even if he is no more than a possibility of situations, this is because he forces his ipseity into reality only actually being a body, and entering the world through that body. In so far as, when I reflect on the essence of subjectivity I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity is merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world. (pp. 408-409)

The challenge of bringing the body and mind onto an even playing field, where the two can benefit from each other's capacity is difficult indeed. Why does the body want to take over as it enters an athletic setting? Is the process of thinking too slow for a

fast-faced team sport such as basketball? I often wonder why younger athletes are so lethargic in practice, especially when the coach asks them to run monotonous drills. Could it be that the mind and body become separated in these moments as we stop the body from its natural motion of being in order to walk it through a strategic path called play? Once the body is injected into the sporting space it has no choice but to rely on adrenaline as an elixir between what it can do reactively through competition and what it has learned to do routinely through practice.

Connecting the Body to a Culture of Basketball

How an athlete lives through the game of basketball within a gymnasium is not very different than Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the inseparability of self and world. Although the sport of basketball does not require one to be a part of a team and is quite cheap to play by yourself, it still is building toward a dream or outcome of playing with a group of others, using both individual and team skills. Merleau-Ponty (1968) states:

Although, normally, I can distinguish my perceptions from dreams, yet I am also able to 'dream around things,' projecting imagination into the world in a seamless way which shows the real world is a 'closely woven fabric' not constructed out of a series of syntheses performed in my inner self. It is this whole weave of myself with the world which I must come to understand. Our insertion into the world is through the body with its motor and perceptual acts. (p. 248)

The young athletes who engage in the game of basketball may turn to the sport as a cheap recreational escape from the harsh realities of poverty and isolation found within their community, but simultaneously they may imagine and emulate their evolving dexterity in the form of a local high school player, a well-known college student-athlete, or a high-profile professional superstar.

Baker (2008) captures the deep internal significance and bond of sporting lives through a conversation with Women's National Basketball Association former player, Nancy Lieberman:

She said, "The safest place for me was to get between the lines on the court, it's always been so comforting." That's when it hit me – I mean really hit me...there are just some players who feel the game deep in their souls. Once that connection is forged, it can never be broken. It is as real as the pillow under our heads at night, as certain as knowing our birthdates. It is quite simply, what makes us so incredibly unique and so incredibly alike. (p. 169)

In their bodily pursuit to learn, feel, and use the basic skills, such as dribbling, passing, and shooting, the players' passion within a basketball space ponders the complex spirituality of basketball beyond the act in place. The complex spirituality that lies within a body in the space of basketball often is referred to as "being in the zone." Dunbar (2007) claims that the engaged body in basketball often misinterprets the zone as being something quite active and mobile, when in reality there are "moments when time and action seem to slow down and play becomes effortless, not guided by me per se but by a kind of 'flow' in which I sense my 'self' and all action as one" (p. 150). Dunbar explains that this moment of "no action," better known as the "Wuwei," is what triggers the Dao and enacts the rhythm that brings forth a semblance between order and chaos:

The Wuwei does not mean that one is merely reactive or content to avoid obstacles to personal development; rather, wuwei means acting in such perfect accord with the environment that you become so completely absorbed in what is happening that your sense of self is not limited to a locality, but is part of the process or field of action. (2007, p. 151)

Like many others, I was attracted to the sport of basketball recreationally for what it had to offer in the moment of play. The game was not timed, and the space was not limited to those who were more superior at playing the game. A simple formula regulated play – you win and you keep on playing until your team chooses to leave; you

lose and you wait for another opportunity on the side. Choices had to be made between playing with your friends and possibly risking a loss which meant sitting out for a game or two. Or it might have meant selling your soul to the other by finding the very best players in the neighborhood, even if they were foes, and hence maximizing your chance to stay on the court for as long as possible. Time was not a factor in these lived moments, and to this day, as I step onto a playground or gymnasium court to shoot around, the nature of recreational play seems to slow down the action and tranquilize the soul. What has happened to the lived experience of basketball as the notion of competition in contemporary society has trickled down to younger ages? Does the lived soul adapt to the hyper nature of the game, as it does to other aspects of life, or does it choose to step away and enjoy the game recreationally, allowing the notion of play to remain a passion and not a purpose?

The Soul that Cannot Be Seen

Finding a balance between the body, the mind, and the soul can take a lifetime of experiential encounters with space as it changes both in depth and in purpose. As boys and girls continue to engage in the sport of basketball and teams are established both within a recreational and a scholastic space, rituals are born and bodies are tested. Stress and pressure upon nerves, muscles, and organs make us appreciate listening to our bodies, even though as athletes we often ignore the cry because we want to live the ritual. By ignoring our bodies, we often are living up to the influential markers that basketball moments have, socially and historically, impressed upon our minds and defined by what we expect of our bodies. Merleau-Ponty (1962) points out that this is the human way:

Whether it is a question of another's body or my own, I have no means of knowing the human body other than that of living it, which means taking up on

my own account the drama which is being played out in it and losing myself in it. I am my body, at least wholly to the extent that I possess experience, and yet at the same time my body is as it were a 'natural' subject, a provisional sketch of my total being. (p. 198)

The concept of organized basketball introduces an individual player to the philosophy of a squad with an aim toward optimal group performance. The basic skills that a young boy or girl have acquired in a personal space must now be sharpened and managed in a communal space. Individual actions lead to collective repercussions. The rituals of basketball often have been passed down and culturally manipulated to serve a similar purpose of keeping things fair, both for the team and for each player individually. The body senses the balance and equality of the basketball space, both in practice and in competition. Jackson (2007) specifically captures the ritual of toughness:

Sport is often presented in the media as a hypermasculine practice, focusing on its fierce competitiveness and its display of male dominance. Those players who didn't exhibit the requisite warrior mentality were scolded and punished, usually by being labeled 'soft.' Players are often encouraged to play hurt, to 'suck it up.' But when they are unable to perform to the best of their abilities – and of course, most injured players are unable to play their best – they are frequently criticized for coming up short. (pp. 162, 164)

Something about the uneasiness of the body either elevates us to new heights or plunders us into the depths of despair. Often many of the rituals surrounding the game of basketball are strategically implemented by coaches and team captains to loosen the anxiety and fear encountered in a competitive space. Rituals come and rituals go, but one thing is for sure: regardless of their complexity, rituals carry weight beyond the public space of the gymnasium into the private space of neighborhood playgrounds, and backyard courts. In his rendering of basketball moments on the rez, Frazier (2007)

humbly captures the notion of informal bodily rituals:

She spent endless hours practicing basketball. When she was in the fifth grade she heard somewhere that to improve your dribbling you should bounce a basketball a thousand times a day with each hand. She followed this daily exercise faithfully on the cement floor of the patio; her mothers and sisters got tired of the sound. For variety, she would shoot layups against the gutter and the drainpipe, until they came loose from the house and had to be repaired. She knew that no girl in an official game had ever dunked a basketball – that is, had leaped as high as the rim and stuffed the ball through the hoop from above – and she wanted to be the first in history to do it. To get the feel, she persuaded a younger boy cousin to kneel on all fours under the basket. With a running start and a leap using the boy's back as a springboard, she could dunk the ball. (p. 206)

Although we shoot our own version of basketball in our backyards and driveways, we very well know that the version is based on a bigger ritual and reality. We want our legs to thrust us up to certain heights; we want our hands to maneuver the ball into certain dribbled motions; we want our eyes to see the space inside and outside from certain angles, and we want our hearts to feel the rhythm of a shot as it prepares to drop perfectly into the destined cylinder. Why do we thrive in these lone moments of play when no one else is watching? We create lived scenarios to prove to only ourselves that we are capable of matching with the other, even when they are not present. What is the value of the self-initiated practice of play, and how do these moments contribute to our success in an organized game of basketball and the bigger game of life? Basketball does not require us to play the team version, but if you want to get the full flavor of the sport, you must at some point announce your ego to four other individuals, who have their own self-built egos, playing on your side of the court.

Hearing the Egos of the Team

While the individual player must relinquish himself or herself to the tenets of a team in basketball, self-identity is continuously maturing within the body as it travels from one space to the next. According to Husserl (1913/1989),

The self is a ‘zero-point,’ a centre of reference and orientation from which distances, times, etc. radiate outwards. Something is over there to the left, on top far away, near, all as mapped out taking myself as the centre of space. As such the ego requires a bodily orientation and a spatial location. The transcendental ego becomes embodied in a living body. (p. 41)

Putting aside assumptions of how people experience, learn from, participate in, and grow with basketball, nothing should be ignored or brushed off as irrelevant. Merleau-Ponty (1968) describes this as the notion of phenomenological reduction:

Here we must presuppose nothing – neither the naïve idea of being in itself, therefore, nor the correlative idea of a being for the consciousness, of a being for man: these along with the being of the world, are all notions that we have to rethink with regard to our experiences of the world. We have to reformulate the skeptical arguments outside of every ontological preconception and reformulate them precisely so as to know what world-being, thing-being, imaginary-being, and conscious-being are. (p. 7)

For young athletes, playing basketball offers a space for the ego to shine as part of a racial community, school community, team community, and family community.

Simply put, in impoverished urban and rural communities, opportunity is not aplenty, so the ego struggles to find a space to scream. Without a scream, inspiration becomes limited. The bodily expressive opportunities that basketball players are granted is the grandest platform of all within communities – the concrete jungle transformed into the hardwood court. Corbett (1999) captures the inaugural stages of this phenomenon by reflecting upon WNBA all-star Dawn Staley’s experience and words:

She had always been a squirt, small for a girl, even, and given that playground basketball was ruled by a strict meritocracy – play until you lose, lose and go

home – Dawn had been forced to learn a creative game of basketball in order to earn her time on the court. Playing had become an addictive thrill. “Being so short, I was not able to get my shot off all the time, so I had to perfect different parts of my game. I had to learn how to dribble, I had to learn how to pass, and I had to learn how to be just tough,” she said, looking back. “I mean, the guys have molded me into the player that I am today. Some players are sort of finesse-type players, but growing up in the inner city, that’s nonexistent. We all go out and we play as aggressive as they come. (p. 146)

The challenges that young athletes face through the lived moments of basketball are complicated beyond the comfort of a private space for play. For many athletes the notion of basketball as being a private lived experience is unfathomable. As Staley mentions above, the reason for her success as a professional basketball player is based on the learned moments of basketball in neighborhood courts. What is the addictive nature of basketball as lived that pushes an individual, like Staley, to meet tremendous physical and mental obstacles head on? For many athletes, the notion of lived basketball is not one of rebellion or justification in the face of the other, but instead, a broader story of companionship within the competitive nature of play. As athletic bodies continue to progress via modern technologies and the competitive nature of sports trickles further down the ranks of age, the narrative of basketball as lived may begin to tell a different phenomenological tale, one in which the active mind guides the built body toward a liberated outcome.

Opening Minds to a New Era of Athletic Bodies

According to Nietzsche (1968), “The phenomenon of the body is the richer, clearer, more tangible phenomenon; to be discussed first, methodologically, without coming to any decision about its ultimate significance” (p. 270). Nietzsche’s construction speaks loudly to the learning of a sport such as basketball. For example, any scholar-athlete can tell you about the first time he/she remembers dribbling the ball well

or between the legs, sinking a free-throw shot or a three-pointer, blocking or stealing the ball from the opponent, and making a no-look pass – all of which were initiated by a physiological stimulus. In the counternarrative prose, *Who Let Girls in the Boys' Locker Room*, Moore (1994) offers an alternative and liberating possibility to female athletes through the main character Michelle Dupree, who confronts the boys on the team to stop thinking of basketball in terms of gender and frailty, and more so about ball and hoop in order to succeed as a team unit:

[T]he not-so-fragile girls banged shoulders against the boys Then the girls knocked the boys with their not-so-fragile hips 'We [girls] do not think about chests or behinds when we play, ... We think about putting the ball in the hoop.' ... 'If you guys can do the same, we have a good chance of finally beating the Barracuda.' (p. 129)

It is not until we have acquired a comfortable grasp of the basic physical skills needed to play the game of basketball that we turn to the intellectual comprehension of where we need to be and what we need to be doing with our bodies, better known as “moving without the basketball.” Merleau-Ponty (1968) claims that an individual should strive for these higher levels of being because,

In order to really reduce an experience to its essence, we should have to achieve a distance from it that would put it entirely under our gaze, with all the implications of sensoriality or thought that come into play in it and bring ourselves wholly to the transparency of the imaginary, think it without the support of any ground, in short withdraw to the bottom of nothingness. Only then could we know what moments positively make up the being of this experience. (p. 111)

Unfortunately, the notion of separating the mind from the body is unintentional by the coaches, but quite destructively natural when it comes to winning at all costs. We hear coaches yell, “Think about it before committing to it,” as they make reference to basic bodily skills of dribbling too much, not making a sharp bounce pass, shooting out of range, and leaving the floor too early on defense, and hence, getting beat to the basket.

Why not embrace the intellectual process of embodiment as coexisting with the corporeal discipline of expression? As Levin (1985) states:

If thinking is our gift, uniquely our gift, then it should be given to the body as a gift, a gift of acknowledging and reciprocating the gifts which the body, receptive to the sensuous presencing of Being, has passed on to it in the mode called 'givenness.' Thinking would open to the body, would listen, would shift into a more receptive attitude, an accepting attitude, an attitude whose spelling of graciousness the body would feel and find fulfilling. (pp. 40-41)

To know the game of basketball is to navigate the athletic prowess of each individual within a shared intellectual team agenda that seeks to bring forth disciplined movement within the boundaries of the hardwood court in order to accumulate a consistent advantage over one's opponent. Heidegger (1979) captures this semblance of physical and mental agility:

Ultimately we dare not split up the matter in such a way, as though there were a bodily state housed in the basement with feelings dwelling upstairs. Feeling, as feeling oneself to be, is precisely the way we are bodily. Bodily being does not mean that the soul is burdened by a hulk we call the body ... We do not 'have' a body; rather, we 'are' bodily. (pp. 98-99)

The visual nature of basketball at all levels paints a portrait of bodies clashing in space and time, even though we know quite well that the outcome is not determined by the grace of corporeality, but rather in the accumulation of points. Yes, we are entertained and often shocked by the moves that a body displays on the basketball court, but if you ask, most athletes will tell you that they want to win. In order to win, teams often rely on the mental strategies and decisions of a coach who has no direct power over the corporeal nature of the game other than directing traffic for his or her five players. How do the bodies that are driven by adrenaline within a competitive moment gauge themselves on the court to maneuver through an offensive or defensive pattern? To answer this difficult question, I must turn to the temporal aspect of basketball and how it

affects play in a progressive form where each moment, although distinct in nature, teaches us something in the lived moments to come.

Transitioning within the Temporal

Basketball provides an all-access pass to other things in life by teaching us about putting our energy into something and appreciating the outcomes. The cerebral experience that basketball so often infuses temporally within players, via coaches and mentors, often is overlooked by fans in the bleachers because they are so focused on the magical, bodily performance. Regardless, as both observers and participants, “In the moment of vision, indeed, and often just ‘for that moment,’ existence can even gain the mastery over the ‘everyday:’ but it can never extinguish it” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 371). For many athletes, basketball is a mode of practicing basic skills such as concentration and focus. Often, these skills are transformed sequentially into other aspects of life beyond the basketball court, as a player transitions between rights of passage and personal needs. What happens when that moment of vision is challenged by what society deems as “the right thing to do?”

Baker (2008) regresses back to a significant moment in her childhood when she felt strong confrontation as a female interested in athletics:

The helmet was a few sizes too big, and I had trouble seeing, so I pulled it off my head. My long blonde hair spilled out from inside the helmet. With the helmet on I was just another kid. With the helmet off I was a girl – a girl in the sports aisle of Bradlees. The little boy poked his father in the side and laughed loud. He said to me, “Hey Blondie, you’re in the wrong aisle. Dolls are in the girls’ aisle over there. What are you a tomboy?” I was called tomboy quite a bit in the coming years. When I played in the Lions Club Boys’ Youth League, I’d hear opponents and even parents of the opponents whispering it to one another like I had leprosy or the plague, but the boys who were my teammates thought nothing of it, and neither did the coaches. (pp. 10, 11)

It is difficult to penetrate the depth of thinking within young athletes who are participating on teams in recreation leagues that embrace dimensions such as race, gender, and social class. The extent to which these dimensions come to the forefront of the lived basketball moment depends on what happens in the specific temporality of practice and play. Some questions do come to mind especially as the athletes approach their teen years. What is each athlete's personal goal beyond victory? How do the parents of each athlete respect and not interfere with the game beyond cheers and jeers? What is the goal of the coach for the team? Basketball players who are involved in organized basketball as team members find their minds challenged and faced with quick decisions on and off the court that impact the entire team's well-being. This is quite similar to how organizations use individuals as resources to better their entire operation. According to Elcombe, "The durable quality of lived time and space, particularly in a well-defined context such as a basketball game, gives continuity and meaning to the embodied experience. Basketball's form and structure create uniformity, a way to share experiences and meanings with others" (2007, p. 208).

Although the path of continuity and uniformity in women's athletics has made leaps and bounds, it was a battle to overturn certain social conformities from within gender itself. As O'Hagan (1999) reminds us:

The general adoption of athletic sports by women meant the gradual disappearance of the swooning damsel of old romance, and of that very real creature, the lady who delighted, a decade or so ago, to describe herself as "high strung," which, being properly interpreted, meant uncontrolled and difficult to live with. Women who didn't like athletics were forced to take them up in self defense; and exercise meant firmer muscles, better circulation, a more equable temper, and the dethronement of the "nervous headache" from its high place in feminine regard. (p. 160)

What is often troubling for me is that although the participation of women in basketball has grown tremendously, the nature of participation in the sport, in conversation, is often based on a model initiated and still influenced by the men's game. The lived basketball experience of women scholar-athletes should not be compared to the experience of men, unless it truly is based on playing with men while growing into the game. Of course, there will be basketball similarities that will naturally weave within the narrative line, but to make an assumption that all women scholar-athletes experience basketball in a similar fashion to men would be unjust to the temporal notion of the lived experience. The time has come to hear the voices of women scholar-athletes, in the form of their own autobiographical rendering, in order to allow basketball to be what the individual wants it to be and not what history has deemed it to become thus far.

Finding Your Way in a Timed Space

How an athlete and referee think through the game of basketball in a gymnasium is quite similar. There are positions to be obtained and maintained, angles to be opened, communicative mechanics to be signaled, and intellectual frustrations to be vented and explained. These notions of thinking become natural in that the participants are not in deep critical contemplation while in motion, but instead they naturally are allowing these cognitive systems to flow in and out of the game. Husserl (1907/1964) points out:

What is taken for granted in natural thinking is the possibility of cognition. Constantly busy producing results, advancing from discovery to discovery in newer and newer branches of science, natural thinking finds no occasion to raise the question of the possibility of cognition as such...Cognition is a fact in nature. (p. 15)

Cognition is not something that the player can obtain as a guarantee toward a positive outcome. Basketball is a cognitive art form. A player builds a sense of patience for the

self and toward others, while realizing that expectations are not always going to occur as you planned them. In the narrative *Ain't God Good to Indiana!*, Tunis (1996) highlights that basketball is anyone's and everyone's game, and hence, on any given night a temporal momentum during a game can shift and bring forth an exponential change for better or worse. Tunis captures the coach's emotional frustration as the game transitions into the final eight minutes:

Basketball is a game of movement; move to the strong side. Swing-it-wide-and-swing-it-true. You had things sewed up, then what happened? The roof fell in. So you lost your heads, you saw you might be beaten, and you quit. Bunch of quitters. You quit cold. You got scared, you didn't pass, you acted like you had boxcars in your shoes... Watch that ball. Alla time, watch...that...ball. At no time...take...yer eyes...offa that ball. An' get those bricks outa your britches. This isn't kindergarten, it's basketball. How you gonna go back home and face those folks if you lose? Get out there and fight. This is your last chance. The bread-and-butter quarter. Every shot counts. Have you got guts? Are you a bunch of quitters, that's what I wanna know? Have...you...got the...guts?
(pp. 45-46)

Basketball fans often dehumanize the sport, especially at a scholastic level, as solely about winning and losing. Winning is equated with superiority in the mental, physical and emotional sense; while losing is equated with inferiority of the three senses. But, for players who have been around the game for some time, the notions have far greater complexity. For Heidegger, the notion of complexity is actually a return to how we came to be. Hence, looking at competition in sport and the drive to defeat and become the sole victor, we must as Heidegger (1962) proclaims, "understand this task as one in which by taking the question of Being as our clue, we are to destroy the traditional content of ancient ontology until we arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being" (Heidegger, pp. 6, 44). Basketball is just another sport that was created as a recreational tool to achieve better

physical and mental health in life through the pleasure of active participation. Hence, the cognition that we so often trivialize and complicate as fans of the game, is truly the simple cognitive experience that allows a player to conduct life beyond the basketball court.

Larner's story, *Drive, He Said*, captures the cognitive brutality of basketball upon athletes, as they are often scrutinized in the gaze, and hence, in that temporal moment transform their humiliation into rage. Larner (1996) delves into the thoughts of Hector and hears the following:

Yet, slowly, as he sat, a rage built. His old rage, that had carried him so far. It was a rage at the whole world sitting, the world of spectators, at everything for putting him in the middle and mocking him. And at himself, too, because beyond the weariness which he could not penetrate, he *did* care, he did he did he did. He had spent too long a life shooting balls into baskets. And so he found himself committed to the final degradation: though he no longer had use for self-respect he was forced to respect the only kind of self he knew, the self he had been given. Or else his only self must die. *Because that was me out there, really me. Like it or not I will have this game to remember me by.* Therefore he clenched his fists and fought with all his might against his sickness of himself and his symbols and his deadly soul-fatigue, went back to the game and put his hands in the air and shot as best he could: so that when his team lost, he would not lose. *Not everything, not yet.* (pp. 63-64)

Who are these athletes playing for, and how do they find balance between the self and the other (teammates, opponents, and fans) in the temporal moment? Basketball is a lived experience for many because of the amount of time dedicated to learning the game, playing the game for fun, and then competing in the game for all the marbles. As members of a team, how do athletes balance their own being and desires within the synergy that allows them to function as a team? Coaches assign roles to athletes and expect them to carry out their duties in order to honor the team's drive toward victory because ultimately the temporality of the game will expire and one team will become the

lone winner based on points. In that moment in time, the only consolation to individual players is that they played their best and were able to put up lots of points even though the team did not prevail. However, as the unwritten code of athletes involved in team sports proclaims, it does not matter how well you did individually because you still have lost collectively. I often wonder what the mind of the athlete has to say about all of this, especially when he or she may have had the most superb game of his or her life.

A Time for Body and Mind

One of the key bodily features that coaches look for in players is perception, or in basketball terms, court awareness. The leader of a team, often coined in the point guard position, plays an intricate role in distributing the ball and creating opportunities for scoring. As Levin (1985) explains,

Vision, like the other modalities of perception, is a way of being-in-the-world. It is also more specifically a capacity. Vision invites development, invites cultivation. At birth, we are given a gift of nature and sent on our way. What we do with that gift, how we experience the potential-for-being inherent in that skill, is the question which defines our individual being. (p. 52)

Coaches often ask players to engage via game tape in the mistakes that were made and practice them correctly, because “Recollection is much more than a process of contacting and retrieving. It is also a process of developing our bodily awareness and cultivating its capacities” (Levin, 1985, p. 53). The dilemma that many coaches face is the separation of thinking from playing by most athletes. The body and mind are inseparable, and hence, when as players we decide to express ourselves via a move, a pass, a shot, or the infamous expression of bodily control, the infamous dunk,

We must let go of our metaphysical conception of ‘thinking.’ We must simply give our thought to the body. We must take our thinking ‘down’ into the body. We must learn to think through the body. We must learn to think with the body.

For once, we should listen in silence to our bodily felt experience. Thinking needs to learn by feeling, by just being with our bodily being. (Levin, 1985, p. 61)

According to Hales, one of the biggest temporal notions of success in basketball is found in the phenomenon of “the hot hand.” Since the notion is a hypothesis that is difficult to prove, many arguments have come forth in support of and against the phenomenon. Hales proclaims that having a hot hand is ... “the feeling that you are in the groove, that you cannot miss your shots, that everything you do is the right thing” (2007, p. 196). Yet, many psychologists and statisticians do not believe in such a streak, that success breeds success. In other words, they claim that there is no proof that just because a player has taken the last three shots and made all three, that we should get the ball to him and allow him to shoot because he has the highest chance of making his fourth shot. Hales (2007) acknowledges that prominent experts are looking for definites via success rates, and as a result are missing the point of the phenomenon:

Instead I have argued that being hot does not have to do with the success rate, duration, or even frequency of streaks. It has to do with their existence. The conclusions to be drawn are (1) one has a hot hand when one is shooting better than average; (2) players often know when they are shooting better than average; and (3) observers can often tell when players are shooting better than average. This judgment of countless fans, coaches, and players is vindicated. (p. 205)

Percentages have become the mode for determining an athlete’s ability to perform within the lived moment of basketball. Young basketball players venture upon these correlated mind games as they proclaim to themselves that they must make 8 out of the next 10 shots (80%, a good number), before they go back inside, even if they could barely see the rim as dusk falls. As they hit number 8, they leave with a sense that they are as good as the idols they look up to on television or in the high school game at the end of the week. The dilemma, which remains an irresolvable mystery, is how much do

numbers impact the mind, which in turn, restricts or broadens the bodies' capabilities within a live game situation. Are athletes led to believe, through this mode of self-talk, that they will make or miss the next shot? If there were no percentages, how does an athlete determine whether they are performing better or worse than average? The goal of any athlete is to improve, and I often wonder what physical and mental messages we are sending to a basketball player by asking them to pass the ball and not shoot even when the opportunity is clearly there. On the backyard or driveway court, the script could be replayed and the outcome could be altered, but in the lived moment of an actual game, the choice of shooting can haunt you for a good amount of time if the outcome does not reap the ultimate reward of victory for the team.

Preserving the Lessons in Moments Passed

The moments of embodiment that define the identity of athletes as players and learners of basketball often are recollected in a regressed form via game tape and box scores, all of which often focus on individual accomplishment and room for improvement. Levin (1985) emphasizes that "Recollection is the 'repetition of a possibility of existence that has come down to us.' It is a retracing of steps in order to retrieve an understanding which will prepare us for new steps forward. Recollection is not at all a passive form of enquiry; nor, for that matter, is its emerging body of understanding required to be docile, submissive, and fatalistic" (p. 72). The high-profile player as an athlete and scholar of the game must be given the opportunity to reflect upon the ever-changing notions of embodiment by consistently learning from the past, living in the present, and looking to the future. "The truth in the work of recollection is therefore to be judged not by an accurate correspondence to the objective reality of a past epoch

and another culture, but rather in terms of the character of the transformation by which a deeper understanding of the past significantly alters the course of the future” (Levin, 1985, p. 89). From his narrative *A Season Inside*, Feinstein (1996) eloquently captures the notion of becoming a champion in the syncretical moment from the perspective of a player. He describes the moment in the following manner:

For a split second, he didn't move. The ball was cradled in his hands the way a doctor might hold a newborn; the grip firm, yet soft and clearly full of love, with just a touch of wonder. Danny Manning loved this moment, perhaps more than any other in his entire life. He had fantasized it thousands of times and now, when it was real, he was not quite sure whether to believe it. But his eyes and ears told him it was true. He looked at the Kemper Arena scoreboard and there it was: Kansas-83, Oklahoma-79. And the clock said :00. The questions had all been answered. The basketball was his to keep and so was this feeling. If it had been tangible, Manning would have gripped the feeling so tightly he might have choked it. Instead, he had the ball. (p. 91)

Scholar-athletes often sacrifice spare time by placing all their mental, physical, and emotional energy into the sport, anticipating grand professional outcomes. Heidegger (1962) frames the sacrifice as the actual journey within which each player, individually, “must seek a way of casting light on the fundamental question of ontology, and this is the way one must go. Whether this is the only way or even the right one at all, can be decided only after one has gone along it” (p. 437). This, of course, is especially significant for scholastic basketball players since many of them will not go on to play at the collegiate nor professional level. To allow the immense amount of temporal dedication to dissipate is almost to claim that the journey never actually occurred because the scholar-athletes never became what they truly set out to develop into – full-time athletes and part-time scholars.

To return to a moment when identities were merely playful and time stood still shows the simplicity of lessons learned, not goals accomplished. Blais (1999) reminds us

of these moments when, “Applauded only by the mosquitoes and the crickets, she would take the ball and pound it on the asphalt and set up and shoot. Despite the noise from the bugs and the drone of traffic on Route 116, she heard nothing except the thud of the ball and the pulsing inside her chest, the steady beat of her pride and exhaustion, the old brag of the athlete’s heart” (p. 261). The joy of basketball, even in its self-driven competitive nature, is often limited to the game itself and not given the exponential worth that it deserves beyond the court. For many scholar-athletes of the game, the opportunities for playing at a professional level are minuscule, especially since the popularity of basketball has grown tremendously at the recreational and scholastic levels. Yet, the lived lessons that we can learn from playing the game and reflecting upon our play in many temporal moments are monumental. How can athletes return to the lived moments of playing basketball in the driveways, backyards, and neighborhood playgrounds in order to learn from the pillars they set in place for themselves to succeed as individuals, not as athletes? Our bodies too often fool our minds into thinking that we are indestructible, and in the process, as athletes, we stray from the pleasure that we received in succeeding, with only the self in that temporal childhood moment called play, not praxis.

Shooting through the Spatial

The ‘game’ of basketball brings people together and you start to appreciate the diversity with regard to talent, achievements, and honesty of interesting people. Regardless of how you participate with the game of organized basketball, you are part of the engaged space for either a moment in time or a more extended stay. Casey’s (1993) examination of time within a space claims:

There is *no (grasping of time) without place*, and this is so precisely by virtue of place’s actively delimiting and creatively conditioning capacities. Place situates

time by giving it a local habitation. Time arises *from* places and passes (away) *between* them. It also vanishes into places at its edges and as its edges. For the ‘positions’ of time are its effective limits, without which it would not appear as time at all – indeed, without which time itself would not be able to present itself to us, would not be timelike or temporal in the first place. (p. 21)

The sense of community and adhesion that basketball provides is unique and diverse, yet similar in philosophy. Players, coaches, referees, and fans all realize that a code of conduct exists for their particular role during the 32:00 minutes of scholastic action, but of course, they at times step beyond the understood boundaries to express their worth in the immediate basketball community. However, at the end of the game, everyone must return to their more influential role as parent, bread winner, and citizen. Basketball is something that energizes the community. It is a bond shared between and among communities. It is a common denominator for boys and girls, the tall and the short, the slow and the fast, the youth and the elders. Basketball brings people together quickly, but on the flip-side of that coin, it can divide a community just as fast. The focus of the community on basketball space, as both a mode of escape and a right to brag, is compellingly honest.

Baker (2008) reminisces and, in the process, reminds us of community spaces used for pure pleasure and consistent competition, beyond the glamour and lights:

When Donna Lopiano grew up, there was no Title IX, and there were no leagues for girls. “As is true of many women in my generation, the encouragement to play sports was a function of either growing up with a whole bunch of brothers or living on a street with a whole bunch of boys, where your parents didn’t stop you from playing. Although I didn’t have the brothers, I grew up on a street with fifteen boys and one other girl. Those kids always picked me first because I was a great athlete, and they didn’t care whether I was a girl or not. So I’m sure that among all the sports that I played, these are the places of my fondest memories, having a hoop in the backyard, having an organized league on your own street, two-on-two basketball, and playing everyday,” Lopiano said. (p. 23)

The significance of the first community basketball courts that we encounter raises a complicated question about whether the lived experience is driven by the sporting space that one has at his or her disposal for play at a young age. A female athlete being in the midst of a predominantly male populated street basketball space brings forth a very different notion of play, in contrast to young girls participating in an organized, women's recreation league. In the present, the growing number of basketball leagues has allowed for multiple versions of basketball spaces based on gender, talent, and grade to thrive. In some geographic regions of competition these dimensions may serve as a divide, but in other regions they become the complicated essence for conversation as boundaries are crossed and in the process, protocols are challenged. In these spaces where a new basketball function is taking place, a new kind of athlete is also starting to rise. What will become of the experiences encountered in both spaces of competition is worthy of written narrative by the participants who lived in them.

A Complicated Community for Competition

In *Ain't God Good to Indiana!*, Tunis (1996) compares the social worth and appreciation of basketball space by claiming, "The high school gymnasium today in the Midwest has the role of the playhouse of the Elizabethans, the bull ring of Seville, the theater of the ancient Greeks. Indeed the Greeks would have been entirely at home watching a basketball game in Kokomo, Indiana" (p. 40). It is amazing that in smaller towns, the very space that allows for such fierce competition among scholar-athletes, embraces the platform for camaraderie among spectators as communitarians seeking a common ground for complicated conversation beyond the game of basketball. Through complicated common ground, "Place bestows upon them 'a local habituation and name'

by establishing a concrete situatedness in the common world. This implacement is as social as it is personal. The idiolocal is not merely idiosyncratic or individual; it also collective in character” (Casey, 1993, p. 23).

Naturally, there are nuances of play that occur in the space of basketball among the participants on the staged court and the extended audience, who find ownership in the athletic script. If you stick around long enough, it will become apparent that

Basketball is ultimately about communication. It is one of the most truthful and honest ways we communicate. It’s a conduit for an adrenaline rush – the anticipation of a battle and the potential satisfaction of coming out victorious. Off the court we camouflage our true selves. We wear masks, but on the court, truth reigns. You cannot hide on a court. You cannot pretend to be courageous. You cannot pretend to be smart. You have to prove it. If you cannot prove it, you sit next to the coach on the sideline and hope for another chance. (Baker, 2008, p. 115)

The gradual shift of playing from home courts, to neighborhood courts, to school courts, and possibly to bigger arena courts accustoms the athlete to be productive within the lined boundaries of a basketball court, regardless of how big the gaze may be upon that confined space of play. Upon entering the game, one can no longer hide in the trenches of the sidelines as the expectation to play in the lived moment is immediate. However, unlike individual sports, in that the athlete enters at the beginning and exits at the end of the game, basketball is a game of ins and outs, where players and plays are constantly interjecting onto an ongoing script.

According to Gadamer, “The movement to-and-fro obviously belongs so essentially to the game that there is an ultimate sense in which you cannot have a game by yourself. In order for there to be a game, there always has to be, not necessarily literally another player, but something else with which the player plays and which

automatically responds to his move with a countermove” (1975, p. 106). So, what happens when we do play by ourselves? Do we inject the other via play into the game?

According to Becky Hammon, who grew up in rural South Dakota,

At night after the floodlights were turned off on our concrete basketball court and my brother and father had gone in the house, I would routinely stand out there on the darkened basketball court, dreaming. Often I would let my thoughts run wild and imagine hitting game winners, buzzer beaters, circus shots, and nailing daggers from twenty-five feet out. Imagination aside, I could not foresee how my life and career would connect in the world of women’s basketball. (Baker, 2008, p. xi)

The basketball space may look and feel different, but the narrative has universal qualities. On playgrounds, you often see a young player epitomize her favorite athlete as she battles the invisible other, often a rival. She forces the other to move to and from the play that she conducts, screaming the famous countdown 3-2-1, she shoots, she scores, they win. Or, she shoots, she misses, but there was a foul. Without the manipulation of the invisible other, there is no continuation of play. It is a given, that if she misses the shot, the other will commit an infraction which would allow the play to continue, in this case via free-throws. “The real subject of the game (this is shown in precisely those experiences in which there is only a single player) is not the player but instead the game itself. What holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there is the game itself” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 106). Hence, the game is not dictated by the number of players, but by the plays themselves, which can often be practiced by the self alone.

Earning an Invitation onto the Court

How an athlete honestly feels the space of scholastic basketball is crucial to the success of scoring, defending, and running plays or patterns. The actual community embraces him or her and teaches the individual to catch, dribble, pass, and shoot in a

given basketball space. The space could be a rural dirt court, an urban playground, a local park, a recreation center, a school gymnasium, or any combination of these places. As students of basketball, we learn to absorb that space and its function, seeking to become more fluid with the objects within the space. Casey (1993) claims in the examination of finding one's place within a space:

For what is paramount in a culturally specified place is not the endpoint of destination, much less the shortest route to it. What matters most is the experience of *being* in that place and, more particularly, *becoming part of the place*. The time of cultural implacement (and the time experienced *in* that implacement) is that which informs a place in concert with other human beings, through one's bodily agency, within the embrace of a landscape. (p. 33)

Becoming a successful team basketball player often involves truly understanding the movement of the ball and the movement of the players, independently and dependently, within the confines of a court. In his story, *The Game They Played*, Cohen (1996) emphasizes the spatial character of playground courts, where many of the invisible happenings are scripted toward reality, by setting the scene as follows:

There were no nets on the baskets, and as the afternoon faded the rim seemed to lose itself against the green of the backboard. But schoolyard basketball is a game played on the accumulated instincts of one's own time and place. There were no markings on the court; no keyhole or foul line, and one learned to take his points of reference from anonymous landmarks – a jagged crack in the pavement, an imperceptible dip in the wall along the sideline, the subtle geography that is known and stored only in the private preserve of the body. (p. 72)

At this point I must ask, why do we choose to play the game within the rugged and lavish environments, and what does basketball represent in each individual's mind? Gadamer specifies that "However much games are in essence representations and however much the players represent themselves in them, games are not presented for anyone – i.e., they are not aimed at an audience" (1975, p. 108). What is fascinating is

that we learn a game in order to entertain ourselves and gain pleasure in the recreation. Yet, the sporting space has become so high profile that children as young as eight years old are quickly learning that the self-play transforms into playing for and to the tune of the other (the fans). You even see young kids making a play or scoring a basket and then turning to the bleachers for a reaction from the fans who do not occupy the actual space of play. How does this quick transformation take place between the notion of self-play and playing for the other, which is often a group of fans?

Gadamer claims that, “Play itself is a transformation of such kind that identity of the player does not continue to exist for anybody. Everybody asks instead what is supposed to be represented, what is ‘meant.’ The players (or playwright) no longer exist, only what they are playing” (1975, p. 111). Hence, the identity of players is shaped often by their artistic moves and athletic abilities. Yet, they simultaneously mimic the glorified moves and antics of those who played before them as they try to find an independent identity within the play itself. “When a person imitates something, he allows what he knows to exist and to exist in the way he knows it. A child begins to play by imitation, affirming what he knows and affirming his own being in the process” (Gadamer, p. 113).

Does the nature of play by gender or race dictate a dominant behavior by many of the participants who step onto the space of basketball? To some degree this is evident as a correlation of antics can be made between revered basketball players and the young athletes who mimic their behavior. However, visual technology has enhanced, not necessarily for the better, the lived experience to become almost self reflective of another. Athletes have a tendency to package their style of play, not their lived experience within a space, emulating their favorite sports icons, and in the process they

may mistake the lived experience of the other as a roadmap for the self. The practice of reflecting upon the self while being in the space of basketball as it is still fresh on the mind allows an athlete to delve deeper into the living moment without molding it to fit the lived moment of another. Only then does the lived space offer opportunities where individual wants and team wishes are addressed, but not necessarily attained.

Protect Home Court at All Costs

The initiated action that takes place within the contingent space of basketball encompasses factors such as needs and desires. Players represent not only their individual wishes, but also those of the team and the community at-large. As Casey (1993) points out, “What is at stake is not just *my* own body but also the other’s body as it relates to, and differs from, mine (and vice versa). My own here remains mine, yet I am aware of another here precisely as *another’s here*: a here that is conveyed to me only indirectly by the other’s body as *there* in my perception” (p. 54). For players the desire lies in the victory over, and burial of, the opponent on their own home turf, which is so often based on the honest need to perfect the skills of moving with and without the basketball. In other words, the monotonous plays that are practiced over and over again within the training space may or may not lead to the desired outcomes that the team wishes to achieve via victory. Alhoff and Vaidya (2007) capture the relationship between mind and body in reaching optimal performance by highlighting the remarks of NBA coach Phil Jackson, who believes that within these contingent spaces,

Basketball happens at such a fast pace that your mind has a tendency to race at the same speed as your pounding heart. As the pressure builds, it’s easy to start thinking too much. But if you’re always trying to figure the game out, you won’t be able to respond creatively to what’s going on. The key is seeing and doing. If you’re focusing on anything other than reading the court and doing what needs to be done, the moment will pass you by. (pp. 110-111)

The weight of basketball upon a player is not truly a burden, but more so an honest expectation to represent the community with honor and dignity, both on and off the court. The lights just happen to shine a lot brighter on the enclosed linear court. However, what is more significant is the imprint that a player, a group of friends, and a team may have upon the cultural space within which they learn, practice, compete, refine, champion, and eventually vacate. Casey's (1993) investigation of place dimensionality states:

Even if we vacate a place and it stays unoccupied, it does not become an instant void or revert to being a mere part of space. So long as we (or other living organisms) have once been there, it has become a place – and it *remains* a place, insofar as it bears the sedimented traces of our presence. These traces, which act to shape and identify a place and not just to haunt it, need not be externally, engraved; they can be inward memory traces possessed by all who have shared that place. Whatever their exact character, such traces establish what might otherwise be a mere locus or site *as a place*, a status which, once gained, is perhaps never entirely lost. (p. 103)

The conversations that continue beyond the shining moments within individual local communities do carry the weight of tradition, especially if they are extended beyond the community. For many young athletes who do travel beyond the borders of their neighborhood playgrounds, the game of basketball, along with sports talk in general, become agents for conversation and a mode of balancing the individual psyche and soul between very distinct worlds – the privileged and the deprived – the rural, the suburban, and the urban.

All You Need is a Ball and a Hoop

Ultimately, we must return to the individual experience in order to understand how the space of basketball impacts the player beyond the game itself. Players often talk about many lessons that were learned by listening and watching their coach, their

teammates, and their opponents. A popular scene from the movie “Hoosiers,” provides a comfort zone for the underprivileged via the speech given by Gene Hackman, who plays the role of a prominent high school coach, Norman Dale. In the midst of the state tournament, Old Hickory High School, a definite underdog, must play their next playoff game in a much larger gym than they are used to and in front of a much more hostile crowd. The space of basketball has dramatically changed, and Dale knows that he must honestly address his players to preserve the confidence and talent that victoriously brought the team this far into the tournament. As Elcombe (2007) reminisces:

Norman Dale first measures the distance from the hoop to the free throw line and then instructs Strap to place Ollie on his shoulders to determine the height of the rim. Measurements confirm that the basket is positioned fifteen feet from the free throw line and ten feet off the ground. Although the Huskers are no longer in Hickory, the basic dimensions of the court are the same as in their home gym. Similarly, the seconds on the large electronic game clock will tick away at the same rate of speed as the smaller timer they use at home, in spite of the enormity of the event. Time and space on the basketball court, Coach Dale is implicitly saying, stand as unchanging constants – a commonality that binds huge facilities in big cities to tiny gyms in small communities. The durable quality of lived time and space, particularly in a well-defined context such as a basketball game, gives continuity and meaning to the embodied experience. (pp. 208-209)

Casey (1993) highlights the value of self-awareness within place, especially in moments such as these, where the space challenges the individual physically, mentally, and emotionally. Each player at some point must come to a realization that

Just as there is no place without body – without the physical or psychical traces of body – so *there is no body without place*. This is so whether we are thinking of body in relation to its own proto-place, its immediately surrounding zonal places, its oppositional counter places, its congenial com-places, or in relation to landscaped regions as configured by such things as landmarks and lakes, towers and trees. For the lived body is not only locatory ... it is always already *implaced* (which is not to say that it is always securely *in place*). (p. 104)

By regressing back to the moments when we were students of the game and listeners of the space instead of mere participants within a moment in time for exercise, we can each see a little bit of Louise Smith in our own inviting space where basketball happened:

As a young girl I begged long and hard for that hoop. The game had courted me in the driveway of our first house, ensnaring me with its most basic charm: sinking a basket felt joyful even if the street was almost dark and everyone else had gone home. That first rim was rusty and lopsided, but when I was six its imperfection didn't matter. The hole could have been a discarded toilet seat as long as I learned to shoot a ball through it like my older brothers. We moved when I turned nine, exchanging the basketball court for a sloping driveway and a swimming pool. There was no space for a hoop, Dad insisted. There was no space because in 1969 there was no future for a girl in basketball. (1999, pp. 275-276)

Accessing the game of basketball is quite easy due in part to the simplicity of what one needs – a ball that bounces and a hoop that is to some degree stable. What happens to an athlete beyond getting the ball into the hoop with regard to the physical, mental, and emotional style of play is dependent upon how populated our lived moments with basketball become. How are we listening to those basketball spaces which may teach us about conducting ourselves beyond the court? How are we seeing our actions on the court, especially in difficult times, leading us astray or keeping us on course with the other as we leave the lived moment behind? How are we reaching the power within our soul as we rise to accomplish the unthinkable because we have learned to become a part of that space? To answer these questions, we can regress back into those spaces in search of hidden treasures that are broadly etched in our memory waiting to be unpacked.

Rebounding against the Relational

All I wanted to do with most of my spare time was play basketball. Having to watch from the sideline was very frustrating, especially when basketball was such an important outlet in my life. The game does make you humble, especially if you are on

the actual court as a player, coach, or referee. Thank goodness they keep the fans further away. Yet, the relationships that are formed and the generous acts of teaching, playing, learning and most importantly, respecting the game of basketball, are addictive if you stay in it long enough. But, what happens when the glory days are over? How does one learn from the positive and negative moments that have passed, but are etched into a memory bank physically, cognitively, and emotionally? Baker's analysis of her experiences asks each of us to ponder the question – why do I play? Baker claims, “I might never be a professional basketball player, but the court will forever be my home. Basketball is in my blood. It's in my heart. I play because I love the sound of a leather ball slipping elusively through the chain net. I love the cracks in a blacktop court where the weeds poke through. I love the sound sneakers make on a shiny indoor court. I love the competition and the camaraderie. That's why I play” (2008, p. 2). It is not basketball that necessarily is taking us on a journey, but instead it is our own physical, intellectual, and emotional learning that occurs while thinking through the moments we have had, and will have with basketball.

A Theory of Basketball Relativity

Gadamer believes that hermeneutics inspires individuals to pose questions toward their actions and, “When one realizes that understanding is an adventure, this implies that it affords unique opportunities as well. It is capable of contributing in a special way to the broadening of our human experiences, our self-knowledge, and our horizon, for everything understanding mediates is mediated along with ourselves” (1981, p. 110). In this hermeneutic process, the ego actually can be nurtured or malnourished by the community that embraces or rejects the individual. In certain communities, poverty and

despair often mask the relationships that help build, challenge, and strengthen the ego. It is no wonder that so many scholar-athletes have difficulty succeeding beyond the borders of their neighborhood playgrounds. A player's ego embraces the responsibility to community beyond mere camaraderie. Players growing up in these communities can only situate themselves outside of their community via basketball. Through sports competition, you belong to a sub-culture that teaches you to give yourself to the team and love your teammates. The ego is, of course, threatened especially by a tall order such as the concept of team, at a time when it, the ego, may want to experiment and rebel. Yet, within these communities, the ego is hungry for compassion and dedication to serving the community and not a mere circle of camaraderie.

According to Kretchmar (2007), a tension exists within basketball philosophy that pits the purists against the modernists as they differ in their views. He poses the following distinctions:

Purists and modernists disagree significantly on how we should design, teach, officiate, and value the game. One side finds excitement and beauty in one set of abilities, skills, and attitudes. The other side finds excitement and beauty in an overlapping but partly different set of abilities, skills, and attitudes. This underlies the fact that the purist-modernist controversy is at least partly over how we want basketball to be played – which skills we want to honor, how we hope to teach youngsters to play, and what values have attracted us, and countless others around the world, to this marvelous sport. (pp. 33, 34)

What happens to the scholar-athlete who must consistently confront these two styles of play within basketball time and space? The confrontation pits team potential versus individual capability, fundamental skills versus exceptional athleticism, group achievement versus one-on-one matchups, group spacing versus clearing out of space, patience versus pressure, help defense versus man-to-man defense, agile motion versus brute force, and set plays versus run-and-gun transition. Regardless of the style that one

favors, or often uses in game situations, most basketball coaches claim that persistence prevails. Bassham and Hamilton (2007) emphasize:

Persistence is holding steadfast to a purpose despite obstacles and setbacks. It is perseverance and tenacity in the face of hardships and disappointments. It is sticking with something even when you do not feel like it or see the final goal. As Pitino says, 'It's persistence that makes you great. It's persistence that allows you to reach your dreams. It's persistence that enables you to perform at your fullest potential.' (p. 51)

In basketball games, the surge of competition between two teams seeking victory may elevate the individual athlete to his or her optimal level of performance. Persistence, however, is a bigger factor lived through the sessions of practice and scrimmage that lead up to the game that actually counts. What do athletes sacrifice at a personal level, outside the realm of their sporting lives, in order to help the team prepare for the next game? How does one's responsibility toward a collective group impact the lived course once the season is complete? The conversation rooted in these two questions is often a silent one-way interchange between the athlete and the self. As a member of a group we hesitate to disrupt an order or expected routine unless we truly want to expunge our membership. To bring the complicated conversation to surface may require an uncomfortable camaraderie between the heart and the mind in the face of the other. How the surfacing of these moments impact lived play can only be synthesized by members of the team in a reflective, not reactive format.

Enlightening the Self through the Other

Being in the game of basketball as a team member allows each scholar-athlete to practice disciplining the heart and mind, in order to achieve individual enlightenment with a collective mission of victory. We would like to think of victory beyond the hardwood via the occurrences that take place on the hardwood. The bigger question

could be phrased as, “Should we think of taking care of the opponent, the other, in basketball or just our team, or simply, just our own self?” Gadamer (1980) interprets a notion of righteousness:

What is just and right is not the right that someone has in opposition to another. Rather it is being just: Each is just by himself and all are just together. Justice does not exist when each person watches the other and guards against him but when each watches himself and guards the right and just being of his inner constitution. (p. 51)

Few scholar-athletes manage to absorb the basketball acts and transform those experiences into future relational deeds in scholastic, professional, and personal communities. For Robinson, playing with the United States Basketball Team in the Olympics epitomizes the salience of many years with basketball as part of her life. She states:

I love that basketball is a team sport. I love the camaraderie. No other kind of job has the atmosphere that lets you develop this kind of camaraderie with your teammates. You live together, you get to know your teammates, and you go through struggles with other people. You learn to accept people’s differences and work with them. The game teaches you such great life lessons because you have been a part of a team and you know what it takes to fight through everyone’s differences, to all have one common goal. (Baker, 2008, p. 118)

Unfortunately, today as we transform from being students of the game to athletes of the game, our hunger for competing against our own band of brothers and squad of sisters has reached the pinnacle of selfishness. Seeking any and every opportunity to strengthen an individual resume for basketball as a sought after profession, we sometimes forget that roughly nine other individuals on the team helped us achieve athletic greatness through both practice and play. The story is much more prevalent in men’s basketball as, Orlean (1996) in *Shoot the Moon* very blatantly presents the notion of chance with regard to

exporting phenoms:

Currently, there are five hundred and eighteen thousand male high school basketball players in the United States. Of these, only nineteen thousand will end up on college teams – not even four percent. Less than one percent will play for Division One colleges – the most competitive. The present N.B.A. roster has three hundred and sixty-seven players, and each year only forty or fifty new players are drafted. Most people who follow high school basketball teams that are filled with kids from poor families and tough neighborhoods encourage the kids to put basketball in perspective, to view it not as a catapult into some fabulous, famous life but as something practical – a way to get out, to get an education, to learn the way around a different, better world. (pp. 32, 33)

How does the lived experience of basketball for women diverge from the all too common, contemporary account described above? What aspects of the men's game philosophy can be seen echoed within the growing popularity of women in professional team sports? By considering these two questions, we are opening up a conversation that links gendered athletics and academia, and in the process possibly broadens the lived experience of being scholar-athletes by telling two very different tales.

Finding Meaning in an Ignored Loss

Merleau-Ponty's examination of structural behavior considers the relationship between nature and human culture. In other words, how does the human mind and body react to natural occurrences in external space? I wonder how a young scholar-athlete, so often astute in filtering out the lessons embedded within the natural basketball occurrences, transforms those incidents into productive outcomes spiritually, socially, culturally, and personally? As Baker (2008) points out, the toughest lessons are rooted in the athlete's darkest moments immediately following competition:

Basketball players often learn more about themselves in the defeats than they do in the wins. Everyone wants to know a winner. Everyone wants to high-five a winner and relive her glory on the court. No one wants a quote from a loser. It's the winners' locker rooms that are full of reporters toting mini-tape recorders. Losses remind you that you have flaws and that some other players have fewer

than you do. Losses show you that God, or whatever higher power you believe in, has granted superior physical abilities to someone else, but the trick played on athletes has nothing to do with talent because the heart of a champion often beats quietly inside a loser, just waiting for a chance to show itself. (p. 35)

Merleau-Ponty (1963) signifies, “Our goal is to understand the relations of consciousness and nature: organic, psychological or even social. By nature we understand here a multiplicity of events external to each other and bound together by relations of causality” (p. 3). A scholar-athlete’s parent or coach uses the philosophy of basketball as something bigger than 32:00 minutes of fame or shame. Each dribble, each shot, each foul, and each fall would have greater implications beyond the basketball court. They introduce the athlete to a system called “life” which has natural strategies that are not independent of relationships, yet quite dependent upon change brought forth from within. Heidegger (1962) says, “Interpretation is carried out primordially not in a theoretical statement but in an action of circumspective concern - laying aside the unsuitable tool, or exchanging it, ‘without wasting words’. From the fact that words are absent, it may not be concluded that interpretation is absent” (p. 33). Eventually, the scholar-athlete may capture the relationship of basketball to acts of kindness in that with understanding comes greater appreciation for both similarities and differences. Degrees of separation are not as big as society makes them to be, as things do come full circle.

Painting a Blissful Experiment

There always seems to be an unnamed tension between science and art, or better yet, between the definite and vague. Through this unnecessary tension we have created a war of intelligibility that pits truth against doubt. Heidegger simplifies this work by looking to art as intelligibility. He states that “The origin of the work of art is simply the artist himself. For the Being of beings, the coming to presence of things, is the original

self-showing by which entities emerge from hiddenness; by the constancy of their relation to concealment beings show that they have an origin” (1993, p. 140). In other words, through the art of Being each being expresses his or her intelligibility. Heidegger expands this conversation by expressing that “The origin of something is the source of its essence and ...it is the work that first lets the artist emerge as the master of his art” (p. 143). At some point in a lived experience of basketball every scholar-athlete must come face to face with the ultimate question, “Was it all worth it?” All the sacrifices made by the self and others, all the time lost that the self could have been experiencing something new with another, and all the minor and major injuries sustained along the way. Yet, the ultimate question is so shallow and often signifies a guilt trip upon the self. By being in accordance with the question, one is justifying all the good lived moments while keeping the other moments locked behind closed thoughts. By being in conflict with the question, the whole journey is placed under the scrutiny of doubt or the infamous, “What if?” By complicating the conversation from the present perspective with the notion, “Is it worth it?” – athletes are engaging with their own being as scholars of their lived experience in relation to an experience of another.

Considering that the scholar-athlete as an artist is brought to the game of basketball by his or her physical and cognitive aptitude, I wonder if the platform of sport today merely compliments athletic intelligibility instead of the logic behind surpassing the other via intellectual strategy and movement of the ball. So, have we named these scholar-athletes into existence because the sport of basketball exists as their origin and calls upon them to perform? Brand and Brand (2007) capture the complex notion of

athletes as artists and the game as a complicated, yet beautiful, display of collaboration between a group of teammates and opponents:

The outer beauty is what is universally observable and follows a pattern of excellence for the type of object or event that is. There is some similarity between music, dance, and athletics ... Beauty is to be found in the sequencing of movements (or sounds), in the transitions between parts of the sequences, and especially in the interaction between participants. Just as a jazz musician must anticipate what others with whom he is playing will do and alternately lead and support them, so too must the basketball player anticipate where others will be on the court and either pass, dribble, or take the shot himself ... 'Inner' beauty depends on what's going on in the players' heads, not just their bodies. The coaches devise the strategies that are internalized by the players during repetitious practice, and the players apply these strategies to rapidly changing events on the floor. Basketball, when played well, is a head game. It takes cognitive ability – smarts – to create a beautiful play and certainly a beautiful game. (pp. 100-101)

Heidegger ponders upon the notion that “All works have this thingly character.

What would they be without it? But perhaps this rather crude and external view of the work is objectionable to us” (1993, p. 145). If the art that is produced by a basketball scholar-athlete is embedded in his or her ability to process the field of play visually (the canvas), make an intellectual decision to move the ball in a specific direction, and carry out a creative physical move(s) to put the ball into the basket, only to turn around immediately and defend a similar artistic attack upon his or her team, then how could this art possibly be labeled as a “thing” that happened in a moment of time?

To Err is not Athletic

As we attach super-being qualities to athletes in their teens today we remove the notion of their being from Being in that time of their life. Athletes are framed as capable of doing what we cannot as “ordinary” beings. Hence, the word “thing” reappears, separating the humanness of an athlete from his art – which unfortunately carries the weight of his intelligibility. For Heidegger, “This thing-concept (the thing as bearer of its

characteristics) holds not only of the mere thing in its proper sense, but also of any being whatsoever” (1993, p. 150). During a basketball performance or game we are focused on the super-being so that we rarely hear the tools that guide the being in that moment of Being. Heidegger mentions that “In order to hear a bare sound, we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e., listen abstractly. There is not an inordinate attempt to bring it into the greatest possible proximity to us. But a thing never reaches that position as long as we assign as its thingly feature what is perceived by the senses” (1993, p. 152). For example, we rarely hear the ball striking against the wooden floor as it travels from one end to the other, or the squeaking of sneakers as the super-beings fight to gain a spatial advantage. These things are not concealed; yet, they also are not revealed to our senses. Does the noise that we often claim to elevate the physical and mental capabilities of the super-being make the play reveal itself prior to its occurrence? It is hard to anticipate a dunk as we are brought to this thing, or act after the occurrence. We as the receivers are not attuned to the intelligibility of the artistic movement that led to the physicality of the ball slamming down into the hoop.

Heidegger claims that “We mistrust this concept of the thing, which represents it as formed matter” (1993, p. 153). In other words, we want to control it and not allow it to control us. In his narrative, *Life on the Run* (1996), Bradley expresses the notion of being dedicated to every moment of the game once you have overcome its glamour:

The experience is one beautiful isolation. It cannot be deduced from the self-evident, like a philosophical proposition. It cannot be generally agreed upon, like an empirically verifiable fact, and it is far more than a passing emotion. It is as if a lightning bolt strikes, bringing insight into an uncharted area of human experience. It makes perfect sense, but at the same time seems new and undiscovered. The moment in basketball depends on the blending of human forces at the right time and in the right degree. It goes beyond the competition that brings goose pimples or the ecstasy of victory. With my team, before the

crowd, against our opponents, no one else but me can feel what it all means. It's my private world. No one else can sense the inexorable rightness of the moment. (p. 198)

Heidegger also defines the three modes of thingness as thingly character of the thing, equipmental character of the thing as equipment, and workly character of the thing as work. I wonder if the ball as a thing can possess character without human interaction with it, but necessarily in a game mode – merely the act of dribbling it on the ground anywhere. Heidegger later expands on works of art by stating, “As works, they are torn out of their own native sphere...however high their quality and power of impression, however good their state of preservation, however certain their interpretation, placing them in a collection has withdrawn them from their own world” (1993, p. 166). This makes me wonder about the notion of basketball scholar-athletes as merely athletes, as merely super-beings, as merely human capital, as merely corporate art work often displaced from their poverty stricken community into a luxurious gymnasium (like a museum) to be displayed in the context of basketball, a competition between two teams or things. Over time, these super-being pieces of art may turn into banners hanging from the rafters of the arena, signifying broken records and impressive moments and accomplishments. Yet for Heidegger, “...Setting up no longer means a bare placing; to dedicate means to consecrate, in the sense that in setting up the work the holy is opened up as holy and the god is invoked into the openness of his presence” (1993, p. 170).

The way scholar-athletes, who often become defined as merely untouchable super-beings, are constructed by different forms of media and corporations to the public, and emulated by young minds and bodies, is truly an origin of their art. In a narrative

piece titled, *A Fan's Notes on Earl Monroe*, Woody Allen once wrote about how great ones live through their art:

What makes Monroe different is the indiscernible heat of genius that burns deep inside him. Some kind of diabolical intensity comes across his face when he has the ball. One is suddenly transported to a more primitive place. It's roots time. The eyes are big and white, the teeth flash, the nostrils flare ... It's amazing because the audience's 'high' originates inside Monroe and seems to emerge over his exterior. He creates a sense of danger in the arena and yet has enough wit in his style to bring off funny ideas when he wants to. He has, as an athlete-performer, what few actors possess. The audience never knows what will happen next and the potential for a sudden great thrill is always present. Perhaps because we sense a possible peak experience at any given moment, and when it occurs, the performance transcends mere acting and soars into the sublime. On a basketball court, Monroe does this to spectators. (1996, pp. 191-192)

The "Great Ones" of today can be 30 years old or 10 years old, depending on how you are involved with basketball. Regardless, through their physical endurance, cognitive decision-making, and emotional fervor they invite us to become visual critics, and in the process, transform us into the body, space, time, and being of basketball as a life course.

In Chapter Two, I have turned to the written narrative and lived accounts of others in order to explore the hermeneutic nature of basketball as played and lived through the body, during specific time periods, within particular spaces, and with a variety of people. The variety of textual narrative exposed through the corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational framework demonstrates the complexity of basketball as lived. As I return to my initial question of - **What is the lived experience of basketball in the lives of collegiate women who claim to be scholar-athletes?** – I am mindful that their experience is not the beginning and the end to understanding the phenomenon of basketball as lived by women collegiate scholar-athletes. Instead, it is the offering of a new academic and athletic mode for inquiry into how one becomes the scholar and athlete, in their own right, via body, time, space, and relations. In Chapter Three, I

demonstrate how a consistent application of *currere* in the classroom is an essential piece to unpacking the autobiographical renderings of basketball as lived through both complicated conversation and written narrative form via regression, progression, analysis, and synthesis.

CHAPTER THREE:

WRITING OUR WAY INTO AN ATHLETIC LIFE COURSE THROUGH *CURRERE*: PHENOMENOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Having the opportunity to talk about one's life, to give an account of it, to interpret it, is integral to leading that life rather than being led through it.... Part of human life, human living, is talking about it, and we can be sure that being silenced in one's account of one's life is a kind of amputation that signals oppression. Another reason for not divorcing life from the telling of it is that as humans our experiences are deeply influenced by what is said about them, by ourselves or powerful (as opposed to significant) others.... We cannot separate our lives from the accounts given of them; the articulation of our experience is part of our experience. (Lugones & Spelman, 1983, pp. 573-574)

A game of high school basketball consists of four regulation quarters, each 8:00 minutes in length with a 10:00 minute half-time period between quarters two and three. Within this stop-clock 42:00 minutes of play (which roughly equates to about 1 hour and 25 minutes of real-time) opportunities for reflection become mere flashes of reaction for an often dueling, not dwelling, self. As scholar-athletes we often separate our beings as we step onto the court or into the game, and in the process become a reactive agent of the gymnasium instead of a contemplative member of a team. Basketball, like many other team sports, is a game of strategies that we often call plays. Even though these strategies are taught, drawn up, and selected to be used by coaches, it is ultimately the duty of scholar-athlete bodies and minds to implement the play within a game situation effectively. The dilemma often resides in the notion that amateur athletes are merely physical specimens who carry out the intellectual prowess of a coach, yet the coach is not even allowed to set foot onto the court except during timeouts or when beckoned by the referee for special game situations.

Why do we strip the athlete of his or her intellectual capacity by celebrating the corporeal feat when the play goes as planned, or denouncing the cerebral ability when a

strategy fails to be carried out effectively? Schutz captures the essence of this tense question by claiming that “Meaning does not lie in the experience. Rather, those experiences are meaningful which are grasped reflectively.... It is, then, incorrect to say that my lived experiences are meaningful merely in virtue of their being experienced or lived through.... The reflective glance singles out an elapsed lived experience and constitutes it as meaningful” (1967, pp. 69-71).

In Chapters One and Two, I highlighted the significance of living the basketball experience through multiple beings – as a student of the game, an athlete in the game, a scholar for the game, and a scholar-athlete with the game. In this chapter I address the phenomenological foundations on which my study is grounded. The question that compels my study is: **What is the lived experience of basketball in the lives of collegiate women who claim to be scholar-athletes?** As Frankl (1959) points out, “The meaning of our existence is not invented by ourselves, but rather detected” (p. 157). Why should basketball as lived be any different, and how do we move beyond what basketball does to us and explore what we do with, not to, it through the self?

The Phenomenological Mode to Understanding a Lived Being

The hermeneutic process expects us as researchers to strive for deep understanding as we capture, interpret, and thematize human experience as lived. As a researcher I cannot put aside my prejudice for the things I desire to learn, and as an instructor I cannot ignore the texts and lesson plans that I choose to incorporate into a syllabus. In this study, as both researcher and instructor, I engaged a group of collegiate women scholar-athletes in a narrative examination of their lived experience with basketball through a course that lead them through the process of *currere*. Slattery,

Krasny, and O'Malley (2007) capture the intricacy of scholastically handling the nature of being through human science research:

Like the ancient Greek god Hermes, messenger and trickster, many contemporary educators revel in the irony that the official interpreter can also be a cunning deceiver. Layers of meaning, prejudice, and intention surround all artifacts, thus necessitating a hermeneutical study to expose not only the irony of deception, but also the implications of historical analysis ... Contemporary hermeneutics affirms the primacy of understanding contested inter-subjectively over inert objective information, and conceives of understanding as an ontological problem rather than an epistemological problem. (p. 540)

The ultimate challenge for hermeneutics – regardless of whether we are in a position as researcher or participant within the study – is understanding the notion of textuality and how it manifests itself through different forms. Textuality is at the core of meaning making when it comes to interpretive research, as it can open up new possibilities for “lived language” that grow out of a life course. Ricoeur set out to clarify the discomfort with human textuality by proposing “to organize this problematic [the historicity of human experience and communication in and through distance] around five themes: (1) the realization of language as discourse; (2) the realization of discourse as a structured work; (3) the relation of speaking to writing in discourse and in the works of discourse; (4) the work of discourse as the projection of a world; (5) discourse and the work of discourse as the mediation of self-understanding. Taken together, these features constitute the criteria of textuality” (1981, p. 132, emphases removed). To appreciate the transition of the spoken word, as processed reflectively or reactively by the brain, into written discourse that can lead down new roads of intellectual inquiry is the very reason why hermeneutic phenomenology is the chosen methodology for this research project with scholar-athletes.

Interpreting the Self into the Life of the Other

As I embarked upon this journey of a life course with basketball, I needed to address the question of how hermeneutic phenomenology can be the glue for capturing scholar-athlete experiences as a culture of variation as opposed to a culture of similarity within the sport of basketball. More specifically, what are the sociocultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical dimensions that come into play within specific communal, recreational, and scholastic settings? Rundell (1995) emphasizes that we must use hermeneutics to find common meaning and not necessarily similar experiences:

It has now become commonplace to say that ‘we all interpret’. However, hermeneutics – the critical theory of interpretation – is the only current in western thought that has made this issue its own, notwithstanding its presence in both Marxism and that so-called science of phenomena, phenomenology. Through hermeneutics, interpretation has become part of our cultural self-understanding that only as historically and culturally located beings can we articulate ourselves in relation to others and the world in general. (p. 10)

As scholars and athletes of basketball we are merely situated within a specific context of being that is grounded in historical interpretation of rules, a notion of contemporary competition, and a process for future personal and professional camaraderie. Why is the process of interpretation so complicated – especially when considering the duality of being? Heidegger (1962) breaks this difficult ontological process down by warning us of the dangers of swift interpretation within phenomenology:

The achieving of phenomenological access to the entities which we encounter, consists rather in thrusting aside our interpretative tendencies, which keep thrusting themselves upon us and running along with us, and which conceal not only the phenomenon of such ‘concern’, but even more those entities themselves as encountered of their own accord in our concern with them. (p. 96)

Interpretive researchers seek to make sense of the vivid textual data that are encountered in both spoken and written form. Phenomenologists not only interpret the

textual data generated from participants, but they also relive and recall personal encounters with the phenomenon and take in the larger breadth of common meaning brought forth by the experiences shared. Gadamer (1995) reminds us of the significance of historicity in the process of hermeneutic gathering and interpretation and posits that ‘Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through [tradition]’” (p. 295). In the process of finding ourselves within the phenomenon, we gain comfort in textually reflecting and not merely reacting to how we as students, athletes, and scholars became a part of the lived experience. Basketball sets the stage for scholar-athletes to be a part of history and not necessarily make their own history. The game, both at a recreational and competitive level, operates in a dependent manner, even though ten individuals are corporeally occupying space on the court. By becoming more aware of the self, scholar-athletes can turn to the process of reflection based on the other’s experience as well, and not just one’s own lived accounts within the sport of basketball. Gadamer (1975) reminds us:

Self-reflection and autobiography – Dilthey’s starting points – are not primary and are therefore not an adequate basis for the hermeneutical problem, because through them history is made private once more. In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. (pp. 276-277)

In the phenomenological tradition, the process of self-understanding via self-examination is not limited to the persons being studied, but more significantly, it begins with the actual human science researcher himself or herself. Taylor (2002) suggests that we as phenomenologists must be willing to change our investigative approach,

In which we allow ourselves to be interpellated by the other; in which the difference escapes from its categorization as an error, a fault, or a lesser, undeveloped version of what we are, and challenges us to see it is a viable human alternative. It is this that unavoidably calls our own self-understanding into question. This is the stance Gadamer calls “openness.” (pp. 141-142)

Prior to exploring the written narrative of the other, I had to write my way back into the self as lived through the sport of basketball. The process of opening my own corporeality, spatiality, temporality, and relativity via lived moments with basketball allowed me to identify my own becoming of a scholar-athlete within the game.

In the Fall 2009 semester, I embarked upon a journey of “Complicating the Conversation of Basketball as a Life Course” by teaching EDPS 488B. In the previous semester, I had conducted a pilot study of the course and learned that to engage in conversations that invite openness, the size of the class cannot exceed 10 students, a typical roster size for a basketball team. The pilot course also taught me that the written narrative on basketball as lived was heavily based on a male perspective, and hence, the reflection of the women registered for the course relied upon their opinions of the male experience, and not an opening of their own lived experience with basketball. It was disappointing to read their apathy or criticism of the so-named “women’s version” of basketball, engrossed by such words as “slow” and “boring.” I wondered if there was an intimidation factor present within their lived moments of the course since the men outnumbered the women. As the instructor, often wearing a referee’s hat, I was honest in expressing my appreciation for the game as played by women. They either thought I was trying to be diplomatically correct, or that I was being paternalistic. Regardless, I continued to facilitate with an honest game face, trying not to doubt myself as living up to some “politically correct” expectation. The more I thought about, the more I was

troubled by its complexity. How was I going to ever find out what a lived experience of playing women's basketball really was for scholar-athletes who treasured the game, but did not admit to appreciating it in an en-gendered form?

I started researching lived accounts of basketball written by women as a way to experience the game through the eyes of another. As I flipped through the tables of contents, random chapters, and even whole books, I envisioned a new version of EDPS 488B, a version in which I was the minority and my gender experience was not the dominant narrative (see Appendix A for selected texts). How could I create an academic basketball environment where collegiate women scholar-athletes might get together and reflect on their lived moments, seeing themselves within their selected narratives? More importantly, might an environment like this actually allow for a greater opening into the lived experience of the self, not one based on the story of the gendered other?

Writing a Way Back into the Lived Experience

Through the hermeneutical model, scholar-athletes can unpack their academic and athletic life stories not just as a mode of relevance for communicating with others, but more significantly, as a way of transacting what is embedded within their memory via the written narrative form. In the transactional process we must question and intellectually challenge whether this information comes from our own experience(s) with basketball, or what the experts have concluded about the notion of being a scholar-athlete through a self-proclaimed journalistic or academic expertise. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach to written narrative not only allows persons to have a more active role in the research process, but also places greater responsibility on the researcher to use a

transactional process when reading and interpreting the written text. Straw (1990)

clarifies:

In contrast to conceptualizations of reading built on the communication model, transactional models suggest that reading is a more generative act than the receipt or processing of information or communication. From the transactional view, meaning is not, a representation of the intent of the author; it is not present in the text; rather, it is constructed by the reader *during* the act of reading. The reader draws on a number of knowledge sources in order to create or construct meaning. (p. 68)

I am interested in helping collegiate women scholar-athletes participate in this kind of “transactional reading” of their lives through their basketball experience. To add interpretive depth, I draw upon phenomenology. As Burch (1989) suggests:

Even though phenomenology is first and foremost *about* lived experience, and extends a theoretical propensity to reflect on our lives more or less native to us all, it is not of the same order as our everyday thinking about things. As a particular theoretical attitude, phenomenology strives systematically for essential insights, for demonstrable universality, and for theoretical self-transparency, seeking to communicate, not just ideas and information about everyday experiences and matters of concern, but also the manner of our participation in truth. (p. 191)

Phenomenology as an interpretive research methodology by itself is not unique, but what phenomenology transacts from the lived experience of these scholar-athletes becomes the awe inspiring essence. As Heidegger simply states, “Transcendence constitutes selfhood” (1969, p. 39). In other words, what the scholar-athletes bring to this study of lived experience via written narrative form is the true elixir for making phenomenology shine. By giving scholar-athletes a platform for free-writing in the present, we can explore lived experiences of the past in order to better understand paths to the future. A platform that inspires scholar-athletes to engage in written dialogue can transcend a notion that Burch (1991) emphasizes regarding the process of phenomenology:

That lived experience is essentially a self-constituting process also requires that phenomenology interpret lived experience in existential/ontological rather than

merely subjective or objective terms. The issue is not simply one concerning the meanings one understands or what one's experiences are like, nor even less the determination of one's objective circumstances, but of how in the essential interplay between one's situation and the course of her lived experience one comes to be who she is. (p. 28)

The writing becomes the vehicle by which scholar-athletes discover how the individual lived moments they had within and beyond the arena of basketball contributed to their being as individuals, and not merely athletes. A sporting life, especially in modern society, is fast-paced and does not allow a person to phenomenologically process the moment of play which has just passed in anticipation of a moment of play to come, all the while being in a playful moment that is unfolding. Too often we seek to make history by learning from history instead of living in history. The written narrative form will once again allow scholar-athletes to live in the process of learning and playing the game by unpacking the existential nature of their own compelling reflective stories.

A New Way of Thinking and Listening to Play

Like the game of basketball, phenomenology is about being in moments of play. Phenomenologists, like scholar-athletes, can practice their craft extensively in intellectual moments leading up to the lived present, but fall short of capturing the essence when they are relationally engaged in constructing a thematic plot with their research participants. Coaches often instruct their players to get their head into the game, making the assumption that the majority of effort that an athlete has put into practice has been one of physical nature and not the intellectual. Like the coach who instructs players in practice, Heidegger advises hermeneutic scholars, "In what is most its own, phenomenology is not a school. It is the possibility of thinking, at times changing and only thus persisting, of corresponding to the claim of what is to be thought" (1972, p. 65). The dangers of

making assumptions about scholar-athletes based on history not only limits their ability to engage in their own lived experience which they each find themselves gradually inhabiting, but also reiterates the expectations that society has placed upon them corporeally and intellectually. Merleau-Ponty (1962) describes phenomenology as

The study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences; the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness, for example. But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity'. It is a transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, the better to understand them; but it is also a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins – as an inalienable presence; and all of its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status. (p. vii)

Unfortunately, we cannot go back in history and reverse some of the misfortunes that scholar-athletes have faced by society, specifically the media's narrow interpretation of their lived being, or lack thereof, based on the glorification of athletes as strategically crafted superhuman physical specimens. Hermeneutic phenomenological research, through a mode of written reflection, not oral reaction, can begin the process of recapturing the scholar-athletes being too often silenced or reduced to a generically evolving lived experience. As Ugglä (2008) points out:

The concept of reflexivity, as we have defined it, emerges from a mixed mode of thinking characterized by a striving for truth which is absent in the flexible mood of thinking. If flexibility, as an adaptive logic of knowledge organization, takes the form of an arbitrary eclecticism, the reflexivity of hermeneutics seeks to establish a conflict of interpretations where validity is guaranteed by different interpretations balancing and correcting each other by means of conflicts. In the age of hermeneutics, epistemology must be transformed into interpretation theory and the learning process has to be understood as a hermeneutical process. (p. 221)

The silent, reflective voice of the scholar-athlete is invited to perform on paper as loud as it does on the court in order to acknowledge the complexity and diversity of their sporting

life. What brings the individual to a sporting life with basketball? How do our lived moments within basketball create camaraderie with another who has travelled a similar path? In searching through an archived experience of basketball moments, athletes can trace the root components that exist within these questions, and in the process, travel a sporting path paved into the bigger road of life.

The Malleable Foundation of Lived Experience

The process of interpretivism is relevant to the role of a researcher as an interactionist in the course of meaning-making from the symbolism extracted based on the data gathered. Blumer (1969) refers to three significant aspects that an interactive researcher must consider in the process of gathering textual data:

1. That human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them;
2. That the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows; and
3. That the meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. (p. 2)

I explored the formation of my own being in Chapters One and Two and came to a realization that the complexity of a lived experience is often simplified by generalized expectations. Is there a basketball scholar within me, and what is his intellectual duty? What aspects of my corporeal being, within the space of basketball, justify my identity as an athlete? Often as athletes we are asked not to think about a move or a play too much because then we will encounter difficulties in executing the athletic task at hand. If scholar-athletes do not have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in the present, then the intuitive action of drawing upon memory in the future must carry a greater intellectual toll. In the process of understanding the lived present via how it came to be,

Proust (1981) claims:

One experiences, but what one has experienced is like those negatives which show nothing but black until they have been held before a lamp, and they, too must be looked at from the reverse side; one does not know what it is until it has been held up before the intelligence. Only then, when one has thrown light upon it and intellectualized it can one distinguish – and with what effort! – the shape of what one has felt. (p. 1014)

The generalization of scholar-athlete experiences by institutions such as sports media and academia can mask the unique social interactions that may have had significant impact upon their lived experience of being. By designing prescriptive models for how scholar-athletes should maneuver in the classroom and on the court/field, in order to receive maximum output (often favoring the athletic aspect), we lose sight of an important notion:

... the journey inward becomes an ongoing process that leads outward to a more complete understanding of the human condition. Self-understanding is not merely a reflection of what we are but what we are in relation to the world. Self-understanding comes to us via our unique perceptions of the world which are inherent upon our individual abilities as well as on our sociocultural histories. (Krall, 1988, p. 478)

As a scholar-athlete investigating the lives of other self-proclaimed scholar-athletes, I have come to the realization that a written narrative can not only capture a resume of experiences, but can also unlock a sense of how one is grounded in the past, as well as a notion of how one is cultivated through the present. To help others interpret their being as both scholar and athlete, I had to interpret my own lived experience in the past and, in the process come to a realization that “Our lives are ceaselessly intertwined with narrative, with the stories that we tell and hear told, those we dream or imagine or would like to tell, all of which are reworked in that story of our own lives that we narrate to ourselves in an episodic, sometimes semiconscious, but virtually uninterrupted

monologue” (Brooks, 1992, p. 3). These life stories are too often pushed to the side when curriculum as a life course gives way to curriculum as an organized plan for obtaining knowledge and skills. In the process, experience unnaturally becomes a planned course of action and not a spontaneous moment of revelation.

According to Arminio and Hultgren (2002), “What we know about the goodness of research comes not from an authoritative objective truth waiting to be discovered, but rather from the understanding we gain when engaging in our work. Hence, the essence of interpretive and critical research is making meaning, not verifying objective facts that are measured and represented by numbers” (p. 447). Our experiences in a flagged historical format become rigid events that remain stationary in the past and have no revelation in the present. By peeling off the layers of what we have encountered in our sporting life course, in relation to another’s experience, we can begin the process of making fluid meaning out of the now stagnant moments of play as passed. Crotty (1998) emphasizes the importance of an interactive process from within: “Meaning is not discovered but constructed. Meaning does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it” (pp. 42-43). By writing openly and chronologically about my experiences with basketball, I became aware that the game of basketball was not necessarily waiting for me to come upon it, but instead, it was I who discovered that being with and within the game served as a mode of construction for becoming the self-proclaimed scholar-athlete.

Becker (1992) further explains that “Meaning occurs in between the two, and both person and object are necessary in its co-creation” (p. 19). The injustice of creating student-athletes via basketball as an institution needs to be challenged via interpretive inquiries and constructions between the scholarly being, the athletic being, and the game

of basketball. Arminio and Hultgren discuss the notion that mere data cannot convey the thoughtfulness, passion, sensitivity, character, deepness, and power that language, in written and oral form, can convey. Bruner (1986) names this narrative notion ‘a good story’ – through which thought processes “must construct two landscapes simultaneously: landscape of action (agent, intention, goal, situation) and consciousness (what those involved in action know, think or feel or do not know, think, or feel)” (p. 14). A phenomenological approach to capturing and unpacking stories of the lived self through written narrative form allows scholar-athletes to steer their reflections clear of what the institution of basketball expects them to express rather objectively.

The benefit of phenomenology is that it “seeks to understand lived experience phenomena through language that is pretheoretical, without classification or abstraction” (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, p. 453). The process of phenomenology allows the researcher to be accurate with what participants have provided in both conversation and print, and to conduct multiple interpretations of these renderings and their overall implications. It allows the individuals involved in the study to have a lived body experience, a place memory, a time memory, and a lived relation memory. During the exchange of these moments, the researcher keeps open to how the individual participants experienced the event, not conceptualizing or being evaluative of the textual renderings. It becomes the researcher’s job to give these renderings creative life without altering the meaning of the shared knowledge. Hence, sharing the interpretations with the individual participants is a way of honoring the life that one gives to the rendering. What we do with the presentation of the renderings has tremendous bearing on future research questions asked, and furthermore, greater allocations given for conducting interpretive

studies of the en-gendered experience of scholar-athletes in team sports such as basketball. Lastly, we must walk away from each phenomenological project with an impression that the life of those who are affected by our inquiries, renderings, and interpretations might be made better. In other words, our research has opened up new avenues of inquiry from both within and beyond.

By engaging in phenomenological research we should also become more cognizant of how we make sense of hyphenated beings such as scholar-athletes. Each interpretive practice of unpacking lived sporting experiences may lead to a more complicated conversation of how athletes maneuver themselves in and out of play. The more we discover about the detailed experiences of an athletes' journey at various ages, the greater our obligation to resist the temptation to define their life course; for what is a life worth living if the course has already been played.

Putting Thinking and Playing into Phenomenological Practice

The social construction of thought and play are often initiated and separated within the institution of school. In the process of engagement, academics and athletics thrive from two separate modes of becoming, yet the institution stands firmly by its belief in the duality of their being. The complicated conversation surrounding basketball as lived within this phenomenological engagement poses the notion of distinguishing the self as a scholar within athletics and not a student with athletic ability. This is not a minor assumption to deconstruct or use as a broad justification for why many athletes fail to become scholars. As van Manen (1997) points out, "To do hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the

lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal” (p. 18). As both researcher and instructor, I must learn to break from tradition by raising questions from the inside, stepping to the outside, and allowing the scholar-athletes themselves to dig deeper into basketball as lived via what Applebee (1996) calls “curricular conversations.” According to Applebee (1996),

The knowledge that evolves is knowledge that is socially negotiated through the process of conversation itself; it is knowledge-in-action. Taking conversation in its largest sense, this construction of knowledge involves readers and writers as well as speakers and listeners. Each text, whether spoken or written, is constructed by its authors and reinterpreted by the other participants. Written texts live long after their authors have left the conversation because this process of reconstrual allows texts to be made relevant in new contexts, by new participants. Without reconstrual, the texts would lose their voice and place within the ongoing conversation. (pp. 39-40)

The mere initiation of scholarship and athletics into classroom culture, via curricular context and complicated conversations, does not necessarily point to a participatory craving for oral and written discourse. More significantly, the initial collaboration between academics and sports can conceal the apprehension that exists for participants as they are asked to be reflective in connecting their experiences. Shotter (2005) wisely directs us to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of *chiasm*, the meeting point of inner and outer sensation, by stating that,

I can learn about the world, others, and my own nature, only from within my own actual engagements with the others and othernesses around me. The only way I know of language is from within my actual use of it; and that it makes itself manifest to me in ways that continually reverse the relationship between subject and object, between speaking and listening, of signifying and the signified, and so on. (pp. 196-197)

Academic institutions often package patrons as a culture of learners all seeking the same academic and athletic outcome via the specific expectations set forth by teachers and coaches empowered with pedagogies of thinking and ideologies for competition. By allowing the collegiate women scholar-athletes to openly converse and write through the corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational transformations that they encounter within the lived experience of basketball, the classroom may naturally engage the learners in complicated and reflective discussions and in the process may expose them to multiple modes of thinking and playing. The idea is to bring forth greater conversations with our own written discourse and in the process listen to the narrative of the other in order to elicit pedagogically more questions from the self. As phenomenological thinkers and writers we are always looking at a bigger picture, beyond our own lived experience of basketball, past our own notion of being scholar-athletes, and into a realm of paving an unfinished and self-directed life course.

Van Manen (1997) offers the following methodological framework for addressing the complexity of human science research:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

The following sections address the way in which this framework guides my study. I return to the initial question - **What is the lived experience of basketball in the lives of collegiate women who claim to be scholar-athletes?** – in order to commit myself to understanding my own lived experience more fully with basketball in relation to an

experience that may be similar or different as lived and complicated through conversations with the other. I specifically look to van Manen's (1997) methodological grounding in human science research as I embrace the challenge of:

1. Turning to the nature of basketball as a complicated life course;
2. Investigating basketball as it is lived by collegiate women scholar-athletes;
3. Identifying and reflecting upon the essential themes that arise from our complicated conversations of basketball in both oral and written form;
4. Describing the complicated conversations of basketball as lived through the art of writing and rewriting.
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to basketball as lived by collegiate women scholar-athletes; and
6. Balancing the research contexts by considering how the complicated conversation of basketball as lived by collegiate women scholar-athletes may have broader pedagogical implications.

Turning to the Athlete by Unleashing a Scholar

The phenomenon of becoming a basketball scholar-athlete was not a planned course for me and my reasons for complicating the conversation of basketball now are fluid as I write in the moment. Basketball is a game that invites you to grow from within your body as you learn to balance the game in your hands and on your legs. Once you have committed to being a student of the game, basketball starts to live within you and your relationship with merely a ball and hoop grows into the athletic spaces of recreation and competition where you encounter the other. It is no longer just basketball and I, but instead, a greater awareness of how you relate to other athletes who live the game. As Dilthey (1985) suggests, "A lived experience does not confront me as something perceived or represented; it is not given to me, but the reality of lived experience is there-for-me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to me in some sense. Only in thought does it become objective" (p. 223). As I grew from being an athlete in the game of basketball to being a scholar of the game of

basketball, I encountered a shift from playing to thinking. When living on the court, I was a reactive member of play, but as I started living off the court, I was becoming a reflective agent of thought. Coaching the game gives you a new insight into the lived experience of basketball as you become more critical of your own past and often try not to relive your reactive mistakes through the reflective strategies you teach to the other.

The challenge truly came for me as I turned to a new lived experience with basketball; a phenomenon that brought me back onto the court as a referee. The corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational nature of officiating a basketball game opened up a new chapter of lived moments where the reactive and reflective nature of play allowed me to experience the game in a whole new light. With theoretical rules in mind and practical application in hand, I started to see the corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational nature of basketball in ways I had not seen before. Philosophies of refereeing floated in my head as I stepped on the court with different age groups, in recreational versus competitive games, and perhaps the most inspiring, the Special Olympics stage. Throughout my narrative rendering, the play of tension between theory and practice can be seen. Gadamer (1998) highlights the strong force that exists between theory and practice by claiming:

Just as the individual who needs relevant knowledge must constantly reintegrate theoretical knowledge into the practical knowledge of his everyday life, so also a culture based on science cannot survive unless rationalizing the apparatus of civilization is not an end in itself, but makes possible a life to which one can say "yes." In the end all practice suggests what points beyond it. (pp. 35-36)

I return to the question of what is the lived experience of basketball in the lives of collegiate women who claim to be scholar-athletes because the phenomenon of women's basketball is practically booming. In theory, the game of basketball in an en-gendered

form is the same, except for a few minor rule differences, but what is intriguing for me is whether the lived experience for women scholar-athletes is exceptionally different.

Hermeneutically speaking, the broader inclination is not of importance. What is crucial is whether a scholar-athlete might ponder how she comes to understand her being; and if she does not, how do we engage her in the complicated conversation? In the process of opening these doors of reflective inquiry for athletes, I am reminded by van Manen (1997):

Every project of phenomenological inquiry is driven by a commitment of turning to an abiding concern. This commitment of never wavering from thinking a single thought more deeply is the practice of thoughtfulness, of a fullness of thinking. To be full of thought means not that we have a whole lot on our mind, but rather that we recognize our lot of minding the Whole – that which renders wholeness or fullness to life. (p. 31)

Although I have learned a great deal about my own corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational being in the process of becoming a scholar-athlete, more significantly, I have encountered an awareness of the lived experiences of many others with the sport of basketball. It is not always what we share through a common phenomenon that becomes the turning to the lived experience, but instead, how we live through a shared phenomenon in our own way. By placing myself in an academic space of conversation where my being and becoming does not serve as the underlying discourse for interaction, I am attempting to empower the voice of another by turning to an en-gendered form of a phenomenon lived by the women who are registered for the course.

Investigating the Scholar-Athletes' Becoming of a Living Self

Human science research is truly an art that does not seek specific answers; rather, it raises questions in which participants dwell deeply. As I practice hermeneutic research with scholar-athletes, I must create a space for the participants to pose questions with

each other as a way to embrace fully the complexity of dwelling. By living within a vast array of queries and the manifestations that they bring forth, scholar-athletes actually may have been paving opportunities for the self that were not often provided within an academic setting. Being a scholar-athlete is a natural corporeal and intellectual process, both of which are encapsulated in the experience:

Principles embodied ... are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore, more precious, than the values given body, made body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy. (Bourdieu 1977, p. 94)

To stop and return to the past for analysis without considering the present and looking to the future, we are synthesizing an artificial version of the self based on possible regrets and forced transformations. As van Manen (1997) points out, the notion of turning to the things themselves,

is essential in allowing the lived experience to exist within an uninterrupted continuum. It is becoming full of the world, full of lived experience. 'Being experienced' is a wisdom of the practice of living which results from having lived life deeply. In doing phenomenological research this practical wisdom is sought in the understanding of the nature of lived experience itself. (p. 32)

The key here is taking what basketball has done to athletes on the court through the dimensions of body, time, space, and relation, and bringing it off the court with a scholarly eye upon the living self. Without stepping on and off the court, the scholar-athlete remains a product of a past narrative and not a process of becoming in the lived present. As a researcher, I must return to the premise that basketball in its simplest form is a practice of play and not competition. To return to the game itself and not necessarily the athlete that competes in the game, helps unravel a complicated conversation of what basketball means. The worthy investigation of the self as scholar-athlete may lend an

awareness toward how basketball as lived experience seeps into life beyond the playgrounds and gymnasiums of inquiry.

Constructing Themes of Scholastic and Athletic Nature

In Chapters One and Two I investigated the concept of thinking and acting as a philosophical athlete. The structure of confined expectations and modified exceptions that scholar-athletes have encountered in the process of transitioning from recreational play to scholastic competition must be handled with great delicacy in a hermeneutic study of this nature. Anticipating scholar-athletes to engage in a philosophical process of capturing commonalities and embracing diversions within themed platforms would be a travesty to the lived experience. Chapter Two began to open up some possible themes that reflect the nature of being a collegiate women scholar-athlete: charging into the corporeal, transitioning within the temporal, shooting through the spatial, and rebounding against the relational. As my study continues with the present group of women scholar athletes, new themes continue to emerge as their written narratives of basketball as lived will dig deeper into the realm of body, time, space, and relations.

The narrative that evolves from a communal dialogue and is reflected upon in the written form by the self, with the self, and sometimes only for the self, becomes an intricate part of understanding the themes of lived experience, as well as empowering new opportunities for experiences to be lived. By allowing complicated conversations to take detours away from being a scholar and an athlete we may be able to gain greater intellectual appreciation for why we seek to become in the first place and why basketball as a team sport has such a big pull. By loosening our grip on what van Manen (1997)

calls a “reflective grasp of facticity” (p. 32), we can rely on phenomenological research to

Make a distinction between appearance and essence, between the things of our experience and that which grounds the things of our experience. In other words, phenomenological research consists of reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life. (p. 32)

In the process of loosening the grip on a factual becoming, I have been able to look upon my own writing as a constant departure and arrival point for meaning-making. The coming to and going away from my own moments in text has allowed certain themes to not remain stagnant in their nature. Each theme that arises may empower us to make greater sense of our lived experience as scholar-athletes. Once our being has a sense that something is there, a connection is imminent between the scholarly being and the athletic being within lived moments of basketball. The practice of making sense from these themes becomes the art of opening ourselves to the lived moments.

The nature of en-gendering basketball as lived opens up a possibility of themes that can also reveal how women scholar-athletes come to experience and value the game of basketball. The agenda of learning to compete is by no means trivial in the modern sense. There are some standardized rights of developmental passage that tempt athletes and their parents into the established programs and teams, led by high caliber coaches seeking to teach the ultimate life lesson of how to win as a team. Unfortunately, this common script of group success and camaraderie become the narrative often shared with athletes, and eventually lived by those who take the game seriously. What about the narrative that is running through a player’s mind and body, the being who lives within this prescriptive formula of success? Why not challenge the themes for what they have claimed to do, especially in the moment where they have failed the athlete? A staged

program for development in basketball remains the unspoken code of conduct for athletes “hooping” to shine in their becoming of the next sporting phenom. A phenomenological approach to autobiography provides an opportunity for renaming the themes of play and competition that hover over scholar-athletes living through the game of basketball.

The Art of Writing and Rewriting in a Competitive Nature of Being

Phenomenology as a process, not a method, allows the self, whether researcher or participant, to turn to the written word as a means of relinquishing the thoughts embedded within lived moments past and present, as one looks progressively ahead.

Kockelmans (1987) points to the poetic feature of phenomenological narrative:

Often an appeal to poetry and literature is almost unavoidable in that poetic language with its use of symbolism is able to refer beyond the realm of what can be said “clearly and distinctly.” In other words ... in human reality there are certain phenomena which reach so deeply into a man's life and the world in which he lives that poetic language is the only adequate way through which to point to and to make present a meaning which we are unable to express clearly in any other way. (p. ix)

Sometimes by just living through basketball I separated myself from my own becoming of a scholar-athlete, especially in the teen years. To write about basketball was never a sophisticated act of thinking, but more often, it was considered a logging of time spent being active recreationally. Then again, as a teen I just wanted to play and not think about questions such as why I play basketball, how it impacts my life, or what I have learned from others on the court. What is it about the act of writing inside the realm of organized guidelines that pushes us merely to produce, instead of express, our chaotic thoughts in a reflective manner? How is the act of writing with a purpose relative to the practice of shooting, dribbling, or passing? It may be that the organized chaos of a life

course based on regimen has become the very reason why we hesitate to approach our own narrative constructions as a creative practice and not a routine.

Van Manen (1997) encourages us to turn to writing in a phenomenological manner because:

- Writing separates us from what we know and yet it unites us more closely with what we know.
- Writing distances us from the lifeworld, yet it also draws us more closely to the lifeworld.
- Writing decontextualizes thought from practice and yet it returns thought to praxis.
- Writing abstracts our experience of the world, yet it also concretizes our understanding of the world.
- Writing objectifies thought into print and yet it subjectifies our understanding of something that truly engages us. (pp. 127-129)

In the process of writing myself back into lived moments with the sport of basketball I could not help but to think of the other, and how he or she will bring my narrative to life using his or her imagination in the process of reading. As the writer you are tempted not to omit any details. The openness of phenomenological writing lured me into the finite aspects of what basketball was doing to me both on and off the court. In the regressive process of writing I became consumed by the influence of basketball upon my life because I had never had an opportunity to express it through written narrative. As the timeline of my basketball moments came closer to the present via writing, I started to realize the shifts that were taking place with my views on basketball based on life moments. Specifically, I came to understand the power of basketball in my life as I wrote about my becoming a scholar of the game on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The more I extracted from my basketball memory, the more connected I felt with a bigger picture of my own becoming as a student, athlete, scholar, and scholar-athlete. Gradually, by analyzing the chunks of text that I had written, I was able to rewrite my

thoughts as an art and not a task. The rigid conventions of practice which I had learned over the years started to give way naturally to a more fluid praxis for understanding how I have chosen to tell this story. By writing and rewriting my way back into basketball I was able to synthesize how my own abstract renderings of becoming a scholar-athlete connected to the bigger implications of sporting lives beyond play. To write about basketball as lived in an interpretive fashion has been intense, but more importantly, it has allowed me to unpack why this game of ball and hoop has been intriguing for me in so many ways, over so many years.

Discovering an Oriented Relativity with Scholar-Athletes

There used to be a time when organized team basketball was merely a three-month affair, meaning that the other nine months of the year were in the hands of the individual finding his or her athletic being within the playgrounds and recreation centers of a community. Today, organized basketball is a year-round business of play, where bodies may be lucky to get a few weeks' break between transitions from fall through summer. As a dedicated basketball official I also transition in the same time frame, and over the past ten years I have observed the changes that have occurred in the nature of recreational and scholastic basketball. Research has too often, from a logical and prescriptive aspect, allowed the system to define the scholar-athlete, instead of the scholar-athlete discovering himself or herself. The scholar-athletes are always free to walk away, but as long as they are seekers of living and participating in higher education sports and academics, their beings are bound to strict regulations. The process of phenomenological inquiry has the potential to challenge the notion of defining a paved path for scholar-athletes by allowing them to explore selfhood within the context of sport.

Since the sport is a year-round affair for those individuals who are committed and addicted to the game within the realm of both practice and play,

We must distinguish: the prephenomenal being of experiences, their being before we have turned toward them in reflection, and their being as phenomena. When we turn toward the experience attentively and grasp it, it takes on a new mode of being: it becomes "differentiated," "singled out." And this differentiating is precisely nothing other than the grasping; and the differentiatedness is nothing other than being-grasped, being the object of our turning-towards. (Husserl, 1928/1991, p. 132)

To be a scholar and athlete of basketball, a discovery of the self is essential. What brought you to basketball, what keeps you motivated to play basketball into the late hours of the evening, and what lessons basketball has taught you about life are just a few of the many questions that the self must ask. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think about the question, "What if I get seriously injured and cannot referee basketball anymore?" The corporeality of officiating a game has kept me connected with my selfhood because basketball was always an essential part of the maturing process on neighborhood hoops, suburban playgrounds, rural gymnasiums, and grand stadiums. Can the hungry story of basketball continue when my active participation comes to an end?

Van Manen (1997) suggests:

To establish a strong relation with a certain question, phenomenon, or notion, the researcher cannot afford to adopt an attitude of so-called scientific disinterestedness. To be oriented to an object means that we are animated by the object in a full and human sense. To be strong in our orientation means that we will not settle for superficialities and falsities. (p. 33)

As a reflective practitioner in life, I draw upon the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to offer a highly valuable scholarly tool for contemplatively investigating the following:

1. The process in which basketball phenomenologically embraces lived experience for scholar-athletes of the game.

2. The praxis of living through corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational moments by scholar-athletes in the game.
3. The practice of unveiling the regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical significance of basketball as a lived game by scholar-athletes.

By allowing scholar-athletes to discover and not just be labeled with the athletic marker, in absence of their intellectual being, human science can open up a new perspective on sports discourse, one that allows scholar-athletes to not only scream with their bodies on the court, but also speak with their minds and bodies off the court as well.

Passing the Parted Athlete beyond the Whole Sporting Space

It is hard for me to imagine living without having sports as a part of my life. For others who, like me, may consider themselves as scholar-athletes in their own right, the notion of play via sports is an agent of preserving selfhood. I know that a time will come when I cannot run as fast, jump as high, shoot as far, or pass as smoothly as I did when basketball was life. But, to play basketball is not the beginning and the end, it is a means by which we acquire lessons, practice strategies, defy odds, and hopefully become better individuals. Basketball is a game of corporeal, spatial, temporal, and relational theory, yet within the theoretical exists the lived moment. In these lived moments, the parted athlete may crave to become a whole beyond the sporting life, but as Gunn (1982) suggests, “The self must be interpreted, then, or read by others – not as a text complete in itself with a single, unchanging, and transparent meaning, but as a text that requires continuing interpretation in order to mean at all. The self cannot be defined as being-once-and-for-all. Rather, the self goes on being” (pp. 140-141).

As a human science researcher I must balance my own lived experience as a basketball athlete and scholar as I write; but simultaneously, I must not lose sight of the bigger picture beyond autobiographical renderings of the other. In the creation of a

semester-long course I must be aware that the course participants are being asked to complicate the conversation of basketball within a classroom setting and upon a discussion board, neither of which resembles the actual spatiality of basketball. A reflective process outside of the usual spatial and temporal context could begin as a reluctant practice. The classroom environment unnaturally became the basketball court and a canvas for regression, progression, analysis, and synthesis as I wrote my way back into the sporting life via discussions about the phenomenological process. The advantage of EDPS 488B was that the readings and writings focused in on basketball, and hence, the space gradually became an extension of the court itself.

In the process of creating a more authentically collaborative space for the lived experience of basketball, we must not forget that there is a phenomenon to be explored here, and that phenomenon has bigger implications beyond just athletics and academics. What the scholar and athlete become in the process of engaging and living with basketball is the bigger question. In the words of van Manen, “Qualitative research (*quails* means ‘whatness’) asks the *ti estin* question: What is it? But as one engages in the *ti estin* question, there is the danger that one loses sight of the end of phenomenological research: to construct a text which in its dialogical and argumentative organization aims at a certain effect” (1997, p. 33). By giving scholar-athletes a platform for creating complicated conversations in both oral and written form, the research seeks to empower their selfhood via their own choice of words and construction of phrases, not the judgments passed upon them by another.

Complicating the Conversation of Lived Experience via *Currere*

Contemporary society seems to be mesmerized by the notion of narrative renderings that are often packaged via shrewd, literary finesse invoking relevance to our own everyday lives. In the process of building a community experience around an individual's autobiographical sound bites, we may very well be silencing and sacrificing the voice(s) within the actual story. We have not only allowed, but invited, the volume of the pop cultural environment surrounding sports to define the narrative lines that athletes must follow, live up to and very swiftly embrace. Pinar offers us an alternate path to undue gradually the labels that the environment has etched into the very being of athletes, as we contemplate the hyphenated nature that all scholar-athletes are superhuman beings running a course with an idealistic destiny:

We must overturn the ideology of environment, the ideology which says, in whatever complexity, it is environment which determines life. We must work through our circumstances: material, intellectual, and psycho-social. We must claim the environment as our land; we lay claim to it brazenly. This is our land, and we will make of it what we will. (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. viii)

The focus of "Basketball as a Life Course" was oriented around the central place of story and narrative in understanding life as both a scholar and an athlete. According to Hultgren (2004), "Stories invite us to come to know the world and our place in it. Making sense of our stories summons us to address contradictions in our lives and in the lived curriculum. When curriculum is understood as phenomenological text, we are called to be attuned to the specific and actual situations in which stories speak, are heard, and answer questions about place in relation to curriculum theorizing" (p. 1). Class participants engaged in story making and narrative interpretation of their experience with

the sport of basketball in relation to the other via the process of *currere*:

The stories that emerge from the autobiographical process are valued neither for their revelation of truth nor for their fabrication of fiction. They are not approached as pieces of literature, ends in themselves, but are viewed as precipitates of a development process in which the telling and reading and revising of one's own stories is of most consequence. (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 116)

The *currere* process followed the four-step developmental components introduced by Pinar in seeking renderings via the regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical manner while simultaneously expanding beyond the educational and into the recreational, confrontational, and sociocultural nature of basketball. Pinar (2004) states that *currere* –

An infinitive form of curriculum – asks us to slow down, to remember even re-enter the past, and to meditatively imagine the future. Then, slowly and in one's own terms, one analyzes one's experiences of the past and fantasies of the future in order to understand more fully, with more complexity and subtlety, one's submergence in the present. (p. 4)

The regressive moment of *currere* allowed each woman scholar-athlete to go back into their past and draw upon significant moments that they encountered through the basketball sporting space and how these moments played a role in their becoming. Through the progressive moment of *currere* each woman scholar-athlete was given an opportunity to project how basketball moments passed may impact their sense of intellectual and physical being in the future, both on and off the court. The third moment of *currere* allowed each woman scholar-athlete to analytically return to the basketball sporting space in order to intellectually break the whole into parts bracketing what is, what was, and what can become. Through the fourth moment of *currere* each woman scholar-athlete was given an opportunity to synthesize meaningfulness of her lived moments with basketball through the compilation of the corporeal, spatial, temporal, and relational aspects explored in the first three moments. Pinar (2012) refers to the process

of *currere* as a reconceptualization of curriculum through a complicated conversation.

He emphasizes that the lived course:

... is conversation with oneself (as a 'private' person) and with others threaded through academic knowledge, an ongoing project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engagement in the world. Conceived as a complicated conversation the curriculum is an ongoing effort at communication with others that portends the social reconstruction of the public sphere. (p. 47)

The interpretive form allowed each class participant to gain a richer understanding of their own place in space as they reverted back to the overarching theme of having complicated online conversations surrounding their versatility as both a scholar and a basketball player. By analyzing the others' lived accounts of basketball via novels, short stories, poems, magazine and newspaper articles, academic renderings, and internet blogs, each scholar-athlete captured her own autobiographical written narrative of basketball in relation to the social, political, and intellectual contexts of curriculum as lived. The journey within the analysis revealed:

... It takes a great listener to hear what is actually said, a greater one to hear what was not said but what comes to light in the speaking. To focus purely on the positivity of what a text explicitly says is to do an injustice to the hermeneutic task. It is necessary to go behind the text to find what the text didn't and perhaps could not say. (Palmer, 1969, p. 234)

In the process of unveiling these muted voices, class participants became a critical community, employing humorous and serious conversation, cooperative exploration of meanings, and academic critique and questioning toward one another's narratives to facilitate insights and transformation (Hultgren, 2004). As Grumet emphasizes:

Currere...describes the race not only in terms of the course, the readiness of the runner, but seeks to know the experience of the running of one particular runner, on one particular track, on one particular day, in one particular wind. Educational experience is a process that takes on the world without appropriating that world, that projects the self into the world without dismembering that self, a process of synthesis and totalization in which all the participants in the dialectic

simultaneously maintain their identities and surpass themselves. (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 36)

As the class participants engaged in each phase of the *currere* process, they reverted to an overarching theme of complicating conversations surrounding their being as both a scholar and a basketball player. In the process, other roles that they may have taken on throughout their life (for example serving as an employee, a mentor, a father for a sibling, or a care-taker for an elderly relative) exposed these various “selves” naturally in each phase of meaning-making. The process of *currere* does not ask us to start with a fresh new palate, but instead, it expects us to put the actual artist in charge and give her tools to construct their own narrative renderings. Speaking more broadly, “Curriculum development and innovation do not require a revamping and reorganization of the schools, of instructional methodologies, or of academic disciplines, but a transfer of our attention from these forms themselves to the ways in which a student uses them and moves through them” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 68). The goal of the *currere* process here was to begin to understand the multiple implications of the game of basketball from the early stages into the projected future. In the span of these complicated reflections and conversations we explored the phenomenon of participating in numerous competitions under the auspices of an academic institution, better known as high school. We sought to make sense of what leads to gaining access to 32:00 minutes of perseverance on a hardwood floor as both a scholar and an athlete in the game of basketball. Grumet suggests that reflections (from the scholar-athletes’ point of view in this case) have tremendous value within academic institutions because,

The processes of reflection that yield self-as-object inform a creative and free will, self-as-agent who then acts through self-as-place. The operation is reversible; the prereflective experience of the body that through its senses and

movement is in direct discourse with the world, becomes the raw material for reflection, self-representations and action. (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 69)

By reflecting as scholars, as athletes, and as scholar-athletes, participants were really finding their human identity within a system that strives to package them into a category of expectations and outcomes. Challenging the scholar-athletes to become constructors and deductors empowered each of them to open the locked windows through writing, and explore the notion that

The autographical process is dialectical reflection, designed to challenge self-as-object by requiring that the student see himself seeing. Autobiographical entries reveal the genesis of the assumptions and commonsense attitudes of the individual. When in reflection, the student brackets those assumptions and identifications with the everyday world, it is not to remove himself from that world, but to move closer to it by seeing through the structures of objectivity to the preobjective, prereflective contact with the world upon which they rest. (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 70)

The practice of unveiling these lived accounts of basketball in relation to broader connotations of moving beyond an athletic being unhinges the notion of a power-filled arena of expectations. The power is taken away from anything that is official within the game. It is given directly to the athlete as she engaged in a self-selected transformation of lived events as seen in the present, in order to make sense of what is to become of her beyond the space of sport, yet influenced highly by being in the lived game of basketball.

Maneuvering through Power-Full Moments Using *Currere*

The game of basketball invites us as intellectual and physical warriors to enter a respected space of competition. The term warrior, which often had a direct connotation with male athletes as sporting gladiators going into competitive battle, has crossed the gender line as the participatory and physical nature of women's sports has changed since

the inception of Title IX in 1972. According to Delaney's (1998) analysis of the women's modern movement into sport,

Since Nixon signed Title IX of the Civil Rights Act in 1972, which required schools and colleges receiving federal funding to offer equal opportunities to female athletes, the number of girls and women participating in sports in this country has increased more than eightfold. Today, there are an estimated 2.5 million girls in high school sports, compared to 294,000 twenty-five years ago, according to the National Federation of High School Associations. As a result there are more women prepared for the rigors of professional sports, and an ever-growing number of fans anxious to see women competing in their favorite sports - both of which translate into increased respect for female athletes and athletic events. Nowhere has this been so clearly demonstrated as in women's basketball. In 1996, the USA women's Olympic team drew over 30,000 spectators to each of its six consecutive games on their way to capturing the gold medal. That same year, a record 2.85 million households watched the NCAA women's championship on ESPN. (p. 21)

How does the lived experience with physical activity at a young age influence a love for the sporting life regardless of whether one defines herself as an athlete or not? By turning to autobiographical renderings of athletes post-Title IX, it may be possible to authentically explore the restrictive aspect of a corporeal expectation of femininity challenged by sports. Hargreaves (1986) explores the complexity of what a movement such as Title IX brings forth in relation to the athletic participation powered by gender:

This trend represents an active threat to popular assumptions about sport and its unifying principle appears as a shift in male hegemony. However, it also shows up the contradiction that women are being incorporated into models of male sports which are characterized by fierce competition and aggression and should, therefore, be resisted. Instead of a redefinition of masculinity occurring, this trend highlights the complex ways male hegemony works in sport and ways in which women actively collude in its reproduction. (p. 117)

The value of exploring the lived experience of basketball by women through their own written narrative provides an avenue for synthesizing the notion of an entitled being maneuvering within a physical space once deemed only appropriate for men. Alper and Jhally (2003) capture this in the documentary, *Playing Unfair*, as a generational

movement where girls at one point were hoping that there would be a team, to now hoping that they would make the cuts for a team. As team sport opportunities for women did grow so did the understanding of how the individual women maneuvered a new sense of power and expression within institutional and cultural dynamics (Alper & Jhally, 2003). It was a complicated revolution in understanding what it meant in becoming a woman and a man in the arena of play and beyond.

En-Gendering Basketball as a Life Course

Although the inquiry into how femininity is classified by scholars, athletes, and society is essential to ask, the bigger concern for human science research is the analysis and synthesis of lived moments within a basketball body, time, space, and relation which address the notions of strength, aggression, and competition. As we venture into extracting these lived moments through the process of *currere*, Birrell reminds us that “Sport is clearly a gendered activity, that is an activity that not only welcomes boys and men more enthusiastically than girls and women but that also serves as a site for celebrating skills and values clearly marked as masculine” (2000, p. 61). In the Fall 2009 semester, I embarked upon a new pedagogical journey that brought together the sport of women’s basketball, the lived experience of scholar-athletes, and human science research via the written narrative form, packaged under the title of EDPS 488B – “Complicating the Conversation of Basketball as a Life Course” (see the course syllabus in Appendix A). Although the class was open to both men and women, the content was based on the lived scholar-athlete experience with women’s basketball. In the early registration process, a few women from the University’s Women’s Intramural Basketball Club Team contacted me via email inquiring about the intent and process of the class. As word got

around and registration began, I realized that the course had enough interest on campus to secure between 5-10 participants. A couple men did contact me and I did not discourage them from taking the class, but I was forthright in explaining that the content would be based within women's basketball. Neither chose to register for the class.

In preparation for how the course would be lived for a period of an entire semester, and thereafter via extended sessions, I had to remind myself of a notion that for some athletes, "Basketball was associated with masculinity during childhood and adolescence. At both times, to gain entrée to play with boys, girls had to resist gender stereotypes that they were highly feminine. Typically, opportunities to play with boys involved constructing a masculine self-presentation" (Shakib, 2003, p. 1412). It may be likely that women who turned to sports as a lived experience have at some point encountered access to opportunities through their athletic feat, but at the same time, they may have faced a degree of resistance from their peers as well.

Over the past ten years my appreciation for women's basketball, from a referee's perspective, has led me to personal inquiries surrounding the notion of scholar-athletes' lived experience among women who consider basketball to be a significant part of their being. In the process of selecting my female scholar-athlete participants, I was reminded of Birrell's (2000) synthesis of feminist theory:

If the proper subject of feminist theory is women in all our diversity, then the proper project of feminist theory is theorizing that diversity. The subject of feminist theory must shift from woman to women to reflect the vast experiential diversity of women's lives. A central part of the contemporary feminist project is to discover and theorize links to the lived experiences of other oppressive relationships. (p. 65)

The criteria for selecting participants based on gender and association with the Women's Intramural Basketball Club Team was initiated via questionnaire (see

Appendix B) in order to capture the experiences that women, who currently identify themselves as both scholars and athletes, have had with the sport of basketball in both recreational and competitive programs and settings. The course was advertised via email through the club contact for the University's Women's Intramural Basketball Club Team and via Facebook from a former student, and member of the team, who took the pilot version of the course in the Spring 2009 semester. In the construction of valued ends, formation of academic assignments, and selection of texts for the course I, as both a male instructor and human science researcher, must acknowledge that pedagogical scholars are too often in the business of constructing knowledge for the other via curriculum instead of discovering knowledge with the other as pedagogical philosophers. Sprague (2005) suggests that in the practice of pedagogy and praxis of information,

Researchers should give all control over knowledge creation to those being studied. The researcher should serve as the mere conduit, the holder of the microphone, to 'give voice' to research subjects (cf. Hertz 1997; McCall & Wittner 1989). This position has at least four shortcomings: (1) it fails to take into account how and where research subjects already have some power; (2) it ignores situations in which the researched have even more power than the researcher; (3) it is insensitive to the selection biases built into implementing this strategy; and (4) it can privilege hegemonic discourses over critical ones. (p. 58)

Phenomenology does not ask or expect us to flip the notion of power into the hands of the human participants whom we study, but instead to empower and project each of their voices upon a scholarly platform. The process of empowered projection must begin with the self, and for me, I must understand that even though my lived experience of basketball grants, not entitles, me access to having rich oral and written dialogue with the scholar-athletes, in their eyes, I am to some degree more empowered via age, education, and rank. However, my background does not by any means grant me greater awareness of the scholar-athlete experience. I am merely a conductor in the

interpretive form, by which their expression of power and struggle within sport become thematic realities of lived moments, not prescriptive diagnoses for change. “Some say that researchers should not study people over whom they have social privilege: only women can study women, only Blacks can study Blacks, and so on. Others would merely assign epistemic privilege to insider researchers, that is, assume that researchers who are members of the social category they are studying will develop more valid knowledge than will outsider researchers” (Sprague, 2005, p. 62).

As the instructor I may be viewed as holding the key to their grade in the course; as a basketball referee I may be viewed as knowing the rules of the game beyond what they have been taught by coaches; and as a male I may be viewed as living a different game of ball and hoop. These are dilemmas that sprout from the struggle of power via social relations. As Sprague mentions, “From a capitalist standpoint, power can be seen as a commodity; from the standpoint of workers, power can be seen as a relationship of domination. From the standpoint of the caretaker, power can be understood as the ability to make possible” (2005, p. 68). As a philosophical scholar and athlete I sought to hear the written experience of the other and provided an opportunity for all of us to learn from the lived moments as reflective practitioners, not reactive ideologists. We live in a time that “The increased cultural acceptance of women in sport (as evidenced in greater media attention and the post-Title IX narrowed sex-gap in participation) could mask the importance of considering gender in understanding female physical activity. In spite of greater social tolerance for female athletes, gender still seems to shape how the “female athlete” is constructed” (Shakib, 2003, p. 1408). The themes that formed based on the written renderings of basketball as lived by women can have valuable implications for

approaching sport not as an en-gendered activity, but as a lived journey through the corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational encounters that we face through recreation and competition.

Paving a Possible Path for Philosophical Athletes

The biggest hurdle that we face in pedagogy is whether to place a generic roadmap for learning in the hands of our students or lay out a path that they can pave for themselves. A reacquainting with the self is not only suggested, but necessary, in order to transfer the notion of power into the hands of persons who travel the path. Pinar (2004) reminds us:

When autobiography is understood phenomenologically, “distancing” and “reconstituting” need not be, strictly speaking, compensatory. These gerunds can also refer to the process of excavation, and to the architectural rebuilding of a self, with materials previously excluded (now excavated), a self more spacious, more inviting. (p. 51)

By synthesizing and analyzing the others’ past and present lived accounts, each scholar-athlete captured her own written autobiographical narrative of both the recreational and competitive nature of pick-up and organized basketball. The major course questions that helped pave our way throughout this semester-long journey included (see course syllabus in Appendix A for greater detail):

- What is the phenomenon of lived experience as a scholar-athlete?
- How is basketball a lived body experience, a place memory, a time memory, and a lived relation memory?
- What is the value of using the written narrative form?
- How does the narrative form of the other influence the self?
- What is the significance of interpreting the connection between self and place through the practice of autobiographical/narrative writing?
- What can novels, short stories, poems, and magazine/newspaper articles teach us about cultural values and issues/conflicts in our lives as scholars and as athletes?

- How does a critical community employ serious conversation, cooperative exploration of meanings, and caring critique to facilitate insights and transformation in its members?

Prior to collecting any official oral or written narrative from the students, they were given a consent form (see Appendix C) and notified that participation in the research study was not a course requirement. Class members were eligible to obtain the same amount of credits for the course by following the assignment guidelines in the syllabus and asking the professor not to include their individual written narratives posted on the discussion board, submitted via email, or recorded from class sessions. The students were asked to partake in the following specific assignments from which written narrative data were extracted for the dissertation. The instructor/researcher also used in-class discussions of the weekly readings and postings to facilitate informal conversations on basketball musings. The narrative data eventually became the source for building the phenomenological themes that were collected in the following manner:

1. Students were expected to post thorough reflection(s) based on each of the weekly prompts constructed by the instructor and/or other students in the class. The discussion board was a tool that allowed us to continue the complicated conversations that we started in class and kept our minds fresh with regards to reading and writing the self into the issues that scholars and athletes experienced in the culture of basketball.
2. Our presence and participation was an essential component of gaining the most from this course. The diverse views that we each brought to the pallet as we analyzed the historical, philosophical, sociological, autobiographical, spiritual, and contextual aspects of basketball allowed us to understand the notion of “life-long scholars” and “life-long athletes.” As a reflective practitioner and leader each student was asked to facilitate one of the class sessions in the semester using the four steps of the *currere* process to engage us in both in depth writing and complicated conversation.
3. Throughout the semester, students were expected to maintain an online written collection of their lived experiences with basketball via the discussion board postings. As the instructor, I read the reflections on a weekly basis, not to critique, but more importantly, to have a written dialogue with the thoughts shared as the students went through the experience of unpacking what

basketball had done and was currently doing to them as scholars and athletes. Periodically, each student took the time to reread and expand upon what she had written throughout the preceding weeks as she constructed a segment of her autobiography via the written narrative form. At the conclusion of the semester, the four narrative forms were revised, edited, and consolidated into one powerful piece, an up-to-date autobiography of her lived experience of basketball based on “four quarters” – the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical – each of which served as a precious platform for both scholastic and athletic manifestation.

4. At the end of the semester, the students were asked to meet with the instructor one on one for a post-course interview session with the intent of expanding upon specific lived moments from their autobiographical narratives and the responses they had submitted on their post-course questionnaire (see Appendix D). The interviews were audio recorded in a digital format in order to capture the complicated conversations we had with the weekly readings in relation to what students had written on a regular basis in their journals, on the discussion board, and eventually within their final autobiographical narrative. The transcriptions were handled by the instructor.

Regressing Back on the Lived Moments of a Life Course

The first quarter of a basketball game is often a regression to lessons learned in the previous games, seasons, or life events in general. We are humbled and invigorated by the lessons lived that lead us to better ourselves as both scholars and athletes. According to Pinar, in the regressive moment of *currere*, “One goes back and there one finds the past intact. The past is entered, lived in, but not necessarily succumbed. Because if one is not there concretely, one is not necessarily vulnerable. One avoids complete identification with the self that was, and hence is able to observe” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 57). In the first quarter of the course we took special notice, via readings and renderings, of our beginnings in basketball with regard to practicing the skills, feeling the spaces, identifying with a team, learning the plays, listening to the coaches, and competing toward victory and defeat. New revelations were made about

our early moments with the game of basketball:

Bringing the past to the present by printing it. The words coalesce to form a photograph. Holding the photograph in front of oneself, one studies the detail, the literal holding of the picture and one's response to it suggestive of the relation of past to present. (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 58)

In the gathering of such text there was no analysis. The writer freely observed as far back as possible and tried to visualize the past into the present. According to Pinar:

We imagine what we might become, both individually and societally. We mold our imaginings into artful form: novels, poems, paintings. In brief, much of our life is spent in fantasy, and much of our lives is the expression of fantasy. Sartre argues that this capacity to imagine what is not the case, which brings with it radical freedom, is at the heart of what is human. (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 9)

While sitting at the playground or resting between games at the gym, I often am reminded of my own childhood when watching young athletes emulate the physical feat and emotional fervor of professional athletes. There is a feeling of accomplishment and superiority in that transformative moment of play where the concrete is pushed aside. The notion of finding our heroes and heroines within the play of the self has cut across gender lines with the tremendous growth of women's college basketball and professional basketball leagues like the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA). Pinar addresses that this was not always the case as the experiential nature sports via gender was inferior pre-Title IX. "Griswold points out that sports and exercise had different meanings for girls and boys ... For boys, fitness leaders emphasized competition (i.e., winning the game, running the fastest, completing the most sit-ups. For girls, experts emphasized friendship, health, and becoming sexually appealing to boys" (Pinar, 2004, p. 89). In the present, the moments of lived basketball help strengthen an adolescent's journey within a spectrum of beings through the modeling of the other. At the same time, such moments could become problematic when, "In schools, particularly in secondary

ones, and those of higher learning, one observes countless persons playing at being a student, a professor, an intellectual, a radical, a bohemian, a freak, and so on, playing at being some thing other than themselves. They are not themselves; in Laingian terms, they are out of their minds; they are mad” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 11), which brings forth the question: what roles are scholar-athletes primarily playing to – scholarship, sportsmanship, or sponsorship?

Many have already drawn the conclusions and written the articles and books making claims that autobiographical regression is time-consuming, disruptive, and irrelevant to the present path of living, yet as Doll argues, “It is the purpose of curriculum to engage the imagination, such that it is possible to think more metaphorically, less literalistically, about one’s world and one’s presuppositions about that world” (2000, p. xi). By looking back upon the moments of play that we encountered as we learned the game of basketball and started to live the game of basketball – the drawn up buzzer beaters in the driveway, the indoor tournaments bracketed and played on laundry baskets, and the play by play announcing and jubilation of a crowd – we could not possibly ignore our imagination as we returned to the present in order to make sense of how we came to be with basketball as life.

Progressing toward the Lived Moments of a Life Course

The second quarter of a basketball game is often a progression toward gaining an advantage and a momentum prior to reaching the half way point of competition. An athlete is often challenged in this stage by herself, her teammates, and her coaches to think about the direction of possible outcomes based on her past performance, while building a relationship with the episodes of the present moment, for they will determine

what lies ahead. According to Pinar, in the progressive moment, “We look, in Sartre’s language at what is not yet the case, what is not yet present. We have found that the future is present in the same sense that the past is present. It influences, in complicated ways, the present; it forms the present” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 58). In the second quarter of the course we took special notice, via readings and renderings, of our future with regard to realistic projection of how basketball helped us make sense of our intellectual and physical being in the next stage of life. As Brown (1959) suggests, “[Fantasies] do not exist in memory or in the past, but only as hallucinations in the present, which have no meaning except as negations of the present” (p. 166). Special attention was given to discussions about how basketball impacted life off the court and how we liked to see basketball as a part of our life off the court. In that moment, the writer projects herself into the future in order to make sense of how she arrived at the present. Pinar refers to this process of biographic projection as the notion of becoming, which “becomes an individual’s preoccupation with himself, not one individual’s preoccupation with another” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 93).

While learning the game of basketball and eventually becoming an avid athlete and team player, I often projected, during my adolescence that I would miraculously grow over night and overcome one of my biggest barriers, height. Even though I could play ball with *the crème de la crème* of the community and the school, the physical toll that my body withstood, would eventually pull me away from the game in the future. I never thought of basketball in a scholarly fashion because it was purely recreational for me. Hence, I never thought about what my lived story of basketball would mean to me in the future. Pinar (2004) asks us to consider the following question – “Can the book be

rewritten as an imagistic object, partly by the use of iconography, but, more subtly, by a certain nonlinear progressivity, a sense of logic that is more psycho(logical), dreamlike, and suggestively imagistic than it is specifically cognitive?" (p. 136). At the age of 40, I am more involved with the game than I have ever been before, and I can actually call basketball an educational experience encompassing physical, intellectual, and emotional undertones both in the present and in the future. To look at our past experience as we seek a fresh awakening emphasizes:

... temporal distinctions, not for the sake of a simplistic proceduralism, but to enable the reconstruction of the present through the reactivation of the past, differentiating present-mindedness into the co-extensive simultaneity of temporal attunements, expressed individually in social context through the academic knowledge. (Pinar, 2012, p. 51)

The progressive nature of our past as retold toward the future with intellectual flavor and flair paints a script that can be quite different than the one never told, but gradually documented in the mind. To use rekindled stories from childhood up through yesterday as an avenue for entering what has become of their sporting life, scholar-athletes practiced the art of writing a basketball narrative as lived and not merely observed in a flash from the past.

Analyzing through the Lived Moments of a Life Course

The third quarter of a basketball game is often a return from an intellectual and emotional analysis of what has occurred thus far in the game between the self and the other. A team often is challenged simultaneously to learn from the past, live in the present, and look to the future at the same speed that basketball dictates. For the players who are anxiously waiting for their opportunity to play, the self is consistently considering the multidimensional interrelations of how the future is present in the past,

the past in the future, and the present in both. According to Pinar, in the analytical moment, “Description via conceptualization is breaking into parts the organic whole. Conceptualization is detachment from experience. Bracketing what is, what was, what can be, one is loosened from it, potentially more free of it, hence more free to freely choose the present, and future” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 60). In the third quarter of the course we took special notice, via readings and renderings, of the institutionalization of basketball within both academic and recreational settings, focusing on describing the ideology of teamwork, structure, and discipline in relation to lived being. By placing the scholar-athletes in charge of their own analysis and that of the other I sought to redefine an intellectual nature of being that Said (1996) claims is often more enlightening: “[The] intellectual’s spirit as an amateur can enter and transform the merely professional routine most of us go through into something more lively and radical” (pp. 82-83). A prescriptive guideline for analysis not only stuns the imaginative aspect of basketball as lived, but it forces the individual to recapture specific moments from the vault.

As an athlete, one never stops in a moment to question what playing basketball means to the self, in congruence and/or divergence, with the other’s experience. The other could be a teammate, an opponent, a neighborhood team, a national team, or an international team. We expect the other peer to value the game and play it in the same manner that we do, from both an individual and team perspective. Grumet claims that in a process of finding the self in relation to a bigger picture, in an analysis like the following occurs:

The ego relations with the external nonego – the world and its wonder, forever transcending our knowledge, and the internal nonego – the richness of human possibility and the mysterious origins of our energy, the ego emerges as both determined and determining. As we consider the relations of ego and nonego, we

are also examining the relations of the student to his educational experience.
(Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 120)

Basketball to some extent is culturally limiting in that we grow up learning a way that the game needs to be played, and we mature in that model, resisting considering for ourselves the role it plays in the life of another person or place. Grumet suggests that an analytical approach toward the self within a phenomenon can be productive, in that “By asking our students to be conscious of their metaphors, we are asking them to loosen their allegiance to one particular discipline or paradigm for a time so that they may avoid the tunnel vision that constricts the cognitive lens” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 121). By engaging, via complicated conversations, outside the realm of a team, where emotions run high, performance gains privilege, and the coach’s word becomes the law of play, the course sought to bring forth an antithesis of analysis via the self in its most reflective manner.

Synthesizing the Lived Moments of a Life Course

The fourth, but not necessarily final, quarter of a basketball game often is associated with living in the actual moment and overcoming the other, both mentally and physically, in order to claim victory. In extremely close game situations, an individual often is designated by his coach and teammates as the “go to person,” or the “play-maker.” For in that moment lives a myriad of rapid regressions and progressions that the individual may not truly ponder upon, but that dwell within him or her. According to Pinar, in the synthetical moment we strive to “Make it all of a whole. It, all of it - intellections, emotions, behavior - occurs in and through the physical body. As the body is a concrete whole, so what occurs within and through the body can become a discernable whole, integrated in its meaningfulness” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 61). In the fourth quarter of the course, we compiled the regressive, progressive, and analytical

moments that each scholar-athlete had lived in the culture of basketball and celebrated the ever-changing written narrative, in recognition of our versatility as intellectual and physical beings.

I take a step back away from the court and think of all the basketball threads that I have woven together to construct a substantial part of my own identity. Each of these threads represents not only moments in time, but more substantially, different perspectives – player, fan, coach, and referee – in separate times. The synthesis of the whole is found within threads that may be lived chronologically, but are intellectually reflected upon sporadically. The spontaneous elixir between the past, present, and future is how “we invite one another to risk ‘living at the edge of our skin,’ where we find the greatest hope of revisioning ourselves” (Boler, 1999, p. 200). These threads are revisited as I observe the game from an official’s point of view and relive moments of jubilation, anguish, frustration, and success through the play of the others who now try to make sense of their own egos through basketball. As I run up and down the court, I know that I am not separated from them and they are not unaware of me because,

Every autobiography is both someone else’s story and our own. We reread our own stories to find the mythic-fictive threads that we have woven through them. By making our students aware that their self-representations are not factual, absolute renderings of what really happened, we hope that our students will assume a more permissive and relativistic form of minding, making it possible to review an event or action in one’s life history without at the same time repudiating it or affirming it. (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, pp. 134-135)

At the end of this journey, learned and lived, I realized that the lived experience of basketball via written discourse was as complicated as I claimed it would become, and there is tremendous value for introducing the practice of *currere* into our sporting spaces

from the moment a child, in lieu of gender, looks toward the cylinder hoping that the ball will sail through just one more time before he or she goes home for the night.

The Implications of Complicating Conversations via *Currere*

John Dewey looked upon individual experience as the ultimate bond within a classroom environment because it is always dynamic, often unstable, and never erasable.

While theorizing about the meaningfulness of an educative experience, Dewey (1988)

writes:

[E]xperiences in order to be educative must lead out into an expanding world of subject-matter ... This condition is satisfied only as an educator views teaching and learning as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience ... At every level there is an expanding development of experience if experience is educative in effect . (pp. 60-61)

The social, academic, and athletic plight of scholar-athletes throughout our secondary schools today relies significantly upon an appreciation and camaraderie between exclusive narrative renderings, conflicting community cultures, and dynamic classroom curricula. The study of the self within these environments is a multi-disciplinary and multi-methodological approach that is shaped by diverse intersections between the historical, sociological, and philosophical perspectives. The research methods used can be formed around comparisons in systems, entities, policies, subject specific achievement, and/or various statistics. Current socio-philosophical trends and issues of local communities in the United States, as well as alternative forms of pedagogy used within these isolated pockets, should be analyzed in order to provide higher rates of success for scholar-athletes transitioning between secondary schools and local institutions of higher education. Often, the windows of success within a community are blurred by

the lens of cultural ignorance from beyond its boundary lines. The challenge lies in exposing the significance through a common lens of understanding.

The sport and culture of basketball may serve as a critical break-through and an alternative, temporary window out of an isolated community for many scholar-athletes seeking educational prosperity. More importantly, it serves as a revolving door back into the community for successful scholar-athletes seeking to return and build greater opportunities for future generations. Therefore, the *currere* process not only tells the story of each scholar-athlete's life, but allows others in the community to engage in the practice from numerous perspectives of interest. The first step must begin in the classroom and then be given wings to fly its own destiny. As the famous Lakota proverb states, "Tell me, and I will listen. Show me, and I will understand. Involve me, and I will learn." *Currere* in the curriculum is a way of involving students in their own autobiographical renderings whether they are academic, recreational, cultural, or social; as for the sport of basketball, it encompasses all four.

CHAPTER FOUR:

REGRESSING BACK INTO OUR SEASONED BECOMINGS VIA BASKETBALL

We achieve our personal identities and self-concept through the use of narrative configuration, and make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single unfolding and developing story. We are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives. Self, then, is not a static thing or a substance, but a configuring of personal events into an historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be. (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 150)

The start of a sporting summer season often signals a transition between the professional basketball and baseball leagues in the United States. However, two summers ago, as the light shone upon South Africa and the World Cup, soccer, better known as football outside the United States, took precedence and control of the sporting limelight. So many athletes to watch and cheer for, so many stories to unfold – but another summer transition back into basketball was underway with the WNBA (Women’s National Basketball Association). As the excitement of the NBA (National Basketball Association) playoffs was in full swing and the WNBA pre-season games were in session, a commercial aired on TV with the slogan “Basketball is Basketball.” The commercial featured numerous players from the NBA and WNBA, meshed together in a cinematographic masterpiece, as teammates dribbled up the court, making sharp passes, taking long-range shots, and demonstrating acrobatic hustle. The point was, that basketball season was not yet over as the talented women’s basketball league was about to begin. Even though the commercial served as a mode for continuing to build on the growing fan base for the WNBA, the mindset that “basketball is basketball” regardless of who is playing the game, is a very difficult sell to the general public at the recreational,

scholastic, and professional levels. To understand the notion that “basketball is basketball” calls for a lived experience encounter, not a visual coaxing of one’s beliefs through advertisement. As Cavell (1979) reminds us:

In philosophizing, I have to bring my own language and life into imagination. What I require is a convening of my culture’s criteria, in order to confront them with my words and life as I pursue them and as I may imagine them; and at the same time to confront my words and life as I pursue them with the life my culture’s words may imagine for me: to confront the culture with itself, along the lines in which it meets in me. (p. 125)

In the Fall 2009 academic semester, a group of eight women scholars embarked with me, their male instructor on a lived autobiographical journey to discover whether basketball is truly just basketball or a much bigger phenomenon beyond the neighborhood playgrounds, the local gymnasiums, and the national arenas where the game is lived by so many individuals. The small nature of our class often resembled the makings of a basketball squad, learning the *currere* method through the practice of autobiographical renderings and musings. Eight women committed themselves to unpacking the significance of basketball in their lives beyond its in-the-moment physicality, outside the space of play, and within the notion of two beings - a scholar and an athlete. Who are these women who claim that basketball is not JUST basketball? Is their lived experience truly unique, or this a more common thread for living through sports? The time has come to listen to and make sense of the voices of these women, [their names being pseudonyms], who experienced multiple aspects of their lives through a sporting way in order to understand the simplicity of play as it matures into the complexity of competition.

Human Ingredients within an Academic Sporting Space

One of the first students to express interest in unpacking the scholastic and athletic nature of basketball by registering for the course was *Comet*. Through our initial emails, I got a sense that basketball had played a significant role in *Comet's* life, but in the present, play was not a priority. *Comet* is an ambitious Caucasian scholar-athlete from a small township in New Jersey, who at the time was majoring in Early Childhood Education. From the moment you meet her, you can tell that she cares about the game of basketball and wants to preserve that passion with the next generation of players. Often during class sessions she would listen to lived moments that others had experienced and find a way to connect, reflect, and question. For her, basketball was not just a game that was played for fun or as a means to an end; but instead, basketball was a sacred space for finding balance in life. As a “power forward” she was taught the values of controlling herself physically, mentally, and emotionally, even though it was not always pretty. As a young girl she often was pushed in a competitive nature by her brother as she learned to love the battle that takes place within the notion of play. Today, *Comet* is learning to watch the game from the sidelines as she contemplates her interests in teaching the little ones and coaching at the high school level.

A last minute addition to our roster was *Dream*, a vibrant African-American scholar-athlete, from a small suburb in New Jersey, who at the time was majoring in Family Studies. *Dream* is quite independent, but not a loner by any means. Often during class sessions she would make sure that her opinion was heard loud and clear as she entertained us with stories about her childhood. Because of her tall, lean physique, *Dream* was urged by her family and coaches to play basketball at a young age, even

though her first passion was running track. She often described finding solitude on the track since she was in control of her own actions and did not have to rely on four other players to achieve her goal. She fell in love with basketball as an observer of the highly-competitive streetball version in New York City, and gradually that version of the game served as a bond between *Dream* and her mother, an avid player. She learned to love basketball via all the camaraderie and discipline that came along with it, as she jumped from one team to another trying to determine whether this was her calling. Today, *Dream* still engages with the ball and hoop, but merely in a recreational and intramural manner, hoping that it will allow her to escape the other stresses of her day.

When you first meet *Fever*, she comes across as quite timid, but once you get to know her, you can feel the fire in the belly she has for sports in general, and especially basketball. *Fever* is an illustrious Caucasian scholar-athlete from a small town near the Eastern Shore of Maryland, who at the time was majoring in Government and Politics. Being the first child in the family and radiating toward sports, *Fever* made her daddy proud. Not your typical girl as she claims, she craved playing with her younger brothers outdoors instead of playing with dolls indoors. *Fever* often kept to herself during our class conversations, but if you looked in her eyes, you could tell that her thoughts between the past and present moments were constantly churning. Although her family moved a few times within the state of Maryland, *Fever* spent most of her playing moments near the Eastern Shore in a small suburban community. Playing basketball allowed *Fever* to come out of her shell and be successful both on and off the court. That success is apparent as she has most recently put all her energy into her academics in

pursuit of gaining admission into law school. She no longer plays at a competitive level, but turns to the lessons learned within basketball for true motivation.

As word spread about the course and what it aimed to do, I received an email from *Liberty* in Barcelona who expressed interest in registering for the class upon her return from a study abroad semester. My immediate reaction was – basketball is not just basketball if people are willing to invite it into their lives beyond play. *Liberty* is a confident Caucasian scholar-athlete from a small township in Long Island, New York, who at the time was majoring in Criminal Justice. Being the older of two girls in her family, her father never anticipated that both his daughters would be so inclined to participate in multiple sports and be specifically so talented at basketball. *Liberty* has a small guard-like frame, but her inner strength radiates out and makes itself known to anyone who meets her. During class sessions she was not one to initiate conversation, but once we put some issues on the table, she let you know exactly how she felt via her own moments in and out of basketball. As a child she was adamant about competing against boys on the playground and in gym class, showing them that her game was worthy of their loss. The confidence that she has also allowed her to experience and appreciate basketball abroad via tournaments, and in the more recent times, via academics. *Liberty* continues to play on a regular basis with the women's club team on campus and still does not back down from playing with men in coed pickup games. She attributes unity as the most significant element of basketball, as it has allowed her to build more relationships throughout the years.

When basketball brings a community together, then you know that it is much bigger than just a game. When you sit down and talk basketball with *Mystic* you get a

sense of how sacred the game is, especially in smaller communities. *Mystic* is a spiritual Caucasian scholar-athlete from a title-town city on the border of West Virginia and Ohio, who at the time was majoring in Women's Studies. Being from a city known for its high school sports, *Mystic* has a certain spunk to her step and to her stories. She looks to basketball as a simultaneous source of accomplishment and escape. *Mystic* is extremely proud of how basketball transformed her from a casual participant to a fierce competitor as she played on numerous championship teams. During class sessions she was not outspoken, but often enlightened us on the blessings that basketball has provided for her, none of which came without hard work. Her experiences shine with border crossing conflicts, community camaraderie, and difficult decisions. Although she had a short stint of playing collegiate level women's basketball, she came to a realization that playing basketball in the absence of happiness beyond the court is not worthy of her time. *Mystic* still plays on a regular basis with the university club team and must get her daily dose of the court; otherwise, something feels absent from her life.

Every team needs a player who is willing to live in the moment, sacrificing the past and not eagerly planning out the future. It is a gift to be able to take in everything that the present has to offer. For our team, eight women strong, *Shock* epitomized the now moment. *Shock* is a fearless Latino-American scholar-athlete from a suburb outside of Kansas City, who at the time was majoring in Biological Sciences. Her vocal and physical presence is felt immediately as you start to engage her in conversation. Being raised in a family with two brothers, she often found herself living up to their standards and beyond, especially on the playground. Yet, she is one of the strongest people I have ever met, and her story tells the tale of physically pushing the body to its limits, or in her

case, there are no limits, because one's spiritual love for basketball is by far greater than the physical pain the game inflicts. Her warrior-like attitude was present in the reaction she had to basketball moments in class. She spoke with great determination about what basketball means to her and how she played a role within a bigger stage as she took to the court each time. *Shock* does not turn to basketball as a routine or a mode of exercise, but instead she expects it to give her a new experience or challenge each time she participates. Despite numerous injuries and severe pain, she still plays on a regular basis with the university club team and finds solace when on the court.

Some people play this game of ball and hoop with sheer muscle and size, while others like *Sky* enter the game with pure determination from the heart and soul. You really have to love this game to keep going back to those bruising playgrounds, anxiously waiting to be picked up among the sea of talented players. *Sky* is a determined African-American scholar-athlete from a suburb near College Park, who at the time was majoring in Criminal Justice. She was quite vocal and honest during class, both in her reactions in conversation and reflections via writing. *Sky* approaches basketball with an explorer's mentality, challenging herself to perform at the highest level possible, never backing down from obstacles on her path. She always found great support from her father as she learned to take criticism well, but also to dish it out when necessary. Even though basketball has been a mode of travel and has offered great camaraderie, *Sky's* biggest struggle was her dual passion for basketball and soccer. She speaks of not wanting to sacrifice one for the other, but looks back upon her basketball experience as an education of sorts. Even though she no longer plays basketball on a regular basis, *Sky* is determined to stay involved with the game from an educational perspective, emphasizing the

significance of educating the next generation about the joys of the game and the dangers of relying on the game as a way of life.

The final member of our team is by far the most well-rounded basketball person in the class, especially in terms of being both a scholar and an athlete of the game. Right from the first class session, *Storm* was adamant about unpacking her basketball moments, especially on the discussion board as she further reflected upon the complicated conversations started in class, and she naturally exposed the specific details that made her life so unique. *Storm* is a voracious African-American scholar-athlete from a suburb in Baltimore County, who at the time was majoring in Communications. Her passion for basketball beyond the court is immense as she has served as a team manager and is currently working as an intern with a sports broadcasting company. *Storm* credits her aunt for getting her into basketball and supporting her passions for the game. *Storm's* journey was one that was destined for the college ranks, but unfortunately numerous injuries kept that dream at bay. She wrote extensively about being in pursuit of the best amateur teams and high school programs as she was growing up, and the challenges that made it tempting to step away from the game. Yet, the fire is still in the belly, as she still competes by playing on the university club team. But, the goals are somewhat different and more about camaraderie than just mere competition. In other words, the aim is to have fun, and if you happen to win in the process, that is not so bad either.

As a group of self-proclaimed scholars and athletes we embarked on a narrative journey that needed to be explored in order to make sense of the dual lives that each of us has passionately selected to participate in and learn from via the experiences that we encounter. In the autobiographical rediscovery process, the mind and body work together

to unpack the notion of play for pleasure and purpose. An informal game that often begins with the simple joy of a ball and hoop has grown into a tactical competition, with the intent of accumulating a certain number of points while defending the sacred hoop against the attempt from an opposing player. We seek to untangle these lived moments of camaraderie and rivalry asking questions about why each of us has dedicated our becoming to the art and science of basketball in and out of the contested space.

The Mind is a Terrible Thing to Just Play, So Let's Write

The Fall 2009 semester was about to begin, and I was getting more and more curious about how a playful passion can become an obsessive phenomenon. I tried to find answers by turning once again to my own autobiographical renderings of falling into basketball, in order to make sense of how I persuaded these eight scholar-athletes to join me for a semester of basketball conversation and writing off the court. I pondered whether these students truly knew what they were getting themselves into beyond the notion of basketball as play. As athletes, we are too often reminded by our peers and coaches not to think about our athletic duty or performance, and as the Nike slogan simply states, "Just do it!" As I started to plan out the first few sessions of our semester, I sensed an urgency to shatter the wall that separated the mind from the body, especially as portrayed so distinctly within scholastic sporting spaces. Too often athletes are encouraged to perform well in the classroom so that they can have the opportunity to play on the court or field. It seems to me that the lack of purposeful connection between academics and athletics has brought forth the separation of thought and action, a distinction between work and play. In bridging the gap between two very significant aspects of our becoming, "*currere* provides a strategy for students of curriculum to study

the relations between academic knowledge and life history in the interest of self-understanding and social reconstruction” (Pinar, 2004, p. 35).

In the process of connecting our academic and athletic being, we must regress back to our lived experiences with basketball, from the very first moment it invited us onto the playground for mere fun, through the challenging times that it burned our muscles and broke our hearts as we strove to make the team or become champions of a league. Yet, the journey is so young, for even those whose notions of fame are no longer becoming. As participants we must progress to unveil the mysteries of what has and will become of our lived moments within the game of basketball. We may often have been told to ignore such moments, but now we attempt to find solace in a road that has been paved by the self and those who crossed our paths. Analyzing our becoming as scholars and athletes through writing may simultaneously trigger fancy and resentment, yet, our writing brings together the often diluted camaraderie between thought and action. First, we take a step back to a new future of synthesizing what has been, with what could be, of basketball as life. In the process, we must not forget that a new generation of athletes is being told at this very moment that without the proper grades they will not be allowed to compete within a sporting space. What is the knowledge acquired and its relevance to a lived sporting space beyond subjective letter grades? Who is acting upon this question?

Turning Ordinary Rituals into Extraordinary Cultural Praxis

One of the biggest challenges of engaging with the *currere* approach is becoming autobiographically cognizant of life as a cultural practice, the significance to be captured foremost *by* the self and *for* the self. Mc Laughlin (2008), an English professor at Appalachian State University, looks at basketball as a cultural practice that has and still

continues to play a significant role in his life. He claims, “Cultural practices have strong personal dimensions, since they are the sources from which individuals learn the cultural styles that they identify as their *personal* styles. Individuals commit so much of themselves and their daily lives to certain cultural practices that these practices become central to their personal identities” (p. 12). I did not truly understand the depth of basketball as a cultural practice in my life until I started to write about it. Hence, the storyline is no longer that of another athlete, often prominent at the local or national level that I emulated in a fictitious sense, but rather my own written narrative of what I have become in the cultural practice of basketball, and what still lies ahead in the practice to come. The challenge of writing authentically, through the scholarly and athletic self as a cultural practice, would have been greater for the eight women in the class if their basketball storyline templates were based on a masculine agenda. According to Mc Laughlin (2008):

There are, of course, millions of women who play basketball avidly and with great skill. This fact clearly demonstrates that there is nothing inherently masculine about the game. But the practice of basketball is clearly *coded* masculine within our current cultural binaries. One day the growing number of women who play the game will change that coding, but for now they have to deal with the “masculinity” of basketball, just as male dancers have to deal with the “femininity” of dance. (p. 49)

Yet, I am not fully convinced that a gender-specific storyline coding claims the cultural practice of basketball as Mc Laughlin so adamantly suggests. If that were the case, I strongly believe that the eight women scholar-athletes would have shown some reluctance in registering for a course that had significant autobiographical expectations and was designed and taught by a male instructor. Instead, I sensed that their registration for the course was a greater inclination for intellectual and emotional camaraderie, a

calling or return to a familiar cultural practice that was built and shared through the notion of a team. As Senge (1990) points out, without any emphasis on a gender-specific agenda,

Most of us at one time or another have been part of a great “team,” a group of people who functioned together in an extraordinary way – who trusted one another, who complemented each others’ strengths and compensated for each others’ limitations, who had common goals that were larger than individual goals, and who produced extraordinary results. I have met many people who have experienced this sort of profound teamwork – in sports, or in the performing arts, or in business. Many say that they have spent much of their life looking for that experience again. (p. 4)

Could it be that these eight women scholar-athletes, some of whom had never met, and only a few years removed from basketball as a daily cultural practice in high school, now were finding a reason to come together and have conversations about their passionate experiences?

Playing basketball on a regular basis can simply be a cultural practice, but writing about the lived moments within the practice of play becomes the praxis of one’s passion. Christina Baldwin’s research on sharing one’s stories points to a new surge of capturing, or better yet, releasing our autobiographical renderings through modern tools such as internet blogs and social media websites. These avenues merely capture the emotional surface of our lived being, and in-the-moment smattering of our feelings, rather than the deep, engrained passion that comes forth as we write our way back to ourselves.

According to Baldwin (2005):

There is no historical precedent for what we are doing with our determination to write. This is the first time in human history that widespread and populous literacy can support such a phenomenon. We are laying a new foundation for the future, laying out a grid of millions of stories. Not just those of the famous people or the powerful people, but the stories of ordinary people. (p. 44)

As everyday players we do extraordinary things with a ball through dribbling, passing, and shooting on a variety of courts. As casual writers, we can also do significant things, within a different context of language, through the stories that we scribe on a canvas or type into a screen. Our mind and body become one as we regress and intellectualize how basketball has played a significant role in our becoming.

I am Thee, Hear us Write

As I first encountered my athletic becoming in writing, I was amazed at the vivid substance that each memory triggered when I closed my eyes and took myself to the places, the people, and the platforms of basketball that played a significant role in making me who I am today, regardless of the fact that I did not even play basketball competitively at the high school level. In other words, the richness of my basketball culture remains in the realm of a recreational extravaganza that has gradually become a token of my daily praxis. Yet, it took a lot of deep autobiographical digging through the lived self, and a greater trust in sharing my lived moments with others, for me to appreciate fully the following:

Through metaphor, the past has the capacity to imagine us, and we it ... Those who have no pain can imagine those who suffer. Those at the center can imagine what it is to be outside. The strong can imagine what it is to be weak. Illuminated lives can imagine the borders of stellar fire. We strangers can imagine the familiar hearts of strangers. (Ozick, 1986, p. 65)

So, I am hoping that the praxis of *currere* can unlock our interpreted, and sometimes imagined, construction of basketball as a cultural practice for the other. In this case, the eight women scholar-athletes can not only embrace the foundations that they may possibly share within the lived practice, but also watch their imagined differences come

to life through the written narratives that they explore both in and out of class, both on and off the court.

In the process of bringing together a group of scholar-athletes, some of whom were still playing on a regular basis, and others who were now drifting toward delegating instruction from the sidelines, I was surprised to hear that conversations of inclusion were limited. It seems as if there is no clear cut right of passage for how one is fraternized into the scholar-athlete circle. The assumption is that if you hang around long enough and contribute to the conversation when empowered, you eventually have been granted membership by a ghost committee. Perhaps, this is the very reason that the sharing of our lived moments in real time is so limited to a form of self-inflicted talk that rarely inquires into the success or struggle of the other. Martin Buber (1965) believed that inclusion

is the extension of one's own concreteness, the fulfillment of the actual situation of life, the complete presence of the reality in which one participates. Its elements are, first, a relation, of no matter what kind, between two persons, second an event experienced by them in common, in which at least one of them actively participates, and third, the fact that this one person without forfeiting the felt reality of his activity, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other. (p. 97)

It is amazing that even though we must physically participate in drills and tryouts in order to be accepted on a basketball team, the complicated conversations that ensue about our experiences within the game are accepted holistically and not put forth for greater expansion or debate. Perhaps, the absence of spoken or written exchange points to an engendered agenda set forth by the masculine motto, "Just do it!" – or for a lack of a better slogan, "Actions speak louder than words!" The process of *currere* allows for a contextual breakthrough in the bridge between academics and athletics, while

simultaneously speaking through the en-gendered voice of another:

Our reclaiming of the right to name, challenge and theorize silence is a political and personal activity emerging from the (self)consciousness of our stories. We speak and write out of our collective experiences of silence, at the same time acknowledging the insights and experiences of women who have informed and who will be informed by our work Breaking silence means bursting through the surface of the other's hearing, fleshing what is resisted, cloistered [T]he implications of breaking anything can be profound and immutable. (Davies, Dormer, Honan, McAllister, O'Reilly, Rocco & Walker, 1997, p. 75)

By bringing to the surface, via writing and conversation, our lived moments of becoming in basketball, we are breathing into our past to better understand what we have become, knowing that our regression through the *currere* process might be intellectually gratifying, physically painful, and emotionally powerful. In the moments of *regression*, *progression*, *analysis*, and *synthesis*, the camaraderie between athletics and academics invites the possibility of being strengthened. The practice of engaging as philosophical athletes brings forth awareness that,

Along with the sense of personal authority arises a sense of voice – in its earliest form, a “still small voice” to which a woman begins to attend rather than the long-familiar external voices that have directed her life. This interior voice has become, for us, the hallmark of women's emergent sense of agency and control. (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 68)

By writing the self back into our lived moments we are capturing, not completing, our academic and athletic selves. Weedon (1987) reminds us that the act of capturing our unique autobiographical renderings is the mode for completing the self that is brought forth to the other:

Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is *constructed*. The assumption that subjectivity is constructed implies that it is not innate, not genetically determined, but socially produced. Language is not the expression of unique individuality; it constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways which are socially specific. (p. 21)

In competition, we step onto a basketball court as a team, five of the best players from a squad, expected to continuously communicate with each other while advancing the ball through physical actions such as dribbling, passing, and shooting. We score and then retreat back into defense, signaling each other to close the gaps that the opponent is trying desperately to penetrate. The intersection of the verbal and bodily language becomes the key to our success, as our interior voice becomes an exterior force; not a mystery or secret, but an actuality of our very becoming.

Reviving a Lived Journey in Shared Community

As the team of eight women scholar-athletes and I prepared to enter the academic space of basketball, a new sense of community was upon us. The new sacred space that we were creating did not have any sidelines, baskets, balls, or fans. The energy within this space was to be initiated by the complicated conversation surrounding our life experiences, documentaries, and readings. Our passion for basketball may be similar, yet, our points of view regarding basketball as a life course are embedded within the seasoned communities we bring into this new space of prose and dialogue. As Friedman (1983) points out:

What makes community real is people finding themselves in a common situation—a situation which they approach in different ways yet which calls each of them out. The very existence in genuine community is already a common concern, a caring for one another. The caring begins with understanding from within the actual people present. Only then does it extend to gather other people in and then to a dialogue with other communities. (p. 135)

The biggest challenge that awaited us, as we engaged with the autobiographical process of *currere* to unlock the embedded lived moments of basketball, was actually observing our departure points parallel to the lived moments of the others in class. In the self-reflective art of retelling our basketball moments we can easily be consumed by our own

written narrative as we come face to face with it, quite possibly for the first time. Our own writing tempts us to dig deeper into the self, and hence, in response to the community conversation we are mindful of our departure points and expect others to be right there with us. The lived moments within *currere* allow us to unveil multiple aspects of our experiences and “cultivate our capacity to see through the outer forms, the habitual explanation of things, the stories we tell in order to keep others at a distance” (Pinar, 1998, p. 149). Our intent of complicating the conversation of basketball through our writing requires us to talk through each other’s experiences in order to find distinctiveness, as well as commonality, especially since we are in the presence of others who may know our phenomenon quite well. Even though the written narrative of our lived moments is initiated by a self-reflective gazing upon our individual departure points with basketball, it does not need to be an isolated engagement. As Pagano (1991) suggests:

Autobiographical writing, particularly in the classroom context, can inhibit that surprise [of otherness] because we are so concerned with the representation of ourselves. When we tell stories with ourselves prominently and self-consciously at the center, we tend to think of others only in relation to ourselves; we tend to reify others. (p. 202)

There is a mystery behind the autobiographical process when it comes to the realm of what is shared and what is made public for discussion, feedback, and inquiry. Much of what we write about the experience of the self is filtered or embellished when we know that it will be read by another. The circle of trust for many is quite narrow to begin with, but especially when it involves writing. The author might be concerned with how her words are interpreted by another, especially if she is not there, in the moment, to

converse about the lived moments. Bruner's (1986) work on understanding the self and culture

points to a complicated relationship:

One could argue against the tenet of privacy, for example (inspired by anthropologists), that the distinction between "private self" and "public self" is a function of the culture's conventions about when one talks and negotiates the meanings of events and when one keeps silent, and of the ontological status given to that which is kept silent and that which is made public. Cultures and subcultures differ in this regard; so even do families. (pp. 61-62)

As we begin our journey of unpacking our lived public and private moments through the practice of *currere*, we must acknowledge that sport is competitive in its nature and that each scholar-athlete seeks to shine both on and off the court. So, even though we are coming together as a team of individuals sharing a distinct passion for basketball and all that it has given to us over the years, each scholar-athlete may strive to make the most out of her-story. Sport psychologist Terry Orlick (1974) warns us:

For every positive psychological or social outcome in sports, there are possible negative outcomes. For example, sports can offer a child group membership or group exclusion, acceptance or rejection, positive feedback or negative feedback, a sense of accomplishment or a sense of failure, evidence of self-worth or lack of evidence of self-worth. Likewise, sports can develop cooperation and a concern for others, but they can also develop an intense rivalry and a complete lack of concern for others. (p. 2)

So, we journey through each stage of *currere*, learning from each other's lived moments, building on each other's passion, forming a new sense of community off the court, and hoping to make sense of how sport has confirmed us as scholar-athletes. In the eyes of the self, in written narrative, her-story, we encounter stories of passion, perseverance, and pain. Eight stories await to be shared, hoping to spark a phenomenon for all scholar-athletes who strive to succeed for themselves, for their teams, and for the community who cheers them on each and every night.

The starting point for building our *currere* community is driven by the regressive moments that drew us closer to this game that we each eventually fell in love with. In the next section, these lived moments will be revisited through the spatial, corporeal, and temporal details that each member of the community expressed by exploring the journey into basketball via illustrated maps, written reflections, and critical conversations. The regressive moments helps us understand the significance of becoming a basketball player, finding team camaraderie, and establishing basketball territory.

Living Through a Regressive Hoop: Driveways, Playgrounds, and Gyms

The turning to basketball as a life course reminds me that I played, therefore, I was. Yet, the regression within a reflective past becomes the transgression into the lived present. As Roberts (1995) makes clear:

My being cannot be separated from the actual present world, which is the resultant of the totality of history so far and which, unstable and tension-ridden, is endlessly being remade through the responses of present individuals, including me. (p. 52)

In the process of reattaching the self through what Pinar (2011) claims to be “animated engagement,” we can better understand the impact our past has had on our becoming a scholar-athlete today. We gather in an enclosed space absent of bleachers, full of tables, no scoreboard or basket, equipped with a chalkboard and smart technology, orange leather ball replaced with rainbow colored pens, directly facing a triangle on the board. The triangle is not a defensive formation, but a two-dimensional rendition of becoming, through a sporting platform. At the top of the triangle, basketball claims hierarchical dominance. On the bottom two edges sit scholar and athlete mirroring each other. We have chosen, and in some way been chosen, to come to this space for these distinct edges that partially define who we are as individuals and as a collective. As Schutz (1967)

informs us,

Meaning does not lie *in* experience. Rather, those experiences are meaningful which are grasped reflectively. The meaning is the way in which the Ego regards its experience. The meaning lies in the attitude of the Ego toward that part of its stream of consciousness which has already flowed by. (p. 69)

So, how do we begin the reflection process of our passion for basketball, our becoming as athletes and our engagement as scholars? I struggled with this question and found no harmony in isolating the three edges of the triangle. I decided to start by jotting down words in chronological order that described my own basketball experience. I numbered my paper from 1 to 20 just to keep myself focused on multiple time periods in my life and not just the middle years where time to play was more abundant. Looking back at the list, the picture became quite clear as I was taken back to neighborhoods, friends, leagues, teams, modes of transportation, infections, organizations, showcase tournaments, famous players, unique opportunities, discipline, conferences, courses, transitions, missed moments, and great games. I had so much to work with from this grocery list of my becoming in basketball that I had captured. Each of these terms carried either the seeds of a scholar or an athlete, and the triangle started to become clearer as I wrote my way back into the future.

As each participant captured her own chronological twenty-word sequence and tried to unveil her scholarly and athletic self within each of the moments, I could sense a new energy in the room, a feeling of returning to things that truly meant a lot and played a huge role in who each of us has become. With this ray of energy, I asked the participants to make a bird's eye view map of the very first playground or gym in which they learned how to play basketball and/or compete in games. They were asked to include as much detail as possible, along with a legend or key that named each of the

symbols that they chose to put on the map. Also, they had to make sure to capture unique moments on the map by thinking about inanimate objects situated in that space, the bodies (friends and foes) occupying and behaving in that space, the secrets of smaller places in that space, the off-limit places within that space, where good things happened in that space, where bad things happened in that space, and how the space may have changed over time if they were there over a longer period of time. The actual reconstruction of that remembered space triggered the regression of our bodies into specific moments of time, with certain individual relationships and group dynamics. Kierkegaard writes, “Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards” (as cited in Birren, 1987, p. 91). Calling on that quote and emphasizing the significance of one’s past, Birren (1987) states:

We search for a self, an identity that is more than the membership and credit cards we carry with us ... The autobiographical process doesn’t stop with the recalling and writing. You understand your life better if you share it piece by piece with other people ... Other people’s experiences become reminders of feelings and events that we have set aside and thought we had forgotten. (pp. 91-92)

So here we were in the second week of class, studying each other’s maps of driveways, playgrounds, and gyms, learning about our teammates’ experiences growing into the game of basketball and their turning to the temptation of play. Although most of my memories of childhood basketball resonate on the concrete of neighborhood playgrounds, the eight women scholar-athletes’ experiences were triggered by personal driveways and competitive gymnasiums. In her story of a special childhood space, *Shock* remembers that her father empowers her with building a basketball space:

As a project one day, he made me look up all the dimensions of a court – how far is the free throw line, how wide is the lane, what is the difference between a college and NBA three pointer? After reporting back, we went straight to the store and bought paint. By the end of the day we had a fully functional half court.

More often than not, the other neighborhood kids would join us and it would turn into a very competitive environment. It was everything a practice should be minus the coach having to tell the players to run, because as kids we would run around anyways. We would run full sprints chasing the ball down the street, tackling each other on the asphalt. It was like a common language. The second you heard a basketball bouncing, kids would just flock outside. You could easily round up enough to start a game. It was something that brought us all together.

The spaces that are created with friends during childhood become the canvas where our stories as athletes are painted, and later revisited as scholars, through autobiographical narrative. What is the ultimate attraction to the space of play? We are drawn into this space to compete, not for ribbons and trophies, but for an opportunity to participate, for the mere sake of play, not an outcome. As Feezell reminds us, "...the activity is engaged in for its own sake. It is autotelic, intrinsically valued, not instrumentally desired. Play is engaged in for the sake of the intrinsic enjoyment of play itself. One might see the play of sport as a free and immensely enjoyable physical activity engaged in for its own sake" (2004, p. 14). The limitation of self-constructed playground boundaries becomes the sanctuary of free play, since we as young architects, dictate the limitless possibilities of the space, jockeying for a position and diving for loose balls, with the intent of making the space functionally fun.

Dream recalls the driveway space as something that was more personal and shared by her and her mom. The driveway was not an open invitation to gather with friends, but instead it served a bigger purpose of connecting family members through play. *Dream* writes:

My driveway is the first place that I can remember playing basketball. It's not one of those really long driveways; it fits two cars comfortable and my basketball hoop that I received as a Christmas present. The funny thing about getting the basketball hoop for Christmas was at that time I was not even really into basketball; it was just the popular thing to have. During this hot summer day my mom and I spent a lot of time running after the ball in the street. A lot of people

were passing by and watching, also asking if they could play. Having that experience helped prepare me for playing in front of crowds of people because people were able to see me shoot an air ball, and also make a nice hook shot. There was nowhere to hide from the world.

For *Dream* the driveway was a carousel of lessons learned between mother and daughter, as well as an observation deck, where community members could gaze upon her from a distance. How does the other impact personal growth within a game? The presence of the other from an early age helped *Dream* develop a sense of confidence toward play for fun, which later blossomed into competition for status. Saraf (1980) captures the notion of play as a theatrical act between characters, both active and passive. He claims that “A theatre without spectators is an absurdity. However, spectators are not an absolute necessity for a sport competition. In other words, despite the importance of sport fans for sport, the spectacular aspect of sport is not the principal goal of sport, it makes its appearance as an accompanying phenomenon” (p. 129). Hence, *Dream*'s passion for play was naturally a platform for performance, as she practiced her shots, not wanting to disappoint or be harshly criticized by the drifting pedestrians who witnessed her grow into an athlete.

Mystic's journey of basketball also began as a Christmas gift that she immediately cherished, but the interest in the space was triggered by a tiny pair of shoes and a huge passion for sports. As she claims:

This is a story about a little five-year-old girl who would always be found out in her driveway, day in and day out. When she was outside, she would be wearing her Nike shorts and shirt, along with her new Michael Jordan tennis shoes that Santa brought her for Christmas. During the day, you would see her out in front of her house dribbling in each square making sure she would not miss one. She would go back and forth back and forth, up and down the driveway. Then she would push the basketball up in the air towards the lowered basket, as best as she could. At the time, you could not tell which hand she was actually shooting with,

left or right. It looked more like a throw that was shot so high it could be mistaken for a rainbow.

The boundaries that are often set by another reclaim the space of play to be an organized, purposeful platform for participation. However, our childhood playgrounds, whether they are driveways or parks, can never be manipulated. We learn to adapt to the gyms and arenas, not forgetting the simplicity of play in open space, the very reason why our passion grew for the simple game of ball and hoop. Fetters claims that “To participate in one’s own self-creation requires that one be ‘in touch’ with those delicate qualitative modes of human experience, the depths of personal feeling, imagination, and meaning” (1978, p. 37). As children, our tendency to be engaged in a naturally free, instinctive form of play allows us, as *Mystic* so beautifully captures, to live and love the space based on a desirable tone we have set, not the rules that we are made to follow by an authority figure such as a teacher, coach, or referee. In these creatively imaginative moments of play, a child learns to love sport as a canvas of infinite possibilities.

For *Comet*, the attraction to basketball was triggered by her neighbor’s grandfather who sat on his porch smoking a cigar every afternoon. As she recalls, one day after school she heard him call:

“Hey. Why don’t you try this today instead,” he said and he rolled the basketball over to me. I picked it up before it hit my feet. I had never played before, but seeing my neighbor play, I got the gist of what to do. The hoop was way too high for me to reach, but that didn’t stop me from trying. For the rest of the afternoon, my neighbor’s grandfather taught me the fundamentals of basketball. I learned how to dribble and shoot. From then on, I was hooked on the game of basketball, and played whenever I could. What once seemed impossible, like reaching the net of a ten-foot basket, became a determined life goal I worked for until my senior year of high school.

Too often, children may be deterred from participating in sports not because they do not enjoy play, but more so, they feel that the outcome weighs far more than the actual

experience. For *Comet*, a combination of learned achievement via skills, along with the pursuit of pleasure via play, blossomed into setting personal basketball goals, pushing her to take the “im” out of possible. A basketball guru such as Phil Jackson knows the power of this “fire in the belly” syndrome all too well. In the book *Sacred Hoops* he advises:

‘Make your work play and your play work.’ Basketball is a form of play, of course, but it’s easy for players to lose sight of this because of the pressures of the job. As a result, my primary goal during practice is to get the players to reconnect with the intrinsic joy of the game. Some of our most exhilarating moments as a team came at these times. That’s certainly true for Jordan, who loves practice, especially the scrimmages, because it’s pure basketball, nothing extra. (1995, p. 123)

The Games Ignite Excellence

The simple joy of getting closer to the rim by touching the net that *Comet* describes is not an in-the-moment miracle, but a desire driven by numerous logged hours of free play. In the practice of fundamentals between the self and a hoop, a participant grows into a self-defined athlete, and an athlete, becomes a scholar of her own becoming in basketball. The growth that we achieve as individuals becomes the pillar that we rest on during team play, as we push each other to turn our passion into glory, or in the eyes of a child, a trophy.

Liberty never did experience the aura of playing on a driveway court, and her earliest memories of learning the game were embedded within boundaries. She captures that limited, but joyous space by reminiscing:

The gym at my elementary school was tiny. If you walked into the gym you had about a foot of free space then you would be within the boundaries of the court. The three-point line basically touched the half court line and shooting a three-point shot from the corner was nearly impossible. The floor was in pretty good shape, but the rims were double rims. Everyone hated the double rims, including Mr. Rob who eventually led the revolution to buying new ones. Mr. Rob had a tiny office just off the side of the gym where he kept his trophies from winning his varsity basketball and tennis championships.

The transformation from playground to the gymnasium brings forth a limitation to the idea of playing freely. How does a community gymnasium become an extension of the outdoor space claimed to be home “turf” by so many? The grass is no longer present to cushion you from the hustle for loose balls. Hence, the powerful affinity you have to your driveway or playground gets lost in the tight lines and walls of the gymnasium. Your body feels constrained, and the individual not only may feel pressured to conform to the space, but even worse, may lose her passion for free activity, being consumed by the structure and devices of physical education. Huizinga (1955) suggests that “[Play is] a free activity, standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life as being ‘not serious’ but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly ... It proceeds within its own boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner” (p. 13). Although *Liberty* never had an opportunity to experience the purity of a driveway space or community playground at a young age, she still was aware, as a child, that the basketball gymnasium at her elementary school was a constrained and rigid space that didn’t invite natural interaction and play, even though Mr. Rob made it fun.

For *Fever*, her earliest memories of a basketball space were quite competitive in nature. Actually, they were more nerve-racking as she had to adjust to a neighborhood and all the new faces at the local gymnasium. She remembers how tough she fought to prove herself:

We had evaluations the first week of school, and they were held in my elementary school’s gymnasium. The first thing that shocked me going into the evaluations was how odd the gym was. The floor was carpeted, with very oddly shaped baskets with the thick rims. During evaluations I wanted everyone to know that the new kid had skill. Even though it was not a tryout, I treated it like it was. I dove for every loose ball and tried to beat every other person out during the two sprints we had to run. In 5th grade the skill level still is not extremely high, and I could not really see the court as a basketball player just yet. Everyone still kind

of flocked to wherever the ball was, and didn't really know plays or different defenses.

Being the new kid on the block can be quite challenging, especially as one tries to prove herself both in the classroom and on the court. As play turns into performance, the desire to compete elevates, especially at a young age, as participants are trying to prove their ability to the adult, but on the inside, they are really trying to build a reputation among their peers. Weiss (1969) argues that humans at a young age are attracted to sports because: "Excellence excites and awes. It pleases and it challenges . . . a superb performance interests us even more because it reveals to us the magnitude of what then can be done. Illustrating perfection, it gives us a measure for whatever else we do" (p. 3). The skill evaluations that *Fever* describes set the tone for how she behaved within the notion of play. Basketball became her proving ground, the very mechanism by which she as a "sports warrior" fought for the attention of the masses, in order to prove that she was the most valuable player. The competitive foundation set forth by the skill evaluations provided her with a very focused perception and definition of play.

Storm recalls how the gymnasium was more of a transitory space between something she was forced to do and something she eventually loved to play. She recalls trying to prove that she was athletic enough to play instead of cheer from the sidelines, as she confidently proclaims:

At six years old, tryouts aren't too extensive. You dribble the ball through cones all the way down the court and shoot a lay-up, then speed dribble back. It was my first time and I was nervous, but my mom told me that I was the best girl there and with such a statement I flew through those cones and made both of my lay ups. The next day the players were called to see what team they would be on. My first coach was Coach Johnny. He told me that I would play point guard. Being fresh in the game I had no idea what this meant, but by the end of our first practice I had it down. Our first game was in a week and Moe and I had been in

constant competition for the point guard and shooting position. You see, I could shoot and dribble better than he could.

The expectation of superior performance via basketball is no longer limited to professional athletes. Children as young as eight years of age are being challenged by their parents and coaches in a very strategic game of deliberate preparation called play, jumping from one team to another, trying to find the best combination of desire and will to earn recognition by the Amateur Athletic Union organization. For these early-bred athletes an inner voice echoes, “The body prereflectively understood as the lived body is not something which I have; rather it signifies who I am. I am my body or I exist as body. The lived body refers to my personal manner of existing, and the meaning attached to this manner of existing, in a world in which I experience presence” (Gerber & Morgan, 1979, p. 157). The joy of winning the starting point guard position as expressed by *Storm*, may merely have been about the desire to play, as much as possible in the game, yet it consequently served as an identifier for who she was becoming, and what was expected of her as she was the one they were cheering for as opposed to being the cheerleader. The constant competition often carries beyond the court as the lived body craves the challenge to fight for the next position of rank.

For *Sky*, the first gymnasium served as a tough reminder of how hard she was expected to work at an early age because she was younger than the other players, and she was consistently under the gaze of her father. She passionately recalls the space that was a training ground for many years:

My first memory of playing basketball, “The REC” as I call it was when I was probably about 4 years old. My father was the coach of my older sister’s co-ed basketball team and they were having practice. One of the luxuries of being a coach’s daughter was that I got to practice with the team. The team was doing full court lay up drills so I joined. They were doing an excellent job making their

lay ups, but I was not. My father let a couple of missed lay ups slide under the radar without him saying anything to me. But by the 3rd missed lay up he could not hold it in anymore. He told me, “Take it serious, take your time, and make the lay up.” Unfortunately I missed the next lay up and he told me to sit down because he felt like I was playing around and not giving it all I had, which was not the case, I was just not good at lay ups.

To be under constant scrutiny of another at a young age can be intimidating, yet empowering. Has the adult’s desire for accumulating victories within the sporting space become an excuse for teaching self-discipline to younger and younger athletes? The expectation that *Sky*’s father had pushed upon her may have planted the early seeds of discipline within play. Suits (1988) clarifies that play is not just a way of gaining pleasure via free time, but instead:

To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs, using only means permitted by rules, where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favor of less efficient means, and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity. Playing a game is the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles. (p. 43)

Sky was learning at a very young age that to place the ball in the hoop, in its simplest form, the lay up, involves a skill that is acquired not through random play, but through carefully calibrated drills. In the dreaded hours of repetition, as experienced through practice, these drills may appear to be inefficient yet, they produce the most likely opportunities for accumulating points in a basketball game. With the pressures of learning the organized version of basketball at a younger age and at the expense of free play, the recreational aspect of a sporting space, beyond driveways and playgrounds, becomes an exclusive canvas for competition and power.

As the story maps were passed around and narratives were read out loud by each author, the birth of a complicated conversation was taking place. Each journey gave reason to why we had come together, yet at the same time, it begged the question why we

had waited so long. To understand the path these journeys have taken, one must be ready to initiate and engage with the sporting lives upon a curricular platform. The depth that these autobiographical narratives carry may serve as a foundation for why we value knowledge within sports beyond the mere concept of play. Pinar (2012) eloquently captures the value of knowledge via subjectivity:

The existing individual is primary, and so the question is never answered once-and-for-all. The curricular question is a call to individuality, as it invites addressing the concrete other in one's midst. This is not the so-called "possessive individual" associated with capital accumulation, or the rationalistic self-interested hedonist associated with economics, but the actually existing, culturally variegated, historically sedimented, not always conscious human being for who the question of academic knowledge is also a question of self-knowledge. (p. 57)

The finding of the scholarly and athletic self through written narrative is not an individual process by which an individual traces his or her relationships via lived moments. Instead, it needs to be an interactive process where the regressive renderings of another triggers my own becoming and allows me to engage in curriculum, as lived, through complicated conversations that break into the depths of my experiences. In the next few weeks that followed, the participants regressed back to earliest moments of play and unpacked the significance in becoming of the self, team camaraderie, community support, and responsibility to the game via the praxis of narrative deconstruction.

Becoming a Basketball Player

Sports often serve as a recreational escape from reality, but as one grows to engage in play in order to excel, the identity of a player is set into motion through competition. Players often compete with themselves in order to prepare for the challenge of facing the other either individually or as a team. The pleasure that a participant may have craved as an apprentice transforms into a desire to achieve greatness as a self-

defined athlete. The journey is a road filled with obstacles and goals that must be overcome and achieved. A foundation for “rites of passage” along this road may be granted through opportunities, yet the actual achievement is proclaimed by the tactics that a player uses to maneuver within the possibilities. Often we do not picture ourselves coming face to face with the challenges that lie ahead, but instead live our dreams through the body of another. Bandy and Darden (1999) remind us how gender can play a significant role in our becoming in sports:

A woman begins her journey into sport as an outsider, peering in. She enters a world in which she has no identity, a world that affirms what she is not, a male. Sport cannot be used to affirm her femininity; if anything, it is a challenge to or even a denial of her femininity and her femaleness. As she continues her journey as a participant, she must, by necessity, reject the female and the feminine, which will lead her to experience the “divided self” so characteristic of the experience of the outsider. And from this split and the anguish of this split, comes the search for wholeness, a return of the feminine to join the masculine, and the resolution of the divided self. The heroine’s journey is circular in nature; it begins with the self and ends with the self. However, a woman is transformed during her journey into an autonomous, whole, and free person, a transformation brought about and fashioned by her own personal experiences. (p. xii)

The question that remains to be answered is whether given the post-Title IX opportunities that each of the scholar-athletes in our group inherited to some degree, what are the unique sporting challenges that they faced in their becoming as scholars and athletes of basketball?

The canvas of competitive sports has changed dramatically since the initiation of Title IX, yet the notion of gender, in lieu of talent, has remained a focal point on playgrounds and in gyms. Women are constantly fighting to prove that they are capable of participating in, and not tainting, the competitive nature of play. According to Feezell (2010), we have forgotten that play is an all-encompassing concept that is fluid:

Play is activity characterized by freedom, separateness, nonseriousness, illusion, unreality, delimitation of space and time, isolation, purposelessness, order, make-believe, a play world, superfluousness, suspension of the ordinary, internal or intrinsic meaning, inherent attraction, unalienated participation, internal purposiveness, serious nonseriousness, diminished consciousness of self, unselfing, absorption, responsive openness, attunement, experience of difficulty, overcoming obstacles, risk-taking, finitude, narrative structure, unity, contingency, possibility, uncertainty, spontaneity, improvisation—and fun. (p. 158)

By defining play as an activity that must be carried out and enjoyed by everyone in the same manner, based on stagnant ground rules, crushes the initial invitation of an escape from reality. For many of the participants in the class, play as defined by Feezell became a fire in the belly to prove to themselves and others that they were capable to use the sporting space as a venue for self-development both in and out of play.

In the regressive section of her autobiography, *Fever* reminisces about how the time she spent with her dad as a young girl was influential in the passion she developed for sports. Although her dad was also her coach, she writes about having to prove herself to everyone else:

Even being as young as six, I quickly realized how outnumbered I was being a girl. I remember Sarah would usually just sit on her mother's lap during the games and refuse to go in. I never thought twice about our differences at the time, but looking back I was really the only girl that wanted to participate. At that age I was one of the only kids out of both the boys and girls that was really into the game. I was not the best player by far on any of the teams, but I knew that basketball was something extremely enjoyable for me.

To remain focused on a sport that you enjoy, even though other girls around you do not want to participate, brings forth the notion of how opportunities can be an elixir for perseverance. Had *Fever* not been given an opportunity to play on a team, she would have to find other avenues of connecting with kids on the playground, and many of those kids quite possibly were boys. However, I wonder if the relationship that *Fever* had with her father was what truly ignited her pleasure for the game, regardless of how the other

girls reacted toward playing organized basketball? The attraction of women to sports sadly begs for an explanation of the other. As is, she could not possibly fall in love with the notion of physical play. People ask her how many brothers she had, or in which sports her parents participated. As Mitchell (1964) points out:

You're in a contest against yourself ... It's you and the sea, and the sea is eternal. You're alone for a little while in a crowded world, out under a big sky with the wind blowing on you. It's ... learning to depend solely upon yourself, of trusting your muscles and endurance and nerve ... It's always reminding yourself that life is, or can be, basically simple. (p. 123)

Although we have come a long way in breaking stereotypes, such as girls are not as active as boys, we still seem to doubt the capability of women being aggressive and competitive in nature on their own will and perseverance. Hence, we pigeon hole girls for certain sports or activities and are shocked when they rebel. Often, their informal journey in sports becomes one of self-reliance, as they find themselves standing tall to prove their desire and ability to play with the so-called "big boys." For those girls who feel as if they have been blessed with a gift to play, the challenge becomes the drive.

Mystic, who is quite spiritual, claims that she was given the talent to play basketball by a higher power. In her regressive moment, she writes:

One of the first times I knew it was my job to dribble a basketball was when my dad took me to a cheerleading tryout at the local elementary school. We had to draw a number to see when we were to perform our tryout. Well, so happened that I drew the number one, meaning I would go first. I asked my dad if we could leave, so we did, and that was the day I knew my talent was not going to be in cheerleading, or anywhere near the cheerleading arena. It was more a girly sport. My twin sister was the more girly one and I was more of the tomboyish one and I was always with my brother and we got along better, cause he was a football player and a basketball player. My sister was all about the Barbies and stuff like that, but I was more like let's go play outside and we had a hoop. Cheerleading just was not for me.

Although her connection with cheerleading was absent at a young age, I wonder how much of *Mystic's* becoming was influenced by the action that her father took, in that moment, by not forcing her to try out and not making her commit to something she truly did not enjoy.

Dream captures the essence of how challenging the becoming of a young girl in sports can be with regard to the choices that parents make for their children and how they differ between one gender and another. In her regressive moment she writes about the recreational barriers that existed for young girls in absence of organized league play:

For guys I feel like it's different than it is for girls. You do not see girls out on the courts like you see guys if kids are out there anymore. And so being a female is like if I didn't play basketball on a team, then I was not playing basketball because at least where I come from you do not have girls running around saying hey let's go to a court and just shoot around. Like my friends if they're running around, anything, it's a purse like the mall or something ... So, it was just hard to enjoy the game as a sport, as fun, because there was not much opportunity to.

I often wonder why we have progressed so far in providing sporting opportunities for women, yet in lieu of recreational leagues, the unofficial sites of competition such as neighborhood and school playgrounds still serve as proving grounds with limited opportunity. According to Messner's interviews with coaches, who had worked with both genders, the battle for girls is if they can weather the storm of society's expectations and limitations within sports at a young age. One of Messner's participants claims:

They're very, very different in style...The girls tend to form a team much easier than boys. Boys seem to have a much more competitive streak in them and a much more aggressive streak in them than the girls do—sometimes to the detriment of the team. They are individuals playing together, not a team working together. I think that changes a little bit as the girls get older and become more trained or conditioned into behaving in a more aggressive manner—over time, girls who would have been aggressive, to some extent, and competitive, to some extent, I think learn to be more so. And I think what happens is as they grow older, those who are willing to be like that—be more similar to boys, I think—stay in the sport. (2011, p. 162)

I understand that regardless of gender, on the playground you must prove that you can play before you are selected by a team of individuals who know each other well, but the question is whether women are given the same opportunities to prove themselves on the playgrounds that are often dominated by men.

In her regressive moment, *Liberty* takes us back to her favorite time of day in school – recess. She surprisingly recalls with great detail how empowering those moments were for her:

The most memorable forty minutes of recess was, by far, the three-on-three basketball tournament in sixth grade. I played with my two friends, Alejandra and Olivia, and we were the only all-girl team in the bracket. Most of the boys were terrified of us because they knew how we played against them at my house and at the Vernon court on the weekends. We were merciless and demolished the first two teams we played. In the finals we played against our best guy friends. They didn't go easy on us at all and we ended up losing the game. This was the first time that ever happened to us. Maybe the male gym teacher gave them a few calls because he was worried that his prized male athletes could actually lose to a bunch of girls.

The fascination with play, via recess, often favors young girls in elementary school who may have matured faster than some of their male counterparts. At this age, girls, unlike boys, may look to each other for support in competition, instead of trying to prove individual elite status among their own teammates. The ultimate goal is to have fun by any means necessary, and part of the pleasure comes in defeating the boys. According to Collingwood (1924), in a classic philosophic piece, there is a strong connection between play and life:

All play, even the most splendid, is only play. Beyond it and above it stands the world of utility, and above that again the world of duty ... So play, which is identical with art, is the attitude which looks at the world as an infinite and indeterminate field for activity, a perpetual adventure. All life is an adventure, and the spirit of adventure, wherever it is found, can never be out of place. It is true that life is much more than this; it is never, even its most irresponsible

moments, a mere adventure; but this it is; and therefore the spirit of play, the spirit of eternal youth, is the foundation and beginning of all real life. (pp. 106-107)

The respect of skills that *Liberty* and her friends had instilled within their home court and neighborhood playgrounds definitely trickled into recess at school. That respect also earned them the right to compete with boys who did not back down and refuse to play against girls. Hence, the spirit of adventure was not tarnished by a lack of effort on the part of the boys during the observed recess hours because of the respect that the girls had earned during informal play in their own neighborhoods.

Claiming the Athlete Within

The status earned on the school playgrounds, however, is often a self-initiated achievement, and not one that is granted to a group of friends. In her regressive moment, *Comet* revisits the battle of proving her worth to others under their terms. She claims that the playground was an empowering experience for her status as an athlete:

My elementary school playground really fueled the fire of passion for basketball. My whole childhood I was a tomboy and still am to an extent. At lunch on the playground, I was usually one of the only girls who would play football and basketball with the boys. Basketball, in particular, gave me some troubles from time to time. I would always try and get on the court, and this one group of boys would always tell me no because I was not a part of their crowd. Every day I pushed to play and finally one day they let me play. I remember under what circumstances I was allowed to play: if my team won, I could stay. Basketball brought me some status and was one of the first instances I remember standing up for myself.

As *Comet* points out, the becoming of the self was more significant than the opportunity to play basketball and sit at a particular lunch table. Her desire was to be accepted for what she enjoyed doing and talking about, not a free pass into the jock network at school. The notion of play during childhood is imagined to be a pure experience, through which girls and boys can choose to create their own interactive engagements, not for the

purpose of power, but for the experience of learning. Yet, Merleau-Ponty (1962) reminds us:

The phenomenological world is not pure being [as the world is conceived of in the speculative tradition], but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which find unity when I either take up my past experiences in those of the present, or other people's in my own. (p. xx)

Often the notion of becoming and acceptance are inseparable in sports, but as *Sky's* narrative screams, in basketball, you cannot prove anything verbally unless you can back it up physically. She takes us back to her favorite recreation center and how special and challenged she felt by putting on that official league uniform:

I got to practice the first day, and I was the only girl there. Some of the boys were shocked that I was the only girl, but I saw no difference; we were all just there to play basketball. I felt like I had to once again prove myself, and I tried to beat the guys at everything I did; I ran faster, played defense harder, threw stronger passes, and just ran them into the ground ... It was like you're not going to look at me like that because I'm probably better than half you all out here, so I need to shut you all up. I need to make lay-ups that you all ain't going to make. I need to play defense like you all aren't going to play, cause I was not going to go through an entire season of them not passing me the ball or acting crazy.

Sky's experience points a new challenge in sports for kids who are participating on coed teams. Often many girls will find themselves as the lone star females on the team, and regardless of how talented and passionate they may be, they face a wall of uncertainty and adversity as they encounter their own teammates in practice and other teams in competition. *Storm* captures this dilemma well as she regressed about the repercussions of being a very talented athlete on a coed basketball team:

The worst part about being a girl on a coed team is the fact that the coach's son hated me because I played more than he did and I didn't like him too much either, my reason was just because he sucked! I used to call him a girl in practice because he would always whine. I guess you could say that he got me back in our championship game. I had ended the half with a shot roughly from half court and

the game was extremely close. All that his son had to do was inbound the ball to me. I would speed dribble down the court and pass to Ashy Knees for the lay-up and the win. But, Little Anthony beamed the ball at my face so hard that it busted my mouth all-open. There was blood everywhere, but I was determined to get back in the game. I tried to convince Coach Johnny that I could play, but he told me to sit down and cheer for my teammates.

The dilemma that *Storm* faced is not unique, in that more young talented girls are stealing the limelight on coed basketball teams, instigating the boys to retaliate and prove their masculinity in front of the audience, instead of improving their skills in competition. Yet, when all the dust settles, it appears that the women are still fighting to prove that they belong on the same staged court as the men. As *Shock* explains in her written narrative, for many young women it serves as an invitation into playing multiple sports in order to prove their athletic feat to the doubters. *Shock* captures how it all eventually caught up with her when she writes:

I do not know what it is about my life that I have to do so many things, but, I was playing on two soccer teams and two basketball teams, and I was run down, I was like 12. We're sitting in the parking lot outside of a basketball tournament, I had a game in like ten minutes, like I do not wanna do this anymore; it's not fun when you have so much you have to do and it's not learning, it's just going through the paces. I wanted to play both sports and my dad was like you should do this. My brothers as well – we played an insane amount of sports.

The becoming of an athlete early on in a women's life appears to serve as a foundation for how she later approaches a given task both on and off the court. The transition from play, to sports, to athletic competition, is not a personally isolated, driven right, but a more complex engagement of multiple people with personal intentions.

Keating (1964) makes a distinction between sports and athletics by claiming:

In essence, sport is a kind of diversion which has for its direct and immediate end fun, pleasure, and delight and which is dominated by spirit of moderation and generosity. Athletics, on the other hand, is essentially a competitive activity, which has for its end victory in the contest and which is characterized by a spirit of dedication, sacrifice, and intensity. (p. 28)

The inquiry that could be raised is how many women, who eventually abandoned sports for lack of support in athletics, could have potentially benefited from the experience had they been given the opportunity to define themselves and their desires as individuals on the court through dedication, sacrifice, and intensity. The engagements and relationships that occur during the middle years for athletes are critical to the way that sports is used as a platform for life lessons learned and earned. In the next section I explore the regressive notion of camaraderie and how it played a role in the lives of these eight women as they grew into their middle years with basketball.

The Arrival: Finding Team Camaraderie as Individuals

We fall in love with the game of basketball and dedicate numerous hours to learning the drills for dribbling and shooting the ball. We watch our athletic heroes on television and wake up early the next day to get on the court and emulate their moves, while simultaneously cheering for ourselves as the other. At some point, we crave testing our skills against another, hoping that the long hours of practice pay off. The infamous recreational tryout often becomes the first place these skills mean something, even though we often face another on a playground, informally testing what we claim to have perfected. Jay Coakley (2007) refers to the transition as a middle passage for moving from an active phase to a regulated stage. He claims:

Children must be creative to organize games and keep them going. They encounter dozens of unanticipated challenges, requiring on-the-spot decisions and interpersonal abilities. They learn to organize games, form teams, cooperate with peers, develop rules, and take responsibility for following and enforcing rules. These are important lessons, many of which are not learned in adult-controlled organized sports. (pp. 136-137)

The dilemma that we encounter is that not all athletes arrive at the space of organized basketball from exposure to camaraderie on the playground, especially if their experience

limits them to an enclosed driveway where they made the rules and they changed the rules at their own discretion. For many of us, basketball playgrounds, whether they were based in school during recess or found on our own time in the neighborhood, served as the first point of interaction, competition, and collaboration. Today, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) brings the many playgrounds together within an organized tournament under a common set of rules. The idea is that even if you shoot around by yourself somewhere in the outskirts of a small rural town and you have the talent, then you can find a team close by that can grant you an opportunity to be part of the great camaraderie of a national basketball competition.

For many of the scholar-athletes in the class, seeing organized basketball or participating on an AAU team served them quite well in becoming better players, making new friends, and traveling throughout the country and the world. *Dream* reminisces about how she was drawn to the notion of playing at a competitive level in middle school, based on the challenge of meeting new people that were talented and unique in their style of play. In her regressive narrative she writes:

My AAU teammates were much cooler than my middle school teammates; I think it was because most of us didn't know anyone else that was on the team. But once we started getting into a rhythm it was like I had been playing with them forever. My teammates Stephany and Samantha and I had learned each other's style of play fairly quickly. Samantha knew that when I was on the left side of the court that she should not pass the ball to me because my left hand layup was not that strong, but she knew that when Stephany was on the left that she had a good left hand layup. It was crazy how quickly the team seemed to gel with each other. I think our bond grew close because we traveled a lot and would share rooms together, so it was like we became a little family.

The transformation from recreational play to competitive tournaments served as an initiation for many of the scholar-athletes in the class as they witnessed opportunities only granted to them, greater attention from teachers and other students, and of course,

the distinct title of being recognized as an official athlete. It is not until later in life that we reflect on how many people influenced our becoming, directly or indirectly, through the game of basketball. Eakin (1999) suggests that the intellectual renderings from an autobiographical past should contemplate the following:

Why do we so easily forget that the first person of autobiography is truly plural in its origins and subsequent formation? Because autobiography promotes an illusion of self-determination: *I write my story; I say who I am; I create my self.* The myth of autonomy dies hard, and autobiography criticism has not yet fully addressed the extent to which the self is defined by – and lives in terms of – its relations with others ... *all identity is relational.* (p. 43)

An athlete's dream may be built on emulating a favorite player, but the individual grows past this phase and wants to some degree to become desirable by encompassing her own unique style of play and competitive zeal. The possible fear of losing an individual identity to a group of relations may be a possible explanation for why an athlete gives credit to the other for consistent support, without relinquishing control of her becoming as a self-declared basketball phenomenon.

Sky recalls her experience of building camaraderie as one that had to be earned and was not just handed out because she had experience. She claims that these moments helped her understand the “specialness” that comes from being connected with others who worked to excel:

Middle school basketball was a different type of game because it was more about fighting for your position, and letting not just the coach and your teammates know you were good, but the entire school know you deserved everything you got. People would decorate our lockers, come up to me in school and say “good luck, kick ass,” and the teachers would treat us special. I was never someone that liked hand outs; I liked to work for everything I got because when I accomplished my goal it felt so good to say I did that on my own. In middle school I had acquaintances that I never would have had if I were not an athlete, these were the people like the fans who were your supporters and just wanted to be around you, and feel like they were a part of the team.

The confidence that an athlete builds while playing competitively under the auspices of an academic institution can have tremendous implications beyond the court, into the classroom, and throughout the community as *Sky* so eloquently captures in her writing. Academic institutions set the tone for balancing scholarship and athletics. The tone often becomes a key factor in the human relationships the scholar athlete encounters within the journey. Kleinman (1975) emphasizes that the development of an individual is based on the experiences she has while engaging with others:

It is the 'other' which signifies people and things which are essential to the nature of human relationships. I am contending here that it is these human relationships, man's dialectic with people and things, which provide an avenue for man to become a self ... an essential ingredient of kinesis [movement toward self] is encounter. (p. 46)

Sky's encounter with her peers and her teachers validated the significance between being a scholar and an athlete, allowing her to use basketball as a means to a beginning, not an end. *Shock* also writes compellingly of her middle school experience as being a growth phase, both intellectually and physically. In order for her to achieve greatness in 8th grade she had to dedicate a lot of her time to understanding the game. She captures a true moment of being a scholar-athlete in this reflection:

By the time I was in 8th grade trying out for the team, I knew I would make it. I knew all the plays, defense sets, and even drills by heart. Managing for two years had its perks. The season seemed like one big learning moment. I literally learned something everyday about the game and about my role in it. Pierson had her struggles keeping me focused, but in the end we had a great season and I set a school record with most points in a season. My name is still on the wall at the middle school. Sometimes, I like to go look at it. I often wonder why someone hasn't broken it yet, but I take a little pride in the fact that I did something no one else can seem to achieve.

The process of declaring the becoming of an athlete can begin at a very raw age.

Being part of the AAU circuit quickly ripens athletes into confident competitors, seeking

camaraderie within the notion of excellence. *Comet* takes us back to her induction into the AAU ranks by writing about how great it felt to be the center of attention, and how the relationships that were embarked upon remained intact for many years to come:

AAU was the most interesting team. Most of those girls eventually became my high school team, but there were some girls that didn't live in my town. We all became the greatest friends. I remember my first year of AAU. My coach always put us in the older league. We only won one game. When we won that game, you would have thought we won the State Championship. We were so happy. We celebrated and went out to eat. After that, we were unstoppable in any league we played in. It seemed to be that as our camaraderie off of the court grew our success in games grew.

The dilemma with AAU basketball is that it often becomes, too early in the life of an athlete, all about winning and sending a message to other teams that you are unstoppable. In the process of gaining notoriety for a team's camaraderie, the individuals live up to shame and not necessarily fame. The high-stakes tournaments sponsored by the AAU organization set the stage for competition as an art form. Spectators pack into tight gymnasiums to get a glimpse of future all-stars and indulge themselves in team rivalries.

Gaskin and Masterson (1974) emphasize that the elements of sports bring forth art:

So it is then that the superlative action of individuals or of groups of players, resolving the problems imposed by sport within the rules and ethics of the event and stimulated by the drama, tension, uncertainty, and mood of the occasion can give rise to the displays of human skill coupled with courage, power, strength, and effort which manifest beauty and the sublime, thereby creating Art in sport.
(p. 60)

The transition from recreational playground basketball to competitively staged basketball is short-lived, and often not regretted, by many young athletes. The drama, tension, and uncertainty of putting your skills to test against someone from a playground far from home creates a mood that is addictive for many adrenaline junkie gym rats.

Storm recalls her first AAU team at the age of ten and how arrogant, yet successful they were:

We all played AAU ball together when we were ten, and played an age group or two up every year. And believe it or not, we would win, and if we didn't win we would only lose by single digit numbers. Those were the good old days. My dad paid for all of our jerseys and we just new we were the "flyest" and best team out there "reppin" our red and white as Andrea would say. We would travel to Philly, Delaware, NJ, Southern MD, everywhere and we would dominate. The funniest and sometimes most embarrassing moments were getting kicked out of a few gyms because of our poor attitudes and sometimes our coaches' attitudes as well.

Even greater problems arise as basketball becomes a business – the business of winning that is. As AAU teams pack their rosters with greater talent at a young age, they find a need to play up from their age bracket, if the competition is absent, always looking ahead to the next year and preparing themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally for what is to come. *Mystic* recalls one of her most fascinating experiences at a basketball tournament:

Walking into the gym in Morgantown, West Virginia, those girls looked like they were giants compared to me, some even beyond that. They were a huge team and they were known nationally. They recruited in-state and all over Ohio and Pennsylvania. We came in jerseys that were like practice jerseys and they show up in these Nike, WV Thunder pants and socks, like they were sponsored by Nike. I remember we were playing them and we were losing by 10 at half-time. They were way better than us. They were an all-star team compared to what we were. Our coaches are like, "Don't be scared, you'll be fine." They tried to make us better by going against better competition. They ended up beating us by like 35, but afterwards we were all excited that we were even that close to that team.

The world of AAU can offer fantastic opportunities for testing your skills as a player and learning to work harder, as a team, in order to achieve the ultimate prize of a national championship; yet, it cannot replace the jubilation that an athlete encounters when she has made the "A" team and is on the road to building something great with a group of talented athletes. Weiss (1969) emphasizes that the pinnacle of performance is

not merely a physical mastery of sporting skills, but an appreciation of controlled, technical achievement. Hence, just like the performing arts,

Excellence excites and awes. It pleases and it challenges. We are often delighted by specimens whether they be flowers, beasts, or men. A superb performance interests us even more because it reveals to us the magnitude of what then can be done. Illustrating perfection, it gives us a measure for whatever else we do. (p. 3)

The notion of living as scholars and athletes through the game of basketball equates to a creative balance between the body and mind leading to skillful performance both on and off the court. *Fever* captures her validation in basketball by recalling a special moment of induction:

After the fall club season ended I was excited to learn that I could try out to be on a select league for Green Hornets. I had become acquainted with the four superstars during that fall season, and went back to the same gym for the try out. I was beside myself with nerves because it was the first time I had ever tried out for anything. But when the call came a few nights later saying that I had made the “A” select team I was elated. I had finally found a team that shared my passion for the game.

Looking beyond our neighborhoods and national tournaments, a shared camaraderie for basketball exists among players globally as teams compete for bragging rights to which country has the most talented basketball players. For *Liberty* the opportunity occurred in the off-season as she reflects upon her unique experience overseas:

The summer after my junior year I went to Israel for the Maccabi Games. I had played Maccabi in North America for three years before making the junior team that represented the United States in Israel. Before that, I traveled to Montreal, Ohio, and New Jersey and my team was undefeated with three gold medals. It was crazy to be around Jewish athletes from all over the United States and various other countries. During those years, our coach was the best in the business. The theme of the Maccabi Games was Rachmanus, or sportsmanship. My coach didn't believe in that. He was a great guy off the court but on the court he showed no mercy. We would beat teams by up to fifty points.

The discovery of a special camaraderie early on in a women's life appears to serve as a foundation for whether an athlete remains in touch with the game. The

question that must be raised is whether the price of maintaining that camaraderie is worth a winning at all costs mentality, or worse yet, sacrificing the personal passion of basketball for a championship. Kew (1978) reminds us that we forget who we are as individuals in order to respond to the outcomes that are demanded of us in play.

As the emphasis on winning increases, so the value of the actual playing of the game decreases. The means being to justify the end result ... basic moral tenets which, by common consent, govern all human action, cease to apply within the realm of the game ... The individual is valued purely instrumentally and his effectiveness and worth are synonymous with his single-minded dedication and contribution to winning. His own motives for playing the game, the meaning of the game for him, his personal and private experiences, and feelings, aesthetic satisfaction, and so on are of no consequence if they neither contribute to, nor detract from the main aim of winning. (p. 107)

Players fall passionately in love with the game of basketball and when high expectations for perfection fall upon their shoulders as athletes, they turn to each other to seek refuge in the camaraderie that was the source of energy on the driveways and playgrounds where they learned the game. In the next section I explore the regressive notion of community and how it played a role in the lives of these eight women as they grew into their prime years with basketball.

Whose Basketball Community is it Anyways?

As basketball participants in a recreational playground setting, we have no obligation to the community. The community has provided us with a space for leisure, and in return it merely expects us to respect the public space and others who use it. The same is often true of the sacred hoops that our parents buy and erect within our driveways, asking us to take care of them and share them with other neighborhood kids who are also responsible. Once a participant enters the realm of becoming a community athlete (e.g., an athlete who is respected and known throughout the community because of the feat she displays in organized league play and scholastic sports), she is no longer

held to the basic standards set forth by her parents or friends. Now, she is under the gaze of what Webb (2007) names as *communitarians*.

Communitarians are political philosophers who believe, as you might guess from their name, that the needs of the community outweigh the desires of the individual. Communitarians follow Aristotle in arguing that humans are naturally social creatures. People find value in life through their attachments to various groups, organizations, or teams. Communities determine meaning, not individuals. As the familiar example of team bonding in basketball illustrates, people value each other and the places they live because they have shared goals, common beliefs, and public rituals that bring them together. (pp. 8-9)

The notion of a community gaze is not one of losing our becoming, but instead through our lived accomplishments we are part of how a community defines itself. In the realm of basketball, the goals and rituals of the community are often the same as our intentions. Both parties seek victory and improvement, and of course the community prefers to see us succeed beyond the neighborhood borders like a poster child that they can later brag about. Kleinman (1975) argues that "... a self is a becoming. It is a coming to be. It becomes itself independently, yet obligated. An 'other' is a necessary condition for this process to take place ... A self is actor, yet acted upon, performer and audience" (p. 45). The outcome of a strong bond between parents, athletes, schools, and fans within smaller communities could have a tremendous impact on basketball as a global community. The unity of sports is not limited to a single platform. The more we engage with others who share similar interests, the more we realize the variety of interpretations that different communities carry out with regard to the sporting space. As Kracauer (1995) points out:

The more reality opens itself up to man, the more foreign to him the average world with its distorted conceptual petrifications becomes. He recognizes that a boundless plenitude of qualities inhabits each phenomenon, and that each is subject to widely differing laws. But, the more he becomes aware of the many-

sidedness of things, the more it becomes possible for him to relate them to each other. (p. 234)

For many of the scholar-athletes in the class, basketball became a big deal because of how the community embraced it. To fall in love with basketball is a gift, but to have others experience that passion with you is a treasure. For *Dream*, the passion was electrified through a grand, informal celebration of women's basketball on the streets of New York. As she recalls:

Basketball has always been a part of my life because my parents love the game. On weekends my mom and I would go into New York City and go to women basketball tournaments. The games would take place in these small recreational leagues, but the players were not just old women who have had a hard time letting go of the dream of playing basketball. These were some of the best basketball players that I have ever seen play the game of basketball. Even as a young child I knew that as a girl I could play the game of basketball even if I was not able to watch the game on television. Going to these recreational games was like going to watch the Knicks play at Madison Square Garden. The gym would be packed to capacity – some people had to stand during the whole tournament, but it did not matter to them because they knew that they were about to watch a great game of basketball.

The visual opportunity granted to *Dream* at such an early age is rare and priceless as she witnessed her own athletic self being confirmed in the superb ability of other women competing gracefully and fearlessly on outdoor courts. According to Kohn (1992), “Competition is rule-governed, often extrinsically motivated (by the desire for social approval), and is goal-oriented (a product-orientation), rather than being a ‘process orientation.’ Therefore, because sport is competitive, ‘sports never really qualified as play in the first place. Although it is not generally acknowledged, most definitions of play do seem to exclude competitive activities” (p. 82). Obviously, the women that *Dream* was admiring meant business, and they were not just fooling around through the

notion of play. Instead, they were showing their great athletic ability through competition, and within the contest they were achieving happiness.

Sky paints a very different picture of her earliest basketball community experience, one that was not filled with glamour and glitz, but instead served as a space that had to be accepted. *Sky* describes her discovery of this space by writing:

Most people say basketball is like a journey, but I say it's more like an exploration; more filled with adventure, fun, triumph and struggle, and all ending right back where you started. My exploration started when I was 5 years old and I took my first trip to Ardwick Ardmore basketball court with my sister and brother. It was a sunny day, and my expectations were high, because I was ready to go start my life on this court that they lived on 5 hours a day. I got there and my happiness sunk away, because this court was depressing. The gravel was cracked, and it sat in a place that no matter what you did, after every shot you would have to chase the ball down the hill.

The acceptance of this basketball space by *Sky* was also her mini-passage into the larger community of basketball. She no longer could seclude herself by her safe, adjustable hoop at home, but craved to follow in her siblings' footsteps. The mold of selfishness was broken by *Sky* as she entered unfamiliar territory. Murdoch (1971) claims that individuals often paint an incomplete picture of the world in their isolation:

Our minds are continually active, fabricating an anxious, usually self-preoccupied, often falsifying *veil* which partially conceals the world. Our states of consciousness differ in quality, our fantasies and reveries are not trivial and unimportant, they are profoundly connected with our energies and our ability to choose and act. And if quality of consciousness matters, then anything which alters consciousness in the direction of unselfishness, objectivity, and realism is to be connected with virtue. (p. 84)

Although her initiation into an unknown space was driven by an older sibling, *Sky* could have easily limited her play to familiar territory by not returning. Instead, she allowed the basketball space to open up new doors of interaction for her.

Comet paints an older and somewhat different landscape of initiation within small town politics. Her experience points to the bigger picture of athletics and community gossip. *Comet* expresses her concern by writing:

I come from a small town. So, reputations in the athletic world at my high school get built quick. If your name is out there for one sport, you are most likely to be watched for the other sports you play. One girl on my team is a very talented athlete. Although she is talented, I do believe there were other ways she made herself known outside of her playing. She kissed a lot of butt. She sucked up to every coach around her, knowing that it would get her what she wanted. I do not blame her completely. Her parents did it too. She got her recognition. She got her name in the paper and her face on our local sports news often.

The reputation that a person builds within a community, one that is especially small and quite public, can carry a toll for many years to come. I wonder how much athletes feel that they have to conform to the masses as the torch bearers within competition. Was the athlete that *Comet* mentions above simply chasing her own dream, not caring what image of herself she was painting, or was she seeking acceptance by the community through her actions? Metheny (1968) argues that an athlete is ultimately in charge of the image she portrays on the court, and her actions during play often carry beyond into her life off the court. As she gains greater attention, she must also be aware that

We can play hide and seek with reality, avoiding facing the truth about ourselves but in sport we cannot do this ... As a result, sport leads to the most remarkable self-discovery, of limitations as well as abilities. The discovery is partly physical ... but mainly the discovery is mental. In time we learn how far from being self-sufficient we are, we realize the value of cooperation and assistance from others. But unless we start out alone, we never learn the answers others can best answer and those we must answer for ourselves. (p. 66)

In her written narrative, *Fever* writes about returning to her old community under the audacity of still naturally belonging in the athletic space where she shined often.

Unfortunately, she had a rude awakening:

The first time I didn't feel welcomed in a basketball space was the first time I returned to my high school for a girl's basketball game. When we walked through the doors we were met by the athletic director who started to yell at us for being somewhere we didn't belong. I was shocked because I was so used to going in that way, and hearing him say, "You aren't allowed to be back here," was surreal. We all felt that because we had played basketball for the school for four years we had some sort of right to still be a part of that community. It was also weird to have to pay for a ticket to get into the game because I was so used to carrying my gym bag and going right through. That first time going back was really difficult because I felt like I lost my sense of belonging.

A sense of community is often associated with a particular space, and as *Fever* mentions, a return to that nostalgic place in search of memories can be quite jarring. *Fever* and her friends felt disowned as returning alumni by a community that had formerly embraced them as basketball players. Heidegger warns us that the notion of authenticity is instructive in the moment(s). He defines authenticity as "the excellence of being what one is, fulfillment of one's particular functions, true self-realization in the sense of self-disclosure and self-fulfillment" (1962, p. 158). Hence, there are many possible ways of being and becoming with regard to authenticity. *Fever* had pictured the sporting space within her former school to still exemplify a sense of "mineness" – but, the belonging that she craved and anticipated had now become the next athlete's authentic platform.

For some of the scholar-athletes in the class, their memories of community were associated with the people who occupied that space with them and shared in the moments. *Shock* remembers distinct rules of engagement within her community basketball courts and how they defined how one was viewed by other members in that space:

Every kid has someone they look up to. Whether they wear the shoes hoping to gain a bit of their hero's skill or attempt their player's favorite move so much they could swear they had it down to perfection. Most of the time it was a halfhearted

attempt at dunking (on the lowered basket) with tongues flailing ala Mr. Michael Jordan. This is where I learned the unspoken rules of the game. When a foul is called, you do not question it. As much as you bitch and moan, the person that called it is always going to get the ball. If you call next, you get next. You cannot step onto a court like you own it unless you've proved your worth to those whose court it really is.

The sporting space often defines how we behave and who we become. The altered rules of the game are set in place to develop a sense of fairness in absence of a referee. Suits points out that:

To play a game is the attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs (prelusory goal), using only means permitted by rules (lusory means), where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favor of less efficient means (constitutive rules), and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity (lusory attitude). Playing a game is the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles. (Feezell, 2004, p. 68)

Shock not only craved the elements of the playground space, but she revered the obstacles set forth and altered by the players who claimed that space to be their sporting home. Yet, within this unstable playground society, young players, like *Shock*, found their true identity as athletes and ambassadors of the game.

Not all of the scholar-athletes' experiences of community were focused on the big community playground and its quirky rules of engagement. *Liberty* shares her story of how the home court became an extension of what she had fallen in love with at school.

As she talks about the relationship between basketball, herself, and her father she recalls:

My father knew that we were in the basketball segment of my gym class at school but I do not think that he was prepared for me to be able to dribble behind my back. He was so happy and abruptly stopped mowing the lawn. So, with half of our lawn uncut, my father and I shot around until my mother came home. Of course it was not the most precise dribble, but it was good enough for my father to forget how upset he was that his chances of having a son were dwindling. Every once in awhile, my father and I would draw a key and a three point line with sidewalk chalk. The lines of our makeshift court were always crooked, not only because of my awful drawing skills, but because there were so many cracks and bumps on our driveway. But, the only thing that remained constant was the

placement of the foul line: always aligned with a light-post on the side of our driveway.

That treasured space can never be taken away from *Liberty*, as she often returns home to visit her family and still recalls being the little girl who was the architect of that small basketball community right outside her house. Roochnik (1975) claims that our attraction toward a self-defined space may be based on a concept of play stance:

Play is a mode of being. It is a way of comforting oneself, a way of approaching and extending oneself to the world ... it can become a stance. A stance is very much an attitude. An attitude is a way of thinking about things; it is a mental disposition and orientation toward the world ... But a stance is more deeply rooted than an attitude; it permeates all aspects of human being ... A stance goes beyond the intellect to the body and the spirit, and becomes a mode of being-toward-the-world. (p. 39)

In her writing, *Storm* brings forth a very different aspect of community, one that is driven by competition and trickles beyond the court into every aspect of life. As she ponders upon her becoming, she compares herself to other aspects of her immediate community by stating:

My first coach, she was the worst one. She was all about competition. In practices, we were always competing against each other. If we didn't win, we all ran. At home, my mom is the only person I know out of everyone in my family who's just peaceful. With my mom she's the least competitive person that I know. I'm so competitive I stopped talking to this guy like two summers ago because he didn't want to play the basketball game at King's Dominion. Even when I was 3, we had competitions on who could memorize the most Bible verses. I knew every verse that was in the Bible. It's kind of weird that I like confrontation because in a way that's like competition.

In other conversations during class *Storm* was adamant about arguing through issues, even if they were counter to her own beliefs. Her competitive nature was somewhat contagious as she triggered others to question some of the readings based on their individual experiences. The transformation of play into competition seems quite natural for athletes like *Storm* who thrive off of the challenge and refuse to give in to a notion of

a tie. Kretchmar's (1973) analysis between play and sport suggests a tension between learned notions of work and play:

It is often thought that play and sport are highly, if not totally, incompatible. The competitive projects of sport stand at odds with the freedom, spontaneity and lack of seriousness thought to be characteristic of play. The extreme goal orientation of sport, including the drive to win, the quest for honor and the thirst for excellence, seems to beg a work not a play orientation. It is more correct to say, so the argument runs, that one *works* sport, not *plays* sport. (p. 64)

Mystic writes about the pressures of her community as she tried to find a balance between her academic and athletic becoming. It was quite interesting to read that she actually had an inclination for where she would end up after high school early on in her life. She also blamed her athletic becoming within a "title-town" community as playing a part in some decisions that she made:

I knew my whole life that I was going to go to a big school. I'm not going to a state school, I'm not going to a division II school; I'm not doing any of that. I went to Marshall because my sister was going there and my best friend was going there. I shouldn't have done that; it was a huge mistake and it ended up, I didn't like it. I feel bad that I should have just gone the academic way. Playing basketball your whole life – that's all you do, that's all you think, you have pressure from your coaches. My parents didn't really push me or anything; you have your fans – you're supposed to play division I basketball. I had all that pressure on me and I should have gone another route, but I felt like I had to because I was this basketball star that was supposed to be something and it didn't work out.

The impact that community places and people have on our becoming as scholar-athletes begs the question, do we belong to these spaces or do these places belong to us and our childhood history. These scholar athletes are merely one of many who passed through that space at a certain point in time, yet for some of these women there was a sense of ownership and belonging far greater than a moment in time. By writing their way back to these spaces as scholars, they are able to regressively capture each moment

in time, and through the sharing of these basketball experiences recognizing the historicity of their becoming:

We connect our lives to many others – to lives that are over, and to lives that have not yet begun, as well as to those proximate to us in time and space. Rather than a self-contained volume, authorized by us, our history is only one chapter in an enormous and ever-expanding book, whose overall meaning and shape we cannot even begin to grasp, let alone determine. (Silverman, 2009, p. 65)

Moving from Regression to Progression

The lived experiences illuminated in this chapter, set in-the-betweens of stories, became the foundation for our camaraderie as a team of scholars nudging each other through sporting spaces in order to delve deeper into our own narrative renditions of what was and what is yet to come. The regressive turn in *currere* takes us back to the foundations of our sporting life and allows us to better understand the connections that those moments in time, space, and relations had upon the self. In revisiting these lived experiences we can address the question, “How does a self mean?” Pinar (2012) suggests that we consider the scholarly perspective of our life history in order to increase our participation and conversation. For “it is conversation with oneself (as a ‘private’ person) and with others threaded through academic knowledge, an ongoing project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engagement in the world” (p. 47). By living through the regressive hoop the women in the course experienced their becoming as individual basketball players, their reliance upon the notion of team camaraderie, and their participation with basketball as cultural communitarians.

In the next chapter, I explore the significance of bringing the past into the present via the progressive turn of *currere* in order to locate the value of writing our way back into the current self: “Understanding curriculum allegorically self-consciously

incorporates the past into the present, threaded through one's subjectivity ... We self-reflexively articulate what is at hand, reactivating the past so as to render the present, including ourselves, intelligible" (Pinar, 2012, p. 50). In the praxis, we examine the continuum of historicity through a deeper appreciation of how we maneuvered through the sporting space culture with purpose, and not just random acts of recreational and competitive play.

CHAPTER FIVE:
**TRANSFORMING BASKETBALL FEATS INTO PROGRESSIVE SCHOLARLY
THOUGHT**

Releasing the imagination means moving into the future, at least as the contents of dream, thought, and fantasy are discerned as split-off fragments of self and society that, in their dissociation from what is, function to conceal the present. Like the regressive, the progressive phase or moment in the method of *currere* is an effort to sidestep the ego and its present preoccupations, to dislodge material the ego has covered up, denied, evaded or misplaced in the “technostructure” in which many of us are now embedded. (Kroker, 1984, p. 57)

As former athletes come together in conversation around sports, a bonding often takes place in the lived moment shared. By regressing back to their earliest experiences with basketball, these eight women were starting to think as scholars, deconstructing each other’s lived moments in time. By digging deeper into the autobiographical past, we found more justification for our actions in the present and our desires for the future, whether they were on or off the court. Gluck’s (1977) examination of the rise of a new voice in history validates how what is being shared in the present will be part of a greater intellectual revolution in the future. She claims:

Refusing to be rendered historically voiceless any longer, women are creating a new history – using our own voices and experiences. We are challenging the traditional concepts of history, of what is “historically important,” and we are affirming that our everyday lives are history. Using an oral tradition as old human memory, we are reconstructing our own past. (p. 3)

The regressive conversations that were taking place in the classroom, through the discussion board, and within the written narratives not only created a new platform for scholarly thought via sporting spaces, but it gave validity to the notion of capturing life experiences regardless of the value that society places upon a self-engendered version of basketball. In this chapter I transition to the next phase of the *currere* process: the progressive movement. By bringing the past into the present with intent of looking into

the future, a person is transformed, not reformed, via complicated conversations and written narrations about the life course. To face the present based on one's past is a progressive leap into the future through which "the very idea of modernity is closely correlated with the principle that is both possible and necessary to break with tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living and thinking. We now suspect that this 'rupture' is in fact a way of forgetting or repressing the past, that is, repeating it and not surprising it" (Lyotard, 1993, p. 76).

Learning from a Progressive Perspective: Benches, Sidelines, and Bleachers

As we transitioned from the regressive into the progressive stages of *currere* we stopped and considered some things in the present. First, what do we wish could have been different about some of the most significant basketball moments (both on and off the court) that we had in our life up until the present, even though we cannot change things now? Second, what are some wishes or desires that we want from basketball for ourselves individually and/or a greater community (both on and off the court) over the course of the next 20 years? I asked each of the women to approach these loaded questions by assuming that as a senior thesis project they embark on a fully funded nonprofit mission to create a global basketball academy. I asked them, "Based on your own personal values, what have you been taught about the game of basketball, your experiences with recreational and competitive basketball up until now, and some traits that exist within the game of basketball?" The traits that we agreed to consider were: (a) set demanding goals, (b) make hard work your passion, (c) establish good habits, (d) be persistent, (e) learn from adversity, and (f) put the team before yourself.

As each participant grappled with what she had become through basketball based on the traits mentioned above, something appeared to be consistent in both the writing and conversation; not one athlete regretted the commitment that she had made to basketball, regardless of time lost to other aspects of life. Both the positive and negative experiences of basketball had made each of them stronger as they confronted life off the court. Hence, although as athletes they each belonged to the institution of academia that they played for, they were not merely students and athletes. As Axtell (1991) adamantly expresses based on his own life:

Unlike student-athletes, who seem to sprout annually and effortlessly from the scholastic soil, scholar-athletes are a somewhat rarer hybrid. They are relatively scarce because the resources needed to succeed in one endeavor are demanded by the other as well. Moreover, scholars and athletes peak at different ages. Scholars, particularly in the humanities, mature slowly, not so much in technical skills as in caniness of judgment, sharpness of eye, and depth of understanding. Athletes, by contrast, realize their potential at relatively young ages, in most sports by their early-to-mid-twenties. So the range of ages when the two forms of mastery overlap is fairly narrow and dictated more by the athlete's body than by the scholar's mind. (p. 71)

Axtell's words remind us that the premature collision between our athletic and scholarly self can often be overlooked as we are too busy experiencing the moment and not thinking about how it is transforming who we are as individuals. The value of capturing our becoming in the moment is priceless, as many of the women often mentioned during our class sessions. They wished that someone had given them an opportunity to capture their becoming earlier in life instead of letting each moment carry its course like an expected rite of passage.

Becoming a Scholar of My Athletic Self

I often wonder how we see our lived athletic selves in conjunction with who each of us is becoming beyond the court of play and competition. For the eight women in the

course, the portrayal was quite gratifying even if the agenda was planned by another. The women wrote about the impact that a person, place, or performance had on some of the decisions they made in their athletic lives at a young raw age. For many young girls, the mystique of sports has been tempered by future gender roles and broader expectations beyond the realm of play. To enjoy the game recreationally at a certain age was safe in the eyes of society, but once the game became a significant aspect of life and there was no so called “growing out if it” stage, red flags started to fly. Eitzen (2009) emphasizes that a prolonged sports experience for women scholar-athletes is still quite a young post-Title IX phenomenon, and hence, it is often seen through the lens and framed reasoning of the male experience:

Sports participation is expected for men. Sport is strongly associated with male identity and popularity. For women, however, the situation is entirely different. As Willis has stated, “Instead of confirming her identity, [sports] success can threaten her with a foreign male identity ... The female athlete lives through a severe contradiction. To succeed as an athlete can be to fail as a women, because she has, in certain profound symbolic ways, become a man. Superior women athletes are suspect because strength and athletic skills are accepted as “masculine” traits. (p. 129)

In both writing and conversation we battled with the notion of whether there is a distinct basketball experience that women encounter in recreation and competitive play, especially in regions of the country where league play is limited to being coed due to the lack of numbers. *Shock* describes her progression in the game as becoming more complicated with age. She recalls how many things that appear to be wrong in hindsight were not naturally questioned in the moment, while in our conversation she grapples with how the system complicates notions of play:

Just boys and girls being allowed to play together – it just didn’t make sense. I do not understand why I cannot play with the boys. Like now there are other set rules, like WNBA, NBA, you cannot do this, you cannot do that. But, back then

if it made sense to you; if the ball is rolling down the court, anyone go get it, it's rolling down the street. I've talked to people that got recruited, people who have gone to big schools, people that should have done this and been this way – it's not even about basketball. It doesn't revolve around basketball anymore. When you're a kid that's all that it revolves around. When you are grown up it's again, what basketball can do for me, not what I'm doing for basketball in basketball, but what can it do for me. That becomes the focus and not the actual playing. When you're a kid it revolves around this little orange thing getting in the hoop.

The lessons that are embedded within the game itself, regardless of one's gender, are far greater than the pillars it seeks to use to negotiate fair competition and empower player confidence. Huizinga's (1955) analysis of play captures the significance of free activity being a serious escape, not just a time for horsing around or shooting the breeze:

Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary life" as being "not serious," but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means. (p. 13)

Even though we turn to the sporting space as an opportunity to escape our hectic realities, we must also recognize that a sporting space, such as a playground, itself, creates a culture of hierarchical engagement that may serve as an obstacle in our free activity. Yet, players do not abandon the sporting space because it gives them a sense of belonging and a reason to persevere. The camaraderie, both friendly and adversary, becomes the ultimate pay off.

For *Liberty*, basketball was more than wins and losses; her experience speaks to the values and responsibilities embedded within the philosophy of the game. In the progressive aspect of her written narrative she recalls:

Basketball as a game constantly teaches you different lessons. It sounds cliché, but I have learned important skills like teamwork and leadership through

basketball. You need to problem solve and negotiate amongst yourself as well. Basketball has also taught me how to take out my aggression in a meaningful way. Teammates also teach you many things. You must understand their opinions and actions to move forward and become a successful unit. Not only did I participate as a player, I assisted the younger girls on the Varsity team and the Junior Varsity team. For example, I had to show the girls our different plays and be a role model for them on and off the court.

Regardless of how different societies deem what is appropriate and improper participation within sports via gender, the outcome for many of the women in the course was life-changing. What *Liberty* had gained from her many years of competition empowered her with the duty of serving as a leader for her teammates and future players. Sadler (1973) claims that in the intense moments of competition, the pillar of cooperation can be experienced to its fullest. Under the rules of engagement within team sports, athletes naturally learn the notion of relying on the other. Hence,

Cooperation is emphasized rather than submission and obedience. The goal of life is conceived as the fullest realization of human and natural powers. Individuals and cities should strive for the achievement of excellence ... Insofar as competition is consonant with a becoming value or orientation, it is viewed as an activity *with* rather than against ... The aim of competitive activity here is to interact so that participants actualize their fullest potentialities; it is not meant to deprive someone else of something valuable. (p. 183)

The view from within the huddle is often the true measure of the impact that a sport has upon the players. As plays are drawn up and roles are assigned in that moment of group time, the perception of others does not matter. The participants become their own worst critics since they know what duty each individual is assigned to carry out once they return to play. Teammates rise up to push each other for optimal outcomes, while opponents seek to hold their ground and alter the tactic that was drawn up in the huddle.

Storm was very adamant in describing her progression as a painful one. Although leadership is exemplified in her bones and runs through her veins, she captures the pain

that she currently has to endure because of her loyalty to basketball. She apologetically writes in her autobiographical narrative:

It is too bad that the majority of my basketball memories are triggered by personal accidents. So let's see, a broken nose in Florida and then again in Severn, MD at high school basketball practice, an asthma attack in North Carolina, Philly, and Virginia, a broken tail bone in Northern Virginia, a concussion in Arbutus, MD and Florida, and several dislocated shoulders in Maryland, Arizona, Philly, and all the like. My body took a serious toll at such a young age. It's a shame that the majority of the games I played in I do not remember because of a victory, but because of an injury.

Storm's progressive corporeal trauma, and her desire and ability to still compete at the university intramural level, point to an intense sporting relationship that should not be enclosed by barriers such as gender. The notion of pain and suffering in sports is often expected of boys who are asked to test the limits of their physicality by pushing their bodies to the edge, both in practice and in competition. Yet, there is a perception of hesitation by spectators as girls attempt to push their bodies – a troubling dichotomy between play and competition within the sporting space. When boys fall to the ground and grapple for loose balls, the crowd roars expecting a fight to the finish. But, when girls carry out the same play, with the same emotion and angst, the spectators cringe hoping no one gets hurt. In the *Leviathan*, Hobbes (1958) claims that everything in the world relies on motion, and hence, we turn to the corporeal nature of becoming in order to understand human behavior. He writes:

For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principle part within: why may we not say, that all automata (engines that move themselves by springs and wheels as doth a watch) have artificial life? For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints but so many wheels giving motion to the whole body. (p. 184)

The perception of how bodies should engage in the sporting space via gender at a young age may develop into a certain societal expectation later in life. If athletes are

looked upon as well-designed engines, due to their dedication and training, then, as *Storm*'s experience clearly points out, we should expect the bodies to be put to the test of extremes regardless of gender. The notion that the sporting space for women should be less rigorous or short-lived was also challenged by *Sky* who passionately writes about being torn between two sports and the possibility of abandoning one for the other. In the progressive moment of her autobiographical narrative she claims:

I knew that if I began to dedicate the school year, and the off season to one sport I could be great, and would definitely play in college. Instead I decided to equally give my time to the two sports I loved, and was content knowing that I would not be outstanding at one sport, but rather great at two sports. See, to the basketball world it's all or nothing, but in the athletic world it's a compromise. In the athletic world you're encouraged to be good at more than one sport, and it is looked upon highly. I feel like the athletic world doesn't want you to limit yourself, but rather challenge and push yourself.

Playing Louder than Expected

The notion of commitment to the sporting space is often expected for prominent male athletes and frowned upon for women. The four excerpts above point to a self-inflicted progression, not necessarily driven by societal agendas or forced guidance. The sporting space allows children and teens to have a place to build their identity and use their voice, while learning to compete and better themselves as individuals. Weiss (1969) emphasizes that even at a young age a participant is on a quest for supreme performance:

Those who are young cannot do much to maintain or to contribute to culture; they are not experienced or developed enough to see or do things in the round. Most of them find it quite difficult to attend to the important for more than an occasional, short period, or to be much occupied with what is not relevant to the satisfaction of personal desires and short-run concerns. The best that most of them can do is to be good at sport. (pp. 10-11)

To be fully content in the sporting space may limit an individual in other aspects of life, but if that is the chosen path of pleasure and pain by the individual, then how do we claim

the clear-cut formula for competitive participation? As *Dream* mentions in our conversation and through her written narrative:

Today, especially with the way athletes are perceived and put out there, you feel like when you decide to play a sport, you have to be serious about it as soon as you start. Your idea is this is going to get me a college education. It's not like hey I just wanna play basketball for fun; cause when you get to high school people aren't letting people in for fun. Basketball is a game that brings joy and pain; it is a roller coaster that prepares you for all that life has to offer, all the ups and downs, the wins and losses, that's the game of basketball. Each child that decides to pick up a basketball should not be told that they are the best, but that they should do their best everyday on the court because there is someone out there that is better than them.

What separates these eight women from being just participatory student-athletes is that even when they were in the moment, they were absorbing the lessons embedded, not necessarily taught, in practice and competition. They each chose a distinct path of pleasure within basketball that clearly defines who they are now as individuals outside the game. What was it about the game beyond the physical challenge that drew them in? Once the official student-athlete curtains dropped, the experience did not end. Instead, these women found their way back into the sporting space as scholar-athletes. The in-the-moment action of the sporting space is addictive, as a sense of solitude is gained within the parameters of a game. Metheny (1968) interprets the essence of goal-oriented freedom within a sporting space by arguing the following:

Within the complex conditions of life, we are seldom, if ever, free to focus all our attention on one well-defined task and bring all our energies to bear on one whole-hearted attempt to perform the task effectively ... In contrast the rules of sport provide us with a man-made world in which this freedom is fully guaranteed. These rules eliminate the demands of necessity by defining an unnecessary task. (p. 63)

The transition from recreational play into organized competition may inspire players to introduce defined tasks into the sporting space that has become their comfort

zone. The transformation of chaotic movement into purposeful collaboration on the basketball court becomes the reason for return to a space many athletes identify with as their home. On the discussion board and in her written narrative, *Mystic* refers to basketball as being a foundation for her and many other athletes in her community:

My character, leading ability, outgoing personality, and integrity, were all built through playing basketball. Basketball has been my foundation through life that I have been able to build upon and take to the next level. If you were to ask me to name ten amazing moments in life, at least eight of them will be dealing with basketball. Some people say that they are born to play basketball, but for me it was more like I was born into basketball and from there I just fell in love with it. Sports has taught me how to work hard, be dedicated, never give up, practice makes possible, and to always give all I have got in everything I do. Not only do all these characteristics take part on the basketball court but they are also engraved in my life. Every day I have to use them. Philosophy of the game is what it is all about, and should be the main reason why parents should have their children involved in sports. It has been what has shaped almost my entire life.

To have achieved such high solace in our lived moments with basketball allows us as scholar-athletes to return to the game often in honor of preserving what that progressive torch provided for us. We are the ambassadors of the time, space, and relationships that gave so much to us. Sartre (1979) captures the essence of freedom and play with regard to time, space, and relationships, by reminding us:

The act is not its own goal for itself; neither does its explicit end [winning] represent its goal and its profound meaning; but the function of the act is to make manifest and to present to itself the absolute freedom which is the very being of the person. (p. 85)

For many of the women scholar-athletes in the course, the notion of competitive outcomes was important as they got older, but not overbearing to the point that it brought them greater joy than the actual affair of play. *Comet* dwells in the space of basketball as play often as her progression suggests. It may very well be a lifetime commitment that

she gladly accepts, even if the praxis is harder:

I felt very out of place on the Women's Club team. In high school, I was never good at running, and I am still not good at it. I am not fast, and my stamina has always been a little bit weaker than everyone else's. In the past, however, I have always made up with it in aggression, dedication, and smart playing. On the club team here, however, you have to have it all. When I play with my younger cousins I am more of the teacher, a coach. I do not play my full hardest. I do not box out hard and hit the boards. I joke around with them and I will knock them around a little bit. My role not only has shifted, but my goal as well. My goal now is to pass on my knowledge and show my love for the game so that one day they can feel it too.

The greatest gifts are often shared, not colonized, by the receiver who will progress to do great things with the treasures she has accumulated. As *Comet* writes, she knew that change was coming and instead of fighting it, she flipped the page to a new chapter of basketball. Fraleigh (1973) suggests that athletes eventually come to a realization that they are free to find their own intentions within the sporting space:

The person who is free to realize personal intentions understands his identity as being partly dependent upon his own personal will as manifest in effort. The person who is free to create new personal intentions understands his identity as a being who transcends himself and other humans by his personal will in conjunction with his personal creative levels and new strategies. (p. 137)

The journey within the sporting space is not limited to the actual staged court itself, but can become a sanctuary from other perspectives as well. For me, basketball has transcended from uneven playgrounds to grand gymnasiums, but the roles I have played in these spaces have allowed me to dig deeper in understanding how basketball has influenced me as a person and not just an athlete. *Fever* got a glimpse of her next possible chapter in basketball from the bleachers as she recognized how engrained the knowledge has become and how the journey will continue. She writes:

My most recent moment with basketball was about a week ago, I went to watch my younger brother's basketball game. I found it very interesting, how connected I still am with the game, even as a spectator of the sport. I can still spot the little

things, such as a good cut or a hard screen that most people never notice. I also found myself critiquing my brother, and after the game I was telling him the things that I noticed he did well or needed to work on. Another parent overheard me talking to him, and was amazed about how much knowledge I had about the game.

The confirmation that *Fever* received may have directly justified her wisdom of the game, but more significantly it represents a calling upon her experiences which started as mere play. Levy (1978) reminds us of the potential value of play:

Play, then, is necessary to affirm our lives. It is through experiencing play that we answer the puzzle of our existence. To be free, and therefore to know play (know oneself), means to realize simultaneously the supreme importance and utter significance of our existence. To play means to accept the paradox of pursuing what is at once essential and inconsequential. (p. 1)

The initial attraction to play is not one of escape from reality or desire for physical movement, but instead a subtle invitation to try something new for the mere fun. Before we are overwhelmed with the rules and skills of the how to play something, we learn to improve through experiential interaction within the space of play. Gadamer's (1975) philosophical interpretation of play reminds us that an individual is never bigger than the notion of a game as competition:

Play clearly represents an order in which to-and-fro motion of play follows of itself. It is part of play that the movement is not only without goal or purpose but also without effort. It happens, as it were, by itself. The ease of play – which naturally does not mean that there is any real absence of effort but refers phenomenologically on to the absence of strain – is experienced subjectively as relaxation. (p. 105)

We may arrive at the sporting space by accident, but those who stay for the long haul, whether it is recreationally or competitively, have a bigger calling. Regardless of whose agenda may be in place, the calling is not limiting by gender or any other dimension, unless we choose to believe that only one agenda exists. The progressive moment for each of the women above claims a separate agenda that was empowered by a

much bigger movement, a basketball revolution in which many have claimed membership. In the next section I explore the progressive notion of camaraderie and how it plays a role in the lives of these eight women as they embark upon new sporting chapters.

An Inseparable Bond: Finding Camaraderie in New Spaces

As I transitioned between new spaces of basketball from player to coach, referee to scholar, I could not help but wonder about the true bond that keeps me intact with basketball. I am a fan of the game, and for that reason I will always radiate toward the space of basketball. It is not merely the space that brings me back progressively, but the relationships that are formed and grown through the space of basketball. By space, I am referring to basketball as a cultural phenomenon and not basketball as just a venue. In basketball referee circles there is common language of conversation that is professional, yet practical. When I read an article written by another basketball referee, I can clearly picture the scenario that he or she is painting for me through his/her narrative.

Regardless of whether I agree or disagree, we automatically have a bond through the text. As the eight women scholar-athletes built that bond with each other, both in conversation and in writing, I wondered where that left me as their teacher. By allowing each of them to facilitate one class session, I was slowly taking myself out of the content equation and allowing them to grow through their own lens of interest. Spender (1981) reminds us that although not all women write from a feminist perspective; a new movement in women's narrative discourse is well under way:

Women came to realize that the knowledge which men constructed about women (from their deviant physiology and psychology to the definition of women as non-workers) was frequently rated as "objective" while the knowledge women began to construct about women (which has its origins in the role of a participant rather

a spectator) was frequently rated as “subjective.” ... But there is a significant difference between the way men have checked with men and often presented their explanations as the complete and only truth, and the way women are checking with women and offering their explanations as partial and temporary “truths.” The partial and temporary truths about women, which have their origin in women’s experience of the world, are being fed back into the various disciplines and are changing those disciplines. (pp. 5-6)

The amount of self-expression present within the progressive writing of these eight women scholar-athletes justifies a growth in camaraderie beyond the court. There is to some degree a distinct correlation between reflecting on a missed space, preserving the athletic self, and expressing a philosophy for the game. *Mystic* still participates in the present, yet in absence of the consistent amity, she is to an extent still progressively in the past. She writes on the class discussion board:

Basketball is such a huge part of my life and will always be. I have always found myself welcome in the space of basketball but I do find myself reminiscing a lot about it. Mainly since I am no longer a part of a "structured" team and I reminisce about all the memories that I could relive day in and day out. The times that I think about the most are my high school memories. At the time I took them for granted, but now I dream about them constantly and it’s three years later. One particular moment is winning the State Championship. There is hardly anything in the world that can compare to it. It is like you are on cloud nine through the entire experience.

The lived experience of playing on a championship high school basketball team calls forth a practice of total immersion where one is consumed by play during the off-season in preparation for the highest level of competition. In these moments of preparation, the number of games becomes inconsequential as a team is eating and sleeping basketball. Although the muscles may be taking a severe toll, the soul is hungrier than ever to be on the court. The taste of championship is so far away in the summer months, yet that is when athletes are completely immersed in play. According to Collingwood’s (1925)

philosophic interpretation, play is naturally a form of art:

... [the total immersion into an activity] is to describe that form of action that we call play; and therefore play is the practical aspect of art, art is the theoretical aspect of play. What characterizes each is its immediacy, that is to say, its concentration upon the activity of the moment and is ignoring of anything outside this activity. A game is what it is for no reason outside itself; it is played as if there were nothing in the world but games, and no games but this game. Just as art does not explain itself by stating reasons, so play does not explain itself by stating reasons; and immediacy means the absence of reasons. (pp. 89-90)

The only explanation of putting the body through physical turmoil between practice hours and logged games is a desire to raise the state trophy above the head and cut down the nets in that one shining moment – an unforgettable climax of the journey played. The difficulty of recreating those spaces as a scholar-athlete can be colossal if one is no longer playing under a consistent scholastic schedule. The transition into balancing a more independent life within a large academic institution can easily trigger progress in an idle time. *Fever* shares her experience of missing that special basketball space by stating:

Life in college has been much different in regards to basketball. I didn't even know about the club team until last year, and most of the time I play with boys who won't pass me the ball. But even though the game takes up less of my time now, I still have a secret obsession with it. Some of my friends here at UMD do not even know I played basketball in high school. But when I sit down and watch a Terps basketball game, my guy friends are shocked that I know what is going on. Basketball may not be dominating my life anymore, but I still continue to be connected to it in some way. I'm hoping that I will be able to coach a girl's team sometime this winter, and when I have kids I definitely want them to be involved with this sport.

For many of the women scholar-athletes, basketball served as a mode back into the comfort zones of the past, even when the close bond appeared foreign. *Fever* admits that basketball is no longer priority number one, yet she will do what it takes to stay connected with the game. As all athletes who have been immersed in the sporting space

know, “The refreshment and relaxation of play are purely spiritual; they result from the fact that play is capricious, that in it we choose our end for no conscious reason whatever. Hence it is a complete mistake to suppose that play is the overflow of mere physical energy and aimed at merely physical pleasure” (Collingwood, 1924, p. 104).

The obligation to give back to basketball because it has given so much to them radiated across the board, to some degree, with all the members of the class. For *Liberty*, basketball has always served a greater personal purpose; the camaraderie is enticing, but not the primary reason why she stays connected with the game. As she writes on the discussion board:

In terms of basketball, I have always used the game as a fall back. Whenever I was stressed with life I would use it to relieve that stress. When I was shy around people, basketball would let me be myself. It also brought me a lot of confidence because I could hold my own on the court. That is why I think I love club basketball. My first semester of freshman year I didn't play and I found it very hard to assimilate to college. But, when I joined the team it automatically helped me.

Often we are misled by our dreams into thinking that the grass is greener on a bigger lawn, and hence, we seek ways in finding a small patch to call our own. The camaraderie of club basketball for *Shock* was a necessary element to her survival on campus. She claims in her autobiography:

When I realized my dream and finally made it to College Park, it was different than I had imagined. I hated it. I knew no one on campus. For the first 2 months, I wanted to go home. I kept thinking maybe I was wrong. Maybe I should have taken the scholarships and stayed in Missouri. I thought that's it! I just need to play basketball here. Despite promising my mom I would not play because of my back, I looked up the club team and went to the first practice. Since that day, I've made great friends and played in some highly competitive games. In our last game of the season last year, we had won all the games of the tournament and made it to the championships. We came into that game thinking we were invincible, since we had beaten the other teams handily. We were wrong. The other team owned us. But no one gave up. Sure, we got a bit more physical out of frustration, but we continued to give it our all. In the end, we lost by double

digits. But I thought if they're going to keep trying then so will I. I won't give up on a team that won't give up on me.

The motivation that *Shock* embraced from her teammates' energy on the court was not a flashback to moments of the past, but instead a thrust to compete in the moment. The impetus to not give up reflects Osterhoudt's (1973) assertion that,

The athlete is more than a place where past and future meet. He determines the nature of that union. It is his task to bring about the best possible unification of a worthwhile past and a desirable end. This is done, not by simply allowing the end to control the act that his past now makes possible, but by so acting that a maximal result is attained. (p. 20)

The university club team provides former high school basketball players with an opportunity to compete, make new friends, and stay in good shape. For *Shock* it was more essential to be part of the team so that she could adapt to life away from home. The comfort of being part of a playing community made her feel more at home based on what the basketball past had provided her for many years before.

Regardless of the strong bond that exists between players and coaches on a basketball team, a sense of individual accomplishment must eventually be confronted. This is especially significant as high school athletes prepare to be seen or profiled as high caliber collegiate student athletes. In our conversation, *Dream* comments about how AAU coaches provide numerous connections, and it eventually becomes an ego thing for athletes. As she states:

You're paying them to keep you in shape, to have people see you, to meet new people, have new life experiences. But your ultimate goal is to be seen, cause you play basketball in the park with your teammates from home. So, I think you do pay for exposure and you wanna be seen. I like to do big things but I do not like to get the big credit. I was more happy to have just the ribbons that said I won first place than to have the newspaper article that said look at this up and coming track star. So, it's not really about what other people see, it's about me being happy with what I'm doing.

The notion of competition is just as prevalent in women's basketball as it is in men's basketball, and unless you're entwined in the circuit, you may jump to misleading conclusions. Although *Dream's* competitive nature did not interfere with her personal drive toward happiness, *Storm* makes it clear that the two concepts are inseparable. Her posting on the discussion board serves as a justification for who she is both on and off the court. She writes:

In practice, I must say that sometimes my inner competitive drive does get in the way of my communal actions for the betterment of the team. I think that I am just over competitive. When I was younger, I'll admit that I was the one with the attitude problem whose coach sat them far too often for the short temper. I would sit there and be mad even if we were winning. Selfish? Yes, I'll admit now, but I see that I've grown a lot over the years as well. Yes, I want to play, but sometimes a win is a win, even if I'm sitting on the bench. But I must say that you know how you always feel like you can contribute to the game? Like you should be in to make the difference? Well, I feel like that the majority of the time. So, does that make me selfish? Or do I just want to be in the game, because I genuinely feel like I can make a difference.

The Passion and Plight of Play

Basketball players are valued for their skills at getting the job done offensively, by accumulating points for their team, and defensively, by stopping the opponent from scoring in their basket. In this north to south, east to west affair a reality of duties is created through competition. According to Michael Novak's (1976) exploration of finding ways to escape from a harsh reality:

Play, not work, is the end of life. To participate in the rites of play is to dwell in the Kingdom of Ends. To participate in work, career, and the making of history is to labor in the Kingdom of Means. The modern age, the age of history, nourishes illusions. In a protestant culture, as in Marxist cultures, work is serious, important, adult. Its essential significance is overlooked. Work, of course, must be done, but we should be wise enough to distinguish necessity from reality. Play is reality, work is diversion and escape. (p. 40)

The longer we stay in contact with the game of basketball, the more we feel entitled to participate. I experienced a recycling effect for what I thought I deserved as I transitioned into officiating basketball and learned that I had to work my way through the ranks, just like a job. However, officiating has never felt like a laborious task because of the pleasure it provides in return. I accepted more and more games because, just like an athlete, I wanted to demonstrate that I am a valuable asset to my partners on the court. I truly craved for the camaraderie before, during, and after the game. According to *Sky* in her written narrative, the notion of progress should have a more distinct reason:

Basketball should be something different for every level of players. For the younger player it should be about building discipline and structure as well as having fun. It should teach them that a goal can be reached if they ultimately see themselves achieving it. For the older players it should be about passion, if you are older and playing basketball you should be playing it because you love it not because someone is forcing you to. Playing basketball should be an experience that you can hate in the morning, but by the evening you are back in love and working on ways to make the relationship better. Basketball should be more than a game it should be a friend, a love, an opportunity, and it should leave you with a desire to always come back for more.

The hope that *Sky* has for the future of basketball and those who come into contact with it as participants is also shared by *Comet*. The claim that many of these women are making in their philosophy of what basketball should be is justified by many years of experience. That does not mean that they will all agree, but each of their views has undergone some degree of change as they have transitioned from player to athlete to scholar within the basketball community. As *Comet* states in her written narrative:

In basketball, I believe that everyone should get a chance. I do not like, like in recreation leagues, when coaches try and choose the best players with the most talent. As a coach, especially in those leagues, it is about teaching the game to the children and getting them to learn the game and have fun. I think basketball should be fun. I also think that you should cater your expectations of a team based on the contexts of that team. For example, if you have a high school team, the best players should be chosen to give you the best opportunity to win. In

recreation, where there are no tryouts and everyone can sign up, more about learning the game and having fun with the game should be the priority.

Unfortunately, many recreational leagues have become competitive and as a result, the notion of play becomes murky as many participants, who signed up to have fun, are sitting at the end of the team bench watching for the majority of the game. Yet, we are oblivious in the moment as we focus on the staged performance. What is it about the journey that we crave, even as mere observers? In these moments, an isolated game of basketball, in a small gym, becomes more relevant to how the real world revolves – a survival of the fittest mantra. The transition from recreation to competition points to Weiss' (1969) claim:

The athlete's world is set over against the everyday world. Economic demands and the satisfaction of appetites are for the moment put aside ... Artists and historians similarly bracket off their distinctive, dynamic spatio-temporal worlds. What he [artist or athlete] is and he does is for the moment, thereby severed from the rest of the world. (pp. 243, 245)

We seek open gym hours, find a playground that is consistently filled, and even claim to be a team player when all the while we forget that the progressive nature of our camaraderie with basketball began with a simple ball and hoop. The mission was clear, get the ball in the hoop. Little did we know that someday the goal would be to have others share in that special moment, over and over again. In the next section I explore the progressive notion of communal responsibility and how it plays a role in the lives of these eight women as they prepare for their professional lives outside of basketball.

Sharing Basketball Outside the Lines

If you had asked me fifteen years ago to project how I see basketball as being part of my life, I most likely would have guessed that I would be playing in a recreational league somewhere and maybe coaching youth on the side. Never did I anticipate that I

would become a referee serving as the gatekeeper of fair play and having complicated conversations about basketball as a scholar. Yet, even the recreational athletic life cannot be forever planned, as each athlete faces a time period where their physical prowess fluctuates and injuries become more common. As I saw my speed and agility decrease on the basketball court, especially since I craved to play with the younger athletes, I also found an alternate route to have an active presence on the court through officiating. The projection of our becoming is often based on the community that surrounds us and a personal desire to stay in touch with the game. Basketball is a life course driven by the players, coaches, fans, and referees who bring it to life, each serving a different purpose in their role, but all sharing in the passion of the lived moment. Pinar (1994) reminds us:

Curriculum is not comprised of subjects, but of Subjects, of subjectivity. The running of the course is the building of the self, the lived experience of subjectivity. Autobiography is the architecture of the self, a self we create and embody as we read, write, speak, and listen ... [it] is a self we cannot be confident we know, because it is always in motion and in time, defined in part by where it is not, when it is not, and what it is not. (p. 220)

The community of basketball in the present has become tainted by corporate sponsorships and individual portfolios tempting athletes to put themselves before the team. The seduction of ridiculous professional salaries and tantalizing endorsements have trickled into youth sports and partially taken away the sanctity of play. As *Liberty* points out on the discussion board:

I have never experienced a sneaker company, like Nike or Adidas, sponsoring my basketball team. But that would be pretty cool. Until my freshman year of high school I played AAU for my father. Practices were tough and we had some pretty good talent. We were able to easily beat many teams and had such a great time doing it. But, my father knew that if I was going to have a shot to play in college I would have to join a team that traveled to national scale tournaments. So I went to play for another team that traveled much more often. I sat most of the time and the girls were not welcoming whatsoever. I wish AAU was not like that. The

long shot of playing in college took me away from playing with my father and my good friends in a way.

The individual sacrifice that we make to expose ourselves to the other in sports has progressed to a level where every parent thinks his or her child is entitled to be seen at national tournaments. In the process of promoting a sense of unity via sportsmanship, a basketball organization such as the AAU has created a platform for competition that redefines the notion of play. Schmitz claims that this new measure of successful play via wins and losses impacts how we participate with sports as both players and spectators.

Such an emphasis on victory detaches the last moment from the whole game and fixes the outcome apart from its proper context. It reduces the appreciation of the performance, threatens the proper disposition towards the rules and turns the context into a naked power struggle. The upshot is the brutalization of the sport. And so, the sport which issued from the play-decision, promising freedom and exhilaration, ends dismally in lessening the humanity of players and spectators. (pp. 27-28)

Liberty's regret for leaving her team in order to have access to the greater good of competition [winning] has become a common narrative that I hear and see while officiating basketball. Players as young as eight years of age already have embedded in their minds that the measure of success in basketball is not the fun factor, but how many trophies you can accumulate playing on different teams, and just a few years later, how many coaches are chasing after your talent. *Sky* revisited her progression into the AAU ranks at an early age on the discussion board by claiming:

The AAU season started off and I expected it to be just like Boys and Girls Club in terms of competition, environment, and seriousness, but boy was I wrong. The first game of AAU was so intense; we were at a basketball tournament in Mount Vernon. There were games going on, on every court and parents filling the bleachers and sidelines. What was this new world I had stepped into? Was this where I was supposed to play the game of basketball, because I never knew the basketball world could look like this. I got a decent amount of playing time, but I was now intrigued by this new world. I craved it; I loved to be around, near, or in it. Basketball began to take on a new meaning to me, and I think this is when I

really began seeing myself as an athlete not just a kid that played sports. I think it was because now I understood why my dad had been pushing us so hard in regards to running, knowing the plays, court awareness, and all the other key essentials to being a good basketball player.

The surplus of play that occurs during AAU tournaments, on multiple courts of action, explains the flow of revenue and sponsorship from athletic companies such as Nike, Reebok, and Adidas. These companies seek athletes that illustrate perfection as future icons for their products stalking them from a young age, as they quickly witness their transformation from playing for pleasure to competing for recognition. Thomas (1983) claims that “The challenge of excellence, the desire to become what one is capable of becoming, forms the source of the need to compete. If, in the process, superiority is established, then the true and ancient agon is accomplished. If, however, the contest is lost but the challenge is met, then there is honor and nobility in having genuinely and authentically competed” (p. 85). For *Sky*, the experience was at first overwhelming, yet it quickly became exhilarating. Her practiced progression had finally paid off as she was allowed to participate in a larger than life venue. For *Storm* the platform of AAU basketball was inevitable due in part to her extremely competitive nature. Yet, she recalls the wake-up call that a tournament provided for her, and how that moment in time transformed her work ethic as she progressed to the next level of play. In her autobiographical narrative she writes:

I remember when we went to this one tournament and we lost a game that put us in the loser’s bracket. Coach D gave this huge speech about being mindful on the court. He used me as the key example and said, “Now look at *Storm*, she’s definitely not the best player on this team but she’s court smart, she knows what’s going on.” At that point, I didn’t know whether to take that as a compliment or an insult. However, now looking back at it, I see it as a compliment. I was not the best player on that team and when he said that I wanted to become the best and I never stopped working so I could do so.

Declaring Autonomy in the Eyes of the Other

Although the accelerated development of the AAU circuit provided numerous opportunities for women scholar-athletes, it was not an automatically punched ticket into bigger and better arenas of play. The acceptance of women's basketball by spectators, still faces numerous obstacles as it is often compared to the men's version. Bodies in motion may be perceived differently by spectators as opposed to participants within a sport. The aesthetic beauty of a disciplined and trained body is too often based on performance during competition and not dedication during preparation. Fetter's (1982) corporeal examination of the body as an active entity both through practice and performance claims:

The capacity to view one's body and the body of the other as a source of "identity and dignity" and as an expression of the richness and fullness of humanity, what Keen calls that "common grace," takes one beyond the world of objects. This sense of the body both as an expression of uniqueness and of human mutuality engenders the respect and reverence necessary to aesthetic appreciation. (p. 32)

The acceptance of women's basketball by spectators has not yet gained the respect it deserves largely due to the expectations of fans. It is no mystery that fans want to see high-flying action taking place above the rim, and in the process, they forget the fundamentals of basketball that create a more natural expression of aesthetic grace. As the game has changed, so have perceptions of what basketball should do visually, regardless of how good a team may be. In her autobiography, *Comet* writes about how her high school team's great success was still not fully respected by the men's team, who had a struggling season and felt ashamed by the progress that the women's team had made:

In a positive way, girl's basketball in my town was being revered, giving my team many privileges and popularity that it hasn't seen in a long time. Even our boy's

team was more supportive than usual, but still negative. Being the big bad boys that they were, they felt like our rising status was shrinking their manhood. When we first rose to power my sophomore year, we got nothing but taunts from them. I guess it was that we were so much better than them and they were guys and that bothered them. I think it will always be like this. No matter how far women come in society and no matter how much equality we get, physically and athletically, men will always be sore losers. I think it's genetic.

The progressive nature of athletics is not always a story of winners and losers.

Each community varies in what it provides and what it expects of us, so to some degree certain aspects of our athletic selves develop based on what we are told. According to Meier (1988), athletes may pursue a sport based on pure passion and love for the game, but their attitudes, intentions, and motivations during practice and competition are often influenced by their surrounding environment. She claims that sport and play exist on a continuum:

Particular attitudes or stances manifested by the participants, including motives and inducements for engagement as well as the setting of the action, do not dictate whether a specific activity may legitimately be termed a sport. The essence of sport is independent of these concerns. However, such factors most certainly determine whether or not the sport activity at hand is also a form of play. (p. 26)

Hence, although basketball was initially created as a form of team play to keep young men active during the cold winter months, it has transformed into a well-defined activity with parameters that far exceed the simple concept of play. *Shock*, who is very independent in nature, found herself in the midst of expectations and desires. In our conversation she says:

The culture that I grew up in, Missouri, Midwest, take your opportunities when you get it; if you get one, do not run off making your own cause you already have one waiting for you. Honestly, me and Tori played amazing together. We've played since we were kids— amazing together — but she had her opportunity and she took it, but I decided I wanted to make an opportunity for me instead. So, the culture there was yeah you're good enough, but stay here and do it here, and to me that's not what I wanna do. So, I had to go make an opportunity instead of just take it. Another school over there, Northwest, was giving me scholarships for

my grades, and my ACT scores, and basketball, and minority and all sorts of nonsense. In the end, they were paying me to go there; I'd be getting so much money back from all the stuff I was doing. I am very stubborn, I just always wanted to go and make my own opportunity, make my own thing, my own future.

As teenagers grow into their beliefs and start to build a sense of independence, the harder it becomes for a community to relinquish them of pillared ideals and a future becoming. For the eight women scholar-athletes in the class it was often a two-headed community beast – one on the court with a demanding coach, and the other off the court with parents and family friends. *Fever* describes the challenge as both discouraging and empowering. In her interview she states:

I was discouraged because I was not playing, but I realized that everything he made us do, even though I hated it, and he would scream at us and get in our face, for some reason I could see the bigger picture; I knew a few people kind of shared that opinion with me. His philosophy is that he was really big on team and togetherness, not just individuals. That's probably why people had a hard time with it because they individually weren't getting benefits, but our team was benefiting. He was very big about not letting individual stats get in the way, and hard work was the key to everything for him. It was not just about how skilled you were, it was about other things too. If you had the right state of mind, if you were confident, he placed a lot of importance on that too.

The question of what becomes of our dedication to lived basketball was visited quite often in our class, especially halfway through the semester. For many of the women it was not a matter of why, but more an inquiry into how basketball will continue to weave its way into their daily routines. Although the reward of team play and individual recognition now merely serves as a recreational escape from courses and jobs, some of the women still subject their bodies to the grueling demands of training to stay in shape. Weiss (1969) writes about this mysterious passion as a pursuit for the ideal:

Athletes usually submit themselves, often with enthusiasm, rarely with reluctance, to long periods of training ... At times they risk injury, and in some cases death. Fatigue is familiar. Sooner or later every one of them comes to know that he is preparing himself for defeat, and perhaps humiliation ... Why are they willing to

risk making their inadequacies evident, instead of enjoying the struggle of others from afar, or instead of plunging into a game without concern for how they might fare? (p. 18)

As *Mystic* proclaims in her written narrative:

I still consider myself an athlete today because of how involved I am in working out/playing basketball still. For me being an athlete takes dedication to something involving love of sport. In this case, I have fallen in love with the sport of basketball. I have been an athlete since the first day I touched a basketball, and see myself continue being an athlete for the rest of my life. I became a scholar when I became a coach of basketball my sophomore year in high school. I coached an elementary girl's basketball team, and by being a coach I looked farther into the game. I saw the game differently than I did as an athlete.

I look at my sporting life and recognize that it is definitely a road less traveled. I stumbled into my athletic self at any early age recreationally because of numerous opportunities that the community provided for my friends and me. The progression from a self-defined athletic being to a self-declared scholarly becoming was initiated, and is currently driven, by my love for the game. The same love that many of the eight women describe in both writing and conversation has brought us together, yet we traveled very different paths. *Dream* captures the journey as a passing of the baton to the next group of basketball lovers. This is our way of staying in touch with a game that has given each of us so much and promises to show us even more.

As I look back on my experiences that I have had with basketball and I look to the future I do not know what is to come. When I first put the basketball down I never thought I would pick it up again, but I have picked the basketball back up and I am trying to figure out what I would like to do with it. The idea of coaching little girls into great athletes and women would be a great accomplishment for me, because I definitely want to give back to the world what it has given to me. In some instances I wish that the coaches that took part in shaping my basketball career would have taken a step back and thought about what was best for me and not for them. I believe that as a coach you have a lot of responsibility to making these young impressionable children confident and smart adults. The game of basketball as well as many other sports can prepare kids for some of the failures and successes they may face in their future.

We often must return to the places and people who gave us basketball memories in order to understand who we have become. For this group of eight women athletes their progression into scholars has a solid foundation set by demanding goals, passionate hard work, good habits, persistence, adversity, and open-mindedness. Sheehan (1978) argues that sport in its simplest form is just play which should not beg for analysis given that it is a mere state of being for the human body. Hence, a warning:

The intellectuals who look at sport start with the assumption that it must serve something that is not sport. They see its useful functions of discharging surplus energy and providing relaxation, training for fitness and compensation for other deficiencies. What they do not see is that play is a primary category of life which resists all analysis. Play, then, is a nonrational activity. A supralogical activity in which the beauty of the human body in motion can reach its zenith. (p. 78)

Moving from Progression to Analysis

To claim that we are scholars of our sporting lives is not something to take lightly, for the next generation that comes across our path will get a taste of the foundational pillars, and in their praxis, they, too, shall become scholars and athletes. The lived experiences captured in this chapter, driven by the growth these women experienced through the sporting space, serve as pillars embedded within the lessons of basketball as a life course. The challenges that were confronted and the achievements that were celebrated through basketball transition into what is yet to come, both individually and as a collaborative. The progressive turn in *currere* moves us forward to the cravings of a sporting life and allows us to understand better the connections that the present moment has upon our transformation via basketball, and the implications within a future path that is currently in the making. In connecting with these lived experiences we can address the question, “How is the self becoming?” Metzger (1992) captures the essence of our lives

as being an ongoing story told and retold based on the people, places, and practices we encounter:

Sometimes the simple willingness to explore story asserts the reality of the individual, and then the creative process of finding and telling the story becomes part of the way that we construct a life. Our life becomes a story that we are always in the process of discovering and also fashioning, a story in which we both follow and lead – a story that grips us with its necessity, possesses us mercifully, and yet, paradoxically, that we create and recreate. (p. 49)

By learning through a progressive perspective the women in the course experienced their becoming as scholars of an athletic self, the challenge of recognition as a proven player, the complexity of creating camaraderie within new spaces, and the declaration of autonomy through breaking of boundaries.

In the next chapter, I explore the significance of critically examining the past into the present via the analytic turn of *currere* in order to locate the value of writing our way forward into the becoming self. Oakeshott (1959) recognizes that “The real world is a world of experiences within which self and not-self divulge themselves to reflection ... separating itself from a present not-self: self and not-self generate one another ... self is not a ‘thing’ or a ‘substance’ capable of being active; it is activity” (p. 17). In the analysis of our becoming, we examine the self through our writing as an active self, bringing back moments lived into the present.

CHAPTER SIX:
**DELIBERATING THE UNREHEARSED TERRAIN OF BASKETBALL
 NARRATIVE THROUGH ANALYSIS**

The idea that we can think consciously about presenting and representing the stories we tell proffers an enticing invitation to think reflexively and self-consciously – not just about the fieldwork we do, but also about the means we choose and use to relay our fieldwork tales to audiences. The choice implied in reflexivity leaves open the possibility that we can consciously take our narrative voice and reframe it The concept of choice, however, is a powerful one. Choice implies intention. Intention implies a kind of deliberation, and deliberation is at the center of our “story” here: we have choices, and those choices can and will reveal different intentions. (Lincoln, 1997, pp. 38-39)

In the written practice of reclaiming our lived moments with basketball through regression and progression we arrive at a new juncture, an exploratory space where alternative avenues of living are brought forth as food for thought. To reach the moment of analysis in both writing and conversation requires us to have peeled back the layers of what has been and what is yet to come. Rich (1997) suggests that the analytical written moment is transformative in itself as it offers the participants an opportunity to re-imagine what was always their own to begin with. She claims that in the process of rewriting ourselves, we travel back into our lived becoming:

If the imagination is to transcend and transform experience it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives, perhaps to the very life you are living at the moment. You have to be free to play around with the notion that day might be night, love might be hate, nothing can be too sacred for the imagination ... to call experimentally by another name. For writing is re-naming. (p. 3)

Through the reflective narrative experience of short writing exercises and complicated in-class conversations, the participants came face to face with who each of them has become through the choice of accepting basketball as an invitation for life-long learning. Little did they know that the lessons imbedded within the game itself would flourish with

intent, gradually becoming the motive for their individual morals, beliefs, and values beyond the sporting space.

Lifting Toward an Analytical Angle: Warriors, Families, and Institutions

As we transitioned into the analytic stage of *currere*, urgency seemed to develop in stepping beyond our comfort zone to challenge what some of the significant lived moments meant in relation to how the game of basketball had evolved into its present state. Through the analysis of their becoming these women were able to communicate and assign multiple perspectives to their intentionality of participation. For many of the participants the analytical nature of *currere* serves as a reality check into the multiple dimensions that have impacted their becoming within basketball as a lived experience. According to Hart (1970) the autobiographical process of depiction is a literary art form that serves multiple modes of intent:

“Confession” is personal history that seeks to communicate or express the essential nature, the truth of the self. “Apology” is personal history that seeks to demonstrate or realize the integrity of the self. “Memoir” is personal history that seeks to articulate or repossess the historicity of the self ... Confession is ontological; apology, ethical; memoir historical or cultural. (p. 491)

The extension of the game into life as a continuum sheds light upon the complexity of intentionality. Things are not always as they seem, especially when they are revisited temporally from the outside in. We have all experienced some sort of *tragedy and triumph* through the sport of basketball. During our youth and adolescence, the tragedy may have been something small that felt colossal within our hearts and upon our minds. Likewise, the triumph may also have been a simple moment of accomplishment in time and space that seemed to shine brighter than the streets of Las Vegas. We cannot brush off these special basketball moments as not having any

significance, especially since they often define our identity in the next stage of life.

Regardless of how big or small these moments may be, as scholar-athletes we have raised our fists in triumph and bowed our heads in tragedy. And in these moments, lessons are charted and philosophies are born. Reid (2002) points out:

Like many inhabitants of this modern world, athletes tend to live in what Frankl calls an 'existential vacuum' characterized by widespread lack of care and concern about their lives. The vacuum is caused by the fact that we reject both instinct and tradition as guides for our action. That is not a bad thing in itself, since instinct and tradition can be very unreliable guides. The problem is that instead of guiding *ourselves* toward meaning, most of us just conform to the will of the masses or submit to the authority of others. This is especially true of athletes. How much of what you do as an athlete is (1) because other athletes do the same thing, or (2) because a parent or coach told you to do it? These reasons may be characteristic of a modern athlete's life, but they are fatal to the search for a *meaningful life* because individuals must find their meanings individually. (p. 125)

Reid's words are troubling to hear, yet as scholar-athletes analyze their own becoming, many of them come to grips with the absence of autonomy within the lived moments. What is the significance of their transformation and growth from a self-defined notion of controlled play into a communal competitive version? Although each of the eight scholar-athletes in the course acknowledged their lack of control over the powers of basketball, they all claimed that the discipline, values, and companionship the sport provides, both in recreational and organized play, has had a profound impact on their individual becoming outside of sport.

I'm Not Every Woman ... I'm an Athletic Woman

Athletes are often defined by the feat they practice, polish, and portray on the grand stage of competition. In basketball, the performance is often celebrated from high school, through the professional ranks as individual athletes are celebrated and trademarked for their signature moves. The becoming of future prospects often lies in the

performance of current stars who display their talent in the local gyms and nationally on television. The plight of athletic women in basketball is still quite often based on the sanctity of male athletes. The superstar women on college teams are few and far between in comparison to men, and the women's professional league (WNBA), comprised of only twelve teams, is merely in its thirteenth year. As Miller (1976) points out:

Women have been led to feel that they can integrate and use all their attributes if they use them for others, but not for themselves. They have developed the sense that their lives should be guided by the constant need to attune themselves to the wishes, desires, and needs of others. The others are the important ones and the guides to action. (pp. 60-61)

Hence, as women take to the court for the same purpose of competing under the grounds of fair play, they are sometimes scrutinized by fans for being too aggressive or masculine. The notion of becoming an athletic woman is often associated with representing every woman and not necessarily perseverance toward finding the self within a sport. How do these women become an extension of the next athletic generation's dream? The passion that all eight scholar-athletes expressed for basketball within their narratives and our conversation was often tainted by the anticipation that others pictured their performance to be on the court. In other words, the passionate reasons why these women had chosen to play the game were often ignored by the masses and substituted with their own imagined reasons. *Comet's* analysis of one of her earliest moments of basketball exemplifies the purity of an imagined being gaining strength:

My first basketball experiences in my driveway catered to my solitude. The ball and hoop never made me feel pressured at this age. I could go outside and shoot if I felt like it, and they would both be inviting with open arms. I didn't have to go up to anyone and ask to play in my own backyard. I was allowed to be the shy and timid me, learning to play and find comfort from the game I love. In those moments in the backyard, I could pretend I was in these situations where the game depended on me making my foul shots. I became that outgoing fearless kid that I wanted to be in those pretend situations. I was the kid everyone wanted to

be friends with, and in my imagination, I became an all star. Basketball helped me imagine the person I would work to become.

The communication between the body and mind at an early age can be both gratifying and devastating. Sports allow us to play games as a form of escape and adventure from our reality, and in those driveway moments, when the self faces the hoop, a child closes her eyes and tells her mind to imagine an adventure filled with greatness through pleasure and performance. Through the mind and body things becomes meaningful. As Arnold (1979) points out,

Our body is the ultimate instrument of all external knowledge, whether intellectual or practical. When we learn to use a language or a tool for example, we make ourselves aware of these things as we are our body; they become, as it were, extensions of our bodily equipment and indications of what it is to be intelligent. (p. 117)

The driveway moments where the body faces the hoop and the ball rests in the player's hand, only she stands between a made or missed shot attempt. In those silent moments of self-inflicted motivation, the mind persuades the body to achieve the task at hand, anticipating great pleasure from the outcome. The comfort zone of becoming, that *Comet* mentions above, is often shattered beyond the driveway as young girls have to defy societal expectations to compete with young boys on the playgrounds within neighborhoods. The craving to compete can be overwhelmed by the resistance to fair play. As *Liberty* mentions in her analytical moment:

It is very intimidating when you walk into the gym and get sized up by the boys almost immediately. Even when I shoot around on a hoop no one will come shoot with me because they feel as if a girl's basketball is contaminated with some kind of disease which will make them play like a girl. With the amount of talent that some of these boys have they may want to play like a girl. It only takes one shot for them to change their method of defense on me. After that made shot, they will no longer be shown up by a girl. They try their hardest to not let me make another shot. Sometimes they pull my shirt 'in traffic' to keep from being seen by their fellow macho men.

Although respect must be often earned on the basketball court, *Liberty's* experience shows that a woman's skill is not only doubted, but when displayed, it is further ousted because it demeans the capability of masculine play, even within a recreational setting. Our bodies become the platform for telling life stories as we build an autobiographical slate of our trials and tribulations through what we physically encounter. Burkitt (1999) explains:

What we call 'mind' only exists because we have bodies that give us the potential to be active and animate within the world, exploring, touching, seeing, hearing, wondering, explaining; and we can only become persons and selves because we are located bodily at a particular place in space and time, in relation to other people and things around us. (p. 12)

The balance of competing as an athletic warrior on the court and identifying with a feminine self off the court can be a physical, mental, and emotional struggle. As *Fever* reminds us:

Being a female athlete off the court was difficult in itself. Sometimes people viewed me as a certain stereotype, or didn't take our sport seriously at all. In high school we would try to get other students to come to our games and so many people would say that girl's basketball was not as fun to watch as boy's. Also, basketball I found is not really considered a "girly" sport like field hockey or cheerleading. So that was another factor too. Other guys would think we were less feminine because we were basketball players (which was not the case at all). On the court we forgot about being feminine and it was all about being tough. Therefore, it was sometimes hard to find that balance of being seen as a legitimate basketball player, and a female as well.

The space of basketball expands beyond the notion of play as society's expectations become a poisonous belief in what should occur in that canvas of competition and whether one gender's performance is as worthy as the other's when put on display. Which aspects of the game are directed by how spectators expect to be drawn onto that canvas? The inversion of a staged basketball competition, from game to war, is much more complex than the visual performance. According to anthropologist, Sherry Ortner,

A woman's body seems to doom her to mere reproduction of life; the male, in contrast, lacking natural creative functions, must (or has the opportunity to) assert his creativity externally, 'artificially,' through the medium of technology and symbols. In so doing, he creates relatively lasting, eternal, transcendental objects, while the woman creates only perishable – human beings. (1974, p. 75)

The competitive sports journey of women is not expected to last forever as the professionalization of sports is sadly not, and may never be, of the same size and caliber in comparison to men's professional leagues. Hence, the journey, in the eyes of the other, becomes more of a moment in time with detoured intentions beyond the realm of sports.

What a Woman Wants of Sport

For many women athletes, the struggle to define themselves as warriors is a salvation in itself, as they consider the fight for honor as part of a bigger process to breaking down stereotypes and empowering the self and others who feel the strain. The limitations set forth by society's perceptions of a woman's body as more radiantly identified with nature as opposed to culture, places the female athletic body in an awkward state of persistent defense. The physicality of performance within a sport such as basketball, for women, becomes a limitation in the eyes of the spectators, who often do not expect to be amazed beyond the fundamentals of the game. For *Sky* it was a matter of proving to the self and to others that she can be simultaneously a female and an athlete.

In her analysis she claims:

As a female athlete I was a warrior on the court when I played with the guys. I played with the guys most of my life because there were no girls to play with. I had to always prove myself, and there was NEVER anything called backing down, because there was no way in hell people were going to look at me like I could not hang with the guys. I earned my place on that team because of the hard work I put in, in practice and in the game. So every day I stepped on any court with the guys I had to be a warrior. They had to know that I was there to take them to the hoop, and get knocked down, cut, and scraped just as badly as they

were. Off the court I felt like I had to be a warrior for other girls. I felt like I had to prove to other girls that in fact girls could play sports and roll with the guys. There would be little girls that came up to me and just admired me and that gave me the strength and encouragement to keep playing with the boys.

The experience that *Sky* mentions above may be quite unique to the realm of youth sports as more and more coed recreational leagues have formed. With girls often physically maturing faster than boys, these playing grounds serve as an interesting arena for identifying warriors. The experience of growing into their bodies in conjunction with simultaneously playing basketball in the same space as boys, allows the new generation of female athletes to experience the lived body through both a physical and mental state of performance. As Loland (1992) claims, “In a Cartesian, dualistic universe, the body is seen as *res extensa*, as mindless matter moving around in a deterministic world in which there is no room for concepts like intentions, experience, meaning, and value, concepts that play an important part in an understanding of bodily movement as lived, practical experience” (p. 61).

For *Shock*, who grew up playing with boys, the physicality of basketball was quite natural, and the notion of becoming a warrior on the court was not limited by gender, but instead by agility and ability. *Shock's* analysis of her becoming a warrior points to this:

Being raised with my brothers and a plethora of other boys, I saw how they played and did my best to emulate it. I know there is a difference in anatomy as I stand next to my 6'7" big brother or 6'4" muscular little brother. But I have never backed down from the challenge of playing against them. Playing basketball and being the underdog because I am a woman taught me that anything can be accomplished if your heart is set on it. All around I could see the desire in all our eyes as we dove for the ball that was going into the grass (out of bounds). I always went for it and so did the boys. Not because we were either boys or girls, but because we were passionate athletes.

The passion and perseverance that *Shock* experienced, while playing basketball with her brothers is embedded within who she eventually becomes, both on and off the court. Her

sense of being a fighter is not just a falling into combatant mode during competition, but more significantly, a drive to sacrifice the athletic body toward the edge of ultimate achievement. Kretchmar (1982) reminds us that there are many degrees embedded within performance and hence,

The resilient enigmas of sport do not usually lend themselves to easy and quick solutions. Just as it is difficult to be “moved” or “carried away” by paintings, poetry, prose literature, or music by dealing with them skeptically or half-heartedly, so too sport does not normally render up its full charm and meaning to the occasional or distracted participant. The athlete has to give himself to the contest, become committed to the game, fully live the activity, if he desires to understand some things about himself and his sport world which are most difficult to grasp. (p. 17)

How a Warrior Means in Sport

The very notion of being a warrior is often associated with masculinity due to the physicality that ignites within sports competition. By claiming one’s physicality over another, each athlete manages to find a playing style that helps her defy the odds and make her mark. *Dream* mentions that her advantage was always size and speed, and in competition she set forth to make her presence felt, regardless of who was on the receiving end of her play. She recalls:

I always tried to establish fear in the other players when I walked on the court ... I think that you have to set a tone for the type of game you are willing to play, if you feed into their style of play that is the way things are going to go. So nothing is part of the game unless you allow it to be. Everything in life has positive and negative changes just like the game of basketball. It’s about how you adapt to the changes. Either you let the changes bring you down, or you make them work for you. There is nothing in life that cannot use some changes, so unless you bring another way to play the game you must accept what it has become. At the end of the day its how you play the game, not how everyone else plays the game.

The significance of playing in the moment during a game often makes the difference in the outcome for the player and her teammates. A resilient awareness of the rectangular space and the partners and opponents who move within those dimensions becomes

essential in establishing presence of both body and mind. Kretchmar's (1982) analysis of an actual basketball play captures the essence of subjectivity within movement:

The advanced basketball player, for instance, may initiate a drive to the right with the intent to proceed to the basket for a lay-up shot. However, if his skill is developed well enough and if he remains peacefully attentive to the constantly shifting sense of his world enroute to the basket, he will live through countless opportunities to modify his course of action or abort the mission altogether. With each bounce of the ball, each step, each shift in position, junctures for change are encountered. A shift in pace, a new rhythm, a modified direction, a head movement, a fake with the shoulders, a shot, a pass off – all may be consistent with the overall context of the action, though they are not a part of the initial project to drive to the basket straightaway. (p. 12)

The defining moment that we all anticipate as warrior athletes does not necessarily greet us with jubilation. The warrior's struggle in sports often ends with the agony of defeat. Yet, as *Mystic* reminds us through her analysis, it is the journey of a warrior that is significant and not merely the outcome of her journey. In *Mystic's* analytical moment, in the role of a coach, she preaches:

Losing is a horrible emotion that you have to feel in life, one that makes you feel like you have failed. But, sometimes losing makes you stronger as a person. It makes you realize how much you wanted something, what you did wrong, or what you could have done to win. For failure defeats losers and failure inspires winners. Time, sweat, and now tears, basketball was the place that you learned hard work and jubilation. Now it has shown you heartache which is a feeling you never want to feel again, just like in life. All of you have the potential to do anything and everything that you put your mind to. Always remember that "The storm is coming; not all storms are evil. With its raindrops, it can wash away your past and in its flash it can illuminate a new way. This is one of those storms."

The athletic self must experience struggle in order for the warrior to grow from within.

The experiences that many of the participants shared with each other, through their sporting lives, points to the intrinsic value that competition naturally triggers. Taylor

(1961) claims:

Objects, acts, situations, and persons can have extrinsic value only. A felt or perceived quality of experience may have either intrinsic or extrinsic value ... The essential difference between intrinsic and extrinsic value is the difference between the derivatively good and the non-derivatively good ... Nothing else need have value for a thing to have intrinsic value; the thing is good in itself, apart from its leading to or contributing to the value of other things. (pp. 23-24)

Our athletic selves often limit us to see beyond competition and the notion of fighting to succeed both on and off the court. *Storm*'s analysis of transitions shows that although the prime time of a basketball journey may have come to an end, the lessons learned that apply to the normalcy of life are still embedded within the greater battle of being a life warrior.

I think I missed the competition because there's something about competition that just drives me, like everything in life is like you're trying to get ahead of, if not some body, then something. You're trying to overcome something. That transition from high school to college without a basketball scholarship is like, jeez, I'm about to be a normal person. I've never been a normal person, for the past 14 years. I've been an athlete.

Our becoming as players in a game, athletes on a team, and warriors for the moment, justifies an eventual return to a normal life not filled with the consistent routine of training, practice, and performance. Does the life of an athlete ever return to this notion of "normalcy" or do the corporeal and relational routines themselves naturally transfer onto the next life path? According to Campbell (1966), "...In essence, sport is a kind of diversion which has for its direct and immediate end fun, pleasure, and delight and which is dominated by a spirit of moderation and generosity. Athletics, on the other hand, is essentially a competitive activity, which has for its end victory in the contest and which is characterized by a spirit of dedication, sacrifice, and intensity" (p. 28). The return to normalcy claims greater independence and control over our lives, yet even in

that state of independence we naturally seek camaraderie. In the next section I explore the analytical notion of team camaraderie and how it played a role in the lives of these eight women as they dig deeper into their role as members of a greater entity.

Team Camaraderie: Unifying the Self through the Teams We Honor

As a greater number of children enter the realm of competitive team sports at an earlier age, the more complicated it will become to define the notion of unity. As I have previously discussed through my observations with officiating AAU basketball, the number of young athletes trying to find their way onto nationally elite, often sponsored teams, is dramatically on the rise. The notion of constantly changing teams in order to improve the chances of the self begs the question – what will become of team unity if the cast of players is constantly shifting? In the analysis of their experiences with finding themselves in organized camaraderie, the eight participants emphasize that often the commitment to traveling teams involved lots of sacrifice, both of the self and the family.

According to George Sage there is a new phenomenon of club sports emerging:

For both young athletes and their families the commitment to traveling teams is almost total. The young athletes must abandon other organized sports to concentrate on the travel team. They must commit to specializing in one sport, and often must compete with their team year-round. Family lives must be re-centered around the sports world of the traveling teams. The new breed of sports' parents are road warriors who drive thousands of miles every season and spend weekends and evenings watching their kid's practice and play. And they write lots of checks because it is very expensive to support a traveling or club team athlete. (as quoted in Eitzen, 2009, p. 108)

We were often reminded as referees to be mindful of the sacrifices that families were making, both in time and finances, in order to give their young sons and daughters an opportunity to progress in the realm of competitive athletics. The intent for us was to stay focused during the entire game so that no athlete or parent felt that they had been

cheated in their dedication to basketball. In both their writing and the classroom conversations, the eight scholar-athletes share in detail the notion of opportunity, disparity, loyalty, acceptance, growth, leadership, intelligence, and disinterest, all brought forth by competitive team play. All of these elements in and of themselves can serve as a chapter in a book or an act in a play, and each one is significant to the process of building a scholar-athlete. After all, that is the intent of the sacrifices that families make for their children. Clark and Holquist's (1984) examination of Bakhtin speaks to this process of building, an act that is self-driven, yet quite reliant on the other.

Life as event presumes selves that are performers. To be successful, the relation between me and the other must be shaped into a coherent performance, and thus the architectonic activity of authorship, which is the building of a text, parallels the activity of human existence, which is the building of a self. (p. 64)

Becoming Part of an Athletic Sisterhood

As a team of scholar-athletes, the participants in the course were empowered by each other's basketball-centered stories of the past in order to generate vibrant conversations of their sporting life in the present, and how it all came to be. Were they drawn to this curricular space of engagement craving a return to a sporting past or are they seeking a new collaboration through their current relationship with basketball? The bond naturally formed within the crossroads of their autonomous, yet relational, authorship of basketball as a life course. The road that may have been less traveled within each of their own minds, was surprisingly more common than we initially thought. In her analysis of building the athletic self, *Mystic* recalls her transition from the driveway to the gym as she was just starting to understand the notion of teamwork and how it should be displayed on a court with multiple players.

She writes:

The first team experience that I remember playing was in the boys and girls league at the local YMCA. My twin sister and I were both on the team, at age five. At that age I think my head was in a state that just being a part of the team was a good experience to meet friends and to run up and down the court even though the boys on the team thought girls could not play basketball. Two of the boys were my neighbors and I would play with them a lot in my driveway. But when we would enter the YMCA, there was not much "teamwork" going on. It was more of a one man band kind of thing. Yes we all had the same shirt on and were known to be each other's teammate, but teamwork, that was something that was learned later in life.

It appears that the notion of competition is learned quite early within the games we play against other people. Even if they are our friends in a more informal setting, once the stage of competition has been defined, whether it is on the playground or at the gym, each individual wants to prove that she is the best. The transition from playground to gymnasium disrupts the natural flow of informal play with designated roles and limited time for play, given that each team has eight to ten players. Weiss (1981) philosophizes that in the mechanical nature of individual duties brought forth by organized play, team connectivity suffers:

If there is too great a submission to the conditions of play – when a team, for example, is completely guided by a game book, by coaches on the side line, or by traditions it has long cherished – it will be prompted to act inappropriately at times. The players and their direct interactions will tend to be disconnected. Distinct, atomized ways will be the norm, bolstered by the hope that they will somehow mesh together. (p. 50)

Although each player on the court has a designated role to fulfill, whether it is directing and settling into the offense plays, screening off defenders, being at the right place to receive the pass, getting the ball to the easiest scoring possibility on the court, or crashing the boards for a rebound, the connectivity of live action must be fluid in execution and not merely mechanical in task. *Comet's* narrative analysis considers the

possibility that individualism and identity in basketball actually grow from interaction in team play:

"I am. I think. I will" (*Anthem* by Ayn Rand). This is a very popular quote by a character in Ayn Rand's book, *The Anthem*. The character discovers the true meaning of the word "I" and individuality and what power the word "I" has. Through basketball, I have been privy to the same knowledge. Funny, I know, since basketball is a team sport. But what makes the individualism learned so profound from basketball is that you learn to become an individual from being on a team. The camaraderie of my basketball team taught me about loyalty. We needed to trust and be loyal to one another to have that chemistry to be successful on the court. Team sports were good for that, and basketball made me feel like I was a part of a greater purpose. By senior year, however, I realized I could not completely be ruled by what others wanted and what they thought of me. I had to start becoming the person I wanted to present to the wide world of college. I could not hide behind the team identity anymore, and basketball helped me with that too.

The push to promote individual athletic success at a younger age has altered the direction of events that *Comet* mentions above. A greater number of young players are joining teams already defined by predetermined beliefs of individuals, both players and coaches, instead of a transformative connection brought forth by team camaraderie over time. According to Sartre (1982), a team achieves a functional potential in competition when it learns to adapt to the changing environment of play:

The action of every player is predetermined as an indefinite possibility by function, that is to say, in relation to a future objective which can realise itself only through an organized multiplicity of technical activities. Thus, function is for every member a relation to the objective as a totality to be totalized. In the match, every common individual will, in the light of the group's objective, effect a practical synthesis (orientation, schematic determination of possibilities, or difficulties, etc.) of the field in its present particularities... (p. 456)

The sense of building a successful basketball team together in the realm of AAU has become a dissipating fad. As *Storm* points out in her experience of transferring from one

AAU team to another at a young age:

When I was younger I didn't even think about impressing people, it was more, I need to have fun and I went. I always practiced to become better; I never thought the game was a playground. When I came into the gym it was all work. (IMPRESS). That first happened when I went into the Maryland Magic; I went from one AAU team to the Maryland Magic in Baltimore City. My entire team was black; they had one white girl and I was like, "Hey this is going to be a little bit different." Uniforms, matching sneakers; not just one uniform, but I had three different uniforms I was wearing. I had to make my way onto that team; they didn't know me, they didn't like me – when I first came there I got asked like 20 questions, like how I would improve the team by people; like I'm only 11. 11-year-olds are like asking me these questions, so at that point I'm like I have to impress them; I just cannot come on the team and act like this is fun.

Reforming within a Culture of Competition

As the foundation for high athletic expectations is introduced at an earlier age, a culture of tradition has formed. The most elite AAU basketball teams seem to crank out trademarked athletes who fit the mold of their program philosophy. Often, a handful of superstars will emerge as icons based on the power of tradition, yet for many others, as Rorty (1989) claims, they merely become replicas of a process:

The words (or shapes, or theorems, or models of physical nature) marshaled to one's command may seem merely stock items, rearranged in routine ways. One will not have impressed one's mark on the language but, rather, will have spent one's life shoving about already coined pieces. So one will not really have had an I at all. One's creations, and one's self, will just be better or worse instances of familiar types. (p. 24)

The AAU proving grounds are often brutal, especially for sponsored teams that eventually compete at the national level on a regular basis. Although it is a significant year-round time commitment for athletes and their families, the perks of camaraderie and the connections brought forth are truly a unique opportunity for those who take advantage of them. *Dream* captures what the AAU experience meant for her beyond athletics in her

analytical written account:

When I was younger I didn't realize that playing on an AAU team was a privilege. The AAU system definitely causes a huge disparity between those that can afford to play on an AAU team and those that can't. The AAU team in my comparison to my middle school team is nowhere near being on the same level. My AAU team provided so many opportunities for me and the other girls on the team. We got to go to so many different cities and we were able to be seen by college coaches at the age of 12. Kids that can't afford to take part in the AAU program have little to no chance of ever being seen by a college basketball scout. I know that it is not fair for the people that can't afford to experience it, but isn't that how everything else is in the world. If it were not for AAU, I would never have been able to become as good as I did.

The glory of playing basketball on a scholarship at the college or university level team is a privilege that is granted to few out of the many who breathe and bleed basketball from a very young age. However, not all passion is measured by merely the outcome of opportunity to continue competing at a high level. For *Dream* and many of the other participants in the course, the value of basketball was embedded in the becoming, not the end product. Roberts (1995) signifies that a true scholar athlete is actually a poetic creation of her own experiences that shines through the joy of being in the moment:

More than all others the strong poet-athlete acknowledges, appreciates, and accepts the worthy role of chance in the determination of her fate, of her self. That she is a poet-athlete is no more or less the result of contingency than the determination of any other artist as artist. Being born of an appropriate gene pool, having the right games, books, music, or images dangled in front of them at the right times, coming under the influence of worthy mentors at the right times and places, having the time, money, and parental support to sustain years of training – all are contingency through and through for all poets. (p. 105)

The desire for each participant to write about her experiences growing into basketball as a life course, not becoming a basketball player, helps us understand why they each remained loyal to a game that offered them no guarantees beyond the fundamental joy of putting the ball into a hoop. The opportunity eventually to play for an organized and

established AAU team does not equate to success or pleasure, but instead, it serves another medium for expressing their becoming as scholars and athletes.

The benefit of traveling across the country definitely has its perks, but as *Sky* captures in her analysis, the grass is not always so green on the other side. Although basketball culture is quite unified within the United States, dimensions such as race and socioeconomic status, can often trump camaraderie. *Sky* writes about the reality of an AAU experience her team encountered while traveling in the south:

We went to Georgia and number one we didn't see a black ref the entire tournament. Every game, the parents were like holding back from yelling racist comments at us, and I'm like, "Yo! We're like 6 years old, leave us alone." I think refs cater to the areas they're in and so do the fans because you know what you like basically. White girls play differently from black girls in my opinion. White girls are raised on fundamentals, like they practice free-throws and passing. Black people, we do not practice that, so I think they were catering to the style because they weren't used to seeing that aggressiveness come out on a basketball court. It's almost like when they looked at you, they weren't looking at you, they were looking at your skin saying what is the person saying to me; they weren't looking at who you were, and for me to notice that when I was 6-8 years old was ridiculous. Surprisingly we went back to Georgia every year for like three or four years and we kept winning and pissing them off, but it was a good tournament as far as the competition and we liked the area it was in.

The competitive nature of the AAU basketball circuit may often be seen as a continuous battle over pride. Coaches fight to persuade the best players in their region to join the team and in return promise them full exposure to the best scouts in the country through team travel. Unfortunately, this notion of play becomes a relational war over time-sensitive glory, and in the process of defining supremacy via sponsorships and trophies, the joy of basketball may become tainted. Loland (1996) criticizes organized sports for possibly having a detrimental impact on human relations, even though the intent for sports is to develop a sense of camaraderie between athletes.

He specifically states:

In zero-sum games, one person is said to succeed only if the others do not. Competitive practices are therefore seen to lead toward a destructive win-at-all-cost-ideology that “poisons” the relationship between persons. Competitive settings undermine our capability of empathy and lead to egoism, envy, contempt, distrust, and aggression. In competitive struggles for supremacy, other persons are deprived of their humanity and become “enemies” to be confronted and conquered. Some understand competitive sport as a substitute for war, or even as war in the full sense of the word: as a struggle for supremacy by all means possible. (p. 80)

Not all moments of tension are brought forth by competition. Since teams spend the majority of their time in practice, tension from within can often destroy the camaraderie among players and coaches. That tension is often absent in AAU basketball because the practice times are short and any tension that comes about often leads to a change of teams. However, as *Fever* explains, high school basketball is a completely different beast, and hence, it requires leadership and liaisons in order for camaraderie to stay in tact. In analyzing a difficult basketball time period *Fever* states:

I was a captain and I was supposed to do what was best for the team and I knew by getting angry about not starting and not playing, I knew that was wrong. I mean, I battled with myself just because I had an obligation to my team; I was supposed to be the captain, the person they look to, that keeps us all together, but I thought the way she went about things was wrong and I think what came of that – she had her opinion of what was best and I had my opinion of what was best – it just created a lot of tension for the two of us. Every practice she’d tell us that whoever played best in practice would get to start, and I would think that I played the best in practice and I hustled more than the rest of them, and then she still would not start me. It just caused a lot of tension and people on my team thought that what she was doing was wrong as well. I was the captain and I was supposed to be the liaison between the coach and the players and I think they just lost confidence in her because they didn’t agree with what she was doing and they didn’t think she was adequate to coach.

There is an assumption that as athletes within a sport we deserve to reap the benefits of the dedicated time we put into training and practice. Although the rewards may not always come from victories in competition, the expectation is that our efforts

should not go unnoticed. The battle between internal and external incentives can be interrupted by coaches who serve as leaders who often make decisions about lineups and strategies. Faarlund (1983), an activist in the Norwegian ecological movement, stresses the following:

Competition as a value represents a form of self-realisation which is reserved for the select. The competition-motivated life style presupposes 'losers'. Self-realisation for the elite presupposes that the others are denied self-realisation. Competition as a value is thus excluding and elitist. ... An important element is the necessity of effort. Without effort, no quality, and without quality, reduced enjoyment. Enjoyment of the quality in one's personal life conduct is an autotelic experiencing of value, or inner motivation. Competitive motivation is external motivation and thus a weaker mode of motivation. (n.p.)

The experience that *Fever* shares points to a dilemma that exists within team play.

Although we strive to win as a team, individual players often do not agree with each other or the coach about who should be on the court running the show from each position. Hence, a team's external motivation to win the game is disrupted by individual beliefs. In the process, an initial internal drive to obtain pleasure through play, as discovered by informal play on driveways and playgrounds, is disrupted through delegated tasks in organized competition. As active players, we are often not mindful of self-realization in the moment of play, but in her analytical writing, *Shock* looks back on her experiences from the sideline during a time period when she played on a very talented team at a young age and had to adapt by watching:

The most accomplished team I have ever played with was the varsity team of my high school. Every girl on that team was good. And as long as you showed your talent, no one judged you based on age or grade. That year was rough and we didn't always win all the games we should have. But I learned more watching and playing with those girls than I had since I began playing. They taught me to have a basketball IQ and to focus everything on basketball. On the court, nothing else mattered. And with this philosophy we won many of our more important games. At the same time the older girls were showing us underclassmen what it meant to lead a team. When I sit at games and watch other girls play, I reminisce about

how things were in high school. If something needed to be done in a game, I was the go to player. Whoever their best player was, I was guarding. And other teams made defenses around me. Now, I feel lost at times and think back to when I could do the things these other girls are doing, if not better than them.

The notion of becoming a philosophical or reflective athlete goes beyond training, practice, and competition. How does a sporting space mean to us when we are looking in from outside the boundaries of play? For many young athletes, to observe the game from the outside becomes a challenge as they crave to put their bodies to the test against the other, attempting to prove their physical worth with agility and finesse. However, Kretchmar (1982) suggests that stepping away from the game can make the difference in how far an athlete can excel in a sport:

A fine athlete can be marvelously unpredictable. He can act toward his world in any number of surprising, equivalent, and right ways. Yet his unpredictability is grounded in the peculiar features of this one individual. When an athlete achieves distance from his sport milieu, he does not become impersonal; neither are his intuitions impersonally abstract. Rather, he experiences the world *vis-à-vis* his distinctiveness ever more sharply. And intuited truth is honed to the unique person that *he* is ever more completely. (p. 14)

In the process of analyzing our lived moments of play we may discover the reason for why something occurred in our athletic past. For *Shock*, the lesson is revisited as she observes basketball with a keen eye even more in the present. The passion that is often ignited through team play can dwindle with life changes. As *Liberty* writes in her analysis, her ability is being charged with failure in the present, and as a result her confidence has dropped and her joy for the game is slowly disappearing. She ponders her experience with team basketball at the university level by contemplating whether she still belongs on the court in that capacity:

Even though I love the girls on the team and the practices serve as an escape for me, club basketball has led me to question my abilities as a basketball player. I have always started or come right off of the bench for every team that I have

played on. Now I am missing lay-ups in practice and losing my thirst to get into the paint and elbow my way up to the basket to get a tough rebound. I have lost the swagger that allowed me to compete with the boys at a young age and allowed my coach to have faith that I would stop the fastest girl on the other team. I just seem to get frustrated so easily. My frustration used to serve me in a good way. I would act like a crazed dog when I was frustrated, but at the same time, in control of my body. Now I put my head down and walk away dejected. I still love the game so I will never walk away completely. All I want is my confidence back.

Although an athlete's glory days in action may appear to be over, her physical and intellectual proficiency of the game she fell in love with can never become devalued.

The culture of basketball asks us to think when the ball is in our hands and move when the ball is out of our hands. Yet, in reality our bodies and minds are in constant collaboration as we react and predict via actions and thought processes in the sporting space. For Whitehead (2007), the development of the athletic self is dependent upon physical literacy. She asserts:

Physical literacy can be described as the ability and motivation to capitalise on our motile potential to make a significant contribution to the quality of life. As humans we all exhibit this potential; however, its specific expression will be particular to the culture which we live and the motile capacities with which we are endowed. (p. 287)

Our partnership with basketball can frequently be a love-hate relationship. We often want basketball to conform to how we envision it in our lives, and not how the culture of basketball is changing as we live within our own past. Maybe it is not basketball that we are having this difficult relationship with, but the different teams and people we encounter at an older age that trigger our emotions toward the game we love to play and watch. In the next section I explore the analytical notion of communal responsibility and how it played a role in the lives of these eight women as they dig deeper into the institutionalization of basketball and what it expects of us.

Communal Responsibility: What Does Basketball Expect of Me?

In the stories that were shared throughout the semester it is obvious that the lives of these eight women have been enriched by the game of basketball. Regardless of whether they still choose to shoot around recreationally or compete at a university intramural or club level, each of them has admitted to being molded by their lived moments in basketball. The urgency to stay connected with basketball beyond just play verifies the impact that sports culture has on our lives in the United States. Even as mere spectators we influence the culture of competition. However, according to Nelson (1994), sports culture is quite murky:

We live in a country in which the manly sports culture is so pervasive we may fail to recognize the symbolic messages we all receive about men, women, love, sex, and power. We need to take sports seriously – not the scores or statistics, but the process. Not to focus on who wins, but on who's losing. Who loses when a community spends millions of dollars in tax revenue to construct a new stadium and only men get to play in it, and only men get to work there? Who loses when football and baseball so dominate the public discourse that they eclipse all mention of female volleyball players, gymnasts, basketball players, and swimmers? (p. 8)

As amateur athletes we often do not think about revenue that is generated within the sports market and its impact upon various populations. Our concern as athletes is to become the best, and sometimes that means we are blind to our actions beyond the game. It is not that we do not care; it is just that our physical, mental, and emotional well-being in the act of play takes precedence over greater sociological implications. As each of the class participants analyzed their experiences with communal responsibility as they grew into the game, a natural sense of duty to basketball began to take shape. Yet, it may still be early to predict what will become of this impulsive call to serve as an ambassador of the game.

One of the aspects of communal responsibility that seems to be of interest for many scholar-athletes is to become a teacher of the game and coach their own team, building their own philosophy of morals and values embedded within the arena of competitive basketball. As *Dream* points out in her written narrative:

In the beginning I played because of the amazement of the coach. It was like, “Hey if this lady thinks that I could be a great basketball player and she’s had all the success, why not try it?” I can’t remember how track faded out and basketball became so dominant in my life cause I played a lot of sports; track was just the one that I was really into. My mom never really pressured me or was really crazy on me. It was not for her, it was more for the glory of playing the game, knowing that there’s a greater chance that I could be really successful at this sport. There is so much more competition in the game of basketball. I feel that when I was younger, maybe it was not as bad, but definitely when I got into high school in the area that I’m from, and the school that I’m coming from, there are such high expectations for our team and so much great competition.

The experience that *Dream* had in being drawn into the game by a coach that served as a good mentor, and a mom who did not shove basketball down her throat, radiates in the path that *Dream* will follow as a mentor or coach. A basketball player’s transition from a recreational to a competitive, or better yet, more organized sporting space is highly dependent upon the people and programs that define the expectations within the space.

A basketball team space may be challenging to the autonomy of an individual player desiring to use the space as a platform for growth and recognition. Yet, the conglomeration of human and programmatic factors can either nurture the autonomy or agitate it from further growth. Lefebvre (1991) contemplates:

Every space is already in place before the appearance in it of actors; these actors are collective as well as individual subjects inasmuch as the individuals are always members of groups or classes seeking to appropriate the space in question. The pre-existence of space conditions the subject’s presence, action and discourse, his [sic] competence and performance; yet the subject’s presence, action, and discourse, at the same time as they presuppose this space, also negate it. The subject experiences the space as an obstacle, as a resistant ‘objectivity’ at times as implacably hard as a concrete wall. (p. 57)

For *Comet*, her sense of present autonomy is embedded in the consistent feedback she received as a young adult from one of her coaches. In her analysis of expectations she mentions:

In high school, I played JV my freshman year. We practiced with the varsity. One of the volunteer assistant coaches used to play with us. She used to guard me because we were roughly the same height and speed. Whenever she told me something to do, I did it. But the difference between her and my head coach was that I gave her my best, and she gave me something back. She would say good job or say something was wrong. My head coach, however, would constantly knock me and my teammates down, but never bring us back up with positive acknowledgements. I think autonomy is lost when a player blindly does what a coach says without thinking about it and accepting it. A player should think, "Well, he is wrong, but maybe I can talk to him when he calms down a little bit." Otherwise, you are not thinking for yourself.

Taking Charge within a Community

One of the biggest dilemmas that players and coaches encounter is trying to get into each other's heads in order to sustain maximum output in performance and pleasure. The withholding of suggestions by players because of intimidation and the reluctance by some coaches to limit praise to avoid atrophy in team performance has become a shared understanding in the competitive community of sports. This social interaction between players and coaches is not a problem from an insider's perspective since there is a shared intersubjective understanding that arises from the large amount of time spent together in and out of a particular sporting space. As Taylor (1971) proposes:

The meanings and norms implicit in ... [social interactions] are not just in the minds of the actors but are out there in the practices themselves, practices which cannot be conceived as a set of individual actions, but which are essentially modes of social relation, of mutual action. (p. 27)

Being around the game of basketball from a very young age does give an athlete some credibility in asking questions and offering suggestions to the coach. The independence that *Comet* emphasizes above is not a form of teen rebellion, but a

communal contribution to the betterment of the team. Often this responsibility falls upon the captain who serves as the floor general, carrying out the demands of the coach as she sees fit on the court. *Mystic* claims that she owes her life to basketball because of all the roads it has paved for her through numerous opportunities. She also expresses a strong belief that what she has earned through basketball must not be colonized, but instead should be shared with the next generation of players. In her analysis she believes that the sacrifices made in basketball have all paid off and she would do it again:

One thing that I gave up for the community of basketball was my summers. My summer vacations were spent on basketball trips. I remember listening to other friends talk about how they went to the beach, Disney World, etc. I went to all those places, but basketball was the reason that took me there. My parents also gave up their summertime to travel around and watched my sister and me play basketball. All those summers spent with basketball ... I loved it, would not change it if I did it a million times over again. In my opinion, I owe the sport of basketball everything that it taught me. That is why I want to be a basketball coach. I want to teach the kids about this amazing sport that can help you be successful on and off the court. The joy in seeing people get better, it is an amazing thing to witness; that is why I want to be a coach. Basketball has always been there for me and I hope to always dedicate my time to it.

The skills and strategies of basketball demand players to be cognizant of their bodies and minds as they move with or without the ball up and down the court. “Active hands” is a phrase that is commonly used with athletes involved in team sports to clarify that our bodies signal others, both our teammates and the opponent, to mentally react. To fully appreciate the phrase, one must experience the correlation between the mind and the body during play, and not merely through predetermined drills. Varela, Thomson, and Rosch (1993) examine cognition not as a predetermined template to activate, but instead, a resume of our interactions:

We propose as a name the term *enactive* to emphasize the growing conviction that cognition is not the representation of a pre-given world by a pre-given mind but is

rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs. (p. 9)

The drive that each of these eight women have expressed about basketball is both empowering and inclusive. The voice of their becoming is heard loud and clear, but more significantly, it tells a story of becoming, not one of acceptance or tolerance. As *Storm* adamantly recalls in her written narrative:

I used to be this tomboy little girl that wanted to beat all of the boys on my coed recreational league. Those moments taught me to never accept coming second to any man of equal or lesser talent. Then I grew up a lot faster while playing with people one or two years older than me on an all girls team. That taught me that age was just a number and I could compete with anyone no matter their age. I knew what was separating me from mediocrity and success, and that was changing AAU teams. Being able to know what would lead me to success back then only foreshadows my current knowledge. I knew that because I had played with people so much older than me and had a coach that understood me so well that I could no longer play AAU for any other coach, so I quit. I have learned to move on from AAU basketball and that dream of becoming “the first girl in the NBA” as Monica Wright would say in *Love & Basketball*.

Each athlete at some point will reach the crossroads of her basketball sporting life. At this juncture, she must face the physical and mental challenges of how she would like to continue interacting with the ball and hoop which have been so good to her. To become aware that a change in our sporting habits may be necessary is an unavoidable condition of the body; but to cherish that change into a new habit of interaction with basketball is a triumph for the soul. Kretchmar’s (1982) examination of distancing suggests the same:

Consciousness does not invade some mechanistic world from the outside, as it were, but rather grows, see new aspects of reality, intuits different possibilities, senses a novel strategy, in part, by virtue of such mundane phenomena as a habitualized head fake, the power in a calf muscle, the size of a forearm, and an ingrained pattern of dribbling. Thus, both the multitude of invitations received by good performers and the frequent junctures for change which are experienced are inherently related to the athlete’s habits... (p. 14)

To confront ourselves as scholars of our sport is to understand that we were thinking about our moments as we lived them. The decisions that were made, such as the stepping away from AAU competition by *Storm*, epitomize the very essence of our scholarly becoming. These women who are no longer institutional athletes, have gained great strength beyond the court from their becoming on the court. Each story is unique and as *Liberty* suggests, basketball was always the great healer, even if the culture around it was stained by personal agendas:

The institution of basketball has led me to see the dark side of many people. Because my father coached me when I was younger I was able to see the inner workings of many parents who believed their kid was god's gift to basketball. In some ways the institution of the sport may have taken away the fun aspect of the "game" and made it into primarily a form of competition mainly on the personal level between young players. Basketball has always been an escape for me because it has always been a constant for me. Whenever I had a fight with my family or friends I knew that basketball would always be there. At some point I could get out of the situation and either go to practice or just shoot around outside by myself to clear my head. I even made my father put a flood light over the driveway so it could be an outlet for me all of the night. I wouldn't think about anything except for the ball swishing through the net.

Reviving the Value in Slow Motions

In the moments of competition we do not have the luxury to freeze frame our existence and listen to how the game addresses us. Hence, we seek a separate space of sporting solitude or the same space during its downtime as an outlet to either quickly escape what has happened in real time or relive the highlight of the moment through a celebratory analysis. Regardless, meaning-making happens more efficiently when we tune out the special effects of our sporting lives. Linschoten (1987) claims that by being phenomenological and slowing down the loudness in our listening, things address

themselves better:

The silence we need in order to sleep is not merely the absence of noise, but the meaningless, stilling silence. The ticking of the clock, a speech which is boring, the creaking of the bed, noise made by street cars and cars, and even a lively conversation around us do not keep us from falling asleep provided they are meaningless and worthless; however, a low soft conversation in the room next door, or the alarming drip from a leaking roof, or the irregular breathing of your spouse can be enough to deprive you of sleep. That is because they address themselves to us and we have to answer to their appeal. (p. 90)

The fact that basketball can serve each of us when we call upon it individually, in times of leisure or crisis, and then bring us together as a collective within a sports arena, points to how significant each athlete's becoming is in relation to the bigger picture. By listening to the elements of escape we can better understand why they were and still are attracted to that common sporting space. *Sky* sees the institution of basketball as a cultural phenomenon that has grown over time:

It's like a bowl of rock creek soup [where the story goes]: One day different people from all over the town, came together and added something different to the pot, some added potatoes, some added carrots, some added meat, and in the end there was a huge pot of soup that tasted delicious even though there were so many ingredients thrown in the pot. What makes basketball unique is that there are so many different people, adding so many things to the game from their style of play, to their attitudes, to their moves. In my opinion basketball culture is the rules, and expectations to living and playing basketball. Basketball, like many countries, has its own culture that those who live in the world of basketball come to know, learn, live by and challenge.

The game of basketball is so vibrant that it can serve as a simple challenge for an individual seeking to shoot from a further distance or a revolutionary act for a community seeking to promote peace through a tournament. The culture of basketball allows intrinsic value to blossom into an act of self-realization within which the person is connected to a larger community through an inner conviction. According to Naess'

(1989) examination of relevancy:

Identification in this sense is the widest interpretation of love. In love one loses part of one's identity by gaining a greater identity, something that in its truest sense cannot be spoken of. So at the same time we do not intend to make everything part of ourselves and see ourselves as nonexistent otherwise. (p. 11)

For each athlete the journey in and out of basketball begins with a dream, a ball, and a sacred hoop. That hoop eventually turns into hope – the desire to be an icon even in the absence of fame – to have a goal for balancing two very distinct yet interwoven notions of basketball, the physical with the mental. *Fever* ponders the communal sense of athletics:

I think for the community, just being a good role model for younger kids and showing them what athletes are, cause there were a lot of athletes at our school that got in trouble and were wild and could get away with a lot of things. It was good for these kids that started where we started out in realizing, "Well we're gonna go to the same MS as them, we're gonna go to the same HS as them. They played Green Hornets and I'm playing Green Hornets now." I think it's good that they could see that you could be an athlete, but you do not have to succumb to pressures that are going on because there were a lot of people that got in trouble. So, I think just showing them that you could be an athlete and also an intellectual, like you can be smart too. I think that was a good thing.

Basketball as the great sports emancipator becomes a token of opportunity to participate in something greater than the rules of the game and not restricted to boundaries found on a court. Yet, as the notion of competition brings players together to excel against each other, there is a shared understanding that each team seeks to prove that they can outperform the other physically and mentally. Kretchmar's (1975) etymological analysis of contest clearly shows the intent of togetherness within competition:

Coming from *com* plus *testari*, meaning to bear witness together, it suggests both human plurality and a common testimony. A minimal of two persons must be doing the same kind of thing for valid comparisons of success to be made ... But this contesting "togetherness" is not a community project towards one end, as it would be if two or more persons were trying collectively to pass a test. It is doing

the same kind of thing in an attempt to show differences in the direction of superiority. (p. 29)

A new sense of freedom can be achieved when the path from the driveway leads you to a group on the playground who challenge you to walk into the gym and learn from a person who has already been there before. As *Shock* reminds us, it all starts with a desire to put a ball into the hoop and the sanctity it provides for those who accept the invitation over and over again as they explore different communities of basketball in search of never-ending bliss. In her words:

When I get mad even today, I'll have the urge to want to go shoot, just touch a basketball, just have sneakers on, be in the gym, smell it, just that, calms me down. Like I have panic attacks, like basketball takes it away. Watching it is fine, but I like being in it, and I hate sweating, but I'll sweat all day long for basketball. Like that's the only thing I'll sweat for – basketball. One of my good friends that I used to play basketball with in high school, she was like I heard you went to the gym, but did you play basketball? No, I saw the court though and I wanted to go play, but there was a bunch of boys. I didn't think they'd let me play. So I went to the gym and I played a game, just pick-up, and I was like yeah, I think I wanna play basketball. They didn't know me, but hey high-five, they didn't know me but, "Hey good job – what's your name again? I gotcha on the next game." It was that connection in a way that I knew how to make. It was the strangest thing for me but I had to put myself back into something I'm comfortable with and I could be comfortable with basketball anywhere.

The basketball story that is too often not told is the one that brings us back to the space where we found the greatest solitude. To invite ourselves back into those spaces and delve deeper into our lived moments is the key ingredient to building a basketball culture filled with opportunity, disparity, loyalty, acceptance, growth, and leadership.

Osterhoudt's (1976) examination of our obligation as participants in a sporting space clearly points to a shared culture of being, regardless of how far removed former players may be:

The use of the imperative in sport secures an internal relationship with the laws (rules and regulations) which define and govern it, and with those other persons

who also *freely* participate in it. A regard for those laws as self-legislated, and an intrinsic respect for those others is nonetheless presupposed by a free entry into sporting activity ... [it means] the taking on of the laws of sport as one's own, and a cultivation of a diving sympathy for all others who have also made such a choice. The categorical imperative commands that we abide by these laws for their own sake ... And that we consequently treat others with a regard that we ourselves would prefer. (p. 68)

Moving from Analysis to Synthesis

As we enter into a new gymnasium we encounter a fresh set of faces, yet we are naturally bound to a cultural contract, a shared understanding of what may occur in the time that we spend together, regardless of which driveway or playground was our sanctuary. The analysis of the participants' lived experiences with basketball, through both unrehearsed conversations and written reflections, provided a platform for an autobiographical investigation that had often been carried out physically, but never reflected upon intellectually. The academic engagement through a personalized agenda justifies what Applebee claims as being an authentic socialization in the classroom: "Curricular conversations are similarly constructed by their participants. The knowledge that evolves is knowledge that is socially negotiated through the process of conversation itself; it is knowledge-in-action" (1996, pp. 39-40). To stop at mere analysis would limit the participants from understanding the value of knowledge embedded within their life stories. In the next chapter, I explore the synthetic nature of lived experience by bringing the parts from the past into a present whole reminding us that, "[E]very subject finds herself obligated to search for the future in the past" (Silverman, 2000, p. 49).

CHAPTER SEVEN:

RECOGNIZING THE NEVER-ENDING SYNTHESIS OF A BASKETBALL SANCTUARY

[T]he subject ... does not seek to bury, forget, or transcend the past. Rather, this subject holds himself always open to new possibilities for the deployment of that signifying constellation which most profoundly individualizes him. He is receptive to the resurfacing in the present and future of what has been – not as an exercise in narcissistic solipsism, but rather as the extension in ever new directions of his capacity to care. (Silverman, 2000, p. 62)

The journey of basketball begins with a ball and a hoop, and often ends in front of a television cheering on teams and players that we try to relate to or emulate in our own games. As scholar-athletes we live in those moments, hoping that someday it will bring us full circle with the passion that first brought us to this game. We reminisce about our greatest moment on the playground and in the gym, trying to make sense out of this journey that we committed ourselves to early in our lives. In the lived moments of our past, through the present, and into the future, we legitimize basketball as a way of life because of the morals and values embedded within the game. Our autobiographical narrative becomes not merely one of ball and hoop, but more deeply, a story of character, of honor, and of humility. According to White (1981):

If every fully realized story ... is a kind of allegory, points to a moral, or endows events, whether real or imaginary, with a significance that they do not possess as a mere sequence, then it seems possible to conclude that every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralize the events of which it treats. (pp. 13-14)

The stories that have been captured about the lives of these eight women scholar-athletes are not snippets of an imagined life, but significant moments of transition in their becoming of athletes and people. They each saw value in basketball and all that it had to offer, a journey filled with promise, yet requiring deep commitment. The voices of these

women will be heard loud and clear through the reflective language they use to unpack their sporting lives. As Gannett (1992) points out:

No longer seen as the transparent reflection of an objective reality, nor the passive vehicle for the conveyance of ideas, language and discourse are now clearly seen to have the power to marginalize or empower, mute or magnify, hurt or heal. In short, language, the social codes it embodies, and the discursive forms that it employs all write us into the social and cultural positions that we, as we write, experience as intrinsically ours. (p. 4)

The more I listened to the conversations between the participants, and the more I read through their autobiographical reflections, I came to a realization that we just do not fall in and out of a sporting space. In the same intoxicatingly natural manner that an artist grows fond of recreating a space on her canvas, so too, does an athlete become more aware of how to finesse her way between the confined boundaries of a basketball court. In the process of learning a sport she pushes her body to obtain the fundamental skills needed to participate. As her skills become more natural, she craves the contest in order to put her talent to the test against the other. In the act of collaboration between teammates, she strives to push herself and others to the limits only to become more skilled. She falls in love with the ball and hoop as they become the very instruments that she uses to showcase her art. By losing herself on the court, she finds a path that leads her full-circle into an inner soul, the very reason why she picked up the ball and stared down the hoop in that driveway or playground that invited her in the first place.

Leaping into a Synthetical Sensation: Practice, Process, and Praxis

The synthesis of our journey calls for an authentic discourse, a complicated conversation with the self through written narrative that examines the becoming, the camaraderie, and the communal responsibility as a praxis of play leading to a bigger

philosophy. In the conclusion of *The Philosophical Athlete*, Heather Reid (2002) writes:

The really 'big game' that we prepare for in athletics is in fact the game of life. The object of the 'game of life' is, quite simply, happiness. We all seek a good life full of challenge, satisfaction, friendship, and meaning. What's wonderful about these meaningless games we play is that they help us to develop skills useful in the 'big game' with its ultimate payoff. Athletes cannot 'be enlightened,' however, they must enlighten themselves. The transformation into a philosophical athlete takes place inside the individual. It begins as part of that vision of the kind of person you want to be, then becomes reality only through practice. (p. 279, 280)

As we transitioned into the synthetical stage of *currere*, an extended journey via deep inquiry was taking place where our past was no longer just a moment in time, but instead, an essential part of whom we have become through basketball as a life course. The praxis had blossomed into examining the lived course through a subjective perspective of thinking, as reflective knowledge is assigned value and examined for its significance to each participant's spatial, temporal, and relational development. Through the synthesis of their becoming these women were able to transcend the past into the present and resurface the present into the future. For many of the participants the synthetical nature of *currere* serves as a challenge, expanding philosophically into the realm of appreciating the existential demand of agency. According to Pinar and Grumet (1976) when the autobiographical process of *currere* comes full circle the synthesis of experience is no longer random as the becoming moments pertain directly to the inquiry of why, in this case, basketball has been the chosen journey. In the process:

I work to get a handle on what I've been and what I imagine myself to be, so I can wield this information, rather than it wielding me. The beginning of agency. Now the antithesis, the synthetical stage. More deeply, now, in the present. I choose what of it to honor, what of it to let go. I choose again who it is I aspire to be, how I wish my life history to read. I determine my social commitments; I devise my strategies: whom to work with, for what, and how. (p. ix)

Each of the eight women athletes found themselves through basketball, yet they did not allow basketball solely to define their becoming. Basketball will always be there waiting for our return, knowing that we seek to relax from a more hectic aspect of our lives. The escape back into sports as recreation and not competition allows one to approach the notion of play in a more inert manner. For Vannatta (2008), “Playing does not entail actively making judgments; or rather, it does not only entail making active judgments... Instead, playing involves a fluid and continuous activity generated by passive synthesis at a lower level” (p. 65). The slowing down of their fast-paced, lived experience, through conversation and writing, allowed each participant to see that we do not fall in and out of basketball. Instead, we fall for basketball as it invites us to return, even when we may have neglected its presence in our lives beyond the notion of play.

The Circle is Full of My Becoming

Perhaps we did not become the superstars that we once dreamed of, but we have become better people through our sporting lives. Basketball never guaranteed us any fame or ridiculous contracts, but instead it instilled in us a modesty and patience. It was patient with us as we tried to put the ball in the hoop, and in return, it expected us to be cooperative in play as we became members of a team. In studying sports and character development, Goodman (1993) suggests:

The very qualities a society tends to seek in its heroes – selflessness, social consciousness, and the like – are precisely the opposite of those needed to transform a talented but otherwise unremarkable neighborhood kid into a Michael Jordan or a Joe Montana. Becoming a star athlete requires a profound long-term self-absorption, a single-minded attention to the development of a few rather odd physical skills, and an overarching competitive outlook. These qualities may well make a great athlete, but they do not necessarily make a great person. (p. 103)

When we began the Fall 2009 semester, the eight women scholar-athletes were excited about having conversations around the topic of basketball. As the semester progressed they realized that their basketball lives were much deeper than athletics; it was about obtaining privilege through a sport that they enjoyed playing excessively. The regression back to our practices and games invigorated who we have become off the court and how we strive to accomplish our personal and professional goals. *Mystic's* synthesis of lessons learned focused on the notion of victory and defeat. She claims:

Winning would show me how amazing the sport is and how hard work pays off in a good way. Losing was a hard thing for me to deal with, because winning felt so good! You can be the greatest athlete to ever play the game, but if you are a horrible person off the court, you also will be remembered for that. Now if you are both, then I think that is where you can become a true idol, someone who shines far behind just the athletic arena. It's all about how you want to be remembered. There might be many other people who play the sport as well as you do, but if you put in that little extra something special, it could give you an edge. You got to want to be different, do not do what everyone else is doing. You make your own history; we do not want to be remembered as the ones who failed themselves on the inside.

To play a sport is an opportunity granted to all recreationally, but to embrace a sport and excel to the highest level of competition, that is reserved for the few who use the sporting space as a canvas of praxis into becoming a better person, both in and out of play. What has led each of these women to make sacrifices and dedicate themselves to the notion of excelling to her highest potential within basketball? Schacht's (1972) philosophical analysis and counterargument to competition as being a selfish act of destroying the other for self-recognition justifies the significance of unpacking the trickling effect of sports upon individuals. He states:

If we are to speak of "the goal of athletic activity": where this signifies the proper end of athletic activity as a component of a complete and fulfilled human life, it seems to me that it ought not be conceived in such a way that it excludes activity along other lines, or requires that other men be treated as means to one's own

achievement, or makes the attainment of satisfaction depend on excelling over everyone else. (p. 102)

Once the glory of the game is done and the celebrations for the victorious team have become a moment in history, who have we become as the participants in the event? As *Mystic* points out, what truly matters is the balance between our achievement on the court and lessons applied beyond the court. One in absence of the other is an incomplete experience. *Liberty* also synthesizes what it truly means to be a successful athlete, or better yet, a responsible person who seeks out opportunity to better her life in the wake of turmoil. In her words:

As a competitive athlete, whenever you play you are a warrior. I never want to lose, even when I play pick up games. Even in gym class I would play hard and refuse to lose. As I got older it became more difficult because everyone was growing and I was staying the same height. It just forced me to fight even harder. Off the court you must be a warrior as well. I used to think that basketball was do or die. If I didn't win that night my life would be over and everyone would think that I screwed up. Now I view basketball as just a game when you are young and definitely a business when you reach the professional and college level. But, I understand that many people have different views of what basketball means to them.

The notion of always training and preparing the athletic ego to face off against the other as an inhuman obstacle breaches the ethical nature of sportsmanship within competition. Furthermore, it makes aggression an acceptable form of play within the confines of the rules. Yet, in the heat of the moment, we are left in charge to gauge freely our urge for doing what is responsible within the parameters of the contest. How does the notion of responsibility become an avenue for feeding the athletic ego? Morgan (1976) proposes that the very nature of training or practice within a sport impacts our moral responsibility within the actual competition:

In this way [bad faith] the pact of freedom that unites the individual athlete with his fellow athletic colleagues, a pact established and overtly attested to by their

collective consent to abide freely by the rules, is abrogated thereby encouraging a treatment of one's athletic compatriots not as persons who through their mutual contesting efforts make possible the expression of one's being *qua* athlete, but as obstacles to one's freedom who are to be considered only insofar as they can be manipulated to further one's own egotistic impulses. (p. 91)

Each scholar-athlete in the course had her own reasons for dedicating so much time to basketball and her own expectations for what she wanted to get out of basketball. Whether the goal was physical or mental, it was about consistently learning the game from various angles. *Shock's* synthesis of her becoming points to the mental aspect of winning and maintaining her passion. She writes:

Basketball is as much about the mind as of the body. It takes much more time to develop the basketball IQ than it does a basketball body. Sure, being tall or being quick helps. But *knowing* when to make a pass or take a shot is the ultimate challenge of the game. The game is all about outwitting the opponent, whether with a fancy assist or a simple jump shot, as long as you can out think the competition, you can win the game. If you play your hardest and lose, it's about learning from not just your mistakes, but your mistakes as a team and building something from that. As a student of the game, I find myself studying players. I see how they move or how they think the plays that they make and how to learn something new from it. As an athlete of the game, I can't let go of my desire to play and compete. Being an athlete in the game means you never lose your passion for basketball.

The true measure of passion in sports often relies on how authentic one is to the athletic self. The obsession that *Shock* mentions above stems from her practice and application of skills and knowledge onto that confined space. Hence, an understanding of how one's movement and decision-making impacts both teammates and opponents. Thomas' (1984) examination of authenticity through Heidegger challenges an athlete to exist within a shared space of play without losing the unique "mineness" inside:

An extrapolation of Heideggerian authenticity in the development of an authentic intent prior to the contest and the achievement of intent during the sport contest is essentially to know what one is capable of doing and becoming. In the establishing of an authentic intent one does not become lost in the anonymity or demands of others but remains free from unessential involvements, free to assess

capabilities, and free to realize what is accidental and inauthentic. The authentic intent, like authentic existence, is a positive realization of what my capabilities are and the positive movement of what I am toward what I am capable of being: i.e., an intentional movement toward either a personal or universal standard of excellence in sport. (p. 85)

Building a passion for basketball is more complex than just aching to play the game. You really have to come full circle, and sometimes more than once via multiple circles, in order to realize the passion that is embedded within the sporting life as both recreational and competitive. *Sky* uses a snow globe as a metaphor to symbolize the space of basketball and how it ignites different kinds of passion. As she imagines:

For me the basketball court is like a snow globe. Like a snow globe, you can find a court wherever you go, and it serves as a visual memory of the good times you had in that place. Just like kids are fascinated with snow globes, I was always in love with basketball courts. I did prefer to play in the gyms that had the nice hard wood floors, huge bleachers, and nice score board, but I would play wherever there was a court. The funny thing I realized one day was that I played a little differently depending on the court. If I were inside I felt more obligated to play by the rules, and focus on the technical aspect, but when I was outside on the rough pavement, I felt like I could play rougher, foul harder, and make decisions, plays, or moves I would not normally make.

The freedom of playing outdoors, whether it is on a driveway or at a playground, without an artificially rigid space for teams and their fans, not only lightens the mood for play, but ignites a more natural sense of participation. Without constant intervention from coaches and parents, would players be more inclined to play within the space more poetically, with personality and passion? Birkert's (1986) nostalgic observation of places we once occupied regularly, but now only visit through memory shows:

No matter what plea or adjustment I make, I cannot catch hold of the peculiar magic of those [childhood] places ... No effort of will can restore to me that perception, that view of the horizon not yet tainted by futurity – it runs through me sometimes, but I cannot summon it. And yet everything I would say about place depends on it, and everything I search for in myself involves some deep fantasy of its restoration. My best, truest – I cannot define my terms – self is vitally connected to a few square miles of land. (p. 54)

The space itself does ignite legitimacy for belonging, and as a result, helps our passion grow within the space of recreation and competition. You have to dream within the space in order to get excited about what is happening in the moment, and as *Comet's* synthesis points out, the picture is much bigger than a basketball court:

I learned the game alone, I matured through it as a teammate, and I now am back to the game on my own. Although I came full circle, I have become far more learned. A scholar-athlete is a title that came up a lot throughout my life. As I begin my final stages in my basketball life, I realize that this art form that I love has given more to me than I will ever be able to give back to it. Now, a more enlightened basketball scholar, I find my path winding towards the sharing and enlightening of others to this way of life. In education we learn about how successful teachers are reflective practitioners. As you teach, you need to reflect on what you have done to grow and develop into a better teacher. After much reflection, I believe that coaching is something to continue my development into a better scholar athlete in the art of basketball.

The quarters or halves of an athlete's basketball life are not necessarily based on a shared formula of learning, practicing, competing, and withdrawing. The journey for some begins as a child, often with fun, yet disciplined coaching, while for others it is a falling into as a young adult, where someone sees potential and attempts to hone the skills. Regardless of how athletes may fall in and out of basketball, they each have the potential to bring creativity to the game from both a corporeal and cerebral lens.

Falling into the Game for all the Right Reasons

For many of the participants in the class, the journey is a never-ending dedication, or an addiction of sorts, that needs to be cultivated through various stages. Being away from the sporting space brings forth a weight of guilt, making the athlete thoughtfully ask herself, "How can I stay committed to basketball since it has always been there for me?" Kretchmar's (1982) exploration of an athlete's ability to find fluidity and creativity

within the sport, through both unification and separation, justifies basketball as an art form:

Undoubtedly, nearly all athletes are inventors to one extent or another. Each performer brings with him a unique set of physical capabilities, a unique history, a distinct set of hopes and desires. Technically then, no athlete who intends to be successful can afford to play his game entirely by tried and true methods. He has his own assets and liabilities, and no textbook on how to play some game can hope to take all of these issues into account. Each athlete, if only in relatively insignificant ways, must invent ways of accomplishing his ends in ways which suit him – both in terms of who he is and what he is capable of doing. To say that an athlete, over time develops his own style is to notice, in part, that each performer must invent his own ways to succeed. (p. 15)

As *Comet's* words previously express, the full circle for many scholar-athletes is never-ending. To part away from your first love is always hard to do, and even when we do think that our time has come to move on, something in the past reminds us of who we have become.

Storm views basketball with open arms, regardless of the bitter and the sweet. In the opening of her synthesis she symbolically writes:

My first love is an unconditional love that is brought about because it has been with me for so many years. A love that never goes away no matter how many dislocated shoulders, broken noses, torn ligaments, and tears it has brought me. A love that never stops no matter how much it abuses me and tries to take control over my life. A first love! A love that allows you to live in the moment because if you do not then who else will? A synthesis and collaboration from all of the quarters of my basketball life thus far could show you the love that we have. This love is untouchable, unstoppable, and undeniable. It is real and falls right under that love that you have for a family member. It's that ex-boyfriend that you can't get off your mind because they have changed you so much and shaped the way you are as a person. It's a love that I wish I could share, but this is mine!

The relationship that an athlete shares with her sport is one of joy, pain, devotion, and neglect. Yet, she falls in and out of love with the space(s) that remind her of how she has persevered to become a stronger person. All the while, she knows, in the back of her mind, that basketball is a shared relationship. Although she loved what they have

together, she still has to understand that the game of ball and hoop was designed to be shared. As Gebauer (1993/1994) eloquently writes:

One does not engage in sport alone, just as one does not play alone. The individual is only a small part of an extensive network of relations in play. In athletic action a great deal is present that extends beyond the individual: gestures, fellow players, competitors, spectators, comparable earlier situations, and outcomes. The principle of sport is not reduction to an individual but the extension of the human being. (p. 102)

The ownership that *Storm* feels of her experiences with basketball demonstrates the value of passion within our sporting lives. I often wonder whether that passion still exists for the newer generation who loves the game for the rewards and glory that it reaps, but not necessarily for the embedded lessons with which it engages us.

Dream expresses this concern as something that adults and the institutionalization of basketball have created for the younger generation. In her synthesis she adamantly writes:

Kids are no longer being told to go out and have fun with basketball. By the age of five kids are being told they are going to play in the NBA and that should not be happening. The pressure that kids have to face today is ridiculous. I know that there were times when I just wanted to quit because I was so worried about making everyone else around me happy. The thing about the pressure these kids are facing is that their parents are so caught up in having their child be the savior of the family, or their kid living out a dream that they still had from their childhood. The kids have no one to talk to because their friends view them as competition and their parents are too busy counting the money that they have yet to receive. I think all the problems that basketball and other sports face is this idea that you have to be the best and you have to do whatever it takes to be the best.

According to *Dream* we have converted the childhood experience and purity of play into a mission-oriented task of access. We do not see as many children on outdoor basketball courts just horsing around and letting their imaginations run wild in these open spaces. Instead, as soon as an interest is shown, we turn play into practice, and not too much later, we push practice into competition. By limiting the child's imagination through this

accelerated process, we are creating a new sporting space, one that is very reflective of the world we compete in, fighting to show that we are better than the other. Rorty (1989) warns us:

The best way to cause people long-lasting pain is to humiliate them by making the things that seemed most important to them look futile, obsolete, and powerless. Consider what happens when a child's precious possessions – the little things around which he weaves fantasies that make him a little different from all other children – are described as “trash,” and thrown away. Or consider what happens when these possessions are made to look ridiculous alongside the possessions of another richer child. (pp. 89-90)

We are making children believe that there is a proper way to play basketball, a better team to consider joining, a better tournament to sign up for, and a better shoe to wear while competing. In the process, our original playgrounds have become somewhat obsolete as children are busy playing organized basketball indoors. The intrinsic value of basketball has become one of mass attainment and not merely individual pleasure.

The next question that arose through our complicated conversations in class and on the discussion board was whether there is a gender difference with regard to passion for our sporting life. In other words is the sporting space the same between both genders, or is there a distinct line when it comes to expectations? For *Fever*, the issue is often influenced by how the media portray the game of basketball and its flair or lack thereof. She synthesizes that we need to take a closer look at what we glorify as passion and dedication:

I think that the shifts have occurred because of the audience. Players will do things that draw media attention, in turn that makes more players want to do it to become more well-known. I think that by the media giving more coverage to a certain aspect of the sport that makes it more popular. Today, the dunk has become a huge part of the sport (and a main reason why many claim they would rather watch a men's game). Certain aspects of the men's game sell tickets, and the businesses realize this, and therefore want players that bring in the crowd. The media portray men basketball players as super heroes who can do things out

of the ordinary, and that is why people want to see them play. Just because women's style of play is different doesn't mean it's less quality, but because of how the media portray what basketball is "supposed" to be, less people want to be involved in watching a woman play basketball.

The influence of media on what kind of basketball game is worth watching apparently takes precedence with the shift from high school to collegiate sports. Philosophical athletes, the ones who take the time to reflect upon their passion and performance within a sport, know that the ultimate reward is not the portrayal of our actions by an observer, but instead, the lived moments of performance by the self. The Friday night lights may not be on when two of the worst high school women's basketball teams take the court surrounded by near bare bleachers in an end-of-season game, yet for the ten women on the court, it is their shining moment to improve upon their previous performance. So, with the ability that she has acquired from her coaches and her teammates, she steps onto the court, craving that space which, statistically, has not favored her all season long. Yet, Burt (2006) in the poem titled "For Lindsay Whalen" reminds us what resides in these moments:

You only have the skills that you can use.
The shots you make surround you like a breeze.
When someone wins, then someone has to lose.

You do not show off. We know you by your moves;
A feint, viewless pass, a perfect tease
Make space for all the skills that you can use.

Defenders and their shadows, three on two,
Start at you like infuriated bees:
You glide through them. You take the look they lose.

As serious as science, picking clues
And dodges that no other players see,
You find the skills that only you can use:

Applause, then silence. Scrape of distant shoes.

Then race through packed periphery to free
Space no one lifts a hand to. – Win or lose,

Such small decisions, run together, fuse,
In concentration nothing like the ease
We seem to see in all the skills you use,
Till someone wins. Then someone else will lose. (p. 11)

As we approach each crossroad of our basketball life we stop to look both ways and see who will meet us there and what they have to offer. For many of the scholar-athletes in the course, the lessons were intertwined with the life of others such as family, friends, coaches, and opponents. It was the web of interaction that promoted each scholar-athlete to build within herself a philosophy of her sporting life and how she thinks basketball should be adhered to by others who come across its path. In the next section I explore the synthetical notion of team camaraderie and how it played a role in the lives of these eight women as they dig deeper into their shared moments on the court.

Our Time: One Shining Moment Together as a Team

The arrival of the spring season is often associated with a time for new beginnings and growth, but for the basketball world and the athletes, coaches, and fans, it also is a time of madness – *March Madness*. As both high school and college tournaments are in full swing, every player wants to shine in the spotlight, every coach wants his or her player to be focused, and every fan wants their team to play well together and reach the finals. One bad game and it could cost you and your team a very long ride home. What is this “shining moment” that she has dreamt of many nights and now adamantly seeks, and who is it truly for? Although we do not always measure the outcome of our lived moments in sport with just wins and losses, tournament time is a completely different beat. The mentality of “one and done” kicks in, and as we inch closer to the grand stage

of play, we recognize that other teams are as hungry, if not hungrier, than us. The shining moment is not mine to own or define; it belongs to all of us who experience that space both in person and from home in front of a screen. What are the numerous sporting accounts? How do they gain value? Which groups of people have bought into them? As Lather (1997) challenges us:

What does it mean to create a different space in which to undertake other performances, other thinking, power, and pleasures, to create new lines of flight, fragments of other possibilities, to experiment differently with meanings, practices and our own confoundings? (p. 234)

When synthesizing our greatest team moments in the present, we often realize that we did not fully appreciate what was happening between us and the other players and opponents on the court. Our point of view was limited because we were so focused on winning, or getting a chance to play, or scoring the most points. *Dream's* synthesis reminds us that we cannot recreate a camaraderie that may have meant more than play:

At this time in my life I play on the club team, but unlike other teams I have played on I do not feel camaraderie. With this lack of camaraderie I do not feel obligated to attend practices or games; I see it as more of a recreational thing to do. I wish it felt like it did in high school where all the ball players hung out together and were more than teammates but friends. I do not give practice everything I have because I see people giving less than me, and so I wonder why am I working this hard and I do not even want to go away to games, and the person right next to me is giving 50% and on the "A" team. I have come to the conclusion that I will give practice my all, for myself, and no one else. At this point in our lives I do not see us becoming closer, so I just enjoy the practices for what they are worth because I know as I get older there will be no more teams for me to play on.

The Sacrifices of Our Becoming

As a living basketball community, we learn to grow together and take on a heartfelt responsibility to carry out our roles and not let the team down. The engagement is naturally required as players, coaches, and parents buy into the unwritten contract of

sacrificing their time in other aspects of life in order to participate in a variety of tournaments year round. The craving to recreate that archived, lived experience is captured well in Dunne's (1997) analysis of Habermas and communal engagement:

By "praxis" he [Habermas] intends a type of human engagement that is embedded within a tradition of communally shared understandings and values, that remain vitally connected to people's life-experiences, that finds expression in their ordinary linguistic usage, and that, rather than being a means through which they achieve outcomes separate from themselves, is a kind of enactment through which they constitute themselves as persons of a historical community. (p. 176)

The desire to recreate the team camaraderie that was consistent in our youth and teen years is often a challenge as the balance between our professional life and a sporting life comes into conflict. As *Dream* mentions in her narrative, she sees no incentive to give 100% when the outcome is minimal. The only time she'll give it her full potential is when she wants to push herself for herself and no one else. As there is no incentive to compete with the only person you have anything to prove to when it is yourself.

For *Shock*, basketball serves as an escape, not from the self, but with the self, and if others would like to join the journey they are more than welcome to come along. In her narrative she, without hesitation, says:

You can't play this game alone. No matter how much talent you have, there is always going to be four other players on the court. To be great, you have to take the skills you have and make it work with the skills of your teammates. It is only then that you can grow as a team and become better. This is the basketball culture to me: teamwork and loyalty, not individualism. Although basketball has always, and will continue, to be a personal escape for me, I can't envision it without others in friendly competition. It is a form of release that makes everything else go away. When I'm playing basketball, nothing else matters. When I'm mad, I'll go shoot some hoops until I've calmed down enough to think through situations. It is something that is engrained in my being.

The power of competition in basketball cannot be accomplished between myself, the ball, and a hoop. A player must be challenged by teammates, coaches, opponents, and fans in

order to reach one's full potential on the court. Many of the challenges we face in practice and competition with others serve as an impetus for success off the court as well. According to Arnold's (1979) observation of ice dancers, personification embodies the performer as meaning is created through movement:

In the harmonious blending of *motion* with *emotion* the dancer is able to realise himself as few others have the power to do. What is felt and meaningfully constituted, although sometimes capable of being described in words, is not reducible to words. Its "meaningfulness" lies in its own mode of expression. (p. 143)

In a similar fashion to ice dancers, a basketball player gets lost in the moment of play as she is surrounded by the teammates who support her and opponents that defend her as they all maneuver within the confined court. To escape reality by shooting hoops alone, one can not recreate the meaningfulness of what transpires when ten players release their individual emotions upon the sporting space.

In the post-course questionnaire (see Appendix D), I asked each of the participants to consider the following question – What specific moment of your basketball life course would you place inside a time capsule that will not be opened up until the year 2040 (consider that you will be about fifty years old then)? In other words I was curious to know which aspect of their lived moment with basketball they thought was of value thirty years down the road. Of course we cannot predict what the basketball culture will look like then, yet we can choose a legacy for future consideration. For *Storm* the moment served as a transition between something she liked to do and something she now had to do. As she sadly confesses:

I would put my final days with Maryland Magic in that time capsule. It's funny because with that team lies some of my best memories and some of my worst. The reason I chose to put my final days on the team in the capsule is because this is when basketball somewhat stopped becoming fun. I want to be able to revisit

that later and see if I still feel that way. I know most people put good memories in capsules. However, I feel like this would be a bitter sweet memory and would make me laugh because I was so young, but make me angry because I quit that team for a moronic reason.

The ability to see through a lived experience is often achieved in the remaking of our becoming. We obviously can not bring our athletic past into our understanding present. And even if we could, how can we argue against the fact that our becoming(s) in that sporting space made us who we really are today. Hence, without those moments lived, regardless of whether we agree or disagree with them in the present, we quite likely would not have the same thought-provoking outcomes if they were altered in the past.

According to Roberts (1992) the acts of seeing is always a new becoming:

Even when we see sport actions first hand we do not in some two stage process first see actions in their naked form, as they are-in-themselves, and then remake them through composition, decomposition, or any of the other processes of worldmaking. Rather the seeing is the making and the making is the composing, decomposing, and weighting and so on. And from there we may remake and remake again. The first hand, initial seeing is no less a function of these processes than subsequent remakings and in that sense no closer to the truth or the actual. Often, remakings in light of new knowledge are more apt and interesting. (p. 23)

The transition from the driveway or playground version of basketball to the organized gymnasium version often carries the price that *Storm* mentions above. On the playground, you are by yourself and you dribble, shoot, and imagine however you please. Once you enter the realm of tryouts, your autonomy for pleasure is somewhat limited as you are taught about game rules, proper techniques, and supervised expectations. The infiltration of AAU basketball into younger age brackets has made the transition between recreational and competitive basketball more natural. As *Sky* states in her questionnaire:

I would like to put my trip to Hawaii with my AAU team. This was the first trip I took with the team that I really began to understand the magnitude of basketball. It was the first time I understood that basketball could be fun, and it could allow

me the opportunity to travel, and grow as a player and a person. I gained so much love and appreciation for the sport after that trip. It showed me why my sister, mother, and father worked so hard, and it showed me why I needed to work hard. I wanted to receive all that basketball had to offer for me. I took away from that trip a new love, respect, and dedication for the game. There has been no other experience that compared with this one, and I would love to relive it.

Athletes often find themselves at a point where they feel obligated to return the favor to a sport that gave them so much to live for. As a result, athletes eventually reclaim a sport as the final destination in the journey of the human spirit. What is this physical and mental burden with basketball that she carries, yet she craves so desperately? According to Hegel (1959), we live our sporting lives corporeally:

If we look at the inner nature of ... sports, we observe first how sport itself is opposed to serious business, to dependence and need ... Serious occupation is labour that has reference to some need. Man or nature must succumb; if one is to live, the other must fall. In contrast with this kind of seriousness, sport presents the higher seriousness; for in its nature is wrought into spirit. In this exercise of physical powers, man shows his freedom, he shows that he has transformed his body into an organ of spirit. (p. 55)

For many of the participants in the course, the transformation of the human spirit in basketball was and still may be a blossoming of the self through the communal engagement. The fluidity of the game through moving with or without the ball naturally creates an obligation to free the self with the help of others.

Defining our Place in the Sporting Space

The notion of team camaraderie in basketball, which expects you to use your four other teammates to get the ball into the hoop and communicate with them to guard your hoop on the other side of the court, just makes sense. To appreciate this simple competitive philosophy is to understand that the battle that takes place on the court is much bigger than basketball – it is often about survival off the court, in the bigger game

of life. As *Liberty* reminds us through her greatest moment overseas:

The most accomplished team I ever played on was the USA Maccabiah team. We won every game, beating teams from Israel, Australia, etc., and took home the gold medal. Even though we won, I believe our biggest accomplishment was being able to represent the United States. My team and I traveled to Israel for three weeks when many of my closest family and friends were telling me not to go. They were scared that we would be victims of a terrorist attack. We were transported to and from every event, game, and tourist attraction by armed soldiers and there was even a sniper on our roof when we went to sleep at night. It was also difficult to play with eleven other girls from all over the country when we only practiced for two weeks. The practices were grueling because my coach turned up the heat to 95 in the middle of July to simulate how the Israeli air would feel like. But we got through it together.

Cooper offers us the phrase “self-in-association-with-others” in describing how team sports such as basketball require us to strike a balance between our own becoming as athletes and our role on a team. In this intersection of orientation, team basketball challenges us to grow as an individual while understanding that our growth may be manipulated by the needs of the other four individuals on the court who have a stake in the team’s success. Cooper’s (1982) analysis of individual and group welfare suggests:

When a person associates himself with others there is a form of reasoning with him that appeals to his feelings of group solidarity, rather than his selfish demands or strictly moral considerations. It is common experience in cooperative sports to do things that one would not if one were concerned solely with one’s welfare. (p. 68)

The camaraderie that synthesizes over time often reaps reward in the greatest fashion – a special victory. For three of the women scholar-athletes, the effort they put into their team paid off with the highest dividends. For *Fever*, the reward was not a county or state championship, but a personal recognition for epitomizing the very essence of team play, both on and off the court. In her own words:

The one specific moment I would choose didn’t happen on the court. It was my senior year end of the year banquet that we held for basketball. There were three different awards that our coaches and teammates voted for who deserved each.

The awards were Most Valuable Player, Most Improved, and Unsung Hero. I had never won any of these awards in my four years on varsity. But my senior year, I won the Unsung Hero award. This award meant so much to me and was the one I had wanted for so long. On my team I was never the one who scored the most points or had the most steals. But I did do the little things like boxing out, setting hard picks, and rebounding. I also felt like most of my teammates could come to me without hesitation if they had a problem, and I felt like I had done a good job as captain in that respect. I chose this moment because for once I felt like all of my efforts had meant something.

The price one pays for being a selfless athlete is the possibility of not achieving maximum performance as an individual within a team sport. In a time period where the business of sports is bigger than ever and younger basketball players are being hailed for their individual talent, the sacrifice of taking one for the team is not so enticing.

Weiss (1972) acknowledges:

The athletic goal rarely allows a man to work toward the achievement of any one but himself, except incidentally as a means ... When an athlete makes provision for the success of his team mates, it is usually because this is incidental to his own. If he puts team always above himself he may become popular, and be known as a prince among men; but he will often fail to become the athlete he could have been. (pp. 96-97)

The power of knowing that you have been influential in the lives of other athletes in times of victory and defeat serves as an elixir between basketball and life. The commitment made to the game without any expectation in return finds a way to pay you back, and surprisingly at the right time. As *Mystic* explains, it often comes as an opportunity you always dreamed of, but never thought would actually occur. She reminisces about the ultimate high school athletic prize:

The moment I would put in a time capsule would be from 2006 when my high school team won the state championship. It was the top moment of my basketball career, thus far. Being a part of the same teammates my whole life, winning it with them was a dream come true. The moment I felt that night will forever be indescribable. Not everyone gets the opportunity to experience that feeling, and God gave me the opportunity to be a part of such an amazing experience. Pictures and videos can still never compare to that indescribable moment!

The sense of accomplishment that *Mystic* describes is not a journey of one, but a practice of many, who over the years learned to play with each other at an optimum level, and on that night, let the whole state know that they, as a collective, were the champions. The transformation of play into contest invites a challenge to players to work as a collective, in almost a military fashion, using pillars such as discipline, responsibility, and consistency, to win the athletic war and hold the trophy prize high above their heads. Shields and Bredemeier (2011) consider the “contest is war” metaphor as being prevalent in our culture beyond the sporting space, yet it trickles into coaching philosophies:

They drew first blood.
 They're within striking distance now.
 They have a lot of weapons.
 They're on a mission.
 They're still very much alive.
 They've battled back from the brink of elimination.
 It's do or die.
 This game is being won in the trenches.
 She's a warrior.
 (p. 30)

Even though the moments are few and far between, we dream of them often as kids, imagining what would happen when we reach the pinnacle of play and how the people who helped us on the journey will react. The goal, of course, is to become an all-star, but deep inside we always know that four other teammates helped make us look good in that moment in time. As *Comet* recalls, the moment was unbelievably out of this world.

I would put my county basketball championship experience in a time capsule. I would put in the whole experience, from every tournament game to the meeting at the State House in Trenton, NJ and getting that proclamation from the state. I truly felt like I was a big shot athlete at that moment in my life, and it is the closest to fame I will ever come. I knew I was never going to become a college athlete, but that moment let me feel how my life could have turned out if I was able to be a Division I athlete. I felt like I was in an alternate universe, being

allowed to experience an alternative reality and outcome. I was so proud of what we accomplished in that tournament and it is a time in my life that I feel my father was actually proud of my basketball abilities. Sometimes I thought he wished he had a more talented basketball-playing daughter, but that moment I believe he was truly proud of me for being an athlete.

The road to a championship can be traced back to driveways and playgrounds where athletes first learned to dribble, shoot, and pass the ball. Many hours were logged in, regardless of the weather, because the participants craved the adrenaline rush of competition. Yet, the only reward was to get a chance to keep playing and not have to sit out a game. Although the contests were for pleasure, the athlete's honor was at stake; so she claims her prize to be the queen of the court as she gathers a talented group of individuals around her. The notion of play as collaboration on recreational playgrounds eventually develops into the metaphor "contest is partnership" in the scholastic gymnasiums. Shields and Bredemeier (2011) suggest in the following reflections that the very root of competition relies on collaboration between many individuals on two separate teams seeking a common goal:

The teams brought out the best in each other.
 The teams swayed back and forth like dancers caught in the rhythm of the game...
 They are fighters and friends.
 It's a shame someone had to lose this game.
 They turn defeat into victory.
 Success cannot be measured by the scoreboard.
 They all had fun.
 (p. 32)

We entered this game alone wanting to know how it feels to finally place the ball into the hoop and hear the crisp swoosh as it proceeded down the net and back into our hands. Mission accomplished we told ourselves and then wondered if we could do it again. How many in row can I get in? Soon after, we were joined by others who wanted

to compete in games such as “H-O-R-S-E” and “Around the World” to see who had perfected the art of making baskets from different places on the court. It was inevitable that each of us was always a part of something much bigger, not just a recreational or competitive team, but part of a colossal tribe comprised of participants who shared basketball camaraderie far greater than any State Championship or an MVP (Most Valuable Player) award. In the next section I explore the synthetical notion of communal responsibility and how it impacts the whole journey for these eight women scholar athletes.

Proclaiming the Journey: The People’s Republic of Basketball

As basketball has become more global throughout the past ten years, so has the variety of versions being played in homes, offices, playgrounds, gyms, and arenas. The traditional ball and hoop now has many makeshift forms ranging from wastebasket and paper to coat hanger and socks. Yet, the ultimate goal of putting an object through an enclosed boundary remains universal. The eight scholar-athletes have all found some significance in the smallest aspects and the grandest venues of basketball. Each of their basketball journeys has reached a pinnacle, with possibly more to come, both in and out of play. In the game of basketball, these women have found merit and personality, justice and responsibility, and now move forward sharing that message with the next generation of athletes with whom they interact. Was basketball truly their path to success, or merely an enjoyable rung in their ladder? As Sage (1990) wisely reminds us:

Because sport is by nature meritocratic – that is, superior performance brings status and reward – it provides convincing symbolic support for hegemonic [the dominant] ideology – that ambitious, dedicated, hardworking individuals, regardless of social origin, can achieve success and ascend in the social hierarchy, obtaining high status and material rewards, while those who do not move upward simply didn’t work hard enough. (p. 41)

The game of organized basketball has changed dramatically in the past decade, and the biggest concern seems to be the influence the powers that be are having on the hearts and souls of young student-athletes. Through a grueling form of physical, mental, emotional, and sacrificial labor, they are made to believe that by performing as the hungry athletic warrior, their appetite and spirit will rationally lead them to a state of never-ending bliss. Young athletes look up to their parents and amateur organizations to set a standard of expectations with regard to balancing basketball with other aspects of life. Unfortunately, the adults in this equation, who to some degree can be labeled as the rational souls, too often prioritize accomplishment on the court and trivialize the necessities off the court. Hence, young minds falsely believe that the mere warrior, or spirited soul, within their developing bodies, will get them to basketball heaven. Could it be that these young athletes are merely being exploited by the rulers of society for their appetitive soul?

The eight women scholar athletes' lived moments with basketball, however, seem to justify that the physical, mental, emotional, and sacrificial labor were well worth it in making them who they are in the present, and the person they each aspire to be in the future. They, too, sought the fame and glory of becoming an all-star, and in that path travelled by many, but actually paved by a few, each of these women became a formidable individual. *Liberty* claims that basketball is just part of who she is, and she will never ignore that reality because she truly loves everything about the game. She writes with clear enthusiasm:

I will never stop watching basketball highlights on ESPN, attending college and professional games, and keeping up with my fantasy basketball team. I am obsessed with basketball and am sort of an ESPN junkie. Basketball has always been a major factor in my life and something that I will never be able to let go.

The memories and the friendships that I have made will live with me forever. The lessons that I have learned will also never be forgotten. I won't forget people like Mr. Robinson who have taught me so much. If I do not take the lessons that he, my other coaches, my teammates, and my family have taught me throughout my basketball career and use them to the best of my ability, my basketball career will have been a monumental failure. I have no regrets about my basketball career. All of the horrible losses, fights, missed social events, and scars have just made me into the person that I am today.

To experience basketball in a utopian fashion is to allow the game to become a part of your lived curriculum. Basketball addicts or junkies, as they like to be called, crave the lesson plans, the teachers, the homework, and the extra credit that the game offers. As young players, we just want to play, not as a way to escape our stressful life, but because basketball actually becomes our life. Utopia was not an imagined space, but a lived place for us as teens growing up on driveways, playgrounds, and gymnasiums. According to Suits (1978), as we get older, games become the only mode of return to utopia:

What we need ... is some activity in which what is instrumental is inseparably combined with what is intrinsically valuable, and where the activity is not itself an instrument for some further end. Games meet this requirement perfectly. For in games we must have obstacles which we can strive to overcome *just so that* we can possess the activity as a whole, namely, playing the game. Game playing makes it possible to retain enough effort in Utopia to make life worth living. (p. 172, italics original)

The memories are so engrained in what each of these women has become, that to walk away from basketball at this point would be to erase a huge chunk of their lives.

To walk into a gym and be able to rebuild the relationship with the game in lieu of new faces serves as an exclusive membership of sorts. We have again entered that utopian space that was once continuously lived and is now being visited as a nostalgic mechanism of pure joy. To live within those confined linear and circular boundaries of a court challenges our patience, yet at the same time, it rejuvenates our passion for the

game. As *Storm* adamantly claims in her synthetical narrative:

I never want to be away from the game. It was once an outlet, but after looking back I want it to continue to play a huge role in my life as so much more. Basketball was and still is my first love and that is something that you can never let go of or forget. So, from this point forward all I can do is live in the moment and right now I am focusing on academics and playing on the women's club basketball team here on campus, unless I decide to coach. Sometimes people need to escape reality and go to a place where everything is just fine. I was thinking about doing it tomorrow, just going to the gym just to shoot around because I've had a rough week and I need to clear my mind. In some way, just being able to pick up a ball, and knowing that I could still shoot a ball and make it go in, is satisfaction in itself and it tells me that I could go back to my first love, which it is.

Finding a Reason for Return

Basketball is clearly a spatial, relational, temporal, and corporeal sanctuary for the eight women scholar-athletes who through nostalgic regression and analysis have claimed basketball as their own, while simultaneously sharing it with the world. However, in that moment of return to the basketball space, we embrace the game as being our own, as we flash back to how our bodies adapted to the many versions of a constantly recreated space. From chasing the ball down the driveway before it entered the traffic, to preventing the ball from going out of bounds by diving into the surrounding grass that bordered the outdoor playgrounds, we sacrificed our bodies to fulfill a giving relationship with basketball. Bergson's (2001) examination of time and space is provocative:

[When] we project time into space, we express duration in terms of extensity, and succession thus takes the form of a continuous line or a chain, the parts of which touch without penetrating one another. [Thus we create a distinction between] before and after [separated] by one and the same instant. (p. 101)

In other words, as addicts of this game, players are never truly separated from the space of basketball that they grew into, and as they enter a new basketball place, they quickly acclimate. Is it her instinct or a newly invigorated desire? Regardless, the individual

reactivates her lived moments of the past, understanding that her body may not be able to perform in the same manner, with the same people that shared the space with her, but her heart and mind can instantly recreate the experience through a new space and time.

Comet takes us on a journey down memory lane as she enters the sports arena as a spectator and recalls:

As I walk into the Comcast Center now, I hear the loud warm up music and the clapping of the crowd; I close my eyes and take a deep breath. Comcast has become a time machine to the past, to a time where I was warming up on that court, and choosing that warm up music to get us pumped for games. As the buzzer signals to start the game, I get a jolt of excitement and nervousness in my stomach. It takes me a few minutes to remember that I am not the one about to be announced and run out to play the game. Although watching the games makes me nostalgic, the pain is a good reminder. Like a lover lost and found again, I have come to realize that I have not truly lost basketball. It has impacted my life so that it will forever be a part of how I act, think, and feel. I realized that I have come home to the game, but my role has changed. It is now my job to pass its wisdom, hopes, joys, and fears to the next generation.

The experience of entering an arena from above and gazing down upon the court, gave *Comet* a new perspective on how she has come to be with basketball. The distance between her and the staged court in that moment of play reminds her of the journey, not in a passive reflective manner, but in an active lived manner. Kretchmar (1982) claims that our engagement via body, time, and space becomes the very agent for understanding.

To be at a distance from some object allows persons to circumspect and behold it, to interact with it, perhaps to influence its course in nature, to retain an individual sphere of influence, and to remain (if need be) disentangled. Those who radically lack distance are engulfed, subsumed, assimilated, or inexorably drawn to certain conclusions ... Of course, individuals cannot literally distance themselves from their world *per se*. To leave one part of the environment is to move closer to another. Persons are rooted, stuck, implanted, thrown into a world which can be modified but which cannot be entirely avoided. (p. 6)

What we have set aside in order to understand basketball to our fullest potential will never be a point of discontent or regret, but instead it will serve as an accomplishment as each of these women point out in their autobiographical renderings. *Fever* recalls:

Basketball has been a huge part of my life for almost 14 years. It is the sport I have come to know inside and out. I have been a player, a spectator, and a coach of basketball, each experience bringing new knowledge. Although basketball is not in my life as much as it once was, it is never far from my mind. Whether it be a Terps basketball game on TV, or someone wearing a Green Hornets jersey, I am constantly reminded of how much I love the game. Some memories are filled with joy, while others are more somber, but they all build to create my story. Playing this sport has taught me more than just how to be an athlete; basketball has taught me how to be a strong and accomplished person.

Our stories are filled with lessons, and as ambassadors of the game, we often feel obligated to leave a basketball legacy. Is it truly a legacy of what I have done through basketball, or a legacy of what basketball has done with me? As *Mystic* writes in her synthesis:

Every morning I still pick up a basketball, whether that is at the ERC, my old high school, Elite Center in Parkersburg, or any place with a hoop. Still to this day, one of my favorite places to be is on the basketball court. It makes me forget about everything else in my life, it makes me SMILE; it makes me who I am. No matter where I go I wish to keep basketball a part of it. For the last few years I started sleeping with a basketball. Every night before I go to bed I will just shoot it up into the air. I want to help make every girl fall in the love with the sport like I did. It turns into a relationship, one that you must always dedicate your time and heart to. The person I am seen as off the court will be the one “hopefully” my future players will idolize. My goal will be to leave my legacy or my fingerprints on each opportunity I will get through my future. My future that will start tomorrow and that will last until the day I die.

The impact of basketball on *Mystic* is not limited to her moments on the court, but more significantly, her feelings about the game when she gets off the court as she replays the pleasure over and over again in her mind. The act of reliving our passion either through our own highlight reel, or watching that of another, justifies Belaief’s (1985) prediction that, “Sport uniquely addresses the agonistic dimension within life and shows us that we

can indeed control and direct it into creative power which can then provide the ground of self-trust and the beginnings of the socialization of trust” (p. 421). The legacy that has been paved and is still in action is not always pretty and often can be trying, and, at times it makes you wonder why you do not hang up the sneakers and just watch the game from the bleachers or teach the game from the sidelines.

For *Shock*, the legacy runs deep both internally and externally through how she has seen the game of basketball change and what it has done for her personally. She claims:

It’s getting lost in it. Even if I go shoot by myself, I shoot a 15 foot jumper, I miss it three times in a row; now that’s something that I have to fix and I can fix right there on the spot. It’s not something that I have to focus on anything else; just on the spot I’m gonna shoot hoops. And if I’m missin’ it I can fix it right there. It’s a problem that I can fix and go back and keep doing and fixing; feel like I’m in control of something when everything around me is just spiraling; just go shoot hoops cause it’s easy. It’s a memory that I have my whole life, it brings me to something that I know; it’s just getting lost in it. Basketball takes something, when it needs to; it takes my anger, my pain, which is weird, because playing basketball causes me physical pain, but so does walking on the sidewalk.

The give and take relationship that *Shock* describes above is unique to the physicality of sports which can only be experienced through active participation, as a player, and not merely, passive observation as a fan. According to Pieper (1972), “Human acts derive their meaning primarily from their content, from their object, not from the manner in which they are performed. Play, however, seems to be chiefly a mere modus of action, a specific way of performing something, at any rate a purely formal determinant” (p. 214). To just visualize what it feels like to be on the court without actually feeling the momentum of play falls short of understanding the sporting space as an active engagement.

Being removed from the game for a long period of time also has its consequences, as *Dream* reminds us in her rendering while she fights with the notion of having fun, yet feeling a heavy burden of responsibility for a journey that seems to be never-ending. She even contemplates having regrets in the paths she took that brought her to the present. What does the notion of forcing ourselves back into our prime do to the present? In her words:

My feelings about basketball, they come and they go. It's a weird relationship I have with basketball. When I think basketball, even with club, even at practice there's a certain amount of pressure that I would put on myself that was just ridiculous, I can't keep doing this, and so that's when I decided to lay back on basketball because I'm trying to do this for fun, to relax, to stay in shape, to hang around, and continue taking part in the sport, but it's not making me relaxed or feel comfortable. Even when I see the girls now that are on the club team, I kind of feel ashamed like I should still be going, I should never have given up, I should keep pushing though, it just doesn't make me happy.

As *Dream* tries to find a balance with the sport that she loves so much, she has doubts of whether she put too much effort into this journey, only to deprive herself of everything that she used to live for in the past. The price of pushing the body through sport in anticipation of this great emancipatory moment can bring forth a feeling of deficiency and regret. Dreyfus (1999) argues,

In absorbed coping the agent's body is led to move so as to reduce a sense of deviation from a satisfactory gestalt without the agent knowing what a satisfactory gestalt will be like in advance of achieving it. Thus in absorbed coping, rather than a sense of trying to achieve success, one has a sense of being drawn towards an equilibrium. (p. 3)

Ultimately, each one of these women hopes that her own legacy will be partially lived through a variety of experiences that future generations of young women will encounter. They each have hopes of seeing women's basketball prosper and gain the

recognition that it deserves, not only for the memories that it has given them, but for the values it has embedded in each of their lives. *Sky* captures the very essence of what each basketball player, woman or man, young or old, wants basketball to be:

In the future I crave for players of the game to be more than players of the game. My first hope would be that we can get away from the idea that athletes are dumb. I would hope that schools, parents, teachers, and coaches would begin to place more of an emphasis on education. I would hope that athletes would learn that basketball is not always what is promised, and they need something to fall back on. I want future players to know basketball is a beautiful gift, and not all are blessed to have the ability to play at top levels, and for those who do make it to those top levels it is their duty to be the best role models they can be. Basketball has taught me discipline through rigorous games and practice. It has taught me commitment and dedication, and I would hope that in years to come it can do the same for many other people.

What started as a game for so many of us has transformed into a way of being.

As a teen I always rushed home on Friday afternoons to do some of my homework, vacuum the house, and clean my room, so that I could jump on my bike and ride over to the basketball courts and play until I could no longer see my teammates, the ball, or the hoop. As a small player, I learned that I have to fight hard and consistently work on my skills in order to be able to compete with my peers and the adults who often wanted to stay in shape by running with the “young guns.” Those late afternoons and early evenings taught me discipline and prepared me for organized team play once the regular season began. According to Ollman’s (2005) philosophy on the correlations between basketball and democracy:

One of the main things basketball does is enable us to have fun. But, like all games, basketball also provides people with a simplified model of how society works and – implicitly and often explicitly – how to get ahead in such a society. It does this through its rules and through what people do and experience when following (or watching others follow) these rules, and in the assumptions it encourages people to make regarding the relevance of these experiences for the rest of life. Basketball, then, is as much about education as it is about fun. Education is part of the deeper meaning of basketball. (para. 3)

Moving from Synthesis to Transformative Praxis

The education that basketball has provided for each of the eight women scholar athletes is immense as demonstrated through their stories. Many athletes dream of becoming superstars, and in the process of chasing their athletic self, they become a product of basketball as an institution, and not basketball as a life course. The journey that these women and I have captured during the Fall 2009 semester serves as a window of opportunity, a calling to all athletes to grasp their becoming through the sporting life, as it challenges them corporeally, spatially, temporally, and relationally. Rabinow (1977) reminds us of the hermeneutic nature of our becoming:

Culture is interpretation ... Facts are made – the word comes from the Latin *factum*, “made” – and the facts we interpret are made and remade. Therefore they cannot be collected as if they were rocks, picked up and put into cartons and shipped home to be analyzed in the laboratory. (p. 150)

The praxis of *currere* allowed these eight women to explore their becoming as scholars and athletes and opened up a new platform for sharing the script of the sporting past through a narrative voice in the present. The revisiting of lived facts are constantly transforming as we unveil the details from various paths that trigger our memory, and eventually, help us better appreciate what we have become through our lived experience with basketball. The implications of unpacking the sporting life via autobiographical renderings is explored in the final chapter laying the foundation for a new era in curricular conversation – one driven by the words of the student-athlete, and not the voice of a teacher, coach, or parent.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

ENVISIONING THE RUNNING NARRATIVE OF AN ATHLETIC SELF WITHIN THE SCHOLARLY BACKBOARDS OF BASKETBALL

Human science is largely *ex post* understanding We strive *ex post* to understand the changes [which we observe in culture], and to do this we try to develop a language in which we can situate the incommensurable webs of concepts To be able to predict the future would be to have explicated so clearly the human condition that one would already have pre-empted all cultural innovation and transformation. This is hardly in the bounds of the possible. (Taylor, 1971, p. 50)

In summer 2011 I was privileged to attend the Special Olympics World Games in Athens, Greece. This was the first time that I was participating in an organized sporting space outside of the United States since I arrived in Virginia in 1981. Little did I know that those three precious weeks in Athens would also serve as a turning point to my own lived continuum as a scholar and an athlete. The camaraderie of the international sporting space was powerfully rich and vivid, as several countries sent their most inspiring athletes to attend the games in hopes of overcoming life obstacles and achieving personal dreams. Yet, within this space of self-pleasure, persistent competition was evident, and in the process of running up and down the court, referees like me were reminded that our invitations were based on an understanding of how to adapt to the sporting space variation that is brought forth by the diversity of Special Olympic athletes. For in that three-week window of time, they were the heroes of the sporting world – wearing their badges and medals proudly around their necks while singing their national anthems loud and clear on bus rides to and from the basketball venue. I was actively witnessing basketball's greatest show on earth, a running curriculum within a lived continuum that begged for a telling both in and out of the sporting space context.

Now that I think back to the smiles, tears, chants, and cheers on the sidelines, in the bleachers, on the court, and upon the pedestals, I feel the true power of basketball, a lived game loved by so many, regardless of race, gender, age, or ability. I am reminded of Pipkin's (2008) claim that, "The athletes' subjective experience of sports revealed the importance of childhood, the body as a site of identity, the magic of remarkable moments denied to most average people, and an unusual twist on the common fear of mortality" (p. 7). However, these were not professional athletes who were teaching us about the trials and tribulations of sports through corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational means. They were the true ambassadors of basketball, fighting to keep their balance with their superb abilities, begging for the game clock to slow down so they could play some more, diving on the floor for the ball even when the whistle had blown, and exchanging cultural gifts with their opponents in a display of humanity within competition. I stood in that space, game after game, for nearly three weeks, each time fighting back tears of passion, pleasure, and pain. What a wonderful gift we, as referees, had been invited to witness – Special Olympics, the greatest athletic show on earth.

My journey to Athens was a reminder that a sport such as basketball can serve as a running life course in numerous ways, and not solely based on a definition of high-profile sports through the hyper-competitive lens within our society. The thematic analysis of lived experience gathered from EDPS 488B – "Complicating the Conversation of Basketball as a Life Course" showed the depth and value of engaging in story making and narrative interpretation of scholar-athlete experiences with the sport of basketball in relation to the "other" via the practice of *currere*. The methodology followed the four-step developmental process introduced by William Pinar in seeking

renderings via the regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical manner while it expanded beyond the educational into the recreational, confrontational, and sociocultural nature of basketball. The interpretive form allowed each class participant to gain a richer understanding of her own place in space as she reverted back to the overarching theme of having complicated conversations surrounding her versatility as both a scholar and a basketball player. By analyzing the others' lived accounts of basketball via novels, short stories, poems, magazine and newspaper articles, academic renderings, and internet blogs, each scholar-athlete to the degree of her choosing captured her own autobiographical written narrative of basketball in relation to the social, political, and intellectual contexts of curriculum as lived. Class participants became a critical community, employing humorous and serious conversation, cooperative exploration of meanings, and academic questioning toward one another's narratives to facilitate insights and transformation.

In this final chapter I examine the lessons learned from practicing the *currere* method in order to understand the value of the autobiographical process within curriculum and policy. By exploring what each of the four stages of *currere* offered the scholar-athlete women in the course via transitions and transformations, pedagogical insights can be brought forth with regard to the significance of written and spoken narrative in the learning process. The journey of unpacking these sporting lives through *currere* offers a new perspective on empowering student-athletes to become scholar-athletes in an active, not just reactive, manner.

A Return to the Becoming of Me

Craving for a lived sporting space from the past is not a matter of mere recreation or escape from reality. The desire is driven by the purity of place that has evolved through numerous corporeal and relational moments with play. As a good friend of mine claims, the space becomes the meditation chamber through which life slows down and artificial expectations are not demanded. By revisiting the childhood spaces through our autobiographical renderings, the space becomes the backdrop of our greatest memories. Through the process of writing, we long to go back to this participation place where play is more significant than competition. The reward is within the activity, not the celebration at the end. In the process of writing the present self back into a lived past, we are reminded by Osterhoudt (1973) of what occurs in that union:

The athlete is more than a place where past and future meet. He determines the nature of that union. It is his task to bring about the best possible unification of a worthwhile past and a desirable end. This is done, not by simply allowing the end to control the act that his past now makes possible, but by so acting that a maximal result is attained. Did he not do this, his acts would be merely agencies for eventually attaining some remote objective. He would get no satisfaction now, he would achieve nothing today, but would instead merely be on his way, coming nearer perhaps but never arriving at his desirable goal. (p. 20)

For many of the scholar-athlete women in the course the journey was incomplete, void of any culminating event or departure from the sporting life. By returning to the memorable spaces of their past each of them was able to identify more clearly with the present. The regressive journey back into those spaces was no longer merely nostalgic, but instead it served as a springboard onto a path that had yet to be paved. For in the understanding of their individual growth as a student and an athlete, and their communal representation as a daughter, sister, or friend, each woman was able to experience the significance of space beyond the game.

How Does a Space Mean?

The scholar-athletes in the course often found themselves returning to that space of basketball as a sanctuary or escape from reality. As a child, it is the only reality that we know, and that becomes a natural source of amusement. The space is inviting, exploratory, and interactive – all architectural elements of the sporting refuge. Casey (1993) claims that through displacement we find our way back into that special place:

For what is paramount in a culturally specified place is not the end-point of destination, much less the shortest to it. What matters most is the experience of *being* in that place and, more particularly, *becoming part of the place*. The time of cultural implacement (and the time experienced *in* that implacement) is that which informs a place in concert with other human beings, through one's bodily agency, within the embrace of a landscape. (p. 33)

Hence, the space of basketball becomes a classroom of lessons observed and passed down from an elder player to a new participant. It becomes a canvas for observation and a platform for demonstration of skills, a display that the community embraces. These women admitted that they liked to show off in their neighborhoods, because those were the people they had to prove themselves to on a daily basis.

The reflective practice of autobiographical narrative takes them back to the place and helps them recognize how they have learned to adapt to change and growth. These women have learned to become both participants and spectators in their own lives.

Britton's (1963) differentiation of that lived duality radiates in the formation of scholar-athletes' beings. He states:

If I describe what has happened to me in order to get my hearer to do something for me ... then I remain a participant in my own affairs and invite him to become one. If, on the other hand, I merely want to interest him, so that he savors with me the joys and sorrows and surprises of my past experience and appreciates with me the intricate pattern of events, then not only do I invite him to be a spectator, but I myself am a spectator of my own experience. (p. 39)

The beauty and sanctity of an outdoor space builds a sense of independence even though we cannot manipulate the playgrounds. Instead, we infuse rules upon the built space altering boundaries through collaboration. In retrospect, the gymnasium has structural restrictions that cannot be altered, and players to some degree, may feel confined until they adapt to the spatial limitations.

I'm(proving) a Way out of Play

In the pursuit of happiness on a basketball court these women found that their skills had and still have endless possibility, as they felt their performance level and confidence grow with each dribble, pass, and shot. Through practice and participation they promoted their identities into the athletic ranks and accumulated corporeal, spatial, and temporal skills which served as pillars in their success with team play – pushing each other to perform at a more competitive level, while pursuing the never-ending bliss with a ball and hoop. The ecstasy of play can never be measured by another in an organized form, as true “ballers” better known as “gym rats,” get lost in the moments, even when play becomes task-based through team practices and drills. According to Caputo’s (1970) philosophic inquiry on the distinction between rule-governed and rule-less play:

To play, in many languages, means to swing, to wave, to flutter. The paradigm instance of such play, then, is that of the child ... We ought to distinguish this sense of play from another but distinct idea: play as a game with rules. The game with rules, according to Jean Piaget, is a more rational behavior persisting throughout adulthood. In this play the rules are freely accepted, but must be adhered to rigorously. To break the rules (cheating) in a game with rules is to destroy the essential playfulness of the game. (p. 37)

The natural notion of free play can become stifled by a rigid physical education curriculum that aims to force activity for the sake of health. Even though a period of physical activity can be a great escape from the monotonous academic subjects, it still is

not a sanctuary, as rules are taught and expectations are forthcoming through measured skills, evaluations and repetitive drills. If a player has not experienced the unrestricted space of basketball through a sense of free play, then she will not find corporeal value within the physical education class that often serves a temporal showcasing of skills for athletes within a school. According to Gadamer's (1975) examination of the existence of play, we must look to the player for answers:

Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play. Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play. Someone who doesn't take the game seriously is a spoilsport. The mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave toward play as if toward an object. (p. 103)

In the process of proving their ability to adults, athletes are really trying to find acceptance within their own peers, all through performance. The notion of amateurism is fading as competition, modeled after the professional scale, is taking over at a much younger age as athletes are jumping from team to team trying to find the golden ticket to get noticed by elite AAU coaches, who have connections to college coaches, who can prepare them for something bigger. The formula for success has somewhat stifled the pleasure of play. Participating in high-profile sports has become to some degree a race to the top through which play is no longer valued for the fun factor if there is no means to an end. Although many of the women in the course did not feel the full impact of this model of participation, they recognized its presence around them from an early age, as they craved to play on the best teams in order to get a piece of the glory. Moving beyond the notion of professional sports, regardless of how much attention a team's accomplishments generate, the philosophic notion of play itself does not generate anything beyond a win or loss outcome. As Caillois (1961) adamantly states:

A characteristic of play, in fact, is that it creates no wealth or goods, thus differing from work or art. At the end of the game, all can and must start over again at some point. Nothing has been harvested or manufactured, no masterpiece has been created, no capital has accrued. Play is an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy ingenuity, skill ... As for professionals ... it is clear that they are not players but workers. When they play, it is as some other game. (pp. 5-6)

For the women in the course, basketball never served as a means to an end. The pursuit was never about fame or money, and they never envisioned themselves as becoming full-time professional basketball players. Yet, their devotion to practice and preparation for games that Caillois would claim to be meaningless had, and still has, significant power in their lives. The freedom to play a game at the highest caliber with peers who push your body to the edge is the source of passion, and the ultimate reward is taking that source of energy and applying it to life beyond the basketball court. Metheny (1968) explains this as a process of freedom where the self is unified with the self through play:

In short, within the complex conditions of life, we are seldom, if ever free to focus all our attention on one well-defined task and bring all the energies of our being to bear on one whole-hearted attempt to perform that task effectively.

In contrast, the rules of sport provide us with a man-made world in which this freedom is fully guaranteed. These rules eliminate the demands of necessity by defining an unnecessary task ...

In this sense, the rules of sport provide each performer with a rare opportunity to concentrate all the energies of his being in one meaningful effort to perform a task of his own choosing, no longer pushed and pulled in a dozen directions by the many imperatives he may recognize in his life. (p. 63)

The women in the course highlighted that there is an assumption that they are connected to basketball because of male role models who they naturally engaged with while growing up. The physicality of their participation was often questioned or traced back for greater clarification instead of being associated with the true passion they had, and still have, for a game they love to play with heart.

Heather Reid (2002) quotes an anonymous student from Kokomo High School who describes what the new en-gendered athlete faces:

In this age of woman's movements, few people have realized yet that the movement which is doing most for womankind is centered in our High Schools. A new type of girl has sprung up in our country. A girl more perfect mentally, morally, and physically than the girls of twenty years ago. This is the basket ball girl. Many are her detractors; numerous are her critics, but her champions and supporters see in her the future greatness of American womanhood. (p. 257)

The informal neighborhood courts, whether they were playgrounds or driveways, became the proving grounds where gender was often challenged and participation was earned through performance, not affiliation. These women did not participate in sports for the mere social perks; they wanted people to appreciate their desire for playing the game and have a forum where they could share their experiences with other basketball junkies. Even though they were cognizant that they had the capability and desire to play in the same game as the boys, they had to prove themselves by displaying greater physicality in order to be accepted for participation.

Representing Place in Our Becoming

The game of basketball provides numerous opportunities for attention, participation, socialization, and recognition. The title of student-athlete carries a great amount of weight and attention, especially in the scholastic ranks. These women became the *crème de la crème* of their communities by playing on multiple teams and paving a new path for the next generation of girls who idolized their athletic ability. The player's identity becomes a part of the space of play and encompasses a relational power over time. Casey's (1993) exploration of finding our way into a place explains the value that a sporting space can have on both the spectators and the participants:

To be somewhere is to be in place and therefore to be subject to its power, to be part of its action, acting on its scene. The power of a place such as a mere room possesses determines not only *where* I am in the limited sense of cartographic location but *how* I am together with others (i.e., how I commingle and communicate with them) and even *who* we shall become together. The “how” and the “who” are intimately tied to the “where,” which gives to them a specific content and a coloration not available from any other source. Place bestows upon them “a local habitation and a name” by establishing a concrete situatedness in the common world. This implacement is as social as it is personal. The idiological is not merely idiosyncratic or individual; it is also collective in character. (p. 23)

The women participants wrote about how, as children, they idolized other athletes, both women and men, and how they were drawn to the sporting space because of the connection they felt through the passion that an older athlete demonstrated on the court. Yet, at some point, they each wanted to be known for their own attributes and contributions to this game they all love, and not be compared to another through their hard work, dedication, and achievement.

Basketball as a task or job asks us to step out of childhood early by playing on teams who compete against older athletes in order to push our level of performance, not necessarily our desired pleasure, to an extreme. For some it is an opportunity to thrive, but for others it is a love-hate relationship with basketball. Although the spirit of play is not initiated with an agenda for competition, each player seeks a mode of comparison or a standard of measurement to determine how far she has come through the number of hours she has fallen in love with basketball. The seriousness that she portrays when lacing up those high top sneakers, pulling her hair back into a pony tail with a scrunchy, and going through her pre-game rituals exemplifies a passion for play that she values beyond the outcome. As Schmitz (1979) proclaims:

Sport can be carried out without the spirit of play. Nevertheless, in the life of individuals and in the history of the race, sport emerges from play as from an original and founding posture. Sport is free, self-conscious, tested play which

moves in a transnatural dimension of human life, built upon a certain basis of leisure ... There is certainly a return to seriousness in the discipline of formal sport. There is training, performance and competition. But the objectives of sport and its founding decision lie within play and cause sport to share in certain of its features – the sense of immediacy, exhilaration, rule-directed behavior, and the indeterminacy of a specified outcome. (p. 27)

The women scholar-athletes in my study became the ambassadors of the game within neighborhood playgrounds, local gymnasiums, national tournaments, and forthcoming acceptance into high-profile programs, always representing the community. Do they belong to these spaces, or do the spaces own them? Many players will come and go, yet they define these places as their own spatial and temporal treasures, where they shined and smiled. As Casey (1993) points out, our departure from a space does not signal a loss of what it has become:

Even if we vacate a place and it stays unoccupied, it does not become an instant void or revert to being a mere part of space. So long as we (or other living organisms) have once been there, it has become a place – and it *remains* a place, insofar as it bears the sedimented traces of our presence. These traces, which act to shape and identify a place and not just to haunt it, need not be externally, much less eternally, engraved; they can be inward memory traces possessed by all who have shared that place. Whatever their exact character, such traces establish what might otherwise be mere locus or site *as a place*, a status which, once gained, is perhaps never entirely lost. (p. 103)

Through the spaces that these women occupied and identified with as a sanctuary of play and competition, their athletic lives found significance. In the forward movement of writing from past to present, these spaces crave for stories filled with glory and struggle. Passing by the driveways, playgrounds, community centers, and school gyms, they are reminded of their in-the-moment growth through life stories, verifying why they are drawn back into this never-ending journey with basketball.

The Progress of Reflecting Upon Growing Pains

The sporting space has a natural culture of hierarchy through which players gain a sense of belonging even in the face of adversity. The camaraderie is the ultimate reward. The women in my study were naturally inclined to become leaders off the court through their experiences of playing a team sport and serving as mentors for their teammates. Through their present perception of the past they relive sporting experiences as defined outcomes instead of isolated moments that no longer have significance. “[I]t is the way in which we understand our past which determines how it determines us. But this understanding is itself intimately related to our orientation towards the future” (Sarup, 1992, p. 38). In the present, the women write their way back into the past, identifying the reasons why they find comfort in the sporting space and radiate back into the space no longer as athletes, but instead as scholars or ambassadors of the game.

The Pursuit of Writing Back into the Present

The physicality of basketball expects men to sacrifice their bodies diving on the floor, being aggressive with opponents, and body-bumping their teammates; yet, women are expected to play the game in a more subtle manner, avoiding physical confrontation when possible with greater finesse and less aggression. The pain and suffering that these women endured in their time of competition is as much, if not more, than what men experience. It all arises from passion, pure passion. The game face that these women were asked to wear in order to display mental and physical toughness while facing adversity was removed in the present through their writing. The autobiographical nature of unpacking her lived experience places the scholar-athlete in a sacramental space with her writing, and for many of these women, it was the first time they witnessed their

sporting life from a critically reflective perspective. According to Richardson (2001) this means:

Experiencing the flow of writing and experiencing connectedness to others. The sense of time and space as separate is undermined, re-understood as deeply interrelated. As you write, you can find yourself connected to others; the meaning you construct about your life connects you to others, making communion – community – possible. (p. 37)

The identity of the women was defined by the experiences they endured while growing from participants to athletes to student-athletes, and now looking back as scholar-athletes. The space of basketball provides solitude within chaos. Although they are no longer student-athletes, they are addicted to the lessons, the moments, and the outcomes that basketball has given them, and hence, they return again and again, either to play or to observe. The space has become their meditation chamber. As a community of writers these women found a way to bond through basketball stories, questioning each other's experiences, digging deep into the essence of the moment played. In sharing each other's musings they learned to appreciate that "To understand it [a text] does not mean primarily referring back to past life, but rather present participation in what is said. It is not really a question of a relation between persons ... but rather, of a participation in the communication which the text makes to us" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 369).

It is through a community of the lived present where these women found the value of athletics and scholarship, while unpacking their written narratives and having complicated conversations about who they have become. Although basketball now serves as the background on their lived canvas, each of these women claimed that writing their way back into basketball has made them realize the mental and physical impacts of the game upon their motivation and values as individuals.

Consuming a Never-Ending Journey

There is a basketball revolution occurring here with multiple agendas. Although commonalities do exist in the stories shared, each journey is unique in how it has empowered these women to claim exclusive rights to a shared membership, an understanding of a life course that begs to be reflected upon. In the process of revisiting their becoming the women in the course encountered the value of listening to the self prior to writing about their experiences. The notion of silence becomes an elixir for empowering the reflective praxis of written narrative. Athletes are taught to react in the moment of play and competition based on time, space, and relations. Often, in the down time, as their bodies are in rest so is the mind. Boss (1979) suggests:

The openness of human existence consists in the capacity for perceiving the presence and meaningfulness of whatever appears, the capacity for responding meaningfully to the perceived significance of these phenomena in a way that corresponds to their significance. (p. 118)

Basketball is a year-round phenomenon where athletes are fully immersed both in and out of season. During the summer, these women pushed their bodies to perform at the highest caliber, eating and sleeping basketball, often ignoring the physical pain brought forth by a ridiculous number of games in which they participated. Although the constant prize of making the team, being a starter, having a winning record, claiming the state championship, and being the most valuable player were so distant in those hot summer days, it was well worth the perseverance of traveling from gym to gym, registering for one tournament after another, ultimately pushing the body to its outer limits. Merleau-Ponty (1962) views the body as a transient temple of change that is constantly adjusting to maintain equilibrium through lived meaning.

My body is geared to the world when my perception offers me a spectacle as varied and as clearly articulated as possible, and when my motor intentions, as they unfold, receive from the world the responses they anticipate. This maximum distinctness in perception and action defines a perceptual *ground*, a basis of my life, a general *milieu* for the coexistence of my body and the world. (p. 250)

The sporting space challenged these women to sacrifice themselves physically and mentally in order to make sense of what it means to endure the full range of what basketball has to offer. In those moments of agile and accelerated play the body finds relativity with the world by defining itself in motion, and at times, turmoil.

The Changing of the Guards

At some point in her life, every athlete must learn to pass the baton on to the next generation. She believes that she has fully served her ambassadorship as a student-athlete and has been a good role model for the next group that will carry the torch. Yet, she also realizes that the philosophy of the game is not in her control, and the pillars have altered throughout her journey and will continue to change, since the sporting space is always a contested place. Every athlete seeks a purpose with regard to individual accomplishment. “To comprehend the ‘inner world’ of the performer and to understand the reason why each man, as an individual, chooses to partake in sport activity, is to pursue inquiry into personal forms of meaningful and significant existence” (Slusher, 1967, p. 220).

Although these women joined a team and followed the coach’s philosophy and game plan, deep down inside they have goals and outcomes that they are striving to achieve to prove to themselves that they have grown as athletes. Kleinman (1979) suggests that the behaviors of athletes within individual sports is not very different from those who partake in team sports, as both types approach play with a self-inclined agenda for achievement.

She points out:

Although all participants ... may be performing exactly the same movements, the individual, if he is truly engaged in the act, knows nothing of the others. He is completely absorbed in his landscape. He is acting only as he can act. He is deriving meaning and significance only in the way he is capable. (p. 178)

A personal drive toward happiness through play, and the desire to compete and overcome obstacles set forth by the opponent, become inseparable through the years of participation. The women observed that the current generation seeks tangible rewards such as trophies and medals as a sign of pleasure. The mere act of participation is no longer enough, and you should not be having fun unless your team is winning. The true measure of success has become equated with what you have to show for it, "For victory which used to be the winning of, or the struggle for, the prize has now become merely the prize or the reward, an external outcome which becomes the new symbol of success" (Morford, 1973, p. 85).

Every player seeks recognition, and the marketing of basketball has built the hype to a level that is dangerously selfish. Each player thinks that he or she can easily achieve the highest caliber of athletic success by doing as directed instead of finding the pleasure within the game itself. Our dedication to basketball shifts from free play to performance to competition and eventually to fitness. For some of these women, the recreational escape back to a space all too familiar is enough to keep them happy, yet for others, they still crave the adrenaline of running up and down the court trying to outdo the opponent and claim to be the queens of the court.

To move beyond the notion of play as a physical act begs for a reflective analysis of what an athlete has accumulated, beyond skills, over the years. To fully appreciate the impact of basketball upon their life course, the women scholar-athletes had to dig deep

into the roots of their passion for the game, and in the process find the philosophical athlete within. In the moment of play we react with our bodies through space, time, and relations, not really considering the decisions, sacrifices, and outcomes. The notion of competition often has athletes focusing on practice and not praxis of sporting situations, often limiting them in appreciating who they are becoming within the elements of the sporting space.

Arriving at a Scholarly Analysis of Athletics

Women basketball players are constantly under the scrutiny of the fans who often are not dazzled by their performance in comparison to the feats that men demonstrate through acrobatic acts of human defiance. The skills that women have acquired through their dedication to the game may go unnoticed, even as they gracefully move up and down the court. Basketball players play *to* the fans and not necessarily *for* the fans.

Gadamer (1975) touches upon the communal sense of games as people are brought together for some thing much bigger than play. He claims:

... however much games are in essence representations and however much the players represent themselves in them, games are not presented for anyone – i.e., they are not aimed at an audience. Children play for themselves, even when they represent. And not even those games (e.g., sports) that are played before spectators are aimed at them. Indeed, contests are in danger of losing their real play character precisely by becoming shows. (pp. 108-109)

Gadamer predicted where sports may take us as the games have become more ritualized by spectators. More and more fans are attending the games in order be entertained, and rightfully so, since they are paying big bucks to watch super stars. The phenomenon of sports entertainment has trickled to the recreational level as high school and college coaches are scoping local gymnasiums for future prospects who can bring talent to their school and make their team shine.

Holding a Passionate Court

With the growth of coed recreational programs comes a new generation of female athletes who have gradually and naturally grown accustomed to the physical nature, using their bodies to battle for position on the court, and the mental nature, infusing their voice upon the space of basketball. The women in this course have experienced becoming the queens of the court. In order to hold that title they had to buy into their surroundings and play the game not for themselves but through themselves. They were under the constant scrutiny of the “other” – coaches, teammates, fans, and parents, yet they drew them in and through their display of perseverance, they too became participants. Gadamer (1975) reminds us:

Imitation and representation are not merely a repetition, a copy, but knowledge of the essence. Because they are not merely repetition, but a “bringing forth,” they imply a spectator as well. They contain in themselves an essential relation to everyone for whom the representation exists ... This was prepared for by deriving the concept of presentation from the concept of play, for self-presentation is the true nature of play – and hence of the work of art also. In being played the play speaks to the spectator through its presentation; and it does so in such a way that, despite the distance between it and himself, the spectator still belongs to play. (pp. 114-115)

The women in the course were not and still are not, to some degree, hesitant to sacrifice their bodies within the sporting space, not necessarily to send a message, but more so, to prove their passion for a sport they love. They have learned to fight to the finish without backing down to the expectations of their surroundings, seeking to exceed the limitations of the boundaries set forth by historical trends. Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) analysis of the phenomenal body argues:

As far as bodily space is concerned, it is clear that there is a [prepersonal, bodily carried] knowledge of place which is reducible to a sort of co-existence [i.e., attunement] with that place, and which is not simply nothing, even though it

cannot be conveyed in the form of a description or even pointed out without a word being spoken. (pp. 347-348)

The staged basketball court became the canvas where these women painted their moves, sacrificed their bodies, accrued their statistics, and proved their passion. Yet, deep down, they wanted to transform that space back to the driveways and playgrounds where time and space were under their control. In their performance on the court, their bodies told a story of dedication and joy as they each learned to adjust their skills in juxtaposition with their teammates, in clash with their opponents, and in harmony or discord with spectators.

Sacrificing Free Play with Eyes on a Prize

The meaning of competition has changed, and as we transition from the freedom of playgrounds into the confines of a gymnasium, we realize that participation is more rigid, and actual playing time has diminished. The flow of energy within play is stifled by substitutions, rule infractions, and timeouts. These women crave for a return to that open space, where they dictate when it is time to go home based on natural elements such as weather and daylight, not artificially organized plans for participation. Birkerts (1986) captures the significance, yet complexity, of a lost place that may very well still exist, even though the return to that place would not necessarily recreate the original sense of belonging captured by the lived experience of the past. He observes:

No matter what pleas or adjustment I make, I cannot catch hold of the peculiar magic of those [childhood] places ... No effort of will can restore to me that perception, that view of the horizon not yet attained by futurity – it runs through me sometimes, but I cannot summon it. And yet everything I would say about place depends on it, and everything I search for in myself involves some deep fantasy of its restoration. My best, truest – I cannot define my terms – self is vitally connected to a few square miles of land. (p. 54)

The sense of identity that is effortlessly formed by the spatial and relational nature of playground culture outside has somewhat disappeared, as younger players are joining

teams with predetermined identities and coaching ideologies, merely for the sake of being noticed by the other. Where is the pleasure in sitting on the pine and observing from a distance, hoping that her day will come? The natural transformation from playground to staged play is absent as identities are being formed within gymnasium competition, and not prior, through playground collaboration.

For these women, their loyalty to basketball is based on their experiential growth within various stages of play, not the mere outcome of playing at a high level of competition. The greatest joy is the simple presence within the space of basketball and the pure pleasure of putting the ball into the hoop. What has grown from the notion of free play into organized competition serves as another canvas for their individual development as players, performers, and people. Now in their moments of writing they see themselves as scholars of their own athletic passion. They have learned to fall in love again with basketball by writing through their lived experience within moments of many games. Denzin (1989) claims that writing our lives in a story form becomes a dynamically fluid academic experiment for both the listener and the teller:

The personal experience narrative is a genre, or form, of storytelling. It is dependent on the “private” folklore of the person or the group, although it may draw on broader cultural and ideological themes. Such a narrative draws on everyday experiences, and may be a “true” story which identifies core, shared values of the teller and listener. They may be based on single-experience episodes or be multi-episodic. Their significance lies in their ability to create an intimate bond between teller and listener. They connect selves in a context of shared and shareable experience. (p. 186)

For the women in the course, the notion of team camaraderie was a natural everyday expectation, and as they each started to share their writing and found commonality within their sporting lives, a community of writers was formed. Through the praxis of exchanging stories, they were unveiling feelings towards what basketball and people had

expected of them. The athletic game face mask was officially off and a group of philosophically charged scholars were now looking at basketball from new angles.

The competitive nature of basketball as an organized platform for bragging rights has challenged the notion of relations between players and coaches who are constantly battling to find the fittest road to the final match, where they can crown themselves as kings and queens of the court. These women wanted their efforts to not go unnoticed since they put forth their energy and time each and every day because of their love for the game, not seeking extrinsic rewards, but just an opportunity for playing time. However, their coaches often had their eyes on the prize, and in the process, sacrificed individual effort for a chance to have their moment of glory. The written narrative of the women in the course shows that falling in love with basketball was so easy that it naturally flowed into a transformation of surrendering the self to the game and trusting that it will always protect their best interests. According to Starbuck's (1914) discussion on conversion:

An athlete ... sometimes awakens suddenly to an understanding of the fine points of the game and to a real enjoyment of it, just as the convert awakens to an appreciation of religion. If he keeps on engaging in sport, there may come a day when all at once the game plays itself through him – when he loses himself in some great contest. In the same way, a musician may suddenly reach a point at which pleasure in the technique of the art entirely falls away, and in some moment of inspiration he becomes the instrument through which music flows. (p. 385)

Every basketball player has heard the expression “basketball is like a religion out there,” and over time, many mature to understand how communities, big and small, urban or rural, learn to embrace the game and make it their own. The players become the pawns who offer others an opportunity to experience the adrenaline rush as they pack the gyms, beyond capacity on a Friday night, understanding that this is just a game, but deep

down inside, wanting their community team to make it to the state championships and bring home the prize, a justification of their own commitment to basketball.

Basketball Lessons Lived to Be Learned

A return to the informal space of play reminds us of the sanctity of pleasure without regulated purpose. The space and the people within it dictate the outcomes, not a preplanned agenda with hidden beliefs and intents for how play should be carried out. Basketball is like a relationship. The simplicity of ball and hoop is the game we fall in love with over and over again; yet, the diversity of experiences we have with teammates, coaches, and tournaments may stir our emotions away from what initially draws us toward the driveway or playground. Even though they are free to step away from the shared version of basketball, back into their own nestled sporting sanctuary – driveways or playgrounds, the women in the course credit organized basketball as an elixir for the relationships that they had formed with friends and an extended basketball family. Fraleigh (1973) believes that the choice is not necessarily a matter of one or the other within the sporting space. Instead, he proclaims:

My personal human identity is at least partially a product of my will to free myself ... And it is in entering such a world [sport] that man may know himself symbolically as a powerful agent in being since, in that world, he literally uses externally controlling necessities ... to serve his own purposes. (p. 114)

In their driveways and on the playgrounds the women in the course claimed they were in a comfortable space, free to express themselves as children, not having to worry about the scrutiny of a parent or teacher. The space was still competitive, but not with expectations of measured rewards or the taking away of privilege based on performance. As they craved to try out for teams and prove what they had accomplished in their sacred space, they also came to a realization that play was not necessarily carried out in the same

light-hearted manner, even though it was really nice to have a passion that bonded them with others.

Although coaches and players have a shared interest in how the game is played, they often get into each other's heads trying to figure out what the other is thinking in the moment of play. Emotions are held at a constant in order to maintain momentum within competition and avoid any changes to the game plan. Hence, neither players nor coaches relinquish their game face until the final buzzer sounds. For many of the women in the course, their relationships with coaches, more often than not, were healthy as they discussed how these individuals had helped shape the lessons they had learned on the court to bigger lessons in the game of life. In the pursuit of athletic achievement it is easy to dismiss the perseverance and discipline that players are taught to practice through consistent routines. Adorno (1974) reminds us that although we strive to find an independent self, we cannot ignore the fact that to a big extent,

Not only is the self entwined in society; it owes society its existence in the most literal sense. All its content comes from society, or at any rate from its relation to the object. It grows richer the more freely it develops and reflects this relation, while it is limited, impoverished, and reduced by the separation and hardening that it lays claim to as an origin. (p. 154)

The relationship with society through the sporting space is complex as players must learn to engage with teammates, coaches, opponents, and referees. Their bodies become the storyline within the sporting space as they push themselves upon the opponent, initiating a physical or mental reaction that determines the next play they carry out. Players are taught to read each other in order to obtain an advantage during games. Basketball brings them together as a community through the process of socialization, both in and out of that space. The inner gratification gained from participation within the

space impacts their connection to the bigger community and how it values sports.

Although those long, magical days and nights of shooting and dribbling on the driveway courts and neighborhood playgrounds are owned by the self, these women often found themselves injecting others, such as their favorite professional players or collegiate teams, into that space in order to fill the absence of liveliness that is often experienced while watching the games on television. According to Gadamer (1975), the concept of play begs for purpose:

The movement to-and-fro obviously belongs so essentially to the game that there is an ultimate sense in which you cannot have a game by yourself. In order for there to be a game, there always has to be, not necessarily literally another player, but something else with which the player plays and which automatically responds to his move with a countermove. (p. 106)

The storyboard of the driveways and playgrounds is filled with characters from the real world as moves are recreated while nicknames are shouted out. Players embrace the identity of a sporting hero, placing him or her in a climatic plot, such as shooting two free-throws with one second left on the clock and the team is down by one, in order to avoid a hypothetical overtime situation. Rewriting their way back into that basketball space, that has been so significant to their becoming, opens up doors of opportunity beyond the game itself as these women reflect upon the lessons learned through the taste of triumph, the agony of defeat, and the pursuit of leadership. Bochner (2001) points out that there is righteousness embedded within the act of personal written narrative:

We call on stories to make theoretical abstractions, or we can hear stories as a call to be vigilant to the cross-currents of life's contingencies. When we stay with a story, refusing the impulse to abstract, reacting from the sources of our own experiences and feelings, we respect the story and the human life it represents, and we enter into personal contact with questions of virtue, of what it means to live well and do the right thing. (p. 132)

The questioning praxis of *currere* allowed the women in the course to be critical of their own life stories, not with an intent to devalue or alter the running course, but instead, to dig deeper within the lived moments of basketball. These moments helped them understand why they put so much energy and effort into a game that some people apathetically play just for passing time, often without any measurable craze. For these women, the gratification was sealed through the camaraderie that they embraced both on and off the court. As an individual athlete, you can only learn so much through play, even though the desire to just shoot around often takes precedence over actual competition. Yet, the ultimate amalgamation of storied athletic lives is put into motion by the outcome of interactions in and out of the context of play.

Satisfying a Self through Synthesis

There is a strong correlation between lessons learned in the moment of practice and play and how those moments impact the way athletes carry out their lives beyond the sporting space. The turmoil that they face in competition often makes them stronger as individuals facing adversity in life. Just like a basketball game, not every moment is filled with celebration and glory, and they learn how to cope even when their efforts do not reap the expected rewards. The true life course is how they become, not what they do, in that sporting space. In the practice of synthesizing their lived experience, the women in the course claimed that there was always a hidden sense of urgency to understand the deep relationship they had with basketball, but they were never granted the opportunity to be reflective of their time on the court. Instead, they were constantly expected to train their bodies to be reflexive to the moment within either practice or

actual competition. Gadamer (1975) reminds us that in the praxis of synthesizing the self, a person experiences change to an extent that they may realize another within:

Transformation is not alteration, even an alteration that is especially far-reaching. Alteration always means that what is altered also remains the same and is maintained ... When we find someone transformed we mean precisely this, that he has become another person, as it were. There cannot here be any gradual transition leading from one to the other, since the one is the denial of the other ... Play itself is a transformation of such a kind that the identity of the player does not continue to exist for anybody. Everybody asks instead what is supposed to be represented, what is “meant.” The players (or playwright) no longer exist, only what they are playing. (p. 111)

The true scholar-athlete understands the implications of her physical movement and mental decisions upon the sporting space as she tries not only to push herself to produce the greatest outcome, but also be aware of involving and using her teammates’ capabilities to the fullest. In the process of appreciating the competition, she is aware of the greater goal of outdoing her opponent offensively, and defensively stopping them through a collaborative effort.

A Passion Worthy of Sharing

These women may have parted ways with basketball in the sense of consistent competition, but it is after all, their first love and a life course that they have journeyed which cannot ever be forgotten. Instead, they have learned to fall back in love with the game that taught them so much, and have found avenues for reentering the sporting space. In the process of revisiting the sporting space, they are each reminded of how they have become the person who they are, and do not for one second take it for granted. After all, it is through the trials and tribulations of the sporting space that much of their life has come to be defined. Even though it started out as a voluntary activity, the growth of play into competition, justifies how these women experienced a sense of freedom,

imagination, adventure, opportunity, power, mastery, judgment, and independence.

Novak (1976) claims that there is a natural intrinsic motivation to become involved in the sporting space:

The basic reality of all human life is play, games, sport; these are the realities for which the basic metaphors for all that is important in the rest of life are drawn. Work, politics, history, are the illusory, misleading, false world. Being, beauty, truth, excellence, transcendence – these words, grown in the soil of play, wither in the sand of work. Art, prayer, worship, love, civilization, these thrive in the field of play. (p. xii)

Although their relationship with basketball started more as a one on one encounter through ball and hoop, with time these women came to an understanding that basketball is a shared passion and relationship that expects to be passed down from one generation to the next. Of course, those special moments on the driveway will forever be their own to keep and reflect upon, but the sport of basketball was intended to be played in groups. The desire to put their skills to the test against others was a reality for many of these women early in life as they found joy in competing through organized play. The friendships that were formed helped establish a system of shared values that carries into how they approach life in the present. Also, there is a sense of obligation to give back to the game that gave them so much as a child, teen, and young adult. For those who are no longer on the court as players, they have desires to become mentors and coaches from the sidelines. The knowledge of basketball scholarship is best measured by the time put into practice and play, even though a person can learn the game by reading philosophical playbooks written by famous coaches. However, if you have not been on the court as a player it is a challenge to understand how play is carried out by individuals within a confined space.

A Platform for Participation with Purpose

The notion of creating play through practiced imagination within the sporting space has become a lost art as children are being taught to view play as competition through which they have to prove their skills by outperforming their peers to make it on team, their teammates in order to get more playing time, and their opponents in order to accumulate trophies and awards. The whole process has become an eye on the prize approach as playgrounds have become more desolate places absent of consistent identities who occupied the space in the past. Instead, more and more players are in the gym year-round working on improving their skills under heavy scrutiny of coaches who have their reputations on the line. Campbell (1966) claims that participation through play versus competition is not a natural flow:

... In essence, sport is a kind of diversion which has for its direct and immediate end fun, pleasure, and delight and which is dominated by a spirit of moderation and generosity. Athletics, on the other hand, is essentially a competitive activity, which has for its end victory in the contest and which is characterized by a spirit of dedication, sacrifice, and intensity. (p. 28)

According to some of the women in the course, the basketball experience has become that of the sporting masses as young players look to others for guidance on how they should appreciate this simple game of ball and hoop. As if there was one right way to participate in basketball, beyond the rules, everyone now is even more anxious about gear, such as sneakers, or lucrative tournaments that offer lavish rewards. The basketball communities that these women have been a part of have taught them how to grow together and learn to appreciate the process of building relationships between peers, coaches, and parents. Everyone has given up something else in their lives in order to help a community of participants grow as a team through its ups and downs. Brown's (2009)

expertise on play observation justifies that sport, as a form of play, is a survival mechanism for human growth and prosperity:

I have found that remembering what play is all about and making it part of our daily lives are probably the most important factors in being a fulfilled human being ... I do not think it is too much to say that play can save our life. It certainly has salvaged mine. Life without play is a grinding, mechanical existence organized around doing things necessary for survival. Play is the stick that stirs the drink. It is the basis of all art, games, books, sports, movies, fashion, fun, and wonder – in short, the basis of what we think of as civilization. Play is the vital essence of life. It is what makes life lively ... The world needs play because it enables each person to live a good life. (pp. 6, 11-12, 201)

But, what happens when our bodies can no longer answer the demanding physical toll that basketball exerts? For some of these scholar athlete women they have reached the crossroads of physicality, yet the urgency to experience competition still remains prime. For them the return to the court is a resurgence of their own authority within basketball – a passing of the torch to another, infusing them with “fire in the belly” and “ice in the veins.” A new chapter of participation has become possible from the sidelines, as they live their passion through the body of another.

Moving Beyond the Prime Time

Basketball was a starting point for these women and it will more than likely serve as an ending point, not necessarily through the active engagement of play, but more likely, through the lessons learned that they are each so hungry to pass down to the next generation of players, as a mentor, coach, and/or parent. They each feel as if they owe basketball a huge favor because it was there to celebrate with them the victories and comfort them through the defeats. A return to those special sporting spaces is not simply an athletic reminiscing of what was within a small window of time, but more

significantly what has become through the journey that basketball has taken these women on, both individually and as a team.

The process of contest and competition is dependent upon the notion of partnerships formed within play. The collaboration that one experiences within basketball can become the journey of a lifetime as we stay in touch with those who logged in so many hours with us at the local playground, the school gymnasium, and community recreation centers. The adrenaline rush of the sporting spaces is lived forwards and backwards with those who understand our journey the best. Childs (1931) claims that a sense of freedom is formed through these lived moments:

In a changing world the only person who can become free and who can maintain his freedom is the one who has 'learned to learn.' A democratic society can hope to succeed only if it is composed of individuals who have developed the responsibility for intelligent self-direction in cooperation with others. (p. 168)

To relive their past moments through present reflection allowed these women to encounter the lived course for all it has done to and with them. The journey can at times be regrettable if an anticipated outcome has not been reached. In these moments of reflection, they joyfully and painfully challenged themselves to think back to the decisions made to pursue basketball instead of other opportunities. In these flashbacks, she injects her present self into prime moments as an athlete and wonders why she believed in the sporting space so much and what she gave up in the process. Yet, in the long run, they each have come to a realization that this is a never-ending journey with basketball that rejuvenates the self through a new window of opportunity beyond the prime time.

The culture of excellence within athletics is too often results based, measured in numbers, and packaged through statistics. The reflective, not reactive, words of the

participants need to be given a platform via curriculum. To transform the ideology of student-athlete into scholar-athlete calls for a change in inquiry and practice. For these women, the semester served as a sacred space of conversation and written narrative – a place to unpack their authentic personality, appreciate their embodied whole, free their consciousness, interpret events, clarify their values, examine the internal good of basketball, and foster their perspectives.

Transforming Lived Experience into “Phenomenal” Policy via Curriculum

Life is a running course. The sporting space can be a course within the curriculum. Basketball becomes the syllabus for this course. The students in the course learn to collaborate as a team. Hence, the individual voice becomes an essential part of their creatively-constructed autobiographical reality. The real world does not revolve around mere memorization of information, but the actual application of knowledge gained and used in resolving a contemporary problem; or in our case, examining being and becoming through a path that has partially been paved by a life experience with the sport of basketball.

Throughout the semester, I asked the women scholar-athletes to reflect upon their lived experiences with basketball based on the corporeal (body), the temporal (time), the spatial (space), and the relational (relationships) moments that shaped who they have become as both a scholar and an athlete. The goal was to construct detailed autobiographical glimpses of their basketball experiences as both a scholar and an athlete via the four stages of *currere*. The four separate stages were consolidated into one powerful, detailed musing, an up-to-date memoir of the lived experience of basketball based on “four distinct quarters” – the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the

synthetical – each of which served as a precious platform for both scholastic and athletic manifestation. The praxis of written narrative for a scholar-athlete begs her to return to that busy sporting space and relive the deeply engaging process between body and mind through time. As Bourdieu (1990) eloquently describes it:

A player who is involved and caught up in the game adjusts not to what he sees but to what he fore-sees, sees in advance in the directly perceived present; he passes the ball not to the spot that his team-mate is but to the spot he will reach – before his opponent – a moment later, anticipating the anticipations of the others and, as when ‘selling a dummy’, seeking to confound them. He decides in terms of objective probabilities, that is, in response to an overall, instantaneous assessment of the whole set of his team-mates, seen not as they are but in their impending positions. And he does so ‘on the spot’, ‘in the twinkling of an eye’, ‘in the heat of the moment’, that is, in conditions which exclude distance, perspective, detachment and reflexion. He is launched into the impending future, present in the imminent moment, and, abdicating the possibility of suspending at every moment of ecstasis that projects him into the probable, he identifies himself with the imminent future of the world, postulating the continuity of time. (pp. 81-82)

In the world of academics and athletics we encounter more and more a shift towards the notion of “adult convenience” – where an envisioned, often confined, sense of betterment for society takes precedence over individual identities and interests. The battle between constructing and implementing curricula as plans versus lived experiences is something that has more recently been downplayed due to the big race to the top for assessing students’ progress via standardization in all aspects of the curriculum. The system has created a very prescriptive plan for students, so that desired outcomes for the sorting machine are celebrated, while opportunities for realistic break-through performances are downplayed.

Creating a Culture of Community not Commodity

The phenomenon of team basketball has reached great heights globally, but more significantly, some of its wildest challenges lay ahead in the United States. I choose to

use the word “wildest” due to the trickling impact professional organizations and their rosters have upon scholastic athletes as they try to find a balance between basketball and academics within their secondary schools, junior colleges, and universities. Due to the complex nature and glory of becoming a high profile basketball “phenom” within the local high school circuit and the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), being scouted by the country’s top National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) coaches, and dreaming to jump into the National Basketball Association (NBA) spotlight and high life, many student athletes have become mere basketball icons who are being targeted by numerous corporate entities beyond the court. The distinction of student athletes as basketball icons makes them a commodity of the unitary policy actor who maintains the weight in power. The significance of exploring the lived experience of student-athletes through a scholarly, autobiographical perspective allowed the women in the course to create a community filled with critical conversations of what they had lived through the sporting space.

According to Church (1995), the investigation of our lives is not irrational scholarship:

Critical autobiography is vital intellectual work ... The social analysis accomplished by this form is based on two assumptions: first, that it is possible to learn about the general from the particular; second, the self is a social phenomenon. I assume that my subjectivity is filled with voices of other people. Writing about myself is a way of writing about these others and about the worlds which we create/inhabit ... Because my subjective experience is part of the world, the story which emerges is not completely private or idiosyncratic. (p. 5)

As public/private academic institutions and high-profile athletic corporations struggle to find common ground through sports, the very individuals who are at the source of the phenomenon may become collateral damage. The hidden agendas become a source for masking the lived experience as the voice of the athlete becomes fueled by a predetermined course of action. Hence, the running narrative staggers and policy

becomes cluttered by metaphor. Malen and Knapp (1997) capture the significance of metaphors within a policy by “defining a symbol as an image conveyed by gesture, visual means or verbal cues that stands for a more complex idea or condition. These perspectives suggest that policy sends signals and creates symbols that serve important functions” (p. 430). Hence, the symbolic nature of policy does not consider who we are, but instead, what the policy can do to or for us. “Policy viewed from the symbolic perspective is intended to shape conceptions of institutions, the problems they face, and the work they carry out” (Malen & Knapp, 1997, p. 430).

In essence, the symbols embedded within an education policy may distinguish power, represent voice, signify an image, speak to the populace, build a common understanding, acknowledge varied interpretations, manipulate ideologies, and/or anticipate specific outcomes. By the very nature that we make education policy, we confirm or confer the status of various groups or individuals directly, while indirectly influencing the ideologies of the masses towards each other. According to Doll, Fleener, Trueit, and St. Julien (2005), creating a community of active learners revolves around the individual:

Educational communication is to a great extent reduced to orienting itself according to interaction, in that the organizational roles and decisions as well as the function and performance determined by the functional system must constantly be communicated in the interaction system *teaching* if it is to any degree to be observable and guiding for participants: roles must be confirmed through illustration, decisions must be re-updated for reasons of both remembering and understanding, and the idea behind the teaching must continuously be thematized for reasons of conditioning and motivation. (p. 223)

The mere construction of policy by an actor is inadequate without following the symbolic trail of action that insinuates change within institutions and the receiving communities.

According to Yanow (1996) once a policy is symbolically set into motion, certain

assumptions are anticipated – “(1) implementation may cover a wide range of symbol-sharing communities; (2) interpretations of symbols and the making of meaning(s) change over time; (3) actors who share symbolic meanings at one time may not share them at another time in the course of implementing a policy; and (4) relationships among actors, policy goals, and implementation may change over time” (pp. 21-22).

Hence, any artifact that is put into motion by policymakers is interpreted by the public, and then possibly reinterpreted via the course of a new action, which creates new symbolic connotations. Bruner (1986) captures Yanow’s cycle of action-text-interpretation as “a good story – through which thought processes must construct two landscapes simultaneously: landscape of action (agent, intention, goal, situation) and consciousness (what those involved in action know, think or feel or do not know, think, or feel)” (p. 20). Policymakers and policies come and go, but their symbolic impact upon cultural and social human landscapes may linger into the future for many years to come.

The process of interpretivism is highly correlated to the role of a policymaker, within an institution, as an interactionist in the process of meaning-making from the symbolism that he or she extracts based the information gathered. Blumer (1969) refers to three significant aspects that an interactive researcher or policymaker must consider in the process of gathering data: “(1) that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them; (2) that the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows; and (3) that the meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters” (p. 2). According to Arminio and Hultgren (2002), “What we know about the goodness of research comes not from an

authoritative objective truth waiting to be discovered, but rather from the understanding we gain when engaging in our work. Hence, the essence of interpretive and critical research is making meaning, not verifying objective facts that are measured and represented by numbers” (p. 447).

While struggling to establish identity internally within the institution, and externally with the general public, policymakers must be prepared to defend the question – who does this policy think you are? Crotty (1998) emphasizes the importance of an interactive process from within by stating that “Meaning is constructed by human beings as they engage with the world. Meaning is more than what is observable in the world to be measured and counted” (p. 43). Becker (1992) further explains that “Meaning occurs in between the two, and both person and object are necessary in its co-creation” (p. 19). What the sporting space has provided for the women in this study is immeasurable regarding the impact on their life, as it has gradually grown to define who they are, and how they make meaning out of the corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational aspects of their life course. As gatekeepers of curriculum we must recognize that “Like riverboat pilots our course is seldom straight or easily known in advance, yet we seem to expect and communicate to our students that paths to learning are straight and without deviation without detours” (Doll et al., p. 267).

How Does a Curriculum Mean?

In the notion of self and other I am reminded of how often teachers separate their identity as educators from their identity as individual human beings. As we like to say in this society, we *wear many hats*, or you are *a jack of all trades*, or better yet, *put yourself in someone else’s shoes*. In the rigid mode of pedagogy, we do not allow for shifting to

occur, worrying that the lesson may not come across properly or that the curriculum will not be completed on time, or that we may lose control of our classroom. What we truly see with our own eyes can sometimes be silenced by the very curriculum that attempts to open up the world to us. Isolating assignments, subjects, and students via some mode of measurement or classified sorting is truly closing the door on becoming a keen observer of the existence of multiple phenomena with multiple interpretations. According to Doll (2000), “The teacher serves the function of introducing difficult cultural material with the intent of sparking student imagination and initiating the energy from within. Such a process should result in learning that has, at its root trace, an authenticity not discoverable by traditional teaching pedagogies” (p. xii). She further distinguishes that we define curriculum in cycles of acquisition when in reality it is “a ‘running’ rather than a course” (p. xiii).

Our reliance and full-hearted belief in the swinging of the academic pendulum has further alienated us from the students and made us treat them even more as educational commodities (objects of reproduction) instead of subjects with unique life histories and critical capabilities. In other words, we have sold them on the ideology that they are unimportant in the greater scheme of things until they reach adulthood, and hence, their job is to reproduce what we deem as being valuable for the betterment of society. I wonder if the educators have been so hypnotized by the swinging of the pendulum that they have forgotten that children are not receivers, but they are the learners. Dewey (1980) suggests:

Since the curriculum is always getting loaded down with purely inherited traditional matter and with subjects which represent mainly the energy of some influential person or group of persons in behalf of something dear to them, it requires constant inspection, criticism, and revision to make sure it is

accomplishing its purpose. Then there is always the probability that it represents the values of adults rather than those of children and youth, or those of pupils a generation ago rather than those of present day. (p. 250)

Like letters written in running water, “words can be ritualized acts, if they are put in the river, in the stream of imagination” (Moore as quoted in Doll, 2000, p. 145). Educational policy makers today have the daunting task of constructing a curriculum that not only meets the needs of a heterogeneously skilled student population, but also measures the requirements that justify proficiency of standards. Once the policy is set in motion, it becomes the disheartening responsibility of the teacher to massage the curriculum into student-friendly goals, objectives, and outcomes. How did we ever become the architects of such complex obstacles in education that consistently veer away from the individual learner and his or her identity? In the process of striving for high academic standards, the becoming of an individual may be deemed as secondary, as students are prioritized and grouped by institutionalized categories, hence, separating the natural life course of their becoming from the rigid school curriculum.

The Power of Curriculum as a Conversation

Pinar nicely captures the essence of how female education has changed in the United States with regards to a shift from no education to isolated education to specialized education to equal access to education. Yet, we still have trouble accepting women in leadership roles, whether it is politics, corporations, or schools. Even though progress has been made in that more women have moved into these high level positions, the numbers are still quite imbalanced. The biggest problem may be embedded within how women are portrayed via multiple forms of media disseminated within our society. This portrayal includes body image, lifestyle, power, and occupation. Often the women

who are idolized leaders are in entertainment, and hence, are often portrayed by their physical image before their intellectual capacity. Applebee (1996) suggests that we consider simultaneously embracing and challenging traditions within the curriculum:

Traditions can transform the individual, providing powerful tools for understanding experience; individuals also transform traditions, through the ways in which they make use of and move beyond the tools they inherit; and ensure that this continues to occur, our traditions of teaching and learning must be transformed so that students learn to enter into the ongoing conversations that incorporate our past and shape our future. (p. 3)

As a child I never doubted what my schools and teachers deemed to be valuable knowledge and skills. Like most people, I assumed that they had learned all there is to know and were giving me access to a future path via their lesson plans and life experiences. I actually credit many of those school leaders and teachers for making me the person who I am today; yet, we must acknowledge the power that these select individuals have when it comes to curriculum development and implementation. As a result, certain perspectives are shared and discussed within our classrooms, and others are completely ignored. Graham (1991) suggests that we turn to the lived stories of students, correlating it to course content, in order to entice them back into the curriculum.

Autobiography as a provocative blend of fiction, personal metaphor, and myth is undertaken to make students aware that this method of self-representation is less concerned with a wholly accurate rendering of what was the case; rather, it is to be hoped that a student will assume a more relativistic stance in order to facilitate reviewing an educational experience as part of his or her life story ... *Currere* does not wish to alter basic personality structures but instead holds out to students a method of gaining more direct access to the personal meaning of the experience of schooling. (p. 134)

It would be fair enough to claim that there is no such thing as a neutral-based curriculum, no matter how hard the system tries to bring in multiple viewpoints.

Although curriculum appears to be changing frequently in order to keep up with the

changing world, many of its goals today are very similar to its inception. Learners are scientifically probed as robots, not humans, to provide feedback on a given set of factual data within numerous subject areas. Even in the moments where the curriculum calls for critical thinking and personal reflection, they expect students to generate their response within very specific boundaries of expression.

The educational playing field, where the curriculum serves the role of referee, starts out as a friendly competition in learning and ends as a brutal battle of achievement. In the process, not everyone comes out of their educational construct with a positive, valuable experience regardless of the life path they choose to pursue. Furthermore, there may be a loss of human identity for both the student and teacher within the construction and implementation of a given curriculum. Today, more and more teachers may have less to say about the selection of text and the art of pedagogy that they employ as professionals within their classrooms. Eventually, teachers may accept these constructions as beliefs of their own and secretly make the necessary adjustments that they deem to be appropriate for the learners' life course. Pinar (2004) captures this notion by stating, "It is clear, they conclude that there is no one definitive way of developing curriculum or of engaging in curriculum inquiry. They assert that they would like to see texts explore in some depth and with some measure of understanding, the alternative positions that exist, the basis for their existence, and what curricular form they might take in practice" (p. 19). Our most subtle actions, which may be intended to celebrate a student's ability, can become the biggest source of interference in the natural development of individual identities.

The sporting space is treated as an extension of the school curriculum and has a tendency to isolate the scholarly self from the athletic self. The lessons learned within the pages of textbooks and novels are not necessarily correlated through conversation to the pursuit of excellence that athletes practice and perfect on a daily basis. Although the content within various subjects asks us to engage with narrative text, it often dismisses the significance of our own lived narrative that craves relevant correlation. According to Josselson's (1993) exploration of the autobiographical process:

We know what is not a narrative much better than we can define narrative and evaluate its quality ... What is a good story? Is just a good story enough? What must be added to the *story* to make it *scholarship*? How do we derive concepts from stories and then use these concepts to understand people? What – precisely – would have to be added to transform story material from journalistic or literary to the academic and theoretical enriching? (p. xi)

To find a voice within the curriculum is a special invitation granted through pedagogy that values the person in relation to the content. The essence of learning exists in finding the self within the lessons of history, science, and literature. The conversations that inject the personal experience into the course content become the agent for critical reflection and application. For the scholar-athletes in EDPS 488B, the sporting space of basketball took on a whole new perspective when observed through a corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational lens. The curriculum for the course was given value through both oral and written engagement. As Applebee (1996) suggests:

Curricular conversations are similarly constructed by their participants. The knowledge that evolves is the knowledge that is socially negotiated through the process of conversation itself; it is knowledge-in-action. Taking conversation in its largest sense, this construction of knowledge involves readers and writers as well as speakers and listeners. Each text, whether spoken or written, is constructed by its authors and reinterpreted by the other participants. Written texts live long after their authors have left the conversation because this process of reconstrual allows texts to be made relevant in new contexts, by new

participants. Without reconstrual, the texts would lose their voice and place within the ongoing conversation. (pp. 39-40)

As researchers and teachers we often are reminded to remove our identities in this process, from the questions that we construct and pose, to the individuals who we are learning about in order to avoid a notion of ‘bias’ that our personhood may inject. Sadly, we remove ourselves from the very essence of the question itself, and possibly get lost in desiring certain responses instead of allowing a question to lead to yet another. If question-making is a science and an art, the very nature of how humans choose to exist is also based in science and art. So, why are we so hung up on separating ourselves from the questions that we pose? We seek to gain ‘something’ from a question and refuse to settle for ‘nothing.’ By responding with ‘nothing’ we often mean ‘nothing of value’ or null in the minds of the respondent as he or she relates to society. As a result, we may often find ourselves as a missing piece to an intangible puzzle of humanity, yet regardless of our response to the ‘question’ we are still a unit of the whole. Doll et al. (2005) remind us that in the practice of curricular engagement, people are transformed through performance via interaction:

A person of practical wisdom is more than a mechanic, fixing that which is, but is a creator, imaginative of insight. Helping such a person emerge and develop requires a certain pedagogy, not the pedagogy of mimesis (copying) but the “pedagogy of practice” wherein the practice is not mere repetition but the practice of doing, reflecting, visioning, doing yet again with a “difference.” Such a pedagogy is one of transformation, of transforming an individual’s nascent, natural instincts, interests, powers, abilities into mature, reflective successful, and productive ones. A curriculum organized around such practice – itself honoring the play of performance and the performance of play – is dynamic, not stagnant. Like a play, the performance has structure but also flexibility as the performer (the “*curreter*” running the curriculum course) interacts with the audience and the other actors (the environment). The play (or curriculum) becomes transformed as it is produced by the players acting and interacting. In this sort of performative process, a semi-stable, semi-permeable structure of fluid habits continually and dynamically interact that new knowledge and new forms keep emerging. One

might well call this not only a transformative curriculum but also an emergent one. (p. 55)

The practice of hermeneutic pedagogy and facilitation through EDPS 488B has transformed me, both as an athletic participant and a scholar-researcher. Through the stages of *currere* I was able to experience the impact that basketball has had on my becoming as a philosophical scholar. The lessons that I have encountered on this journey of unpacking my own athletic and scholarly self, followed by facilitating complicated conversations and narrative renderings, and based on the journeys that the eight women scholar-athletes lived, have become a significant foundation for how we may consider bridging the divide between academics and athletics. *Currere* allowed me to appreciate more fully that I had chosen to be an active human in the sporting space, not through coincidence, but through interest-driven engagement. Once the level of participation dropped, I actively pursued new avenues of return through coaching and refereeing. To be a part of the sporting space is often the gift that keeps on giving for athletes.

The Transformation from Within

As a human science researcher, I push to extend the sporting platform beyond driveways, playgrounds, and gymnasiums, bringing each venue pedagogically into the curricular space. The classroom becomes a reflective pool into the past where we ponder upon insights through the lived self, instead of reacting to how others portray us to become. As a group of philosophical athletes we have developed a conscious awareness of thinking about basketball instead of just playing basketball. The praxis of basketball as a life course became a journey of quintessence, reawakening the self beyond factual occurrence of events in the sporting space. The narrative renderings that were drawn out from our complicated conversations manifested an intuitive unpacking of how basketball

has, and is still, transforming us. As a researcher I have gained greater insight in how things happen in the moment of play, not always based on a particular association, but instead, in a simple corporeal, temporal, and spatial glimpse of life. Musil (1955) reminds us that the stages of *currere* are interwoven and not sequential, occurring simultaneously:

[W]hat in the distance seems so great and mysterious comes up to us always as something plain and undistorted, in natural, everyday proportions. It is as if there were an invisible frontier round every man ... What originates outside and approaches from the long way off is like a misty sea of gigantic, ever-changing forms; what comes right up to any man, and becomes action, and collides with his life, is clear and small, human in its dimensions and human in its outlines. And between the life one lives and the life one feels, the life one only has inklings and glimpses of, seeing it only from afar, there lies that invisible frontier. (pp. 159-160)

As a human science researcher I have learned to value my reliance on the other and in this case, the women scholar-athletes' experiences within the sporting space of basketball. In the process of facilitating conversation, I have become a better reflective practitioner, taking departures often in order to revisit the intent and implication of looking at basketball through a curricular lens. Just as a classroom pedagogue builds interest and knowledge through scaffolding of insight, the phenomenological researcher, too, engages in precise thoughtfulness. By allowing scholar athletes to be mindful and critical of their lived experience, I as the facilitative researcher engaged in greater scrutiny of my own pedagogical practice. The philosophical nature, of course, asked us to become more fully aware and responsible in the moral implications of unpacking the sporting experience through the process of *currere*, listening to the voice of the scholar athlete within each of us, poetizing, not glorifying what lies at the ontological core of our becoming.

The Becoming of Lived Curriculum: Pedagogical Insights

The notion of irrelevance has trapped our mindset into the anxiety of wanting to be accepted. For scholar-athletes and a multitude of other hyphenated forms of human existence, anxiety hovers itself over an ever-changing becoming, almost fooling the being out of existence and into an artificial realm of identity. Scholar-athletes serve as powerful role models within society and hence, their lived experience is consistently challenged by their actions. By being constantly interrogated for their do's and don'ts, their identity is steadily contested by a notion of anxiety. If the shift in becoming means being held out into the nothing, then why do we glorify human existence to the point that nothing is unacceptable by the ones we deem as the chosen forms of exceptional discipline and perseverance? Yet, the reality of this glorified life by the other is simply a story of ethics through ball and hoop, one that Mc Lauglin (1999) captures by claiming:

Those who play the game learn to connect pleasure with selflessness, joy with improvisation, satisfaction with heightened awareness. These lessons can be lost in the welter of other practices we engage in. They can be forgotten in the harsh competition of the marketplace. But they still have their subtle effects; they still shape the 'character' of the players who are open to the lessons of the game. As a teacher I'm always passing the ball. As a father I'm always setting picks for my kids. And I haven't undercut anyone since I was a child, too young to see the wisdom of restraint and respect. I have learned from the game, and I take it into the other practices of everyday life. That's all we can ask of an ethic in our time. It can't give our lives a totalized coherence. It can't order the behaviour of the entire society. But it can exert a moral pressure on anyone connected to its practice. (p. 28)

The pedagogical value of human science research is that it places the scholar within the natural engaged world of the participants, allowing the phenomenon that is being studied to come alive through lived interpretation, and not hypothetical situation. Van Manen (1997) emphasizes that the outcome of phenomenological research does not have an aim for greater control, but instead:

Human science operates on the principle of the recognition of the existence of freedom in human life. And self-consciously free human beings who have acquired a deepened understanding of the meaning of certain human experiences or phenomena may in fact be less susceptible to the effective management or control of others. (p. 21)

I wonder if as human beings, not as students in a classroom, we must individually encounter, not via curriculum, but via life as a course of actions, the other, both intrinsically and extrinsically. Often, the path of success within high-profile sports such as basketball is defined by the expectations of the masses who misinterpret the life course as being prestigiously untouchable. The challenge lies in exposing the significance through a common lens of understanding. The pedagogical insights into the culture and people of scholastic sports extend beyond the notion of academics and competition. As Wideman (1992) suggests, “Our current popular culture would be incomprehensible to an outsider unless he or she understood basketball as the key to deciphering speech styles, clothing styles, and metaphors employed by kids, politicians, and housewives” (p. 151).

The impact of basketball as a life course is far greater than the school curriculum, as it is driven by human cultural movements socially, economically, and politically. The sport and culture of basketball, through an autobiographical perspective, may serve as a critical break-through, an interpretive window leading us out of the measured malaise of student-athlete performance, through which “respondents narrativize particular experiences in their lives often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society” (Riessman, 1993, p. 3). More importantly, it serves as a revolving door back into appreciating the life course for scholar-athletes seeking to share their experiences and build greater opportunities for future generations.

As Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) proclaim:

For in telling their stories individuals make claims about the coherence of their lives. In effect the storyteller says, 'This person I am today is who I have been years becoming.' Further, what is included and omitted from the account renders plausible the anticipated future ... In telling our story to another we establish who that other is (the one who will understand us, forgive us, or become converted to our point of view). In turn, as the telling of the tale turns the listener into the audience required by the teller, the storyteller's identity is reaffirmed or even altered. (p. 9)

By engaging in phenomenological research around the marvel of basketball as a life course, I was able to build a bridge between knowledge and action, accessing multiple literary resources that allowed participants to tap into their own lived experience. In the process, the curriculum became personal and a sense of course ownership took place. As a group of basketball enthusiasts we expanded the depth of our experiences philosophically, culturally, and socially, becoming self-declared scholars of our athletic selves. For these women, the notion of a student-athlete captured a new essence of being – one that dared to challenge the reality that “The student-athlete negotiates and embodies a complex identity. It is the institutional demarcation of a fixed identity, binary and oppositional in nature, which limits fuller understanding of the nature and possibilities of their experiences of life in and beyond schools” (Mahiri & Van Rheenen, 2010, p. 16). By means of our autobiographical renderings we reminded ourselves of the reflexive value of research by teaching each other through the complicated conversations of our written narrative. The intimacy that formed between the participants and I in the exchange of basketball stories proved to me the value of human science research, as one who engages and not isolates, the participants personally, biographically, and situationally. “And while phenomenology as a form of inquiry does not prescribe any particular political agenda suited for the social historical circumstances

of a particular group or social class, the thoughtfulness phenomenology sponsors is more likely to lead to an indignation, concern, or commitment that, if appropriate, may prompt us to turn to such political agenda” (van Manen, 1997, p. 154).

The end of the EDPS 488B course marked the beginning of a new journey in scholarship and athletics, an opportunity to engage in greater human science research pursuing a better self-understanding through lived experience via sports. For me, it was a breakthrough in appreciating how my passion can be experienced from a variety of paths informed by others. Mary Dale (1973) once wrote, “The experience of the becoming of women cannot be understood merely conceptually and abstractly but through active participation in the overcoming of servitude” (p. 16). For many of the women scholar-athletes in the course, basketball was a space for proclaiming their power as individual women, not just as en-gendered athletes. The course allowed each of them to bring the sporting space into the classroom, purely writing and critically discussing their way in and out of the lived moments that shaped who they have become. Mahiri and Van Rheenen (2010) capture the limitations and expectations of the sporting space by claiming:

Opportunities to observe and engage in critical discourse are rare, and inside the space of sport, they are largely not allowed. The structures and practices of sport thrive on a kind of taxation without representation that ultimately does not serve important needs of the individual athlete and the broader needs of society. It’s taxation of the physical body without representation of the needs of the mind. (p. 70)

Although the experience of high-profile student-athletes within sports such as basketball may vary for men and women, due especially to differences in the lucrative professional ranks that may outweigh the model for scholarship, athletics is profitably being streamlined within academic institutions. A new perspective has emerged through

the “scholar-baller” movement initiated by C. Keith Harrison of the Paul Robeson Research Center for Academic and Athletic Prowess that focuses on changing the mentality of how one participates through interscholastic and intercollegiate sports.

According to Harrison, Comeaux, Boyd, Parks, and Heikkinen (2006):

While on the surface one could argue that “scholar-baller” is synonymous with student-athlete, we would like to expand upon this notion. We propose to consider “scholar-baller” as an innovative concept for repackaging the current model of intercollegiate athletics, creating an identity and mindset among students in terms of their perceptions about education, sport, and occupational aspirations ... Together, scholar-baller is a concept that promotes the willingness of students to accept the challenge of harmonizing academics and athletics. At a pragmatic level, scholar-baller is about cultivating education, sport, and entertainment consumption into one lifestyle. (pp. 230, 231)

What the scholar-baller movement is trying to enhance is the actual considerations of sports as a life course, but it has its limitations in that the movement aims to alter the mentality of the student-athlete to think more about his or her education instead of unpacking the philosophical implications of what it means to be a scholar-athlete. The separation of sports from life as a running course seems irrational, and the narrative renderings of the women scholar-athletes in the course justify that it is not just about doing well in the classroom and on the field obediently, but more so, changing the way we process and progress within the narrative of our becoming. Tsang (2000) eloquently captures the value of infusing the narrative form within curriculum:

Moreover, narrative is a way to represent and convey my experiences as an athlete without suffering what Dorothy Smith calls a “bifurcation of consciousness” (1990), where “voices” or identities are maintained in separate spheres as dictated by power relations (and which often puts a strain on the individual who has to maintain this separation). The narrative form allows me to tell my experiences to you from multiple standpoints simultaneously, to merge as athlete and academic. I believe these experiences of identity to be meaningful not just for myself, but for others as well in what they reveal about how identities are produced, negotiated, and performed in the context of high-performance sport. (p. 46)

The *currere* process not only tells the story of student athletes' lives, but it allows others in the broader community to engage in the practice of scholarship and athletics from a variety of perspectives, both within and beyond the boundaries of the sporting space. The first step begins in the classroom, and then is given wings to fly its own destiny. *Currere* in the curriculum is a way of involving students in their own autobiographical renderings, whether they are academic, recreational, cultural, or social. Sameshima (2007) captures the journey I took with these women scholar-athletes best by confessing ... "I am hopeful that this dissertation encourages subjectivity, opens windows into alternative spaces, disrupts conceptions of form, heartens lived experiences as theory and knowledge, decolonizes writing, and broadens the richness of living the research of *currere*" (p. 312). As my basketball mentor Jacky Loube often reminds me, "Sports is life with the volume turned all the way up." Basketball as a life course is a never-ending journey of ball and hoop with infinite ports of call that have challenged me to grow physically, socially, and intellectually. I was attracted to this game for its simplicity; I learned this game for its subtlety; I played this game for its camaraderie; I coached this game for its desirability; I officiated this game for its humanity; and I created this course for its absence, so that every athlete can find the scholar within.

EDPS 488B***“COMPLICATING THE CONVERSATION OF
BASKETBALL AS A LIFE COURSE”***(3 credits)***FALL 2009****Section 0101**

Tuesdays/Thursdays: 11:00am-12:15pm

Benjamin Building (EDU) #2102***Mr. Kasra Sotudeh***

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*Department of Education Policy Studies***Mailbox:** 2110 Benjamin Building**Office Hours:** By appointment only**Email:** ksotudeh@umd.edu**COURSE OVERVIEW***How does a life course mean?*

The focus of “Basketball as a Life Course” will be oriented around the central place of story and narrative in understanding life as both a scholar and an athlete. According to Hultgren (2006), “Stories invite us to come to know the world and our place in it. Making sense of our stories summons us to address contradictions in our lives and in the lived curriculum. When curriculum is understood as phenomenological text, we are called to be attuned to the specific and actual situations in which stories speak, are heard, and answer questions about place in relation to curriculum theorizing.” Class participants will engage in story making and narrative interpretation of their experience with the sport of basketball in relation to the other via the process of *currere*. The methodology will follow the four-step developmental process introduced by William Pinar in seeking renderings via the regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical manner while simultaneously expanding beyond the educational and into the recreational, confrontational, and sociocultural nature of basketball. The interpretive form will allow each class participant to gain a richer understanding of her own place in space as she reverts back to the overarching theme of having complicated conversations surrounding her versatility as both a scholar and a basketball player. By analyzing the others’ lived accounts of basketball via novels, short stories, poems, magazine and newspaper articles, academic renderings, and internet blogs, each scholar-athlete can capture her own autobiographical written narrative of basketball in relation to the social, political, and intellectual contexts of curriculum as lived. Class participants will become a critical community, employing humorous and serious conversation, cooperative exploration of meanings, and academic questioning toward one another's narratives to facilitate insights and transformation.

Conceptualization of the EDPS 488B framework has been borrowed from EDPL 738 as taught by Dr. Francine Hultgren in the Spring 2004/2006 semesters at the University of Maryland, College Par

COURSE RATIONALE

Why take the life course journey?

The major questions that will help pave our path throughout this semester-long journey include:

- What is the phenomenon of lived experience as a scholar-athlete?
- How is basketball a lived body experience, a place memory, a time memory, and a lived relation memory?
- What is the value of using the written narrative form?
- How does the narrative form of the other influence the self?
- What is the significance of interpreting the connection between self and place through the practice of autobiographical/narrative writing?
- What can novels, short stories, poems, and magazine/newspaper articles teach us about cultural values and issues/conflicts in our lives as scholars and as athletes?
- How does a critical community employ serious conversation, cooperative exploration of meanings, and caring critique to facilitate insights and transformation in its members?

The influential quotes that reflect the essence and hope for this course include:

- “Narrative is the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future. In the telling of our stories we work out new ways of acting in the future.” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990)
- “Novels and stories are renderings of life – they can not only keep us company but admonish us, point us in new directions or give us courage to stay a course...They can offer other eyes through which we might see – and ears with which we might make soundings.” (Coles, 1989)
- “Self understanding is not merely a reflection of what we are but what we are in relation to the world. Self-understanding comes to us via our unique perceptions of the world which are inherent upon our individual abilities as well as on our sociocultural histories.” (Krall, 1988)
- “Human meaning rests in stories. Life making calls for accounts, for story, for sharing. To be human is to be entangled in stories...The best stories are those which stir people's minds, hearts and souls, and by doing so gives them their human condition.” (Reason, 1988)
- “Live as if your life were a curriculum for others, and balance that principle by realizing that every life you meet could be a curriculum for you if you perceive with sufficient perspective.” (Schubert, 1986)

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

How has the life course been traveled by others?

- **Baker, C.A. (2008). Why she plays: The world of women's basketball. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. (ISBN# 9780803216334)**

“Why does she play basketball? Since the enactment of Title IX in 1972, that question has come to be asked of more girls and women and answered in more ways than ever before. Christine A. Baker, herself an avid player and an assistant coach, pursues an answer through the ranks of the sport from youth basketball to the WNBA. Baker sets the stage with a quick look at current statistics and trends in women's basketball nationwide, noting the profound changes in the last thirty-five years. A series of exclusive interviews then takes us into the heart and soul of the sport. Her subjects are players and coaches, from neophytes to stars such as Dawn Staley and Nancy Lieberman; from legendary coaches such as Jody Conradt to the masterminds of USA Basketball and the 1996 Women's Dream Team; from Donna Lopiano, former CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation, to tomorrow's Olympic athletes. A richly detailed, all-encompassing portrait of the sport, these interviews offer a wealth of insight into the game, American sports culture, and, indeed, why Baker plays.” *(Publisher Review)*
- **Colton, L. (2001). Counting coup: A true story of basketball and honor on the Little Big Horn. New York: Grand Central Publishing. (ISBN# 9780446677554)**

“There was a time when ‘counting coup’ meant literally touching one’s enemy in battle and living to talk about it. Still part of the Native American tradition, today the phrase means playing winning hoops and dominating one’s opponents. Capturing the divisive racism between whites and Native Americans and the hardscrabble existence of a small rural town, COUNTING COUP tells the story of the girls’ varsity basketball team at Hardin High School in Crow, Montana. The team--comprised of both Crow Indian and white girls--is led by Sharon LaForge, a moody, undisciplined yet talented Native American girl who’s hoping to be the first female player from her high school to earn a basketball scholarship to college. While following LaForge and the Hardin High School girls’ basketball team for an entire season, Colton shows how the players deal with success, failure, friendship, rivalries, and racism.” *(Publisher Review)*
- **King, M. (2005). She's got next: Life played under a hoop. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. (ISBN# 9780618264568)**

“When Melissa King, a transplanted southerner in search of connection, finds herself on the lean, mean streets of Chicago, she turns to her childhood passion for basketball. In her late twenties, King is at a crossroads in her life, and the randomness of the game as it is played on the streets suits her mood. The rules are unwritten, the teams a haphazard collection of players, and unlike anything else around her, the courts feel like home. So wherever there is a game, she gets her ball and goes. From the rough, male-dominated inner-city courts of Chicago, she travels to lazy oceanside pickup games in sunny California and dilapidated gyms in her Bible Belt home state. In a street-smart voice full of understated humor and palpable hope, King chronicles her journey, using the rhythms of the court to riff on the issues of race, class, gender, religion, sexual politics, and love. Ultimately, through the jubilant swish of the net, the brunt of an egregious foul, and the knowing glance of a stranger who says yes, you can be on my team, King discovers in those rare moments on the court the countless things she wants in life but cannot name.” *(Publisher Review)*
- **Reid, H.L. (2002). The philosophical athlete. Durham: Carolina Academic Press. (ISBN# 9780890894057)**

“All athletes experience victory and defeat, but how many truly learn from the experience of sport? For ancient Greek philosophers, sport was an integral part of education. Today, athletics programs remain in schools, but we face a growing gap between the modern sports experience and enduring educational values. This book seeks to bridge that gap by advocating a philosophical approach to the sports experience.” *(Publisher Review)*

COURSE PROGRAM

What is a life course in moments?

First Quarter: The Regressive Moment in Currere

The game of basketball invites us as intellectual and physical warriors to enter a respected space of competition. The first quarter of a basketball game is often a regression to lessons learned in the previous games, seasons, or life events in general. We are humbled and invigorated by the lessons lived that lead us to better ourselves as both scholars and athletes. According to Pinar (1976), in the regressive moment, “One goes back and there one finds the past intact. The past is entered, lived in, but not necessarily vulnerable. One avoids complete identification with the self that was, and hence is able to observe.” In the first quarter of the course we will take special notice, via readings and renderings, of our beginnings in basketball with regards to practicing the skills, feeling the spaces, identifying with a team, learning the plays, listening to the coaches, and competing towards victory and defeat. In the gathering of such data there is no analysis. The writer freely observes as far back as possible and tries to visualize the past into the present.

Second Quarter: The Progressive Moment in Currere

The second quarter of a basketball game is often a progression towards gaining an advantage and a momentum prior to reaching the half way point of competition. An athlete is often challenged in this stage by herself, her teammates, and her coaches to think about the direction of possible outcomes based on her past performance while building a relationship with the episodes of the present moment for they will determine what lay ahead. According to Pinar (1976), in the progressive moment, “We look at what is not yet the case, what is not yet present. We have found that the future is present in the same sense that the past is present. It influences, in complicated ways, the present; it forms the present.” In the second quarter of the course we will take special notice, via readings and renderings, of our future with regards to realistic projection of how basketball will help us make sense of our intellectual and physical being in the next stage of life. Special attention will be given to discussions about how basketball impacts life off the court. The writer projects herself into the future in order to make sense of how she arrived at the present.

Third Quarter: The Analytical Moment in Currere

The third quarter of a basketball game is often a return from an intellectual and emotional analysis of what has occurred thus far in the game between the self and the other. A team is often challenged to simultaneously learn from the past, live in the present, and look to the future at the same speed that basketball dictates. For the players who are anxiously waiting for their opportunity to play, the self is consistently considering the multidimensional interrelations of how the future is present in the past, the past in the future, and the present in both. According to Pinar (1976), in the analytical moment, “Description via conceptualization is breaking into parts the organic whole. Conceptualization is detachment from experience. Bracketing what is, what was, what can be, one is loosened from it, potentially more free of it, hence more free to freely choose the present, and future.” In the third quarter of the course we will take special notice, via readings and renderings, of the institutionalization of basketball within a scholastic and recreational setting focusing on describing the ideology of teamwork, structure, and discipline in relation to identity.

Fourth Quarter: The Synthetical Moment in Currere

The fourth, but not necessarily final, quarter of basketball game is often associated with living in the actual moment and overcoming the other, both mentally and physically, in order to claim victory. In extremely close game situations, an individual is often designated by his coach and teammates as the “go to person,” or the “play-maker.” For in that moment lives a myriad of rapid regressions and progressions that the individual may not truly ponder upon, but that dwell within her. According to Pinar (1976), in the synthetical moment, “It, all of it - intellections, emotions, behavior - occurs in and through the physical body. As the body is a concrete whole, so what occurs within and through the body can become a discernible whole, integrated in its meaningfulness.” In the fourth quarter of the course, we will compile the regressive, progressive, and analytical moments that each scholar-athlete has lived in the culture of basketball and celebrate the ever-changing written narrative, in recognition of our versatility as intellectual and physical beings.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Which ways will I expose my life course?

1. **Complete the reading assignment(s) prior to the class meeting for which it is due.**

Discussions are an essential component of our classroom time and hence, we all need to be prepared to make relevant connections between the readings and our own individual life experiences. Please take note of relevant personal connections and lived experience as you are doing each reading assignment.

2. **Attend all class meetings and participate in all social formation activities during specific class sessions.**

Expected absences must be arranged prior to class meetings and unexpected absences must be accompanied by valid documentation. You are expected to participate and express your opinions throughout the semester. Participation will be noted on a daily basis and taken into consideration at the end of the semester.

3. **Post weekly critical reflections in response to the Yahoo! Discussion Board prompt.**

All prompts will be posted by the instructor each Tuesday afternoon and will be available for reflection through the following Tuesday prior to the start of class (11:00am). No exceptions or extensions will be granted unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. The goal is to engage with the weekly prompt and thoughts of your peers in the form of electronic journaling while the weekly readings and discussions are fresh on our minds.

4. **Facilitate one class session based on the weekly reading(s) and any other sources of your choice (articles, internet blogs, video links, etc.).**

The project will allow you to reflect upon your own mode(s) of thinking and learning, and in particular require you to consider, but not be limited to, key events, concepts, and questions raised throughout the assigned reading(s) - in relation to your personal interests and inquiries - as you engage us in a one-hour group facilitation.

5. **Construct an autobiographical narrative of basketball drawing upon the four stages of currere as a method for gathering the complicated moments which define your identity as a both a scholar and an athlete.**

During the final three weeks of the semester you will draw upon the in-class social formation activities, the written narrative exercises, the discussion board postings, and other inspirational sources to write your final autobiographical narrative highlighting the regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical moments of your being as both a scholar and an athlete within the game of basketball.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

How will my life course be constructed?

Yahoo! Discussion Board Reflective Postings (25% of your grade)

Students are expected to post thorough reflection(s) based on each of the weekly prompts constructed by the instructor and/or other students in the class. The discussion board is a tool that will allow us to continue the complicated conversations that we start in class and keep our minds fresh with regards to reading and writing the self into the issues that scholars and athletes experience in the culture of basketball.

Furthermore, students are strongly encouraged to use the discussion board as a tool for responding to other students' posts, expanding upon issues presented in class via message reply, as well as posting links and/or files that they find relevant to the overall themes of the course. Guidelines, procedures, and expectations for enhanced use of the discussion board will be reviewed via demonstration in the third week of class.

Individual Facilitation Leadership Project (25% of your grade)

Our presence and participation is an essential component of gaining the most from this course. The diverse views that we each bring to the pallet as we analyze the historical, philosophical, sociological, autobiographical, spiritual, and contextual aspects of basketball will allow us to understand the notion of "life-long scholars" and "life-long athletes." As a reflective practitioner and leader you will be asked to facilitate one of the class sessions in the semester using the following steps of the *currere* method to engage us in both in depth writing and complicated conversation:

- **Regression:** According to Pinar (1976), in the regressive moment, "One goes back and there one finds the past intact. The past is entered, lived in, but not necessarily vulnerable. One avoids complete identification with the self that was, and hence is able to observe."
- **Progression:** According to Pinar (1976), in the progressive moment, "We look at what is not yet the case, what is not yet present. We have found that the future is present in the same sense that the past is present. It influences, in complicated ways, the present; it forms the present."
- **Analysis:** According to Pinar (1976), in the analytical moment, "Description via conceptualization is breaking into parts the organic whole. Conceptualization is detachment from experience. Bracketing what is, what was, what can be, one is loosened from it, potentially more free of it, hence more free to freely choose the present, and future."
- **Synthesis:** According to Pinar (1976), in the synthetical moment, "It, all of it - intellections, emotions, behavior - occurs in and through the physical body. As the body is a concrete whole, so what occurs within and through the body can become a discernible whole, integrated in its meaningfulness."

Autobiographical Narrative (50% of your grade)

The real world does not revolve around mere memorization of information, but the actual application of knowledge gained and used in resolving a contemporary problem; or in our case, examining a being and becoming through a path that has partially been paved by a life experience with the sport of basketball. Throughout the semester, you will be expected to maintain an online written collection of your lived experiences with basketball via the discussion board postings. As the instructor, I will be reading your reflections on a weekly basis, not to critique, but more importantly, to have a written dialogue with you as you go through the experience of unpacking what basketball has done and is currently doing to you as a scholar and an athlete. Periodically, you should take the time to reread and expand upon what you had written throughout the preceding weeks as you construct a segment of your autobiography via the written narrative form. At the conclusion of the semester, the four narrative forms will be revised, edited, and consolidated into one powerful piece, an up-to-date autobiography of your lived experience of basketball based on "four quarters" – the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical – each of which can serve as a precious platform for both scholastic and athletic manifestation.

COURSE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

How can we provide equity and access for the life course?

Personal Responsibility Statement

As critical thinkers and writers, we are creating an environment conducive to social, academic, and individual growth. In our historical, philosophical, and autobiographical journey we may explore in depth issues such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and social class. While you may disagree with the opinions and understandings of others in this course, it is your responsibility to respect the ideas of others. No individual enrolled in this course has the right to take advantage of another simply because of station in life. Gender and ethnicity are not to be used as tools to gain power over individuals, but are acknowledged as our station in life that may influence how we understand and make sense of the world. As active participants, we will attempt to understand the ideas embedded within basketball as a life course, acknowledging that there are many lenses and forces that have shaped our relationship with the sport as we have come to know it. Hence, by the end of the semester you will have the tools necessary to reflect upon the broad range of diverse variables that encompass your own personal lived experience and other lived experiences of basketball, which you may encounter throughout complicated conversations.

Equal Educational Opportunity Statement

In accordance with federal, state, local, and university policies (especially with respect to the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act), access to equal educational opportunity is paramount. Thus, every effort will be made to arrange for reasonable accommodations to ensure that such opportunity exists and is measurable in terms of equality of outcomes for every student on the basis of race; ethnicity; language; geographic origin; socioeconomic class, sex and gender; gender identity and expression; sexual orientation; physical, developmental, and psychological ability; religious, faith-based, spiritual, and/or secular affiliation; age and generation; and physical appearance; among other categories of identity.

Students with Documented Disabilities Statement

The University is legally obligated to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. In order to ascertain what accommodations may need to be provided, faculty should request that students with disabilities inform them of their needs at the beginning of the semester. The instructor should then consult with the Department Chair and Dr. Jo Ann Hutchinson at Disability Support Services (314-7682). She will make arrangements with the student to determine and implement appropriate academic accommodations.

Junk E-Mail Filters Statement

If you have an Internet Service Provider (ISP) that has junk e-mail filters, or you have set-up your local e-mail software to filter out junk e-mail, the e-mails that I send to the entire class may get kicked out of your e-mail in-box. This is because the e-mails I send to the class have multiple recipients and may, therefore, be perceived by your filters to be junk e-mail. To avoid this problem, turn off your filters for the duration of the course or make sure to check your junk e-mail folder for course communications.

COURSE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

How can we provide equity and access for the life course?

Academic Integrity Statement

The University is an academic community. Its fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge. Like all other communities, the University can function properly only if its members adhere to clearly established goals and values. Essential to the fundamental purpose of the University is the commitment to the principles of truth and academic honesty. Accordingly, the Code of Academic Integrity (www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html) is designed to ensure that the principle of academic honesty is upheld. While all members of the University share this responsibility, The Code of Academic Integrity is designed so that special responsibility for upholding the principle of academic honesty lies with the students.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: any of the following acts, when committed by a student, shall constitute academic dishonesty:

- a. **CHEATING:** intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.
- b. **FABRICATION:** intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
- c. **FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of this Code.
- d. **PLAGIARISM:** intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise.

Honor Code Pledge: “I pledge on my honor that I have not given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.”

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism.

University-Wide Course Evaluations

Your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility you hold as a student member of our academic community. Your feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University as well as to the tenure and promotion process. CourseEvalUM will be open for you to complete your evaluations for fall semester courses between Tuesday, December 1 and Sunday, December 13. Please go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluations starting December 1. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing online, at Testudo, the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

EDPS 488B – Pre-Course Questions



DIRECTIONS: *Please respond to each of the questions below honestly and accurately.*

- (1) How long have you been playing basketball?
- (2) How often do you play basketball now?
- (3) Where did you play high school varsity and/or AAU basketball?
- (4) What position did/do you usually play?
- (5) Briefly describe your first memory of learning and/or playing basketball.
- (6) Do you consider yourself to be a scholar-athlete? Why or why not?
- (7) Briefly describe your favorite basketball moment as a participant.
- (8) Briefly describe your favorite basketball moment as an observer.
- (9) Who is your biggest basketball inspiration? Why?
- (10) What is the biggest lesson that basketball has taught you beyond the court? Please be specific.

APPENDIX C – EDPS 488B Student Consent Form
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CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS IN EDPS 488B

Project Title	“Complicating the Conversation of Basketball as a Life Course”
Why is this research being done?	This is a research project being conducted by Kasra Sotudeh (co-investigator) under the supervision of Dr. Francine Hultgren at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research because you are at least 18 years of age and you have had previous high school girl’s varsity or AAU basketball experience. The purpose of this research is to identify the impact of basketball upon your life course as both a scholar and athlete through a regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical lens.
What will I be asked to do?	The procedures for data collection will take place over one semester, approximately 15 weeks, during which you will be asked to complete the reading assignment(s) prior to the class meeting for which it is due, attend class meetings and participate in social formation activities during specific class sessions, post weekly critical reflections in response to the Yahoo! discussion board prompt, facilitate one class session based on the weekly reading(s) and any other sources of your choice, and construct an autobiographical narrative of basketball drawing upon the corporeal, temporal, spatial, and relational as modes for gathering the complicated moments which define your identity as a both a scholar and an athlete. The research will take place under the course EDPS 488B at the University of Maryland, College Park in Fall 2009.
What about confidentiality?	We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality: Two methods of data collection (written narrative and audio recordings) and two methods of storage (electronic and digital) will be implemented in this research project. The written narrative data that will be posted electronically on the instructor-created Yahoo! discussion board site or submitted electronically via email during and after the semester will only be accessible to the instructor/researcher and students registered for the course. The audio data that will be collected through class discussion form during the semester and one on one interview sessions after the semester is complete will only be accessible to the

<p>What about confidentiality? (continued)</p>	<p>instructor/researcher. To insure greater confidentiality, the subjects will be identified in cyber-space and audio-space by a randomly selected pseudo name. Any written assignments that will be submitted via hard copy in class will also be headed by only the randomly selected pseudo name assigned at the beginning of the semester.</p>
<p>What are the risks of this research?</p>	<p>There are no known risks to you except the mere hesitation of not wanting to be judged on your personal experiences and style of writing by your peers. Since all of you are/were members of the University Women's Intramural Basketball Club, the above risk is anticipated to be minimal. The instructor has incorporated a personal responsibility statement within the syllabus as well.</p>
<p>What are the benefits of this research?</p>	<p>The interpretive form will allow you to gain a richer understanding of your own place in space as you revert back to the overarching theme of having complicated conversations surrounding your versatility as both a scholar and a basketball player. By analyzing the others' lived accounts of basketball via novels, short stories, poems, magazine and newspaper articles, academic renderings, and internet blogs, you will be given opportunities to build your own autobiographical written narrative of basketball in relation to the social, political, and intellectual contexts of curriculum as lived.</p>
<p>Do I have to be in this research? Can I stop participating at any time?</p>	<p>Participation in the research study is not a course requirement and is completely voluntary. You and your class members can obtain the same amount of credit for the course by following the assignment guidelines in the syllabus and asking the professor not to include your individual written narratives posted on the discussion board or submitted via email. You may stop your participation at any time and it will not affect the grade you receive in this course or your academic standing in any way.</p>
<p>What if I have questions?</p>	<p>This is a research project being conducted by Kasra Sotudeh (co-investigator) under the supervision of Dr. Francine Hultgren at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Dr. Francine Hultgren at: The University of Maryland, 2110 Benjamin Building, 301-405-4562 or fh@umd.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail)</p>

What if I have questions? <i>(continued)</i>	irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678. This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.	
Statement of Age of Subject and Consent	Your signature indicates that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you are at least 18 years of age; • the research has been explained to you; • your questions have been answered; and • you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project. 	
Project Title	“Complicating the Conversation of Basketball as a Life Course”	
Signature and Date	NAME OF SUBJECT	
	SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT	
	DATE	

EDPS 488B: Post-Course Questions



DIRECTIONS: *Please respond to each of the questions with as much detail as possible.*

- (1) What was your most recent moment with basketball in the lived present?
- (2) Close your eyes for a few minutes and think about the basketball space that you most identify with as being a *home* or *sanctuary*. Tell me about a special moment there and why that space is/was your sanctuary.
- (3) As a female athlete, how were you a warrior both on and off the court?
- (4) When was the first time you thought about basketball as an intellectual affair and not just a physical engagement? Take me to that moment and describe what happened.
- (5) Describe your philosophical beliefs about basketball both in and out of the context of play. Convince me that your philosophy is what the game was all about and should be about in the future as well.
- (6) Close your eyes and take a minute or two to think about each of these before you write down your thoughts individually:
 - Describe yourself as a *student of the game*
 - Describe yourself as an *athlete in the game*
 - Describe yourself as a *scholar for the game*
 - Describe yourself as a *scholar-athlete on the game*

TIME CAPSULE Question: What specific moment of your basketball life course would you place inside a time capsule that will not be opened up until the year 2040 (you will be about 50 years old then)? Why did you select this moment out of all the experiences you have had with basketball?

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