CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

In terms of participation and equality, women have made tremendous strides in the past few decades. Today it is common place to see females participating in all levels of the workforce, the political arena, and athletics. However, while it is generally accepted in many cultures that women can partake in facets of life that were once considered male oriented, there are still many stigmas that surround females that chose to do so. This is especially obvious in the area of sports.

Gender roles are social mores that influence the perceptions and behaviour of individuals on a daily basis. They tell people how they are supposed to act, look, and even what one’s interests should be. These roles are culturally dependent and are reinforced from birth (Ozkan & Lajunen, 2005; Williams & Best, 1990). For example, traditional Indian culture stresses that men are supposed to support the household financially and are not supposed to convey emotions. Women, on the other hand, are supposed to be emotional and fulfill the role of caretaker and mother. In modern society these traditional roles have become blurred but recently national survey supported these roles as the “ideal family situation”.

Societal and economic considerations have increasingly moved women into areas that were historically dominated by men and vice versa. It has become more acceptable for men to be second to women in the workforce, or even to be responsible for child care and act as a stay at home dad. Due to these changes traditional gender roles have become more androgynous over the years; however, they are still very much prevalent in many aspects of today’s society. Accordingly, athletes are often
exposed to and evaluated based on traditional gender roles. Although it has become more acceptable for females to participate in masculine sports or males to participate in feminine sports there is still potentially a negative connotation attached to those athletes who participate in “opposite sex” sports.

When people violate the stereotypes and mores associated with preconceived roles, they are considered to be a typical or “other than normal”. Student-athletes by definition must deal with the role conflict inherent in acting as both students and athletes. In addition, female athletes must balance gender roles. Lance (2004) found that because of this added conflict, female athletes show a higher amount of role conflict than male athletes. Conflict was also found to be more prevalent for female athletes participating in traditionally masculine sports such as baseball, football, soccer, hockey, and basketball.

Female athletes have a tendency to use more emotion-focused coping strategies which can create more stress (Anshel, Porter, & Quek, 1998). For example, women as a group tend to internalize their anxieties and continually replay or analyze a bad call or error more than their male counterparts. As more and more women and girls across the country are competing in sports and athletic events, the prevalence of those competing in traditionally masculine sports is increasing. Sports such as football, basketball and wrestling are no longer the exclusive province of male athletes.

Participation in sports that require what are considered typically “male characteristics,” such as speed and strength can present an “image problem” for many female athletes (Knight & Giuliano, 2003). While some research suggests enhanced self perceptions of female athletes participating in cross-gender sports (Schmalz & Davison, 2006) the perceptions of others may not be as positive. Female athletes are
often seen as being more like the typical male in terms of characteristics, attitudes, and behaviours (Die & Raye, 1989). Female athletes may also discard typical feminine behaviours after their adoption of the masculine behaviours that accompany their sport (Die & Raye, 1989). While these changes in themselves do not necessarily represent a negative outcome the negative reaction of others can result in adverse consequences in terms of the treatment of female athletes.

Krane et al., (2004) suggested that the paradoxical relationship between masculine and feminine behaviours is also prevalent in everyday life. In social settings, female athletes often strive to conform to the ideal female image which is often defined by society and culture as being “small, thin, and model-like”. Female athletes may have a hard time conforming to this feminine ideal due to the amount of strength, muscle, and “masculine” features that they possess. Conversely, in an athletic setting, female athletes express little desire to conform to the feminine ideal and are often proud of their muscles, strength, and “masculine” features. Female athletes reported that they are constantly reminded by their friends that they are different from the norm, even when performing stereotypically female actions such as shopping for clothing or dining. Female athletes reported having trouble in finding clothing that fits their muscular bodies and often eat a larger amount than their non-athlete female friends.

Questions are often raised regarding female athletes’ femininity, sexual orientation, and other psychological variables. Research indicates that women have a more positive outlook on psychological interventions than do men (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Fischer & Farina, 1997). This could be related to the gender roles introduced during childhood (Good & Wood, 1995). The traditional male roles do not accept
discussing feelings or personal problems because these things show vulnerability (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Jordan & Quinn, 1997). Traditional social or cultural norms connected with masculinity, such as the absence of emotional expression and the lack of insight into their problems may obstruct reporting and help seeking in males (Moller-Leimkuhler, 2000).

Relational health is an important component of healthy psychological development in females and is constructed through mutual understanding, emotional support, and the commitment of individuals to the growth of each individual within a collective unit (Gilligan, 1994; Surrey, 1985). Women develop a sense of relational competence from establishing and maintaining these growth fostering relationships as evidenced by “movement toward mutuality, developing anticipatory empathy, being open to being influenced, experiencing vulnerability as an inevitable place of potential growth rather than danger, creating good connections rather than exercising power over others as the path of growth” (Jordan, 1994). Relational theorists (Gilligan, 1982) contend that relationships within the community, with peers and with mentors in particular, are central to women’s psychological growth and development.

According to the theoretical tenets of the Relational Cultural Theory (RCT), it is likely that the quality of relationships with members of the athletic community, teammates and coaches have a profound impact on female college athletes’ emotional and psychological wellness.

Women rely on healthy connections through relationships as the central source of personal growth. Furthermore, researchers have established a link between intimate supportive relationships as a protective factor against depression and stress (Arce, 2004; Belle, 1982). Findings from recent Sport Psychology studies in which the
researcher suggested that female athletes frequently rely on social support to cope with or manage stressful situations in sport. Furthermore, Sport Psychology researchers have demonstrated that relationships with coaches, teammates or social support in general are important factors in the stress and coping process (Burton, 1988; Crocker, 1992; Giacobbi et al., 2004).

Relational theorists at the Stone Centre, Wellesley College developed the relational cultural theory (RCT) to better represent female psychological health and development compared to more traditional views of developmental psychology. The authors of the RCT defined the unique way in which women experience psychological growth through psychological connection and mutual engagement with others rather than creating a separate sense of self through disconnection from early childhood relationships. One of the founders of the RCT wrote, “rather than a primary perspective based on the formed and contained self, this model stresses the importance of the intersubjective, relationally emergent nature of the human experience” (Jordan, 1997). The consensus among relational theorists is that growth occurs through mutually empathetic relationships (Jordan & Hartling, 2002), and mutual empathy between two or more people is the foundation for healthy, growth-enhancing connections (Surrey, 1991). Mutuality within the relationships is not the same as equality (Miller & Stiver, 1997); rather it means that there is a sense of “openness to change and growth,” of being “responsive” to the other person, and of “emotional availability” (Jordan, 1997). Human beings have a “fundamental human motivation” for daily positive interactions with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). A key element to women’s psychological health identity development is a growth-fostering connection between two or more people, which occurs through authentic
relationships. By contrast, lack of mutual engagement, inauthentic engagements, and lack of empowerment and zest represent “disconnection” in a relationship, and disconnections are the source of psychological problems (Miller & Stiver, 1997).

Stress is an inevitable part of everyday life. Many aspects of life, particularly those involving transition or change, present stressful situations. Examples include starting a school, starting a career, moving home, getting married, becoming a parent, and retiring (Holmes & Rahe, 1967).

Stress is a frequent and often unavoidable aspect of daily life. Research has repeatedly demonstrated the effects of stress on health and well-being (Lazarus, 1999). Interest in stress and coping research may stem in part from empirical findings that coping responses mediate and moderate the impact of stressful events on physical and mental health. Due to the serious impact of stress on health and well-being and the frequency with which stress occurs, individuals must effectively cope with stress.

Aldwin (1994) incorporated most of the elements of various stress definitions into one definition that she believed researchers used to identify and to study the effects of stress. Aldwin defined stress as that “quality of experience, produced through a person-environment transaction that through either over arousal or under arousal, results in psychological or physiological distress”. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) used stressors to refer to external events, but strain or stress to refer to internal stressful states. Aldwin (1994) argued that from a performance viewpoint the disparity between external and internal states is hard to validate because of the importance of cognitive appraisal processes in the perception of stress.
Traditionally, stress has been viewed as an inherent aspect of the college student experience. Zaleski, Levy-Thors, and Schiaffino (1998) assert that the majority of stresses and struggles experienced by college students are manageable and transient. However, high levels of stress and anxiety are often reported by college students (e.g., Bertocci, Hirsch, Sommer, & Williams, 1992). Common sources of stress for college students include: transitions and adjustments to university/college life, continued day-to-day changes throughout the college experience, psychological problems, academic pressures, interpersonal and social adjustments, intrapersonal sources of stress and financial issues (Brody, 1989). The college experience is often conceptualized as occurring in a rapidly changing environment. Therefore, an exploration of college student stress and coping processes is a useful and necessary endeavour.

In today’s world, exposure to stress is a certainty. There is a plethora of research on tools to evaluate the amount of stress to which a person is exposed, how well a person is able to cope with stress, and whether or not a person is displaying physical or mental signs of stress (Nordhaus-Bike, 1995). Stress is a physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes negative feelings, tension in the body or mental tension in response to an event (Abouserie, 1994).

In 1970, McGrath defined stress as “a substantial imbalance between demand and response capability, under conditions where failure to meet that demand has important consequences”. Similarly, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) considered stress to be a function of highly demanding situations coupled with the person’s limited emotional resources for coping with these situations. Stress is primarily caused by situational or personal sources or a combination of the two.
Situational sources include areas such as the importance placed on the event and the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the event (Martens, 1987). Generally, as event importance increases, so do stress levels. However, this construct is highly individual and an event that may seem insignificant to many people may be extremely important for one specific individual (e.g., a university scout coming to watch an individual in hockey practice). Similarly, increased levels of uncertainty generally result in increased stress. Thus, efforts made to eliminate unnecessary uncertainty such as providing information as to what expect from an injury or informing athletes of the competition schedule ahead of time will reduce the perceived stressfulness of the situation (Martens, 1987).

Personal sources of stress include trait anxiety and self esteem. Trait anxiety is a dispositional characteristic predisposing an individual to view generally non-threatening situations as more or less threatening. As such, a higher trait anxious person is likely to perceive competition and other evaluations as more threatening and stressful than an individual with lower trait anxiety.

Self-esteem affects an individual’s state anxiety level or how anxious they feel in each particular situation. Self-esteem refers to how we feel about ourselves and our abilities. Low self-esteem athletes have lower levels of confidence and thus experience more state anxiety than higher self-esteem athletes. Increasing self-confidence through means such as teaching and facilitating success is one way to help reduce the amount of state anxiety experienced.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) coined the term coping as a “constantly changing, cognitive and behavioural effort to manage specific internal or external demands perceived as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person”. It is important
to note that coping includes any purposeful attempt to manage situational demands but does not implicitly imply effectiveness or success (Compas, 1987).

Under this umbrella of coping there is a distinction to be made between different styles and strategies of coping. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed the constructs of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. Problem focused coping refers to the efforts made to mitigate stress by reducing or eliminating the perceived threat and can be likened to Roth and Cohen’s (1986) concept of approach coping (Anshel, 1996). Conversely, emotion focused coping refers to mechanisms employed to control the emotional response to the threat event if the threat itself is not altered (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). To bring this into context, problem-focused coping includes strategies such as problem-solving, planning, time management or increasing effort while emotion-focused coping strategies includes relaxation, positive self-talk, wishful thinking and acceptance to mention a few (Holt, Polman, & James, 2004). According to Moos (1993), approach coping strategies are aimed at resolution or management of life stressors, whereas avoidant strategies are aimed at avoiding thinking about stressors, or managing feelings about a stressor.

Another coping paradigm proposed in 1986 by Roth and Cohen dichotomized coping style into approach and avoidance categories. The approach coping style consists of deliberate attempts to reduce and alleviate the effects of the stressor and may include increasing one’s efforts and initiating direct action to identify the source of the stress and prevent its recurrence. In contrast, avoidance coping involves ignoring or shunning the stressor. Avoidance- focused coping may involve moving to a different task or mentally distancing oneself purposefully, known as cognitive
distancing, in an attempt to remove oneself from the stressful situation (Roth & Cohen, 1986).

According to Anshel (2001) coping styles fall in to four further sub-categories. Coping styles can be categorized as approach-behavioural, approach cognitive, avoidance – behavioural and avoidance-cognitive. Approach– behavioural coping consists of conscious actions taken in order to confront the stressor. Examples include arguing and soliciting further information. Approach – cognitive coping consists of conscious thought process or emotion by which the stressor is addressed. Examples include planning, and self-talk. Avoidance-behavioural coping consists of conscious behaviours and actions taken to physically remove oneself from the stressful situation. Examples include avoiding the stressful situation and moving to a different task. Avoidance-cognitive coping consists of mentally turning away from the stressful situation. Examples include selective attention and distraction.

Roth and Cohen (1986) hypothesized that each coping style is preferable in different situations. For instance, approach coping is preferable when the situation is controllable, the source of the stress is known or outcome measures are long-term, whereas avoidance coping is preferable when emotional resources are limited, the source of the stress is unclear, the situation is uncontrollable or outcome measures are immediate or short term. The effectiveness of a particular coping style may depend on the situation or the type of sport.

Athlete satisfaction has been defined as a “positive affective state resulting from a complex evaluation of the structures, processes, and outcomes associated with the athletic experience” (Chelladurai and Riemer, 1997). Although the construct of athlete satisfaction has been of interest to researchers, few studies have addressed the
underlying standards and processes that determine whether an athlete perceives his or her experience as being satisfying or dissatisfying (Riemer and Chelladurai, 1998).

A related factor called athlete satisfaction gained prominence in the understanding of group motivation. Chelladurai and Riemer (1997) refer to athlete satisfaction as an outcome resulting from the athlete evaluation of the makeup, procedures, and effects related to her/his experience. In other words, an athlete's level of satisfaction can be seen as a reflection of how well the athletic endeavour meets the athlete's own personal standards. Chelladurai et al. (1988) noted that an early study identified two facets of athlete satisfaction as satisfaction with personal outcomes and satisfaction with leadership outcomes.

Consequentially, athlete satisfaction can be understood as a positive affective state produced by a judgement of the structures, processes, and outcomes associated with the athletic experience, and it may be proved to be the ultimate measure for organizational effectiveness of an athletic experience (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1997).

An individual's perception of his or her satisfaction has been posited to be important in sport. Riemer and Chelladurai (1998) noted several reasons why this might be the case. First, individual satisfaction and performance should be naturally linked. For example, a more satisfied athlete might be expected to exert more effort and persistence in the face of competition. Second, athlete involvement is central to athletic programmes and endeavours and, therefore, the satisfaction of the athlete has both theoretical and practical implications. Third, athlete satisfaction is related to and/or included as an antecedent or outcome in the conceptual frameworks of other constructs, such as cohesion and leadership. Finally, member satisfaction (as well as individual performance) has been theorized, and shown in a substantial body of
research undertaken by Chelladurai and his colleagues, to be a major consequence of specific coaching behaviours (Eys et al., 2003).

An athlete's satisfaction with a sport is important for several reasons. Riemer and Chelladurai (1998) noted some of these reasons, such as the link between satisfaction and performance, the importance of the athlete to athletic programmes, and the relationship between satisfaction and other constructs in a group dynamics framework.

Satisfaction has been a construct of particular research interest across many social science disciplines. One of the most studied elements of satisfaction has been job satisfaction. Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or emotional state resulting from the perception of one’s role as fulfilling. Saal and Knight (1988) identified some of the contributing factors that may lead one to be satisfied such as a) the amount of effort expenditure for the task, b) the duration and tenure with the organization, c) the quality of relationships, and cooperation with others in the immediate environment, and d) the overall happiness. Similarly, in an organizational sport setting, Rail (1987) identified competence, autonomy, recognition, and role significance as contributing factors to role satisfaction. Role satisfaction in sport has also been found to be influenced by cohesion (Rainey & Schwieckert, 1988), role clarity, communication and the coach-athlete relationship. Not surprisingly, the construct of athlete satisfaction in sport has been of particular interest to researchers. For example, the construct of athlete satisfaction has been included in many theoretical frameworks as an outcome variable including the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (Chelladurai, 2007). Provided a classification for the different facets of
athlete satisfaction based on three criteria: a) outcomes versus processes, b) personal versus team effects, and c) task versus social aspects.

Athlete satisfaction has also been emphasized by several scholars in sport psychology who have included athlete satisfaction as an antecedent or outcome variable in their work. For instance, the multidimensional model of leadership (Chelldurai, 1978) includes satisfaction as an outcome variable along with performance. The research based on that model of leadership has been largely concerned with linking leadership dynamics with athlete satisfaction. Satisfaction as an outcome has been employed in different leadership studies based on a multidimensional model. The measures of satisfaction, however, varied from a general form of athlete satisfaction (Weiss & Friedrichs, 1986), satisfaction with coach/leader, satisfaction with personal performance (Chelladurai, 1984), satisfaction with team (Weiss & Friedrichs, 1986), satisfaction with personal outcome (Chelladurai et al., 1988), and satisfaction with overall involvement (Chelladurai, 1984). Under the circumstances the scholar felt a need to undertake the research study to set in deep knowledge about the relational health, perceived stress, coping style and athlete satisfaction of female athletes in Kerala.

In India, sportswomen are hardly ever role models or stars. Tennis, athletics and golf do recognise individual brilliance, but in team games like hockey, football and cricket, that's asking for the moon. The female sensation in badminton today is world no 2 Saina Newhal. Similar legendary sportswomen are Karnam Malleshwari, Anju Bobby George, P.T. Usha and Sania Mirza. Even if they are a step ahead, a number of factors ensure that sportswomen stay two steps behind. Though the Indian culture looks up to a woman as a mother of a race, the Indian society is firm with the
belief that women are naturally inferior to men because of the faith that a woman's duty is bound only to birthing and taking care of her family. Not much works has been done analysing the current scenario of psychological status of sports women in India. Under the circumstances the scholar felt a need to undertake the research study to set in deep knowledge about the relational health, perceived stress, coping style and athlete satisfaction of female athletes in Kerala.

**Statement of the problem**

The purpose of this study was to unfold on what researchers and practitioners know about college women’s relationships with their coaches, teammates, and members in the athletic community and further examine the link between these relationships and self-reported satisfaction in sport. Another purpose of this study was to address the link between female college athletes’ relationships with members in the athletic community and perceived stress and coping style. The third purpose of this study was to examine perceived stress and coping style (i.e., engagement and disengagement coping) as they relate to athlete satisfaction. The fourth purpose of this study was to examine the relational health as a potential mediator of the relationship between perceived stress and athlete satisfaction among female college athletes in Kerala.

**Delimitations**

1. The study was delimited to female students studying in different colleges under the four Universities in Kerala state (Kerala University, Mahatma Gandhi University, University of Calicut and Kannur University) only.
2. The study was further delimited to Athletics, Volleyball and Basketball players participating in the Inter Collegiate competitions of four Universities in Kerala.

3. This study was also delimited to selected questionnaires in assessing the Relational Health, Perceived Stress, Coping style and Athlete Satisfaction among female college athletes.

4. The study was also delimited to 281 female college athletes who have participated in the Inter Collegiate competitions of four Universities in Kerala.

**Limitations**

1. Questionnaire research has its limitations, any bias that may enter into the subject on this account may be considered as a limitation of this study.

2. Life style of the subject is beyond the control of researcher, which may be considered as another limitation of this study.

3. Socio-economic and religious factors which cannot be controlled by the scholar might have affected the responses of the students; these are considered as limitations of this study.

**Hypothesis**

On the basis of the literature reviewed, research findings and the scholar’s own understanding of the problem the following hypotheses were formulated.

1. There would be a positive association between Athlete Satisfaction and Relational Health-Community (C) and Teammate (T).
2. There would be a negative relationship between Relational Health (Community, Teammate) and Perceived Stress.

3. There would be no relationship between Coping Style and Relational Health (Community, Teammate).

4. There would be no relationship between Athlete Satisfaction and Coping Style in female athletes.

5. There would be a negative relationship between Athlete Satisfaction and Perceived Stress.

6. The relationship between Perceived Stress and Athlete Satisfaction would be mediated by Relational Health.

7. There would be no significant difference in the relational health between Groups (Athletics, Basketball and Volleyball) and Levels (State represented, University represented and Inter collegiate participation) among female college athletes in Kerala.

8. There would be no significant difference in perceived stress between Groups and Levels among female college athletes in Kerala.

9. There would be no significant difference in coping style between Groups and Levels among female college athletes in Kerala.

10. There would be no significant difference in the athlete satisfaction between Groups and Levels among female college athletes in Kerala.
Definitions and explanations of the terms

**Athlete satisfaction**

Athlete satisfaction is a positive affective state resulting from a complex evaluation of the structures, processes, and outcomes associated with the athletic experience (Chelladurai & Riemer, 1997). The level of an athlete’s satisfaction is determined by the discrepancy between what is wanted by the athlete and the perception of what is received within the psychological, physical, and environmental domains.

**Coping**

Coping has been defined as constantly changing “cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

**Disengagement coping**

Disengagement coping encompasses thoughts and behaviours that focus attention away from the stressful event and includes strategies such as ignoring the task, focusing negatively on self, rather than on the task, self-criticism, and blame (Haney & Long, 1995; Tobin, Holroyd, Reynolds & Wigal, 1989).

**Engagement coping.**

Engagement coping encompasses “active efforts to manage both problem-focused and emotion-focused aspects of the stressful event” (Haney & Long, 1995), characterized by attempts to manage the stressful person-environment relationship (i.e., the source of stress). Emotion-focused behaviours are attempts to distract oneself from the stress provoking relationship (Lazarus, 1999; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).
**Growth-fostering relationships**

Growth-fostering relationships are those relationships characterized by mutual engagement, authenticity, empowerment/zest, and the ability to deal with difference or conflict (Jordan, 1995).

**Peer (Teammate)**

A peer is someone whom you feel attached to through respect, affection, and/or common interests, someone you can depend on for support and who depends on you (Liang, Tracy, Taylor, Williams, et al., 2002).

**Psychological Stress**

Psychological Stress refers to a relationship with the environment that the person appraises as significant for his or her well-being and in which the demands tax or exceed available coping resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1986).

**Relational Health**

Relational health refers to one’s level of satisfaction with peer, community and mentor relationships (Liang et al., 2002).

**Stress**

Stress is the extent to which the demands (or one’s perception) of an event, situation, or relationship between the person and the environment exceed one’s personal resources (Lazarus 1999).

**Significance of the study**

Sport Psychology Research indicates that men and women handle stress differently, and that women cope using strategies that may have less value to coaches and the athletic culture (Anshel et al., 2001; Crocker & Graham, 1995). However, the
role of healthy, supportive relationships with teammates, coaches and the community and their potential to serve as mediator of the relationship between stress and athlete satisfaction for female student-athletes lacks attention in sport psychology literature despite the vast amount of research on the stress and coping process in athletic settings.

Female athletes revealed their frustrations resulting from their perception that the athletic culture does not understand their individual goals, needs or the impact of stress and anxiety on their personal and athletic life (Bump, 1986). Therefore, it is important to examine how relationships are related to stress, emotion, and the coping process with the primary goal of enhancing psychological health for female college athletes in Kerala. More specifically, understanding the relational needs of female athletes requires a more thorough exploration of how relationships are established, developed, nurtured and maintained with the hope of understanding how to facilitate female athletes' efforts to achieve a satisfying experience both personally and athletically.

Prior to a recent trend of Sport Psychology research and practice, researchers primarily utilized psychological models that lacked an emphasis on the unique experiences of women and issues related to diversity in the assessment and intervention of personal and performance deficits (Gill, 2001; Hall, 2001). Ideas about competition, motivational techniques, and methods of discipline were tested predominantly by male researchers with male participants (Tuffey, 1995) and based on a traditional model of psychological development. According to relational theorists, traditional models of psychological development do not fit women’s experiences (Miller & Stiver, 1997). Jordan (2003) contends that the current theories provide a false reality for women through the limitations in the conception of the human condition and the bias in clinical-developmental theory. According to Jordan
(2003), developmental theories reflect an old tradition in which the differences between the dominant and non-dominant subjects are viewed as deficient or defective in a hierarchical culture. In terms of athletics, by the time women became heavily involved in sports, previous models of coaching and relating to athletes were well established and few questioned the generalizability of traditional psychological models of development when working with or studying female athletes (Fasting, 1994). Incorporating a feminist perspective allows sport practitioners to more accurately represent female college athletes’ experiences in the research process. A relational perspective of psychological development for women along with a transactional theory of stress and coping has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of practical application and research methodologies that further examine psychological health and performance related constructs among female college athletes.