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AFRICAN-AMERICAN YOUTH AND SPORT: A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF SPORT IN LIFE

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kirk Edward Peterson
August 2000

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, son, and parents

Mrs. Rachel and Caleb Ashe Peterson

And

Mr. James Everitt Peterson

And

Mrs. Marsha Lyons Peterson

For giving me the opportunity to pursue my dreams and realizing my goals

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the perceptions of six African-American male youth (11-13 years of age) regarding the role of sport in their lives. Participant responses were probed concerning: (a) family background, (b) perceptions of the role sport played in life, (c) perception of how his family viewed him as an athlete, and (d) perceptions of himself as an athlete.

The themes that emerged from their perceptions of the role of sport in life included: (a) self-concept (b) family support and involvement, and (c) sport as an opportunity. The sub-themes associated with self-concept were size/physicality and being the best. Modesty, pressure management, leadership, and sportsmanship were other concepts identified by some participants when they compared themselves to others or the nature of their sport. The second theme focused on family involvement and encouragement, which determined that all had experiences that they believed served as support and encouragement in their lives. Sub-themes of the third theme, sport as an opportunity, included: (a) social mobility, (b) enhanced health and improvement in primary sport, (c) recognition of desired attributes, and (d) friendships.

These African-American youth considered sport a vehicle for social mobility which included receiving an education, repaying family for support, and having travel opportunities. These youth participated in sport for fun, to be with friends, to enhance physical fitness, to avoid potential illegal activities, and to improve in their primary sport.

The participants all spoke of the importance of family involvement and that without family encouragement, sport would not be as interesting. All participants discussed their thoughts regarding the physical nature of certain sports. It was noted by

all participants that being the best was important; but it was not critical to be the best all the time; and they realized that this was a favorable attribute. Several participants discussed the importance of remaining modest even when they were the best. Other self-concept issues included modesty, pressure management, leadership, and sportsmanship. Many of the participants enjoyed pressure situations which included taking the last shot; and others spoke about the qualities of leadership and that sportsmanship was an integral part of being a good athlete.

The insight provided by these six African-American male youth resulted in themes that supported and added new information to the existing body of knowledge concerning youth sport. Other African-American youth might have similar experiences and insights, but further investigations of African-American youth in sport are warranted.

PREFACE

I would like to preface this dissertation by explaining my own path to, and the personal importance of investigating youth and sport and, specifically, African-American youth and sport. For many years prior to the initiation of this research, I had questions pertaining to the involvement of, or lack of, African-Americans in sport. Before entering graduate school, I participated in sport and coached youth sport teams. In fact, coaching filled a void that was left when competing in organized sport was no longer available to me due to injuries. In general, I have strong feelings pertaining to youth sport and the many lessons, both positive and negative, which accompany the sport experience, peers, and coaches who are involved.

When competing in football, basketball, baseball, and track, I was in company of many races. On the other hand, while I was competing in swimming, tennis, and soccer, there was an absence of, or there were very few, individuals outside my race who participated. I was perplexed as to why great athletes, such as those who competed in football, baseball, track, and basketball did not compete, or even participate, in the other sports.

Prior to the initiation of my research and through numerous literary accounts that I read, I realized my strong feelings about sport and my need for involvement in sport. Through the process of reading about African-Americans and sport and by reflecting on personal involvement in sport, both as an athlete and as a coach, I began wondering whether African-American youth participate in sport for the same reasons as mine. Initially, the intrigue of knowing the potential reasons behind African-American youth involvement in sport was the catalyst for this investigation. I reflected on occasions

where African-Americans and Caucasians were teammates who participated in baseball, basketball, football, and track. However, I was puzzled about the reasons behind the seeming lack of involvement in sports such as golf, soccer, swimming, hockey, tennis, skiing, and volleyball.

Once I began the doctoral degree process, the opportunity to explore the potential reasons behind African-American youth sport involvement was provided. There is an understanding that this dissertation is qualitative and, therefore, unique in the sense that the reasons given by each participant might not be an accurate portrayal of African-American youth as a whole. Once I started reading about this topic, I was amazed at the lack of literature which may be indicative of the level of importance of understanding cultural diversity as it relates to sport involvement.

One piece of literature that I found interesting and insightful stunned me, i.e., where Nathan McCall (1994) referred to the game against a white man as a war. It is vital to gain access to experiences, perceptions, and stories by other African-Americans or researchers who have delved into the world of African-American sport. I struggled to gain access to information about the world of the African-American youth and sport due to the lack of available literature. In fact, the bulk of research focusing on minority recreational opportunity is within the area of the disadvantaged and sport. The lack of references, as well as pertinent studies focusing on sport involvement for African-American youth, is an indication that researchers have focused minimal effort concerning the details of minority and recreational opportunities. I found some of the most helpful sources to be personal accounts of African-American athletes concerning their lives and sport involvement.

The following study is an example of how African-American athletes are discriminated against and disallowed to participate in different arenas of sport. This investigation was an attempt to become familiar with the lives of six African-American male youth that I might otherwise not understand. Because I am a white male, gaining access to the culture of young African-American athletes was difficult. Through personal friends, I was provided an opportunity to speak with young African-American athletes and to learn about their experiences and their perceptions about involvement in sport.

I have learned that perceptions of athletes and athletic participation differ greatly, and it cannot be assumed that reasons for athletic involvement are similar for all young athletes or hold the same significance across all cultures. Therefore, stereotypes or generalizations cannot presume to inform us about individual participants and their perceptions and experiences concerning the role of sport in their life. To this end, the voices of each youth and their experiences should be respected as individual accounts relating to sport involvement.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Studying African-American male youth in sport only scratches the surface of the need to study voices other than white, middle-class males, or only elite athletes. Investigating experiences and perceptions of African-Americans pertaining to the role sport plays in their lives is warranted. Because research in sport often deals with the elite athlete and the quality of life for the few advantaged, the voices of African-American youth may cause researchers to open their eyes to the necessity of studying all groups involved in activities rather than concentrating myopically. Through this changed or new vision, it may be possible for researchers and readers to become aware of how individuals become oppressed or of how minority athletes become well represented in the sporting world. The stories that could be heard and read may prove to be assets to coaches, teachers, parents, researchers, and academicians.

Brinson and Robinson (1990) reported that despite emphasis being placed on the physical attributes of African-American athletes, their athletic success is not entirely due to physical characteristics. Although African-Americans are making strides in sport, which are stereotypically denoted as "country club," their successes are still being credited to superior physique, African ancestry, and natural talents, rather than to intellectualism or motivation. Motivation begins with self-confidence and self-efficacy. Although Brinson and Robinson (1990) did not refer to a specific race, they stated that a young athlete who feels good about himself and demonstrates a high level of confidence is more likely to become involved in competitive athletics.

For African-American athletes, repeated success through participatory modeling is a critical aspect of self-efficacy (Brinson & Robinson, 1990). In participatory modeling, a person is able to watch and learn from a model performing a task and is given an opportunity to replicate what he has seen. Brinson and Robinson (1990) noted that it is important that the model is a member of the same ethnic group as the observer. The message, which is construed by the observer who is a member of the same ethnic group as the model, is that the activity or participation by a member of the same ethnic group is acceptable. By observing a member of the ethnic group participating, further involvement is welcomed and rewarded by the ethnic group. Therefore, psychological barriers are removed when African-Americans observe other African-Americans participating in sport.

> Therefore, the reason that there are only a few black swimmers, golfers, and tennis players is not because they lack the athletic ability but rather because blacks have had limited access to black models and limited opportunities to participate in these sports. African-Americans have seen other blacks excel in basketball, football, boxing, and track and field for many years. They watch these models and then through participatory modeling gain strong feelings of self-efficacy (Brinson & Robinson, 1990, p. 256).

Socialization in sport is important for African-Americans, and there are different accounts about how African-Americans have become aware of sport and competition. For example, Nathan McCall (1994) recounted how he was reared around competition and learned what was expected of an African-American young man.

> It is a cardinal rule on the block that a brother couldn't let himself be beaten by three groups of people: gays, girls, and white boys. Of the three, defeat at the hands of a white boy brought the most disgrace. If a dude let himself be beaten by a white boy, he was forever afterward identified by that dishonor: 'That's So-and-so. He let a *white boy* beat him.' Everybody within earshot

> would sadly shake their head, as if So-and-so were the sorriest motherfucka on the face of the earth.
>
> I guess that's why I never told the fellas about what happened to me at Alfor J. Mapp, that white junior high school I briefly attended. Even though those white boys double- and triple-banked me, it didn't seem likely that the brothers would sympathize. So as far as the public record was concerned, I was undefeated when it came to fighting white boys. I was about 30-0. All the fellas went undefeated because we double-banked.
>
> We all hated white people. The fellas and I never talked about specific things they'd done to us, but we instinctively knew that each of us had been through bad scenes with white folks before. So we took it out on white boys. (McCall, 1994, p.58)

McCall (1994, 1997), an African-American author, wrote two books which provide insight into part of the African-American community. He presented personal stories that account for his experience as an African-American man and shared his perceptions about the oppression, the racism, and the life of an African-American. McCall (1994, 1997) reported that games played against Caucasian men were often viewed as a war.

> Jim, who also worked constantly to improve his vocabulary, taught me to play the word game Scrabble. He'd memorized many of the two-, three-, and four-letter words in the dictionary to help him score high points. We were often joined in fierce matches by Lee Hargrave, the serial murderer who worked with me in the library. One day, after Hargrave had won a game and left the room,
>
> Jim said "Hey, man, we can't let this white boy beat us on the Scrabble board."
>
> Initially, I didn't get it. "What's the problem?"
>
> "Don't you know this cracker thinks he's smarter than us because he's white and we're black? Can't you tell that? He's always trying to bluff us with medical words he thinks we don't know."
>
> I knew what Jim meant. I got that same feeling when I played whites at chess. I got the feeling that white boys automatically assumed they could beat me on the board because chess was a thinking person's game. I was black and they were white, and therefore they were better thinkers. They never came out and said it, but I could tell by their confident body language and their smug analyses of moves made during games that they assumed they were superior. That's why, whenever I played whites at chess, the fun went completely out of the game. It

> was war disguised as a game. Every nerve in my body stood on end and my mind focused sharply on every piece on the board; I was like a boxer, eyeing an opponent's every feint and move, ready to use sharply honed reflexes to make him pay dearly for the slightest mistake.
>
> After Jim pulled my coat to Hargrave, we came up with a way to cheat him "like white folks cheat us." Jim, who was a great defensive Scrabble player, made sure he sat in front of Hargrave to prevent him from getting openings to score high points. Whenever Hargrave took the lead, Jim and I secretly fed each other key letters to make sure one of us won the game.
>
> Hargrave never won a game after that. I don't know if he caught on, but it didn't matter. No one else in our building played Scrabble. He loved the game, so he *had* to play with us, or not play at all. (McCall, 1994, 200-201)

Movies involving and following the lives of African-American athletes, i.e., Hoop Dreams (James, Marx, & Gilbert, 1994) and He Got Game (Kilik & Lee, 1998), have brought the subject of African-American athletes' involvement in sport into the modern media. These movies were portrayals of the lives of the three African-American young men. These were excellent accounts of the lives and experiences of the youth depicted. The reasons behind sport involvement indicated themes of masculinity, financial freedom for self and family, family pressure on success, the achievement of the professional dream, a means of expressing oneself through the artistry of the game, and the recruitment and assimilation of African-American athletes into sport and higher education because of their athletic talent rather than their academic potential.

There may be other reasons for athletic participation than those presented in these two movies. Oglesby (1993) posited that high costs of equipment, available facilities, and geographic limitations might dissuade or prevent minorities from participating in certain sports.

> Many other sports, like golf, swimming, and tennis have few performers of color because of the high costs of equipment, apparel, coaching or lessons, facility

> rental, medical care, travel to competitions and housing, geographic limitations, and the pressure of home responsibilities for child care or earnings to supplement the family income. Certainly for the growing black upper and middle classes, these are surmountable problems. For a larger segment of racial minority populations, however, without specific affirmative plans to change the status quo, the doors will not open (Oglesby, 1993, p. 254).

Edwards (1983) suggested,

> There are four reasons why sport tends to be more salient in the black subculture: (a) black males spend an inordinate amount of time honing their athletic skills while believing they will become professional athletes; (b) there is a dearth of highly visible black role models in fields other than sport and entertainment; (c) the black family and community tend to over-reward achievement in athletics relative to other forms of achievement; and (d) black males are more likely to see sport participation as a way of proving their manhood (p. 50).

There are a number of issues suggested by this information, i.e., masculinity, commitment of time, lack of role models, and reward systems that are vital to the young athlete.

M. Merleau-Ponty (1962) stated that we understand others' experiences through introspective recollection of similar experiences, thoughts, or perceptions.

> Looking for the world's essence is not looking for what it is as an idea once it has been reduced to a theme of discourse; it is looking for what it is as a fact for us, before any thematization. Sensationalism "reduces" the world by noting that after all, we never experience anything but states of ourselves (M. Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xv).

Merleau-Ponty was correct in his attribution of personal experiences, which are perceived initially by individuals, secondly by researchers, and subsequently by society. What is real is determined subjectively and experienced, as well as perceived, through various stages of our own experiences. Researchers attempt to understand through personal experiences and relate those experiences to the account described by the participant.

Simply, we understand or make sense of our experiences in a rather raw form, and then the experience is classified with similar perceptions and accounts from previous exposure as well as from others' realizations. Therefore, the realness and essence of the experience are vital to the participant and researcher's understanding if the participant is able to express his perceived factual account. It is important to attempt to understand the account from the perspective of the person explaining his experience. Exploring the personal experience of the participant entails constant clarification through the use of probing questions that afford insight into the world being described. Simply accepting the verbal account and assuming a comprehension of the personal meaning to the experience may lead to a mistake when the researcher must express his participant's perceptions and experiences. Therefore, it is crucial to be aware of one's biases and presumptions based on the research question, which allows the researcher to question better and clarify the participant's story and thus comprehend what is being described from the participant's perspective.

M. Merleau-Ponty (1962) also stated, "The real has to be described, not constructed or formed" (p. x). This is an important idea because communication is often juxtaposed through perceptions and agendas of the listener or researcher. As researchers, we must allow the description of experience to be explained and understood in the voice of the participant. We cannot take the word and simply accept the experience and perception because we assume it to be similar to ours. In fact, "real" is and can only be determined intrapersonally at the time when the event occurs, rather than after it has had time to be digested through the lens of others' perceptions, experiences, and attributions.

The beauty of qualitative research is that the participants have an opportunity to explain their thoughts, perceptions, and experiences. Individual accounts or constructs are unique in that they are the only people that can describe those specific perspectives that each explains. They may be tangential to other accounts, but they are individual and unique. To better ascertain the themes and perceptions of the individuals involved, ethnography, existentialism, and qualitative reviews can explain experiences as each person relates to others, with oneself, with sport, and with their environment. When a qualitative research strategy is being used, the researcher has the opportunity to locate common themes from within the transcripts of all the participants. The ability to explain experiences in relation to each person amounts to rigorous analysis of the transcripts and an accurate representation of the participant's experiences and perceptions.

Buraway (1991) noted that social science is reduced to a dialogue between insider and outsider aimed at mutual self-understanding. Thus, what is ideal is the comprehension of self by the study and appreciation of others. Furthermore, the ethnographer must identify existing social theories that inform the way we organize and pursue our lives (Buraway, 1991). As researchers begin to traverse the field of multicultural understanding and exploration, perhaps one culture at a time, Kurzman (1991) indicated that this forces researchers to ask why they might have been wrong when thoughts pertain to existing social perspectives and to personal ideas and stereotypes. This has profound implications for enlightenment and awareness of another culture and sense of identity. Thus, cultural appreciation becomes a series of self-conscious explorations of interventions in which one searches for, investigates, evaluates

and then reformulates their thoughts toward life and research.

Stach (1991) indicated that members of a culture have biases that affect their perceptions of themselves; outsiders bring biases to the cultures they study. Although life experiences of researchers and participants produce a difference in perceptions, these perceptions can be shared. Whether studying the elite or the poor, if one hopes to discover the rules of routine behavior, the observer must attempt to learn how to move into the world of those observed. That is, the researcher should attempt to gain an understanding and appreciation of the private world of those being examined.

Spradley (1980) stated that ethnography is the work of describing a culture through the understanding of another way of life that is not inherently known to the researcher. Learning from people includes discovering that the insider's view is a different knowledge from one that rests mainly on the outsider's view, even when he is a trained social scientist. Jacobs (1970) also posited that one might best perceive social behavior through direct examination of human life. He reported that science, be it qualitatively or quantitatively driven, should shed light on the area of group life that one proposes to study. In fact, "No theorizing, however ingenious, and no observance of scientific protocol, however meticulous, is substituted for developing a familiarity with what is actually going on in the sphere of life under study" (Jacobs, 1970, p. 7).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of African-American male youth regarding the role of sport in their lives. I asked questions and probed responses specifically on each participant's account of his sport experience based on: (a)

his family background, (b) his perception of what role sport plays in life, (c) his perception of how his family views him as an athlete, and (d) his perception of himself as an athlete. In order to accomplish this purpose, additional questions were used to facilitate the interaction. Examples of topics included: (a) sports the participant would be willing to try learning other than the ones in which they were currently participating and why, (b) their reasons for currently participating in sport, (c) whether they participated in sport because they felt it is culturally acceptable, (d) what they hoped to gain from participation in sport, (e) how participation in sport has affected their life, (f) if sport could do something for each participant, what that would entail, and (g) whether the participant was involved in sport for a variety of reasons or for a singular interest, and (h) with whom they would like to be compared from the sporting world and why.

Definition of Terms

To facilitate the explanation of this study, some terms that were used are defined and placed in context. Throughout this project I refer to athletics and sport interchangeably. By this I presume that athletics is the organized competitive setting in which youth participate in a sport and within which they are formally coached and have an established schedule of events. Because athletics can conjure various images from complex to simplistic exercises, I intend to allow each participant to define athletics as he determines.

I refer to family within the investigation as any member of the extended or immediate family with whom the participant has direct interaction. Because family members are involved in the mental, emotional, and physical development of the

participant, the introduction to athletics might be through family exposure. Therefore, the perceptions the participant presumes his parents have of him as an athlete may provide insight into reasons behind his participation and the athletic arenas in which he competes. I also refer to social mobility within the investigation as improving social status (Dubois, 1986); realizing fame, wealth, and success (Wiggins, 1985); and acquiring a college education, pursuing a lucrative career, and assisting their families financially (Wiggins, 1985).

Scope of the Study

The interest of this investigation lies within the perceptions and insights to the aforementioned questions by African-American males ranging in age from 11 to 13 years. Because I have participated in competitive youth athletics with other male youth, I am particularly interested in the perceptions and experiences of African-American male youth. Because the reasons behind sport involvement of male and female youth may be different and the professional opportunities that exist are different, I am interested in the male youth perspective concerning experiences and perceptions regarding the role of sport in life. These youth were active participants in competitive athletic programs, which included community parks and recreation departments as well as year-around athletic teams which travel throughout the year participating in athletic contests. The youth were involved in both team and individual sports. The data were collected from youth involved in a southeastern youth basketball league and parks and recreation department.

Assumptions

Given the age of the population interviewed, the researcher assumed that each participant was aware of what he was feeling and experiencing related to his athletic involvement. Because the researcher might misinterpret valid and germane points of the investigation due to the difference in race and age, the researcher probed with clarifying questions to understand better the perceptions and experiences being described. It was assumed that the participants could accurately describe what they were feeling and experiencing in a reflective, retrospective, and introspective manner. It was assumed that the participants were able to recall accurately the feelings and experiences about the questions they were asked during the interview. It was assumed that the participants were able to articulate their feelings pertaining to their thoughts, perceptions, and feelings concerning past, present, and future involvement in athletics. Lastly, due to a small number of participants chosen to recall and articulate their feelings, their experiences, and their perceptions, it is assumed that the themes are not generalizable to all other African-American youth.

Significance of the Investigation

Birrell (1989) stated:

> The definition of race as a biological category has gone unchallenged for centuries, but current theoretical approaches attempt to deconstruct that commonsense by focusing on the processes of racial relations, racial formation, and racialization. Since sport also is thought to derive its essence from its physical nature, it would appear that the connections between dominant discourses on race and sport could offer the grounding for constructing a new understanding of the way that racial relations, and race itself, are produced and reproduced in sport (Birrell, 1989, p. 223).

The results of this investigation may provide helpful information to several groups of people, i.e., sport psychology consultants, coaches, academicians, and future researchers. Future researchers may benefit from this investigation by reading the experiences and accounts of the participants and by learning how, as a consultant or researcher, to equip oneself better to ask appropriate questions and to determine which method of obtaining important information might be useful. Sport psychology consultants and researchers can become more in tune with the perspectives of sport involvement as given by the participants through this investigation. A consultant or researcher must appreciate perspectives and experiences of minority athletes. This would prove to be beneficial in order to assist these athletes in times where consultation may be warranted and in times where further research may be beneficial as a means of becoming better acquainted with a voice that may be otherwise misunderstood or unrealized.

Other benefits include a contribution to the body of knowledge on the perceived role(s) of sport in the lives of these particular African-American youth and a better understanding about the relationship between sport and life. The information obtained in this investigation provides insights regarding race issues and sport involvement for African-American youth. Other benefits of the study include an understanding of the characteristics of African-American involvement in sport and non-involvement in sport. This study is significant because it investigates the role of sport in life, contributes to the body of knowledge concerning participant perceptions of the relationship between sport and their lives, and adds new information as well as related information to the literature concerning African-American involvement in sport.

Bias Statement

In this study, I have become aware of my perceptions, biases, and experiences of sport and the vital role sport has played. In the past, I defined myself as an athlete and, through the achievements earned in sport, I recognized that participation in sport was an integral force in my life. Through sport and instruction from family and coaches, I have learned from both positive and negative sport experiences. I have become a better person for these reflective experiences and battles, as well as from the camaraderie, influences, and insight sport has afforded me as I grew up in age-group athletics and while I was in organized high school and college athletics.

I have an awareness of my own experiences with sport as a white male and the role it has played in my own life. However, I believed that there are fundamental lessons learned in sport. Whether it was a lesson about sportsmanship, intensity, perseverance, determination or humility, I have found that, through sport, I have learned a great deal that has carried over into my daily life. I recognized that sport and the perceived effects for each athlete would differ. With this in mind, I have tried to be careful not to let my familiarity with sport and my predisposition of the benefits lead my line of questioning with the participants of this investigation. Through my bracketing interview, I became aware of my presumption of the role sport portrayed in life. Due to this understanding, and with my biases in mind, misinterpretation of the participants' responses based on my previous exposure and current philosophy of youth sport were greatly reduced.

I acknowledged and openly recognized my position on youth involvement in sport. I firmly believed sport to be a wonderful asset in a child's life where discipline, hard work, determined and focused goals, and dedication could be experienced and learned. I am convinced that youth should take advantage of a variety of sporting opportunities to grow and understand the many philosophies and intricacies in each sport. Sport could be a time of great elation and also a time of great disappointment, but I felt that both provide equally important lessons.

However, due to my thoughts pertaining to sport, I found, although difficult at times, the task of not leading the participants to the response I presumed to be "right." I also understood that I was not familiar with the African-American male's perception of sport; rather, I only based my experiences from those of a privileged white male. I made every attempt to adequately and thoroughly probe the statements and I asked pertinent questions as they related to the spoken word of the participants.

I recognized that I was not familiar with African-American life, but I did have feelings as to why individuals participated in sport. I also recognized there were numerous assumptions and preconceived ideas about African-Americans in sport and the quality of performance associated with skin color and sport involvement. I recognized that there was a societal assumption about the natural superiority of African-American athletes. In addition, I believed there were societal assumptions pertaining to the athletic superiority as well as academic inferiority of African-Americans. I also recognized that African-Americans might have limited access to media, role models, and opportunity to participate in certain sports. I felt that African-Americans were not provided with the

same opportunities as their white counterparts. For example, as I have driven through areas in Tennessee, Alabama, and Illinois, which were denoted as African-American neighborhoods, I noticed that basketball courts, open fields (on which football and baseball may be played), and tracks were located nearby. On the other hand, when driving through what was thought to be Caucasian neighborhoods, I was aware of the many tennis courts, swimming pools, golf courses, and even polo grounds that were readily available. To this end, it became clear that recreational facilities were noticeably different depending on which neighborhood I drove through.

I felt that politics and social space often regulated who had opportunities to become involved and to succeed in sport. For example, in Knoxville, if an African-American male youth would like to join a swimming club, he would have to travel to The University of Tennessee's campus or join a swimming club in predominantly Caucasian neighborhoods. Furthermore, if an African-American would like to play golf, he would have to travel a great distance to a public course or join private golf courses, which might not accept African-Americans as members.

I felt that African-Americans were attracted to certain sporting arenas, such as football, basketball, boxing, and track and field, which seemed to draw a great number of African-American athletes. In fact, I believed, because the lack of African-American representation in professional athletics, such as hockey, swimming, tennis, soccer, figure skating, diving, race car driving, and skiing, that the African-American athlete might believe that he was not welcome within a particular sport that was predominantly Caucasian.

When high school students graduated directly into a professional sport, such as the National Basketball Association (NBA) or Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), and collected multimillion dollar contracts, legitimate examples and role models were being established illustrating that education might not be worth as much as spending time on the court, on the field, or on the track. Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers was a prime example of how the high school superstar could make a fortune by not attending college. It was possible for youth to think about future professional athletic opportunities rather than attending a trade school, a university or college, or learning through apprenticeship. Moreover, with the pressures placed on the successful athlete by parents, society, teachers, administrators, news media, and fans, it appeared that there was greater emphasis on athletic accomplishments than on academic achievements. I suspected that sport, fame, and wealth were becoming "realistic" aspirations. I presumed that the personal meaning of the participants of this investigation might include their need to succeed in sport. Regardless, I hoped to gain a greater understanding of the role of sport in life for the participants involved with this investigation.

I felt that by age 11, African-American male youth experienced sport as central to their lives, their family relationships, and their self-identity. I suspected by this age and through age 13, African-American youth have been exposed to media pressures, peer pressures, and familial pressures associated with athletic involvement. I presumed that these youth would have decided which athletic arenas were acceptable and respectable. I have mentioned above how I felt about my own involvement in sport and, although it was impossible to be objective while I pursued answers to my research questions, I was

confident that I could competently describe and control my personal views as they related to this investigation. I felt that these participants provided excellent documentation for athletic involvement in each of their respective stories.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To appreciate the experiences and perceptions of African-American youth athletes, the researcher needs to understand the role of sport in the lives of these individuals. One group that has received increasing attention from scholars in the field is African-American athletes. Anyone familiar with the literature can notice the expanded coverage given to African-American athletes in the historical surveys on American sport or the growing number of articles about these athletes in various publications. The recent surge in the number of historical writings can be attributed primarily to the phenomenal increase in the number of African-Americans participating in sport and the vital part that they have played in the athletics.

The earliest studies of American sport history generally excluded the African-American athlete. None of these academicians made attempts to analyze concepts such as the rise of the Negro baseball leagues, the part played by blacks in professional boxing, and the type of black cultural institutions that sprang up behind the walls of segregation. It could be assumed that these early researchers and reporters of sport did not consider African-American sporting activities to be important. Wiggins (1986) explained the large numbers of African-Americans represented in certain sports

> The apparent domination and over-representation of black athletes in such sports as basketball and track, for instance, is not a result of any inherent racial differences but is caused by a myriad of discrepancies in American society. Simply stated, the disproportionately large number of black athletes in certain sports seems to be accounted for by more than simply biological adaptation or economic deprivation. The cultural setting in which black athletes find themselves, the information about particular sports which is available to black

> athletes, and the black community's attitude toward certain activities are perhaps the essential reasons for the preponderance of blacks in selected sports (Wiggins, 1986, p. 102).

This review of literature of African-American youth and the role of sport in life includes an initial section that contains an account of Nathan McCall's (1994) book, which described and analyzed public opinion about the African-American athlete. He recounted an instance and personal theory relating to an informal basketball game between a group of Caucasian and African-American players. The second section includes relevant research pertaining to youth and sport and is followed by a section of research illustrating the socialization aspects in sport. Next, psychological characteristics of youth sport development provide insight into theorists' thoughts and feelings directed toward youth involvement in competitive sport. An overview of youth values in sport is provided followed by the social mobility, which denotes popular media and public opinion of potential fame and wealth in sport. The last section reviews society and sport and reviews articles and theories regarding the attraction youth and society have with sport and the fame and wealth that accompany sport. Each section is composed of research articles, book chapters, and/or personal accounts concerning the subject. However, some sections include one or more of the aforementioned and they are presented in chronological order with the earliest publication first.

Basketball is the Revolution

Nathan McCall (1997) in *What's Going On* included a chapter entitled "The Revolution is about basketball." This account pertained to an occasion where McCall

observed a group of Caucasian men playing basketball in Arlington, Virginia. He reported that his initial interest in the game was to determine if the Caucasian contestants shared the same enthusiasm that is associated with African-Americans' approach to sport. "Except for the absence of trash-talking, funk-faking [talking more than your game illustrates], signifying [showing that your game is legitimate], profiling [making a fool of your opponent] and coast-to-coast monster slam dunks, the game was played with the same vigor as on any other court" (McCall, 1997, p. 3). One group of kids seemingly ruled the court for the duration of McCall's observation. When he was about to depart, a big luxury car cruised up, slowed down, and came to a stop. After seeing a group of five African-American men step out of the car, he decided to remain in view of the basketball court because he was certain that a racial drama would unfold. McCall (1997) stated, "As the brothers popped from the car, their super-cool demeanor revealed their self-assurance as clearly as the blue sky hanging overhead. Their smug expressions seemed to say, we're here now. The real ballin' is 'bout to start" (McCall, 1997, p. 4).

McCall (1997) reported that almost instantly the Caucasian spectators grew quiet as if they were afraid that there might be trouble.

> Of course, the brothers knew they were being watched. (The white folks stared so hard they couldn't help but know.) Seemingly unconcerned, the bloods stepped to the sidelines and exchanged condescending smirks while they scoped the closing minutes of a lopsided game. Standing there, dressed in the finest brand-name tennis shoes and athletic gear, they appeared totally confident, cocky. Like maybe they'd taken in too many of those popular sneaker commercials that feed America's myths about their super ball-playing skills.
>
> Perhaps they'd bought into the slick Reebok ad, the one where a brother, caught in a fit of hoops bravado, boasts to the world, "This is my planet." Or maybe they were inspired by the hip Foot Locker spot, in which a determined dude with a basketball spinning like a crystal on his gleaming bald head turns to

> Zen meditation to achieve white folks' idea of black men's greatest quest: defying gravity so we can dunk a goddamned basketball.
>
> Possibly, the bloods saw Nike's revolution ad- the one that features several rising black NBA stars standing together, tall, lean, and solemn, while the voice-over informs us that "these are the men who will lead the revolution- because the revolution is about basketball."
>
> Now, seeing that Nike ad makes it all clear: *The revolution is about basketball. To bring on the revolution, brothers must leap in the air, not rise up in rebellion as we once believed. That's right. Stuff a ball in a hole, and all will be made right in our troubled black world.* (McCall, 1997, p. 5-6).

McCall (1997) continued to report that as the African-American men stepped onto the court, the innocent basketball game ceased to be recreational. The game began very slowly for the African-American team as they found themselves on the losing side of the game. The white team was playing as if they were pumped by fear. The concerned looks on the African-American team came across their faces as the white team began to improve. In fact, their play was enhanced as they played better defense, hustled more, and were decisive in their shot selection. The African-American team clearly demonstrated their skilled style of play as they drove the hoop and closed the gap. However, it was too much too late. The white team had gained too much confidence to let the game escape them. Upon winning the game, the white team's triumph and shock could be seen in their expressions, almost as if they wanted to cheer. However, they were afraid to celebrate for fear of being attacked by embarrassed black men who had let their race down (McCall, 1997).

> The bloods were pissed off for sure. But mostly, they were embarrassed that so many people- white people- had seen what went down. After all, those five brothers had come to invade the Man's concrete turf, to do their part for the revolution. Instead, they got slammed, *big-time*, at hoops- by *white* boys, at that.
>
> The brothers lingered on the court momentarily in disbelief. Their pleading eyes hinted that they wanted to play another game- the best two out of

> three maybe- but there was no way they could ask without completely losing face. So they resigned themselves to the humiliating loss. They gathered their broken spirits, got in their car, and drove away, defeated in more than they probably realized.
>
> After the brothers were gone, spectators, players- all the white folks out there- broke into a wild celebration, high-fiving one another as if they'd won the NBA finals or the NCAA. As far as they were concerned, they had won a championship. After all, they'd beaten a bunch of arrogant niggers at their own simple game (McCall, 1997, pp. 8-9).

McCall (1997) recounted that the game he witnessed acted out a drama that revealed how basketball reflects the country's fixation on color. He noted that sport was a metaphor for life and basketball was a metaphor for race (McCall, 1997). He suggested that the basketball contest was driven by the crude assumption that is so firmly held in America's psyche that African-Americans are more gifted athletically than their white counterparts. From the beginning of the contest, it was apparent that the white players acknowledged their inferior talents, and what annoyed McCall the most was that the African-American athletes seemed to believe the hype.

> Clearly, they showed up on that court proudly accepting the mythology that they were blessed with natural athletic skills. And because of that, they assumed they'd dust off the white boys and be on their way.
>
> It's clear why brothers like them are so puffed up and proud of their proficiency at hoops. In a sense, they can rightfully claim basketball as their unquestioned domain. Since they got turned on to that white man's game, brothers have brought a poetic grace and style to basketball that's unmatched in any other sport. On sandlot courts or in pro arenas, African-Americans do with hoops what Charlie Parker did with jazz- they highlight the beauty of improvisation. For brothers, basketball is jazz. It's their sweet obsession. It's ballet in sweat socks and tennis shoes (McCall, 1997, p. 10).

The awe paid to African-Americans on the basketball court exposed hypocrisy in dramatic fashion. For example, African-American men are chosen last for crucial office and business projects, yet are the first chosen for sporting events during company outings.

At that time, the African-American is seen as an asset (McCall, 1997). Although the book did not focus entirely on athletics, it provided monologue pertaining to the fight African-Americans face daily.

Socialization and Sport

The events, which lead to participation decisions, are a result of repeated decisions grounded in experiences, which reinforce or dissuade future participation. Sport participation can be explained through decisions about participation involving the acquisition of knowledge about a sport, becoming associated with a team, learning the norms and values of the team, and earning the acceptance of those in the group so that one's identity as a participant is reinforced through participation over time (Donnelly & Young, 1988).

This section examined socialization in sport regardless of racial identification and; Coakley (1993) noted that socialization in sport has drawn researchers to examine sport roles; socialization through play, games, and sport; characteristics and past experiences of sport participation; as well as influences of various agents of socialization for individuals who participate in sport and for those who do not participate in sport (Coakley, 1993). A majority of work within socialization in sport reported investigations of the differences in values and behaviors for those who have participated in sport. One conclusion about sport involvement was that the support one receives from significant others is positively related to participation in sport (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1973).

With all the sociological variables involved with sport participation, Coakley (1993) reported that sport socialization appeared to be a constant shifting back-and-forth

within the structural, ideological, and cultural context of the participant's social world.

> In other words, becoming involved in sport involves a process of identity construction and confirmation; involvement is not simply an outcome of exposure to encouragement, reinforcement, and opportunities for "role rehearsal" provided through relationships with significant others operating within social systems characterized by interrelated sets of norms and roles. Involvement is never established in any final sense. The social support needed to continually confirm a person's identity as an athlete cannot be taken for granted; and the person is always able to revise decisions about participation or about the commitment of resources to participation. The withdrawal of social support, decisions to cease participation, or shifts in the way resources are allocated may lead to a disengagement from active participation at any point in time (Coakley, 1993, p. 575).

Socialization into sport has often been reported in the literature; therefore, the study of socialization through sport is essential. To this end,

> Between 1950 and 1980 there were many studies of socialization through sport. Researchers were eager to explore possible connection between sport participation and participants' general attitudes and behaviors. Studies often tested hypotheses based on popular beliefs about the social developmental consequences of sport participation. It was hoped that science could shed light on questions about whether sport participation actually contributed to the development of positive character traits, turned young people into better students and more successful adults, promoted conformity, reduced delinquency rates, gave rise to conservative social and political attitudes, and provided a basis for strong achievement orientations and moral development (Coakley, 1993, p. 576).

Loy and Ingham (1973) published a report which established how children assimilate societal values. The connection between psychosocial development and participation in play, games, and sport has led researchers to focus on the following: (a) the process through which children learn to fit into society by adopting values, traits, and orientations compatible with society in general, (b) the development of femininity and masculinity, (c) general processes of social mobility through educational achievement and educational aspirations, (d) the process underlying the search for self-identity, and (e)

moral development and attitudes toward fair play and winning.

Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) reported that, since socialization in sport by minority athletes has received only superficial attention, little could be said pertaining to racial differences particularly among African-Americans. Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) indicated that, "unlike their white counterparts, blacks tend to have only black role models, and quite often black athletes play the same position as their heroes" (p. 303). The purpose of Greendorfer and Ewing's research in 1981 focused attention on how children become involved in sport and how specific social learning factors may have influenced that participation. They hypothesized that: (a) African-Americans tend to have a higher value toward sport than Caucasians; (b) family members would be more important for Caucasians than for African-Americans; (c) for Caucasians, teachers and fathers would be more influential; and (d) for African-Americans, peers and values toward sport would be more important.

A total of 193 subjects (46 African-American and 147 Caucasian) between the ages of 9 and 12 responded to a fixed alternative questionnaire. All subjects were from three public schools in the Midwest and each represented a distinct geographical and social structural background. Nine questions related to the number of sports played, skill in sports, ease of learning sport skills, and how much sports were liked compared to other activities. Six questions focused on the encouragement, discouragement, and nature of influence of each of the following socializing agents: father, mother, brothers, sisters, peers, and teachers. Each question was rated on a five-point scale ranging from "not at all" to "very much" (Greendorfer & Ewing, 1981).

Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) concluded that African-Americans were most influenced by peers and that they received similar influence from mothers, fathers, and brothers, held similar values toward sport, and had similar opportunities to engage in sport. African-Americans had a higher value toward sport and appeared to be more influenced by opportunity and brothers. The findings of this investigation indicated that racial differences, in socializing children into sport, did exist and were more complex than originally thought (Greendorfer & Ewing, 1981).

> Two distinct mechanisms seem to be operant, one for blacks, who are more influenced by social structure or contextual factors (e.g., opportunity and values), and one for whites, who are more influenced by specific agents of socialization. These distinct mechanisms might account for racial differences in aspirations toward a sport career as well as other subsequent outcomes of sport participation. Since blacks are reinforced by more diffuse influences which generally permeate various aspects of their total social situation, they may be more likely to aspire toward a sport career because such influences are extremely potent and are ubiquitous (Greendorfer & Ewing, 1981, p.308).

Research has investigated reasons behind sport involvement and the reinforcement desired by different races and McCormack and Chalip (1988) re-examined assumptions about sport and sport experiences. The authors noted that sport participation has been assumed to involve a consistent set of human experiences and that these experiences were shared by everyone in sport. In fact, the authors questioned whether these experiences facilitated or caused identifiable changes in the characteristics of sport participants. A second assumption that was scrutinized was that athletes as a group passively internalize specific norms through sport experiences and that these character-building experiences were not available to those outside sport (McCormack & Chalip, 1988).

When assumptions like these were made, the following were overlooked: (a) athletes have different experiences with different teams, sports, and circumstances; (b) athletes interpret the same experiences in differing ways because of their relationships with significant others; (c) athletes at different stages of development are influenced in numerous ways by sport experiences and significant others; (d) athletes apply individual interpretations of sport experiences in differing ways to the decisions they make in the rest of their lives, and continue to use these experiences as they get older; and (e) those who do not participate in organized sport have experiences that parallel those who do participate (McCormack & Chalip, 1988). Coakley (1993) reported that the relationship between interscholastic sport participation and academic achievement aspirations has received tremendous attention. Coakley (1993) also reported that studies have generally indicated that varsity athletes have higher GPA's and higher educational aspirations than those who do not participate on varsity teams, and that sport participation does not directly discourage deviant behavior. However, carefully organized sport experiences that present a philosophy of nonviolence, respect for self and others, the importance of fitness and control over self, confidence in physical skills, and a sense of responsibility leads to a possibility of lower delinquency and deviancy. In fact, sport participation may facilitate moral reasoning among children where sport programs have been carefully and explicitly designed and administered to alter already established moral reasoning (Coakley, 1993).

Brustad (1993) noted that extensive involvement of youngsters in structured sport programs have generated considerable speculation and controversy regarding the benefits

and consequences of early sport involvement. Within the past 15 years, sport psychology consultants have devoted research to the study of youth sport involvement and behavior. However, precise data including accurate numbers of youth participants were difficult to obtain. It was evident that for every elite-level adult athlete engaged in sport, there were thousands of youth participants engrossed at different levels in sport. Although statistics concerning a racial breakdown were not provided, Brustad (1993) reported that in the United States an estimated 20 million children between the ages of 6 and 18 years participate in some form of organized sport programs in non-school settings (Brustad, 1993).

Psychological Characteristics of Youth and Sport Involvement

In this section, there was no distinction between Caucasian and African-American youths' psychological characteristics and sport involvement. Malina (1986) contended that children would rely heavily on adult feedback to assess their competency and mastery. If adults do not convey ability-related feedback in a productive manner, a child may infer a low ability level. As in any case, there were exceptions to the rule. Malina (1986) noted several different theories of readiness. The first theory posited that children should be discouraged from beginning organized competitive athletic programs before the age of 8 years because they have not attained a level of cognitive development that will allow them to enjoy and benefit from the feedback concerning their ability. Another theory indicated that children should avoid competitive and structured athletics until the ages of 10 to 13 years, because of the lack of cognitive reasoning abilities reaching full maturation until that time. Malina (1986) suggested a third perspective that children

avoid becoming engrossed in athletics until the parents are psychologically ready to allow and afford their children to participate without their assistance or constant intervening on the child's behalf.

Brustad's (1993) chapter included a look at four major concerns related to the psychological characteristics of youth sport involvement. The first concern involved the psychological readiness for competition, which related to identifying the appropriate age for children to begin competing. A second concern addressed children's motives for participating in and dropping out of sport. A third concern pertained to psychological stress and anxiety in youth sport. This section also identified the sources of stress experienced by youth athletes, which would allow sport administrators to restructure programs in order to reduce the incidence of negative affective outcomes for children in sport. The final concern examined the issues related to the effects of adult involvement in children's sport programs (Brustad, 1993).

> Cultural perceptions about the value of sport participation for youngsters and the continual quest for athletic success have steadily increased levels of sport involvement and specialization during childhood. Reports indicate that involvement in organized sports competition can begin as early as age 3 in the United States (Brustad, 1993, p. 696).

However, there was controversy concerning the best age to introduce children to sport. Brustad (1993) provided a definition of readiness as "the level of maturation or experience needed for learning or some other benefit to be realized" (p. 696). Readiness existed when there is a match among maturation, level of growth and development, and the demands of the task. Therefore, readiness is established when a youngster has sufficient psychological maturation and experience to derive benefits from participating

in sport (Brustad, 1993).

Brustad (1993) noted that a desire to compare skills with others was a primary attraction for youth participation in sport. Furthermore, social and developmental psychologists posited that important psychological benefits occurred when children initiate play. In fact, these activities enabled the children to develop a reflected view of themselves in relation to the skill and mastery of others, and consequently provided an appreciation for their own abilities. Therefore, it was important to recognize when children seek opportunities to compare their skills with those of others and to acquire information about their personal mastery (Brustad, 1993).

Although pursuing participation was important, children also reach a level of cognitive maturity when they demonstrate an understanding of the competitive process. This understanding entails an appreciation of the social nature of competition, specifically with regard to the cooperative and strategic variables involved with sport and the personal roles within a cooperating group (Brustad, 1993). Children are first attracted by the excitement of sport before they have developed a concept of competition. With this in mind, children do not generally begin to actively compare athletic aptitudes with others until 5 or 6 years of age. However, through later childhood and into adolescence, the social comparison motive was becoming an increasingly important component of competition. The extent to which children were interested in the comparison process was also an element of socio-cultural and situational factors (Brustad, 1993).

> Although children begin to demonstrate the desire to compare abilities with others during early childhood, the means by which they proceed in making such comparisons lacks sophistication. Until the age of 8 or 9, children tend to rely

> heavily on objective outcomes, such as winning or losing, and upon adult feedback to provide them with information about personal ability in sport. It is not until the age of 10 years that children generally prefer to use information obtained from peers as an informational source in making judgments about personal competence. Furthermore, research indicates that prior to adolescence there is only a very weak correlation between children's perceptions of competence and their actual competence as assessed by teachers or coaches. In order to effectively compare physical abilities with others, a child must be able to make a mature differentiation among the various elements influencing performance outcomes. In particular, the concept of ability must be distinguished from effort and task difficulty. Research conducted in non-sport contexts indicates that this differentiation is usually not complete until the age of 11 or 12 years. Prior to this time, children are likely to regard effort as the cause of all achievement outcomes (ages 7-9 years), or only to partially differentiate the roles of ability and effort in performance outcomes (Brustad, 1993, p. 696).

Brustad (1993) noted that, since youth sports are primarily team-oriented, a child must have sufficient mental capacity and social experience in order to act within the rules of the sport. This is a difficult timeline due to early entry into sport. It appeared that children were becoming involved with sport at an earlier age. Therefore, an undesirable emotional consequence may result for children who become involved too young. A byproduct of such emotional strain may include inaccurate perceptions, aspirations, and achievement goals. A subsequent factor of high expectations may result in heightened frustration, discouragement, and low self-esteem (Brustad, 1993).

With the avid enthusiasm in youth sport today, the best time to place a child in athletics is nearly impossible to determine. Reasons for youth sport participation included improving skills, having fun, learning new skills, playing for the challenge, being physically fit, being involved socially, and enjoying the competition (Brustad, 1993).

Youth Values in Sport

Dubois (1986) reported that a common belief among most Americans, with no emphasis on race, is that sport participation facilitates the development of desirable character traits and values in athletes. Dubois' (1986) research attempted to gain further insight into whether there was a transmission of values in youth sport programs. According to the author, the most prevalent reasons given for youth sport involvement included having fun, improving skills, becoming fit, challenging oneself, and being part of a group. Furthermore, reasons for conducting the present research were given which attempted to provide further evidence concerning the socialization effects among youth athletes. Specifically, Dubois (1986) investigated whether selected sport-related values of 8 to 10 year olds can be influenced by participation in organized soccer programs. Dubois (1986) also attempted to test two theories often used to explain value, attitudes, and/or behavioral differences among athletes participating in different sport settings and between athletes and non-athletes. Additionally, Dubois (1986) attempted to replicate prior research by determining which values were most important to the athletes as determined by their involvement in a youth sport program.

Dubois (1986) selected 110 athletes, aged 8 to 10, from two separate soccer programs. Using cluster sampling, 68 subjects from the competitive league (42 males, 26 females) were utilized. The subject's mean age was 8.6 years. A second sample of subjects included 42 subjects (19 males, 23 females) from the instructional league. Data were collected during the fall of 1982 and the follow-up data were collected during the fall of 1983. However, during the fall of 1983, only the 37 subjects (15 males, 22

females) who continued to play in the instructional program were utilized for the follow-up data. In either case, both programs were located in a middle class, predominantly white residential community outside Boston, Massachusetts.

Data were collected by using a 13-item, fixed alternative response interview schedule that covered a variety of sport-related value orientations including winning, game etiquette, personal performance, affiliation, competing, having fun, playing time, and social status. Each subject had a choice of important, somewhat important, or of very little importance for each question. The instrument was piloted on 14 fourth graders (mean age of 9 years) who played at least one season in an organized sport program. They were interviewed before and after a 9-day interval. The sets of scores were compared for reliability and were found to have a coefficient of .91 (Dubois, 1986).

Findings included the relative importance of selected values for participation in sport, the effects of sport participation on the value orientations, and a comparison of the value orientations of the competitive and instructional league athletes. A comparison of the two leagues indicated that five of the six constructs had identical values, i.e., improve skills, have fun, show good sportsmanship, improve fitness, win by rule breaking. However, by the post-season of 1983, the instructional league athletes more strongly valued: (a) playing and sport etiquette, (b) being both part of a team and of a social group, and (c) competing against others. On the other hand, the competitive league illustrated more emphasis on winning by virtue of playing or not, being part of a team, being with friends, competing, and improving social status (Dubois, 1986). It is interesting that the competitive league would assess that players were more interested in

winning even if they were not allowed into the game. Winning, in this case, superseded any satisfaction from participating, and improving social status was another surprising aspect at the mean age of 9 years. Dubois (1986) reported that the study reinforced the notion that young athletes valued fun, skill development, affiliation, fitness, and ethical behavior in their sport experiences and downplay the importance of winning. However, the competitive league did value winning more than the instructional league.

A second purpose of the study was to determine whether participation in the soccer program could influence the value orientation of the young athletes. Based on the data, participation in both the instructional and the competitive league appeared to have influenced value orientations. Orientation to sport was related to a competitive and instructional league in this study. The author noted recommendations for future research including the use of longitudinal designs whenever possible in studies of socialization via sport involvement. A second recommendation was to analyze the data with relation to gender (Dubois, 1986).

Social Mobility and Sport

In a historical perspective, Scott (1971) reported that the myth of sports being an excellent means of social advancement for African-Americans has been fully exposed by magazines and articles within *Sports Illustrated* and *Newsweek*. Sport, in 1971, often facilitated racism. White people have always enjoyed being entertained so they were willing to pay Kareem Abdul Jabbar (listed in the 1971 book as Lew Alcindor) one million dollars to play basketball. However, off the court Jabbar was seen still referred to as a "nigger" (Scott, 1971). While other examples of white society's disgruntled attitude

toward African-American athletes, in 1971, was illustrated in the amount of daily hate mail and death threats that Tommie Smith and John Carlos received during the 1968 Olympic boycott. This instance was a powerful reminder that the dignified and proud behavior of African-American athletes may result in cruel and threatening actions by white Americans when demonstrations are seen to negate white societal structure and thought (Scott, 1971).

During the time of 1971, African-American athletes and coaches were given strict rules and policies concerning the African-American athlete. For example, during the 1969 basketball season, the Notre Dame University basketball coach had the five African-American players on his team playing simultaneously in a game versus Michigan State. The white students and spectators began hooting and booing anytime the five players were on the court together. The African-American players resigned from the team as a result of the blatant discrimination and cruelty demonstrated by the Notre Dame fans. The disturbance at Notre Dame stemmed from the coach violating the quota system common in both American sport and society. In 1971, the quota system in a sport such as basketball usually allowed for no more than three out of the five starting players to be black. Scott (1971) referred to a Bill Russell comment as the equation for starting African-American players: "... it is a long-standing policy to start two at home, three on the road, and five when you get behind (p. 180)." Moreover, this type of racist system caused casualties among African-American athletes as well as among white coaches with integrity. Dick Harp, coach of Kansas, resigned at the conclusion of the 1964 season as he was so upset and disgusted with the abuse he had received from fans and alumni for

starting four black players during most of the 1963-1964 season (Scott, 1971).

> It would be foolish, however, to deny that sports have not helped many black people to a more comfortable life. Despite how white people may feel about them, Alcindor [Jabar] and other great black athletes have their money and are free from the financial worries that plague most Americans, white and black. Gifted black athletes will usually make out all right, but what happens to the thousands of young unathletic black children whose only heroes are sports stars? How many brilliant doctors, lawyers, teachers, poets, and artists have been lost because intelligent but uncoordinated black youths had been led to believe by a racist society that their only chance for getting ahead was to develop a thirty foot jump shot or to run the hundred in 9.3? (Scott, 1971, p. 180-181)

In 1985, William Wiggins wrote about African-American athletes whose achievements had tremendous influence on the African-American and the American culture.

> The showmanship of Muhammad Ali's shuffle and Julius Erving's graceful and gravity-defying dunks are looked upon as exquisite athletic expressions of black dance. Such dramatic exploits as Jackie Robinson's and Jack Johnson's achievements have inspired both the American playwright and the theatre-going audience. And the images of Henry Aaron's Atlanta Stadium statue and Jackie Robinson's memorial postage stamp graphically attest to the acceptance of the black athlete in our society (Wiggins, 1985, p. 136).

Wiggins (1985) stated that it is because of athletic achievements that a large number of African-American youth have "turned to sport as their primary means of realizing the American dream of fame, wealth, and success" (p. 136). Wiggins (1985) presumed that sport exists as an avenue in which African-American youth acquire a college education, pursue a lucrative career, financially assist their families, and become idols among the community and throughout the nation.

However, for every successful athlete, there are thousands of frustrated and rejected African-American athletes who fall short of realizing their illusive dream of fame

and wealth via professional sport. In fact, by not concentrating on academics, many perceived themselves as functional illiterates who, instead of living in the posh life of athletics, found themselves trying to manage on the minimal earnings from jobs predominantly assigned to minorities (Wiggins, 1985).

Wiggins (1985) provided examples of Ralph Sampson and Ralph Simpson, who were very touted collegiate basketball players. Ralph Simpson saw his collegiate career as a launching pad to the NBA and, therefore, isolated himself from academics and college life. He spent the majority of his free time honing his jump shot and further refining his skills. On the other hand, Ralph Sampson perceived his collegiate career as a "time for playing basketball and achieving fame, but also as a time for study, reflection, and intellectual growth" (Wiggins, 1985, p. 140). Sampson, in fact, rejected numerous attempts by the NBA to court him to the professional side of basketball.

> He [Simpson] had neither the athletic fundamentals nor the intellectual training to successfully cope with the myriad psychological and sociological problems that routinely confront the professional basketball payer. In this day and age, black athletes, as well as their white counterparts, must come to realize that to cope, they must be educated. Athletic talent alone isn't enough" (p. 141).

Wiggins (1985) concluded, through these illustrations, that athletic talent was the lone salvation to propel an athlete to wealth, fame, and success. Simpson was a very talented basketball player who was lucky enough to make it professionally. However, because of poor counsel or lack of understanding, he was unable to make it financially. In the end, after being waived, he left the game a bitter and disillusioned man. Sampson, on the other hand, was able to do well in the NBA financially and athletically (Wiggins, 1985).

Eitzen and Purdy (1986) reported that athletes, especially African-American athletes, are vulnerable to exploitation by universities based solely on athletic prowess. They noted that these individuals should feel a sense of gratitude, as they might otherwise not have attended college due to financial inabilities or prior educational achievement. The dual roles of student and athlete are often incompatible, even for the motivated student-athlete. Eitzen and Purdy (1986) posited that often very good African-American athletes with inferior academic credentials are recruited to attend institutions that otherwise would not accept these students. They wrote of some athletes who have filed legal cases against the colleges who recruited them and proclaimed to be helping these athletes' futures. In fact, these athletes left school reading or writing below the second grade level; or they took classes such as badminton, rugby, and backpacking instead of classes pertaining to their major.

Eitzen and Purdy (1986) noted that African-American athletes, who were recruited, when compared to Caucasian athletes who are recruited, were much less likely to succeed in the classroom. In fact the authors concluded that,

> And lest we forget, even the white athletes are less prepared for college than the general student population and do less well in college not only because they have poorer academic credentials but because of the demands of participation in a big-time college sports program (Eitzen & Purdy, 1986, p. 19).

With academic success in mind, Eitzen and Purdy (1986) reported that none of the 22 African-American track and field athletes graduated as compared to 39 percent of the Caucasian track and field athletes who completed their degrees.

Eitzen and Purdy (1986) stated:

> Black college athletes over a ten-year period in one major university scored lower than white athletes on the measures most commonly used to assess the potential for college achievement. They entered with poor academic backgrounds, they received lower grades than their white athletic peers, and proportionately fewer of them graduated. These results confirm that schools with big-time sports programs recruit from white and black athletes- but especially black athletes- who are academically marginal at best. This widespread practice exploits the athletes using their skills in return for a scholarship but not an education (p. 21).

Eitzen and Purdy (1986) purported that athletic scholarships were given to many African-American athletes who were not well prepared. By giving scholarships to these athletes, the stereotype of African-Americans being superior athletes and inferior students was perpetuated. To this end, African-Americans were seen as physically endowed; however, their poor academic performance was a means of proving their lack of intellectual prowess (Eitzen & Purdy, 1986).

Financial constraints or financial rewards are not novel ideas when it comes to the world of sport. Rudman (1986) presented a thought about sport in relation to poverty and sport incorporation in life.

> Having a professional attitude toward sport, incorporating sport into daily routines, and having a deep commitment and belief in the use of sport for dealing with social problems all seem to be a result of an individual's place in the social structure. These findings suggest that a culture-of-poverty explanation that focuses on economic and family conditions provides a better interpretation of differences in sports orientations. Poor blacks as well as poor whites are likely to see sport as a means of dealing with social problems and as a way for their children to become upwardly mobile (Rudman, 1986, p. 315).

Thoughts such as Rudman's have transcended sport and social mobility within society. It appeared that sport involvement in society provided an opportunity for individuals to take advantage of vast amounts of money available in sport. As Rudman (1986) indicated,

poor youth have incorporated sport in daily routines and have a deep commitment and belief in the use of sport for dealing with social problems. Why is the commitment to sport so pervasive in the African-American community? Rudman (1986) stated, "sport orientations for both African-Americans and Caucasians are a result of an interaction between race and social structure that limits African-Americans' opportunities in other professional occupations" (p. 305). Furthermore,

> Since Jackie Robinson's debut as a professional baseball player, sport has been viewed as a way to facilitate upward socioeconomic mobility for minorities. It is not unusual to read about young black professional athletes' rise to stardom from the ghettos of American cities. In several professional sports, blacks are overrepresented. For example, although only 13% of the U.S. population is black, approximately 70% of all National Basketball Association players, 50% of National Football League players, and 70% of all boxers are black (Rudman, 1986, p. 305).

Rudman's 1986 paper examined the differences between African-American and Caucasian perceptions of sport in their personal lives. Specifically, he delved into the differences between African-Americans' and Caucasians' vicarious involvement with a favorite athlete or team and personal commitment to sport. Secondly, he examined the interaction coefficients from the regression analyses to determine whether factors that influence sport attitudes are similar among African-Americans and Caucasians. This paper focused on whether sport attitudes are directly related to racial factors, factors related to the social/economic structure of society, and the interaction between race and socioeconomic processes.

Rudman (1986) reviewed previous studies involving African-American athletes and outlined these findings: (a) there is an explicit pattern of racial discrimination and

use of African-American athletes in professional sport, (b) African-Americans are consistently relegated to tertiary positions that emphasize physical rather than mental prowess, (c) African-Americans with playing abilities comparable to those of Caucasians are paid less and are less likely to be chosen for the team when performance is borderline, and as a result of this discrimination, (d) African-Americans' careers are shorter and their paychecks are smaller.

Rudman (1986) posited that attitude differences toward sport between African-Americans and Caucasians are based on sociocultural processes related to access and control over social resources. He expected that African-Americans were more likely than Caucasians to identify with a favorite team or athlete. To this end, identification with a team or athlete was suspected to serve as an alternative source of social prestige, which was presumed to be lacking from work or occupational status. African-Americans were more likely to have a professional orientation toward personal competition in sport. With this in mind, the incorporation of sport into daily routines was not limited to competition on the playing fields. In fact, African-Americans were presumed to daydream more about athletic success and discussed personal athletic endeavors in daily conversation. African-Americans were more likely to believe in the social and economic benefits of sport competition. Furthermore, Rudman (1986) noted:

> Blacks are more likely to focus not only on the use of sport as a way of upward economic mobility, but also in controlling other social problems such as juvenile delinquency. In this sense, sport is a way of dealing fairly and openly with various forms of social problems (p. 307).

Rudman (1986) was able to test his hypothesis by collecting data from a national survey of Americans about their attitudes, beliefs, and participation in sport. Research Forecasting Incorporated collected data for the Miller Lite Brewing Company. The sample population ranged in age from 18 to 75 years. Factor analytic techniques were used to create indices that measure sport attitudes. Four separate attitudinal categories were examined in this study, including (a) ecstasy, emotional involvement when a favorite team or athlete wins, (b) agony, emotional involvement when a favorite team or athlete loses, (c) professional/amateur, how sport enters into lifestyle behavior, and (d) social desirability, how sport can be used to deal with social problems (Rudman, 1986).

There were two points resulting from the study: (a) both African-Americans and Caucasians viewed sport favorably, incorporating sport into everyday lives and both were affected by sport outcomes; and (b) on most measures, African-Americans were more likely than Caucasians to incorporate sport into their daily lives and to be more strongly affected by the sport outcomes of their favorite team or athlete (Rudman, 1986). He further indicated:

> Winning or losing was more important for blacks than for whites. Moreover, blacks were more likely to work on their athletic skills and to integrate sport into activities outside the game itself. Third, blacks were more likely than whites to believe in the positive benefit of sport participation. Blacks saw sport as a means of building character and as a way to reduce delinquency, and saw athletes as being appropriate role models for their children. The findings suggest that blacks tend to turn toward sport more than do whites as a way of coping with limited social and economic opportunities by more closely identifying with sport. Sport is credited with teaching children social values and norms, providing opportunities for upward social and economic mobility, reflecting community pride, and reducing juvenile delinquency. Black parents were more likely than white parents to see sport as a means of economic mobility for their children. Black parents were more actively involved than white parents with their children

> in supporting professional athletes and teams. Involvement by parents at this level of interaction can serve as a primary socializing activity that enhances the likelihood of children perceiving sport as a way of becoming upwardly mobile. (Rudman, 1986, p. 312-313).

Rudman (1986) posited that sport was associated with social and economic mobility within the disadvantaged socioeconomic positions. Disadvantaged individuals would likely view sport as a way of enhancing social prestige and economic status. They maintained a belief that an individual could succeed in sport regardless of social status because personal skill, dedication, and effort were seen as the primary determinants for success in sport. Rudman (1986) stated that this was a common thread that tied the lower economic class regardless of race. However, Birrell (1989) wrote that sport has not afforded African-Americans the same rights as Caucasians.

> Placed alongside our commonsense understandings of sport as an important stage of manhood, as an equal opportunity employer for Blacks, and as a reward for and a marker of the good life is the growing criticism of sport as a sexist, racist, and classist institution, as a site for the reproduction of relations of privilege and oppression, and of dominance and subordination structured along gender, race, and class lines (Birrell, 1989, p. 213).

With social mobility and the presence of African-American men in media, Wenner (1995) noted that the stories of African-American men that were important in the society were being told in the sport pages across the nation's papers. Wiggins (1995) argued that this was especially troubling because the focus on the sport star limits both Caucasians and African-Americans in their thinking, creativity, and intelligence if the athlete can put the ball into the hole. By focusing on African-American men as athletes, society has been oblivious to the diversity of everyday accomplishments and successes of African-American men. In fact, Wenner (1995) stated,

> What I am most worried about is that given the relative paucity of black men in the public eye, sports stories about these particular good guys and bad guys are being generalized into moral lessons about something dangerously familiar: good blacks and bad blacks (p. 228).

Wenner (1995) noted that there were inevitable characteristics that were associated with the goodness and badness of African-American athletes. Michael Jordan and Mike Tyson were two obvious examples. In the construction of Jordan as a good African-American man, the media represented him as a deserving man of fame and fortune. This was depicted as such because of his joy and love for the game and his God-given talent. However, media had certain expectations of Jordan in order for him to receive the respect of being a good African-American man. In fact, Wenner (1995) stated,

> Jordan must not be angry, politicized, ungrateful, greedy, mean, or talk the talk or walk the walk of the streets. A Jordan who is mean and on the edge of criminal thuggery, a ladies' man, someone out of place in the boardroom, who threatens basic Christian values, would not be welcome in the neighborhood. The fact that Jordan plays golf certainly helps his persona of being more cultured. Ironically, his sole piece of deviance, a passion for a little friendly gambling, fits in among the boys at the country club. Given the "right" attributes, the good African-American can live in the white neighborhood and serve as a comfortable marketing icon (p. 229).

On the other end of the spectrum of defining good and bad African-Americans was Mike Tyson, who, as shown by his criminal activities, was a man that did not have neighborly attributes. Tyson continued to encourage this "bad African-American" persona.

> It is hard to like Tyson any way his public persona is sliced. But it is likely that the criteria used to evaluate Tyson, in the public eye, is the same used to judge other less severe cases and to routinely cubbyhole someone as a bad African-American. By not showing that smiling happy face, by not being ashamed to

> showcase power and strength over grace, by not being afraid to admit that you're in for the buck instead of the sheer joy of the game, by not being ashamed of being from the street as opposed to being codified for the boardroom, and by not being ashamed to talk the talk or walk the walk of the 'hood' instead of talking White English (Wenner, 1995, p. 230),

This was depicted through film documentaries which received critical acclaim. Movies such as Hoop Dreams (James, Marx, & Gilbert, 1994) and He Got Game (Kilik & Lee, 1998) have had only limited circulation and have usually been shown in non-mainstream cinemas. However, Hoop Dreams (James, Marx, & Gilbert, 1994) was a powerful film which depicted the experiences of Arthur Agee and William Gates as they were beginning the eighth grade. Indeed, some said they received an incredible opportunity at the age of 14 to attend the suburban school, St. Joseph's. However, the ordeal that both experienced while attending such a prestigious and sport-oriented school could lead to another conclusion. Arthur lived in the projects near Chicago Stadium with his mother, father, brother, and sister. William lived several miles away in a two-family house in a working-class neighborhood with his mother and siblings (Malec, 1995).

Both began their career at St. Joseph's as starters on their respective teams. Arthur was named to the freshman team and William to the varsity team. However, with their strong abilities on the court, they did not succeed in the classroom. William was reading at the fifth-grade level, but through tutoring and persistence, he was able to quickly catch up with the class. However, this high-profile school later failed him as he was unable to attain the minimum score on the ACT to attend college on scholarship. Not until his fifth attempt did he attain the score essential for such athletic honor (Malec, 1995).

The journey to school began at 5:30 a.m. when the boys departed on their three-hour round-trip. As if the journey were not enough, once they arrived at St. Joseph's, they were again isolated in the predominantly white and affluent school. In fact, William later confessed that if he had problems at school, there was no place to turn. They had to adjust and be able to assimilate their new world in order to earn the chance to fulfill their hoop dreams (Malec, 1995).

Malec (1995) reported that both the parents and each student-athlete recognized that basketball could be a ticket to a good school and a chance to a lucrative career in professional basketball. In fact, Arthur's father stated that he did not think about the possibility of Arthur's not making it professionally in basketball. Furthermore, William's brother wanted William to succeed, as his own hoop dreams were never fulfilled.

With the hopes and dreams of professional sport lingering in the forefront of their minds, the notion of receiving a great education also became a reality. Arthur's father stated that in order to have a better life, a strong education must be achieved. With this privilege came opportunity as William was introduced to a corporate executive who agreed to assume all of William's expenses. Furthermore, she found a job for William's brother and provided a tutor who helped William achieve the minimum score needed to earn a collegiate athletic scholarship. On the other hand, Arthur did not develop as rapidly as William athletically and did not receive the same sort of preferential financial treatment. Consequently, he was forced to withdraw from St. Joseph's and return to the public school system (Malec, 1995).

Upon Arthur's withdrawal, his father began using drugs and eventually served seven months in jail for robbery. In the midst of Arthur's troubled life, many Big Ten, Big East, and other independent basketball programs were recruiting William. Just when nothing could go wrong, William suffered a knee injury that caused him to have surgery and 12 to 16 weeks of rehabilitation. Thus, his junior year was lost and the recruiting letters dwindled to a near halt. As William was trying his best to play on a recurring knee injury, Arthur was working at a pizza shop near his home (Malec, 1995).

As their senior year ended, William's powerful St. Joseph's team was eliminated from the tournament, whereas Arthur's inner-city program made a Cinderella run at the state championship, but their efforts ran out in the semi-finals. William took a basketball scholarship to Marquette and Arthur attended a junior college in Missouri, where he was one of seven African-Americans in attendance (Malec, 1995). This was an introduction and synopsis of the movie Hoop Dreams (James, Marx, & Gilbert, 1994). However, Malec (1995) stated:

> The film provides a powerful commentary on the sports-school connection in American society. In its seemingly callous treatment of Arthur, St. Joe's appears as one of the villains of the film. The shoe companies that sponsor the summer "meat markets" and the college coaches who fawn over these boys are shown in their discomfort and unease. But there are also heroes and heroines, such as Arthur's mother. Marquette University also comes off as heroic. When William quits the team in his junior year, Marquette honors its commitment and continues his scholarship. As much as I admired this film, I was left with a certain ambivalence. Although it is true that both boys achieved their and their families' dreams of going to college to play ball, it is also true that, according to the NCAA, only one high school senior basketball player in 57 will become a senior player in college (USA Snapshots, 1993); one in 2300 will make an NBA roster. And if they do manage to play college hoops, there is little assurance that they will graduate, and less that they will get an education. In the real world, I fear, most hoop dreams turn out to be hoop illusions (p. 310).

He Got Game (Kilik & Lee, 1998) was another film about the power, wealth, and glory that a high school superstar faced while deciding his future as either a collegiate or professional athlete. The film depicted the struggle that a phenomenal athlete might face from unscrupulous agents and demanding family members. The film starred Ray Allen, a current NBA player, who was raising his younger sister in the same housing complex as an aunt and uncle. Allen, Jesus Shuttlesworth in the film, was an amazing basketball talent that had been approached and badgered about his future career in either college or professional basketball. Agents, friends, coaches, and family were all persistent in planning his future. It appeared that the interest of Shuttlesworth was not of any importance. The people pleading with him about their concerns regarding his future were doing so selfishly. They were not interested in what he wanted from playing basketball, but what Shuttlesworth could do for them. This film illustrated details about the positive and negative aspects of evolving into a nationally recognized high school athlete. He was promised the world, and his family and friends were pressuring him to make a hasty decision based on their needs and not what was in the best interest of Jesus and his younger sister. The film also demonstrated how an inner-city father might begin preparing his son, at a very young age, for a potentially acclaimed future in basketball. It was not about learning how to love the game, but learning how to beat an opponent in order to earn the big payoff.

Throughout the film, Jesus' father was seen living vicariously through his estranged son while spending time in prison for killing his wife. The incident where Jesus' mother was killed stemmed from disappointment the father had toward Jesus

because he was not practicing hard enough and was not handling the mental and emotional challenges of the harassing comments his father was badgering him with during practice. Jesus' father was purposely trying to get him out of his game in order to prove how weak his son was and how strong he needed to become. Consequently, Jesus retreated to his home where dinner was being served. His father continued to downplay his son's inability to overcome harassment on the court. Jesus left the dinner table without the permission of his father, and his father became enraged. Jesus' mother tried to intervene, but his father threw her down, resulting in a life-ending head injury.

The movie demonstrated how, on every level in society, sport dominates individual lives. For example, in the movie, Jesus' father was allowed to leave prison in order to persuade Jesus to attend the university which the governor of the state attended. By an agreement between his father and the governor, if Jesus attended this university, Jesus' father would be granted early release from prison. Another example of how Jesus' life was interrupted by all the hoopla of being a basketball phenomenon was how his uncle constantly preached to him that he was not getting to reap the benefits of Jesus' talent. In fact, at one point, after a recruiting trip, his uncle arrived to pick him up in a new Lexus. When questioned about the car, his uncle proudly explained how the car was for Jesus as a gift from boosters. Because his uncle was so proud, he was infuriated by Jesus' rejection of the gift. Jesus' uncle confronted him about when the time would come for his uncle to be paid for taking care of him and his sister. He announced that it was Jesus' responsibility to take care of him from this point on. Furthermore, Jesus' high school coach was also on the take from universities with offers of college coaching and

lucrative incentives for Jesus to attend certain schools. Jesus explained how he wanted no part in the improprieties, but the coach asserted that Jesus was involved from the very beginning by accepting loans from the coach to gain an apartment for his sister and himself. In short, the promises and propositions that Jesus received were not because he was a loving and devoted family member and others wanted to see him take care of his sister. People were giving him these opportunities with hopes that Jesus would make them very wealthy.

Jesus' name was interesting as he was seen as the savior for many people who claimed to be close to him. He was seen as the messiah for college programs that would benefit from his immediate entry. He was seen as a dollar sign. His talent was soon to be everyone's gain where his friends and family stood to profit a great deal. At one point, Jesus' basketball team presented a short monologue describing what basketball meant to each of them. The comments included:

> The game brings me love, peace, and happiness.
> - Lonnie "Dub" Dukes
>
> I play the two spot, and we are the real splitters ain't nobody is fucking with us
> -Sip Rogers
>
> Basketball is like poetry in motion... just coming down the court... you've got a defender in your way... you're taking him to the left and back to the right... he's fallen back, and you just J right in his face... then you look at him and you say "What!"
> -Jesus Shuttlesworth
>
> Basketball is a perfect place for all my dreams... everything I want to be... everything I want to accomplish... and what it is I want to do in life.
> -Mance Littles

> I feel handsome when I'm on the court... I feel like somebody.
> -Booger Sykes

These quotes provided evidence of the true meaning of basketball for these characters. Within each monologue, there were reasons for participation, including: (a) love, peace, and happiness; (b) masculinity; (c) expression of culture and art form; (d) means of achieving life goals; and (e) a sense of personal worth and feeling about how society viewed athletes.

Society and Sport

Through sport, dreams may be realized and, for others, hopes may be lost. Sport certainly intrigues athletes each day to achieve the ultimate goal of professional sport, the means of which fame and wealth may be attained. Shropshire (1996) suggested that the majority of youth athletes would be unsuccessful in becoming professional athletes. In fact, many may have few options if professional athletics is not achieved.

> The saddest side of sports is that it serves as a magnet for young African-American males but rejects them when their playing days are over. One portion of an ideal solution would be to remove sports as the brass ring in depressed communities and immediately replace the goal of athletic success with that of becoming something more attainable, such as a businessperson, physician, engineer, attorney, or architect. In 1968 a Louisiana high school coach said, "A white kid tries to become president of the United States, and all the skills and knowledge he picks up on the way can be used in a thousand different jobs. A black kid tries to become Willie Mays, and all the skills and knowledge he picks up on the way are useless to him if he doesn't become Willie Mays." As the longest of long-term goals, this transition to a change in priorities is mandatory. To reach this point would require corporate advertisers, movie makers, team owners, and fans to stop idolizing the athlete. Achieving this goal approaches the difficulty of eliminating racism itself. To suppress somehow the public knowledge of the salaries that the athletes receive is next to impossible. This would have to be done, at the same time making other routes to success more palatable. The task of deflating the fantastic status of sports in society is formidable. In short, it is not going to happen in the foreseeable future

(Shropshire, 1996, p. 145-146.).

This passage described the hopes and expectations that our youth hold for becoming professional athletes. Shropshire (1996) recounted a conversation with a high school coach that points to the naïveté of youth who are working toward professional athletics rather than a professional field that is more realistic.

Arthur Ashe, a prominent figure in professional athletics who died of complications due to AIDS, was very outspoken about the attraction youth have with sport rather than with education. He stated, "We should either get serious about academic standards or cut out the hypocrisy and pay college athletes as professionals" and "the obsession with sports borders on pathology" (Ashe, 1993, p.149).

> I agreed completely with what the respected football coach Joe Paterno of Pennsylvania State University said in his provocative declaration at the 1983 NCAA convention: "For fifteen years we have had a race problem. We have raped a generation and a half of young black athletes. We have taken kids and sold them on a bouncing ball and running with a football and that being able to do certain things athletically was going to be an end in itself. We cannot afford to do that to another generation."
>
> We need to address the deep-seated cynicism of coddled, black public-school athletes, many of whom are carried through school with inflated grades and peer group status that borders on deification. High school coaches need to be held accountable for the academic preparation of their would-be Michael Jordans. The critics of Proposition 42 seriously underestimate the psychic value that black athletes place on their athletic success and how that could be used to motivate them academically. The screening process for superior athletes starts earlier- when they are 11 or 12- and is more efficacious than for any other group of Americans. Social status is conferred at once. And they learn early that they don't get the idolatry, attention, and, ultimately, Division I scholarships for their intellectual promise (Ashe, 1993, p. 149-151).

Ashe was an exceptional athlete of high educational standards and a man with a strong desire to see fellow African-Americans stress the importance of education as a

method of earning a living rather than relying on sport for support throughout life. Ashe (1993) revealed a sense of frustration with a conversation he had with varsity athletes at school in Connecticut. The distress was associated with athletic scholarships and weak performances in the classroom. The athletes, many of them African-American males, thought that it was fair that persons who performed poorly in school should be awarded scholarships due to time spent in training. This thought was upheld even when confronted with the scenario that by receiving a scholarship a more academically qualified student would be deprived of one. In fact, no one suggested that athletes should be treated and judged with the same standards as non-athletes when competing for scholarships.

Have we, as society, placed such a high value on sport and athletic success that athletes be given a pardon from the daily routines of school and academic achievement for the sake of athletic improvement? Who is teaching children and youth to be so consumed with winning and athletic success when it means a failure in the classroom? Ashe (1993) contended that a lack of leadership continues to plague the African-American community. He stated, "We depend on all sorts of blacks to be leaders and role models for the community. We even think of athletes and entertainers in this way" (Ashe, 1993, p. 153). He also purported that professional athletes and entertainers may not be the ideal to which African-American communities should look as role models or leaders. In some cases these professional athletes and entertainers have served as positive role models which could be nothing further from the truth.

Ashe (1993) reported that, in some instances, athletes were not good examples or did not serve the African-American community very well. For example, he wrote:

> I do not think that every black athlete or entertainer has an obligation to thrust himself or herself into positions of leadership. However, our situation is increasingly desperate, and I admire those athletes and entertainers who consciously try to give something back to the people, if only by exemplary behavior. I admire former stars such as Julius Erving in basketball, or Lynn Swann in football, for what they have made of themselves. I am less happy with the demureness of someone like Michael Jordan, who is as popular as he is rich. While I would defend Jordan's right to stay out of politics in general, I think that he made a mistake in declining to give an open support to Harvey Gantt, the respected black politician who ran for the U.S. Senate in 1990 from Jordan's home state of North Carolina. For me, the main point is not that Gantt and Jordan are both black; rather, it is that Gantt's opponent, Jesse Helms, has a long history of supporting segregation, and the contest was close. For blacks across America, that Senate contest was the most important in decades. Instead, Jordan stuck to his apolitical position (Ashe, 1993, p. 160-161).

The lack of leadership of which Ashe (1993) wrote was congruent in some ways to what Shropshire (1996) reported when discussing what youth of different backgrounds strive for in the classroom and on the athletic field. To recount, for a moment, the Caucasian child hoped to become the president of the United States, and everything he picked up along the way would help him professionally. On the other hand, the African-American child hoped to become Willie Mays, and this only helped if he became Willie Mays. The role model seemed to be of great influence in the lives of our youth (Shropshire, 1996).

So, are African-American youth looking towards athletes and entertainers as a means of realistic career models or choices? Who were African-American youth looking to for leadership and as role models? What did sport mean to African-American youth? What do young athletes strive to create for themselves? How did one prepare oneself for the competitive world of sport?

Samson and Yerles (1988) noted that a person who has watched the sporting world over the years would have seen the predominance of certain races in specific sporting arenas. Whether African-Americans dominated sprinting events in track and field, or swimming championships achieved by Caucasians, or the success of Asian athletes continued in gymnastics, the race debate continued (Samson & Yerles, 1988).

Samson and Yerles (1988) stated that scientists have hypothesized numerous reasons behind the domination by one race over another. The race-linked characteristics as an explanation of performance differentials, the race-linked psychological characteristics, the sociological explanations of performance differentials, and the sports-opportunity structure explanations were all debates as to why certain races are prevalent and most successful in specific areas of sport.

Samson and Yerles (1988) noted that a social scientist's explanation would state that racial differences in sport performance reflect differing socio-economic and political environments in which athletes develop, differences in the socialization process toward sport across cultures and races, or discrimination processes. The authors did report that answers to the superiority questions were difficult for numerous reasons including the virtual impossibility in ascertaining any type of relationship between presumed racial characteristics and athletic performances.

When it came to race-linked physical characteristics, Samson and Yerles (1988) posited that, "The intra-race variation is such that there are probably more anthropometric and physiological similarities between a Black champion and a White champion than between a Black champion and a Black non-athlete" (p. 114). As far as the race-linked

psychological characteristics explanation is concerned, Samson and Yerles (1988) noted that this type of explanation where African-Americans and Caucasians have different personality profiles is based on unfounded evidence. The sociological explanations of performance differences resulted in two theories including the occupational discrimination experienced by non-whites and the over-value placed by minorities on the professional athlete occupation. This has resulted in the gradual increase in the numbers of African-Americans who pursued professional athletics as a career as compared to Caucasians. Furthermore, "African-Americans have channeled themselves into an occupation from which they are not barred, and an occupation that they highly value" (Samson & Yerles, 1988, p. 115).

African-Americans seemed to dominate when the best facilities, coaches, and competitions were found in the schools. On the other hand, the sports where African-Americans were underrepresented were the sports where the best coaches, facilities, and competition were found in the private sector. Samson and Yerles (1988) noted that this hypothesis would become nullified if and when African-Americans have gained access to the sports available only in the private sector. In fact, we would observe an increase in African-American achievement in a wider spectrum of sports if total access could be realized.

The debate has not diminished over the years.

> African-Americans are thought to possess natural athletic ability in speed, quickness, and jumping ability, traits that many coaches believe cannot be taught; you are either born with these qualities or you do without them. That they excel in sport, then, has little to do with their work ethic or their intellect, according to this perspective. This view allows African-Americans to be outstanding athletes

> without negating the belief that they are lazy and ignorant; in fact, it reinforces the belief in their indolence and incognizance. This is what I think some sports fans (and fans of black athletes) had in mind when they stated their admiration for the athletic gifts bestowed on African-American athletes and followed that by asking me, "Without inborn talent, where would the black athlete be? What do you think his fate would be if he had to work as hard as the white athlete?" Whites, on the other hand, are believed to excel at sport because they possess traits that are valued both in and (especially) out of sport: intelligence, industriousness, and other unspecified intangibles (Harris, 1993, p. 61-62).

Harris (1993) wrote this passage directed to the suspicions of society pertaining to the athletic success and determination of African-American athletes. Yet, this was still another example of how society has attempted to differentiate the abilities of African-American athletes as they relate to Caucasian athletes. All too often, when African-American and Caucasian athletes have been praised for their abilities, African-American athletes were not given credit for intellectual superiority or mental abilities. On the other hand, white athletes have been perceived as intelligent and decisive, playing on the knowledge of the game and not by instinct alone (Harris, 1993).

What seems to be the reason behind the differential treatment and outlook among society when relating to African-American athletes concerning instinct versus intelligence? If the aforementioned passage is an assumption made by society, why are African-American athletes recruited to enter the collegiate arena? With the emphasis on athletics, education appears not to be the priority. In return, these athletes often have been humiliated by entry exams and standardized tests. These poor test scores can come as a great shock and can be inferred as some illustration of one's lack of education and preparedness. The promise of some bright future and of getting great experiences in college and participating in athletics may remind the young men of how little they

currently had in terms of education (Harris, 1993).

What intrigues certain populations to become involved in athletics and in which athletic arenas? Hasbrook (1986) stated that there appears to be evidence supporting the idea that participating in sport is related to social class. However, this relationship of participation and social class was not directly demonstrated to exist among youth. Hasbrook (1986) reported two studies that specifically examined the relationship between youth participation in high school athletics and social class background. Both studies indicated that a lower social class background might serve as an obstacle to participating in sport. There was additional evidence that suggested that sport transcends the social class stratification and was enjoyed by all social classes. Due to the lack of investigations examining the sport participation-social class relationship among children and adolescents, Hasbrook (1986) conducted two independent studies to determine the extent of the relationship between formal youth sport participation and social class background.

Hasbrook (1986) conducted an initial study to determine the extent of the relationship between youth sport participation and social class, with no emphasis on race. This study was completed in May 1981, using a stratified random sample of 199 females and 141 males, which was divided by athletic status. Athletes were defined as participating in at least one junior varsity and/or varsity high school sport. On the other hand, non-athletes were labeled as never participating in any high school sport. All subjects were given a self-administered questionnaire which gathered information pertaining to the duration of sport involvement, the number of sports in which the subject participated and the quality of involvement in sport (i.e., jr. varsity/varsity letters

awarded). Furthermore, social class background was determined by the father's occupation as indicated by the Duncan Socioeconomic Index. The overall test-retest reliability was ($\underline{r} = .956$, $\underline{p} \leq .01$). Among the male sub-sample, the sport participation/social class relationship was found to be non-existent ($\underline{r} = .035$, $\underline{p} = .347$). On the other hand, a low-moderate and highly significant relationship was found among the female population ($\underline{r} = .265$, $\underline{p} \leq .01$).

Hasbrook (1986) conducted a second study over a two-year period (1982-1984) utilizing a sample of 166 females and 107 males ranging in age from 8-16 years. A self-administered questionnaire was given to all subjects. This study also examined the extent of the relationship between formal youth sport participation and social class. Sport participation was operationally defined to include their duration in sport and the number of sports in which the subjects participated. Social class was again determined by the father's occupation as determined by the Duncan Socioeconomic Index. The internal reliability of the instrument ranged from .71 to .88. Pearson product moment correlation coefficients illustrated the youth sport participation and social class relationship, but no significant relationships were found among the male population ($\underline{r} = .017$, $\underline{p} = .429$). On the other hand a low-moderate and highly significant relationship was found among the female population ($\underline{r} = .260$, $\underline{p} = \leq .01$) (Hasbrook, 1986).

Hasbrook (1986) concluded that youth sport participation was not related with social class background among males, but to some extent, was related among females. Moreover, the studies indicated that males from all social classes appeared to participate

in sport as often as males from higher socioeconomic classes. Hasbrook (1986) presented an explanation that the decline in the importance of the family's social class has resulted in a positive influence to participate in youth athletics regardless of socioeconomic class.

> One can speculate that because sport participation has become so pervasive in our society and very much associated with boyhood and manhood, it has become a societal expectation for boys regardless of social class background. Whether families are wealthy or poor, they may value sport enough to provide their sons with the necessary encouragement, equipment, lessons, and facilities to successfully participate in sport (Hasbrook, 1986, p. 158).

However, if Hasbrook was correct, then it would be safe to presume that African-American participation in sport would be represented across all sports. To this end, Spreitzer and Snyder (1990) commented that relationships among different races were a concern of sport sociology and had generated a great deal of interest. It was noted that much of the research in the area has focused on the discrimination and exploitation of African-Americans in sport. For example, the parity in position opportunities as a player and in management seemed to indicate a great deal of discrimination. While African-American athletes have been exploited for their athletic skill, they also have been restricted in accessing managerial and leadership positions within sport (Spreitzer and Snyder, 1990).

Spreitzer and Snyder (1990) noted that previous studies indicated poor treatment of African-American athletes regarding playing positions, the way African-American athletes were recruited, and the disadvantage African-American athletes experience in balancing the scholar-athlete roles. They further commented that the equality of opportunity for African-American athletes required a change in the organizational

structure of the sporting world (Spreitzer and Snyder, 1990).

Spreitzer and Snyder (1990) referred to the fact that there has been little research conducted concerning differences among the races with respect to informal and vicarious involvement in sport, variability in the meaning of sport, attitudes toward sport, and orientation to sport. They, along with Sociologist Harry Edward, agreed that there was a widespread belief that sport was more salient in the African-American community than in others. Therefore, the purpose of Spreitzer and Snyder's 1990 study was to compare African-Americans' and Caucasians' degree of sport involvement with respect to passive participation. They hypothesized that if sport was greatly emphasized within the African-American subculture, this may explain the willingness of African-Americans to participate in various types of sporting arenas or contexts even when discriminatory practices were encountered (Spreitzer & Snyder, 1990).

The data utilized in this study were derived from a national probability survey conducted by Research Forecasting Incorporated for the Miller Brewing Company. A multi-stage research design was used in the Miller Lite study of American attitudes toward sport. The first phase consisted of qualitative research designed to generate hypotheses and to steer the second phase of the study conducted among four populations: (a) the general public; (b) coaches in the high school, collegiate, and professional levels; (c) sportswriters and broadcasters; and (d) sports doctors. Fifty trained interviewers conducted telephone interviews for a period of four weeks in 1982. The interviews took approximately 45 minutes. The data analyzed in this study were derived from a sample of 1159 Americans from the general population ranging in age from 14 to 75 years.

The index included seven dimensions of passive sport attachment including: (a) watching sport on television, (b) listening to sport on the radio, (c) reading about sport in the paper, (d) watching/reading sport news on television/radio, (e) reading sport books, (f) reading sport magazines, and (g) talking about sport with friends. The subjects rated their degree of participation on these seven dimensions by means of a five-point scale. The reliability yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .81 for the sport involvement index.

The results of the study indicated that African-Americans show a higher degree of involvement with the world of sport. This supported the claim that sport involvement was more salient within the African-American subculture. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that African-Americans and Caucasians differ considerably on overall involvement in the world of sport. However, the races did not differ in terms of the demographic correlates of sport involvement. In fact, race was the only demographic characteristic that showed any consistent relationship to sport involvement (Spreitzer & Snyder, 1990).

To this end, Spreitzer and Snyder (1990) reported that African-Americans responded more favorably than Caucasians on all six of the attitudinal items concerning the importance of sport for child development. However, there was a significant difference between the races on only two items. African-Americans were more likely than Caucasians to affirm that it is important for boys to participate in sports, and that African-American parents indicated that they would be proud if their son were to become a professional athlete. With this in mind, African-Americans were reported to express positive perceptions of sport involvement with the following findings: (a) sport

participation was valuable for psychosocial development, (b) sport competition was a positive experience, and (c) professional sport was a desirable career channel. Furthermore, African-Americans indicated that athletes are seen as good role models for children (Spreitzer & Snyder, 1990). African-Americans, according to Spreitzer and Snyder (1990), showed great interest in athletics for a variety of reasons.

However, Smith (1993) claimed that this road to equity would traverse a long and treacherous path of racism before a positive press was the norm for the African-American athlete. African-Americans could not work in craft union jobs, purchase a home in the community of their choice, attend schools of their choice, earn a decent living, or even rent a room for a night at a respectable establishment. Because African-Americans could not enjoy monetary rewards for working, which included sport, the Negro Leagues in organized baseball were the direct result of their exclusion from the "white man's game." Racism has been in the country since the day African-Americans were kidnapped to this country.

Due to this exclusive attitude of white superiority, even the great African-American sport legends were destined to experience racism and oppression in professional sport. African-Americans were labeled as biologically inferior, which caused great athletes such as Joe Louis, Jesse Owens, and Althea Gibson to be considered inferior to their white counterparts. Sadly, even the late Arthur Ashe, who epitomized class in the sport of tennis and an elegantly incomparable life, could not escape racist oppression (Smith, 1993).

Great organizations were erected in support of the African-American athlete such as the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) which was founded by Harry Edwards from the University of California at Berkeley. This organization pursued the supposed inalienable rights of mankind which were oppressed in light of the African-American man's skin color. One such example was Muhammad Ali where he was stripped of his heavyweight title because he refused to enlist in the armed services. The OPHR stood up for the rights of these men who had the courage to stand by their convictions and were consequently un-rewarded for their bravery (Smith, 1993).

However, this was not an easy task because many African-Americans did not participate for fear that their athletic status and opportunity would be snubbed due to their respective participation in demonstrations. Great outspoken African-Americans have suffered greatly due to their demonstrations at international competitions. U.S. sprinters Tommy Smith and John Carlos wore black socks and raised their African-American gloved fists as symbols of racial inequities. Consequently, both were barred from the rest of the Olympic Games (Smith, 1993).

When such protests took place, the predominantly Caucasian committees took exception and penalized their freedom of speech and struggled to accept the African-American athlete as legitimate and talented. So many articles and discussions in international magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* suggest that African-American athletes possess innate psychological and physiological attributes that enable them to succeed (Smith, 1993).

Along the same notion that sport afforded African-Americans an avenue out of the ghetto, Wenner (1994) wrote about the Nike ads where prominent African-American athletes asked the rhetorical question, "Where would I be without sport?" He also suggested that it was implicitly assumed that, without sport, both Michael Jordan and Jackie Joyner-Kersee would be on the streets presumably doing nothing with their lives.

> Finding myself being led to draw this "logical" conclusion, I was pretty upset. I was upset with Nike. I was upset with CBS. I was upset with institutionalized sport and all of its institutionalized analogies concerning sports as preparation for life. I was upset by racism. I was even upset at Michael Jordan and Jackie Joyner-Kersee for partaking in this role-modeling adventure that left few avenues open besides "just saying no" to drugs by saying "yes to sports" because they implicitly would be nowhere and nobody without them. I found this institutionalizing of sports as the single path to success for African-Americans abhorrent and stupid. I was seething after I first say the spot. Who would you be without sports? Maybe you'd be a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, an architect, a firefighter, a social worker, a minister, a scientist? There are a lot of possibilities beyond the streets and drugs. And almost all of these "right answers" had shorter odds than aiming for athletic success. Of course, none of them were featured in the Nike commercial (Wenner, 1994, p. 230).

This was a great example of how sport appeared to be a logical way out for African-Americans. Counting on sport and being a professional athlete is such a long shot, yet so many are encouraged and endeared by the lure of quick and enormous payoffs. To this end, participation in sport is a feasible method of earning millions of dollars (Wenner, 1994).

The growing awareness of the monetary reward in sport caused Siegel (1994) to indicate that the acceptance of African-American athletes, especially in highly visible revenue-producing sports such as basketball and football, appeared to be an example of equal opportunity and upward mobility. In fact, because of athletic attributes, it appeared

that African-Americans now have a chance to attend a university or college. Due to a lack of social or economic reasons, athletic prowess had become a viable means of earning a college degree. However, this degree came at a price to the African-American athlete because the college or university expected dedication from recruits as well as contributing to team success and program recognition at the national level.

The educational opportunities were a selling point of the recruitment process; however, recruiters also conveyed the message of potential value of playing in high-profile programs with national exposure. To this end, academics appeared to be secondary as a result of demanding schedules that committed the student-athlete to daily practices, dealing with emotional and physical pressures of sport performance, and traveling the nation representing the program. Siegel (1994) also implied that the lack of academic success was a product of long training hours that consumed the time and energy of athletes.

Siegel (1994) stated that African-American athletes were being used to give national recognition to programs, but might not receive degrees in numbers that reciprocated the fact that the athlete was giving his service for four years, and the institution was giving him an opportunity to obtain a college education. The recruitment of underqualified students who were subjected to intense emotional and physical stress while experiencing time constraints on studying was identified as a factor working against academic success (Siegel, 1994).

> The picture seems to indicate that graduation rates across racial groupings for all students and athletes (including those in revenue-producing sports) are significantly greater in institutions with better academic reputations. But it also

> appears, contrary to popular belief, that participation in revenue-producing sports at the average Division I institution is not associated with poorer graduation rates. Indeed, Blacks appear to benefit somewhat by such involvement. On the other hand, at the elite institutions, participation in revenue-producing athletics is associated with poorer graduation rates, but this phenomenon is predominantly a function of White athletes underperforming their White cohorts. Black athlete graduation rates again surpass, by small margin, the graduation rates of their Black peers (Siegel, 1994, p. 215).

Perhaps this was a theory behind Smith's 1995 research which reported that the white world has difficulty accepting and recognizing that an African-American man could be the best at anything except basketball and music. The author noted that stories of fame and fortune rise from the ghetto, as youth prompt their good fortune via athletics. However, media and the predominant frame of thought provoked the notion that young African-American children cannot succeed in any arena other than sport.

Smith (1995) indicated the need for more books and movies illustrating the young Tiger Woods of the nation where success at college was coupled with academic and athletic achievements. He also suggested that more press and illustrations were needed to include people such as Trisha Perry, a basketball player with All-American honors who received the 1994 Wendy's High School Heisman Award and who had a 3.89 grade point average. Smith (1995) wanted to see more stories detailing kids who succeed on more than the fields and the courts, but who also do things in a mode that does not fit the movie producer's stereotypes of African-American children and adolescents.

Summary

There was conflicting information concerning the most appropriate time or age to initiate youth into sport participation (Malina, 1986; Brustad, 1993). However, as

Coakley (1993) noted, earning acceptance of those in the sport group with which the child is involved and the development of the child's identity are affirmed over time when competing and participating in sport. Loy and Ingham (1973) reported that researchers have focused on the following: (a) the process through which children learn to fit into society by adopting values, traits, and orientations compatible with society in general, (b) the development of femininity and masculinity, (c) general processes of social mobility through educational achievement and educational aspirations, (d) the process underlying the search for self-identity, and (e) moral development and attitudes toward fair play and winning.

McCormack and Chalip (1988) examined sport experiences and found: (a) athletes will have different experiences with different teams, sports, and circumstances; (b) athletes will interpret the same experiences in differing ways because of their relationships with significant others; (c) athletes at different stages of development will be influenced in numerous ways by sport experiences and significant others; (d) athletes will apply individual interpretations of sport experiences in differing ways to the decisions they make in the rest of their lives, and continue to use these experiences as they get older; and (e) those who do not participate in organized sport have experiences that parallel those who do participate. In fact, Coakley (1993) posited that sport participation might facilitate moral reasoning among children where sport programs have been carefully and explicitly designed and administered to alter already established moral reasoning.

Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) reported that, since socialization in sport by minority athletes has received only superficial attention, little could be said pertaining to racial differences particularly among African-Americans. They indicated that, "unlike their white counterparts, blacks tend to have only black role models, and quite often black athletes play the same position as their heroes" (Greendorfer & Ewing, 1981, p. 303). They concluded that African-Americans were most influenced by peers and that they received similar influence from mothers, fathers, and brothers; held similar values toward sport; and had similar opportunities to engage in sport. African-Americans had a higher value toward sport and appeared to be more influenced by opportunity and male siblings. Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) concluded that racial differences in socializing children into sport did exist and were more complex than originally thought.

Social mobility as a result of participation in sport has been a popular thought for numerous years. Scott (1971) reported that sports were an excellent means of social advancement for African-Americans. To this end, Wiggins (1985) stated that a large number of African-American youth have "turned to sport as their primary means of realizing the American dream of fame, wealth, and success" (p. 136). Wiggins (1985) suggested that sport exists as an avenue in which African-American youth acquire a college education, pursue a lucrative career, financially assist their families, and become idols among the community and throughout the nation. Similarly Harry Edwards (1983) suggested,

> There are four reasons why sport tends to be more salient in the black subculture: (a) black males spend an inordinate amount of time honing their athletic skills while believing they will become professional athletes; (b) there is a dearth of

highly visible black role models in fields other than sport and entertainment; (c) the black family and community tend to over-reward achievement in athletics relative to other forms of achievement; and (d) black males are more likely to see sport participation as a way of proving their manhood (p. 50).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of African-American male youth regarding the role of sport in their lives. I asked questions and probed responses specifically on each participant's account of his sport experience based on: (a) his family background, (b) his perception of what role sport plays in his life, (c) his perception of how his family views him as an athlete, and (d) his perception of himself as an athlete. The sections of this chapter consist of: (a) selection of the participants, (b) an overview of qualitative research, (c) practice interview, (d) the bracketing interview, (e) qualitative research group, (f) procedures, and (g) analysis of data.

Selection of Participants

Hatch (1995) wrote about the use of child participants in qualitative research and the importance of careful awareness when choosing participants.

> Selecting participants for qualitative studies involves careful consideration of the willingness and abilities of individuals to be exposed and available for long periods of time. When children are participants in qualitative studies, special considerations need to be given to selection and the establishment of rapport. While it is my experience that children are very comfortable acting naturally in settings with which they are familiar, children are frequently uncomfortable and unnatural in unfamiliar settings such as interview contexts that are frequently used by researchers. Because participant perspectives are the substance of studies of childhood as a social construction, careful communication and rapport building should be emphasized early in the selection process (Hatch, 1995, p. 125).

To this end, participants were identified with the assistance of friends of the researcher, throughout the Southeast region of the United States. Consequently, each contact person was familiar with the potential participants. Informed consent was received from the

respective agencies where the participants were contacted prior to the interviewing process (Appendix A), the coach of three of the participants (Appendix B), the athletic director of three of the participants (Appendix C), the parents of the participant (Appendix D), and the participant (Appendix E).

The participants in this investigation were six African-American youth from the Southeast region of the United States who competed in various forms of athletics. All ranged in age from 11 to 13 years and had participated in some form of organized competitive athletics.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research affords researchers the opportunity to study and investigate concepts, ideas, hypotheses, and experiences. However, this approach is uniquely and philosophically limiting. In research, the question is what drives the choice of methodology, and I believe my question was best suited for the aforementioned means of inquiry and data collection. The aim of this methodological initiative was to encourage and listen to the experiences and perceptions of the participants. The sharing of personal accounts was desired and essential to understand better the role of sport in life for each of the participants.

It was important to paint a picture of the cultural scene and the geographic identity of each respective participant to allow the reader an insight into the lives of the participants being studied. It was important to comprehend their environment and to understand their perceptions as they were relevant to their surroundings. To gain a perspective of another person's life and his life circumstances, the researcher must try to

suspend preconceived notions of their lives. Browning and Hatch (1995) indicated,

> Qualitative methods are frequently adapted to the settings under investigation, and questions often emerge or change as studies progress, making codified descriptions of data gathering and analysis procedures difficult. Furthermore, since understanding the contexts of a study is essential to interpreting the findings of a qualitative report, collapsing these into a few words in a review can distort important meanings generated in the study. Finally, since qualitative findings are descriptive in nature, shorthand versions like those found in traditional reviews of research are likely to leave out a great deal of descriptive power (p. 100).

In fact, the most comprehensive and detailed description would provide the reader and investigator with only a partial understanding of the participant. It was important to understand the language and the voices of the participants in order to adequately report back to each participant his experiences and perceptions. Without this basic understanding, the transcribed data would be known only in the interpretation of the researcher and would be ill founded and inaccurately based on the voice of each participant.

In addition to descriptive importance, qualitative research also portrays a process in which to study human life experiences. Qualitative research, which is embedded in methodology and strategy, includes reconstructing a cultural scene through the perceptions and accounts of the participants. It is not a simple process of jotting down a few notes over a series of observations or conversations, but a detailed course of action that depicts and determines the very nature of the person and culture being studied. It is intended that the data represent the worldview of the participants, and the participant's thoughts and perceptions were used to structure the research (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Individuals who are involved with qualitative research should, "seek to construct

descriptions of total phenomena within their various contexts and to generate from these descriptions the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect human behavior toward, and belief about, the phenomena" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 3).

However, there are occasions where elements and procedures need to be considered carefully when interviewing. An example of this is interviewing children and youth.

> Individuals who are unwilling or unable to share their perspectives in open-ended interviews or are unwilling or unable to act naturally while being closely observed do not make good participants. An essential element in any study that attempts to get at participant perspectives is the development of trust and rapport between researcher and informant or participant. Negotiating trust and rapport takes time and certain receptiveness on the part of both researcher and informant (Hatch, 1995, p. 125).

Therefore, it is extremely important and vital for the researcher and the participant to become comfortable with each other. A major mistake may occur in data collection and in the integrity of the investigation if careful consideration is not paid to the necessity of allowing trust and rapport to build before delving into the personal lives, experiences, and perceptions of the youth in the study.

Graue and Walsh (1995) stated some important components of interviewing and developing rapport prior to initiating data collection.

> The physical, social, cognitive, and political differences and distances between the adult and child make their relationship inherently different from relationships among adults. Regardless of the rapport between researcher and child, the researcher is NOT a child. The adult remains an adult, an outsider, an "other." The relationship between adult and child is asymmetrical and can never be bridged by taking what some have called a "least adult role" (p. 145).

The authors continued to note that researchers invade children's lives with observation forms and interview protocols while not taking the time to develop rapport and a trusting relationship with the participants. They barely take the time to introduce themselves, thus ignoring the development of the shared context that exists between child and researcher. This reluctance to facilitate rapport can result in shallow perspectives on children's lives (Graue & Walsh, 1995).

With this in mind, Graue and Walsh (1995) prescribed that, in order to gain an understanding of children's lives, researchers must invest great amounts of time with children. However, this time must be determined by the children and based on the children's terms. This results in more hours to desensitize children to adult presence, which will help the participants to incorporate the researcher into the children's world.

In the sense of the present research, and according to a 1986 Tammivaara and Enright study, overcoming an authority position through the adjustment of questions is essential in developing rapport in special situations created when interviewing younger populations. It is strongly encouraged that adults change their authoritative demeanor when they are interviewing children, so that the children's perceptions of the adult-status will change or be altered. It is essential that the demeanor of the interviewer does not control the behavior of the child during the interview structure while allowing the child to initiate the interview format and discussion. In fact, it is suggested that a comfortable interaction should be the goal so that the child participant has freedom to speak on the issues he feels important (Browning & Hatch, 1995).

Parker (1984) reported the necessity of helping children relax and winning their trust at the inception of the interviewing process. To this end, ethical principles and practices should be used when interviewing children including the implementation of adult status to avoid enticing or coercing the children to participate or share information as a means of gaining entry into their lives and experiences (Parker, 1984).

Hatch (1990) identified four problems that threaten the quality of interviews with children. He included potential dynamics such as: (a) the adult-centered problem where there is a difference in power between the adult interviewer and the child informant; (b) the right-answer problem, where the child views the interviewer as wanting correct answers; (c) the pre-operational thought problem, where complex thinking may limit children's ability to respond in adult-expected manners; and (d) the self-as-social-object problem, where the child may have difficulty experiencing himself in a different realm as the experience of being himself. Hatch (1990) stated that the interviewer must take time to build rapport while developing good relationships with children, as well as to emphasize informal rather than formal interviews, to ask questions which are suitable for children, and accept their answers without judgment, and to provide concrete parameters and examples about the question being asked. Interviewers also must be the advocates for the children they study and question (Hatch, 1990). Indeed, there is a need to set parameters and expectations about the effort of each participant, but there is an equal need to be willing to let the voice of the participant be heard without judgment.

Practice Interview

A practice interview was conducted with an African-American male who was 13 years old. Through this interview, it became clear that there was a language barrier between the participant and me. In addition, I felt that it was both enlightening and an excellent opportunity to experience the rigors of interviewing. This was an especially important element in the research because I had not interviewed any African-Americans for research purposes prior to this trial interview. It was also interesting to hear the participant talk about his experiences with sport, what role sport had played for him, and what role he anticipated sport would play in his life. I truly believe, based on this practice interview, that the participant envisioned sport as a means to be successful, to help his parents, and to keep himself out of trouble.

I was not surprised that the participant saw sport as a means to become rich and successful. However, I was not prepared to hear that sport was a method he used to "steer clear of trouble" and to learn about time management. This interview allowed me to appreciate the role of sport in his life. I was also interested to hear him speak about his heroes and the person he would not like to be. Jerry Rice, of the San Francisco 49ers, was the person he revered because of Rice's abilities, accomplishments, playing position, team membership, role model status, and financial success. These were seen as attributes and contributing factors to his idealization. The participant also noted that Michael Jordan was one of his heroes because of his personal and athletic successes in business and in sport. He admired Jordan's good nature and his role model position in society.

The fact that Jordan achieved great wealth in both athletics and private business was seen as desirable and respectable with the participant. In contrast, Dennis Rodman was the person the participant did not want to emulate because "Rodman has worn a dress and is always in trouble."

Interviewing this participant was an excellent opportunity for me to hear about and to become aware of the many opportunities that the participant spoke of and enjoyed. For example, he noted that there were many opportunities to enjoy sport in an organized or unorganized setting. To this end, there were community centers that he attended. The YMCA was available, the local parks provided ample space to play and practice; and he stated that he always had a place to play and practice. It was also interesting to hear about athletic opportunities that he chose not to pursue for various reasons. For example, he would have liked to participate in soccer and in tennis but explained that he "just cannot get it." He also stated that he liked working with his hands, and that football and basketball were premium opportunities in which to excel and earn a college education. However, he did report that tennis players probably made the most money, but that he could not play due to all the hand/eye/foot coordination involved. I probed for what opportunities he could foresee pertaining to other sports, such as swimming and soccer. He admitted that swimming was an opportunity and that he could swim and often did in the summer, but that swimming was not really a sport in which he wanted to compete. However, he expressed aspirations to try soccer and baseball.

Bracketing Interview

Two fellow doctoral students in the Cultural Studies Unit conducted a bracketing interview. The process enabled me to identify and articulate the role of sport in his life. The two individuals were a Caucasian and an African-American who had studied diverse cultures in their respective programs. The purposes of the bracketing interview were to help me identify my prejudices and presumptions and to gain understanding of the biases from which I might question and interpret or analyze the data. It was the rigor of the bracketing interview that allowed me to understand the angle and perspective of the research agenda, to listen more accurately while conducting the interviews with the participants, and to be more open as I examined the transcribed data.

I specifically learned that I had strong opinions concerning youth involvement in sport and the role sport plays in a youth's life. From the bracketing interview, I realized what questions were important to me concerning my own involvement in sport. However, I understood that my involvement in sport would not necessarily be the same as other youth involvement experiences. Therefore, the interview questions were honed to a more general protocol where the participants would be able to describe their experiences and opinions rather than to answer questions that were important to my youth experience.

Through this process I learned that additional readings in African-American culture were essential. I recognized the need to be aware of research that delved into sport as a means of social mobility and also the need to investigate the family's role in African-American youth involvement in sport. I noted that society's perception and portrayal of African-American dominance in certain sports might dissuade African-

Americans from participating in athletic arenas such as hockey, soccer, tennis, and swimming. I realized that socialization in sport might be different in the African-American community and that further research was warranted.

Procedures

Initially, I spoke with numerous contacts requesting their assistance in identifying and contacting youth who might be interested in being interviewed about their perceptions and experiences with sport. I informed each contact of my research interest and research procedures and they agreed to help locate and contact potential participants. In addition, the director of the youth facility where the interviews took place, the coach, and the athletic director who made referrals were asked to read and sign the respective informed consent statements (Appendices A, B, and C) to allow me to approach athletes of their respective programs and to interview in their facility.

Each contact introduced me to referrals and I subsequently contacted the parents of all referrals and introduced the research perspective and myself. I presented the purpose of the research and provided a copy of the informed consent, which detailed the procedures of the research to both the parents (Appendix D) and potential participants (Appendix E). The research methodology was explained to the parents and children involved with this investigation, i.e., that a qualitative approach would be utilized which would allow the participant to direct each session. The parents were informed that the research was not invasive and posed no risks to their children. In fact, each participant and his parents were informed that they could withdraw at any time without repercussion.

The youths were informed that they were not required to participate in the study. However, if they chose to do so, there would be no effect on them nor their sport participation. Then the parents and participants were given a consent form to read and sign (Appendices D & E, respectively). The parents were told that the first interview would take approximately 60 minutes and would focus on their child's perceptions of the role of sport in his life. The parents were also told that a second interview would be necessary. This second interview would enable me to address: (a) any unclear points, (b) any further questions that I had, and (c) my synthesis of their son's responses from the previous session. The parents were told that the second interview would take approximately 30 minutes and that this interview session would take place once the audiotape of the first interview had been reviewed and summarized. The parents of each child were told that each session would be audiotaped, thus allowing accuracy and verbatim transcription of the interview sessions. In addition, the parents were informed that they also would have the opportunity to listen to their son's audiotapes if they wished. The interviews were scheduled for a location designated through collaboration by the participant's parents, the participant, and the researcher. To insure confidentiality, each participant identified a pseudonym.

At the initial interview I spent approximately 20 minutes talking with each participant about general topics such as school, sports, and hobbies that each young man enjoyed. When I felt that each young man was comfortable, I asked if he had any questions concerning the interview and also explained how it would assist me in writing this dissertation. Once all questions were asked and discussed, we began the first

interview. At the onset of the interview process I asked demographic questions of each participant. This allowed me to probe for potential areas of family involvement and the participant's athletic background (Appendix F). A qualitative interview technique was implemented to assess the participant's experiences and perceptions. This enabled me to ascertain the nature of the dialogue through the use of probes while utilizing the participant's choice of words. Often, I made clarifying statements and recounted any pertinent reflections as they related to the course of discussion and this study. I encouraged and allowed each participant to generate the course of discussion. However, there were times when the researcher asked structured questions which were related to the topic of study (Appendix G). In order to accomplish this purpose, additional questions were used to facilitate the interaction. Examples of topics concerned: (a) sports the participant would be willing to try learning other than the ones in which he was currently participating and why, (b) his reasons for currently participating in sport, (c) cultural acceptance of participation in certain sports, (d) his hopes from participation in sport, (e) effects of participation in sport, (f) reasons for sport choices, and (g) comparison of personal attributes and attributes of sport heroes.

During the second interview, each participant was given a chance to hear his responses which were recorded during the initial interview. In some cases, the young men requested the opportunity to listen to their tapes and, on one occasion, one participant's family listened as well. I then asked if he had any questions concerning the audiotape and whether he had any immediate feelings regarding the content. I also asked whether each participant would like to add, change, or omit any section of the tape. Once

all questions were asked and discussed, I asked if it was a good time to conduct the second interview. I then asked questions concerning the initial interview to clarify any additional questions or topics covered in the initial interview. When we closed, I thanked him for his time and discussed how the data would be used to form the research paper.

Once the interviews were completed, I spoke with each participant and his parents concerning the interviews and how their child's responses would be used in the dissertation. I explained the process that would follow including the transcriptionist and the qualitative research group and the roles of each. I described how the data would be thematized and indicated my responsibility in accurately translating what was said in the interviews for this investigation. To insure confidentiality, I told the parents and the participants that the transcriptionist and each member of the qualitative research group would be asked to read and sign an informed consent guaranteeing confidentiality (Appendices H and I, respectively). I informed each participant and his parents that they could have access to the dissertation once it was completed. I personally thanked each participant and his parents for their involvement and told them that if any questions should arise, they should contact me.

Qualitative Research Group

The nature of the qualitative group was to help with the development of the research questions and the qualitative format. The group was composed of individuals of the Cultural Studies Unit, Counseling Education and Counseling Psychology Unit, and an individual from the Sport and Physical Activity Unit at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Three of the group members were professors and the remaining members,

with the exception of one, consisted of doctoral candidates and individuals who had completed their Ph.D. and had or were conducting qualitative research. All members, with the exception of one, were Caucasian. One individual who was integral in the development of rapport with the youth was an African-American student majoring in Sport Management. This group was helpful in the implementation of proper methodology and procedures. The group facilitated the validation of my thematic structure and advised me with respect to interpretation of the data and the search for themes. On numerous occasions, I presented information to the group and received feedback regarding issues such as interview style and probing questions. In order to insure the anonymity of the participants, the group was asked to read and sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix I).

Analysis of Data

Graue and Walsh (1995) suggested that great concern must be taken when analyzing data in a qualitative investigation. The interpretation of the data should be based on the words and the world of the participant.

> Just as children are situated within contexts, the research act exists in context as well. The researcher is culturally and historically situated. This situatedness provides perspectives on the way that the world works as well as relations with others that affect interactions in the field. This context frames all aspects of the research endeavor: the way the question is posed, the theoretical orientations (or their lack) used, the relations forged with participants, the technology employed to gather and analyze data, and the communities to which the studies are communicated. This context provides culturally and historically situated lenses that are as salient to the findings as the "data" themselves. Good interpretive research addresses the gaps between the research's perspective and those of a study's participants and should be reflexive about the history of the researcher's viewpoint (Graue & Walsh, 1995, p. 144).

Therefore, it is crucial to take time to develop rapport and a trusting relationship and to interpret the data according to the words, perceptions, and experiences of the participants. However, the researcher will inevitably become a participant in his own research (Graue & Walsh, 1995).

In order to better equip myself, and the qualitative research group, I employed the use of a transcriptionist to provide inclusive written transcripts of each interview. The transcriptionist was required to sign a letter of confidentiality (Appendix H), which delineated her role as a responsible member of the research team. It was required that confidentiality be maintained while listening to the tapes where potential identifying information might have been presented.

The data were analyzed after the summary of the audiotapes was delivered to the participants and had been validated by the participants in which they had been given opportunity to revise or amplify their responses. I, along with the qualitative research group, examined the final transcribed information to identify categories or themes related to the topic of sport and life. After the interviews were completed, and all tapes transcribed, the written work of each participant became the data for thematic analysis. To insure confidentiality, the participants were addressed in the tapes by their self-chosen pseudonyms.

The order of the presentation of the results includes one chapter introducing the nature of the individuals who participated, as well as three chapters examining the themes of: (a) self-concept, (b) family support and encouragement, and (c) sport as an opportunity. Chapter IV introduces the participants by their pseudonyms and

summarized their ages, number of siblings in family, in which sports they participated, where they lived, and whether that area was urban or rural.

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the characteristics of experiences that the athletes perceived as the role of sport in their lives. Although each athlete had different perceptions and experiences, all had sport experiences that they believed affected elements of their lives. Three themes were identified self-concept, family support and involvement, and sport as opportunity. Within Chapter V, the self-concept elements included size/physicality and being the best. Modesty, pressure management, leadership, sportsmanship were additional components that some of the participants referred to when comparing themselves to others. Chapter VI included the characteristics of experiences that the athletes perceived as support, encouragement, and involvement from family members. Although each athlete had different perceptions and experiences, all had experiences that they believed were supportive and encouraging in their lives. Chapter VII included the characteristics of experiences that the athletes perceived as an opportunity by participating in sport. Although each athlete had different perceptions and experiences, all had experiences that they believed were opportunities gained from participating in sport. This chapter included the sport opportunity categories of: (a) social mobility, (b) enhanced health and improvement in primary sport, (c) recognition of desired attributes, and (d) friendships. Chapter VIII integrates findings of this study with previous literature. Chapter IX provides conclusions and recommendations concerning this study.

CHAPTER IV

THE PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of African-American male youth regarding the role of sport in their lives. I asked questions and probed responses specifically on each participant's account of his sport experience based on: (a) his family background, (b) his perception of what role sport plays in his life, (c) his perception of how his family views him as an athlete, and (d) his perception of himself as an athlete.

To fully appreciate the perceptions of the participants, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the backgrounds of each participant so that their responses can be viewed in the context of their own worlds. The following sections introduce the participants, both collectively and individually.

Group Description

The participants in this study included six African-American male youths ranging in age from 11 to 13 years. All participants lived in the southeast region of the United States. All attended middle schools where each actively participated in sport. Of the six participants, three were referred to the researcher by a former youth basketball coach in the southeast region of the United States. The coach made numerous phone calls, which resulted in three African-American youth who volunteered to participate in the investigation. Three other participants were referred by an athletic director of a community parks and recreation department in a southeastern state. The participants competed in basketball, baseball, hockey, soccer, wrestling, golf, and football. In order to

preserve their identities, pseudonyms were used instead of their real names. The pseudonyms selected by the participants included Bruce, Deion, Griffey, Jeter, Kirk, and Vince.

All of the participants were African-American. Four of the six were raised in the southeast and two were raised in military homes where their families moved throughout the world. Four of the participants were 13 years of age, one was 12 years of age, and one was 11 years of age. All came from families where active participation in sport was encouraged and supported. In all cases, siblings and parents participated in athletics. All of the youth had aspirations of continuing to participate through high school and college, and hoped to make it into professional athletics. All recognized the importance of education and that school was the primary focus. Each maintained grade point averages from 2.7 to 3.5 based on a 4.0 scale. These student-athletes were not expected to be spokesmen for their race, sport, team, or age group. The purpose of this investigation was to determine their perceptions and experiences as they pertained to the role of sport in life and how sport has influenced or affected their personal story with no emphasis on determining cultural, demographic, or sport differences.

The participants all competed in middle school athletics and in community sponsored athletics, but their athletic experiences varied. All athletes were considered the top athlete or better-than-average athlete for their respective teams, which was determined by the athlete himself, and his peers, coach, or athletic director. All participated, at some time, in more than one sport. At the time they were interviewed all except Jeter and Vince participated in more than one sport.

Individual Participant Descriptions

The following section provides insight into the backgrounds of each individual student-athlete (Table 4-1). The descriptions are presented alphabetically by pseudonym.

Table 4-1. Participant Demographics

Name	Bruce	Deion	Griffey	Jeter	Kirk	Vince
Age	11	13	13	13	13	12
Siblings	2 brothers	1 brother 1 sister	2 brothers	1 brother 1 sister	1 brother 2 sisters	1 brother
Birth Order	Youngest	Youngest	Middle	Youngest	3rd child	Oldest
# of parents in home	Both	Both	Both	Both	Both	One (mother)
Sports	Football Basketball Baseball	Hockey Soccer Baseball Football Wrestling	Football Basketball Baseball	Basketball	Golf Soccer Basketball	Basketball
Professional in which sport?	Football	Baseball	Football	Basketball	Football	Basketball
GPA	3.0	3.3	2.7	3.0	3.5	3.3
Where They Lived?	Tennessee	Alabama	Tennessee	Tennessee	Alabama	Alabama
Where Raised?	Tennessee	Military/ World Travel	Tennessee	Tennessee	Military/ World Travel	Alabama
Residence	Inner-city	Rural	Inner-city	Inner-city	Suburban	Suburban

Bruce

Bruce was an 11 year old who participated in football, baseball, and basketball. He was the third child of a family who has enjoyed a great amount of success in sport as well as extensive participation in sport. Bruce lived with his parents and two brothers and attended school in an inner-city area of Southeast Tennessee. He spoke very proudly of his family and learning life's lessons from them. He indicated that he had fond

memories of his family, which included watching videos of his football performances and that the videos were excellent tools for learning from his mistakes and achievements.

Bruce commented that he was participating in sport so that he is not out getting into trouble by running in the streets. Numerous times he referred to his desire of making athletics a profession. He also spoke about his commitment to school and becoming well educated, which could help him earn a scholarship to a much better university because of academics and athletics. He spoke of how he has learned from family involvement in sport concerning how to be a proficient and modest athlete. Bruce was a very competitive individual, and he felt like he could be the best at sport. He enjoyed the contact of sport, especially football and wished to make football his profession. By making the pros, Bruce felt he would be able to take care of his family, which would be a sort of "pay-back" for his parents' support.

Deion

Deion was a 13 year old who participated in football, basketball, baseball, soccer, wrestling, and ice hockey. His favorite sport was ice hockey, but his family felt his best sport was baseball. He liked the element of surprise when he played sports. Because he was often one of the best athletes on his team, he was expected to make many of the plays. He enjoyed surprising his opponents when, for example, he passed the puck and someone else scored.

Deion wished to make sport a profession and felt that baseball was the sport that would allow him to do so. He had a very athletic family; for example, his brother was a world champion boxer and his sister was a former junior Olympic swimmer. Deion

enjoyed the traveling aspect of sport where he was able to see new areas and compete against people he did not know. He also enjoyed using facilities in which he did not practice daily. He recognized how fortunate some are to be able to have access to the facilities they participated in daily. Traveling was something that Deion was accustomed to as he was raised in a military home where living throughout the world was part of his childhood.

Deion was a very intelligent and articulate young man earning A's and B's in school. He attended an urban school and lived outside a large town in a southeastern state. He lived in a large home with a large amount of land surrounding the home and attended a suburban school where he competed in numerous sports. He lived with his parents and younger brother.

Griffey

Griffey was a 13 year old who participated in football, baseball, and basketball. His favorite sport was football where he dominated as a defensive lineman. He stated that he averaged approximately 8 sacks per game and loved the sport of football because of the contact. He had a great deal of respect for the game and had been taught by his older brother and his father the lessons of hard work and determination. His family had been involved with sport for as long as he could remember. His older brother had enjoyed accolades as a freshman star on a local football team. Griffey enjoyed sport and wished to become a professional football player. He participated in basketball and baseball as a means of remaining in shape for football. However, he liked these sports very much. He noted that he did not like to be recognized by his family, coaches, or

friends as a great young talent because it might cause him to become lazy and not practice as hard.

Griffey lived with his parents and two brothers. He attended an inner-city school in a large southeastern community. Griffey earned a 2.7 grade point average and admitted that he and his parents expected more from him in school. He noted that he did not want to be like a former local boxer because the boxer was unable to keep up with his finances. The boxer relied on an advisor due to his lack of education and, as a result, he died a very poor man. Griffey stated that, had this boxer been educated, he could have controlled his own financial future, leaving large amounts of money to his family. Therefore, Griffey was determined to be educated well enough that he could rely on himself.

Jeter

Jeter was a 13 year old who participated in basketball. He was currently in an AAU basketball program, which required him to compete year round. Jeter also competed with his middle school basketball team. In addition, he participated in middle school football and baseball before committing to a strict basketball schedule. Jeter was considered by Griffey to be the best basketball player for the middle school team. Jeter had aspirations of making the NBA where he would like to be the next Kobe Bryant. He considered Kobe Bryant his idol because Kobe was able to achieve athletically while being one of the younger players in the league. He believed that Kobe earned the respect of the senior players due to his game. Jeter related to Kobe because he, too, was one of

the youngest in his league and had to prove his game to the older members of his team and within the league.

He was very conscientious about his grades and maintained a 3.0 grade point average. He worked extremely hard at basketball and loved traveling to different cities and states to compete. Jeter lived with his parents and his brother and sister and attended an inner-city school in a southeast state. He was a well-spoken young man for whom God was his highest priority. Jeter believed that God gave him strength and, through God, he could do all things.

Kirk

Kirk was a 13 year old who participated in basketball, soccer, and golf. He had participated in football and expressed interest playing in the NFL one day. He was raised in a military home and had lived throughout the world. He lived with his parents, two older sisters, and a younger brother and attended a suburban school in a southeastern state where he was actively involved in middle school athletics. He enjoyed learning aspects of sport from his middle sister and from his father. He said he would like to follow in his sister's footsteps by earning an athletic and academic scholarship to college. In addition, he had aspirations of attending the prominent university in his state. Kirk was an extremely conscientious person who would like to be known as a good student-athlete and that he is a leader on and off the field. He maintained an A average in school and recognized the importance of school in his potential of being a great athlete in college.

Vince

Vince was a 12 year old who has participated in competitive athletics for approximately 9 years and competed in football, baseball, and soccer in the past. At the time of the interview he was involved with an AAU traveling basketball team, which occupied the majority of his free time. He noted that he would participate in other sports if basketball did not take so much time. He had aspirations of making the NBA one day and serving as a role model to youth across the country.

Vince lived with his mother and his younger brother. His father worked within a recreational department. Vince lived in a suburban town outside a large city in a southeastern state and attended a suburban school. Vince was an intelligent young man who earned an approximate grade point average of 3.3. He was well spoken and very polite. It became obvious through the interview that his mother's lessons about thinking before he spoke were consistently followed. He seemed very engrossed in thought as he worked through many of the questions. Vince stated that sport came third in his life behind God and family. He noted that, through prayer, he was strengthened and his focus was much stronger.

Summary

Each participant represented diverse backgrounds in sport. Many had older siblings who achieved high levels of success in sport. Of the two youth who were reared in military homes, their athletic backgrounds were more diverse, including more variety in their sports such as ice hockey, golf, and wrestling. Of all young men, only Vince was raised in a one-parent home. However, his father was extremely active in his life.

Each spoke about the support and encouragement they received at home including a sense of sibling rivalry that motivated some to work harder and become better than their siblings. Each spoke about his plans to make sport a profession once he finished collegiate athletics and his plans to help provide for his family. Each noted that, without sport, his life would be changed and might include illegal and dangerous activities such as selling drugs. On the other hand, sport participation has provided excellent opportunities to be recognized and to gain friendships.

In many cases, the fathers provided an instructional element to their learning about sport. Their mothers were seen as gatekeepers to sport and they would, if needed, punish their sons by disallowing participation in sport if appropriate behavior was not demonstrated.

CHAPTER V

SELF-CONCEPT

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of African-American male youth regarding the role of sport in their lives. Three themes were identified from the data; self-concept, family support and encouragement, and sport as an opportunity. The first theme includes the characteristics of experiences that the athletes perceived as one role of sport in their lives. Although each athlete had different perceptions and experiences, all had sport experiences that they believed affected self-concept elements of their lives: (a) size/physicality and (b) being the best. Modesty, pressure management, leadership, and sportsmanship were the concepts that the participants used when talking about their participation in relation to the nature of the game or to other players.

Size/Physicality

When describing the experiences that they perceived had contributed to their self-concept, the participants all explained their excitement or dislike for the physical nature of sport. The development of self-concept through sport involved numerous aspects of sport and sport involvement including the chance of injury, which was on the mind of several participants. Injury or the chance of injury would be devastating, as it would impede further involvement in sport both now and in the immediate future. A sense of self was learned through competition against others who were both larger and smaller in physical size. It became clear that injury could drastically reduce or eliminate any chance of participating in collegiate athletics and thus attaining a college degree or eventually making the pros. The chance of injury and the ramifications of injury were described by

Griffey, whose cousin, a multi-sport star, was offered many scholarships from different colleges in football and baseball. His cousin was unable to accept any scholarships.

> ...because something happened to his knee. He was in the newspaper and they said something about he had been in many different scholarships for football but his heart was in baseball. He really wanted to play baseball so he started playing baseball... and something happened to his knee. (Griffey)

The physicality of sport, which cut his cousin's career short, was what Griffey enjoyed most. He stated that for personal reasons he liked the physical nature of football. The contact was his favorite aspect of football and, in fact, the reason that he liked defense so well.

> I like the defense because I make a lot of sacks. Yeah, most of the sacks I make are on the backfield because if they try to come through the hole that I'm in and they don't get through. Like I'm better at defense. Well, I don't know if I'm better. I think I'm even, but I just like playing defense because I get to hit the man and tackle them, but on the offense I can't tackle them. I like sacking the quarterback. (Griffey)

Bruce also enjoyed the contact sports and admitted that he would like to try rugby because he was attracted to the hitting aspect of the sport. However, because his friends realized that injury was possible, they did not play football or rugby. Bruce felt that his friends were not tough enough to handle rugby and, in fact, stated that he felt they were scared of getting hurt as a result of the contact that is involved with rugby.

The notion of size was apparent with Deion as he spoke about playing hockey against opponents who were larger. In fact, Deion admitted to having some nervousness or anxiety that resulted when he competed against larger players. Deion stated, "...It's like you get nervous because everybody's going to be bigger than you. And it's like before [the game] you're nervous, but after you get on the court you're okay." Deion

noted that his size, as compared to others, initially preoccupied his thoughts, knowing that he was smaller than the other guys. He stated that he felt that the other team, who was bigger in size, would be the better team. The comparison to size was a part of competition for Deion as he normally participated with older age-group teams when playing hockey. Deion noted that unequal size afforded some competitors an advantage over smaller opponents, such as Deion. Deion's reference to size elicited some additional emotions. Deion noted that it was not fun to be manhandled by larger opponents.

> ...They are going to be better than me because I am small. The larger guy is better because they manhandle you more. They can knock you around. You can't do that to them. Being manhandled by the bigger guys is not very fun. (Deion)

For Deion, being bigger allowed one player to dominate the other. However, he acknowledged that by playing against the larger players now, at an early age, it would allow him to become better as he gets older.

Jeter played numerous sports, but, at the time of the interview, concentrated only on basketball. He stated that football was exciting and enjoyable because he was able to run the ball often. However, he eventually gave up football because he did not like the physical nature of the sport. The physical nature of sport included preferences for certain sports and dislike for others. Jeter stated, "...I just wasn't into it. It's a lot of running and hitting. I didn't like baseball when I got hit with the ball a lot." Jeter did not like the contact of football because, as the running back, he was constantly being hit, which was hard to take all of the time. In baseball, although he enjoyed throwing people out, he did not like being hit with the ball.

Vince, like Jeter, was concentrating on basketball. However, he noted that he did miss football. He especially missed football during the fall season when he attended games of local teams in his area. Vince stated, "In football I like giving sacks because I was a linebacker." To this end, and much like Jeter, a preference for certain sports arose because of the contact or the lack of success with certain sports where contact is essential, such as baseball. For example, he did not enjoy baseball very much due to the lack of hitting and movement. The contact of hitting a running back or quarterback was exciting, but contrary to football where he enjoyed giving sacks, soccer was not very pleasant due to unexpected contact.

> Baseball, it kind of didn't go so well. I struck out a lot. Yeah, I scored one run out of the whole year. Well, I wouldn't say I didn't enjoy it. I just didn't get a lot of hits. I didn't like the parts of soccer when I got kicked in the shin... that hurt. (Vince)

Since Kirk had stopped playing football, he reported that he missed certain aspects of the game especially when he watched college and professional games. It usually happened when he watched college or pro games.

> When I'm playing other sports I really don't... but like when I watch high school games or when I watch college or pro games, I really do, because I always liked to catch the ball and I was a wide receiver. The desire is still there to play football. I don't know why I don't go back to football. Well, first of all my size. I mean I want to start lifting weights and building myself. And then of course there's always at least one or two huge people at the school that I'm just sometimes terrified of. I mean there's, of course, the danger that could occur. But I mean it could occur in a lot of different sports. And my dad, he talks to me about how I need to let my bones... I mean if I get hurt or something... I need to let them just heal and not just jump from sport to sport. (Kirk)

The idea that sport was physical and involved physical effort was both attractive and unattractive to these young men. Preferences for certain sports because of the contact

or lack of contact came across when speaking with the participants. Size and physicality within sport provided some with certain challenges, such as remaining unhurt or manhandled, and reward for others, including being able to hit the running back or quarterback. The notion that injury could occur dissuaded some from participating in high contact sports.

Being the Best

Being the best described elements of self-understanding, which included the participants' liking pressure or the tension of close games, playing with older and more experienced teammates and opponents, having the confidence to take the last shot, being a leader on and off the court, and not needing to be the best in every sport. The participants spoke of other elements that they developed through sport by way of success and failure.

> Like Jeter is real, real good at football... I mean basketball. And I'm real good at football. I'm one of the better baseball players, but like some of the people that play on my team are better than me. But I think I am one of the best. (Griffey)

Griffey and Bruce noted that they do not have to be the best at every sport because someone will always be better. Griffey played both offensive and defensive lines positions and, as a result, did not feel the same sense of pressure that a ball handler would feel. When questioned about what it took to be competitive in the close games and for the team to win, Bruce stated that the team must "run the strongest back." He reported that he received the ball in close games, which made him feel good. However, at times he felt that receiving the ball in pressure situations was not always complimentary. In fact, being the best running back was not necessarily a great honor because he was only

given a chance to run the ball when the team was behind or in a very close game. When it came to games that were not very competitive, Bruce was not given a chance to run the ball and because of this he felt used. Bruce stated, "In a way it just makes you feel used. Because sometimes they don't give you the ball unless they're needing a lot of yards."

Being the best, as Deion stated, was relative to whom you are playing. Sometimes you would be the best, and other times, someone else would be better. However, he noted that comparing his skills to those of his opponents was not accurate as he competed in an older division. In fact, he commented that, because of the opportunity of competing against older players, his skill level would increase and someday he would have the advantage over teammates and opponents who were the same age as he.

> You got to learn if somebody's better than you or you're better than them. If I'm playing older than my age group, I often lose. But, one day I'm going to be better than those guys. ...Just know you're not in your age group, so they're going to be better most of the time. (Deion)

Deion often played in an older age group, which placed him in a position which resulted in frequent losses. However, he saw this as an opportunity to learn from older, more experienced players, which would make him better some day.

Jeter, on the other hand, enjoyed being the younger guy on the court. The notion of being a 13 year-old playing in a 14 year-old league allowed Jeter to become a better player while exhibiting a great deal of patience. Jeter was similar to Deion as both competed in an older division of AAU basketball. His awareness of being a younger participant in the league made him aware of the opportunities that are available and the consequences of being a younger player. He saw playing in the older league as a

challenge to prove his ability and a chance to show that he belonged in the older division. When Jeter got the chance, he felt he had to perform in order to earn additional opportunities.

> ...you make yourself into a leader by trying to get a lot of playing and show how to be patient. Wait until you get a chance to get in the game, to show them that you can play. It's a lot of fun. (Jeter)

The participants spoke about size and the physical nature of sport and their perceptions regarding these elements in their participation. They experienced the physical nature of sport differently where some participants were attracted to high contact sports and others did not enjoy the physical side of certain sports such as football. Being the best described elements of self-understanding which included the participants' liking pressure or the tension of close games, playing with older and more experienced teammates and opponents, having the confidence to take the last shot, being a leader on and off the court, and not needing to be the best in every sport. Other self-concept elements that arose through the participant's comparison of themselves with others included: (a) modesty, (b) pressure management, (c) sportsmanship, and (d) leadership. These elements were raised by many but not all of the participants, but they need to be considered as important to self-concept because they concern self-realization through sport involvement.

Modesty

Modesty was expressed in terms of how these African-American youth perceived themselves as athletes and how they assessed their parent's opinions of them as athletes.

Griffey noted that he enjoyed the respect and attention he received from participating in sport. The attention he drew was positive; however, he received criticism as well.

> Oh, I love sports. Like in school people talk about how good I do sometimes. And some of my careless mistakes and things. In school, they'll say something like Griffey, he's killing them, he's killing them, or something like that. They're just scared of me and stuff. (Griffey)

He mentioned that when he heard people talk about him, he became excited about wanting to go to practice. He also spoke about his mistakes as a means of encouragement and that he would make up for his bad play. It was all in the process of being good, accepting the criticism, being disciplined, and accepting ribbing from his classmates as a part of becoming better.

> On defense I kill the quarterback everytime. I'm happy about it (hearing his friends praise) and it makes me want to practice more and more so I can get better and better. If I make a mistake, like I miss a block, like if the linebacker blitz in and I miss him then he'll tackle the quarterback and my coach is going to get on me and they'll talk about me or something, how I got cussed out by the coach. I just think about I know I can do better. I just think, I just know I can do better, and I just tell the coach it was my fault. It doesn't really matter to me because I know they're going to be talking about how good I'm going to be later on. (Griffey)

However, the attention was not always good. In fact, Griffey stated that he did not want to hear all the praise as he feared that it would go to his head and he would become lazy. His concern was that he remained confident in his game and that his parents continued to be proud of him.

> I really don't have to hear them talk about it because I know I'll be good. As long as my mom and daddy's proud of me and my team, is all that matters. They'll tell me, okay... after the game... they'll be like "good job, good job," stuff like that. I'm happy that they're proud of me. They tell me I'm good sometimes, but I really don't listen to that because I don't want them to tell me I'm good, so I won't get the big head and think I'm good. Like after a game or something, like

> when I really hit the quarterback, or the running back hard. Like all the people will tell me I'm good, but I just like shake it off like, because I don't want to listen to them to tell me I'm good, because if I get the big head then I'll start getting worse and worse and worse. Like I'll think I'm so good then I'll stop practicing. I really don't like them talking about me that much. (Griffey)

Bruce spoke about sportsmanship and being modest when it came to his perception of his parent's thoughts regarding his athletic talents. Bruce stated, "They see me as just good as an athlete. I know this because they talk a lot. I see myself as okay...pretty good. I just try my best." The family watched videos of his athletic performances and critiqued his play. He saw this as an excellent tool for becoming better. His parents have told him to always work hard because there would be someone better along the way. When he was questioned about learning how to work hard, he responded that being a good sport was important in both close and lopsided games. Bruce stated, "Be a good sport...to show that you've got class. Don't show off...I don't want to brag."

Deion was a bit more open about his and his parent's perceptions of him as an athlete. He noted that his honesty came from many years of participating in organized sport. Deion stated, "They see me as good. They see me best in baseball basically because I've been playing it long and every year I play second base. They see me as good in everything."

Pressure Management

Another aspect of Jeter's self-development was the understanding he had regarding his preference for close games where there was pressure to perform. Jeter noted, "I like the defense because it's pressure because there's pressure when you're

about to turn the ball over to somebody." Jeter explained that when a game was close, the crowd would be more into the game. Jeter was very proud of his performance in close games and his determination to step up his game. His tenacity in the close games was rewarded as he was invited to play on a select team. The management of tension or pressure was a sign of acceptance and approval by the older league and by the recruiting coach.

> I like close games. If it's a close game... if it's a close game they like to play an interesting game. It makes me want to play harder so people can see how good I am. It was very fun, like we were playing a team and it was a real tense game, that's when the coach saw me playing and he wanted me on his team. (Jeter)

Vince had similar feelings about the pressure he experienced while participating in sports. The tension of close games elicited excitement among the crowd and team. Although the team lost, playing the best under such circumstances was still enjoyable and exciting. When asked what part of sport he really cared for, he described a game situation.

> Like the tension, like when you're down or up, everybody's screaming at me. Like it's like a minute or something in the final quarter and you're tied in the game and somebody dribbles down the court and throws up a shot and everybody's like gasping and everything. Yeah, when we play... like when our team won the championship this year it was tied and we was down like by two points and this boy went up and shot a three and he made it, but they didn't count it as three, so we was tied. And we kept going back to 18 and 19, 18 to 19, or 20 to 21, like that. It was from like 19 to 20. So we lost. We were still happy after the game. And it was a good time and trying to catch up with them. That's the best game we played. (Vince)

Vince also enjoyed the tension of taking the last shot in the game. He understood, at times, he would make the shot and other times he would miss. It went with the game and he could not make them all. Vince stated, "Well, you know, like you really want to take

the shot and you think you're going to make it. I make it most of time, but there are times that I miss." Vince understood that he could not make every shot, but he also realized that when he was really focused, there was a better chance of succeeding. Therefore, leading his team by attempting the last shot was something he liked.

Leadership

Jeter mentioned that he always tried to make an impression and that he was eager to learn and demonstrated this by being first in line for drills, running hard in practice, and volunteering when the coach needed someone to model a skill or asked for assistance.

> When he asks you to do something you're the first one that volunteers to do it. I think it shows that you want to play, that you want to be a leader on the team. You just make yourself into leadership by trying to get a lot of playing and showing how to be patient by waiting until you get a chance to get into the game, to show them that you can play. (Jeter)

Kirk learned the value of being a leader both on and off the athletic field. The development into a leader has paid dividends as he often perceived himself as a peacemaker.

> Well, I think some people, they look up to me, and I try to be a good leader in sports because some people think... like in soccer, some people they think I'm a real good player... and so I mean, whenever something happens or I may get fouls or something I don't just go crazy or something. The way I handle myself, I try to maybe show them how to get along a little better. Because sometimes, just because you're a team, it doesn't mean you're one big happy family or anything. You may have some eruptions on the team or something. I mean it happens probably more at school than it does here at... during sports. I mean actually I sort of act crazy. I mean I run up in the middle of something and try to push them away and I'm like, "Can't we all get along or just be one big happy family." I mean I say comments like that. I am more of a group willing person now. (Kirk)

Being a leader was very important to Kirk, as teammates needed to hear an encouraging word or listen to a voice of reason in a tense situation. Being a leader to athletes was also perceived as being a good athlete and demonstrating sportsmanship. Kirk seemed to understand the roles or responsibilities of being a leader.

> I say it's very important, because I mean... if it's... sometimes you may... I mean... time might be winding down and you may just already be frustrated and people start doing, your teammates start doing certain things, and you just have to tell them to calm down. I mean it's nothing to help you win or lose anymore than the state that you're in already. I say it benefits them a little at least by them realizing well yeah, he may be right, and I mean if they don't pay attention I mean it can make them or break them. Because there may be someone who has a quick temper on your team and I mean, it's not something normal, it's just something really bad happens, like maybe somebody, you're on a fast break and one of your teammate's throwing a fast break and somebody comes and does a flagrant foul on them, and they become upset, of course. But I mean me being a leader you just have to go over there and pull them away. I mean you tell them, I mean you get free throw shots and keep going. (Kirk)

Kirk spoke about being a strong leader through the demonstration of good sportsmanship. His leadership was illustrated on the athletic field and in school. In this case, Kirk was honest about his athletic talents and what that meant to his team and classmates. Being a leader gave him the confidence to express his thoughts and feelings. Being a good leader was important to Kirk's development in that he felt that he could alleviate a great deal of tension among teammates and classmates. This, in return, was a demonstration of how to handle oneself when it came to further conflicts. His parents were very influential in his life and he listened to them carefully, especially when it came to being a better person athletically and scholastically.

> Well, my mom, she tells me a lot of the time that being an athlete and being smart also is, I mean... it's something special because you have a lot of great athletes and... like in high school... and they just can't get the scholarship because of

> their grades or so. My father, I mean, he tells me how to become better and... other than really telling me, I mean how good I am or something, I think he stays away from that. I mean rightfully so because he tries to show us better than bragging. I try to stay modest. I mean because when a lot of people ask me if I'm good, I mean I've started to say... I say I'm decent and I try not to brag. Just because you're good, it doesn't mean you try to lower everybody else. It doesn't make you any better really. (Kirk)

Sportsmanship

Through sport, the participants have learned lessons about the values of good sportsmanship, through interactions with family members, teammates, and coaches. The participants as being respectful to coaches, players, and classmates explained sportsmanship.

When Deion was questioned about what makes a good athlete, he had a clear idea of the qualities of being a good athlete. However, making silly mistakes made Deion upset, but he explained that he did not lose his cool or sportsmanship.

> I have good sportsmanship. Like if we lose I don't get mad. One time we lost by one point in going to a championship in Nashville... See there's a mercy rule in hockey. And if you get eight points ahead... then the game's over, so we didn't want to stop the game. We wanted to keep playing so we let the team score a goal on us, and it came down that if we wouldn't have let them score that goal, we'd have gone to the championship. I got really upset. We shouldn't have let them score that goal. (Deion)

There seemed to be a line that Deion drew between being cocky and being confident. He believed that it was appropriate to be confident but not to be too cocky.

> It's like in wrestling, I never think I'm going to lose. I'm always saying I'm going to win. And everybody says I'm cocky for that. Everybody thinks that because I've been in the newspaper and they're like, "Oh you just think you're all that." Like there's a good cocky and there's a bad cocky. Like good cocky is saying you're going to win, having confidence. And then there's a bad cocky that's like you're bragging like, "Oh, I'm the biggest person." (Deion)

Jeter, much like Deion, had an open approach to his success and position on the team. He was not shy, noting that he enjoyed winning. He also spoke about the importance of paying attention to his coach and having respect for his coach who was always trying to make him better.

> I like winning mostly and when I lose I get mad. I get mad because I'm used to winning basketball and I don't like it, because I've been winning mostly. I think of myself as a good athlete because of my leadership and doing what the coach asks you to do, running hard, being always first. Listening to the coach means doing whatever he tells you to do. Most of the time he's trying to better you. (Jeter)

Summary

One purpose of this investigation was to determine the characteristics of those experiences that the athletes perceived as the role of sport in their lives. Although each athlete had different perceptions and experiences, all had sport experiences that they believed affected self-concept elements of their lives: (a) size/physicality and (b) being the best. Modesty, pressure management, leadership, and sportsmanship were additional concepts that the participants used when talking about their participation in relation to the nature of the game or to other players.

These young men also learned about a development of self, sport preferences, strong leadership, and good sportsmanship through interactions with family, coaches, and teammates. Many were attracted to the physical nature of certain sports where others did not welcome the contact that might occur in particular sports. All have developed a self-concept of their role in sport and what they hoped to gain from participating.

When describing the experiences that they perceived had contributed to their self-concept, the participants all explained their excitement or dislike for the physical nature of sport. The development of self-concept through sport involved numerous aspects of sport and sport involvement including the chance of injury, which was on the mind of several participants. An additional element of the sense of self, which was discussed by a few participants, was learned through competition against others who were both larger and smaller in physical size.

The idea that sport was physical and involved physical effort was both attractive and unattractive to these young men. Preferences for certain sports because of the contact or lack of contact came across when speaking to many of the participants. Size and physicality of sport provided some with certain challenges, such as remaining unhurt, and reward for others including being able to hit the running back or quarterback.

Being the best described elements of self-understanding, which included the participant's liking pressure or the tension of close games, playing with older and more experienced teammates and opponents, having the confidence to take the last shot, being a leader on and off the court, and not needing to be the best in every sport.

Another aspect of self-development was the understanding regarding a preference for close games where there was pressure to perform. It was explained by a few participants that when a game was close, the crowd would be more into the game. In a few cases, the tenacity of performance in close games was rewarded by play on a select team, and the management of tension or pressure was a sign of acceptance and approval by the older players in the league and by the recruiting coach. The participants spoke

about their feelings regarding being the best as taking the last shot in a game, giving the impression of eagerness to learn by being first in line for drills, running hard in practice, volunteering when the coach asked someone to model a skill or to provide assistance, and learning the value of being a leader both on and off the athletic field.

Through sport, some participants have learned lessons about being modest and the values of good sportsmanship. These lessons were learned through interactions with family members, teammates, and coaches. Modesty was expressed in terms of how they perceived themselves as athletes and how they assessed their parent's opinions of them as athletes. For many participants, sportsmanship was explained as being respectful to coaches, players, and classmates. The participants spoke about how they were perceived by family members and coaches concerning their athletic talents. In some cases the participants noted the importance of paying attention to coaches and described that being placed in sports meant that the participant's family cared and that they perceived them as good athletes.

CHAPTER VI

FAMILY SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

The second theme of this research included characteristics of experiences that the athletes perceived as a support, encouragement, and involvement from family members. Although each athlete had different perceptions and experiences, all had experiences that they believed served as supportive and encouraging in their lives.

Family Involvement

When describing the experiences that they perceived to be encouragement, the participants articulated their thoughts relating to their family's support and involvement.

> I've been playing football, basketball, and baseball since I was like in second or third grade. My two brothers... they play football and basketball and baseball. My older brother... now he only plays football because he's in high school and he don't have time for the other two. My mom was never really into sports, but she likes to come and watch us play. And my dad, he's always talking about like he liked to see us play, but he wasn't never into it when he was younger. (Griffey)

Griffey noted that his mom required that his grades meet acceptable standards in order to participate and that his father was also involved with his academic achievement. Griffey's mother was more of the gatekeeper to participation in sport and his father was more of the coach pertaining to his performance or work ethic.

> Okay, if I make a bad grade she'll punish me. I can't talk on the phone because I talk on the phone a lot. And I can't watch TV. Sometimes she won't let me go to football practice and I hate that because I love to go to football practice. Like she'll tell me I can't go to football practice and send me to my room... and sometimes I cry because I can't go. I just think I'm missing out and people are getting more exercise than me and they'll be better than me and I want to be better than them. When I was little he was like... like when I first started playing T-Ball when I was little, he bought me like a T-Ball thing, a little T-Ball thing, and he put it outside on the porch and let me hit the ball. And like when I missed the ball he was like, "son, you know you can do better than that. Let's try harder, let's try

> harder." And I just started doing better. I'm glad he helped me a lot you know. And I want to do the same for my kids when I get older. (Griffey)

Griffey also reported that sibling rivalry provided a sense of encouragement or support within his family. His was encouraged by his brother's success in sport and he was proud of his brother's achievements.

> Anyway, my big brother, he messes with me a lot, because he's fast and I'm slow. And he's always trying to make me better. [My older brother]... he's in high school and he's a freshman and he's the starting tailback for the varsity team, and he's always in the newspaper, and he's like "look at fat boy, you want to be like this some day," and stuff like that. I just tell him I'm going to be better than him. He says I might be like that one day if I keep exercising and stay in sports. (Griffey)

The support and encouragement that Griffey received from his brother were also expressed when they participated and competed on the same team one year. He shared one instance that illustrated the rivalry and competitiveness between the two.

> Yeah, and when we played on the same team like, okay, we'll be running laps and he'll lap me and come around and like push me to make me do better. Last year we played on the same football team and we played for School. And we never got to hit each other until like the last two days of practice. And like the day before that we was doing this little drill and we hit the thing and roll, hit the thing and roll, and then at the end there will be somebody waiting for you to get up and hit you. And hit the sled, and I was hitting the sled and rolling and I hit the sled and my brother was right there and I didn't know and I got up and hit him and he fell into the sled. Well, then the last day of practice they had me playing linebacker and it was like, I went to get a receiver, went to tackle the receiver, and he blind-sided me. He came out of nowhere and hit me and I fell. Like sometimes he'll bring it up, like every now and then he would bring up the hit when he knocked me down. And I was like well, what about the time when I knocked you down into the sled? (Griffey)

The rivalry between the two was a sign of encouragement where his brother's success was the goal to strive for or to surpass. Success had no bearing on the treatment of the children as Griffey indicated that there appeared to be no favoritism from his

parents as they treated all the children equally regardless of athletic success or achievements. Furthermore, the media attention that his older brother received provided a sense of family pride. Griffey noted that he was always happy for his older brother's accolades and the attention that he received from the newspaper. Even media coverage of his brother's success provided an excellent opportunity for Griffey's older brother to encourage him and to play on the rivalry between them.

> When I was eleven or twelve, I really didn't like football as much as I do now. Because I don't know why. I guess I, where my brother used to push me around a lot, is probably why I didn't like it as much. Now, like he'll make the newspaper and he'll tell me I want to be like that. I just laugh at him, like he's going to get killed today. He says I might be like that one day if I keep exercising and stay in sports. Like when he's in the newspaper he'd tell me I'm good. Sometimes, he'll tell me I'm good and I might be like that some day. (Griffey)

However, at one time the rivalry was not appreciated and Griffey lost desire in football as his brother often bullied him during practice sessions.

> And then sometimes he'll tell me, "You ain't never going to be like this," like the day before a game, he'll tell me "You ain't never going to be like this if you don't keep practicing" and stuff. I tell him, I say "I'm better than you." I know he's just playing because I know he's trying to build up my confidence. (Griffey)

Griffey noted that when he was playing or practicing in a lazy manner, his brother would exploit that and dominate him while playing football. Griffey also reported that his brother's continual domination and pushing led him to practice and compete harder and Griffey learned to appreciate that experience. With all the attention his brother received, Griffey had a sense of self-confidence regarding his ability. He knew that his parents' support meant more than simply being a good athlete. As discussed earlier, academic success was essential for Griffey to participate and he understood that approval

was earned in the classroom and not on the playing fields. In fact, Griffey spoke about a time, at the time of the interview, where he received his grades and his mother was not pleased. Griffey stated, "Oh, she was mad about it. She was mad about my grades. But I told her some of it was coming up. But she said they should have brought it up before they sent it."

With the success Griffey has enjoyed, he stated that pleasing his parents was all that mattered. The support and encouragement he received from his parents taught him that impressing people began with his parents. The recognition he received after games was important to Griffey, especially when his parents expressed their pride. At times, during games, Griffey enjoyed hearing his mom screaming for him while he was playing. He also noted that after his games, his family would sit down and watch a tape recording of his games and critique his performance.

> Yeah, he [father] records all of my games so I can watch it and see what mistakes I made... so I can correct it at practice. I probably wouldn't do as good if my parents weren't there. My mom's screaming motivates me. Oh, I like for my mom to just be screaming. Like she screams... after every game she's hoarse. Yeah, sometimes when she screams and hollers at my games she can't scream or holler at my little brother's games because she'll be so hoarse. As long as my mom and daddy's proud of me and my team, that is all that matters. They'll tell me, okay, after the game, they'll be like... "good job, good job"... stuff like that. I'm happy that they're proud of me. (Griffey)

The encouragement was not directed toward personal achievement and accolades for each child, but for success as an athletic family. In fact, Griffey's parents had hoped that he and his brother would play together at a larger level. Griffey stated, "They said they want me to be able to block for him one day. They want to see the family connection there."

Griffey's family encouraged him to participate in football, basketball, and baseball. His parents were also supportive of any other athletic pursuits he might attempt.

> They encourage me to play all three. They want me to try out for the soccer team, but I'm not really into soccer. I just don't see kicking a ball and not using your hands because, in all my sports I use my hands. And I mean, my mamma thinks there's an art to it. And I told her I'll try. (Griffey)

Griffey's family taught him about his ability and instructed him to avoid bragging because there was always someone better and it does nothing for an individual to brag about his skills. One day when Griffey was watching one of his brothers playing soccer, he decided to join him at intermission and kick the ball around. Because their family was involved with each other's athletic pursuits by attending games and supporting the participation, the children had opportunities to experience new sports. In fact, Griffey, because of his brother's participation, had thought about joining a soccer team. But Griffey was a bit unsure that he would participate in other sports such as soccer because of his love for football, basketball, and baseball.

> I was like, when I was little, all my mom and dad really got me into was football, baseball, and basketball, and that's all I really was brought up on, so that's all I'm good at playing. I love the game... I just love to play! (Griffey)

Bruce spoke about the encouragement and support he received from his family through watching his siblings compete before he was old enough to participate. Watching his older siblings and seeing how his parents were involved illustrated that participation and hard work were rewarded through his parents' admiration and attendance. Bruce noted, "My family sees me as just a good athlete. I know this because

they talk a lot. This happens when we watch our games from being recorded when we get home." Bruce watched videos of his performances with his family after the games. He noted that his family also critiqued his performance and looked for mistakes such as when he should have cut in or when he should have kept going to the outside of the line when he was running the football. The support he received from his parents was instrumental in his continuing participation in sport.

> If my parents didn't support or encourage me I really wouldn't play. I wouldn't have no support and nobody to cheer me on. My brothers are always messing with me and telling me I'm lame. I defend myself by watching their tapes. (Bruce).

Bruce noted that his brothers teased him in the same manner that Griffey's brothers did. In return, this presented an opportunity for the brothers to sit down and watch each other's videos, as well as to look for opportunities to learn from mistakes and successes. Bruce's father taught him that hard work might some day lead to a professional contract.

Deion reported that his family's support and encouragement were illustrated by placing him in sports. Deion also spoke of the pride he had in his older brother's and sister's past and current accomplishments in sport. He stated that when his friends spoke of their family's achievements in sport, he could brag even more.

> They see me as good. Basically because I've been playing for a long time. They see me good at everything. My sister was a junior Olympic swimmer and my brother is a world champion boxer. Like people can brag about their sister and nobody really knows I have a sister because she's in college, and I can brag. It's pretty neat having a brother like mine. Actually, nobody knows my brother until about a month ago when his fight was on cable TV. It's pretty cool. Just getting to say he was my brother and he's on TV. (Deion)

Deion learned that success in sport takes hard work and commitment. He discussed how his sister had to swim everyday and that his brother's job was to train for the next fight.

Jeter spoke about his family's involvement in sport and that participation seemed natural. A sense of family togetherness was also achieved through participation in sport as family reunions often involved athletic contests.

> My brother, he's 15, he plays football. My mom used to run track. My dad liked basketball but he never played. My family... we really don't get out a lot, unless we play sports in the park or something. We do that about three times a month. At family reunions the whole family mostly gets involved and it's fun. We get a chance to be with them. We live here and they live in Alabama so we go down there and just... make a team and play a game and stuff like that. My cousins... most of the time just play, but my uncles... they like to play. (Jeter)

The encouragement that Jeter received from his family included his brother's acknowledgment that he was a good athlete. He also discussed his family's perception of his athletic talents.

> They see me as an excellent athlete. Mostly my brother says I can make it in basketball if I just keep playing. He says I can go far, making it pro, I can really play sports. It encourages me to know that my brother believes in me basically. My mom says "Keep at it." (Jeter)

Jeter's mother gave him some advice on how to stay on top of his game and it included working hard and continuing to improve. His mother noted that he could work on his vision of the court and maintain a reference of where his teammates were in case he needed to pass the ball.

Kirk noted that his family was very close because of his parent's military involvement and that his family would frequently move throughout the world. Their

family became close because they moved so often and life-long friends were difficult to come by.

> Well, first of all... my family... we were born in every different part of the world. I mean none of us were born in the same place. So my dad was born in Tennessee. My mom was born in South Carolina, but she grew up in New Jersey, and my sister was born in Baltimore, and my brother was born in Alabama, and I was born in Africa. When I was born in Africa, then we moved to Belgium, and we've been to different places overseas and now we've been in Alabama for nine years. I would... I mean we have moments and times that we aren't exactly too close, but other than that we're a fairly nice, well-bonded family. I mean we travel a good bit and over the summer... the last couple of weeks of the summer... we went all up and down the east coast of the U.S. and they'd reminisce on the things... like we passed D.C. and I think they used to live there actually, and then a lot of different other places in New Jersey and all. (Kirk)

Kirk's family spent a great deal of time together, and this family closeness influenced athletic participation.

> Well, my dad he played both basketball and softball I believe, and my mom, she played basketball and I think softball also. And my sister, she plays basketball and she was a cheerleader also. Well, actually that was when she was about I think, a little, maybe eleven or so, and she used to cheer for the Little League like Bears and Crickets and then she still helped out like this recent... not exactly this year... but the last year, she's been helping out with the cheerleaders. (Kirk)

Kirk was very proud of his sister's accomplishments both on and off the athletic field. He even made the statement that he would like to replicate her successes by earning both an athletic and academic scholarship.

> Well, actually there were several schools writing her and... for instance State University and other schools like that. And she received an academic scholarship and then she also received an athletic scholarship from University of State. And so after they contemplated on where she was going she finally decided to go to University of State. Oh, I mean I don't want to brag on her, I mean too much, but that was something I was happy for her. And not the fact that she was moving out but the scholarship can help her out a lot. And a lot of people are coming up to me and I was telling them that's exactly what I'm going to do. She's been in the enrichment class which stops at 9th grade and then she played basketball and

> she's... I mean... she's tough, because like basketball star that's going to Tennessee this year, she held her to 8 points in one game... And I mean she's a really good defender. (Kirk)

Kirk spoke that he and his sister together learned about basketball and that their father facilitated their skill learning. Kirk's father was the coach for all of his siblings and taught them valuable lessons. The private lessons that Kirk's sister received from their father resulted in a great deal of praise and encouragement for Kirk from his sister.

> Well, I think my dad had a huge part to play in that, and I mean my dad he plays basketball also. And he is real good, and he would take her out to the Y and help her and she'd just become better and better each year. She would like compliment me whenever I told her about it. I think she was always interested whenever I told her. It meant a lot to me because, of course your parents, they're going to support you most of the time you know. And your sisters and your siblings, I mean it's their choice really. And if they do, they really care about what you're doing. (Kirk)

Kirk made the comment that his sister's care and interest in his achievements had a positive affect on him. Sometimes the encouragement and support he received was in the form of lessons or instruction. Kirk also appreciated his parent's support and recognized that all young people did not have the same opportunity as he.

> Well, she would sometimes... well my 18 year old sister... she would take me outside and start to show me a couple of things and I'd sort of do something wrong, then I'd try to recover myself, and we'd start laughing about it and stuff like that. Because my parents, they support me really all the time. But I'm saying in general it's... generally all the kids... most of the time their parents will support them. But it's not... you can't always take it for granted because every parent isn't like all the other ones.

Kirk noted that if his parents did not support or encourage him as they did, his participation level and interest would decrease and he would feel that his parents did not care about him.

> I think it would sort of decrease, it would sort of decrease my interest because I mean, if they didn't, they just went and maybe just dropped me off or picked me up all the time, and didn't care about what I was doing, it's just like I'd probably feel like they didn't really care about me. (Kirk)

Kirk reported that his parent's support did not diminish when athletic schedules among his siblings conflicted. In fact, one parent would attend one game and the other a different game.

> Well, whenever my dad and my mom... I mean, sometimes my brother and I, our soccer games conflict... and so there's either one of them with my brother and one of them with me. And so, I mean it's always good to see at least one of them, or even if they have to, just go back and forth. And whenever I do something good it's always nice to hear my dad's voice telling me "Good job"... or pointing out something to me. Like in basketball sometimes after... when I played for the junior high... and after our games sometimes I'd ride back with them and my dad would point out some things... like maybe I had a way to penetrate in every time but I wasn't looking for it. Or he would always tell me to use my left hand because I'm right handed. They [My parents] have a great deal of affect because my dad, he's the one who's been really coaching me up until like maybe one or two years ago and then I started playing for the junior high and all. (Kirk)

When I questioned Kirk about his father's coaching the teams in which he participated, I was curious about whether he saw his father as a coach or as his father.

> Well, whenever I'm in a game or something with my friends, I mean on a team, I see him as a coach, and then when we're at home at the basketball goal and he's teaching me, I see him as a mixture sort of. Well, I have respect for him because, I mean first of all he's just my father and a lot of kids, I mean like me, they just don't have that experience, and then also sports, and just the way he's with me and the relationship we've built with each other. Because a lot of black kids I know, they're raised in single parent homes and single parent families, and I just... like I mentioned earlier... a lot of things you just can't take for granted. And so I just cherish the things that I have. I think that if, because most single family parents are just mothers. I mean unless there's a death of a mother or something. And I think as a boy, I mean you need that father figure in your life... I mean just to guide you in manly... I mean tell you manly things... and things like that. I mean we talk, I talk to him about some girls and stuff. (Kirk)

Kirk saw his relationship with his father as one that revolved around being taught about the lessons of life and sport. He cherished the opportunity to spend time with his father and looked forward to further lessons. Much like Griffey and Bruce, sibling rivalry was alive between Kirk and his younger brother.

> I play with him. I mean it's funny because he thinks, well, he thinks that he's better than me and everything... I'm like, yeah, I know. Well, most of the time, I think he probably, he's saying, he means what he's saying... but he knows he's not. Well, soccer and he's... I have to admit he does have a better shot than I do. And golf, we always talk about that. Because I cannot... I slice almost every time, just like when I drive. And then we always talk about... he always says "I'm better than you in driving, but you're better than me in putting." So I'm like, "Yeah, I guess so." (Kirk)

Vince spoke about his family's involvement in sport, which included his mother, father, aunt, uncle, and cousins. His family was very involved in athletics and competed in numerous sports.

> Well, my dad, he played basketball, and my mom, her and my aunt, they ran track. My mom, she played... they say she played baseball pretty good. And my uncle, he played football. And my cousins, they played baseball and football... We're competitive, I guess, and we really like sports and we're into it. Yeah, like at family reunions, we play volleyball or something like that. We play softball sometimes or horseshoes and stuff like that. We're having fun, just being with each other. (Vince)

When the family came together for a reunion, there was a great deal of physical activity. Vince noted that the family was not competitive with each other and often chose not to keep score, but used the activity to spend time with each other. The idea of having activities was not to be competitive, but the games included everyone as a means of drawing the family closer to one another. Vince stated that he looked forward to meeting cousins that he did not know and the games they played were a good way to do so. Vince

reported, "Like we might play kickball or something like that. It doesn't matter, just like any kind of sport to get closer together I guess."

Vince reported that his family supported his participation in many ways that included financial support and encouragement to participate in physical activities. In fact, his father served as his coach on occasions.

> Well, they pay for some of the activities I participate in. Like basketball, they pay for my jerseys and shoes and stuff like that. My dad encourages me to get up and stuff, to be in shape and stuff like that... not sitting around the house doing nothing. Sometimes he was my coach and they'd make us do suicides. We had to go from the out of bounds to the free throw line and back to half court line and back and then to the other free throw line and back to the out of bounds line. My mom... she encourages me, but she like asks me "Do you want to play basketball or soccer or something like that?" It feels pretty good [knowing that both parents are supportive]. There are some kids that don't get to participate in some sports or anything, because their parents can't afford it or something like that. (Vince)

His family supported him not only through financial means but also through recognition. Vince stated that his parents came to his athletic events and provided tips and insights concerning his performance and future performances. He recognized the need to take advantage of the opportunities that were provided for him, as others might not have the same opportunity.

> Take the opportunity... just take the opportunity. My family says I'm a pretty good athlete. When they come to my games, they give me tips and stuff... like how to shoot the ball, how to shoot lay-ups... just by putting me into sports... because if they didn't they really wouldn't care. My dad taught me how to drive the lane so I get more fouls and I shoot free throws. (Vince)

Summary

Each participant described instances where family support, encouragement, and involvement served as motivation to participate and perform. On numerous occasions, all

participants noted that if their parents were not involved, they would not be competing in sport or care for participation. In fact, their parents' enrolling them in sports demonstrated that they cared for them and saw them as good athletes.

For many participants, family involvement did not refer only to receiving praise from parents or siblings for good performances, but also included receiving constructive criticism. For numerous participants, watching older siblings and seeing how his parents were involved illustrated that participation was rewarded through parental admiration and attendance. The support and encouragement that each participant received from his family taught them that family involvement was ideal when participating in sport. Whether it was reviewing game films, receiving instruction prior to the game, or hearing a parent cheer for the participant, recognition by a parent was cherished.

The pride that each participant spoke about concerning siblings or family members' involvement in sport demonstrated a family connection in sport. When it came to participation in sport, some participants referred to the influence of family members when deciding in which sports to compete. In some cases, participation in sport was also a means for family togetherness, as the family would often attend the athletic events of siblings.

In many instances, sport provided an opportunity for parents to assist their son in realizing goals and teaching lessons about sportsmanship and hard work. In some cases, fathers were the coach for the athletic teams in which their sons competed. This afforded the opportunity to spend time with each other, which created a sense of closeness.

CHAPTER VII

SPORT AS AN OPPORTUNITY

The third theme included the characteristics of experiences that the athletes perceived as an opportunity resulting from participating in sport. Although each athlete had different perceptions and experiences, all had categories of experiences that they believed served as opportunities resulting from participation in sport: (a) social mobility, (b) enhanced health and improvement in primary sport, (c) recognition of desired attributes, and (d) friendships.

Social Mobility

Social mobility within the investigation might indicate improving social status (Dubois, 1986); realizing fame, wealth, and success (Wiggins, 1985); and acquiring a college education, pursuing a lucrative career, and assisting their families financially (Wiggins, 1985). When describing the thoughts and perceptions of participation in sport, the participants spoke about using their athletic talents as a means to achieving personal wealth and realizing goals of higher education. Griffey, for example, indicated that one reward of participating in sport was being able to attend a university or college. Griffey's cousin, a multi-sport star, was offered many scholarships from different colleges in football and baseball. Unfortunately, he was unable to accept any scholarships due to injury.

> ...because something happened to his knee. He was in the newspaper and they said something about he had been in many different scholarships for football but his heart was in baseball. He really wanted to play baseball so he started playing baseball and something happened to his knee. (Griffey)

Griffey's cousin, because of injury, was unable to accept an athletic scholarship, attend college, and earn a college degree. Griffey spoke of the value of an education and mentioned a man who was well known in the southeast Tennessee region. This man was a boxer who did very well professionally and financially, but he died a very poor man as a result of a manager robbing him of his money.

> I wouldn't want to be Big John Tate. He used to be a boxer and he got gypped, where he couldn't count his money. Yeah, because he couldn't count his money, and I really don't want to be like that, because like he was from around here. He, I don't guess he was good at math or something, and he made so much money and like his manager or agent I guess, something like that, my mom told me, but I don't remember... he gypped him for all his money, so he went poor and was living in the streets. (Griffey)

Therefore, had Big John Tate used his athletic talents and saved some money to get an education, he would not have died a poor man. Griffey mentioned that if Big John Tate had learned how to use mathematics well, he could have managed his own money instead of relying on a dishonest accountant.

Griffey had dreams of playing professional football and taking care of his parents financially. He felt a sense of pride about the opportunity to repay his parents for their support and love.

> I want to be rich and famous and move my mom and dad... my dad's always talking about if we ever get rich and famous he wants a car, a regular car... and move him out of the raggedy old house. I just want to take care of my mom and dad. (Griffey)

Being rich and famous was not the main motivation for Griffey's desire to be a professional athlete. He saw athletics as an excellent means to become able to take care

of his parents. In fact, Griffey noted that just being able to play football would be enough for him because he loved to play the game.

> To be rich and famous, well I really don't need a lot of money. I just love to play the game. It's real important to take care of my mom and dad because they took care of me, so I should be able to take care of them. (Griffey)

Being a professional athlete takes great talent, but Griffey stated that he wanted to use his talent to earn an education. Making it to the NFL would be a dream come true. But if he did not make it into the pros, having the education would provide the basis for a career outside sports. Griffey's brothers aspired to be professional athletes as well. His older brother, for example, wanted to play in the NBA; but playing in the NFL was another goal that he had, as he was also very successful in football.

> Oh, I would be mad, but I mean if I get my education I would have something to fall back on, but I really want to make it. I could probably make it in baseball too... if football doesn't work. But my education is important... it is very important because like... if I do make the NFL, I've got to be able to count my money and make sure I get all of it. And so I won't be like Big John Tate... if he would have gotten his education and studied hard in school he wouldn't be like he was. Like if I was to be in the NFL and broke my leg or something, then I would still be able to make money if I like major in accounting and work at the bank or something. Well, I think he wants to play in the NFL too, when he gets older. (Griffey)

Bruce referred to the opportunities that might be provided via sport including a means of attending college and in the form of a professional sport contract. Bruce noted that his parents encouraged him to earn good grades because academic success would aid his effort of attending and being eligible for a good college or university. Bruce stated, "You've got to keep your grades up, got to go to college. Having good grades allows me to play sports... because I'm trying to make the NFL. Because you can't go nowhere

without your education." Concerning his reasons for participating in sport, Bruce indicated that he wanted to earn his way to the NFL. He stated that the more he played the better he became, which translated into being more attractive to colleges and universities for football. He reported that through professional sport, he could repay his family for their support. He stated that sport could provide money and a house for him and his family. In fact, his father explained to Bruce that he could become a professional athlete. These lessons came in the form of discussions, reinforcement, and praise regarding Bruce's speed and athletic talent.

Deion talked about what sport could do for him which included receiving free equipment because of his athletic success and having the opportunity for travel. When he spoke of a particular NHL goalie, Martin Brodeur, he noted that Brodeur received free equipment because of his tenacious defensive skills. With the success in athletics, Deion also stated that he wished to earn an athletic scholarship because of his athletic ability.

> It's like you get to go to like Florida and Tennessee and all over the world. It's fun because you get to try new things and go to different places. Like every tournament that we go to in hockey there's a skate park and we always go to it.
>
> I hope to earn an athletic scholarship so my parents don't have to pay for college. It would be pretty cool. So they don't have to pay and it's more money they'd have to save. I might get something new with that money. (Deion)

Deion knew that it would take hard work to accomplish his goals of being a professional athlete, but if he were to succeed, it might lead to lucrative endorsements and other professional opportunities.

> If sports could do something for me, well a lot of guys... you... like they get you on a lot of movies. It's just like just about every big sport star is in at least one movie. And it's pretty cool... you get to like handle stuff that you just don't get

> to handle every day. Like on the movie Face Off, they got to handle those guns and stuff and drive stuff like tanks. (Deion)

So being a professional athlete would allow him to make a great deal of money, but it might also afford him the opportunity to earn a second lucrative living as an actor.

Jeter spoke about his desire to play professional basketball and accomplish his goals. When asked about what his goals were Jeter stated, "Go far in life, making it pro... I can really play in sports by accomplishing goals and all things with your life."

Jeter acknowledged that it was a long shot to play basketball in the NBA, but was willing to work hard to make it happen. He recognized that there was about a "one in one million chance" of making it professionally but thought he had a decent chance.

> I think I have pretty good chances because there's a lot of people around the world, scouts, looking. And making the NBA would be accomplishing a goal. It is very important. It's a good way to make a living... like millions. I'd buy my mother a house and buy me a house. I'd like for some people to know me and know that I'm doing good. I'd like to hear my name all over the world. It'll be a lot of fun. (Jeter)

Jeter stated that he could make millions from professional athletics, buy his mother and himself a home, and be recognized all over the world. But he understood that it was going to take a lot of work, listening to coaches, and putting God first in order to accomplish his goals. With the success in sport, Jeter said he would be able to travel and see places that he otherwise would be unable to visit.

> I would need to stay in school, do good work, listen to coaches, and put God first. He does a lot of things. If you've got God, you know that you can make it. It could help me make it, like traveling around the world and stuff... seeing places I'd never see. It's very important. I'd like to visit different places and see a lot of different things. I can go far in life and make a lot of money playing basketball. (Jeter)

Jeter, much the same as Griffey, stated that his brother also had aspirations of making it professionally in sport as well as earning an athletic scholarship for college. Even when Jeter was 11 years old, his goal was to make it to the NBA and earn an athletic scholarship to college. He mentioned that his parents were contributors to goal setting which included professional sport. Jeter stated, "I think he hopes to gain a scholarship to go to college and make a life in sports. I think it's like my mom... my dad like the best so I think that's why we like playing sports." Jeter recognized that hard work and determination would be necessary in order to realize his professional goals. With his aspirations of earning an athletic scholarship and becoming a professional basketball player, Jeter stated that education was important because there was a chance that he would be unable to play professional basketball.

> Because if you're a good basketball player a lot of the time, I mean you'll make it to the NBA or make it pro. And if you're a good student, then you'll have something to fall back on if you don't make it playing basketball. (Jeter)

Kirk viewed sport as a means of achieving social mobility by earning an athletic scholarship like his sister. In fact, he recognized by age 12 that he wanted to earn a dual athletic and academic scholarship, as his sister did. He learned from his sister how much scholarships could mean financially on both a personal and family level.

> Well, actually there were several schools writing her and for instance State University and other schools like that. And she received an academic scholarship and then she also received an athletic scholarship from University of State. Oh, I mean I don't brag on her, I mean too much, but that was something I was happy for her. And not the fact that she was moving out, but the scholarship can help her out a lot. And a lot of people are coming up to me and I was telling them that's exactly what I'm going to do. Well, I've been talking to my parents and actually I've been telling them I really wanted to go to State University and we were talking one day when the lottery passed here, and my mom said, "well the

> lottery passed," and I said well, "I'm not even going to need it, because... I mean... I plan on getting a scholarship." (Kirk)

Kirk also recognized that an athletic scholarship would be unavailable if he did not maintain good grades.

> I want an athletic scholarship but I know I have to maintain good grades and all to receive one. Well, it's not true, I mean because athletics is both, actually, you know. You have to be able to play well. I mean they're not going to get you for... they're not just going to have you just for having good grades. Because I mean if you can't really play you're not going to be on their team. The grades are a great asset to have however if you want to play and you don't have the game to play... (Kirk)

Kirk hoped to earn a scholarship from participating in sports, and he understood that the possibility of making professional athletics would be a result of his hard work and education.

> I hope to get a scholarship then hopefully I'll be able to play pro and earn a living for a while. And just move on to be like maybe an agent or something that has to do with sports. I would like to help give back also... like maybe to charities or maybe I might help a school or so. If I had a choice, I think... if I could play any one of them... I think it would probably be football I think, because well, it's hard. It would probably be, it's hard to choose, but right off the top I think it would probably be football. I'm sure I could earn quite a bit... probably a couple of million over a lifetime at least. I wouldn't exactly go, I'm saying this now, but I mean it might be different when you do have it. But I don't think I'd buy a humongous house. I'd buy a nice size house, have things in there, and then give back to my family. (Kirk)

Vince reported that sport would allow him to earn a college scholarship. This, in return, would enable him to obtain a good job either as an architect or teacher. Vince recognized the importance of attending college and that, without an education, the possibility of receiving a good job would be difficult. Vince stated, "People would have to make jobs, because sports are people's jobs. They get paid for it... the people who play

like basketball and baseball." When I asked him what sport could do for him, he reported that it could provide an opportunity for social advancement and he would serve as a role model. He also recognized the value of an education and that an education would help him if he were to become a professional athlete.

> It would get me somewhere in life... I might be a hero or people might look up to me or something like that... be a role model. By playing sport, you know kids like watching TV, like basketball. You know like breaking a record or something. Breaking Michael Jordan's record or somebody else's. If I were not to get an athletic scholarship... academics could get me a scholarship even if I don't play basketball. If you can't like... if you can't read or something and you like... NBA, they're probably going to decide if you can't read, you can't read... (Vince)

Vince stated that he realized that hard work through high school was necessary in order to become a professional athlete. Vince noted, "They just worked hard through high school. I believe my chances of going pro are about two out of five. I just want to play basketball."

Enhanced Health and Improvement in Primary Sport

The participants spoke about participating in sport and the health benefits that are a result of sport involvement. Some participants also mentioned that through participation in additional sports, the subsequent training and skills would allow them to improve in their preferred sport. Griffey spoke about the importance of being involved in sport as an opportunity to maintain good health. He also mentioned that his parents required him to earn the opportunity to be involved in sport by achieving good grades in school. He spoke about how he felt when he was forced to miss practice because he had not earned the privilege of practicing or competing in the sport. Griffey notes, "I think I'm just missing out and people are getting more exercise than me and they'll be better

than me and I want to be better than them." Griffey noted that if he did not have sports, he would probably be out of shape and unhealthy.

> If I didn't have sports then I probably wouldn't exercise. Probably all I would do is eat, I'd probably be a big couch potato. Yeah, because my daddy, he can't play sports and exercise none. He has bad sugar and blood pressure and I just don't want to end up like that. (Griffey)

When asked what sports did in his life, he talked about his health and facilitating his ability to be a stronger athlete by competing in more than football.

> I know it makes me become a better person. If I didn't play sports I wouldn't be playing basketball, and with basketball running up and down the court keeps me able, I mean I'm fast for a big man. Because what I really want to do when I get older is play football. But I just do the other sports to keep me in shape to play football. It's just really like sports keep me in shape, so I can be a better person. I won't be like some kids that go to our school, they're big, but they're lazy. They walk slow, and they can't run. (Griffey)

Griffey commented on playing multiple sports and acknowledged that he may not be the best in all sports. In fact, he was willing to participate in new sports that might help keep him in shape for football.

> I'm one of the better baseball players, but like... some of the people that play on my team are better than me, but I think I'm one of the best. I would probably try soccer because my mom wants me to. And I mean, my mama thinks there's an art to it. And I told her I'll try and it will probably keep me in better shape. Yeah, it would build my leg muscles and make me quicker...my speed to get off the line. Just to know that I got healthy. Like I know some of the smaller guys haven't got as much exercise as me and built up their leg muscles, so they can't run as fast. (Griffey)

Griffey noted that the exercise that he gets by playing football made him a better athlete and football player.

However, there were other aspects of participating in sports than health related reasons; for example, Griffey noted that if he were not active in sport he would probably be on the streets getting into trouble.

> Like selling drugs or like betting for money... well probably not betting for money... but like running the streets. They get in trouble a lot. Sports keep me from running the streets. In the streets you've got to watch your back a lot and in sports you have fun by playing football and playing basketball. But you've got to like sports to have fun. (Griffey)

Bruce stated that by participating in more than one sport, he became a better athlete. He liked the sports that were similar to football where he could use his hands and contact was involved. He stated that he participated in sports because they were fun, and he was able to use his athletic strengths such as speed to become a better football, baseball, and basketball player. Similar to Griffey, he felt that sport had positively influenced his life by keeping him off the streets and keeping his life together. He reported that if he were running the streets, he probably would not live long. When asked what usually happened to people who run the streets, he mentioned that they were usually shot over money.

Deion stated that playing sports kept him from being lazy and gave him an outlet to stay healthy. It also has forced him to focus on his schoolwork as he completed his homework at the same time each day.

> It keeps me busy and out of trouble. It's like it keeps me active so I don't be lazy and it keeps me like doing stuff. I'm doing sports four out of seven days. It's like if I don't make like a C on my report card then they won't let me play... because I like playing sports and I wouldn't get to play is why I keep my grades up. I go to high school because that's where my parents work. I do my homework and if I don't have any I go put my book pack in Mom's car. Sport keeps me active and busy because I might get into trouble and I don't want to be a big person. (Deion)

Jeter noted that he participated in sport because it kept him on track and out of trouble. Jeter was also concerned about maintaining good grades and if he did not achieve good grades he would not be allowed to participate in sports.

> They help me stay on track in school because I know if I mess up I can't play any sport. Well, the teachers stay on you because they know you're on the basketball team and if you mess up you know you're not going to be playing basketball no more, and I like playing basketball. It means a lot. It's hard because I'm used to making all A's, and I just dropped a little... that's hard. I like people looking at me being smart.

Jeter also noted that part of his strength in basketball was his faith and determination. He felt that by believing in God and working hard, he would steer away from trouble that otherwise might happen.

> Staying in school, doing good work, listening to coaches, and putting God first will help me succeed. If you've got God you know that you can make it. I used to have like an attitude when I'd lose or something. I get mad but I don't show my temper. It's like some people said they do a lot of bad things, but when you play basketball you know that you've got something better to do with your life. When you play basketball you know that you can make it playing basketball. I mean selling drugs is not many things that you can do with your life. If you're a drug dealer your future is death and jail. (Jeter)

Jeter reported that, without sports, he would be bored and spend most of his time sitting around watching television.

Kirk noted that he participated in sports because he wanted to be in condition for his primary sport. He reported that through participation in other sports, his endurance would be increased, which might help parts of his game. Kirk also stated that kids who sit around home and have nothing to do might end up getting into trouble.

> Well, you have to, I mean soccer, you can't just play soccer to be ready for basketball. You have to play basketball also. And I mean soccer helps you with your endurance, and I mean when you run and that, but you still have to be able to

> shoot and I'm not that much of a shooter. But I try to penetrate and dribble. Basketball is my first, really the sport that I really, really enjoy, and I just have a lot of, I like basketball a lot better. I actually used to run track also. I mean that helps a lot... I mean speed-wise. Because first of all, being a guard in basketball every now and then you'll get a fast break or something, and then soccer of course it helps you. In golf it doesn't really necessarily help you, not unless you want to be like Sergio Garcia and run down the fairway.
>
> Because I mean there's a lot of things that happen in the world and I mean if you're involved with sport... I mean... sometimes you just really don't have time to think about that. If I didn't have sports... I just couldn't see myself not playing sports. But I mean, I don't know. I don't think, I might be a little more mischievous. But again, being raised in a home with both parents there helps it be a little easier at least. With both parents there it takes the pressure off. Because if your parents aren't exactly that involved with what you're doing or something, and they may just not care or something, and whenever your parents are there, I mean they tend to watch you sort of. I mean not spy on you, I mean check up on you. (Kirk)

Vince stated that participating in sports has caused him to be active and to avoid sitting around the house doing nothing. He reported that sports have made his life more exciting and interesting.

> To get me up and stuff, to be in shape and stuff like that... not sitting around the house doing nothing. Sports is really, you can't , if you smoke or something like that or not in shape, you can't run down the court back and forth like that. If I were not playing sports, I would like be watching TV or playing with my play station or something like that. It's not a bad thing to me, but you shouldn't do it all the time. If I did that all the time I really wouldn't be interested in anything you know. I really like sports, you know. Sports have just pepped my life up and made life more interesting. If there was no sport, if there was no sports, it would be like dull... people would get fat probably. (Vince)

Vince stated that he learned from parents, teachers, police officers, and coaches that bad habits such as smoking, drinking, and doing drugs could affect his sport participation. This would cause him to be a less than effective athlete.

> It clogs your lungs and you can't... like when you're going for a long time down the court, you want to be able to breathe. Drinking and doing drugs, stuff like that

> would make you a bad athlete. You wouldn't get enough sleep. You'd be actually... you're just killing yourself (Vince).

In order to be a better athlete, Vince stated that he needed to avoid drugs and street life.

Recognition of Desired Attributes

Through sport, these participants have come to recognize positive traits and qualities of athletes that they would like to emulate and people with negative attributes they would like to avoid. Many participants indicated their desire to achieve success and earn the respect of younger people. Griffey admired the success and attitudes of certain sport figures. When asked how he rated himself as an athlete, he stated that he thought of himself like Reggie White. Griffey noted, "He's real strong and he... not all the time... but he hits them a lot, and when he gets the running back, he really gets him." Griffey reported that his sporting hero was his brother because of his achievements and his attitude.

> Because he's in my family and he's really achieving it if he keeps his attitude right. I mean I really don't have a hero, but if it was anybody it would be my brother, because he's related to me... because he's blood. Like he's a freshman and he's on the varsity. I wish I had his speed, but I can't get his speed and when I get to high school I want to play varsity. When he was like... when he breaks around the end... then like it will be one man on the line waiting for him and he'll run them over and it just makes me smile. Because the other people are older than him and have more experience, but it's like he has more experience because he plays varsity. And they won't let him play junior varsity or freshman because like if something happens to him then he can't play on Fridays. (Griffey)

With the positive attributes that he admired, there was a characteristic that he did not care to emulate, that is being insufficiently educated. In this context, Griffey referred to Big John Tate.

> I wouldn't want to be like Big John Tate because he couldn't count his money. He, I don't guess he was good at math or something, and he made so much money

> and like his manager or agent I guess, something like that, my mom told me, but I don't remember. He gypped him for all his money, so he went poor and was living in the streets. (Griffey)

Bruce reported that his favorite sportsman was Jerry Rice of the San Francisco 49'ers because of his legendary accomplishments in receiving yardage and scoring titles. He stated that Jerry Rice was a very exciting player, and he felt a connection to him because of their common "go-to" status on their respective teams. It seemed that any time the team needed a big play, the 49'ers would turn to Jerry Rice just as Bruce's team relied on him.

However, there was one particular player that he did not care for because of his arrogance. He reported that he did not care for Deion Sanders because he always seemed to think he was the best by bragging about his accomplishments and showing off instead of letting his play or statistics speak for his ability. Bruce especially disliked Deion Sanders because, as Bruce was taught, he did not appreciate bragging or arrogance, traits he saw in Sanders. Bruce stated that a player always needed to be a good sport and show a great deal of class, which he felt Deion Sanders did not demonstrate.

Deion (the participant) spoke about his favorite sportsman, Martin Brodeur, because Brodeur has done exceptionally well in professional hockey and has excelled. Deion spoke about the fact that Brodeur was from Finland and that he had many critics of his talent and experience. However, Brodeur has silenced the skeptics through his achievements and excellent defense.

> He does the incredible... it's like everybody's... like he's not going to be any good. He's not going to be able to do it. And he does amazing stops as a goalie.

> One of the reasons I like him probably is that he plays defense and that is my favorite position. He always does the unexpected. (Deion)

On the other hand, Deion also spoke about sportsmen whom he did not respect which included individuals who used drugs and demonstrated an unwillingness to play through pain.

> I don't like Michael Irving because he's a crack head. I also don't like Steve Young... yeah, 'cause he has a head... concussion. I don't like him because it seems that he cries a lot and that he really doesn't want to play. (Deion)

Jeter mentioned that his favorite sportsman was Kobe Bryant because he was one of the youngest professional basketball players in the NBA. Because of Bryant's age, Jeter has come to appreciate Bryant because Jeter was one of the youngest in his league, as well.

> He's [Bryant] making himself known around the world because a lot of other people say that they have more experience and he gets points a lot. They say when you're experienced you know more, and he's young and he's doing a lot, and I'm young and I'm playing in an older league. Yeah, I score a lot of points to be in a 13 or 14 year league, like he does. And Kobe Bryant is scoring quite a bit of points in an older, more experienced league as well. Everyone knows him. When they hear Kobe Bryant, they know that he's young and that he's good in basketball. They know that he scores a lot of points. I'd like it for some people to know me and know that I'm young and I'm doing good. I'd like to hear my name all over the world. It'll be nice... it'll be a lot of fun. Everybody would know me, like they could see what I'm doing. I can be like Kobe Bryant, like he's a hero to me. And I can show people that I can be a hero to somebody. (Jeter)

Jeter also mentioned that he saw his cousin as a role model because he studied a lot and earned a scholarship to the Air Force Academy. He learned that if you study hard, you have a great chance to succeed in life.

On the other hand, Jeter recognized that he did not appreciate the style of play of Karl Malone and Dennis Rodman. He stated that their dirty play, trash talk, and

outlandish behavior were characteristics that demonstrated poor sportsmanship and less than desirable attributes.

> I don't like Karl Malone because he plays dirty and the referees don't see what he does... throwing knees when he's trying to dunk on somebody. He likes to talk... well, they call him the mail man, he just comes to the middle with his knee and so you can't jump with him or anything. He likes to talk. He likes to ya, ya, and like Dennis Rodman... he talks trashy talk. (Jeter)

Jeter stated that he did not care for this style of play because it happened to him on one occasion and he disliked it a great deal. Jeter was taken out of his style of play and subsequently played poorly. When he was asked how he responded when an opponent talked trash to him on the court, he stated that he did not respect him for it.

> There was a guy said I was lame and kept pushing me. I just laughed and kept playing. I just got frustrated and I started messing up. I just started missing a lot of shots and what not. I mean defense is, you just don't have to talk trash to play good defense. They're just trying to take you out of the game. They'll say you're doing good at what you're doing... talking trash. Playing that style of game doesn't earn you respect. (Jeter)

Kirk stated that he would like to replicate his sister's accomplishments of earning both an athletic and an academic scholarship. He stated how impressed he was with her successes both on and off the court. He also stated that he admired people who demonstrated a great deal of modesty when talking about themselves.

> Just because you're good, it doesn't mean you try to lower everybody else. It doesn't make you any better, really. I think I learned to help people out more and start to praise people more. Not necessarily brag on them but point them out when they do good things or when the goalie makes a good stop. (Kirk)

When it came to Kirk's sport hero, he pointed out that he had one in each sport in which he participated and there were different reasons why he admired these athletes.

> Well, I have a sort of hero for all of them. Tiger Woods, of course, for golf... and then I like Jerry Rice, he's a wide receiver in football, and then Anfernee Hardaway for basketball. Oh, Eddie Polk for soccer. Well, especially Tiger and the incident that happened when he won the Master's, and I mean that really showed his perseverance and how his determination didn't waver on one like stupid comment or something. Well, I didn't exactly hear it, but I realized like when you're at the Master's they receive a certain food and he [Fuzzy Zoeller] said like... "Better give some chicken and collard greens instead of steak and mashed potatoes"... or something, or baked potato. Well, I mean it, right now you really don't see any true golf... I mean Black golf players. I mean Michael Jordan, he plays, but I mean he retired from basketball. Golf isn't his first sport. And I mean Tiger, that's his first and he's so talented and you just don't exactly find that everyday.
>
> Jerry Rice... I mean he's the greatest, I mean to me, wide receiver in all NFL. And like I say, I'll always like catching the ball and wide receiver on offense and maybe quarterback or safety on defense. I mean... and his attitude I think is... because I mean, you see it a lot, whenever he catches it he always takes to his knee... most of the time... I mean like the touchdown or something. You know, gives thanks to God or something. And I really haven't been following him this year, but like I said, I think he knows how good he is, and bragging and all doesn't really make him or break him. And Anfernee Hardaway, well, actually I'm not sure, but I think he's related to me... I mean to my dad. He [dad] brought it up one night when we were playing... I mean when they were playing... and since then I'm not sure, but I believe he is related to me... plus he's a great player. I like the way he penetrates. I mean he's not exactly the greatest shooter in the world but...Eddie Pope... well, I play a lot of defense on soccer and I admire Eddie Pope. I mean... being so young, but also being so talented. And I would always, well, I don't say it as much now, but I would always say, "I'm the Pope of defense." He's very fast and I want to work on my speed also. Because I mean being a sweeper you really... my coach, he always tells me about my endurance. And he decides to send in a fullback he tells me to really talk to the defenders and tell them, talk to them. (Kirk)

Kirk also stated that he saw his father as a role model because he was the one who taught him about life and sport. His father, who was the person he turned to about girls, has helped him through questions Kirk had concerning sport and life.

When it came to individuals that he did not care for in the sporting world, he spoke of Dennis Rodman. He was critical of his uniqueness and his outlandish style. He

also pointed out that although Rodman hustled a great deal on the court, and that was admirable, Rodman tended to take it too far and cause a disturbance on and off the court.

> I think there's a time when you're unique, but then there's a time that you just act real dumb... sort of dressed in like a bride's gown and stuff like that. And like the way he acts sort of when he plays... I mean he's a nice hustler, but he sort of takes it too far. Sometimes he acts too physical and starts fights. (Kirk)

Vince spoke about the attributes he admired in role models, and he mentioned Alan Iverson of the Philadelphia 76'ers. He stated that he liked how Alan shot the ball and how he moved around the court.

> He can shoot and he can move the ball around and everything. And can get a lot of moves. I also like Tiger Woods because he can bounce the ball on a wedge... he never quits and he's eager to win. That's pretty important. It would be like going to a game and saying "I don't care," or and you're losing and your saying "I don't care about that." If you don't care about it you are going to lose... you foul out or play sloppy. (Vince)

On the other hand, Vince stated that he did not care for Dennis Rodman because of his aggressive actions and inconsiderations.

> He's an animal or something. He's just rude. He like head butts people and the refs and spits on them... comes out with crazy hair, tattoos all over him, goes to jail. I would be in big trouble... I wouldn't be able to play sports anymore probably. He should be sued for all the things he does... he gets money for it... and goes to jail even. I think he can get away with it because he has money and he doesn't care. (Vince)

Friendships

The participants spoke about friendships gained through sport involvement. In some cases, friends would recognize achievements on the athletic fields; and other times, the participants were able to gain friends or earn the respect of peers through sport participation. Griffey spoke about how his peers recognized him for his athletic talent

and how that has affected him. He reported that he often received attention from his classmates because of his athletic achievements and felt that he received a great deal of respect from his peers because of his athletic talent.

> Like in school people talk about how good I do sometimes... and some of my careless mistakes and things. Okay, in school they'll say something like, "Griffey, he's killing them, he's killing them," or something like that. They're just scared of me and stuff. Oh, I'm happy about it makes me want to practice more and more so I can get better and better. If I make a mistake, it doesn't really matter to me because I know they're going to be talking about how good I'm going to be later on. But, I don't have to hear them talk about it because I know I'll be good. As long as my mom and daddy's proud of me and my team is all that matters. Because I don't want them to tell me I'm good, because if I get the big head then I'll start getting worse and worse and worse. (Griffey)

Griffey wanted to take the focus away from himself and often talked about his younger brother's athletic success.

> Just talk about him... and like when people will talk about me at school, and then I'll talk about him, I'll try to bring him up. I really don't like them talking about me that much. My older brother is talked about at school a lot because he does so well in high school and it just makes me happy for him. They say I see your brother on TV and I read about him in the newspaper, stuff like that. It makes me want to practice even harder so I can be in the newspaper and on TV. (Griffey)

Griffey stated that he did not like his peers talking about him because he did not want to start believing that he no longer needed to work hard. However, he did enjoy hearing people talking about him because his peers recognized his success and the hard work that went into his achievements.

> It makes me feel good, but all the hard work I had to go through to do good at sports. The payoff is people talking about how good I am in school and stuff like that. I think that I am better than most because I've been playing longer than some of them, and I just think that I'm better than a lot of them because they don't really talk about them as much as they talk about me. (Griffey)

Bruce stated that he would like to try rugby, but that his friends would not participate because they were afraid of getting hurt. He also reported that he competed in some of the same sports as his brothers and his friends. Bruce noted, "I would like the hitting in rugby but there's no one to play with me. My friends would have to get tougher to play. They're scared they'll get hurt from the hitting."

Deion reported that he competed in sports in which many of his friends participated, but also that learning new and different sports, such as diving, could serve as a method of impressing people because diving was a skill that everyone might not have. Deion added, "Diving... it's like you get to try new stuff, like one-and-a-halves... it's just neat to learn because you go to like a swimming party and you can do stuff... it's pretty cool and it's fun." Deion also liked competing against people he did not know well, such as older kids, so he could gauge his talent. He noted that he earned some respect from the older kids because he was able to compete against them.

Jeter mentioned that he was able to participate with older players because of his athletic talent in basketball. He reported that he was recruited to play with one particular team and earned a spot on the team through hard work and determination. He stated that he liked their style of play and looked forward to playing with the team.

> Well, they saw me playing and they wanted to pick me up. My coach asked me did I want to play on this team, and they saw me playing and I liked how they played. I just like their... they pressed mostly. (Jeter)

Jeter has earned the respect of his teammates as he often taught them lessons of being patient. Jeter noted that he was very involved with this team and had to give up on other sports because of the commitment to this traveling team. He also reported that on

occasion, when he taught certain lessons, his teammates took his teachings or comments and attempted to apply them to their game. Jeter stated, "It was a lot of fun teaching them how to be patient... they take it like they was my own age."

Kirk had a great deal to say regarding friendships gained through sport. Kirk noted that although he would like to participate in football again, many of his friends play soccer and he wanted to be with them.

> Well, it has a huge effect, I mean because actually sports, it helps me to be with the other people because I enjoy being around with other people and I've made my best here. When I first moved here, I made my best friend, we became friends the first night of soccer practice. I don't play football because, I mean, first of all a lot of my friends, are still playing soccer, and I still want to be with them. I mean I have a lot of friends playing football also. Well, it's not just because they're playing... it doesn't mean I'm going to play. I mean if I don't like the sport I'm not going to exactly. I mean there are a lot of relationships that are built in sports... of course my best friend. Sports have brought a lot of friendships to me... I can say that. (Kirk)

Kirk also stated that he enjoyed knowing that his friends were able to watch him compete. He noted that he felt some pressure to impress his friends but also felt the need to make an impact on his coach in order to remain in the game. He also reported that his friends noticed that he was not much of a shooter in basketball but that he handled the ball very well.

> It's nice. I mean sometimes it's a little more pressure, but it's nice. Because I mean you always want to do good and sometimes you might want to get fancy or something, but you want to impress your classmates but nonetheless you have to impress your coach to stay in. I think there's a negative part and positive. I think the negative is I'm not that much of a shooter and I mean people probably realize that even if I don't tell them. And then another part, positive part, is people can see how I dribble, I can handle the ball quite well and I'm a nice assist person. (Kirk)

Vince reported that many of his friends played sports, and they often competed against one another. When this happened, the two teams would talk back and forth, trying to get the other team out of their game. Because they were friends, this was not perceived as poor sportsmanship.

> We say something like, "Come on, what have you got?" We really wanted to play that team... like some of my friends are on that team. You know, we like to joke around and everything... because we always do that stuff when you're playing sports. (Vince)

Vince stated that he usually involved his friends in most of his recreational activities. In fact, he and his friends would often create their own games to occupy their time.

> Like I love sports and I love playing all kinds of stuff you know, like we make up a game or something. They're sport... like we may have like a baseball bat with a soccer ball or a kick ball or something like that. (Vince)

Vince had opportunities to participate in sports such as tennis because some of his friends had tennis courts in their backyards. He thought about playing tennis competitively, but he has not received any instruction and did not want to play.

> I play tennis sometimes over at people's houses. But I haven't had lessons or anything so I wouldn't want to play against anybody. I guess my friends that know how to play could help and play with me. (Vince)

Vince stated that he appreciated the fact that his friends participated in the same sports as he did. However, he thought he would still be interested in sports because he could make friends easily.

> Making friends would be easier but it depends on like who it is, or you know, like what do they want to do, you know. I have made friends... some of them outside of sports, but some of them in sports. (Vince)

Summary

Each participant described opportunities that sport has provided or could provide if they participated in sport professionally. Sports could serve as a method of obtaining an education, earning financial wealth, serving as an opportunity to travel, and enabling the participants to be seen as role-models. On numerous occasions, all participants noted their desire to earn a living in professional sport. In some cases, additional opportunities included receiving free athletic equipment and starring in movies. Participation in sport might allow the African-American youth the opportunity to earn a college or university education at an institution that might otherwise be financially unrealistic. Numerous participants reported that through professional sport, they could repay their families for their support and stated that sport could provide money for nice homes and cars for their families.

Each participant reported various reasons behind sport involvement including enjoyment, physical contact, family involvement, physical fitness, health benefits, and avoidance of "street life." The African-American youth mentioned that they participated in sport because it was fun and that they competed in multiple sports as a method of improving skills and gaining endurance for their primary sport. Through participation in multiple sports, each youth felt that they were able to become quicker, more agile, and gain endurance which aided them in their primary sport. Other aspects of participating in sports included: (a) avoiding the streets and the potential illegal activities that might accompany the streets, (b) preventing an unhealthy lifestyle, and (c) eliminating the possibility of sitting at home being lazy and becoming overweight.

Many of the participants reported that sports provided an activity that dissuaded and prevented illegal activities. On numerous occasions, all of the participants indicated that by not being involved in sport, their time might be taken by running the streets, selling drugs, and being shot. Other participants noted that if they did not participate in sport they might be more mischievous at home and in school. All, however, stated that sport provided a reason to refrain from such activities.

Many of the participants indicated that they participated in sports because it led to good health. A couple of participants noted family members who were not physically fit as children or as adults and their health were compromised as a result. Many participants discussed the benefit of regular exercise.

The African-American youth noted that through sport they have come to recognize traits and qualities of athletes that they would like to possess. These heroes demonstrated attributes such as having positive attitudes, earning legendary status, warranting respect, and earning athletic and academic accolades. On the other hand, sport has showcased characteristics and individuals that are unappealing including resorting to bragging to earn respect, using or abusing drugs, demonstrating unwillingness to play through pain, achieving success through foul play, and ignoring sportsmanship.

In some cases, participants reported that through sport they have developed important friendships and earned recognition and the respect of their peers. Some participants noted that recognition was satisfying because peers were aware of their athletic talents, but also reported that too much recognition could lead to laziness. For

some, the participation of friends in sports was desirable but not crucial for involvement. In some cases, participation in sport served as a valuable lesson to the participants as they learned about patience, recognition, and hard work. For some, recognition by peers and gaining friendships through sport provided rewards for participants as they enjoyed knowing that their friends were aware of their athletic success and that lifelong friendships evolved from their sport participation.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of African-American male youth regarding the role of sport in their lives. I asked questions and probed responses specifically on each participant's account of his sport experience based on: (a) his family background, (b) his perception of what role sport plays in his life, (c) his perception of how his family views him as an athlete, and (d) his perception of himself as an athlete. This chapter will introduce the participants and discuss issues regarding self-concept including size/physicality and being the best. This chapter will also examine family support and involvement; sport as an opportunity including social mobility, enhanced health and improvement in primary sport, recognition of desired attributes, and friendships.

Group Description

The participants in this study included six African-American male youth ranging in age from 11 to 13 years. All participants lived in the southeast region of the United States. All attended middle schools where each actively participated in sport. They also competed in middle school athletics and in community sponsored athletics, but their athletic experiences varied. All athletes were considered the top athlete or a better-than-average athlete for their respective teams, an evaluation which was determined by the athlete himself, and his peers, coach, or athletic director. All participated, at some time, in more than one sport. At the time they were interviewed, all except Jeter and Vince participated in more than one sport.

Of the six participants, three were referred to the researcher by a former youth basketball coach in the southeast region of the United States. An athletic director of a community parks and recreation department in a southeastern state referred three other participants. The participants competed in basketball, baseball, hockey, soccer, wrestling, golf, and football. In order to preserve their identities, pseudonyms were used instead of their real names. The pseudonyms selected by the participants included Bruce, Deion, Griffey, Jeter, Kirk, and Vince.

Four of the six participants were reared in the Southeast, and two were reared in military homes where their families moved throughout the world. Four of the participants were 13 years of age, one was 12 years of age, and one was 11 years of age. All came from families where active participation in sport was encouraged and supported. All of the youth had aspirations of continuing to participate through high school and college and hoped to make it into professional sport. All recognized the importance of education and that school was the primary focus. Each maintained grade point averages from 2.7 to 3.5 based on a 4.0 scale. These student-athletes were not expected to be spokesmen for their sport, team, or age group.

Each athlete had aspirations of earning a scholarship, attending college, and entering professional sport. Each participant recognized the importance of education in the pursuit of college scholarships and professional sport contracts. Therefore, diligent efforts were taken to ensure that academics were a top priority. Parents would often suspend any athletic participation if grades did not meet acceptable standards.

Academics were seen as both an opportunity to earn a living outside of professional sport and as a means of managing funds if professional sport career were realized.

Eitzen and Purdy (1986) stated that African-Americans "entered [college] with poor academic backgrounds, they received lower grades than their white athletic peers, and proportionately fewer of them graduated" (p. 21). Eitzen and Purdy (1986) noted that athletic scholarships were given to many African-American athletes who were not as well prepared as their Caucasian teammates. To this end, African-Americans were seen as physically endowed; however, their poor academic performance was a means of proving their lack of intellectual prowess. With the emphasis on athletics, education appeared not to be their priority. In return, these athletes often were humiliated by their performance on college entry exams and standardized tests. These poor test scores came as a great shock and were inferred to be one illustration of their lack of education and preparedness (Harris, 1993). The promise of some bright future, of getting great experiences in college, and participating in athletics reminded the young men of how little they currently had in terms of education (Harris, 1993). In contrast, the African-American youth in the present study had better than average academic records (Table 4-1, p. 89) and appeared to have academics as an important facet of their goals.

Self-Concept

The participants described self-concept related experiences, including size/physicality and being the best. When describing the experiences that they perceived had contributed to their self-concept and being the best, many participants explained the concepts of modesty, pressure management, leadership, and sportsmanship. These young

men also learned about their development of self, sport preferences, strong leadership, and good sportsmanship through interactions with family, coaches, and teammates. While many were attracted to the physical nature of certain sports, others did not welcome the contact that might occur. All have developed a self-concept of their role in sport and what they hoped to gain from participating.

Aside from opportunities gained from sport, the development of self-concept and a realization of what was learned through sport provided the participants with thoughts and values about themselves. These perceptions included an understanding of what their lives might entail if sport was not available or if they chose not to participate. These results provide support for Loy and Ingham's (1973) suggestion that children assimilate societal values through sport, focusing on: (a) the process through which children learn to fit into society by adopting values, traits, and orientations compatible with society in general; (b) the process underlying the search for self-identity; and (c) moral development and attitudes toward fair play and winning.

Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) reported that, since socialization in sport by minority athletes had received only superficial attention, little could be said pertaining to racial differences, particularly comparisons with African-Americans. At the time this dissertation was written, there were still no studies available or found describing African-American youths' interest in sport because of the physical nature or the contact involved. Thus, these results offer new information to the existing body of knowledge. When describing the experiences that the participants perceived had contributed to their self-concept, all explained their excitement or dislike for the physical nature of sport. A sense

of self was learned through competition against others who were both larger and smaller in physical size.

The idea that sport was physical and involved physical effort was both attractive and unattractive to these young men. These participants reported preferences for certain sports because of the contact or lack of contact. Size and physicality of sport provided some of the youth with certain challenges such as remaining unhurt or not being manhandled, and reward for others, including being able to hit the running back or quarterback.

According to Dubois (1986), the most prevalent reasons given for youth sport involvement included having fun, improving skills, becoming fit, challenging oneself, and being part of a group. Dubois' (1986) study reinforced the notion that young athletes value fun, skill development, affiliation, fitness, and ethical behavior in their sport experiences and downplay the importance of winning. Researchers have investigated reasons behind sport involvement and the reinforcement desired by different races, and McCormack and Chalip (1988) re-examined assumptions about sport and sport experiences. These authors noted that sport participation has been assumed to involve a consistent set of human experiences and that everyone in sport shared these experiences. As previously mentioned, a consistent set of human experiences in the literature has not included youth being interested in sport because of the physical nature of sport. Thus, the present study provided new information about African-American youth and different information from studies in the 1980's which included only Caucasian youth (Greendorfer and Ewing, 1981; Dubois, 1986; McCormack and Chalip, 1988).

The second component of the self-concept theme was being the best as the African-American youth in the present study compared themselves to their peers. Many participants spoke about their feelings regarding experiences of showing how good they were such as taking the last shot in a game, giving the impression of eagerness to learn by being first in line for drills, running hard in practice, volunteering when the coach asked someone to model a skill or to provide assistance, and learning the value of being a leader both on and off the athletic field. For some of the participants, another aspect of self-development was the understanding regarding a preference for close games where there was pressure to perform. The participants explained that when a game was close, the crowd would be more involved in the game. Sometimes, the tenacity of performance in close games was rewarded by play on a select team. In addition, the successful management of tension or pressure was a sign of maturity that was accepted and appreciated by the older players in the league and by the recruiting coach.

The components from these African-American male youth ranging in age from 11-13 years supported the work of Brustad (1993), who noted that a desire to compare skills with others was a primary attraction for youth participation in sport. He suggested that it was important to recognize when children seek opportunities to compare their skills with those of others and to acquire information about their personal mastery. Brustad (1993) noted that through later childhood and into adolescence, the social comparison motive became an increasingly important component of competition. He posited that, until the age of 10, children generally prefer feedback received from peers regarding personal competence and skill level. Brustad (1993) also noted that through

later childhood and into adolescence, the social comparison motive became an increasingly important component of competition.

When assessing their skill level and competence, these participants saw family involvement as a means of comparing skills. Whether participants were competing with siblings or there was a sense of sibling rivalry, a comparison process was involved. Comparisons included achievements earned, involved viewing game films of siblings, and described instances where one family member competed against or with another.

The participants were also involved in comparison when competing for their respective teams. On numerous occasions, many of these African-American youth spoke of how they dominated opponents, learned from older and more experienced teammates and opponents, and respected individuals who seemed to dominate in their primary sport. Many of the participants realized that they did not have to be the best at every sport in which they participated. In fact, some acknowledged that they might not have been the best even in their primary sport, thus providing support to Brustad's conclusions where comparison with peers was an ongoing activity for the African-American youth in this study.

Through sport, some of these African-American youth indicated that they learned lessons about being modest and the values of good sportsmanship. These lessons were learned through interactions with family members, teammates, and coaches. Modesty was expressed in terms of how they perceived themselves as athletes and how they assessed their parent's opinions of them as athletes. Sportsmanship was explained as being respectful to coaches, players, and classmates. Participants spoke about how they

were perceived by family members and coaches concerning their athletic talents. These value-related components supported Dubois' (1986) report that a common belief among Americans is that sport facilitates the development of desirable traits and values.

Family Support and Involvement

The second theme of this investigation included experiences that the African-American youth in this study perceived as support, encouragement, and involvement from family members. Although each athlete had different perceptions and experiences, all had experiences that they believed were supportive and encouraging. Each participant described instances where family support, encouragement, and involvement served as motivation to participate and perform. On numerous occasions, most of these African-American youth noted that if their parents had not been involved, they would not be competing in sport or care for participation. For some, watching older siblings and seeing parental involvement illustrated that participation was rewarded. The support and encouragement that each participant received from his family taught them that family involvement was ideal when participating in sport. Whether it was reviewing game films, receiving instruction prior to the game, or hearing a parent cheer for the participant, recognition by a parent was cherished.

This evidence of parent and family support across their childhood supported Brustad (1993) who stated, "Until the age of 8 or 9, children tend to rely heavily on objective outcomes, such as winning or losing, and upon adult feedback to provide them with information about personal ability in sport" (p. 696). This information also provides support for Snyder and Spreitzer (1973), who concluded that participation in sport is

positively related to the support an individual receives from significant others. These African-American youth noted that the support and encouragement that they received from family members was critical to their enjoyment and involvement in sport.

At the time this dissertation was written, the socialization in sport literature included information concerning how important significant others were in regard to sport involvement and participation and how important parents and siblings were concerning their sport involvement (Coakley, 1993; Snyder and Spreitzer, 1973; Greendorfer and Ewing, 1981; Rudman, 1989; and Snyder and Purdy, 1982). Many of the African-American youth in the present study discussed issues such as sibling rivalry and the importance of being pushed and encouraged by brothers and sisters. Some reported that sport was used as a method of bringing families together as in the case where family reunions included athletic contests. Therefore, for many, the competitive nature of sport was not the only attraction, but family closeness that resulted from sport participation in both formal and informal settings was also appealing.

The socialization in sport literature also included investigations of the differences in values and behaviors for those who participated in sport. Some general conclusions about sport involvement included: (a) the support one receives from significant others is critical, and (b) the extent of encouragement by significant others, whether they do or do not participate in athletics, is important (Snyder & Purdy, 1982).

The African-American youth in this study indicated that family involvement included receiving praise from parents or siblings for good performances, being placed in sport, getting support and encouragement from his parents, learning how to play by

watching older siblings compete, and knowing that parents were always in attendance at athletic contests. Many of the participants spoke of how proud they were of siblings who had competed in sports, including local, national, and international achievements. Through the family's involvement in sport, participation seemed natural. Each participant noted that if his parents had not supported or encouraged as they did their participation level and interest would decrease. This supported Coakley's (1993) premise that the withdrawal of social support might lead to the cessation in sport participation.

Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) concluded that African-Americans: (a) were most influenced by peers but also received similar influence from mothers, fathers, and brothers; (b) held similar values toward sport [compared to Caucasians]; (c) and had similar opportunities [compared to Caucasians] to engage in sport. African-Americans had a higher value toward sport and appeared to be more influenced by opportunity and their brothers than by individuals of other races. The findings of their investigation indicated that racial differences in socializing children into sport did exist and were more complex than originally thought (Greendorfer & Ewing, 1981). Malina (1986) reported that children would rely heavily on adult feedback to assess their competency and mastery. If adults did not convey ability-related feedback in a productive manner, a child might infer a low level of ability. Brustad (1993) concluded that until children reach the age of 10 years, they prefer to use information from peers as an informational source in making judgments about personal competence.

The findings of this investigation identified that siblings (brothers and a sister) did influence and facilitate athletic participation. The present study provided support for

Greendorfer and Ewing's 1981 report, which stated that these youth were influenced not only by their peers but also by their family. The African-American youth in this study noted that the support they received from family was critical and that peer affiliation was also important. A number of participants noted that they gained friendships through sport, but participating in sport was not dependent on whether their friends participated. The African-American youth in the present study did not discuss instances where they received feedback from friends, but a few did note that they provided peers with performance feedback. Thus, this appears to provide new information regarding Brustad's (1993) theory that youth tend to rely on peer feedback in making judgments concerning their skill level. The African-American youth often participated in the same sport as their siblings and would often receive instruction or feedback concerning performances from siblings as well. In every instance, the participants competed in sports where they had fun and where they have received instruction from family members. For all the participants, family and friends were influential, but they all decided in which sports to participate based on individual reasons.

The present study supported Malina's 1986 study that indicated that children rely heavily on adult feedback to assess their competency and mastery. The African-American youth in the present investigation noted that they often received instructions and feedback regarding their sport performances. A few of these African-American youth noted that although hearing praise from friends was exciting, knowing that their parents were proud of their performances and effort was the most important element of receiving feedback.

Sport as an Opportunity

The third theme identified from the responses of the participants in this investigation included the experiences that the athletes perceived as opportunities resulting from participating in sport. Although each athlete had different perceptions and experiences, all had experiences that they believed served as opportunities from participating in sport, including: (a) social mobility, (b) enhanced health and improvement in their primary sport, (c) recognition of desired attributes, and (d) friendships.

Social Mobility

The first sport as opportunity sub-theme for these African-American youth was social mobility. This supported Dubois (1986) who found that youth, regardless of race, involved in competitive sports placed more emphasis on improving social status. Other authors provided conflicting primary motivations for participation in youth sport. For example, within the competitive league, participants noted that they were more interested in winning even if they were not allowed into the game. Winning superseded any satisfaction from participating and improving social status was another aspect at the mean age of 9 years that Dubois (1986) found surprising.

Wiggins (1985) stated that because of athletic achievements, large numbers of African-American youth have "turned to sport as their primary means of realizing the American dream of fame, wealth, and success" (p. 136). Wiggins (1985) posited that sport was one method by which African-American youth acquire a college education, pursue a lucrative career, financially assist their families, and become idols among the

community and throughout the nation. He concluded that athletic talent was the lone salvation to propel an athlete to wealth, fame, and success (Wiggins, 1985).

Wiggins (1985) suggested that for every successful athlete, there have been thousands of frustrated and rejected African-American athletes who fell short of realizing their illusive dream of fame and wealth via professional sport. In fact, by not concentrating on academics, many were functional illiterates who, instead of living in the luxury of athletics, found themselves trying to manage on the minimal earnings from jobs predominantly assigned to minorities (Wiggins, 1985). Eitzen and Purdy (1986) stated that African-Americans, "entered [college] with poor academic backgrounds, they received lower grades than their white athletic peers, and proportionately fewer of them graduated" (p. 21).

In contrast to this element of Wiggins' and Eitzen and Purdy's ideas, the African-American youth in the present study indicated their strong desire to have education for other careers, in case they were not able to play professional sport. It was important to note that the participants in this investigation had better than average grades at the time the interviews were conducted. Their grade point averages ranged from 2.7 to 3.5 on a 4.0 scale (Table 4-1, p. 89). This appeared to support Coakley's 1993 findings that athletes tended to have higher grade point averages and higher educational aspirations than those who did not participate in athletics.

Rudman (1986) reported that, "poor blacks as well as poor whites are likely to see sport as a means of dealing with social problems and as a way for their children to become upwardly mobile" (p. 315). African-Americans are more likely use sport to

advance their social and economic positions but also to control other social problems such as delinquency. Poor youth have incorporated sport in daily routines and have a deep commitment and belief in the use of sport for dealing with social problems (Rudman, 1986).

Rudman (1986) also posited that African-Americans were more likely to have a professional orientation toward personal competition in sport. With this in mind, the incorporation of sport into daily routines is not limited to competition on the playing fields. In fact, African-Americans have been presumed to daydream more about athletic success and discuss personal athletic endeavors in daily conversation. African-Americans were represented as more likely to believe in the social and economic benefits of sport competition (Rudman, 1986).

The African-American youth in the present investigation noted that they were using sport for many of these same reasons, including improving their social status, earning an athletic scholarship, completing a college or university degree, succeeding financially in professional sports, receiving free equipment due to athletic success, traveling the country and world, and providing financial support for family members. Therefore, social mobility was suggested in one way or another by all participants and served as a great motivation for them to participate and succeed in sport. These results supported hypotheses and results from the literature (Ashe, 1993; Coakley, 1993; Rudman, 1986; Shropshire, 1996; Siegel, 1994).

The growing awareness of the monetary reward in sport caused Siegel (1994) to indicate that the acceptance of African-American athletes, especially in highly visible

revenue-producing sports such as basketball and football, appears to be an example of equal opportunity and upward mobility. In fact, because of athletic attributes, it appears that African-Americans have a chance to attend a university or college. Due to a lack of social or economic reasons, athletic prowess has become a viable means of earning a college degree. However, their degrees come at a price to the African-American athletes, because the college or university expects their dedication as well as their contribution to team success and program recognition at the national level (Siegel, 1994).

Coakley (1993) reported that the relationship between interscholastic sport participation and academic achievement aspirations has received tremendous attention. Coakley (1993) also reported that studies indicated that varsity athletes had higher GPA's and higher educational aspirations than those who did not participate on varsity teams. The present research found that these African-American youth had high aspirations of educational success, as all discussed their plans of attending a college or university and they talked about the importance of doing well academically as prerequisites to participating in sport in college. Furthermore, parallel to Rudman's (1986) findings where the varsity athlete's grade point average was higher than non-varsity athletes, the present investigation found that the grade point averages of the participants ranged from 2.7 to a 3.5 on a 4.0 scale (Table 4-1, p. 89). Rudman (1986) suggested that involvement in competitive and organized athletics contributed to educational success and achievement.

Rudman (1986) posited that sport is associated with social and economic mobility within the disadvantaged socioeconomic positions. Disadvantaged individuals viewed

sport as a way of enhancing social prestige and economic status. They maintained a belief that an individual could succeed in sport regardless of social status because personal skill, dedication, and effort were believed to be the primary determinants for success in sport. Rudman (1986) stated that this is a common thread that ties together the members of the lower economic class regardless of race. All African-American youth in this study, without direct knowledge of the economic situation, viewed sport as a vehicle to improve their social and economic positions. The financial mobility that was discussed supported Rudman's (1986) findings, as many of the participants spoke about the hard work, the determination, and the effort that they were willing to put forth in order to achieve financial and athletic success.

Enhanced Health and Improvement in Primary Sport

No evidence was found within the literature concerning athletic involvement in multiple sports for the purpose of becoming better in the primary sport. In this study, some participants reported that they might play football, basketball, soccer, or baseball to remain in shape for another sport that they hope to focus solely on in college or professionally. This seems to provide additional information to Brustad's 1993 study that reported reasons for youth sport participation which included improving skills, having fun, learning new skills, playing for the challenge, being physically fit, being involved socially, and enjoying the competition. Dubois (1986) reported that young athletes value fun, skill development, affiliation, fitness, and ethical behavior in their sport experiences and downplay the importance of winning. Rudman (1986) stated, "Blacks are more likely to focus on the use of sport as a way of controlling social problems such as juvenile

delinquency. Sport is a way of dealing fairly and openly with various forms of social problems" (p. 307). Many of these African-American youth shared various tenets of Brustad's, Dubois', and Rudman's theories such as participating in sport for fun, playing for the challenge, being physically fit, enjoying competition, being with friends, and avoiding delinquency.

On the other hand, Coakley (1993) reported that sport participation did not directly discourage deviant behavior. However, carefully organized sport experiences led to the possibility of lower delinquency and deviancy if they included a philosophy of nonviolence, respect for self and others, the importance of fitness and control over self, confidence in physical skills, and a sense of responsibility. Coakley (1993) suggested that sport participation might facilitate the development of moral reasoning among children where sport programs have been carefully and explicitly designed and administered to alter already established moral reasoning.

Participation in sport for many of these African-American youth served a variety of purposes including preventing laziness and staying healthy. Other reasons discussed involved avoiding trouble, staying "off the streets," and maintaining good grades. Additional findings included participation in multiple sports which resulted in extra training and conditioning for their primary sport.

Recognition of Desired Attributes

Ashe (1993) stated that a lack of leadership continues to plague the African-American community. He stated, "We depend on all sorts of blacks to be leaders and role models for the community. We even think of athletes and entertainers in this way"

(Ashe, 1993, p. 153). He also suggested that professional athletes and entertainers might not be the ideal to which African-American communities should look as role models or leaders. In some cases these professional athletes and entertainers who are serving as role models do not deserve that status. Ashe (1993) also reported that, in some instances, athletes are not good examples or do not serve the African-American community very well.

The literature concerning role models described a lack of highly visible black role models in fields other than sport and entertainment (Edwards, 1983). Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) indicated that "unlike their white counterparts, blacks tend to have only black role models, and quite often black athletes play the same position as their heroes" (p. 303). The participants in the present study all described athletic heroes and the characteristics that were ideal, and the participants also listed individuals in sport that they would avoid emulating because they do not consider them heroes. In the present study, all role models with the exception of Martin Brodeur and Eddie Pope were African-American; and all were involved in professional athletics except for three noted role models who were a sibling, a cousin, and a father. The African-American youth also reported that many of these role models participated in the same sport and played the same positions. This supported Rudman's (1986) study that found that African-Americans saw athletes as being appropriate role models.

Role models might provide young athletes with an example of what is deemed appropriate or acceptable regarding sport involvement and participation. Brinson and Robinson (1990) noted that it is important that the model is a member of the same ethnic

group as the observer. The message, which is construed by the observer who is a member of the same ethnic group as the model, is that the activity or participation by a member of the same ethnic group is acceptable. Observing a member of the ethnic group encouraged further involvement and was rewarded by the ethnic group. Therefore, psychological barriers were removed when African-Americans observed other African-Americans participating in sport (Brinson & Robinson, 1990).

The African-American youth in the present study spoke about role models and all had a role model who were African-American. In two cases, Caucasian athletes also served as role models. The African-American youth in this study reported that they admired characteristics of role models that pertained to success, achievements, or attitudes. The attitudes that the youth admired included hard work, perseverance, determination, and a never quit outlook. Sport related characteristics were also admired including legendary receiving yards and scoring titles, achieving success when others expected failure, and silencing critics through excellent skills. Additional attributes that were desirable concerned achieving success in a league where the professional athlete was one of the youngest. These youth also indicated that some role models were individuals who studied a great deal and earned a scholarship to various academic institutions.

On the other hand, the youth in the study acknowledged characteristics that were not considered desirable and that they did not care to emulate. These included being uneducated and not being able to keep track of personal finances, displaying arrogance, bragging about accomplishments, showing off instead of allowing skills to illustrate

ability, using drugs, being unwilling to play through pain, playing dirty, talking trash, and demonstrating poor sportsmanship. The participants all seemed to dislike Dennis Rodman for many reasons, one of which was his unique and outlandish style. The participants pointed out that although Rodman hustled a great deal on the court and that was admirable, Rodman tended to take it too far and cause a disturbance on and off the court.

With regard to role models and how the media have portrayed certain African-American role models, Wenner (1995) noted that there are characteristics that are associated with the goodness and badness of African-American athletes. These African-American male youth all recognized positive and negative attributes regarding athletes they would like to emulate and others they would like to avoid. They all recognized that hard work and good sportsmanship were qualities that were admirable and they also identified that outlandish behavior and using drugs were attributes that were unappealing. These African-American youth recognized through sport individuals who exhibited ideal qualities and others who demonstrated characteristics that they hoped to avoid.

Friendships

When it came to being recognized or gaining friendships through sport, the African-American youth in this study spoke about how peer recognition regarding athletic talent influenced them. They reported that they received attention from classmates because of athletic achievements, and they felt that they received a great deal of respect from peers because of their athletic talent. However, some participants stated that they did not like their peers talking about them because they did not want to start

believing that they no longer needed to work hard. They did enjoy hearing people talking about them because their peers recognized their success and their hard work. Therefore, their identity of being good athletes was reinforced over time through peer attention and recognition.

Some of the participants noted that they would be interested in attempting new sports, but the lack of friends that were also interested dissuaded participation. Many participants also reported that they competed in sports that siblings and friends had chosen. This provided support for Dubois (1986) and Donnelly and Young (1988) who indicated that friends who participated influenced sport involvement.

Many of these African-American youth noted that their participation was greatly influenced by peer recognition and acceptance. In some cases, the participants competed in leagues where they were the youngest and where they were recruited to play. Earning the acceptance of the team was a concern for these African-American youth, which was consistent with the results of Donnelly and Young (1988) that suggested sport participation can be explained by earning the acceptance of those in the group so that one's identity as a participant is reinforced through participation over time. In fact, some of the participants noted that they would like to participate in certain sports, such as soccer, because their friends played soccer and they wanted to be with them.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of African-American male youth regarding the role of sport in their lives. Participant interview responses were probed concerning: (a) his family background, (b) his perception of what role sport plays in life, (c) his perception of how his family views him as an athlete, and (d) his perception of himself as an athlete. The study utilized six African-American male youth (11-13 years of age) who had participated in organized sport in both school and recreational settings. The themes that emerged from their perceptions of the role of sport in life included: (a) self-concept, (b) family support and involvement, and (c) sport as an opportunity.

Two sub-themes were associated with self-concept, size/physicality and being the best. First, all participants discussed their attraction to or lack of attraction to the physical nature of certain sports. Many participants also expressed their good and bad feelings regarding their size in relation to teammates and opponents. Second, all participants noted that being the best was important, but it was not critical to be the best all the time, and they realized that this was a favorable attribute. Modesty, pressure management, leadership, and sportsmanship were other self-concept issues related to being the best when these African-American youth compared themselves to others or the nature of the sport.

The second theme focused on family involvement, which determined that all had family related sport experiences that they believed served as support and encouragement

in their lives. All participants referred to the importance of family involvement, indicating that without family encouragement, sport would not be as interesting. The parents' role in these young men lives was especially important. While siblings played an important role as well, their role was different, evoking feelings which ranged from pride in a sibling's accomplishments to a positive rivalry with a sibling.

Four sub-themes were identified for the third theme, sport as an opportunity: (a) social mobility, (b) enhanced health and improvement in primary sport, (c) recognition of desired attributes, and (d) friendships. These African-American youth considered sport a vehicle for social mobility which included receiving an education, repaying family for support, and having travel opportunities. These youth also participated in sport for fun, to be with friends, to enhance physical fitness, to avoid potential illegal activities, and to improve in primary sports.

Some participants reported that they played football, basketball, soccer, or baseball to remain in shape for another sport in which they hoped to specialize in college and professional sport. Participation in multiple sports also resulted in extra training and conditioning for primary sports. Participation in sport for many of these African-American youth served a variety of purposes including preventing laziness and staying healthy. Other health related reasons involved the avoidance of trouble such as running "the streets" and taking drugs.

The participants all recognized and described desired attributes of athletic heroes that were ideal, and the participants also listed individuals who demonstrated less than ideal attributes. The African-American youth in this study reported that they admired

characteristics of role models that pertained to success, achievements, or attitudes. The attitudes that the youth admired included hard work, perseverance, determination, and a never quit outlook. In addition, admired sport related characteristics included legendary receiving yards and scoring titles, achieving success when others expected failure, and silencing critics through excellent skills.

On the other hand, the youth in the study acknowledged characteristics that were not considered desirable and that they did not care to emulate. These included being uneducated and not being able to keep track of personal finances, displaying arrogance, bragging about accomplishments, showing off instead of allowing skills to illustrate ability, using drugs, being unwilling to play through pain, playing dirty, talking trash, and demonstrating poor sportsmanship.

These African-American youth reported that they enjoyed the friendships and the respect of their peers that was associated with sport participation. When it came to being recognized or gaining friendships through sport, the African-American youth in this study spoke about how peer recognition regarding athletic talent influenced them. Some of the participants noted that they would be interested in attempting new sports, but the lack of friends that were also interested dissuaded participation.

The insight provided by these six youth resulted in themes that supported and added new information to the existing body of knowledge about African-American youth and sport. The results suggested that other African-American youth might have similar experiences and insights, but further investigations of African-American youth in sport are warranted.

Conclusions

The results of this investigation indicated that these six African-American youth had similar perceptions and experiences about the role of sport in life. The participants indicated numerous points that provided new information to the body of literature regarding African-American youth and sport: (a) the value of education and earning good grades were a top priority, (b) sibling encouragement and competitive support were a positive motivating factor to their sport participation, and (c) they identified strong negative role models and a well-developed sense of the qualities they did not want to emulate.

Findings of the present research that supported the existing literature: (a) the participants recognized what they hoped to gain from participating in sport including both personal and family social and economic advancement; (b) they also participated in sport for fun, to be with friends, to enhance physical fitness, and to avoid potential illegal activities; (c) the participants indicated that sport was perceived as an opportunity to unite or bring the participants' families closer; and (d) the participants reported that parent support and encouragement was crucial in the development and facilitation of their sport involvement. These African-American ranging in age from 11 to 13 years also identified a number of positive characteristics that they did want to emulate, for example striving for excellence and remaining modest, managing pressure situations, being recognized as a peacemaker, demonstrating leadership, and practicing good sportsmanship.

These African-American youth discussed other salient issues that were similar to findings in the literature. They, however, talked about these issues with a different twist.

These African-American youth perceived sport as a vehicle for social mobility not only for themselves but also for their families. They noted that sport might provide social and economic advancement for themselves and their families by allowing them to repay and assist their families, receive an education, have the opportunity to travel, and serve as a role model throughout the country and world. These six African-American youth reported that they participated in sport for numerous reasons and included personal health. They identified the benefits of regular exercise, but also noted activities to avoid such as selling drugs and "running the streets," to remain healthy. These African-American youth identified role models who demonstrated positive qualities and these selected role models were other African-American male athletes. It is important to note that two participants recognized Caucasian athletes as role models.

Recommendations

Following are some recommendations for future research.

1. Examine the role of sport in the life of African-American youth who are not considered to be above average athletes or who are less than average students. The African-American youth in this study were considered excellent athletes who also earned good grades. This information would allow researchers to compare and contrast the similarities and differences of athletes who are not as talented athletically and/or academically.

2. Examine the role of sport in the lives of African-American youth raised in different geographic regions of the United States. This information may determine whether different geographic regions offer different sporting opportunities or may

facilitate particular sports. Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) stated that opportunity and values might account for racial differences in aspirations toward a career in sport.

3. Examine the role of sport in the lives of African-American youth raised in families of diverse socioeconomic levels. In this study, the African-American youth who came from families of greater affluence appeared to participate in more diverse sports. This may provide information regarding the role of sport and social mobility and whether individuals from greater to lesser affluence have different perceptions of sport as a vehicle for improving social or economic status. Hasbrook (1986) presented an explanation that the decline in the importance of the family's social class has resulted in a positive influence to participate in youth athletics regardless of socioeconomic class.

4. Examine the role of sport in the lives of African-American young men if college or professional athletics were not achieved. This information may provide experiences and perceptions from athletes who were not successful in achieving collegiate or professional athletics. In the present study, all African-American youth considered sport a means of achieving collegiate and professional athletics. The information that would be provided may add information about how athletes handle the emotions of not realizing their goals.

5. Determine what aspirations African-American female youth have concerning professional athletics since the inception of the WNBA and other professional sporting opportunities. In the present study, the African-American athletes all aspired to emulate their athletic heroes who were professional athletes. This information may illustrate how

African-Americans perceive potential careers in professional sport and how this is similar or dissimilar to the participants in this study

6. Examine African-American parents' perspective of their children's athletic involvement and the role of sport in their children's lives. Spreitzer and Snyder (1990) reported that African-Americans were more likely to acknowledge the importance for boys to participate in sports, and that African-American parents indicated that they would be proud if their son were to become a professional athlete. With this in mind, African-Americans were reported to express positive perceptions of sport involvement with the following findings: (a) sport participation was valuable for psychosocial development, (b) sport competition was a positive experience, and (c) professional sport was a desirable career channel. The African-American youth in this study were supported and encouraged by their parents and the involvement and encouragement was critical for their athletic involvement. This information may determine whether the goals and roles of sport in life for the youth are the same as their parents' expectations

7. Examine African-American youth perception regarding physiological, socio-cultural, socio-economic, and political agendas for sport opportunity and overrepresentation in sport. This may provide information regarding whether African-American youth are aware of a race debate in sport, are encouraged to participate in certain sports because of cultural expectations, perceived opportunity, and financial constraints or freedom that may interfere with or provide opportunities in sport

8. Examine how African-American youth perceive themselves outside of sport. In this study, certain African-American youth noted that they could use sport as a means of

earning an education, which would allow them to be eligible for careers as architects and educators. This information may provide additional support that sport is seen as a method of receiving training for careers other than in professional sport.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

African-American Youth and Sport: A Qualitative Investigation of the Role of Sport in Life

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH RECREATION CENTER
INFORMED CONSENT

Purpose of Study

This project is in partial fulfillment of the Ph.D. program in the College of Education. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of African-American youth and the role that sport plays in life. The investigation will utilize an open-ended interview format and will be largely non-directive. The study will enhance the knowledge base regarding this topic by employing a qualitative interview technique. There are no anticipated or foreseeable risks involved with participation in the investigation. This is due to the largely non-invasive dialogue between participant and researcher. The researcher will not ask any intimate questions or ask the participant to divulge any self-disclosing information.

Description of Study

I will ask the parents or legal guardians of the potential participants to give consent by signing an informed consent statement detailing the purpose and structure of the research project. The informed consent form will be stored for three years past the completion of the study at a University of Tennessee location. Furthermore, I will be asking African-American youth to participate in this study. Their participation is purely voluntary. It is their prerogative to terminate their participation at any time without prejudice to the participant or to his family. The study will involve two interview sessions. The interview sessions are designed to take approximately sixty minutes and thirty minutes, respectively, however, the participants may take as long as they wish in both sessions. The participants will be asked to select a pseudonym by which they will be identified in order to maintain confidentiality. The first interview will consist of open-ended questions. The participants will be asked to focus on personal experiences within sport and how sport influences and interacts with each individual's life. The second interview will involve validating the transcribed information from the first interview. The participants will be asked to approve the data, make corrections to the data, and/or make any additions to the data.

Furthermore, the name of the participant and interview session will remain confidential. To ensure confidentiality, there will be no written link to the true identity of the participant. Each participant will choose a pseudonym and his interview will be associated with that pseudonym only. In order to preserve confidentiality, the audio tapes will be erased at the completion of the study.

The possible benefits obtained through this investigation include a better understanding of the characteristics and perceived effects of sport in the life of the six to eight African-American youth interviewed for this dissertation. In addition, this study is significant because it investigates the characteristics and perceptions of the role sport plays in life and the athlete's perception of the relationship between sport and life.

Permission

I,_____, director of _____, give Kirk E. Peterson permission to approach youth athletes of _____ to solicit their participation in a qualitative study on the role of sport in life.

Printed Name:_____

Contact for Information:

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of this study,) you may contact the researcher, Kirk Peterson, or the Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Patricia A. Beitel, at 1914 Andy Holt Ave., and 974-5111. If you have questions about the rights of the participant, contact the Compliance Section of the Office of Research at (423) 974-3466.

APPENDIX B

African-American Youth and Sport: A Qualitative Investigation of the Role of Sport in Life

YOUTH BASKETBALL COACH INFORMED CONSENT

Purpose of Study

This project is in partial fulfillment of the Ph.D. program in the College of Education. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of African-American youth and the role that sport plays in life. The investigation will utilize an open-ended interview format and will be largely non-directive. The study will enhance the knowledge base regarding this topic by employing a qualitative interview technique. There are no anticipated or foreseeable risks involved with participation in the investigation. This is due to the largely non-invasive dialogue between participant and researcher. The researcher will not ask any intimate questions or ask the participant to divulge any self-disclosing information.

Description of Study

I will ask the parents or legal guardians of the potential participants to give consent by signing an informed consent statement detailing the purpose and structure of the research project. The informed consent form will be stored for three years past the completion of the study at a University of Tennessee location. Furthermore, I will be asking African-American youth to participate in this study. Their participation is purely voluntary. It is their prerogative to terminate their participation at any time without prejudice to the participant or to his family. The study will involve two interview sessions. The interview sessions are designed to take approximately sixty minutes and thirty minutes, respectively, however, the participants may take as long as they wish in both sessions. The participants will be asked to select a pseudonym by which they will be identified in order to maintain confidentiality. The first interview will consist of open-ended questions. The participants will be asked to focus on personal experiences within sport and how sport influences and interacts with each individual's life. The second interview will involve validating the transcribed information from the first interview. The participants will be asked to approve the data, make corrections to the data, and/or make any additions to the data.

Furthermore, the name of the participant and interview session will remain confidential. To ensure confidentiality, there will be no written link to the true identity of the participant. Each participant will choose a pseudonym and his interview will be associated with that pseudonym only. In order to preserve confidentiality, the audio tapes will be erased at the completion of the study.

The possible benefits obtained through this investigation include a better understanding of the characteristics and perceived effects of sport in the life of the six to eight African-American youth interviewed for this dissertation. In addition, this study is significant because it investigates the characteristics and perceptions of the role sport plays in life and the athlete's perception of the relationship between sport and life.

Permission

I,_____, coach of _____, give Kirk E. Peterson permission to approach youth athletes of _____ to solicit their participation in a qualitative study on the role of sport in life.

Printed Name:_____

Contact for Information:

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of this study,) you may contact the researcher, Kirk Peterson, or the Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Patricia A. Beitel, at 1914 Andy Holt Ave., and 974-5111. If you have questions about the rights of the participant, contact the Compliance Section of the Office of Research at (423) 974-3466.

APPENDIX C

African-American Youth and Sport: A Qualitative Investigation of the Role of Sport in Life

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT INFORMED CONSENT

Purpose of Study

This project is in partial fulfillment of the Ph.D. program in the College of Education. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of African-American youth and the role that sport plays in life. The investigation will utilize an open-ended interview format and will be largely non-directive. The study will enhance the knowledge base regarding this topic by employing a qualitative interview technique. There are no anticipated or foreseeable risks involved with participation in the investigation. This is due to the largely non-invasive dialogue between participant and researcher. The researcher will not ask any intimate questions or ask the participant to divulge any self-disclosing information.

Description of Study

I will ask the parents or legal guardians of the potential participants to give consent by signing an informed consent statement detailing the purpose and structure of the research project. The informed consent form will be stored for three years past the completion of the study at a University of Tennessee location. Furthermore, I will be asking African-American youth to participate in this study. Their participation is purely voluntary. It is their prerogative to terminate their participation at any time without prejudice to the participant or to his family. The study will involve two interview sessions. The interview sessions are designed to take approximately sixty minutes and thirty minutes, respectively, however, the participants may take as long as they wish in both sessions. The participants will be asked to select a pseudonym by which they will be identified in order to maintain confidentiality. The first interview will consist of open-ended questions. The participants will be asked to focus on personal experiences within sport and how sport influences and interacts with each individual's life. The second interview will involve validating the transcribed information from the first interview. The participants will be asked to approve the data, make corrections to the data, and/or make any additions to the data.

Furthermore, the name of the participant and interview session will remain confidential. To ensure confidentiality, there will be no written link to the true identity of the participant. Each participant will choose a pseudonym and his interview will be associated with that pseudonym only. In order to preserve confidentiality, the audio tapes will be erased at the completion of the study.

The possible benefits obtained through this investigation include a better understanding of the characteristics and perceived effects of sport in the life of the six to eight African-American youth interviewed for this dissertation. In addition, this study is significant because it investigates the characteristics and perceptions of the role sport plays in life and the athlete's perception of the relationship between sport and life.

Permission

I,_____, athletic director of _____, give Kirk E. Peterson permission to approach youth athletes of _____ to solicit their participation in a qualitative study on the role of sport in life.

Printed Name:_____

Contact for Information:

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of this study,) you may contact the researcher, Kirk Peterson, or the Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Patricia A. Beitel, at 1914 Andy Holt Ave., and 974-5111. If you have questions about the rights of the participant, contact the Compliance Section of the Office of Research at (423) 974-3466.

APPENDIX D

African-American Youth and Sport: A Qualitative Investigation of the Role of Sport in Life

PARENTAL CONSENT

I, _____, hereby consent to my child's participation in a qualitative research study, African-American Youth and Sport: A Phenomenological Investigation of the Role of Sport in Life, that examines the role of sport in his life. Specifically, the investigator will examine the relationship of my child's perceived role of sport and the interaction of the sport experiences in life.

I understand that the purpose of the study is to examine the perceptions of African-American youth and the role that sport plays in life. The investigation will utilize an open-ended interview format and will be largely non-directive. The study will enhance the knowledge base regarding this topic by employing a qualitative interview technique. I understand that my child's participation is purely voluntary. It is his prerogative to terminate his participation at any time without prejudice to him or to our family.

I understand that the study will involve two interview sessions. The interview sessions are designed to take approximately sixty minutes and thirty minutes respectively, however, my child may take as long as he wishes in both sessions. The first interview will consist of open-ended questions. My child will be asked to focus on personal experiences within sport and how sport influences and interacts with his life. The second interview will involve validating the transcribed information. My child will be asked to approve the data, make corrections to the data, and/or make any additions to the data.

I understand that I will be given the opportunity to listen to the audio tape, read the transcribed information, and approve its use in the study. I understand that my child's name and interview session will remain confidential. To ensure confidentiality, I understand that no written link of my child's true identity will be associated with that of his pseudonym. In order to preserve confidentiality, the audio tapes will be erased at the completion of the study. The informed consent form will be stored for three years past the completion of the study at a University of Tennessee location.

I understand that the possible benefits obtained through this investigation include a better understanding of the characteristics and perceived affects of sport in the life of the six to eight African-American youth interviewed for this dissertation. In addition, this study is significant because it investigates the characteristics and perceptions of the role sport plays in life and the athlete's perception of the relationship between sport and life. I understand that there are no apparent or foreseeable risks or discomforts to my child involved in this study.

I understand that my child's participation in this study is voluntary and that participation or refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to involvement in sport participation, and that I may withdraw my child or discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

I,_____, parent of _____, give Kirk E. Peterson permission to approach my child to solicit their participation in a qualitative study on the role of sport in life.

Printed Name:_____

Contact for Information:

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of this study,) you may contact the researcher, Kirk Peterson, or the Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Patricia A. Beitel, at 1914 Andy Holt Ave., and 974-5111. If you have questions about the rights of the participant, contact the Compliance Section of the Office of Research at (423) 974-3466.

APPENDIX E

African-American Youth and Sport: A Qualitative Investigation of the Role of Sport in Life

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

I, _____, hereby volunteer to participate in a research study involving African-American Youth and Sport and the role sport plays in life. Specifically, the investigator will ask the participant questions about his experiences and thoughts about sport of what role sport plays in the life of the participant.

I understand that I will be involved in an initial interview session and a follow-up interview session. I understand that the initial interview session will take approximately sixty minutes and that the follow-up interview session will take approximately thirty minutes. The follow-up interview session is necessary to have the participant agree, disagree, change, or correct any information about the first interview. I understand that the interview sessions will be audio taped.

I understand that I will be given the opportunity to listen to the audio tape, read the transcribed information, and approve its use in the study. I understand that my name will remain confidential and that I will be asked to pick another name (called a pseudonym) to protect my identity. To ensure confidentiality, I understand that no written link of my true identity will be associated with that of my pseudonym. In order to preserve confidentiality, the audio tapes will be erased at the completion of the study. The informed consent form will be stored at a University of Tennessee location for three years past the completion of the study.

I understand that the possible benefits obtained through this investigation include a better understanding of the characteristics and perceived affects of sport in the life of the six to eight African-American youth interviewed for this dissertation. In addition, this study is significant because it investigates the characteristics and perceptions of the role sport plays in life and the athlete's perception of the relationship between sport and life. I understand that there are no apparent or foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in this study.

PARTICPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

Date:_____ Printed Name:_____

Signature:_____

Contact for Information:

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of this study,) you may contact the researcher, Kirk Peterson, or the Dissertation Advisor, Dr. Patricia A. Beitel, at 1914 Andy Holt Ave., and 974-5111. If you have questions about the rights of the participant, contact the Compliance Section of the Office of Research at (423) 974-3466.

APPENDIX F

African-American Youth and Sport: A Qualitative Investigation of the Role of Sport in Life

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Pseudonym_____

Year of Birth_____

Grade in School_____

Years Participated in Athletics_____

In Which Sports have you Participated _____

_____

_____

Years Participated in each listed_____

_____

_____

_____

Family Involvement in Sport_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX G

African-American Youth and Sport: A Qualitative Investigation of the Role of Sport in Life

Interview Protocol

Specific questions asked of the participants were:

1. In as much detail as possible, tell me about your family.
2. What role does athletics and sport play in your life?
3. How does your family see you as an athlete?
4. How do you see yourself as an athlete?
5. Do you think you will ever participate in any sport other than the one/s you are currently playing?

    Probe: If you think so, would you try to participate now?

6. Why do you participate in the sports you do now?
7. In the sporting world, who is your hero? Why?

    Probe: Who would you not like to be? Why?

    Probe: Would you like to be like your hero?

8. Do you feel as if you should play the sports you do?

    Probe: Why don't you participate in other sports?

9. What do you hope to get from sport/s?
10. How has participating in sport affected your life?
11. If sport could do something for you, what would that be?

APPENDIX H

African-American Youth and Sport: A Qualitative Investigation of the Role of Sport in Life

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT- TRANSCRIBER

I,_____, understand that the content of the tapes that I am transcribing are to be kept completely confidential. Furthermore, I will not repeat or refer to the information of the material revealed by those on the tapes I transcribe. I am considered a member of the research team and will abide by confidentiality in the degree that my exposure to this information is a guarantee that the researcher and The University of Tennessee, Knoxville has to the participants of this investigation for involvement. As such, I am both legally and ethically bound to maintain the strictest confidence as it pertains to this examination. I fully accept this responsibility and promise to maintain confidence.

_____ _____

Transcriber Date

_____

Primary Investigator

APPENDIX I

African-American Youth and Sport: A Qualitative Investigation of the Role of Sport in Life

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT- QUALITATIVE RESEARCH GROUP MEMBER

I,_____, understand that the content of the tapes that I am reviewing are to be kept completely confidential. Furthermore, I will not repeat or refer to the information of the material revealed by those on the tapes I review. I am considered a member of the research team and will abide by confidentiality in the degree that my exposure to this information is a guarantee that the researcher and The University of Tennessee, Knoxville has to the participants of this investigation for involvement. As such, I am both legally and ethically bound to maintain the strictest confidence as it pertains to this examination. I fully accept this responsibility and promise to maintain confidence.

_____
Name

_____ _____
Signature Date

_____
Primary Investigator

VITA

Kirk Edward Peterson was born in Moline, Illinois on February 18, 1972. He graduated from Rock Island High School in June 1990, where he earned numerous awards and recognitions in varsity swimming, tennis, and soccer. The following August he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse in La Crosse, Wisconsin. While at the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse he swam and earned All-American honors. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse in May 1994, with a Bachelor of Science degree, specializing in Psychology. That following August he enrolled at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville where he began working toward a Master of Science degree, specializing in Sport Psychology, completed in May, 1996. In May 2000, he earned a second Master of Science degree in Community Agency Counseling. In August 2000, he received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education, with a specialization in Sport Psychology.