SCALING SUMMITT: 
TOWARDS A FEMINIST COACHING METHODOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how discourses of gender, sexuality, race, and class reveal themselves in two texts by The University of Tennessee’s women’s basketball Head Coach, Pat Summitt. I examine Reach for the Summitt and Raise the Roof via a feminist lens to explore the ways in which Summitt understands and describes herself as a leader of young women. An analysis of Summitt’s texts and coaching strategies exposes the impact of male models of leadership and coaching paradigms, and the negotiations made by female coaches to fit into the patriarchal institution of sport. The thesis focuses on the rhetorical strategies utilized by Summitt to negotiate her socially constructed roles of woman and coach. Ultimately, I contend that coaching and rhetorical strategies employed by Summitt fail to challenge the male models and power structure of sport. Summitt’s style reproduces rather than defies dominant gender ideology of women in sport. I offer suggestions on imparting tenets of feminist pedagogies into a coaching methodology to provide a way in which male hegemony in sport may be challenged.
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INTRODUCTION

Popular sport ideology recognizes and celebrates the ability of sport to assist participants in honing and developing leadership skills that transcend the athletic playing arena. This is seen as an asset especially for women and girls, and underlies the creation of more opportunities for females to participate in sport. However, little research has been done to interrogate what styles of leadership current coaches of women’s teams impart, how they understand and explain their coaching methods and more importantly what type of (potential) leaders and future coaches these styles create. As male hegemony in sport dominates discourse and ideology, male models of leadership and coaching predominate and set the standards by which female coaches are judged. I intend to explore how this phenomenon manifests itself within the world of Division I women’s college basketball. It is my contention that existing coaching methods fail to acknowledge and accommodate the realities of the female intercollegiate athletic experience, and that the voices and realities of the majority of Division I female athletes are obscured and ignored vis a vis popular culture’s increasing attention to the accomplishments of elite intercollegiate female athletes. Utilizing existing feminist theories on gender, sexuality, power, agency, discourse and the possibilities of social
change, I endeavor to discursively analyze texts that focus on one of the leaders of women's Division I college basketball, Pat Summitt, Head Coach of the University of Tennessee (UT) Lady Volunteers (Vols).

My decision to focus on Summitt was an easy one. This past winter, I worked at a basketball tournament in Phoenix. High school teams from Ohio to Alaska converged in Arizona to compete against some of the best teams in the country. One day in the hotel weight room, I conversed with a few female athletes who had traveled from a small high school in Ohio to compete in the tournament. "I want to play [basketball] in college," one told me. "Where?" I asked. "Well," she said, "I think Notre Dame. I really would like to play for Tennessee, though, but I'm not sure I'm good enough." Like thousands of female basketball players before her (myself included) this athlete knew what it meant to be wanted by Tennessee. To don the orange and white, to be a part of Tennessee's program, to be sought after by Tennessee, more specifically, to be wanted by Pat Summitt meant you had made it. You were not just good; you were special. You were chosen.

In part, my thesis attempts to explore the draw and hold that Summitt seems to have on her players and/or aspiring college players. Summitt is considered by some to be the best coach in the game of women's college basketball today. In her 28 years as Head Coach at UT, she has amassed nearly 800 victories, has led her team to six National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) championships, and has been inducted into both the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame (June 1999) and the Basketball Hall of Fame in
Springfield, Massachusetts. In addition, Summitt has both competed and coached in the Olympic games, playing on the silver-medal winning team of 1976, and leading the 1984 women’s team to a gold medal.¹

1998 proved an important year for women’s college basketball and for Summitt. The Lady Vols captured an unprecedented third consecutive national championship with what some consider the best collegiate women’s basketball team ever assembled and more people than ever saw the Lady Vols and other women’s basketball teams compete. According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), 1998 saw women's basketball attendance reach an all-time high for the 17th consecutive year. The popularity of women’s college basketball soared thanks in part to the re-emergence of a women’s professional basketball presence in the United States. One league, the American Basketball League (ABL), began play in the winter of 1996. Another women’s professional league, the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA), debuted in the summer of 1997 and garnered much publicity and fanfare. The WNBA, still flourishing today, completed their inaugural season with a league-wide average attendance of 9,669. Amidst the excitement surrounding women’s basketball on all levels, 1998 witnessed the release of Reach for the Summitt (RS) and Raise the Roof (RR).²

¹ Biographical information found at http://ultladyvols.fansonly.com/sports/w-baskbl/mtt/summitt_pat00.html

² RS and RR are not the first books written about Pat Summitt and the Lady Vols. Quite similar to Kessler (1997) The Summitt Season (1989), by Nancy Lay, took readers through a season with the Lady Vols and their quest for a national championship.
Summitt's first book, *RS*, made numerous best-seller lists. *RS*, the "first motivational book written by a high-achieving coach" utilizes Summitt's life events and her experiences as a successful basketball coach at UT to inspire others to greatness (Summitt, 1998, dust jacket). The text, *Raise the Roof (RR)*, was released in October of 1998 and claims to present the "inside story" of the 1997-98 undefeated and national championship team that figuratively 'raised the roof' and standards of women's college basketball. Both of these texts were co-authored by Sally Jenkins, currently a sports columnist and feature writer for *The Washington Post*.3

My decision to focus on Summitt not only rests in her star power. Contrary to the situation in men's basketball literature, storybook tales of winning seasons and first-person accounts of coaching methods and rationales are few and far between in women's basketball literature. While recent accounts have documented the Olympic women's basketball team (*Venus to the Hoop*), the 1999 Division I women's basketball season (*Inside Women's College Basketball*), and the adventures and trials of coaching the Olympic Team (*Shooting from the Outside: How a Coach and Her Olympic Team Transformed Women's Basketball*), specific accounts of intercollegiate women's basketball coaches and/or coaching styles have been conveyed through the perspective of an "outside" author and not usually the coach. For example, Lauren Kessler's 1997 book, *Full Court Press: A Season in the Life of a Winning Basketball Team and The Women Who Made It Happen*, re-lives the University of Oregon's women's basketball team's 1993-4 season and gives special attention to Head Coach Jody Runge and her

3 Jenkins has also written for the magazine, *Sports Illustrated*, and has co-authored books with legendary
battle with the university for gender equity. While admittedly not the focus of this text, Kessler (1997) does not examine Runge’s coaching methods and philosophies, but instead focuses on the “team’s” ups and downs and the successful culmination of their season. (Deemed successful by virtue of their invitation to participate in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) women’s basketball tournament.) This is significant considering that Kessler (1997) alludes to strains between the athletes and their coach several times within Full Court Press but does not to delve into this potentially volatile space. The mere glance at Runge’s coaching style and methods fails to analyze critically the ways in which Runge’s particular approach did or did not serve the members of her team.

RS and RR do present the reader with accounts of the ups and downs of the athlete-coach relationship. Furthermore, I choose to focus on RS and RR because they differ from other women’s basketball stories in that they feature Summitt as the primary storyteller. Because of the impossibility of an interview, or more likely, several interviews with Summitt to document her coaching style, the texts I have chosen offer a “virtual” interview with Summitt. Furthermore, because Summitt is listed as co-author in both of my primary texts, RS and RR, it can be argued that Summitt controlled much of the representation of her coaching methods and stories told.\(^4\)

While the bulk of my analysis focuses on RS, I also use RR and the cover story on Summitt (“Eyes of the Storm”) that appeared in the March 2, 1998, issue of Sports men’s college basketball coach Dean Smith and cyclist Lance Armstrong.

\(^4\) Certainly, I concede that without the benefit of a face-to-face research encounter, the possibility of clarification and/or explanation on certain points is lost.
Illustrated to supplement my deconstruction of the notion of ‘leadership’ in sport and its transferability to other areas of life as articulated by/through Summitt. In Chapter One, I explore what Summitt’s notion of leadership reinforces, how it constructs athletes, what point of resistance it offers, and how it operates through tropes, metaphors and rhetorical gestures within these texts. I investigate what rhetorical or discursive strategies are used to establish Summitt as a leader and as a competent coach and consider how other female coaches might similarly be impacted. While it is not my attempt to homogenize female coaches of women’s basketball teams, I do contend that all female coaches operate within the same discursive field. That is, to be successful means that to some degree, they must understand the cultural scripts surrounding them in their precarious positions as females in a male domain. While not all female coaches respond in a similar fashion, to some extent their actions are mediated by often unacknowledged norms of gender, sexuality, race and class.

Furthermore, while I find some of Summitt’s coaching tactics highly problematic, I wish to steer attention to Summitt’s situatedness as a female coach, rather than focus on “judging” her merit as a coach, per se. I contend that the issues raised via a deconstruction of her texts are prototypical of issues facing almost all women who attempt to compete and succeed within the male hegemony of sport. I read her text as performative, as constructed to perform a certain task, and choose to deconstruct it not to indict Summitt or her coaching methods, but rather to illuminate the constraints circumventing women in sport.
After identifying how existing coaching methodologies and the male hegemony of sport impacts the decisions female coaches make, Chapter Two explores the possibilities of change within coaching paradigms through an application of tenets of feminist pedagogies to existing coaching methods. The possible contributions of feminist pedagogues – who have attempted to make the classroom a more democratic and inclusive space to women and other marginalized groups – to those who ‘teach’ the game of basketball has previously gone unrecognized. Similarly, theoretical advancements made in the area of feminist and pro-feminist sport studies of alternatives to male models of coaching are not readily accessible to female coaches because of the under-theorizing of the double bind and precarious place that female coaches occupy within the institution of intercollegiate athletics. Cognizant of the oft unspoken issues present for the female (both athlete and coach) within intercollegiate athletics, my thesis calls on the work of feminist pedagogues and seeks to offer viable and feasible suggestions to current and future coaches interested in imparting feminist leadership styles able to transcend the athletic arena. By employing tenets of feminism that were utilized to disrupt the patriarchal model of pedagogical practices, I create a feminist coaching method designed to better serve the needs of female intercollegiate athletes. This invariably disrupts some crucial components of Summitt’s coaching methodology. In my conclusion, I summarize my research findings and make note of shortcomings and pitfalls of my research.

**Situating myself: Whose team are you on?**

My interest in this topic and research findings rely on knowledge I have gleaned from my experiences as a Division I basketball player; I am the ‘outsider within’ my
research project. Having received my first college recruiting letter at the ripe age of 13 years, I came of age in an era when sport participation for females was expected, collegiate scholarships were attainable and professional basketball opportunities were realistic, albeit a bit hard to come by. For this project I rely heavily on resources that will never appear in my list of references – countless conversations with teammates, coaches, and female athletes; my attempt to impart my own feminist methods in a recent Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) coaching stint; and my experiences as an athlete who has been instructed by a number of different coaches, each utilizing a different coaching methodology. Instead of seeing this involvement as a detriment to my research, I consider it a benefit that allows for astute insight into the oft-overlooked realm of the intercollegiate female athlete’s experiences and needs. I intend to draw on my experiences as a Division I women’s basketball player, coach and feminist pedagogue, all the while cognizant of Joan Scott’s (1991) troubling of the evidence of personal experience in her essay, The Evidence of Experience. I consider my experience as a supplement to my research as opposed to expecting it to ‘prove’ anything. Furthermore, with the contribution of postmodern thought in terms of destabilizing identity categories, I recognize the seemingly impossible task or representing the monolithic ‘female athlete’ and her experiences. While intercollegiate female athletes may share a sport, their experiences are mediated by class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, (dis-)ability status – both temporary and permanent – familial status, region and religion. My research

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5 Scott questions the use of experience and identity as a means to ground any sort of knowledge claims and instead highlights the conditional, debatable and situatedness of knowledge production.
attempts to acknowledge these aspects of diversity throughout, but is peppered by my perspective as a white, Midwestern, middle-class, budding academic.

Theoretical Framework

Those invested in study of sport as an institution benefit from the analytic framework of critical cultural studies, which identifies an understanding of power as the crucial tenet for deconstructing society and social relations (Birrell & McDonald, 2000, p. 5). Within this framework, power is not a static, identifiable entity but something that manifests itself through interactions and relations. As such, the ability to demonstrate how and when power reveals itself is crucial in attempting to assist those for whom power oppresses. Critical cultural studies imparts analytical frameworks and methodologies to make salient the power and interconnectedness of intersecting aspects of identity such as gender, class, race, age, ethnicity and sexuality. This serves as a corrective to previous frameworks that focused exclusive attention on one aspect of identity and failed to consider how overlapping positions of power manifest themselves to privilege some identity categories. What this means to studies of sport is that

the methodology of 'reading' sport — that is, of finding the cultural meanings that circulate within narratives of particular incidents or celebrities — [also] requires critical attention to the ways that sexuality, race, gender, and class privileges are articulated in those accounts (Birrell & McDonald, 2000, p. 11).

Critical studies of sport must also situate their texts/readings within a specific political and historical location in order to illuminate the connection of sport to the larger society with a focus on societal inequities.
Critical studies of sport have deconstructed representations of women in sport. The studies of representations of women in sport, however, have largely focused on the image, as opposed to the spoken or written word, and how gender and heterosexuality are constructed and confirmed through visual representations. Women’s sports scholar Mary Jo Kane highlights four ways in which images of women in sport endeavor to demonstrate ‘appropriate’ behaviors for women (cited in Holste). Visual media representations typically represent women in ambiguous postures (as in, outside of a sports context) and therefore, in their ‘correct’ location. Representations also focus inordinate amounts of attention on women in sport as wives and mothers, to lessen anxieties surrounding the sexual orientation of female athletes and to confirm that these women are connected with men and therefore not lesbians. Visual media representations also tend to portray women in sport in postures and techniques that resemble ‘soft’ pornography, addressing, again, concerns of heterosexuality and placing women in the context of a relationship to men. Finally, visual media representation of sportswomen may dehumanize and fragment the athlete, focusing exclusive attention on a part of her body, and in essence, failing to grant her agency as a whole person. Kane’s assessment of representations of female athletes supports the notion of female apologetic behavior, first explored by Felshin in 1976. According to Felshin (1976), because “women and sport can exist only in uneasy conceptual juxtaposition,” successful women in sport often modify their behavior, appearances or actual sporting participation to conform to what it means to be ‘feminine’ in a heterosexist and sexist context (p. 36).
Although analyses of visual representations of female athletes continue, researchers are now making use of advances in feminist theories to frame their work. Utilizing poststructuralist theories, feminist sports scholars have shifted their focus to the deconstruction of the discourses surrounding 'women' of sport as opposed to focusing exclusively on women as an unproblematized group. Current feminist work on the constructed nature of gender, race, class, ethnicity and sexuality enables researchers to demonstrate the often-overlooked and precarious position of women in the male preserve of sport. Feminist theories also find themselves utilized in studies of sport because of their commitment to and investment in social change. In the case of feminist theorizing of sport, most commentaries straddle the divide between theory and practice and analysis becomes a call for change.

My project moves between feminist theories of sport and critical cultural studies and, as suggested by Birrell (1988), explores the following four themes upon which feminist studies of sport rest:

1. The production of an ideology of masculinity and male power through sport.
2. The media practices through which dominant notions of women are reproduced.
3. Physicality, sexuality, the body as sites for defining gender relations.
4. The resistance of women to dominant sport practices.

I begin my project by identifying male power in sport and endeavor to examine media productions of Summitt to explore the ways in which her physicality and sexuality become sites for the performance of appropriate gender roles. I conclude by creating a feminist game plan for those interested in resisting the dominant sport paradigm.
Methodology

Few studies have examined the construction of gender via the autobiographical written word, and/or have attempted to deconstruct standard sports rhetoric in an effort to consider its effectiveness and appeal. One example is a study done by Birrell and Cole (1990), who use the case of male-to-female transsexual, Renee Richards, and her entrance into the world of women’s tennis, to explore the constructedness of gender. However, while they do utilize Richards’ autobiographical account of her experience, Birrell and Cole (1990) focus more attention on the Renee Richards case with respect to how gender is socially constructed and the roles of discourses surrounding transsexualism, as opposed to specifically focusing on issues of self-representation within the autobiographical account. Other studies that have attempted to deconstruct sports stars via a feminist lens have focused primarily on male athletes. Michael Jordan, Dennis Rodman and Nolan Ryan have all been deconstructed using a critical feminist lens.\(^6\) My interest in Summitt and how she merges two ‘incompatible’ roles (woman and coach) has yet to be explored.

My deconstruction of Summitt follows the model provided by Katherine M. Jamieson (1998) in her essay, “Reading Nancy Lopez: Decoding Representations of Race, Class, and Sexuality.” In an attempt to examine the ways in which the media constructs Lopez as the ideal, assimilated Mexican woman, Jamieson deconstructs three media constructions of Lopez (a Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Hall of Fame performer) via the analytical framework of “multiracial feminism” (Jamieson,

\(^6\) See essays in Birrell & McDonald (2000) *Reading Sport.*
1998, p. 145). By highlighting the media constructions of and focus on Lopez’s marriage, pregnancy, and family situation, Jamieson illuminates the precarious position of women in sport. In addition, by imparting a multiracial feminist lens from which to view Lopez, Jamieson’s analysis exposes the myth of meritocracy perpetuated by dominant sport discourse and challenges the ideological notion of sport as a neutral site. That is, her study challenges the notion that sport is a site where gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, age and ability status fail to matter, and the best man wins. Jamieson and those invested in viewing sport as a patriarchal institution contend that sport actually is a location where ‘others’ face great difficulty as they attempt to challenge the hegemony of sport (white, male, upper-class, heterosexual) leadership.

It is within this analytical mindset that I consider Pat Summitt’s “self-help” book, RS. The very notion that an author, let alone a woman, can fulfill RS’s claim to supply “The Definite Dozen System for Succeeding at Whatever You Do” and use her sporting experiences to back up this claim, speaks to the prevailing ideology of the United States sport experience. Discourses of sport resonate with the liberal political theory in that sport is considered an equal opportunity employer that does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, class, ethnicity or sexuality. However, my analysis demonstrates that Summitt’s texts are cognizant of the unwritten rules of sport and as texts about an “other” within a male preserve, incorporate that which is necessary (female apologetic behavior) to assimilate into the institution of sport.

It is assumed that sports success is success at being masculine...as the athlete becomes even more outstanding, she marks herself out as even more deviant. Instead of confirming her identity, success can threaten her with a foreign male identity (p. 36).

With respect to this statement, I read the texts, and also the silences, to identify the ways in which Summitt attempts to position herself within the confines of ‘normal’ and acceptable behavior for women. I argue that Summitt strategically uses rhetoric surrounding ‘the family’ to control her representation and counter other media representations that have cast her as the “lady who’s so mean to those poor young women” (Summitt, 1998, p. 68). In addition, my analysis examines the ways in which Summitt explains and understands her remarkable success. Ultimately, I contend that the rhetorical practices utilized by Summitt help to maintain, as opposed to challenge, the hegemony of masculinity within the institution of sport.
CHAPTER 1

RHETORICAL STRATEGIES OF REACH FOR THE SUMMIT

This chapter deconstructs Summit’s text, RS, to discover how Summit constructs herself as an authority on success and which experiences and elements of her identity she highlights to serve this construction. I specifically concentrate my attention on Summit’s use of discourses surrounding the family, feminism, and what I loosely categorize as ‘coaching rhetoric.’ While discourses surrounding her family and feminism serve to construct Summit’s gender and sexual identities, I contend that utilizing ‘coaching rhetoric’ serves to demonstrate the corollary — that she is not “too soft” or “too feminine” to get the job of coaching and winning done. That is, the coexistence of these discourses creates a space in which Summit exists as neither too masculine nor too feminine. By examining Summit’s use of ‘coaching rhetoric,’ I demonstrate the ways in which Summit uses discourse surrounding communication, team and teamwork to exercise control over her players.

Addressing Audience Concerns: Who is the audience of Reach for the Summit?

To be persuasive, a text must utilize rhetoric that speaks to the concerns of its audience. Billed as the “first motivational book by a high-achieving coach,” RS speaks to the person who does, indeed, need inspiration to organize his/her life and daily activities
(Summitt, 1998, dust jacket). RS's unveiling of Summitt's "Definite Dozen System" — a foolproof method to navigate the game of life — professes to help that person in need. However, because of its reliance on specific basketball examples to illustrate the success of the "Definite Dozen System," I contend that the primary audience is not the seeker of self-help, but rather the aficionados of Summitt and the Lady Vols — those who want the "real" story and a glance behind the scenes. The category 'fans of Summitt' contains three distinct subgroups: the potential recruit (the high school female basketball player), the women's basketball coach, and the fan. Each group has concerns that manifest themselves quite differently.

The potential recruit reading is looking for two distinct things: confirmation that she could play and 'survive' under this system and assurance that Summitt's style, and not the athletes' skills, produces champions. Relatedly, she also seeks confirmation that former Lady Vols enjoyed their time at Tennessee, and that Summitt cares about her players as people. On the other hand, the women's basketball coach, most likely a coach at the high school or Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) level, needs this book to offer a detailed plan on how one creates a basketball dynasty and specific ways to motivate players. The coach also needs confirmation that it is Summitt's system, and not the institutionalized support of Tennessee, that is responsible for the success of UT's program. In addition to speaking to the aforementioned audiences, RS also presents Summitt with an opportunity to control her own representation and speak to critics of her coaching style and her reputation as the "lady who's so mean to those poor young women" (RS, 1998, p. 68). Attempting to address these areas of concern shapes the
remainder of the text and underscores the rhetorical strategies utilized by Summitt. Above all, *RS* must convince its readers that the Lady Vols are not being hurt emotionally, mentally, or physically by Summitt and her style, as this concern resonates will the potential recruits, the coaches, the fans and the critics of Summitt.

Summitt links her vast audiences with this quotation, featured prominently on the dust jacket of *RS*:

I’m someone who will push you beyond all reasonable limits. Someone who will ask you not to just fulfill your potential but to exceed it. Someone who will expect more from you than you may believe you are capable of. So if you aren’t ready to go to work, shut this book (Summitt, 1998, dust jacket).

These remarks by Summitt set the tone for the remainder of the book. That is, *you* have the power within *you* to make change and ultimately, it is up to *you* to decide how things will transpire. This sentiment resonates with the tenets of liberal political thought which reveals itself in Summitt’s coaching methods. This philosophy ultimately holds the individual accountable for all of life’s outcomes, on the court and otherwise. In a similar vein, Summitt places responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the reader – the fan of the Lady Vols, the potential recruit, the fellow coach, and indirectly, her current players that the reader meets via the text. This statement creates an individualistic ethos which suggests that players who did not succeed at Tennessee failed because of their own shortcomings, their own lack of work ethic, and their inability to rise to the challenge, not through any fault of Summitt and/or her system. These opening remarks also suggest that Summitt does not play favorites, (suggesting that everyone starts out on the cliched “level
playing field”) does not change her values or her mind, and will not ‘take it easy on you’ which appeals to those believing in hard work, equality and justice for all in the world of sport.

The Game Plan: Logics of Success

Summitt’s coaching methods appeal to those interested in achieving success, ironically, the easy and logical way. In RS she professes to have the game plan of all game plans: her “Definite Dozen” rules for success. Summitt suggests that these “tried-and-true methods of success [are] applicable to any job,” and have been instrumental in her personal coaching accomplishments (Summitt, 1998, p. 2). Summitt shares the keys to her success with every team she coaches and reveals them in RS. Immersed in coaching rhetoric, Summitt’s “Definite Dozen” are: respect yourself and others; take full responsibility; develop and demonstrate loyalty; learn to be a great communicator; discipline yourself so no one else has to; make hard work your passion; don’t just work hard, work smart; put the team before yourself; make winning an attitude; be a competitor; change is a must; and handle success like you handle failure (ibid, 258-260). Each chapter in RS elaborates on a different one of the dozen rules and offers examples of how these rules play out in the Lady Vol program. The following section focuses on how Summitt’s use of these scenarios, as well as the structure of the book, appeals to the logic of the reader. The subsequent sections examine how the actual rhetoric appeals to the reader.
Testimonials: The Appeal to Truth

The very format of the book appeals to the logic of the reader in several important ways. Each chapter focuses on a specific aspect of the "Definite Dozen," and is preceded by a question and answer portion ("Q & A") with a Lady Vol alumna, a current Lady Vol assistant coach or Summitt's husband, R.B. The reader never knows for certain the explicit purpose of the "Q & A"s or who is asking the questions (except, because of the third person reference to 'Pat', that it is not Summitt). This lack of information regarding who and why creates the sense of an objective and detached (rational and logical) interviewer, familiar with the Lady Vol program, but someone who is determined to get the most accurate story for the book. The "Q & A" sections appeal to the logic of the reader because each and every interviewee attests to the ability of Summitt's methods to produce winners on and off the court. In essence, the "Q and A"s provide the reader with an understanding of Summitt's methods and strategies from those who know her best — her former players, her husband and her assistant coaches. By having these people vouch for her coaching practices, RS does not turn into a book wherein Summitt alone has to justify her practices. Others do so, seemingly without the pressure of the presence of Summitt, making their assertions appear more legitimate and accurate.

The actual components of the "Q & A"s are also worthy of examination. In a "Q and A" with Bridgette Gordon, former Lady Vol and 1988 Olympic gold medalist, the anonymous and unnamed questioner asks, "You almost didn't go to Tennessee, right?" Gordon answers by acknowledging the pressure she had to remain in her home state of Florida, and then is asked by the questioner, "Was it the right decision [to go to
Tennessee]?” Gordon replies, “It was wild how much I matured there. I mean, I grew. I became wiser. I became a woman. Now I just laugh and say, ‘Pat was right. Pat was right.’” (qtd. in Summitt, 1998, p. 216). Gordon’s “Q & A” provides the reader with a first-person testimonial to the merits of Summitt’s system. It also posits Gordon as someone who ultimately comes around to see the light. By including information on Gordon’s initial reluctance, it re-creates a person for whom critics of Summitt and her system can identify. Ultimately, like Gordon, they should/will see the light.

Similar to Gordon, each of the former Lady Vols interviewed for the “Q & A”s had some sort of altercation and/or disagreement with Summitt or her system at one point in their careers. RS details of most of these episodes, and although they are told from Summitt’s perspective, usually include a degree of reflection and commentary on the part of Summitt. Because Summitt is the storyteller, the location of the “Q & A”s is significant and of note. Locating specific “Q & A”s before the discussion of the altercations/disagreements that certain players have had with Summitt serves to justify the various coaching methods used by Summitt. In essence, an ‘end justifies the means’ ethos is created. Former Lady Vol Abby Conklin’s “Q & A” illuminates this point.

No one interviewed for the “Q & A”s critiques or challenges Summitt’s style, and Abby Conklin, a forward on the 1996-7 National Championship team goes so far as to say that despite all she went through, she would go back to Tennessee and do it again, and “would send my daughter there in a heartbeat” (quoted in Summitt, 1998, p. 9). Conklin’s sentiments precede chapter and “Definite Dozen” rule number one (Respect yourself and others) in which Summitt details a difference of opinion she had with
Conklin. As Summitt describes it, while in a team meeting wherein Summitt was assessing the previous night’s game against Stanford, Summitt concluded her analysis, and Conklin verbalized her take on the game by saying, “I don’t agree” (Summitt, 1998, p. 15). According to Summitt, by doing this Conklin showed not only a lack of respect for her own (Conklin’s) abilities and the game plan but also towards Summitt as a coach. “By taking me on like that,” Summitt says, Conklin “jeopardized everything we [the team] were working towards” (ibid, p. 15).

After practice, Conklin headed to the coaches’ changing room and attempted to apologize but found Summitt still angry and unwilling to accept her apology. In her anger, Summitt threw a cup of water across the room towards Conklin and told her that she would not play in the next game. This incident created a void between the player and the coach that would extend for several weeks, and ultimately found Summitt unwilling to speak to Conklin. Retrospectively, Summitt acknowledges that throwing the water did not demonstrate mutual respect but quickly justifies her actions by saying, “I felt I had to do something to impress on her the seriousness of the situation” (ibid, p. 16). While it is difficult to assess the consequences of Conklin’s verbalized dissent in terms of team dynamics and rapport, the location of Conklin’s “Q & A” with respect to this incident sets the reader up for a particular response. By having Conklin express her appreciation and dedication to Summitt and her coaching methods before hearing about this incident, the reader feels comfort in knowing that their relationship is steady and that Conklin believes so strongly in Summitt’s tactics that she would feel comfortable sending her own

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7 Allegedly, Conklin deviated from the original game plan.
daughter to Tennessee. This occurs before the reader is given the opportunity to hear anything about Summitt’s interactions with Conklin and/or question Summitt’s coaching tactics and methods.

Conkin’s example resembles many of the other “Q & A”s wherein different Lady Vols describe how they were able to work through “their” problems with Summitt’s coaching tactics. These players eventually come to the conclusion that Summitt engages in various tactics because she really cares about them and that trust in her and the methods she utilizes will bring with it many returns. For example, Chamique Holdsclaw, a star player from 1995-1999, discusses a time when an injury to her knee occurred just before the Lady Vols were to begin play in the NCAA Tournament; there was great concern that Holdsclaw would not be well enough to lead her team. Summitt exacerbated the pressure for her to return before she was fully healed by informing Holdsclaw that sitting out of the early games of the NCAA tournament would preclude her from playing in the later games (should the team advance).\(^8\) Holdsclaw (2000) reports that Summitt said, “Are you going to do this [play through your injury]? Or are you going to be a baby?...People are counting on you! Chamique is being selfish! What are you going to do—the first time you get hurt, you’re going to let people down?” (qtd. in Holdsclaw, 2000, p. 83).

Despite admitting that she played through most of the tournament games in pain Holdsclaw (2000) eventually realizes that Summitt taught her a valuable lesson: “Tough times don’t last, but tough people do” (p. 87). Other ways to read this exchange between

\(^8\) This was a rule by Summitt, not a school or NCAA rule.
Summitt and Holdsclaw exist, but her response to the situation resonates with other Lady Vols and their sentiments regarding the ‘tough love’ philosophies of Summitt. As one player tells another in RR, “Every time she yells at you, that means she really likes you...she thinks you have potential” (Summitt, 1998, p. 36). Reminiscent of discourses of unhealthy relationships, Lady Vol team members share their tips on ‘handling’ Summitt throughout both RS and RR. Meanwhile, a consideration of the effectiveness of these types of coaching methods or the troubling of these tactics fails to occur.

**Rhetorical Strategies of Reach for the Summit**

**Family Matters: Pat Summitt as mother, wife, and daughter**

In accordance with the theory of female apologetic behavior in sport, throughout RS Summitt makes a concerted effort to incorporate tales of motherhood and her son, Tyler, into the text (Felshin, 1976, p. 36). In addition to RS’s small cover shot of Summitt and Tyler cutting the nets after a victory, Summitt opens and closes RS with stories about Tyler and the importance of him in her life. While not negating the significance of children in a person’s life, it is important to note that Summitt’s inclusion of her son replicates a common trope in the representations of women athletes. The powerful woman in sport as wife and mother serves a number of purposes. Most importantly, it eases concerns about the sexuality of the female sports figure.

From the moment of his birth (which, ironically enough, occurred the day of a important recruiting visit) Tyler is considered an asset to the team, and stories about his antics appeal to the reader in a number of ways. These stories and the requisite discourse situates Summitt as a compassionate, loving and caring mother, which, one presumes,
carries over to her coaching philosophies and styles. After all, Summitt would not be a ‘good mother’ if she consistently exposed her son to violent and unhealthy team situations. Relatedly, Summitt often references the women on her team as ‘daughters’ and once again, the reader is subtly encouraged to transfer Summitt’s compassionate and loving treatment of her ‘real’ child to the athletes on her team. This serves to ease concerns about her reputation as a relentless and driven coach, and also allows the reader to frame Summitt’s leadership in a familiar female location, the confines of motherhood.

In addition to Summitt’s use Tyler for confirmation of her true womanhood, she also accesses her husband, R.B., for the same purposes. In re-telling the story of their courtship and subsequent marriage within RS, Summitt positions herself as the ‘typical’ woman, capable of falling in love and marrying. This is an important counter to the majority of media representations that position her outside the role of the stereotypical woman. She includes discourses of marriage, family and her ability to engage in domestic chores to situate herself within the confines of true womanhood. For instance, Summitt writes, “I cook dinner for my family just about every night...the last thing I do before I go to sleep is a load of laundry” (Summitt, 1998, p. 156). As it serves to advance the text in no perceivable way, these sentiments suggest that even though Summit is one of the most successful woman ever to coach women’s college basketball, she still knows her place.

In addition to the emphasis placed on Summitt as mother and wife, RS includes a number of references to Summitt’s childhood and the influence of her parents, specifically her father, on her coaching style. Growing up on the farm, Summitt
internalized the messages provided by her hardworking father and incorporated them into her coaching. In one section, Summitt acknowledges how growing up in fear of potential physical violence from her father fashioned her ideas about respect and loyalty and how that connects to (and justifies) her coaching mentality:

My ideas about respect are severe. But then, they were formed by a severe man, my father, who whipped them into me. When I’m tough on a player, like I was on Abby Conklin, everybody back in Henrietta says, ‘There’s the Richard in her.’ They say I’m a lot like him (Summitt, 1998, p. 17).

In reflecting on this portion of her childhood, Summitt accurately speaks to the problematic nature of this type of upbringing, but similar to Conklin sentiments, ultimately expresses her gratitude for her father’s harsh upbringing. Summitt says, “...in the end, I was grateful for it. He gave me strength.” (ibid, p. 20)

In addition, in re-telling the story of her parents’ lives, of how they raised five children and of slowly converted a small plot of leased land into a thousand-acre farm, Summitt evokes issues of class without necessarily naming them. Summitt clearly chooses to identify herself as working class, emphasizing her upbringing as opposed to the financial security, fame and resources she has acquired in her role as UT’s head coach. She briefly talks of Tyler’s nanny and only mentions in passing the ‘remodeling’ of her home that takes place while she wrote RS, but she spends several pages detailing her life on the farm, the hard work that was required of her and how she and her family “lived from crop to crop” (Summitt, 1998, p. 19). While mindful of the fact that this aspect of her life reveals itself in her coaching methods and is therefore important to include, her educational level and celebrity status, in addition to her presumably large income, position her outside of the working class status with which she seeks to identify.
It seems that Summitt adopts this class status to fit into the blue-collar basketball world and the players she recruits. In addition, her ‘rags to riches’ story also resonates with common tropes of athletics. Athletes earn respect by overcoming obstacles through hard work and surviving and playing through pain and other hardships.

I’m not a feminist, but...

In *RS*, Summitt does not self-identify as a feminist, though she readily acknowledges that her activities and job greatly contributed to the advancements of womankind. Her decision to not identify as a feminist addresses the unspoken concern about her heterosexuality and appropriate gender performance, and also assists in the construction of sexism and discrimination (and the subsequent inability to counter it) as an individual pathology rather than one that is systemic and institutionalized. This feeds into the liberal philosophy that pervades the text and Summitt’s coaching philosophies. It also posits Summitt as a rational and reasonable (read: masculine) coach, one who thinks through her agenda and her game plan as opposed to the irrational and emotional woman (read: feminist) who has no place in the world of masculine sport.

Interestingly, Summitt relies on mainstream mis-representations of feminist ideology to situate herself against feminism. Summitt distances herself from the feminist label by classifying herself as a “fairly conventional southern woman” and proceeds to highlight how well she adheres to the stereotypical role of woman (Summitt, 1998, p. 156).⁹ Discussing herself as one who engages in domestic chores, recognizes her familial

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⁹ It’s not clear how well Summitt ‘passes’ as a typical Southern woman. Chamique Holdsclaw, Lady Vol from 1995-1999, had this to say about her first meeting with Summitt: “I didn’t know what to make of Coach Summitt. She was tall and she had on a suit and her hair was done, and her nails were done and she had bright red lipstick. Everything about her was so put together and so businesslike, except her Southern
obligations and knows how to use her 'southern hospitality' to get what she wants, Summit constructs 'real women' as not feminist. In addition to this refutation of feminism, Summit says this of her early coaching days: "Maybe I should have shouted and waved around a copy of Title IX" but my decision to be a "glass cutter" as opposed to someone who tried to break through the glass ceiling by "scream[s]" and "kick[s] with [your] high heels" paid off in the long run (Summitt, 1998, p. 154). Within this dismissal of the advancements of feminisms, she only casually mentions how the institutionalized support for her Lady Vol program benefited her cause. Tennessee is only one of five Division I schools in the country that has a separate athletic department for women.\textsuperscript{10} By having a separate department, women's sports are not forced to compete with men's sports for attention, resources or financial support which usually means more effort is put into addressing the needs of female athletics. By not focusing on this, Summit again reinforces her mantra that individual hard work and dedication will pay off.

Coaching Rhetoric: Communication with Student-Athletes

Summitt incorporates "coaching rhetoric" to establish herself as a competent, yet sensitive, coach. Throughout \textit{RR} Summit details her various meetings and one-on-one communication with her players. While initially this may seem to position Summit as an effective and willing communicator, closer examination of these encounters points elsewhere. In most cases, the conversations resemble the one Summit had with former Lady Vol, Teresa Geter. One day, following a Summit 'episode of discipline' spurred by drawl stuck out a little, and I didn't know whether she looked country or just fake" (Holdenclaw, 2000, p. 67).

\textsuperscript{10} The other schools are: BYU, University of Arkansas, University of Texas, and Morris Brown College, a Division I-AA institution.
Geter's laidback playing style, Geter wept openly during practice. After practice, Summitt asks Geter to stay attempts to communicate with Geter by asking, "Am I being too hard on you? Do you want me to back off? Because if you do, I'll back off right now. I won't say another harsh word to you" (Summitt, 1998, p. 37). While this appears to be a legitimate attempt at communication, two items must be considered. First, this communication takes place immediately following a 'breakdown' on the part of Geter. That is, it is reactive and occurs after the situation has reached a dire point. At the moment, and both within and outside this space, they are not equals attempting to dialogue on the merits of good or effective coaching, but rather a seasoned coach and a first-year student-athlete.

In addition, the world of sport does not celebrate or condone going 'soft' on someone, so for Geter to agree that Summitt should go 'easy on her' would, in effect, be an admission on the part of Geter that she cannot take it or is not willing to take the verbal abuse (coded as effective coaching) as part of her indoctrination into her new team. It would also separate Geter from her teammates and position her outside the 'normal' (by Lady Vol standards) dynamics of player-coach encounters. For a first-year student-athlete, overwhelmed by adjusting to college life, new friends and a new coach, to separate oneself in any way from the team fails to be a feasible option.

By highlighting the ways in which Summitt utilizes both coaching and female apologetic rhetoric, this chapter demonstrates how Summitt situates herself and negotiates her precarious location. As a female coach in the male institution of sport,

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11 Geter transferred back to her home state of Social Carolina after her sophomore season and played for the
Summitt must constantly navigate her identities as ‘woman’ and as ‘coach.’ Summitt does this by relying on a familiar tactic of women in androcentric spaces; she focuses significant attention on the ways in which she ‘fits’ into societal expectations for women, while downplaying other areas of her life. Ultimately, this tactic fails to pose a legitimate challenge to male hegemony in sport.
CHAPTER 2

THAT TAKES BALLS: FEMINIST PEDAGOGY ON THE SIDELINES

While Chapter One highlighted the discursive field within which female coaches operate, this chapter explores what other discursive fields offer possibilities to the female coach and athlete. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to answer the question: What might a theory of feminist coaching look like? While deconstructing the institution of modern sport is beyond the scope of this chapter, invariably, the infusion of feminist values and principles into the coaching experience will shape and re-model the institution of sport while disrupting the current coaching paradigm. I attempt to trouble and complicate the current coaching paradigm by again relying on women’s college basketball legend, Pat Summitt. In what follows, I borrow and extrapolate from work done on feminist pedagogies and incorporate my own knowledge of sport and coaching to create a feminist coaching methodology while simultaneously examining Summitt’s coaching practices through this new lens.

12 While cognizant of the many critiques of feminist pedagogies, I remain steadfast in my belief in the possibilities of a liberating and non-oppressive pedagogical experience. For an example of a valuable critique of feminist and/or critical pedagogies, see Elizabeth Ellsworth, “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering” Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy,” Harvard Educational Review 59, no. 3 (1989): 298.
Instead of offering another prescriptive coaching manual for aspiring coaches to follow or homogenizing the 'female athlete' experience yet again, I consider this chapter an examination into what possibilities arise when coaching methods are considered in conjunction with a feminist pedagogical framework. Inspired by the following statement from Shogan's (1999) book, *The Making of High-Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity and Ethics*: "The juxtaposition of hybrid athletes with the homogenizing and normalizing technologies of sport discipline open up a space for postmodern interventions: questioning, refusing and perhaps creating new ways of participating in sport," the infusion of feminist values into a coaching methodology creates a space for envisioning a new way to coach and lead (p. x). Similar to feminists seeking a different way to instruct and teach other than the 'standard' patriarchal pedagogical styles that privileged certain types of knowledge production and favored specific voices and experiences while silencing others, this exploration attempts to revamp the current model of coaching sport which embraces masculine values of competition and hierarchy all the while working within a rule-bound philosophy.

Summitt recognizes the link between females coaches and educators of young women when saying, "I'm an educator. I teach basketball, and through that, help young girls grow into women, and I broaden their ideas of what they are capable of" (Summit, 1998, p. 254). Summit is not the only one to liken her job and duties as a coach to that of a teacher; most successful coaches are heralded as great teachers of the game. An article on the University of California at Santa Barbara's women's basketball coach, Mark French, resonates with Summit's sentiments:
The coach [French] considers himself as much an educator as any professor, but with an advantage few teachers have. A professor has a few hours per week over a single quarter to influence a student, while the coach's players invest an average of 3,000 hours in his program over the course of their college careers (Barth, n.d.).

The project of examining coaching styles and paradigms to understand the ways they might fail to address the needs of their recipients and to explore alternatives seems useful. When one considers the similarities between the conditions under which coaches of women's sports must operate and the classrooms that feminist sought to transform via feminist pedagogy, an exploration into how these two entities fit together proves feasible.

In order to identify and establish what feminist pedagogies look like, I utilize the article, "A review of the feminist pedagogy literature: the neglected child of feminist psychology" by Forrest and Rosenberg (1997). Forrest and Rosenberg (1997) divide their analysis into two sections. The first section reviews the "60 articles, 25 chapters from books, 10 books and 4 bibliographies" on feminist pedagogy (in accordance with the criteria put forth by Forrest and Rosenberg) in order to identify a critique of traditional educational practices (p. 179). The second section revisits this feminist literature to locate the common "strategies and goals" imparted by feminist researchers. I focus primarily on the second section of their essay as it speaks directly to the question: What might a theory of feminist coaching look like?

To situate their study, Forrest and Rosenberg (1997) define feminist pedagogy as "the infusion of feminist values into the process and methods of teaching" and identify the following as commonalities among various applications of feminist pedagogies. In general, feminist pedagogies call for: balancing and/or integrating educational
dichotomies (such as the public/private, reason/emotion splits); rethinking power and
authority in the classroom; creating communal classrooms; respecting and increasing
diversity in the classroom; integrating the knowledge of personal experience; and
incorporating social action into classroom methods. I suggest that the infusion of core
feminist pedagogical tenets disrupts the rational, rule-bound, modernist coaching
paradigm, which, among other things, fails to consider the multiple identities (hybridity)
of athletes and utilizes discourses of “team,” “teamwork,” and “unity” to silence athletes
embracing certain identity categories and to obscure intersections of identities within
athletes. The dominant coaching paradigm also encourages hierarchical structures that
grant more authority to coaches and “experts.” The privileging of the ‘mind’ knowledge
of coaches over the embodied knowledge of athletes does so with the goal of creating
uniform, unquestioning subjects and reinforces dichotomous thinking. Examples of the
modern coaching mentality play out in both of Summitt’s texts, and I incorporate specific
examples to illuminate my points. In the following section, each facet of the
aforementioned tenets of feminist pedagogies is explored to consider the possibilities of
its manifestation in the world of coaching.

Balancing Educational Dichotomies

The same educational structures that require students and teachers to “check their
personal emotions, experiences and subjective realities at the door” reveals itself in the
context of women’s basketball. Consequently, those athletes who experience sexism,
sexual harassment, racism, classism, homophobia and heterosexism during their athletic
experiences must deal with it on their own and preferably do so away form the playing
arena. Consistent with the popular ideology that sport is politics-free (meaning that sport provides opportunity for all, regardless of one's race, class, sexual orientation, etc.) these personal experiences of discrimination are thought to have little to no affect on an athlete's life or sports participation.

To counter this notion and attempt to address the personal and political aspects of discrimination within a sports context, a coach must make a conscious effort to discuss these issues with her team. Based on personal experience and cognizant of the patriarchal nature of sport, I contend that most female student-athletes have encountered sexism at some point in their athletic careers, but may be lacking the language and ability to name it as such. By dialoging and hearing others' experiences of sexism and naming them as sexist acts (to note that these instances are not isolated events) forces athletes to see how the politics of gender operate in sport. This framework can then be used to examine the ways in which other forms of oppression play out in their athletic lives.

While there are various ways to facilitate this type of dialogue, one way is to start a team meeting by asking players to fill out a short survey or discuss the questions listed in Appendix A in small groups. Ideally, the coaching staff would participate in this discussion with the student-athletes to create a space for dialogue and an open discussion. With the coaching staff an integral part of the discussion, an outside facilitator would be needed. Since many of these themes are covered in Introductory Women's Studies courses, it may be useful to have someone well-versed in areas of sport and women's studies to engage with these topics. An open discussion that connects personal experiences of student-athletes to larger political structures and seeks to address these
issues in some capacity, whether it be amongst themselves, department, or community-wise speaks to a number of the tenets of feminist pedagogies put forth by Forrest and Rosenberg (1997).

Coaches can choose to make these discussions a form of social action by incorporating them into their summer camps. Many colleges and universities with women’s basketball programs have summer camps to teach basketball skills to local girls and boys. In addition to teaching basketball skills a majority of these camps incorporate guest speakers and lecturers to discuss the college recruiting process, balancing academics and athletics, nutrition, and weight training. A space might also be created for small groups of campers to interact with camp counselors (who are primarily current student-athletes at that institution) to discuss issues of discrimination. Camp counselors can facilitate discussions on topics such as sexism, sizism, homophobia in sport, or media images of women athletes by asking campers to articulate their own experiences with these topics. These brief consciousness-raising sessions promote an awareness of gender inequality among young women, take young women’s experiences with discrimination seriously, and creates a space in which young women can discuss ways to respond to the inequities they experience on a daily basis. Furthermore, these discussions also bridge the gap between personal and political experiences.

Respecting Diversity

In RR, Summitt describes an activity she conducted with her team called “Family Night,” an endeavor that provides a way to acknowledge and situate diversity in a team setting. For “Family Night” every member of the team was to bring in a picture of their
family and to share a bit about where they were from and the people close to them. Summitt felt that with four new first-year players (who were quite heralded coming out of high school) something needed to be done to acclimate them to the returning Lady Vols and to the Tennessee staff. Interestingly, what came out during the course of the team activity slightly troubled Summitt. During the course of “Family Night,” Summitt realized that nine of her 12 players came from single-parent homes, including all four of the team’s newcomers. It was not that the single-parent status necessarily troubled her, but she was concerned with considering how this factor impacted these players individually, how it shaped their approach to basketball and how it might affect the team.

Summitt’s attempt to facilitate teamwork in a way that (seemingly only) tangentially relates to basketball resonates with the goals of feminist pedagogies in virtually all of the aforementioned six tenets. I highlight a few ways it fits within the goals of feminist pedagogies, but primarily focus on how this activity speaks to the effort to respect and acknowledge diversity. First, it breaks down the dichotomy set up that posits “personal” experiences on one side of the coin and basketball on the other. Summitt clearly expresses this point in her summation of this particular team function: “[After Family Night] We all understood one thing...about each other: basketball was no game to us. It wasn’t just a way to earn a varsity letter...it was a form of requital...a redemption...an exploration of [her own] value...an offering of self-expression” (Summitt, 1998, p. 76). Therefore, what was shared in “Family Night” revealed that the

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13 As was discussed earlier, this speaks to the importance of Summitt identifying with her working-class roots to better understand her players’ locations and the blue-collar nature of basketball.
basketball skills needed to perform at a high level are infinitely tied to the emotions and motivations that stem from personal and family experiences.

Furthermore, this activity mandates a re-visioning of power and authority. When everyone – Summitt, the players and the assistant coaches – is asked to share, the team is on a (albeit temporary) level playing field, asked to disclose a part of themselves for the sake of the team. As such, the entire team is forced to acknowledge the diversity of their teammates’ lives and to make sense of their teammates’ personal experiences and location. Furthermore, the ultimate goal of this activity was to facilitate the creation of a cohesive, communal environment, a team, and this resonates with those engaged in feminist pedagogies.

Unfortunately, Summitt ultimately assesses the outcome of the “Family Night” encounter a bit differently, which takes the potential for this situation to be an example of feminist coaching and turns it on its head. In her closing remarks regarding this experience, Summitt says, “I knew this [too]: I couldn’t afford to feel sorry for them. One thing you learn as a head coach is that you can’t save people from themselves. Coaches in general think they can – some of them even have God complexes...the truth is this: an eighteen-year-old is already a defined human being” (Summitt, 1998, p. 73).14 That is, instead of considering how the situatedness and backgrounds of various members of her team might play out in this setting, Summitt reads this sharing as a subtle cry from her team members to take it easy on them.

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14 Interestingly, Summitt notes earlier RS that she “demanded that they [her players] act like Pat, and think like Pat...A row of little Patlings” (p. 3). This could perhaps indicate a small ‘God complex’ of her own.
Contrary to Summitt's assessment, another vantage point notes that this exercise made salient the notion that student-athletes identify and exist in discourses that extend beyond the categories of 'student' and 'athlete.' This parallels the acknowledgement in feminist classrooms that multiple categories of 'difference' (race, class, age, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, ability status) impact the experiences, vantage point and possibilities of students, in addition to molding classroom, or in this case, team, dynamics. This realization complicates a pedagogical and/or coaching style that attempt to speak to the monolithic, unnamed student. Instead, concessions must be made to validate and celebrate various perspectives, viewpoints, experiences and needs without it being seen as 'taking it easy' on certain student-athletes. For instance, while Summitt fails to acknowledge race in any fashion in her text, Chamique Holdsclaw, Lady Vol from 1995-1999, addresses her status as a black woman on a predominantly white campus in her autobiography, Chamique. Holdsclaw (2000) notes, "Moving to Knoxville was more of a culture shock that I had expected...I was used to living amongst people of all ethnic groups, and there in Knoxville, you were either black or white" (p.77). Holdsclaw (2000) continues to talk about the campus environment and racism that existed. While Holdsclaw says that she did not experience racism personally, she attributes that to her athletic success and not necessarily to the lack of racism in the university or larger community. Summitt's inability to acknowledge this facet of her student-athletes' experiences fails to respect the multiple locations her athletes occupy.

Respecting and incorporating diversity must also manifest itself in the recruiting of student-athletes. Recent reports on the progress of women in sport since the passage
of Title IX indicates that the policy, in terms of intercollegiate athletics, has served white, middle-to-upper class women the most. Attention to diversity in term of the recruitment of student-athletes will ensure that the sport experience is an opportunity for women to learn from and about difference.

Creating Community

In order to create a sense of community, it remains imperative to consider how one might value all perspectives and cultivate an atmosphere wherein all players feel a part of the ‘team’ environment. While garnering increasing amounts of attention from academic studies to popular texts, oftentimes, the “female athlete,” becomes homogenized in such a way so as to set up a normalized version of the female athlete, which serves to ‘other’ those female athletes not fitting into this representation. As Shogan (1999) says,

An assumption that there are common experiences of ‘female athletes’ posits a standard or normal set of experiences for female athletes, making ‘other’ experiences exceptional accounts. A disabled female athlete, a black female athlete, or a lesbian athlete are, then, necessarily produced as ‘other’ to the norm of the ‘female athlete’ (p. 47).

To counter similar situations in the classroom, feminist pedagogues remain cognizant of the historically silenced voices in an effort to ensure that feminist classrooms do not replicate earlier paradigms while attempting to involve multiple voices and vantage points in classroom knowledge production. Current coaching models, especially within women’s sports, are not as concerned with the ‘unintentional’ silences of athletes who embrace certain identity categories. Shogan (1999) makes a concerted effort to criticize this under-theorized and unproblematized aspect of coaching as it relates to discourses on teamwork, team trust and team commitment. Shogan (1999) suggests that:
Teamwork...can only be sustained when there are restrictions on what can be communicated and on information with which athletes and coaches can be entrusted...if they are to retain a sense of cohesiveness...As an obvious example, there is still an imperative on most teams for gays and lesbians to remain silent about their sexuality (p. 81).

Self silencing prohibits certain members of teams from full integration, hence failing to create community.

Stratta’s 1998 study, “Barriers Facing African-American Women in College Sports: A Case Study Approach,” provides a poignant example of self silencing. Stratta’s study involved examining the experiences of “Dee,” an African-American women who ‘walked on’ (was not a recruited student-athlete) to the women’s tennis team at a predominately white university in the northeast. In one vignette, Dee explains her thought process and ultimate decision not to interject on a conversation on politics carried on by her teammates during a team function. Dee says,

I wanted to [like] express my views...but I just kept to myself. They would have been, like, ‘Oh, of course you know, she would want Clinton or whatever. Like...blacks automatically align themselves with Democrats. I felt maybe if I didn’t say anything, possibly that would be better...I wouldn’t be, like, perpetuating the stereotype thing...I don’t want to reinforce the stereotypes that they already have about blacks (quoted in Stratta, 1998, p. 23).

Dee’s insight and forethought into the possible consequences of her actions makes a number of things salient. While perhaps never ‘officially’ articulated, the dominant members of the team set the terms of the discussion on politics and therefore what could be said and what was not allowed. Dee realized that her dissent from the opinion purported by the majority of the (white) team’s vision had consequences not only in terms of her treatment on the team, but with shaping her teammates’ perceptions of
African-Americans. Therefore a sense of community, one aspect of which includes the free exchange of ideas, was not created on this team.\textsuperscript{15}

Summitt struggles with the cultivation of community in her own way. At first, Summitt attempts to build community and foster a sense of togetherness on her team by subjecting her new players to what she calls a “meltdown” (Summitt, 1998, p. 36). She feels that in order for a player to fit into the “Tennessee system” they must be “chipped and peeled away at” and then “put back together again” (Summitt, 1998, p. 36). The meltdown process includes correcting and instructing her players by yelling at them or embarrassing them – sometimes bringing them to tears. While this happens on the courts, Summitt also reaches out to the parents and guardians of her players, alerting them to the fact that they may receive phone call soon form a frustrated Lady Vol who wishes to quit and return home. Summitt requests that these parents support her and the program by not allowing this option to occur.

While this may be one way of facilitating, or rather forcing, a cohesive unit, the process fails to reach some players, something Summitt realizes when she speaks to the complexities of Tennessee legend, Chamique Holdsclaw: “She (Holdsclaw) was urgently driven...on the other hand, [an] almost frail-seeming young woman, so soft-spoken” (Summitt, 1998, p. 47). So, “in her first two seasons, I treated her gingerly,” Summitt says (ibid., p. 47). In this confession, one sees that Summitt’s way of dealing with Holdsclaw hints that she recognizes that “her system” may not work for all players. Summitt description points to the fact that she never completely understood Chamique

\textsuperscript{15} See Valerie Still’s article, “A 15-year Playing Career is Quieted but Not her Voice,” for more on the
and perhaps “her system” was ill-equipped to handle Holdesclaw’s hybridity. Holdesclaw’s success during her time at Tennessee speaks to the correct decision made by Summitt’s to modify her coaching methods and styles based on the perceived needs of individual players. Creating a community or team might require that student-athletes be on the ‘same page’ but does not demand that all players be treated exactly the same.

**Rethinking power and authority**

To examine how this aspect of feminist pedagogies might be applied to coaching, it is necessary to re-visit an incident detailed in Chapter One, which described a difference of opinion between Summitt and Abby Coaklin, a forward on the 1996-7 National Championship team. During a team meeting where she assessed the previous night’s home loss against Stanford, Summitt said that Coaklin “had played terribly” and had clearly deviated from the designed strategy. Coaklin verbalized her take on the game by saying, “I don’t agree with you” (Summitt, 1998, p. 15). In her assessment of the situation, Summitt feels that by speaking out, Coaklin, as a team leader, had let her down: “Abby’s most critical responsibility as a leader was to back me up, no matter what. If she wasn’t going to respect our game plan, no one else was” (Summitt, 1998, p. 15). In addition, Summitt suggests that Coaklin’s actions demonstrated a lack of respect for Summitt’s abilities as a coach.

While it remains unclear how Coaklin’s retort impacted team dynamics or rapport, or if the team had established that certain times and places wherein discussing silencing of female athletes.

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16 Jim Thompson’s third chapter (“Learning to Love Puerto Rico: Sharing Power with Players”) from *Shooting in the Dark* offers more suggestions on how to de-center power and authority within a player-coach relationship.
game strategies was possible, feminist pedagogies provide a different way in which to consider this scenario. Instead of considering Conklin’s retort as an attempt to challenge Summitt’s authority, one might see it as a chance to dialogue on the politics of knowledge production and a call for a reconsideration of the owners of knowledge within the current coaching paradigm. Coaches and pedagogues alike have consistently “excluded the personal voice as a source of knowledge” (Forrest and Rosenberg, 1997, pg. 86). While some coaches utilize methods that include getting feedback from their players and attempt to incorporate the knowledge that their players’ glean from their on-court experience, others continue to privilege more procedural knowledge. More procedural statements such as “this play best counters a two-three defense” are privileged over players’ perspectives derived from actual on-court interaction – what might be considered embodied knowledge or grounded theory.  

By pointing this out, I, by no means, am suggesting that coaches should relinquish ‘power’ during brief time outs or turn over all play calling and game planning to the players. The perspective one gains from watching on the sidelines offers much to the athlete competing on the playing field. Rather, I suggest an incorporation of the perspectives of players during halftime discussions, pre-season conditioning workouts, individual workouts (a time in which one or two players meet individually with coaches during the off-season to hone specific skills), in the planning of practices, scouting opposing teams and in the identification of any strategic problems/shortfalls the team

17 It’s quite ironic that this is the case considering the fact that most coaches have ‘learned’ their trade via playing and that playing experience is often suggested/required when applying for coaching positions in the college ranks.
may have. Certain parameters would have to be set in order to ensure that chaos does not ensue; if 12 players offer their suggestions during a brief halftime period, this would be an ineffective use of time. However, nominating a spokesperson or requesting that one or two players be responsible for assisting with the scouting report of the next opponent are feasible. Furthermore, veteran players would be especially useful in detailing a scouting report of opposing teams, as they are most likely familiar with their opponents’ playing style and tendencies. This is an example of how embodied knowledge and a rethinking of power and authority might manifest itself in a coaching scenario.

In addition, not only might this create more of a dialogue between players and coaches and call for a reconfiguration of the prevailing power structure of coaching methods, but it would also allow female athletes to discover the qualifications needed to become a basketball coach and give them an opportunity to test their skills in this arena. This might possibly turn them onto the prospect of coaching their own teams one day which is especially important considering the current dearth of female coaches in women’s college sports. Currently 46% of all coaches of women’s teams are females; this is the lowest percentage since 1972 (Carpenter & Acosta, cited in Murray, p. 2). Indirectly, then, the inclusion of female athletes into the decision-making process is a form of social action.

**Incorporating Social Action**

Many coaches currently integrate a plan for community service into their coaching philosophies. Examples include involving teams in civic projects, hosting and organizing basketball clinics for boys and girls, speaking at various functions, and
educating other members of the athletic department on issues of relevance to female intercollegiate athletes. However, what I seek to explore in this section is what social action that is specifically situated within and against the institution of sport might look like. By social change, I mean to suggest some sort of activity that attempts to address the needs of a community – be it the campus community, or the “female athlete” community. In doing so, I knowingly privilege one type of social action over others. Certainly, the mere presence of strong, physical women working together can be considered a form of social action, but I wish to look at experiences of social activism that involve the team in some collective sense.

I refer to Shogan (1999) to elaborate on these possibilities. While she refers to the rubric of “sports ethics,” and I speak of the possibilities of social action in sport, the language difference proves to be of minimal significance. Both are concerned with creating motivated, strong, willing participants in the struggle to modify the institution of modern sport. Shogan (1999) writes:

I am suggesting a new role for sport ethics that takes up the features of Foucault’s ethics: a pedagogical role that encourages active and ongoing questioning by participants of the ways in which sport discipline normalizes practices that would otherwise be considered harmful and that produce athletes capable of and willing to engage in these practices (p. 91).

Encouraging and inviting a questioning of accepted standards treatment in order to improve the lives of student-athletes is a form of social action that would simultaneously shape the institution of sport while seeking to enhance the lives of its participants. Unionizing or forming some sort of network within and amongst the teams
of women athletes would be a way to address concerns of this specific community.\textsuperscript{18} The Collegiate Athletes Coalition (CAC) is a group created by the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) student-athletes, with the primary goal of improving the lives of student-athletes who participate in Division I football and men’s basketball. Their ultimate aspiration includes the creation of a national association of Division I-A football teams that would be able to affect NCAA rules and regulations. Many of their major goals – increasing life insurance policies, eliminating NCAA employment restrictions – are issues that also affect the lives of female athletes. This type of social action – activity that seeks to affect change at an institutional level demonstrates a form of social action that could be supported by coaching methods concerned with the well-being of student-athletes in all areas of their lives.

A screaming silence within Summitt’s texts is a lack of attention to social action or a social agenda. While this is not unique to Summitt’s program or all that surprising considering her anti-feminist sentiments, it indicates a problem of many teams: the failure to situate sport within a larger social context or adequately prepares student-athletes for life after sport. Much is made of the ways in which sport (potentially) teaches women to be strong, aggressive, leaders, but oftentimes these skills fail to be utilized in a socially progressive manner that could affect change in communities.

\textsuperscript{18} I mean unionizing in an informal sense. Student-athletes are not permitted to officially unionize, as they are not considered employees of the university.
CONCLUSION

TOWARDS A FEMINIST COACHING METHODOLOGY

In this thesis, I have deconstructed Pat Summitt’s text, Reach for the Summitt, in order to demonstrate the constraints under which women coaches must operate within the male domain of sport. The rhetoric, stories and points of emphasis Summitt chooses to disclose reveal that the ‘apologetic’ behavior of female sports stars is alive and well. I catalog Summitt’s emphasis on her son, her husband, her father and her anti-feminist sentiments as female apologetic behavior and point to its usefulness in positioning her within the realm of ‘normal’ feminine behavior, something her vast sporting accomplishments will never do. My project, however, goes beyond merely identifying the constraints under which Summitt (and all female coaches) must operate, and the rhetorical strategies she imparts to acquiesce to the demands of male hegemony in sport. Instead, I see the identification of the strategies deployed by Summitt as the first step in exposing the ways in which male hegemony in sport fails to consider the presence and needs of the female athlete. In that vein, Chapter Two suggests coaching strategies that might better serve the needs of female athletes.
While most of my concerns stem from my experiences as a collegiate female athlete and the insight I have assembled through my time in sport, there is increasing evidence that more female athletes are recognizing the shortcomings of 'traditional' coaching methodologies. For example, a story on The University of Minnesota, in search of a new head coach for their women's basketball team, reported that several current players contacted the University of Minnesota women's athletic director "voicing concerns" over the candidate she was considering and the candidate's "demanding coaching style," requesting someone willing to impart the more "relaxed style" of their previous coach. This news is promising for two reasons. Not only does it suggest that the climate for appropriate and acceptable coaching styles in the realm of women's basketball might be shifting, but it also provides an example of female athletes making explicit their needs and interests.

In line with my notions of what a feminist approach to coaching entails, I consider this a beginning, as opposed to a final say, on the possibilities of a merger between feminist pedagogy and coaching. Many of my suggestions, while grounded in my personal experiences as a player and a coach, are exploratory in nature and the infusion of feminism into sport is fraught with tension. As a senior student-athlete at a Division I institution, I endeavored to found an organization that united the female athlete community and would address issues of concern to this community in a proactive manner. While we were able to meet a few times and engaged in several 'community service' activities, discussions on what we would like to see changed or needs we had that were not being met rarely happened. The difficulty in accommodating so many
different class, practice, game, weightlifting and conditioning sessions limited the time we had to meet. In addition, many of us who were aware of the historical struggles of women in sport were content to be competing and receiving funding at a Division I institution, something many women before us did not have the chance to do. However, there were a few committed feminist student-athletes interested in pursuing the more activist vision I had for this organization which indicates that including feminist thought into this arena is feasible.

My attempt to infuse feminist tenets into my own coaching experience last year met mixed reviews. I de-centered the power dynamics often by asking my players for advice, suggestions and to assess their individual performances as well as the needs of the team. While my initial request that they speak up resulted in averted eyes and shrugs, eventually some players felt more comfortable in sharing their thoughts and opinions with me and with the rest of the team. While I made explicit efforts to explain my rationale and coaching philosophies, I identified a number of factors that significantly hindered my feminist coaching possibilities. I met with my team only twice a week, so full-fledged feminist coaching would have to be fit in within the already limited time we had to spend on drills, scrimmaging and conditioning. The age group of the team (all were either 12 or 13 years old) meant that they had little exposure to alternative coaching methods. Hence the strong possibility existed that they inferred my style to be incorrect as opposed to just different. Finally, the age range and caliber of my team required
significant parental involvement. I sensed that many of the parents and I diverged considerably on coaching philosophies and general approaches to youth sport. I have a feeling that my ability to intuit this suggests that my team members might have also sensed this which would affect their commitment to the goals and approaches I chose.

While my modest attempts at feminist coaching met only moderate success, I maintain that college coaches, who spend more time with their players and have athletes beginning to develop their own ideas about coaching and the institution of sport, can negotiate some of my suggestions to suit the needs of their individual programs. As Dewar (1991) suggests, teaching (or coaching) as a feminist “is not about creating a utopia” but “being prepared to critically examine and reflect” on the approaches and systems one currently utilizes (p. 77). An uncritical adoption of the suggestions I have made would not be in line with feminist tenets upon which I base my coaching methodology. Instead, I suggest that coaches incorporating feminist coaching methods remain open to continual assessment and revisions to their coaching methods. I also want feminist coaches to envision new ways to incorporate tenets of feminist pedagogies and feminism into their coaching.

Resistance and reluctance, on a personal level and on the part of student-athletes, is highly likely, and this project has not explored suggestions on how one might deal with resistance to feminist approaches to coaching. One possible area for further research would examine the ways in which feminist pedagogues have countered resistance within their classrooms to see what possibilities to apply this to a coaching arena exist.

19 My team participated in AAU basketball. In essence, we were a traveling team and membership on this
Furthermore, as I have seen little work elsewhere on the possible fusion between feminist pedagogy and coaching, I support the documentation of any attempt at feminist coaching so that experiences, insights, critiques, and shortcomings will be available to others wishing to experiment with and incorporate tactics of feminist coaching.

Moreover, criticism of the 'problems' within intercollegiate athletics often suggests that university presidents and leaders need to instigate change. While I concur that their governance and leadership must be a part of any solutions, I feel it is less than satisfactory not to consider the possibilities of change starting at a position closer to the student-athlete. By this I mean to suggest that coaches have been granted too much leniency when it comes to discussing the current status of intercollegiate sport and wherein the responsibility lies. As those closest to the athletes, coaches have a responsibility to ensure that the needs of their teams are being met and must be willing to adopt their own coaching philosophies even (and especially when) this deviates from the status quo.
Appendix A

DISCRIMINATION IN THE CONTEXT OF SPORT

Briefly reflect on your athletic career to this point and answer the following questions:

1. Do you think your sports experience is in any way shaped by your gender?

2. Can you think of a time when you were treated differently because you were a female? How did it make you feel? Did you ever want to stop playing your sport because of differential treatment you received?

3. Were/are the female athletes at your high school treated the same as the male athletes? Better? Worse? Try to think of specific examples.

4. Have you ever been stereotyped (athletically) because of your race?

5. Does your racial or ethnic identity help or hinder your athletic career? Does your racial/ethnic background support sports participation for females?

6. How has your social class status limited or encouraged your sports participation? Have they ever been athletic camps/equipment/opportunities that you or your family could not afford?

7. Has do issues of sexuality factor into the lives of female athletes?

8. How does homophobia impact all female athletes?

9. How have you effectively dealt with any of the above questions of gender, racial, ethnic, or class inequality and discrimination?

10. How should coaches deal with these issues? If possible, give suggestions that have worked for you or your team in the past.
LIST OF REFERENCES


