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I am submitting herewith dissertation written by Michael John Diacin entitled "Parents' Perceptions of Their Children's and Their Own Sport Experiences." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Exercise and Sport Sciences.

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PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN'S AND THEIR OWN SPORT EXPERIENCES

A Dissertation Presented for

the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Michael J. Diacin

August 2009

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Abstract

Sport participation is a significant aspect in many people's lives. The experiences they accumulate in sport are shaped by a variety of factors. A combination of personal factors (e.g., demographics), social factors (e.g., socializing sources and the support they provide), and structural factors (e.g., costs and accessible programs) uniquely shape each individual's experience. Since a variety of factors can shape that experience, it is useful to examine perceptions of the factors were significant in the creation of an individual's participation opportunities and experiences in sport.

The purpose of this study was threefold: (a) to gain insight into the personal, social, and structural factors participants perceived were significant on their sport participation experiences throughout various stages of their lives; (b) to gain insight into the personal, social, and structural factors participants perceived were significant upon their children's sport experiences; and (c) to illustrate differences that exist among participants' own and their children's sport experiences. Eleven participants were involved in this study. Participants had firsthand experience in an organized sport during their youth and/or adolescence. Participants also had at least one child under the age of 13 who was active in an organized sport at the time of data collection. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Variety in participants' gender, race, age, household income, education, and occupation were present.

Difference in participants' and their children's sport experiences emerged and were reported in five themes. Those themes are: Sources of Socialization, (b) Gendered Constructions Shaping Sport Experiences, (c) Parental Presence in Youth Sport, (d) Self-confidence and Skill, and (e) Structural Constraints upon Participation. These themes reflect variance in the sport experiences among this group of participants and their perceptions of their own and their

children’s experiences.

The framework of this study utilized descriptive and hermeneutical inquiry. The descriptive element was expressed through a realist approach that relied on information learned from the participants (Creswell, 2007). Hermeneutical inquiry, which is concerned with interpretive understanding and context surrounding engagement in the particular act, was reflected through participants’ assessments of their experiences.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Preface

I played a variety of sports during my childhood. I participated in baseball between the ages of 10 and 15 and soccer between the ages of 9 and 10. Despite my first-hand involvement in sport, I never gave much thought as to *why* my participation experiences played out as they did until I began my studies in the field of sport sociology. My participation in baseball and soccer came and went without any consideration of various personal, social, and structural factors such as money or distance from facilities that shaped my experiences. I never considered how my self-perceptions of ability or my gender, race, and family's socioeconomic status influenced the sports I played. I also perceived a considerable amount of *sameness* in that all or mostly all of my teammates were Caucasian and came from families that probably possessed disposable income. The lack of racial and socioeconomic diversity on my teams was a reflection of the lack of diversity that existed within the community in which I lived at that time.

In addition, I never gave much thought to the social networks and provisions of support which enabled my participation. Support from family members had a significant impact on my participation. Both of my parents were supportive of all of my sport endeavors. The decision to participate was ultimately mine; however, had they not viewed sport as a worthwhile endeavor, it is unlikely that I would have participated. Once I started playing, they enabled my participation through their encouragement and by providing financial and logistical support.

Various structural factors shaped my participation experiences as well. I was raised in a suburban community in which opportunities to participate in nearby, well-organized leagues were plentiful. Participation occurred in a safe environment and at well-maintained facilities.

Costs associated with registration fees, uniforms, and equipment never served as a barrier to participation. I lived in a household with both parents present, but never considered the importance of that upon my experiences. I now know all of these factors had a significant impact upon my own sport participation opportunities and subsequent experiences.

I continued to participate in various organized sports until I reached high school. At that time, I voluntarily ended my participation so that I could focus on academics and devote more time to work. During college, I occasionally participated in intramural sports. Those were my last organized sport experiences.

In between the completion of my Master's degree and prior to starting my Ph.D., I worked as a manager at several multi-purpose recreational facilities in the suburbs surrounding Detroit, Michigan where "pricey" youth sports such as ice hockey and figure skating anchored the operation. I thought that I "had it good" when I was growing up as it seemed like my parents possessed an unlimited reservoir of resources. After working in these facilities, I realized that I probably wouldn't have been able to play these sports as a child due to the expenses associated with participation. The level of affluence of many of the families I worked with was above and beyond that of my family. When participation fees, equipment, and travel were added up, it was not uncommon for parents to spend $2,000-$3,000 a year for their sons' or daughters' to participate. Many families had more than one child who participated. Children who showed exceptional promise and participated in elite programs could easily spend well over $15,000 a year. Although I did not know of the household income of the families who had children participating in these leagues, the expenses lead me to believe that these families had a significant amount of disposable income. Parents driving to their children's games and practices in brands of automobiles such as BMW, Lincoln, Range Rover, and Jaguar was certainly the rule

rather than the exception.

In addition to a financial commitment, these parents made a significant time commitment. Since these parents were frequently taking their children all over the metropolitan area for events, they not only needed time but also flexibility within their employment which would free them up to provide logistical support. Many of these parents were proprietors of their own businesses which allowed them the flexibility in their schedules that may not have been available to a lower level employee who is bound to a set schedule.

In hindsight, it was obvious why participation in sport was available to me as a child and why the families I worked with were able to have their children participate in their sport(s) of choice. My experiences and the experiences of the families I've known lend support to the premise that youth sport participation is largely afforded to those with some level of affluence. However, sport participation is not exclusively reserved for those with affluence. Families without affluence can enroll their children in programs that are supported by public funds or are offered through public schools (Coakley, 2007).

Since "anyone" can theoretically participate in youth sport activities, I was interested in gaining insight into the sport experiences of people who come from various social classes and are from different races. Many personal factors (e.g., self-perceptions of ability, gender, race, social class) can shape participation. Various sources of socialization and social support can influence participation experiences as well. Lastly, many structural factors (e.g., access to facilities and programs, costs associated with participation, and household structure, and life transitions) can shape experiences in sport settings. Through locating and speaking with a diverse sample of people who come from various walks of life, I aimed to illustrate difference in the human experience within a sport-specific context.

Rationale for the Study

My personal rationale for conducting this research first stemmed from my childhood participation experiences and also stemmed from my experience with working in sport-based recreational facilities. As I was working to complete my Ph.D., I became aware of and immersed in literature that examined the shaping of individuals' experiences in sport. As a result, I developed an interest in speaking with people in order to gain insight into how their participation experiences in sport settings were shaped.

My experiences ultimately served as the reason why I was interested in examining factors that shaped others' experiences in sport. In addition, I was interested in how these individuals made meaning of their experiences and whether or not they analyzed the forces that shaped their experiences. For those reasons, I sought out participants who were willing to discuss and analyze the factors they perceived as significant in the shaping of their experiences.

As a person who studies family involvement in sport, I am interested in examining the parent-child relationship that exists in sport settings. I spoke with people who played organized sports as children and who are parents of at least one child who is currently active in organized sports. I spoke with them because I wanted to gain insight into the personal, social, and structural factors they perceived as significant upon the shaping of their children's experiences in sport. I was interested in seeing how their children's experiences differed from or remained the same as their own experiences when they were children. In addition, I was interested in knowing if or how their experiences in sport influenced or are influencing their children's experiences. For example, were they physically active as children and did that have an effect upon their desire to have their children develop and maintain a physically active lifestyle? This question and many others were addressed.

My own sport experiences led me to conduct a qualitative study in which participants were asked about their experiences in sport. A qualitative research design allowed me to analyze these experiences because qualitative research effectively captures social phenomena occurring in natural settings. Getting them to think about the factors that shaped those experiences was a goal of this study because it was something I never did when I was participating. Locating people of different races and from various social classes can help illustrate difference in the human experience because they may have lived through circumstances different from mine. My scholarly interest in parental involvement in sport was why I wanted to supplement parents' retrospective examination of their experiences in sport with their perspectives of their children's experiences.

Statement of the Problem

It is well-known that opportunities to participate in sport are not equal for all people. Coakley (2007) stated, "When it comes to sport participation, the socioeconomic status of the family you were born into has never been more important. Participation is a family affair and is driven by family resources" (p. 338). I found it problematic that much of the research within the field of sport sociology focused on the lived experiences of individuals who were neither in the racial majority nor affluent. Therefore, research that focuses upon gaining insight into participation experiences of people who have not been born into wealthy families needs to be conducted. Increased knowledge and a greater appreciation of the circumstances that create diversity within as well as inequality upon participation opportunities in sport are needed. As a sport sociologist, I believe it is important to hear and learn from people from various walks of life in order to accomplish this goal.

In the review of literature for this project, I located many studies with contradictory findings. For example, a positive relationship between a family's social class and their opportunities to engage in sport activities was found (Yamaguchi, 1984). On the other hand, a positive relationship between social class and opportunities to engage in sport activities did not exist (Yang, Telama, & Laasko, 1996). Contradictory findings were discovered in other content areas as well. For example, parents who were physically active as children were more likely to have children of their own who were also active (Wagner et al., 2004). However, children have been physically active when they have physically inactive parents (Kimencik & Horn, 1998).

This problem led me to conduct a study that did not attempt to determine whether or not "X" is responsible for "Y" and then project that finding as being representative of the experiences of a larger population. Instead, I was interested in the different factors that shaped the experiences of one individual and that individual's child or children. Through gaining insight into these different experiences and the factors that shaped them, I intended to show differences in the human experience and how this experience can sometimes mirror what we assume regarding sport participation as well as challenge what we assume.

My own experiences and the questions I developed from examining previous studies shaped my research questions. These included: (a) what personal, social and structural factors did participants perceive were significant in the shaping of their experiences in sport during their youth and adolescence? (b) What personal, social, and structural factors did participants perceive were significant in the shaping of their children's experiences in sport? (c) What differences and/or similarities emerged between participants' own experiences and their children and why did they occur? And (d) what differences and/or similarities emerged in the experiences between participants and why did they occur?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was established in order to address the research questions. The purpose consisted of three parts. They were: (a) to gain insight into the personal, social, and structural factors participants perceived were significant on their sport participation experiences throughout various stages of their lives; (b) to gain insight into the personal, social, and structural factors participants perceived were significant upon their children's sport experiences; and (c) to illustrate differences that exist among participants' own and their children's sport experiences.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it contributes to the existing literature in the field of sport sociology with regard to factors that influence sport participation and differences within the human experience. Attention that was given to factors shaping experiences has not been examined to a large extent in several decades. For example, attention was given to social factors which shape participation experiences in sport. A social factor includes sources of socialization. The work of scholars such as Susan Greendorfer, Eldon Snyder and John Loy was reviewed and subsequently incorporated into this study. Their work, which focused on sources of socialization that influence sport participation, was conducted during the 1970s and early 1980s. Research on social influences and the process of socialization into sport in recent years has been sparse.

In addition, several other shortcomings have been associated with research in the field of sport sociology. For example, past research that has linked participation with specific characteristics of class, gender, or race "has been unconvincing at best because of conflicting findings, inconsistent methodology, and unclear operationalizing of variables" (Henderson, 1988, p. 1). In addition, there have been few instances where researchers attempted to gain insight into the factors that shaped the sport experiences of parents from various ethnic groups and social

classes. A call for research that utilizes diverse samples has been made on many occasions. For instance, Ram, Starek, and Johnson (2004) stated, “Race, culture, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation are characteristics of every individual, and, therefore, should be acknowledged in any and all research on humans” (p. 251). Fishwick and Greendorfer (1987) argued that work on socialization has not taken into account the experiences of multi-cultural and non-affluent samples. They stated “Researchers have focused almost exclusively on white, male, elite athletes involved in a highly competitive sport” (p. 4). Duda and Allison (1990) encouraged researchers to include diversity in their samples. Cote (1999) encouraged more qualitative work on families which are not affluent and/or intact.

Therefore, the significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute new knowledge to the field of sport sociology and also provide knowledge which focuses upon the sport-related experiences of a diverse sample. The perspectives and experiences of *all* people are significant in the field of sport sociology. As a result, efforts should be made by those who conduct research to reach out and learn about the sport-related experiences of people who have been uniquely affected by a variety of personal, social, and structural factors.

Framework of the Study

A framework in which important variables and concepts are determined and findings interpreted are significant elements of a study (Patton, 1990). The framework upon which a research project is conducted governs the focus of inquiry and serves as a lens through which the data is interpreted and given meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). In order to acquire and interpret knowledge as well as accomplish the purpose of the study, a framework that would be effective in the collection and interpretation of knowledge relating to participants’ perceptions of their own and their children’s experiences in sport needed to be utilized.

In order to acquire knowledge of the social world through the perspectives of the participants a realist tale, was utilized. A realist tale is an objective account of a situation which is typically written in a third-person point of view and reports on information learned from the study's participants (Creswell, 2007). The writer of a realist tale offers an account of social reality which is shaped by the experiences of the participants and helps readers understand the complexities of the reality participants' experience on a daily basis (Sparkes, 1991). Each individual has a unique biography and that biography reflects as well as challenges societal expectations and conditions. When examining the sport participation histories of individuals for this study, their experiences were likely shaped by the expectations and conditions to which they were exposed.

A significant aspect of realist tales is the reliance upon participants' experiences (Sparkes, 1995). Quotations from the participants were utilized to a significant extent in order to convey to the reader that "…the views expressed are not those of the researcher, but are rather the authentic and representative remarks transcribed straight from the mouths of the participants" (Sparkes, 2002, p. 44). The participant was positioned as the central and exclusive provider of knowledge and reality. The goal of using these quotations was to give the reader a strong sense of the participants' voices. The researcher, on the other hand, remained in the background as a reporter of the "facts" (Creswell, 2007).

The first segment of the participants' realist tale in sport focused on personal factors or the "self." In this study, the "self" was characterized by the individual's demographics such as gender, race, and social class membership. In addition, psychological aspects such as self-attitudes and self-esteem make up the "self." These personal factors shaped the participation experiences of an individual. For example, internalized concerns about appearance, skill level,

and fear of embarrassment are examples of personal factors that can shape experiences. These concerns about appearance may influence the intentions of females to participate in activities such as aerobics, for example, where the “ideal” body type necessary for participation is slim and toned (Markula, 1995). Self-perception of skill level and subsequent hesitation to participate in an activity can also shape experiences as people seek out participation opportunities in which they perceive possessing competence (Brustad, 1988). Ultimately, these internalized elements influence perceptions regarding suitability for a particular activity and subsequent participation.

In addition to personal factors of a psychological nature, individual’s experiences in sport can be shaped by their demographics. Each person’s experiences and subsequent biography are shaped as a result of personal factors such as social class, race, or gender (Collins, 1989). Although commonalities such as race, gender, and income existed among the participants in this study, differentiation was present within their experiences.

Various social factors and situational contexts that shaped experiences were included. Social factors included the presence of and interaction with various sources of socialization. Sources of socialization can include individuals such as parents, siblings, peers, and coaches (Coakley, 2007). Availability of social networks and support were additional interpersonal factors which played a role in the shaping of participants’ experiences. These factors can be influential in the initiation, maintenance, and discontinuation of an individual’s opportunities to engage in sport-related activities (Hultsman, 1993).

Structural factors were also significant upon the shaping of experience. These factors include time required to engage in participation, costs associated with participation, and logistical factors such as distance from a facility can shape an individual’s experience (Boothy, Tungatt, & Townsend, 1981). Changes to one’s life as a result of events such as divorce,

marriage, or having children change the structure of the household and also serve to shape experience (Jackson, 2005).

Although this study relied upon participants' descriptions of their experiences, it was not a work that lacked an interpretive element nor was it an investigator-evacuated text. In addition to participants' descriptive accounts of their experiences, I included descriptive accounts of my experiences as a basis of comparison. This element, therefore, prevented the work from being an investigator-evacuated text.

Hermeneutics is a theoretical approach that can inform qualitative inquiry. Hermeneutic researchers attempt to establish context and meaning for what people do and ask the question, "What are the conditions under which a human act took place that makes it possible to interpret its meanings" (Patton, 1990, p. 84)? Hermeneutical research is concerned with interpretive understanding, with attention being paid to the context surrounding engagement in the particular act. Hermeneutists are concerned with constructing "reality" on the basis of their own as well as the participants' interpretations of the interview data (Eichelberger, 1989; Donnelly, 2000).

Hermeneutic inquiry recognizes that the experience and the conditions surrounding that experience are subject to interpretation, which is a significant underpinning of sociological study. Interpretive sociology is concerned about "what sport means, and how sport means, in the lives of human beings" (Donnelly, 2000, p. 85). In this study, interpretations of the personal, social, and structural factors that shaped participants' experiences in sport as well as how these factors are shaping their children's experiences were areas of focus. Interpretive sociology is concerned with how social actors continually construct and interpret their worlds. It also recognizes that social life is not governed by objective characteristics but rather is governed by subjective and incongruent forces (Donnelly, 2000).

Critical inquiry has several merits and can be useful in studies which focus on factors that shape the human experience. Critical inquiry stemmed from dissatisfaction with accounts of human actors in which constraints like class, patriarchy, and racism never appear (Anderson, 1989). In this study, the focus was on the accounts of the human actors or participants. Critical inquiry also draws attention to the role of factors such as class, race, and gender and uncovers the inequality relating to individuals' opportunities and experiences (Everhart, 2004). Lastly, critical inquiry also lends support to the concept of postmodernism, which "abandons the concept of the stable, singular self…instead substituting the concept of people's subject positions into which people are situated by language, class, gender and race" (Agger, 2006, p. 8).

Although critical inquiry is useful in challenging various forms of social reproduction, shortcomings exist. As a result, I chose to utilize a postcritical approach as the theoretical framework for this study. I also chose to utilize a postcritical approach because several nuances between critical and postcritical inquiry exist. These nuances were addressed during the bracketing interview and results and discussion and were factors in my decision to utilize a postcritical framework.

Several nuances differentiate critical from postcritical inquiry. Reflexivity is a significant nuance between critical and postcritical inquiry. Hytten (2004) stated; "Critical ethnographers talk about the importance of being self-reflexive…but don't seem to take it this critique far enough. What is needed is more than just self-reflection, but reflection on the assumptions and frames brought to the research" (p. 100). In chapter three, I acknowledge the assumptions I possessed and frames of reference I brought to this research. My frames of reference were significant in the shaping of my opinions and assumptions regarding who participates in sports.

Another weakness of critical inquiry is that critical researchers often lean toward detached writing styles that appeal to academic audiences but do not appeal to individuals and groups beyond that audience (Anderson, 1994). In this study, I attempted to immerse myself in the writing as I repeatedly included anecdotes of my firsthand experiences and some of the assumptions that resulted from the experiences I possessed. I also conducted a study that I believe would be useful to people outside of academics because it focused on experiences of people just like them.

Postcritical inquiry aims to "alter the traditional relationship between the researcher and researched such that research subjects' voices, problems, and concerns become the focus of the research" (Hytten, 2004, p. 101). Although my voice and experiences are present in the writing, I attempted to keep the participants' voices and experiences as the central and most important element of this study. This study was centered on the participants' experiences and the factors they perceived were responsible in shaping those experiences.

Lastly, postcritical research builds upon the premise that research subjects have the legitimacy and authority to produce socially useful knowledge (Hytten, 2004). Participants in this study provided useful knowledge. They did so because they are members of society who possessed experiences that others can examine and consequently learn from. In postcritical inquiry, the researcher is not the only person who can produce socially useful knowledge. I personally learned something new as a result of my conversations with these individuals and I am confident that others could learn something about factors which shape the human experience in sport as well.

In addition, this study was informed by postmodernism. It includes content that is consistent with postmodern foundations of societal members and conditions. For instance,

postmodernism poses skepticism toward the legitimacy of traditional macro-structural theories that explain society (Johnston, 2004). It is inherently critical of modernization and rationalization as it has resulted in the establishment of universal "truths" that do not fully capture the human experience (Giulianotti, 2005). Postmodern inquiry, therefore, recognizes that multiple "truths" emerge from different individuals' experiences (Harding, 1991). In this study, I examined the multiple factors which shaped 11 separate "truths" regarding sport experiences.

Whereas modernists seek to establish universal "truths," postmodernists reject the belief that universal truths can be established. Instead, they recognize diversity and difference in the human experience; they challenge the "grand narratives" of modernism and its tendencies of utilizing the experiences of a few to represent the experiences of many (Hargreaves, 2004). Postmodernists argue that knowledge can only be gained through one's placement in a certain position and that the idea of universal, objective "truths" that shape the human experience are subject to questioning because structures of racism, patriarchy, and social class that shape one's experiences are complex and sometimes contradictory (Andrews, 2000).

Using grand narratives to explain the "truths" of a few to describe the experiences of many is problematic because a single voice cannot accurately represent all of the experiences among members in any society. In addition, "grand narratives" are often constructed by those whose possess societal privilege and power (Giulianotti, 2005). Within this study, the experiences of different people were accumulated in order to illustrate differences in the human experience. Participants possessed different ethnicities and hailed from various social classes. Even when participants shared some commonalities in their demographics, their experiences did not fall neatly into an all-encompassing, grand narrative. Their perspectives and interpretations of their experiences were fragmented, episodic, and could not be adequately described by imposing a

common explanation upon them (Giulianotti, 2005).

For example, people with high incomes who possess high levels of education are more likely to participate in sport activities (Coakley, 2007). Although this statement is largely accepted as representative of many people, it is not true for all. I heard of experiences that were consistent with “grand narratives” that describe the participation patterns of people from non-affluent families and who are of non-European descent. On the other hand, participants’ experiences were substantially different from the “grand narratives” associated with participation patterns in relation to their demographics. Although the findings from this study were not necessarily postmodern, commonalities between the findings achieved in this study and postmodernism were achieved.

Scope of the Study

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the participation experiences of individuals who were from various socioeconomic groups and possessed various demographics. In addition to gaining insight into participants’ own experiences, their perceptions of factors that shaped the sport participation experiences of their children were included. Participants from different socioeconomic groups were welcome to participate. The study’s sample consisted of parents of various ages; however, the age range was reduced to some extent as all of the participants needed to have at least one child under the age of 13. Parents consisted of fathers and mothers. They were biological parents of their children; however, that was not a requirement for participation in this study as step-parents and parents who have adopted children were also welcome to participate. The participant pool also consisted of parents who were not all members of the same race.

Assumptions of the Study

It was assumed that the participants who agreed to take part in this study were telling the truth with regard to their own and their children's sport participation experiences. It was also assumed that participants possessed the ability to articulate their thoughts reasonably well and express them in a clear and understandable fashion. In addition, it was assumed that participants were able to provide some critical perspective with regard to the factors (e.g., personal, social, and structural) they believed played a role in the shaping of their experiences. Lastly, I made an assumption that the experiences of the participants were going to be diverse, even in instances where they shared similar demographics or resided in similar settings.

Key Terms Associated with the Study

Several key terms were utilized throughout the course of the study. Because they appeared frequently, it was important that they were described in further detail. Terms such as *child, class, family, father, gender, mother, organized sport, parent, personal, race, recreational activity, social, sport experience, and structural,* were defined and explained in this section in order to assist the reader in understanding how they were used in this study.

Class refers to "people who share an economic position in society based on a combination of their income, wealth, education, occupation, and social connections" (Coakley, 2007, p. 322). I defined working-class participants as individuals who are *proletariats*. This means they did not make money through the efforts of others but rather make a living through selling their labor power for wages (Giulianotti, 2005).

A *family* can include an intact relationship between a husband and wife in which one or more biological, adopted, and/or stepchildren live in the household. A family can also include a male and female partner who are not married but have one or more biological, adopted, and/or

stepchildren who live in the household. In cases where both parents did not live in the same household but rather one parent lived in the household with one or more biological, adopted, and/or stepchildren and assumed responsibilities of childrearing, that parent who resided in the household with one or more children was also considered a family for the purposes of this study. In settings where same sex couples in which one parent was the biological parent of the child or settings in which one or more children who lived in the household were adopted by the couple, they were also defined as a family (Daly, 1996).

Gender has been referred to as "a cultural or social definition of what it is psychologically to be male and female" (McPherson, Curtis, & Loy, 1989, p. 220). Socially constructed connotations associated with the terms male and female and how these connotations can influence participation in sport and/or specific sports were examined. Within this study, the term gender had a biological association as it was used to identify male or female parents and children.

The term *mother* included a female biological, adoptive, or step-parent of a child. The term *father* included a male biological, adoptive, or step-parent of a child. If a transgendered parent participated, the gender the parent defined him/herself as at the time of data collection was used in order to identify the parent as either mother or father (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006).

Organized sport is administered by adults. Within this study, participation in organized sports activities was accomplished without charge or included payment of registration fees as a measure to enable participation. The particular sports in which the parent participated and his/her child currently participates did not matter; however, they needed to have experience in an organized sport activity.

A term that was used frequently in this study is *parent.* For the purposes of this study a participant could be the biological parent of a child. However, a participant did not need a

biological affiliation with a child in order to be considered as a parent for this study. Participants who may have adopted a child were also identified as parents. Participants may have had a previous relationship with a person, ended that relationship with that person, and then established a new relationship with another person. It is possible that the person with whom the new relationship was established may have biological, adopted, and or step-children of his/her own. If a participant did not have a relationship with this person's child or children prior to the establishment of this new relationship but has established a relationship and has assumed the role of caretaker to a child or children as a step-parent, then that person was also defined as a parent (Daly, 2001).

Demographics were defined as *personal* factors which may shape experiences. The influence of gender, racial and social class ideologies can shape experiences and were examined in order to learn if these factors influenced participants' own experiences as well as the experiences of their children. In addition, factors that make up the self were included as personal factors. Within this study, personal factors included the participant's level of interest or inclination toward involvement in an activity, comfort level toward participating in a particular activity, and self-perceptions of ability levels toward a particular activity. These factors were examined because knowing how the participant's personality and internally held beliefs shape their experiences were significant upon the aim of the study.

Social constructions of gender, race, and social class were included as personal factors which can shape experiences. Social constructions are created by societal forces outside of and around the individual. Therefore, it could be argued that social constructions are a social factor as opposed to a personal factor upon the shaping of experience. Although social constructions are created by forces outside the individual, they ultimately have an impact upon the individual in

the way he/she constructs appropriateness with regards to a particular activity. Because these constructions ultimately have the ability to shape the thought processes within and actions by the self, this element was included within the section of personal factors.

This study included an examination of the participation endeavors of the participants' children. Since the self is also a parent, the impact of being a parent upon the shaping of the participants' own experiences in sport as well as the impact social constructions of parenting within their children's experiences was included in this section.

Race refers to "a population of people who are believed to be naturally or biologically distinct from other populations" (Coakley, 2007, p. 282). The term race was used to describe people who possess different physical traits such as skin color and were identified through the use of terms such as Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian, Middle Easterner, Native American, and Pacific Islander. Race is also a socially constructed definition. Within sport, an individual's race is associated with assumed competencies in a particular sport or specific positions within a sport. As a result, an individual may gravitate toward an activity deemed appropriate based on their race or may be guided toward an activity by others. Connotations associated with race and how these connotations shaped participants' sport activity choices and experiences were explored in this study.

Social factors shaping experiences were mentioned frequently throughout the course of this study. Social factors include sources of socialization. Parents, peers, and other individuals or groups who exert influence upon the participants' activity choices and opportunities are defined as social factors. The types and amounts of social support participants received from various socializing forces were also defined as a social factor. Social factors which influenced or are influencing the activity choices and participation opportunities of the participant were studied. In

addition, the influence the participant who is a parent had upon his/her children was examined in this study. Therefore, the influence the parent has upon the child and his/her activity choices were included as a social factor that shaped the current experiences of the parent and child.

Sport experience is terminology that was used throughout the study. Softball, basketball, soccer, and tennis were just a few of many sport activities within the studies that were examined for this project. Activities such as cheerleading were defined as a sport. Various childhood activities such as playing a musical instrument and participation in organizations such as Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts were not included.

Structural factors can significantly shape the experiences of the participants and were examined in this study. Structural factors focused upon geographic-based factors, such as the availability and proximity of settings where sport activities occurred. Economic factors, such as costs associated with participation, were included in this sphere as well. Household structure was placed within this category because children in single parent households versus dual parent households oftentimes experience different opportunities to engage in sport. Lastly, life transitions such as marriage, divorce, the birth of a child, or relocation can impact experiences and was included in this section as well.

Organization of the Dissertation

The following chapter consists of a review of literature pertinent to this topic. The first section of the literature review addressed personal characteristics that shape participation experiences. Personal characteristics of a psychological nature included an individual's interest or inclination to participate as well as self-perceived ability levels. An individual's gender, race or social class was demographic characteristics of a personal nature that can influence opportunities to participate in sport (Loy, McPherson, & Kenyon, 1978).

An individual's gender, race, and/or social class membership can serve as a factor that encourages or discourages participation in specific activities. Socially constructed connotations associated with personal attributes such as the gender, race, and social class membership of the individual can serve to influence sport participation opportunities. Participation may be influenced as these ideals suggest that males and females should participate in a sport or sports appropriate for their gender. Participation in a particular sport may be viewed as normal for a person of one race. Meanwhile, participation in the same sport may be viewed as abnormal for a person of another race.

A final personal factor relates to the participant as a parent. First, social constructions associated with parenting were examined. Next, participants' experiences with regard to their children in sport settings were examined. Constraints upon participants' own experiences in sport as a result of duties and obligations as a parent were examined in the literature review as well.

Social factors upon an individual's sport activity endeavors followed. Sources of socialization included significant others who exerted influence upon an individual (Coakley, 2007). Literature illustrating the influence parents, siblings, peers, and coaches can have upon an individual's opportunities to engage in sport activities was examined.

Social support, originating from significant others, can impact the individual's sport participation in a variety of ways. Emotional, financial, and instructional are among the types of support provided by these sources. In addition, parents own involvement in sport can shape their children's experiences in sport. Social influence and support provided by parents can be influential upon the shaping of their children's experiences. Therefore, relationships between parent and child involvement in sport activities were addressed.

An examination of structural factors and how they can shape participation opportunities and subsequent experiences in sport followed. Structural factors such as the availability of and access to facilities where participation in sport activities commonly takes place were examined. Cost and the influence household structure such as single-parent and two-parent homes can play in the shaping of experiences were examined as well. Lastly, the influence of life transitions (e.g., marriage, divorce, having children) has upon participants' experiences was acknowledged in the literature review.

The third chapter focused on the methodology associated with the study. This chapter begins with detail with regard to the study's participants. Criteria for participant selection, locations where participants were found, and sampling strategies were described. Detail regarding the ways in which data was collected and analyzed followed. Information with regard to the interview guide was included in this section. Prior to the data actual data collection, a bracketing interview was conducted. Detail regarding this exercise was included. The final segments of the chapter included data collection procedures and data analysis.

The findings from this research made up the content of the fourth chapter. I began this chapter with a brief biography of each participant. I focused on several demographic characteristics and also summarized their experiences in sport as well as the sport experiences of their child or children. Following this description and summation of their demographics and experiences, I presented and discussed five themes and several subthemes.

Throughout this segment, the realist tale of the participants' experiences was present. Participants described the experiences they and their children accumulated in sport. I also incorporated a realist tale of my own experiences. I included descriptions of my own experiences in sport because they served as a starting point from which I began to describe and

interpret factors which created differences in the human experience.

The interpretive element of the participants' experiences was blended into this chapter. Their own as well as my interpretations behind the "why's" that was responsible for the shaping of their experiences were included. I provided part of the interpretive element by utilizing findings from existing studies as possible reasons why their experiences played out as they did. Although participants did not have the benefit of accessing the same sources as I, they contributed their interpretations to the work as well as they addressed the "why's" behind the factors that shaped their experiences.

A combination of descriptions and interpretations of personal, social, and structural factors illustrated differences that emerged from each participant's "story." Since the goal of this study was to present factors which created different experiences in this sample of participants and their children, I incorporated anecdotes which illustrated this difference. In several instances, I compared two "opposites" with regard to a particular factor which contributed to the shaping of experiences between two people. In some instances, I provided anecdotes that supported several "truths" we assume when we consider who is participating and under what conditions. I also provided anecdotes that are opposite to these commonly accepted "truths."

The fifth chapter included a summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for future research. This work relied upon recalling past experiences; therefore, shortcomings associated with this approach exist. This was an exploratory study from which additional research focusing upon personal, social, and structural factors can be conducted. Content from this study can be useful to the sport practitioner; therefore, additional work which can be applied to an occupational setting is encouraged.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Introduction

In order to fully explore the purpose of this study, a review of literature addressing factors relevant to the shaping of participants' experiences in sport-related settings was needed. This study focused upon personal, social, and structural factors that shaped the participants' experiences in sport when they were youths and adolescents. Now that these participants are parents who have at least one child who is active in an organized sport activity, the personal, social, and structural factors shaping the experiences of their children as perceived by the participants was examined. The literature review, therefore, is divided into three parts that address various personal, social, and structural factors that may influence the sport experiences of parents and their children.

Personal Factors Shaping Participation

Personal factors which exert influence upon participation in sport activities were examined in the first segment of the literature review. The first personal factor focused upon an individual's interest or inclination to participate in an activity. Rosma and Hoffman (1980) suggested that one's interest toward an activity supersedes other factors that have the impact to shape participation choices. In other words, if an individual lacks an internal desire to participate, possession of the "necessary" components for participation such as time, money, and ability are irrelevant in his/her activity choices.

Second, an individual's perceptions of his/her own ability and confidence in participating was examined. Perceived skill level and ability of the participant can influence activity choices. Inclinations to engage in various physical activities are positively influenced when self-

confidence to perform effectively exists (Broderson, Steptoe, Williamson, & Wardle, 2005). Conversely, when negative attitudes and a lack of self-confidence toward effectively participating exist, the individual may be inclined to abstain from the activity.

The third factor is an individual's demographics (e.g., gender, race, and social class) and social constructions associated with these demographics. An individual's participation in an activity is mediated by an internal psychological state which is shaped by the attitudes of appropriateness to engage in a particular activity (Chick & Dong, 2005). Therefore, an individual's inclination to participate may be influenced by social constructions relating to personal characteristics such as his/her gender, race, and social class membership.

The connotation of "appropriateness" in relation to a particular activity may serve as a factor in participation. If an individual is participating in an activity perceived to be "inappropriate" for his/her gender, race, or social class, the likelihood of continuing engagement with that activity is less than if the activity was perceived as "appropriate." Although the "appropriateness" of participating in an activity is conveyed through interpersonal relationships, I elected to identify "appropriateness" associated with participation as a personal factor because of the impact it may have on the individual and the individual's thought processes with regard to activity choices.

Fourth, parents' reasons or motivations in association with their children's sport activities were examined. These attempts result in the social construction of the "good parent." This segment of the literature review focused on definitions of the "good parent" and actions parents take in order to achieve this label. In addition to providing opportunities for his/her children, an individual's perceived duty to be a "good parent" can serve as a constraining force upon his/her own participation opportunities in sport settings. This occurs when parents place their children's

needs and wants before their own.

Interest levels upon participation. An individual's interest toward participation can shape experiences. Interest (or lack thereof) is responsible for shaping the activity choices of people from various walks of life. Various studies indicated interest is a significant factor upon participation. Variety in gender, race, and social class exists in these samples.

Rosma & Hoffman (1980) analyzed data which focused on reasons for non-participation in an activity among 2,968 Canadian residents. Based upon their activity profiles, participants were divided into eight groupings. These groups ranged from inactive to highly active. Lack of interest was a significant factor in non-participation among inactive to lightly active respondents.

Boothby et al. (1981) examined the activity choices of 254 residents in London, England. Participants ranged from 17 to "65 and over." Respondents' lack of interest was the most significant factor influencing non-participation toward an activity. It was identified 72 times in the sample of 254. The authors proposed that a lack of interest may stem from the nature of the sport or activity. If the nature of the activity does not appeal to the individual, then the interest needed to maintain participation will not exist.

Henderson, Stalnaker, and Taylor's (1988) study included a sample of 294 females who were students or staff members at a medium sized university in the Southern United Sates. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 66. Fifty-eight percent of the sample consisted of undergraduate and graduate students. The remaining 42% consisted of staff and faculty members. Lack of interest toward participation in an activity was identified as a significant factor that shaped participants' sport experiences. In addition, lack of interest was a constraint among respondents who identified themselves as stereotypic feminine more so than participants who identified themselves as stereotypic masculine or androgynous.

Self-perceptions of ability levels. Studies that considered factors such as self-perceptions of ability levels and confidence toward participating in an activity utilized samples of adult participants as well as youth participants in various sport and/or recreation settings. Confidence in one's ability to effectively perform a given activity influences comfort with participating. It also serves as a factor which empowers an individual to seek out or abstain from participation. Those whose possessed positive self-perceptions of their ability were more inclined to participate in an activity whereas those who did not hold positive self-perceptions were less inclined to participate.

Boothby et al. (1981) studied the recreation participation patterns of 254 participants from London, England. They found perceptions of insufficient ability served as a factor which constrained inclinations to seek out a particular sport/recreation activity. The number of participants who indicated this factor was small (n=14); however, it does indicate that that an individual's feelings of self-confidence in performing an activity can influence involvement.

Searle & Jackson (1985) also found that self-perceptions of insufficient physical abilities serve to constrain interest in seeking out participation opportunities. Their findings stemmed from data that was collected among 1,240 adult respondents in Alberta, Canada. Perceptions of physical ability as a constraint were more prevalent in females as opposed to males. In addition, older respondents were more likely to identify perceptions of insufficient ability as a constraint as opposed to younger respondents.

Jackson (1993) utilized data from a sample 1,891 respondents residing in Alberta, Canada. The purpose of their study was to examine various factors that constrained sport/recreation activity opportunities among a diverse sample. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 66. Perceived lack of abilities was identified as a significant constraint among a small segment of

this group of respondents. This constraint was more prevalent among older respondents as opposed to younger respondents.

Competence motivation theory suggests that positive feelings deriving from successful completion of a task increases the likelihood that the individual will be more likely to enjoy an activity and subsequently continue to engage in the activity (Brustad, 1988). Youth sport researchers reported perceptions of competence among youth sport participants as a key predictor toward their continuation of involvement in sport activities (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simmons, & Keeler, 1993).

Perceptions of ability upon affective feelings toward participation in a sport activity were examined by Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1986). Male wrestlers between the ages of 9 and 14 (n=76) were surveyed. A significant positive correlation existed between self-perceived ability levels and enjoyment toward the activity. The results reinforced the author's hypothesis that those who perceived themselves as being more skilled and competent in their activity ability would display a greater enjoyment toward the activity than those who did not indicate the same levels of self-perceived ability.

Children's perceptions of physical abilities as a factor on participation were examined by Brustad (1996) in a study that included 107 fourth through sixth grade children. The Children's Attraction to Physical Activity (CAPA) Scale was utilized as the instrument for this research. Perceived competence in physical activity was a significant factor that contributed to the overall enjoyment. Differences in self-perceptions of competence existed as boys indicated higher levels of perceived competence than girls.

McCarthy and Jones (2007) studied the relationship between perceived competence and enjoyment for sport activities among youth sport participants in England. The group of

participants included 22 males and 23 females. Their ages ranged from 7 to 12 and the average age of the participants was 10. They participated in a wide range of team and individual activities such as rugby, soccer, netball, swimming, gymnastics, and cross-country running. Focus groups, each consisting of six participants, were used as the data collection measure. A positive relationship was found between participants' enjoyment for an activity and their perceived competence levels.

Shaping of Experience through Social Constructions

As people interact with one another under the social, political, and economic conditions that exist in their society, they construct meanings that are associated with terms such as gender, race, and class (Coakley, 2007). These socially constructed terms are created under different conditions influenced by geography, political systems, religion, and cultural practices. These terms do not have fixed meanings, are subject to change, carry multiple meanings, and are subject to varying interpretations (Layton, 1998). The meanings associated with these terms differ among people, cultures, and societies and result in the construction of the self. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) described the self as the definition people create of who they are resulting from interactions they experience with others. They stated; "In short, people come to see themselves as others see them. The self is thus also a social construction, the results of persons perceiving themselves and then developing a definition through the process of interaction" (p. 26).

Socially constructed meanings associated with an individuals' gender and/or race may serve as a factor that shapes sport-related experiences. Social constructions are created and imposed by social forces around and outside of the individual. However, the influence of social constructions on sport experiences is identified as a personal factor upon participation because the individual is influenced by these constructions.

As a result of the connotations associated with these terms, individuals' sport participation experiences can be affected. Compliance to socially constructed norms may characterize the experience of some while resistance may characterize the experience of others. Therefore, the effects social constructions associated with an individual's demographics have upon lived experiences in sport and the extent to which these constructions may constrain or enable the person to engage in sport or particular sports can be significant. The following sections describe socially constructed meanings associated with personal characteristics such as gender, race, and social class and how they can serve to shape an individual's sport experiences.

Social constructions of gender upon sport participation. Coakley's (2007) use of a simple binary classification model illustrates that all people are classified into one of two sex categories, male and female. Male and female are biological identifiers used to categorize a person's gender (Coakley, 2007). However, those terms carry additional meaning above beyond biologically associated descriptions. Within sport, participation opportunities can be shaped as a result of socially constructed meanings. These meanings are established and utilized by a society and carry ideological connotations that dictate normative behaviors for each gender.

Metheny (1965) identified masculinity and femininity as social constructs which affect the perception of participation in certain sports. Normative or hegemonic perceptions associated with masculinity and femininity implies that women and men should act in accordance with socially constructed ideals. As a result, efforts to comply with societal expectations regarding "ideal" sports in which to participate in addition to appropriate actions and appearances while performing those activities may be made.

Women and men are restricted by "gendered institutions of the world" (Kimmel, 2004). These institutions include the workplace, family, and school; settings where the dominant

definitions of gender are reinforced and reproduced and attempts to deviate from these norms are discouraged. Therefore, compliance with socially constructed “ideals” on the basis of gender is critical because those who comply with socially constructed expectations are viewed as “normal.” Krane (2001) stated, “Women in our society are expected to act traditionally with hegemonic feminine behaviors while males are expected to act in hegemonic masculine manners” (p. 117). Characteristics of hegemonic femininity include being passive, weak, dependent and emotional. Conversely, hegemonic masculine characteristics include strength, independence, assertiveness, and confidence. Acceptability is achieved through displaying an appearance or conducting actions that fall within a certain range.

Sport is oftentimes identified as a gendered institution. Views regarding acceptable or appropriate participation in some sports may exist while participation in others may be viewed as inappropriate (Shakib & Dunbar, 2002). Consequently, individuals may never receive opportunities to participate if their personal gender attributes place them outside the norm in a given sport.

Traditionally, females’ opportunities in sport have been limited (Birrell & Donnelly, 2004). Socially constructed norms serve to discourage female involvement in sports where aggression, physical contact, and strength are integral elements (Krane, 2001). Participation in sports such as figure skating has been viewed as acceptable for females due to its’ aesthetic element. Although opportunities for females to participate in a greater variety of sports has increased over time, women who participate in sports such as hockey, rugby, or bodybuilding and display aggressive behavior in their sport endeavors are often accused of being deviant and disrupting gender norms (Gill, 2007).

In order to avoid being labeled as deviant, participants may be inclined to gravitate to activities thought of as “appropriate” for their gender. The relationship between social appropriateness and participation in an all female sample was studied by Henderson et al. (1988). Their analysis of recreational activity engagement among 294 women ranging from 18 to 66 years of age revealed that perceptions of social appropriateness influenced inclinations to participate in an activity.

Social constructions of gender can influence the shaping of the body in sport settings as the ideal of the feminine (weak) or masculine (strong) body is transmitted to both women and men (Roth & Basow, 2004). Females are encouraged to have a particular appearance and are encouraged to conform to a narrowly defined feminine ideal. Practices such as dieting and exercise are practiced in order to achieve a slender and shapely figure which is commonly perceived as the societal ideal of femininity (Markula, 2003). Displaying a muscular body is not valued and is often denigrated (Theberge, 2000). For example, female bodybuilders who possess a muscular appearance face resistance and marginalization because they are not complying with hegemonic feminine characteristics and are subsequently labeled as deviant (Fisher, 1997).

Conversely, males’ sport-related activities and appearances can be influenced by socially constructed opinions of “appropriate” sport participation as well. Males who do not conform to a society’s ideals of hegemonic masculinity are seen as deviant. Compliance with hegemonic masculinity includes having a muscular body and displaying aggressive behavior (Krane, 2001). Men who do not have that appearance, do not display aggressive behavior, nor participate in sports that celebrate these characteristics are seen as being soft or may be called “sissies,” “fags,” or some other derogatory term (Coakley, 2007).

Although notions of appropriate feminine and masculine behaviors are strong, gender as a socially constructed term is subject to interpretation and change (Kirk, 2003). Social constructions regarding appropriate sports based on the gender of the participant have evolved, as females commonly participate in sports that celebrate traditional hegemonic masculine qualities and males participate in sports in which traditionally hegemonic feminine qualities such as grace and agility are required for achieving success. Although evidence supports the breaking down of traditional gender ideologies with regard to sport participation, both females and males who participate in sports and present themselves in ways that are not consistent with hegemonic femininity still face resistance and marginalization. Consequently, societal gender expectations and role fulfillment can serve as a constraint upon the development of participants' interests in an activity and their participation opportunities.

In summation, the ways in which gender is socially constructed and experienced is complex, inconsistent, and ever-changing (MacPhail & Kirk, 2006). As a result, the social constructions and subsequent practices of gender are worthy of further examination. I wanted to know if participants perceived that their gender was a central factor in the shaping of their own and their children's experiences.

I was interested in learning how parents challenged or reproduced socially constructed norms in their own experiences as well as their children's. For instance, females aren't "supposed" to participate in rugby. If I speak with a mother who played a "non-traditional" sport for women, I'd want to know what her experiences were like as someone who challenged societal norms. Because she did, was her daughter encouraged to participate in sports viewed as non-traditional for females as well? Or, would the possible resistance she experienced from "going against the grain" result in her attempt to guide her daughter into more traditional

activities? On the other hand, fathers who participated in sports which celebrate traditional hegemonic masculine qualities such as football may encourage their sons to participate in the same activities in order to comply with socially constructed views of appropriate activity.

Social constructions of race upon sport participation. Race is another personal factor which may impact individuals' sport experiences. This term is used to identify individuals on the basis of specific physical traits such as skin color, eye shape, and hair texture (Coakley, 2007). The term "race" also consists of socially constructed perceptions and beliefs that people hold with regard to others on the basis of those physical characteristics (Jewett, 2006). These socially constructed connotations associated with individuals' race can have a significant impact upon their life experiences. Morris (2007) argues that race, among other social categories such as gender and class, is something that an individual performs as opposed to it being an inert characteristic of the person. Social constructions of race do not occur in a social vacuum but rather are created through the interactions we have with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers (Machery & Faucher, 2005).

Race can be argued as a socially invented conception about human differences which have the potential to be resisted by as well as reinforced among those who experience limited and restricted access to privilege, power, and wealth (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). In the United States, for instance, people with certain racial characteristics "are assigned less value and receive less favorable treatment from others" (McPherson, et al., 1989, p. 193). Race can have negative consequences for many groups of ethnic minorities which often lead to lower levels of attainment in education, employment, and socio-economic status. These disadvantages subsequently reproduce racial exclusion and class stratification (Howarth, 2006).

The influence of race and racial ideologies upon sport “has been and continues to be significant” (Coakley, 2007, p. 288). Socially constructed racial ideologies can influence the shaping of participants’ experiences in sport. Sports have been “raced” activities in which people of certain races are perceived as being “better suited” for participation in a particular sport or to fulfill certain roles. For instance, African Americans in the United States have historically been overly represented in sports that emphasize raw athleticism over strategy and precision. In addition, African Americans have been channeled into positions within certain sports where decision making and leadership opportunities are de-emphasized while Caucasian participants have historically been placed in roles where these components are emphasized (Jarvie, 2000).

In addition, a sports career orientation has developed among African American youths and adolescents more so than Caucasian youths and adolescents (Picou, 1978). Picou attributed this orientation to beliefs regarding limited opportunities that may be available to African American youths when they reach adulthood. Consequently, he argued that the lack of life opportunities outside of sport may increase the likelihood that African American youth and adolescents are socialized into perceiving sports as a career opportunity. In addition, Oliver (1980) found that African American parents whose children participated in a youth baseball league were more likely than Caucasian parents to identify sport participation as a possible career outcome for their children.

In summation, social constructions of race consist of ideas and beliefs about people in which meaning is assigned to physical characteristics. These constructions are deeply imbedded in many cultures and have produced stereotypes, myths, and prejudices toward certain groups. They have also contributed to discriminatory practices against people who are part of a racial minority (Jarvie, 2000). These constructions are present in sport-related settings as engagement

in or abstention from particular activities result because of connotations connected to appropriate participation.

Social constructions of class upon sport participation. Social class refers to categories of people who share a position in society based on a variety of factors. Income, possessions, education, and occupation are elements that affect one's placement into a social class (Coakley, 2007). An individual's habitus is created in part by his/her membership in a particular social class. Habitus is a tendency or inclination for someone to engage in a particular action. This inclination may be shaped by the practices, beliefs, habits, and tastes of the people that surround the individual (Bourdieu, 1984).

Development of one's habitus and subsequent opportunities to engage in certain activities can result from the familial conditions to which an individual is exposed. It is well-known that economically disadvantaged families have fewer opportunities to participate in activities, especially those activities that require the payment of membership/user fees and the purchase of equipment (Coakley, 2007). In all societies, people from high-income, high-education, and high status families generally have more opportunities to engage in a variety of activities which appeal to them. The family a person is born into is significant as Coakley (2007) states, "When it comes to sport participation, the socioeconomic status of the family you are born into has never been more important" (p. 338). Consequently, people from families that do not possess a significant amount of economic resources are oftentimes unable to participate in activities that appeal to them.

An individual who has the habitus to engage in particular recreational activities and the ability to transform that preference into actual participation is identified as having recreational capital (Auster, 2008). The development of recreational capital is influenced in part by the

possession of other forms of capital. Cultural capital includes education as well as knowledge and appreciation of activities associated with “high culture” (Giulianotti, 2005). Economic capital includes financial resources which enable an individual to commence and maintain involvement in an activity (Tomlinson, 2004). Social capital consists of the possession of networks, associations, and memberships which enable inclusion into a restricted social setting (Giulianotti, 2005). People who possess cultural, economic, and social capital, therefore, have more opportunities to engage and maintain participation in sport activities than those who lack these resources.

Participation in particular sport activities may differ based on the social class and habitus of the participant. Bourdieu (1978) stated that members of higher social classes favor sports that are aesthetic, contemplative, and healthy. They favor sports such as golf, tennis, sailing, equestrian, and skiing. They are more likely to do so because of access to economic capital that will pay for expensive equipment and membership fees. Their participation opportunities in sport are influenced by the social class in which they are an actual member. In addition, participation in these sports acts “as kind of a badge of social exclusivity and cultural distinctiveness” (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2000, p. 319).

On the other hand, People from lower classes are often deemed unworthy of acceptance into certain sport environments because they are perceived to be lazy and possess character defects (Coakley, 2007). Socially constructed ideologies suggest that those who are in working or lower classes are not there as a result of social inequalities but rather are there because they are inherently “flawed.” These ideologies can influence inclusion or exclusion into certain sport environments. “Working class,” for instance, holds socially constructed meanings in which members of this class are assumed to be better suited and presumably interested in some sports

more so than others (Wilson, 2002). As a result of this socially constructed assumption, people from working and lower classes may be channeled into certain activities and away from others.

Wilson (2002) stated that people who possess lower education and lack cultural capital were more likely to be involved with “prole” sports. Prole sports are those that are avoided by the upper classes and are commonly associated with working and lower classes. These sports are potentially dangerous and include a significant amount of body contact that is violent in nature. As a result, members of lower classes are more inclined to participate in sports such as rugby, boxing, and wrestling.

In the previous paragraphs, an individual’s *actual* membership in a particular social class can shape sport opportunities and subsequent experiences. However, an individual’s sport experiences can also be influenced in part by the social class in which he/she or others *perceive* themselves to be a member. Linked with the notion of status are expectations of restricting interaction with others not belonging to one’s social group (Dawson, 1986).This hesitation to socialize with and engage in sport activities with others perceived as different serves to maintain social stratification in sport participation spheres. For example, some people may possess the economic resources to participate in a particular sport but may refrain from participating in “country club” sports because they might feel that the atmosphere and demeanor of others who play the sport do not mesh well with themselves (Wilson, 2002). They may not perceive themselves to be “the type of person” to seek membership and engage in those activities. Consequently, their experiences in sport will be affected by their personal views. If they don’t perceive themselves to be a part of the social class most likely to participate in those activities, they will abstain from doing so, even if they are statistically considered to be a member of that social class. In this case, their experiences would be restricted resulting from a self-imposed

avoidance of certain activities.

In addition, perceptions held by others regarding the suitability of an individual for inclusion into certain sports can shape participation opportunities and experiences. Sport participation is not an open sphere of limitless possibilities but rather a form of social closure that is tightly monitored and controlled (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2000). In addition to one's habitus and family social class membership, another factor is needed in order to gain access to and maintain relations with others in upper classes. Economic factors, while significant and necessary "are not sufficient to explain completely the phenomena of social class. Something more than a large income is necessary for high social position" (Warner, Meeker, & Ellis, 1998, p. 75). Therefore, possession of some other characteristic of acceptability must be present in order to gain access to the activity.

For example, access to exclusive sport clubs is sometimes restricted to those who possess economic capital but lack "acceptability" among gatekeepers to exclusive sport environments. Wealthy individuals and families who have the ability to pay the fees required for the privilege of membership and participation but are deemed unacceptable for inclusion will be excluded. As a result, people with capital can experience actual social exclusion as well (Collins, 2003).

In golf, for instance, people with sufficient economic capital would be able to purchase the equipment necessary to participate and would be able to pay the membership fees required for inclusion (Tomlinson, 2004). However, social networks (such as a sponsor for a country club membership) could be a factor resulting in exclusion (Giulianotti, 2005). In other words, even if an individual possesses the necessary economic capital needed for inclusion, a lack of social capital will ultimately result in exclusion from this setting.

Numerous studies have been conducted in order to determine the relationship between social class membership and participation in sport. Various studies have been included in this segment to illustrate the inconsistent relationships between social class and participation opportunities. Because numerous variables influence social class and subsequent opportunities to participate, researchers have been unable to locate a definitive answer with regard to how social class affects participation.

Greendorfer (1978) found that females from lower social classes were more likely to participate in team sports while females from upper social classes gravitated to individual sports. She surveyed 585 intercollegiate athletes in order to reach this finding. Social class level was determined through fathers' education level. The lower the fathers' education level, the more likely the participant was a member of a team sports. Conversely, the higher the fathers' educational level, the more likely the participant was involved in an individual sport.

Searle and Jackson (1985) examined socioeconomic barriers to participation in recreational activities. An analysis of the activities among 1,240 adult residents of Alberta, Canada revealed a connection between social class membership and participation patterns in various activities. People most likely to experience barriers to participation included the poor, elderly, and single parents. Those with household incomes of less than $10,000 experienced the greatest amount of constraint toward engagement in recreational activities. Lower income respondents reported the price of gasoline, lack of readily available transportation and the price of equipment were significant factors constraining their participation opportunities.

Hasbrook (1986) studied the relationship between social class membership and sport participation among two groups. One group consisted of 340 high school students. The other group consisted of 273 youth soccer participants between the ages of 8 and 16. Hasbrook found

that regardless of social class background, males participated in sport activities to an equal extent whereas females from lower social class backgrounds tended to participate in sport activities to a lesser extent than those from upper-class backgrounds. Societal expectations for boys to participate in sport, regardless of social class background, were argued as a possible reason why sport participation did not vary significantly for boys. On the other hand, Hasbrook hypothesized that families from lower social classes did not value sport participation for their daughters'. Subsequently, differences in participation among girls from different social classes occurred.

Shinew, Floyd, McGuire, & Noe (1995) conducted 1,711 telephone surveys of adults between the ages of 21 to 65 in order to examine the effect social class had upon participation in recreational activities. Golf, basketball, baseball/softball, and bowling were included in the list of activities. The sample consisted of 1,374 Caucasian respondents, 138 African American respondents, 38 Hispanic respondents, 16 Asian respondents and 12 American Indian respondents. The participant pool was predominately middle class, with 68% of the pool self-identifying themselves as such. The other significant grouping consisted of those who identified themselves as poor-working class (27%). The authors found that African American women who identified themselves as poor-working class experience the greatest amount of constraints toward engaging in various recreational activities. The findings of this study lend support to the premise that participation opportunities are affected by social class membership.

In summation, participation in sport has been found to be contingent upon one's membership in a particular social class. Sport participation is not simply a matter of personal choice but rather is affected by various class-related factors (Bourdieu, 1984). The financial resources available to the participant can greatly impact opportunity. In addition, experiences were affected by socially constructed ideologies that have the potential to shape individuals'

perceptions of suitability for inclusion into certain sport activities.

However, the influence socio-economic status upon sport participation does not affect all people uniformly. The relationship between social class membership and participation in sport is not universal as various studies have also revealed that sport participation is not necessarily contingent upon social class membership. Individuals who are not from financially affluent families still have opportunities to engage in sports. Studies conducted by Yamaguchi (1984), Carlson (1988), Wacquant (1992), and Yang et al., (1996) challenge the notion that sport participation is reserved for the financially elite.

Yamaguchi's (1984) examined the influence of family socioeconomic status (SES) upon adolescents' sport involvement. Family SES was measured through data collected on fathers' education, mothers' education, and fathers' occupational prestige. Family SES was found to have a moderate affect upon parental involvement in sport; however, he found no direct affect of family SES upon adolescents' involvement in sport activities.

Carlson (1988) interviewed elite male and female tennis players, their parents, and their coaches. The experiences of 10 elite athletes (5 male and 5 female) were compared with the experiences of a control group of less skilled athletes (n=10). One aspect of this investigation included the socioeconomic status of the families of these athletes. The elite group came from families that "originated from the lower strata of society than did control group player families" (Carlson, 1988, p. 250). The author, however, did not specifically indicate parameters that differentiated lower stratas from upper stratas. The findings from this study are useful for challenging assumptions regarding social class and sport participation. Athletes who come from families of lower socioeconomic status participate in sports and oftentimes participate in expensive elite level sports.

Wacquant (1992) conducted an ethnographic study, examining the experiences of 27 boxers in Chicago, Illinois. Of the 27 participants, one held an Associates degree and one held a Bachelor's degree. Twenty-two of the remaining 25 possessed high school diploma. Roughly 25% of the group was unemployed at the time of this study. The remainder held blue-collar jobs such as janitor, gas station attendant, and bricklayer. These jobs were typically low-paying and provided little potential for advancement.

Participation among this group with little disposable income was made possible through equipment donations made to the club as well as through nominal participation fees. Although participation opportunities among people in lower classes are generally less than for those from higher social classes, participation still takes place. This study illustrated how economic constraints are negotiated within an individual's life and how efforts are made to overcome those constraints so that participation can take place.

Yang et al., (1996) did not find a significant relationship between SES and activity involvement. They studied physical activity among nearly 1900 Finnish boys and girls between the ages of 9 and15. Their activity patterns were studied every three years between 1980 and 1992. The participants' SES was measured through the father's occupation. Three levels of SES were established; low, middle, and high. The findings of this study suggested that the socioeconomic status of fathers did not correlate with children's activities participation.

Parenting

Part of the aim of this study was to explore personal, social, and structural factors participants perceived were significant in the shaping of their own sport experiences. Another part of the aim of the study was to gain insight into how various factors shaped the sport experiences of their children. Parents' reasons and motivations may stem from their own lack of

opportunities to participate in sports as a child. Therefore, it is possible that the parent sought out opportunities for his/her children so that they could experience something the parent wasn't able to. Motivations may include stimulating their children's interest and affection for physical activity. Finally, parents may enroll their children in sport in order to help them improve their self-confidence, learn how to set and achieve goals, and respect authority figures (Jambor, 1999; Kremer-Sadlik & Kim, 2007).

Obligations to work, household maintenance, and other family members may reduce opportunities for parents to engage in activities which are of interest to them. Within a sport-specific context, a consequence of being "good parents" who provide participation opportunities for their children and encourage their involvement is that their own leisure interests may be compromised. Financial and logistical commitments that must be made in order to support their children's activities may result in the decrease or total discontinuation of parents' involvement in sport.

The following sections focused on social constructions of the "good parent." This content was included in order to illustrate how parents fulfill roles and seek out opportunities for the betterment of their children's lives. First, social constructions and pressures to become a "good parent" were addressed. The fulfillment of the "good parent" title and the subsequent effect it has upon parents' own leisure interests follow.

Social constructions of the "good parent." In order to better describe motivations behind parental involvement in sport, socially constructed connotations associated with the terms mother and father are discussed. Mother and father are socially constructed terms in which the meanings associated with them have varied across time, contexts, and households (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006). The terms carry more than just the biological identification of mother as the

female parent and father as the male parent. Becoming a “good mother” or “good father” is a product of fulfilling roles that society defines as being appropriate and advantageous for the effective upbringing of one’s children. Although parenting culture and practices change over time, “good parents” provide opportunities for their children and put their children’s interests over their own Daly (2001).

The meaning of fatherhood has shifted as fathers’ involvement with the family now supplements traditional societal expectations of the father as provider. Historically, the meaning of fatherhood in the United States included being a moral leader and authoritarian figure (Coltrane, 1996). Cultural expectations in the United States of middle-class men included the primary role of economic provider as the development of industry took fathers away from the household (Penn, 2005). In the 1920s an ideology of masculine domesticity emerged, which stated that men should take on domestic responsibilities for child-rearing and spend some of their time away from work engaging with their children in sport and other recreational pursuits (LaRossa, 1997). An additional role of fathers during the industrial revolution was to protect their sons from the dangers of becoming overly feminized. Boys were in danger of becoming feminized due to exposure to female influences such as mothers and teachers. Therefore, fathers ensured that their sons acquired proper manliness as they proceeded into adulthood (Coakley, 2007).

The role of father as disciplinarian and provider has changed. Current fathers have taken on an increased role in the upbringing of their children than fathers of previous generations (Coltrane, 1996; McBride et al., 2005). Fatherhood has increasingly included the role of the nurturing father (LaRossa, 1988). The role of father as a co-nurturer challenges traditional roles of the father being the sole supporter of the family as well as detached authoritarian (Lupton &

Barclay, 1997). This development of the father as co-nurturer illustrates the postmodernizing of fatherhood as traditional norms and roles for the father have evolved and a new set of roles and responsibilities for ideal fathers is established (Harrington, 2006).

A variety of demographic or situational factors that cause some fathers to be constructed as deficient and unable to provide proper upbringing for their children exist. When viewed under a modernist lens, the meaning of the word father would be uniform among all social classes and cultures. In contrast, postmodern theorists would attempt to break down the word and examine variance in the way father is interpreted among various societal groups that experience different social forces and pressures. Consequently, the term father may hold different meaning for a person in a high socioeconomic group versus one who is in a lower socioeconomic group.

The ideal father is typically constructed as white and middle class (Messner, 1993).This father fulfills societal expectations of provider and nurturer and has effectively raised his children to be productive members in society. Fathers who are members of a working class or of non-European ethnicity are seen as deficient and are positioned as negative counterparts to the ideal father and are often labeled as dangerous, absent, or deadbeat. Furthermore, they are viewed as being neglectful, abusive, and uncaring toward their children (Lupton & Barclay, 1997).

Mothers have historically been viewed as being “better suited” for child-rearing and caretaking responsibilities and given the responsibility of the development of their children (Marshall, 1991; Penn, 2005). They have been encouraged to monitor and regulate their children’s behavior and ensure that their children turn out “right” (Phoenix & Woolett, 1991). Children who turn out “right” are those who grow up to become productive members of society. They maintain employment and contribute to the well-being of their economies by purchasing

goods and services through the money they earn. Mothers who are effective in raising their children have children who do not engage in delinquent behaviors. These children do not commit crimes nor serve time in penitentiaries. When they reach adulthood, they also become parents who fulfill the obligations of ensuring that their children become productive, law-abiding citizens.

Mothers who are poor and single carry the stigma of being inadequate mothers (Phoenix & Woolett, 1991). Cultural directives often suggest that women should limit involvement in paid work. The ideal mother is one who does not work outside the home. Single, working-class mothers are commonly believed to be unable to provide educative, stimulating, and linguistically rich environments for their children even though they take on the majority of child care and housework while working outside the home (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006). In addition, mothers who engage in full-time employment deviate from the socially constructed ideal and are blamed when situations of child delinquency occur due their inability to provide constant vigilance upon the activities of their children (Matta & Knudson-Martin, 2006).

Gillies (2007) explored how single working-class mothers encounter marginalization and negative stereotypes due to the fact that they are unable to provide the same opportunities for their children that are valued by middle and upper-class families. Gillies' participants possessed limited financial resources that prevented them from registering their children in extra-curricular activities. The pressure of trying to provide for their children was extremely difficult. The social stigma that surrounded these mothers because of their inability to provide the same opportunities for their children as affluent mothers was perceived as stressful and unjustified as they felt they were unconditionally committed to their children. Because they could not provide those opportunities, however, they realized that they were viewed as an uncaring and incapable.

Although Gillies' work was not focused on sport, parts of it show how parents who provide opportunities for their children to participate in sport-related activities experience adulation from society while parents who cannot provide those opportunities are stigmatized as being lazy or uncaring.

In summation, parents who do not conform to standards grounded in middle to upper-class privilege are blamed for being substandard. Providing opportunities for their children to participate in sports is a way for parents to be seen as caring and nurturing. As mentioned earlier, the term parent and the roles and duties each parent fulfills fluctuate over time but the responsibility of providing for their children remains central to fulfilling the role of "good father" and "good mother."

Parenting and participation constraints. With regard to factors shaping the recreation experiences of parents and their children, the ethic of care is a factor that significantly shapes parents' abilities to engage in recreational pursuits such as sport-related activities (Shaw & Henderson, 2005). This particular constraint has the greatest affect upon women, especially those who have children (Shaw, 1994; Rogers, 1997). Being a "good mother" and placing the needs of the children first serve as a detriment toward an active lifestyle. Shaw and Henderson (2005) stated; "As women internalize the ethic of care and direct attention to the well-being of others, they may not develop a sense of their own needs or feel they have a right to leisure for themselves" (p. 25). Becoming a parent is a significant life transition that influences opportunities to engage in activities in which one possesses an interest. As a result of this life transition, women often cease participation in various leisure activities.

Brown, Brown, Miller, and Hansen (2001) studied the impact motherhood had upon women's physical activity levels. They found that women who were mothers of young children

had lower levels of physical activity than women of similar ages who did not have children. The purpose of their study was to explore the factors that constrain mothers of young children from being more physically active. A sample of 543 mothers of young children from differing socioeconomic backgrounds in New South Wales, Australia participated in the study. Findings indicated that more than two-thirds of the mothers who participated were inadequately active. Although the majority of the respondents expressed a desire to be more active, they were inhibited by ideological influences (e.g., sense of commitment to others).

Henderson and Ainsworth (2001) studied the affect of parenting upon the recreational activity patterns of a diverse sample of women. Surveys on physical activity involvement were collected from 200 women in South Carolina (100 African American) and New Mexico (100 American Indian women from the Pueblo and the Navajo Nations) who were over the age of 40. Thirty African American and 26 American Indian women who submitted surveys also participated in semi-structured interviews. Questions focused on perceptions of physical activity, perceived motivations and constraints affecting physical activity levels, and perceptions of social support toward physical activity. The ethic of care was significant upon the physical activity levels of these participants. Attending to the expectations and needs of the family ahead of their own needs was not uncommon among this group of participants.

Searle and Jackson (1985) examined perceived barriers to recreation among 1,240 “would-be” participants. “Would-be” participants were determined through a survey question which asked “Is there any recreational activity that you don’t take part in now but would like to start regularly” (Jackson & Searle, 1985, p. 231)? Family commitments “often” constrained opportunities among 16% of the sample. These same commitments constrained opportunities “some of the time” among 56% of the sample. Family commitments most frequently affected

respondents between the ages of 25-44. Females were constrained in their opportunities more often than males. Although it was not broken down on the basis of gender, single parents and couples with children were significantly constrained in their recreational opportunities. Nearly 25% of single parents and couples with children indicated that family commitments “often” constrained recreational opportunities and nearly 70% of the single parents and members of couples with children indicated that family commitments were “sometimes” a factor which constrained opportunities.

Jackson & Henderson (1995) analyzed findings from two recreation surveys administered in Alberta, Canada. This study included a sample of 4,858 women and 4,439 men. The influence of family obligations upon recreational activities was examined. In general, family obligations were a slightly greater constraint on women than men. Family commitments served as a constraint most often on participants between the ages of 29 and 43. Women in this age bracket experienced greater constraint than men in this group. Similar to results in other studies, the role of the female and obligations toward raising children was a factor which limited their opportunities to participate in activities that appealed to them.

Family obligations and roles in the studies described above have primarily constrained opportunities for mothers to engage in recreational activities. On the other hand, it can be argued that engagement in recreational endeavors, such as sport-related activities are part of a father’s family obligation. As a result, their opportunities to engage in recreational activities are not diminished as a result of having children. To illustrate, Harrington (2006) interviewed 28 intact families in Brisbane, Australia to investigate the relationship between fatherhood and sport activity. Fathers reported regular co-participation with their children in a variety of sport and recreational activities. Father’s sought out and maintained opportunities to become involved with

in their children's sport activities as it gave the fathers a way to bond with their children.

Social Factors Shaping Participation

In addition to personal factors, participation experiences in sport can be influenced by social factors. The first social factor I addressed focuses on others who play a role in shaping that experience. A significant social factor upon participation is the influence of socializing sources that have the potential to greatly influence an individual's experiences in sport. These sources are *agents of socialization* (Coakley, 2007). They may introduce a child to sport and they may also be influential as to whether or not a person maintains or discontinues his/her sport participation (Brustad, 1992; Hultsman, 1993). Agents of socialization who are central and influential members of this process are *significant others* (Coakley, 2007). Significant others may include parents, siblings, peers, coaches, teachers, as well as other individuals who teach the knowledge, values, and norms that are needed to participate as a member in society (McPherson et al., 1989).

Social influences such as parents, siblings, and peers can influence a child's interests and opportunities to engage in various types of sport activities. Various socializing sources upon the shaping of sport experiences were identified in this chapter. Social influences may serve as role models that can influence their children to participate in an activity. Parents are a common source from which children model their behaviors. They do this through the process of social learning. According to social learning theory, parents serve as sources of influence who exhibit behaviors that their children may later imitate (Bandura, 1977). As a result, the behaviors of the socializee are shaped through observation of the socializing source which is often the parent (Greendorfer, 1978). An individual's participation in an activity is more likely to commence and continue if socializing sources are visible examples of participation. If socializing sources are participating or have participated, they may be more likely to convey the value and benefits associated with

participation as well as provide the necessary support which may allow the participant to commence and continue his/her own participation.

Findings in previous studies suggest that parents who are physically active in sport activities are more likely to have children who are active in them as well. However, it has also been suggested that there is not a relationship between the activities in which a parent engages and the activities in which his/her child engages. As a result, factors which influence similarities and differences between parents' and children's experiences were included in this section.

Lastly, social influences also serve as sources of support. Opportunities to engage in sport activities are contingent upon the provision of support from these influential sources. The support they provide can be emotional, financial, instructional, and/or logistical play a role in an individual's sport experiences. The types as well as amount of support these sources provide can significantly enable or hinder those opportunities and was examined in this chapter.

Sources of socialization. The process of sport socialization is inconsistent and shaped by numerous variables. The influence of particular family members upon the sport socialization process has varied. Studies conducted in the 1970s and 1980s revealed fathers as being more influential upon their children's sport socialization. Studies conducted in the 1990s and 2000s revealed an increased presence of mothers in the process. In addition, the most influential sources in this process have been found to exist both within the family as well as outside the family. The effect of significant others' gender, race, and social class membership upon the sport socialization process has also been studied. These variables have further served to provide irregularities and inconsistent findings. Previous studies in this section were included to illustrate the diversity of sources and variables that are prevalent in the sport socialization process and to illustrate the difficulty in clearly determining which sources and variables are most influential.

It is well-known that the family serves as a significant socializing source which can have a significant effect upon a person's experiences in sport. Parents often socialize their children into sport (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1973; Kelly, 1974; Lewko & Ewing, 1980). They are especially influential during early childhood; however, parents can maintain influence as the child grows older. Kremarik (2000) stated, "Parents provide an environment that can significantly influence a child's desire to participate in organized activities, and their support may be paramount in encouraging participation during a child's formative and adolescent years" (p. 21). Consequently, parents' influence upon sport experiences can be present throughout various stages of the child's life.

However, it is possible that neither parent was a source of socialization upon the child. Instead, another family member may have been the primary socializing source in the event that one or both parents were not present during the child's childhood and adolescence. Other family members such as siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins are oftentimes the first sources of socialization upon a child and may play a key role in socializing that person into sport.

Socializing sources outside of the family have the potential to exert influence as well. Peers and coaches have a significant impact upon children's sport activities (Greendorfer, 1977; Greendorfer & Lewko, 1978). The influence of coaches, teachers, and other adults outside the family also exert influence upon a child's initiation into and continuation in sport. Lastly, the influence of socializing sources that are present within social institutions such as schools and community sport programs serve as a socializing source as well.

Spreitzer and Snyder (1976) focused upon family influences in the sport socialization process of 264 adults. Respondents indicated that their fathers' interest in sports was significant upon the commencement of their own sport participation during youth and adolescence. Mothers'

influence was not found to be significant upon this group's socialization into sport.

Snyder and Spreitzer (1976) focused upon significant others upon the socialization into sport among 234 high school girls who participated in a variety of interscholastic sports. During childhood, participants indicated their fathers as the individual with the greatest influence upon their commencement of sport activity. Their mothers were not significant factors in their socialization into sport. As the participants proceeded through adolescence, they reported peers, teachers, and coaches as significant sources shaping their activity choices.

Greendorfer (1977) examined sources of socialization among 585 female intercollegiate sport participants. Family members were identified as significant sources of socialization during childhood but became less significant as the respondents reached adolescence and adulthood. Peers remained significant throughout the respondents' lives. With regard to gender, male role models (i.e. fathers and brothers) were identified as significant during childhood but became less significant during adolescence and adulthood. Beginning in adolescence, female role models became more prevalent upon the respondents' sport participation.

Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) surveyed 95 children who were between the ages of 8 and 13 in order to explore the role family members had upon participants' socialization into sport. Fathers were a significant influence upon the socialization of both boys and girls; mothers were not. Peers were also significant upon the sport socialization process of both boys and girls. Teachers, however, were only significant sources of influence upon boys.

Lewko and Ewing (1980) surveyed 370 children between the ages of 9 and 11 in order to gain insight into the influence of parents and siblings upon sport involvement. Fathers were the strongest influence upon boys who defined themselves as highly active in sport. Influence from mothers and siblings were similar among both boys who were highly active in sports and boys

who were not. Influence from each parent and siblings, regardless of gender of the parent and siblings, was similar among both girls who were highly active in sport and girls who were not.

Snyder and Purdy (1982) interviewed parents who had at least one child under the age of 15 who was active in an organized sport and found fathers' influence to be more significant than mothers'. Fathers were more often involved in the child's organized sport activity. They were active in sports at the time their child's activity commenced; they served as coaches more frequently than their wives, and participated in the same sports during high school and/or college that their child participated in at the time this study was conducted.

Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud, and Cury, (2005) found that mothers were more influential than fathers upon their children's participation in sport activities. Fathers, mothers, and children from 152 white, intact French families participated in this study. The average age of the children was 9.5 years. Mothers were a greater influence upon both sons' and daughters' involvement than were fathers. The authors stated that mothers' role modeling was more salient to children in this age range than fathers' role modeling. This resulted in mothers being a stronger source of influence upon their children.

Both parents can serve as sources of influence upon their children's sport-related activity (Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999). They surveyed 13 and 14 year old children (n=42) who participated in youth volleyball, soccer, and football leagues. Participants were asked to indicate their mother's involvement in their sport activities as well as their father's. Both parents were equally influential in their children's socialization into sport settings. In addition, both parents were also equally influential in their children's enjoyment and continuation of their sport activities, regardless of the child's gender.

Auster (2008) surveyed 85 current and former female ice hockey players in order to learn of the influence family and friends had upon initiating and continuing their participation. Participants were divided into three groups. “Early” participants (34.5% of the sample) played hockey in college between the years 1974-1983. “Middle” participants (25% of the sample) played between the years 1984-1999 and “recent” participants (40.5% of the sample) played between the years 2000-2008. Participants identified influential sources that were responsible for helping to initiate their participation. The influence of parents, siblings, and peers upon the initiation of their participation differed between age groups.

Parental influence was strongest among recent participants as 36% cited a parent as an influential person upon their initiation into ice hockey. Only 13% of the middle group and 3% of the early group identified their parents as an important influence. The influence of mothers versus fathers upon the participants was not identified in this study.

Siblings’ influence was strongest for the recent group. Seventy-six percent identified a sibling as an important influence upon their ice hockey experiences. Only 36% of the middle group and 13% of the early group identified their siblings as an influence.

Participants in the early group indicated that peers exerted the greatest amount of influence upon the start of their ice hockey experience. The influence of peers was less for the middle group and even less among the recent group. The percentage of early, middle, and recent participants who indicated that peers were influential was 41%, 18%, and 14% respectively.

In addition to the gender of the socializing source as a factor in the sport socialization process, studies have also focused upon the race of the socializee. Greendorfer and Ewing (1981) surveyed 193 boys (46 black, 147 white) and 222 girls (69 black, 153 white) who were between the ages of 9 and 12 in order to learn if the sources of socialization varied based on the child’s

race. First, they found that regardless of race, children received similar influence from mothers, brothers, sisters, and peers. Second, they found that parents who are of the same sex as their children had a greater influence upon their children's socialization into sport than a parent of the opposite sex.

Harris (1994) surveyed 116 African American and 59 Caucasian males between the ages of 15 and 18 and found that significant sources of socialization differed among the participants on the basis of their race. Parental influence upon the socialization of the African American participants into sport was less than the influence of parents upon the Caucasian participants. Caucasian participants were more influenced by their parents; especially their fathers. The influence of socializing sources outside the family upon African American participants was more prevalent as coaches, peers, and other adults were identified as significant sources in the sport socialization process.

Hultsman (1993) surveyed young adolescents in grades 5 through 8 (n=940). Participants in this study completed a questionnaire in order to identify significant others who influenced participation in sport activities. The pool of participants was culturally diverse as nearly 28% of the surveyed population was Hispanic. Native American students made up 6% of the pool and African-American students made up 5%.

Participants identified influences that constrained involvement in an activity. They identified parents as the greatest constraint. Peers were identified to a lesser extent. Parents and peers were identified as the primary constraining influence upon 76% and 27% of the pool, respectively. The data were broken down on the basis of gender, ethnicity, and family socioeconomic status. Boys were more likely than girls to identify parents as a constraining influence. Hispanic students were more likely to identify parents as a constraining source than

students from other cultural groups. Students from schools that were located in affluent areas were more likely to identify parents as constraints than students who resided in less affluent neighborhoods.

The strongest influence upon the participants' decisions to drop out of an activity was "other significant adults." This group consisted of coaches and teachers. Forty percent of the participants identified people from this group as the main reason behind their decisions to drop out of an activity. The percentage of participants who identified parents and peers as a significant reason for discontinuing an activity was 20% and 13%, respectively.

Socializing influences are typically other human beings. However, social institutions such as schools can serve as a socializing source. Yamaguchi (1984) found that social institutions such as schools and community sport programs influenced the sport socialization process among approximately 1,500 Japanese and Canadian adolescents between the ages of 14 and16. The participant pool consisted of approximately 500 participants from Tokyo, Toronto, and Montreal. A similar amount of males and females were surveyed. The Canadian participants, with the exception of females from Montreal, identified the community and structural factors within it as significant factors upon their socialization into sport. The significance of school upon the socialization of Japanese children was offered as a possible explanation as to why parental influence was not significant among the participants from Tokyo. The widespread availability of community sport programs for males in Toronto and Montreal and females in Toronto as well as the availability of school-sponsored sport for females in Montreal was offered as an explanation for the lack of parental influence in the sport socialization process.

In summation, the process of socialization contributes to humans' learning and development and also teaches them the knowledge, values, and norms needed to participate in

social life (Coakley, 2007). An individual's socialization into sport can be affected by many factors. It does not occur over the short-term, but rather occurs throughout one's lifetime. Brown, Frankel, and Fennell (1989) stated, "Since socialization is generally viewed as an ongoing process throughout life and presumably throughout various forms of social participation, we argue that individuals should continue to be affected by socializing influences (e.g., significant others) throughout their ongoing involvement in sport" (p. 398). Although the process of socialization typically occurs during childhood, the process can occur during adulthood as parents can be socialized into sport through their children (Green & Chalip, 1997). In some cases, parents who were not active in sports as children may be socialized into a sport-related setting by their children who were influenced by peers or some other adult.

Parent and child activity relationships. As mentioned in previous sections, parents frequently serve as a source of socialization upon their children. Physically active parents are more likely to socialize their children into a physically active lifestyle than parents who are not physically active (Anderssen & Wold, 1992). The continuity theory of social behavior suggests that a lifestyle at one stage of life influences lifestyles during later stages in life (McPherson, 1983). The influence of parents' past and/or current participation in sport and other physical activities upon their children's participation in similar settings has been found in several studies. As a result of their active childhoods, parents who were active were more likely to have active children as they may socialize the value of participation into their children more so than parents who did not engage in physically active lifestyles. On the other hand, a connection between past and/or current parental activity and their children's has not been found. Several studies were included in this section to illustrate the inconsistent relationship between parents' physically active childhood and adulthood and the likelihood of their children being physically active.

Wagner et al. (2004) surveyed approximately 3,400 sixth grade students in Eastern France in order to learn of relationships that existed between their own and their parents' engagement in physical activity. They found that children were more likely to participate in sport-related activities when both parents were active. When children had parents who were active, nearly 85% of the children in this sample were physically active as well. Similarly, children whose parents practiced sedentary lifestyles were more likely to practice sedentary lifestyles themselves.

Kimiecik and Horn (1998) investigated connections between parents' moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and their children's. Their sample consisted of 81 children (26 girls, 55 boys) between the ages of 11 and 15 and their parents (79 mothers, 63 fathers). Both children and parents self-reported the amount of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity they routinely took part in on a weekly basis. A connection did not exist between children's physical activity habits and the physical activity habits of their parents.

Anderssen and Wold (1992) examined parental influences upon physical activity levels in adolescents. Their analysis included 904 students in Norway with an average age of 13. Participants who received direct parental support for their physical activities and who perceived their parents valued physical activity reported higher levels of activity than those who did not receive the parental support and value toward physical activity. Gender-based differences were found among this sample in several areas. Parental support toward physical activity was stronger for boys than for girls. In addition, the perceived parental value of being physically active was stronger among boys than it was among girls. These findings indicated that parental support and value of physical activity influenced their children's physical activity levels as well.

Brustad (1996) examined the nature and strength of parental socialization upon children's physical activity involvement. Specifically, relationships between parents' role modeling and

expectations and children's attraction to physical activity were explored. In addition, a secondary purpose of the study was to examine these relationships among a population of families of lower socioeconomic levels. Participants in this study included 48 boys and 59 girls in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades in a large metropolitan area school district. A moderately strong correlation existed between parental encouragement of physical activities and children's enjoyment with engaging in physical activities. Gender differences existed, as boys received more parental encouragement for participation in physical activities than girls. Patterns of parental influence upon children's liking of physical activity have typically been conducted among mostly Caucasian participants. The author recommended further examination of the relationship between parental value and encouragement of physical activity upon children's enjoyment of and participation in physically active endeavors among underrepresented societal groups because parental encouragement can be relevant in the shaping of children's physical activity experiences among these groups as well.

Gilbert (2004) studied the relationship between sport participation among parents during their own youth and adolescence and their children's participation in sport activities. A sample of 38 children, 31 mothers and 24 fathers, was utilized for this study. Children's ages were between 11 and 16 at the time this research was completed. Parents and children completed a survey. Surveys completed by the parents included items regarding sport participation during their youth and adolescence and current roles and involvement with their children's sport activities. The children completed a survey as well. Surveys completed by the children included items regarding their sport participation experiences and their parents' role and involvement in their activities.

Many parents in this sample were active in sports as youth and adolescents. Mothers participated for an average of four years and fathers participated for an average of nine. On the other hand, many parents were not involved in sport-related programs as youths and adolescents.

Sport participation histories among male and female children in this sample were similar, as the average length of participation was 6.2 years for each gender. Children's sport involvement was not related to parental youth sport involvement as both active parents and inactive parents had children who were involved in organized sports. The author theorized that the growing presence of youth sport programming and the perceived importance of enrolling children in sport programs to provide structure and reduce idleness decreased the importance of parental sport experience as a significant factor upon children's sport participation patterns.

In summation, past and current parental activity levels occasionally had a positive impact upon their children's activity levels. All of the participants in my study were active in sport as youths. In addition, they had at least one child who was currently active in a sport activity As a result, I explored whether or not parents' past and current experiences were integral factors in their children's socialization into and subsequent participation within sport.

Social support. Significant others provide support toward an individual's sport-related participation in a variety of ways. Emotional, financial, instructional, and logistical support are several of the ways in which significant others may contribute to a supportive environment. In order for participation to begin as well as continue, support from significant others for the activity needs to exist (Greendorfer, 1992). Unless individuals receive positive social support, it is unlikely that sport participation will become a significant part of their lives. Studies that examined the importance of support upon initiation into and continuance of sport participation were conducted with elite and world-class athletes to a large extent. As a result, my intent was to speak with "regular" people in order to gain insight into the types of support they received for their participation and the support they provided for their children's participation. The following paragraphs in this section focused on studies that illustrate the types and sources of support that

enable participation to take place.

Kalinowski (1985) interviewed 21 adult swimmers (10 men and 11 women) who participated in this sport throughout their childhood and adolescence. The influence of family members and other significant socializing agents was integral upon the shaping of participants' experiences. During the participants' earliest sport experiences, parents were a significant source of support. They oftentimes initiated their children's participation and were the primary providers of financial, logistical, and instructional support.

As the participants became adolescents, their parents seldom provided instructional support. However, they still provided financial and logistical support. It was at this time that coaches became significant figures in the participants' experiences as they provided all of the instructional support. In addition, coaches provided emotional support and encouragement. This pattern of coaches providing instructional support, parents providing financial and logistical support, and both coaches and parents providing emotional support continued as the participants continued their involvement through late adolescence and early adulthood.

Monsaas (1985) interviewed 18 tennis players; 10 men and 8 women in order to learn of family influence upon their sport experiences. The family was influential in initiating participation among this group. Parents provided participation opportunities at local country clubs so that the families could spend time engaging in physical activity while having fun. Family support continued in a variety of ways as these participants reached adolescence. The daily lives of family members often revolved around their children's practices and tournaments. Financial support was evident as one participant reported that his mother started working and his father took on a second job in order to help pay for expenses that accrued as a result of his participation.

Brown et al. (1989) surveyed 376 females between the ages of 13 and 19 in order to examine the relationship between social support and continuity of involvement in a variety of sport activities. Participants indicated that support for their participation was given by their fathers more than their mothers. The influence of parental support, especially support from fathers, had a significant impact upon their daughters' involvement in sport. The authors indicated that "When girls perceive that male significant others view their participation as appropriate; continuation of participation is more likely" (Brown et al., 1989, p.406). Fathers' support resulted in higher participation levels within interscholastic, intramural, and intercollegiate sports.

Coakley and White (1992) studied the importance of family support upon the sport participation experiences of adolescents. They interviewed 34 males and 26 females between the ages of 13 and 18 who were from working-class families in London. Approximately 85% of the sample was classified as "white." Descriptions of their sporting experiences, the meanings of those experiences, and the influence of family and other sources of support upon those experiences were focused on during the interviews. They found several sources of support among these adolescents. Participants under 16 indicated that their parents were the most significant people in relation to their participation. Parents provided encouragement as well as financial and logistical support that allowed the participants to maintain engagement with their sport activities. Participants above the age of 16 indicated that other adults such as coaches were most important upon maintaining involvement in sport. Peers were also influential as they often provided support as co-participants in various activities.

Hill (1993) examined the role of family members' in relation to the development of minor league baseball players. Participants (n=152) reflected upon how family members supported their

participation when they were progressing through their youth and adolescence. The typical role of a parent evolved from co-participant to interested spectator. Instructional support was given early in their participation but dwindled as the participants grew older and became more skilled. At that point, parents support was primarily emotional and financial. The participants' development of technical and tactical skills were aided through family members as approximately 25% of the fathers of these athletes participated in professional baseball and were able to provide instruction to their sons throughout their adolescent and early adult years.

Cote (1999) interviewed Canadian national junior rowing team members (n=3) and one Canadian national tennis team member as well as their parents and siblings in order to gain insight into the impact family influence had on their sport participation experiences. The parents of these participants initiated their involvement in sport. Parents provided ongoing financial and logistical support throughout their children's participation histories as they committed significant amounts of money to support their children's endeavors and time to transport their children to venues where participation took place.

Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) examined the role and influence of family members upon sport participation experiences among world-class athletes. Participants (n=10) reflected upon the support family members and other significant people provided toward their participation endeavors during their youth and adolescence. The emotional, financial, and logistical support received from family members was critical in commencing and continuing their participation.

Anderson, Funk, Elliott, and Smith (2003) surveyed 238 elementary school students in order to learn of their perceptions regarding parental involvement and support for their sport activities. The sample included children between the ages of 9 and 11. Of the 238 participants,

106 were female. Gender differences were not found in the amount of perceived support children received from their parents. A positive correlation existed between perceived parental support and the children's amount of involvement in extracurricular activities. A positive correlation also existed between parental support and children's positive perceptions of their participation experience.

Morgan and Giacobbi (2006) interviewed 8 college-aged athletes who participated in an NCAA Division I athletics program. Participants' sport experiences were influenced by significant others. They cited support from siblings, parents, and coaches enabled them to continue their participation.

In summation, the importance of significant others upon sport involvement is substantial. Family members served as significant factors that played a role in shaping participants' experiences. Regardless of the participants' ages, ability levels, or sports in which they were engaged, family members were often continual sources of emotional, logistical, and financial support. Support from significant others can encourage a person to initiate, continue, and/or discontinue participation. If significant others provide a supportive atmosphere for the person, then the likelihood that the person continues participating may be greater than if support did not exist. I explored how participants' experiences in sport were shaped by the support they received from significant others. The importance of support from significant others upon participation at non-elite levels is substantial. Therefore, I included this area of inquiry in my study.

Structural Factors Shaping Participation

The third factor that was examined in this study included various structural factors which shaped the sport experiences of the participants as well as the experiences of their children. Structural factors can contribute to or prevent the development of an enriched environment

(Auster, 2008). An enriched environment consists of a set of circumstances and factors that may serve to increase someone's interest in a particular activity and subsequent opportunities to participate. Specific structural factors that were identified in this chapter include proximity of facilities, financial factors, household structure, and significant life transitions.

Various studies have investigated the relationship between structural factors and participation opportunities. Because different variables act upon each individual's experiences in a unique way, it is difficult to clearly state under which circumstances each or any combination of the factors examined here shape the experiences of parents and their children. The studies are included in this section were included to illustrate diversity in the factors that may shape an individual's unique sport experiences.

Proximity of facilities. The first structural factor shaping participation experiences was proximity of facilities where activities may take place. Several studies focused on the proximity of facilities in relation to the neighborhood/community where respondents reside. Although opportunities to engage in sport activities were influenced by the distance one lived from parks, playgrounds, and recreation facilities, opportunities to participate were not always constrained by these circumstances as individuals who did not reside close to sport facilities found ways to negotiate this constraint. The following paragraphs focus upon the impact availability of facilities and other recreation areas has upon the participation experiences of people from varying demographics.

Felton et al. (2002) studied physical activity patterns among 1,688 eighth grade girls from 31 middle schools in South Carolina. One aspect of their study was to compare physical activity patterns among girls from urban areas versus girls in rural areas. Furthermore, inclinations toward physical activity, based on the geographic location of the participants, were also

compared with the race of the participants. Fifty-four percent of this sample came from urban areas. The areas in which the respondents resided were a factor in their opportunities to engage in physical activity. Girls from urban areas reported higher levels of sport involvement than girls who resided in rural areas. Of the groups examined for this study (Caucasian urban, Caucasian rural, African American urban, African American rural), Caucasian girls from urban areas perceived their neighborhoods to be the safest. However, girls from all four groups perceived a lack of facilities, parks, and playgrounds close to their residences. These findings indicated that safe and available facilities within close proximity to the participant were significant in their recreational activity involvement.

The availability of nearby facilities upon an individual's opportunities to engage in sport activities was also studied by Thompson, Rehman, and Humbert (2005). They interviewed 22 Canadian youths in order to learn of constraints that affected their physical activity opportunities. Seven elementary school students (4 male & 3 female), 7 junior high students (3 male & 4 female) and 8 high school students (5 male & 3 female) participated. Constraining factors upon opportunities to engage in sport and other forms of physical activity existed across the age groups. A significant factor which constrained opportunities to participate included distance from suitable facilities for participation.

The importance of structural factors shaping sport participation opportunities upon African American and Caucasian children was studied by Greendorfer and Ewing (1981). They surveyed 193 males (46 black and 147 white) and 222 females (69 black and 153) who were between the ages of 9 and 12 and resided in various urban, rural, and suburban settings. Structural factors, defined as the "opportunity set" in this study, included the availability and location of facilities. The authors found that sport involvement among African American children living in urban areas

was more strongly influenced by structural factors than involvement among Caucasian children. Agents of socialization, as opposed to the opportunity set, was more influential in the shaping of Caucasian children's experiences.

Brodersen et al. (2005) studied the impact of structural conditions upon physically active and sedentary behaviors among 4,320 eleven and twelve year old youths in London, England. The availability of facilities resulted in an increase in self-reported levels of activity among the respondents. The availability of these facilities positively affected the inclinations of boys to participate slightly more than it influenced girls. In addition, the authors noted that availability of facilities was stronger upon inclinations to engage in physical activity in less affluent areas.

Lack of accessible facilities was identified as a significant factor upon ceasing participation in sport activities among 254 respondents between the ages of 18 and 65 in England (Boothby et al., 1981). Residing in an area where a perceived lack of facilities was present resulted in the ceasing of at least one activity among 62 respondents. Of the 62, 16 indicated that lack of available facilities resulted in ending participation altogether.

These findings indicate that proximity of suitable facilities impact an individual's sport participation opportunities and subsequent experiences. However, the impact of this factor varies from person-to-person. The age of the individual in question as well as various characteristics of the location where he/she resides are factors that can influence the severity of this constraint. Consequently, it is difficult to clearly state that this factor serves as a constraint of uniform intensity upon all individuals but rather is a factor that uniquely impacts each individual.

Costs of participation. Economic factors such as cost structures associated with participation may shape participation opportunities. Several studies identified cost structures as a factor that significantly enables or restricts opportunities to engage in various sport pursuits.

Costs associated with participation uniquely affect people of all social classes. The following paragraphs in this section focus on costs associated with participation and how the availability of financial resources affects participation opportunities.

Searle and Jackson (1985) focused upon barriers to recreation participation among individuals who expressed a desire to participate in various recreational activities but were unable. Their sample consisted of 1,240 residents from the province of Alberta, Canada. Admission fees and charges assessed to enter and use recreational facilities were identified as a significant constraint. Costs as a barrier toward participation increased as the respondent's income decreased. This barrier was identified most frequently by respondents whose income was less than $10,000 a year. The price of equipment needed to participate was also identified as a significant barrier toward participation among lower income groups.

Brown et al. (2001) examined the influence of costs upon involvement in various physical activities among 543 mothers from various socioeconomic groups in New South Wales, Australia. The average age of the participants was 33. In general, costs associated with participation constrained women with lower incomes than those from middle and higher socioeconomic groups. Approximately 80% of the participants from lower socioeconomic groups identified costs with participation as a significant constraint upon opportunities to get and/or stay involved with various recreational activities. Although costs was less of a factor upon women from middle and higher socioeconomic groups, 60% and 50% respectively still indicated cost as a constraint toward their activities.

Costs associated with participation constrained opportunities to engage in various recreational pursuits among 3,000 respondents residing in Texas (Lee, Scott, & Floyd, 2001). They found that respondents making less than $20,000 annually most often reported a desire to

participate in various recreational activities but were unable to as a result of the costs required to participate. The authors cross-examined socioeconomic status with race, gender and age and found that elderly females from ethnic minorities reported cost as a constraint towards engaging in recreational opportunities more than any other subgroup.

More and Stevens (2000) studied the impact of user fees associated with recreation facilities and programs upon individuals in various socioeconomic categories. The authors utilized data that was received from 296 respondents residing in Vermont and New Hampshire. The majority of respondents were male (71%) with an average age of 54 years. Income levels varied, as 28% of the respondents reported an income of less than $30,000 annually. Eighteen percent of the respondents reported an income of greater than $75,000 annually. The remaining respondents reported an income between $30,000 and $75,000.

The impact of user fees upon participation opportunities existed, as 11% of the high income group reported that user fees shaped their engagement in various recreational pursuits. Nearly 18% of the lower income group reported that user fees influenced their activity choices. When asked if a fee increase of $5 would influence activity choices, almost half (49.2%) of the lower income group respondents indicated that the fee increase would influence their activity choices. Nearly 33% of the high income respondents indicated that a fee of $5 would influence their inclinations to maintain involvement in a recreational activity.

Campagna et al. (2001) surveyed 1,028 Canadian families in order to determine whether or not children from lower income households were less involved in various recreational activities than children from higher income households. Children in this sample were between 7 and 10 years of age. Family income varied as some families reported a household income of less than $30,000 while others reported a household income of greater than $80,000. Costs associated with

participation were identified as a constraint by approximately 27% of the sample. This constraint was identified more often by families in the under $30,000 income bracket than by families in the greater than $80,000 income bracket. In summation, as household income increased, the strength of cost as a constraint to participation decreased.

Household structure. Another structural factor that may influence participation in sport is household structure (Kay, 2004). Various studies have been conducted in order to examine the impact of household structure upon physical activity levels. First, the effect single parent households and dual parent households have upon the shaping of a child's experience was considered. These studies included a focus on activity within sport endeavors. Oftentimes, children from single parent homes had fewer opportunities to engage in sport activities. Households in which both parents were present and working outside of the home were more likely to have children who participated in sport activities due to the availability of financial resources coming from a dual income household (Gillies, 2007). However, participation opportunities for children in single parent households existed as well. As a result, the relationship between household structure and opportunities to engage in various sport activities was included in this segment in order to illustrate the inconsistent nature of household structure upon these opportunities.

For example, Broderson et al. (2005) conducted a study in order to investigate factors influencing participation among 4,320 eleven and twelve year old youths in London, England. The authors compared physical activity levels of respondents living with both parents (including stepparents) to those living with only one parent. Roughly one-third of the sample came from single parent households. The percentage of boys and girls that made up this segment of the pool was similar. Nearly 33% of the boys and 32% of the girls participating in this study came from

single parent households. Boys and girls from single parent households reported more sedentary behavior than their counterparts from dual parent households.

Second, the presence of a spouse and/or children in the household upon participants' sport experiences in this study was examined. An individual's participation opportunities can vary based on whether or not a spouse and/or children are present in the household. Various studies suggested that individuals who are single experience the least amount of constraints toward participation. Individuals with a spouse but no children were slightly more constrained. Individuals with children, especially young children, faced the greatest amount of constraint upon opportunities to participate in sport activities.

Jackson and Henderson (1995) examined the results of recreation activity surveys that were administered by the government in the province of Alberta, Canada in order to determine the relationship between family structure and opportunities to engage in various sport and recreational activities. Two waves of data collection resulted in a usable sample of 9,642. A relatively balanced participant pool in terms of gender was achieved as approximately 53% of the sample was male. A wide range of income levels was indicated among the participant pool as annual household incomes ranged from less than $10,000 to in excess of $90,000. A significant amount of variance in age was indicated as well. The age range of the participant pool was from 18 to 91.

A purpose of their study was to assess the impact a spouse and/or children in the household had on respondents' participation patterns. The participant pool was grouped into couples with no children, couples with the youngest child under the age of 6, couples with the youngest child between the ages of 6 and 17, single persons, single parents with the youngest child under the age of 6, and single parents with the youngest child between the ages of 6 and 17.

The largest group was couples with no children. Approximately 34% of the men and 28% of the women who participated in this study came from this type of households. A small percentage, 2% of the men and 6% of the women, were single parents. Nearly 20% of both men and women reported being single with no children. Lastly, almost half of the men and women in this study were couples in a household with children. Of this group, a similar percentage of men and women with the youngest child under the age of 6 and with the youngest child between the ages of 6 and 17 were found.

Single persons of both genders reported the least amount of constraints, regardless of their age. Respondents who were part of a couple with no children reported greater constraints toward participation than respondents who were single. The presence of children in the household served as a significant factor that constrained participation opportunities as constraints were greatest upon respondents of both genders who were members of households in which the youngest child was less than 6 years of age.

Searle and Jackson (1985) examined the effects of household structure as a barrier toward participation. The analysis was based on 1,240 respondents. Couples without children reported the fewest amounts of barriers toward participation. A large percentage (approximately 70% of the pool) of single parents and couples with children reported that they regularly experience constraints toward their recreational activity involvement as a result of family commitments and obligations.

Sternfeld, Ainsworth, and Quesenberry (1999) examined the physical activity patterns among a diverse population of women from Northern California. Their sample included 2,636 respondents between the ages of 20 to 65 from households of various sizes. Approximately two-thirds of the sample was married or living in a household as a couple. Approximately 20% of the

sample was a member of a household with at least one child under the age of 5. Women who were married and had at least one child under the age of 5 in the household reported less engagement in sport and other physical activities than women who were not married and did not have young children in the household.

Life events and transitions. Various life events and transitions may influence and significantly alter life experiences. Jackson (2005) examined transitions which may be positive (marriage or the birth of a child) or negative (divorce or death of a loved one), expected (leaving home to attend college) or unexpected (new employment opportunity or sudden job loss), sudden (an auto accident) or drawn out (gradual deterioration of health) and shape participation opportunities in sport and recreational activities. I was interested in how significant life transitions and events shaped participants' experiences throughout different stages in their lives. Factors that may significantly affect experiences during childhood include relocation and the divorce of one's parents.

Parents' divorce can be a significant factor upon a child's participation opportunities and subsequent experiences. Divorce can change the household structure, which can be a significant factor in the shaping of an individual's experiences. A child's transition into adolescence can also be significant. Attending a new school and establishing relationships with new peer groups can shape experiences. Adolescence is also a time when the sport experiences of many people come to an end as other interests and obligations constrain opportunities to maintain involvement in those activities. As the individual reaches adulthood, marriage and starting a family of one's own may shape his/her participation experiences. Various studies in this section illustrated how life events and transitions affect opportunities to engage in sport activities at different periods in one's lifetime.

The transition from youth to adolescence is not a simple change, but rather is affected by a wide variety and combination of events. As mentioned earlier, adolescence is a time when many youths who participate in sports end their involvement in such activities. Raymore, Godbey, and Crawford (1994) surveyed 363 high school students in Toronto to gain insight into factors that constrained their sport experiences during adolescence. Of the 363 participants, 208 were male. Time constraints such as students' commitments to school, family, and work resulted in reduced participation in sports. School-related commitments included time spent on academic endeavors and other extra-curricular activities. Family commitments referred to obligations older siblings had with regard to younger siblings. These obligations included babysitting duties which limited participation opportunities. Job-related commitments also constrained participation opportunities as leisure time was replaced by time dedicated to work. These reasons resulted in a reduction or discontinuation of participation in sport activities. Female students indicated that these obligations constrained involvement in sport and recreation activities slightly more often than they did for male students.

As adolescents proceed into adulthood, new constraints enter their lives and affect their opportunities to participate in activities that are of interest to them. Marriage, the birth of a child, and work-related commitments often served as factors which limited an individual's opportunities to engage in such activities. Boothby et al. (1981) studied reasons leading to the ceasing of participation among 254 adult respondents in London, England. Marriage, the birth of a child, change of residence, and employment related obligations were factors which lead to their ceasing participation. Marriage and the birth of a child impacted opportunities to engage in activities among females more than males. Change of residence equally impacted participation opportunities of both males and females. Beginning a full-time occupation constrained

opportunities for both genders, however, the majority of respondents who indicated work-related obligations as a constraint were male.

Jackson (1993) examined constraints to recreational activity participation among 4,044 adult respondents who participated in a survey that was administered by the Parks and Recreation Department in the province of Alberta, Canada. Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 66 years. Participants identified activities in which they possessed a desire to participate but were unable to start or continue their involvement. Respondents identified a variety of fitness oriented activities (e.g., cycling, running) team sports, (e.g., baseball, ice hockey, curling) and individual sports (e.g., tennis, racquetball, skiing). Regardless of the type or nature of the activity (e.g., team versus individual), family commitments and work commitments were frequently identified as aspects that had the greatest impact upon their ability to engage in desired recreational activities. The impact of these constraints gradually escalated as participants proceeded from early adulthood to early middle age. Once participants reached their mid 40s, the intensity of those constraints tapered off. Those in the 37-43 age bracket indicated that family and work obligations affected their opportunities to engage in desired sport and recreation activities the most. The strength of these constraints lessened as respondents proceeded into their late 40s and beyond.

In summation, this literature review addressed a variety of factors that have the potential to shape individuals' participation opportunities and experiences within sport settings. Personal factors such as one's interest in and comfort with participating were included. Demographic characteristics such as gender, race, and social class as well as socially constructed "ideals" associated with these attributes may shape experiences in this setting as well and was also included in the review of literature. Becoming a parent can uniquely shape the individual's

experiences and opportunities to engage in sport activities as socially constructed ideals associated with being a “good parent” and the ethic of care may cause an individual to constrain his/her own experiences in order to place the needs and wants of his/her children first.

Social factors may also influence an individual’s sport participation opportunities and experiences as well as the experiences of his/her children. The availability and influence of various sources of socialization have the potential to enable or constrain participation opportunities and experiences. Different sources of socialization that act on an individual throughout various life stages were factors that influenced participation opportunities. Sources of socialization that shape a parent’s experiences in sport may be the same sources which influence his/her child’s experiences. On the other hand, the experiences of an individual’s child may be shaped by an entirely different set of socializing sources. The types and amounts of support an individual receives may shape participation opportunities. Provisions of financial, emotional, logistical, and instructional support vary for each person and have the potential to significantly influence one’s experiences.

Finally, a number of structural factors can limit or enable opportunities to participate in sport activities. Logistical factors such as proximity of facilities and financial aspects such as costs associated with participation can influence one’s experiences. The household structure in which one was a part and the impact of life transitions on participation was also significant.

In closing, a wide range of personal, social, and structural factors exert influence upon an individual’s sport experiences. Because many factors exist and do not manifest themselves uniformly upon all people, I felt that the best approach for this study would be to utilize qualitative measures in order to obtain rich data that allows for a greater understanding of unique circumstances that shaped the experiences of this group of participants.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

My interest in family involvement in sport was the main reason I conducted a study on factors that shaped the experiences of parents and children from different races and socioeconomic groups in this domain. Qualitative measures were utilized to obtain detail with regard to their experiences. The purpose of this study was threefold: (a) to gain insight into the personal, social, and structural factors participants perceived were significant on their sport participation experiences throughout various stages of their lives; (b) to gain insight into the personal, social, and structural factors participants perceived were significant upon their children's sport experiences; and (c) to illustrate differences that exist among participants' own and their children's sport experiences.

The conceptual framework for this study included a realist tale (Sparkers, 2002). Within this element, details of participants' experiences in sport were acquired. The conceptual framework of this study also included a hermeneutical perspective (Patton, 1990). This element included the participants' perceptions of their own and their children's experiences in sport and consideration of the conditions under which these experiences took place. A realist and a hermeneutical approach were utilized in order to obtain detail and perspectives from participants regarding their own and their children's experiences in sport.

A qualitative methodology was utilized because it allowed for the acquisition of detailed accounts of participants' experiences. Key aspects within this study's methodology included: (a) description of participants; (b) locating participants, (c) sampling techniques, (d) the interview guide; (e) the investigator's positionality; (f) the bracketing interview; (g) data collection; (h)

data analysis; and (i) generalizability.

Description of Participants

Participants who possessed experience in some type of organized sport activity during their lifetimes were included in the study. Participation experience in elite or "travel" teams was not required, but experience in recreational "low stakes" leagues was. I selected participants who were involved in organized settings because costs associated with organized participation differ from informal participation. Entrance fees, required equipment, and travel expenses differentiate organized from informal sport activity (Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997). A goal of this study was to explore how individuals' and their families' socioeconomic status shaped participation experiences. Consequently, I focused on experiences in which cost structures existed.

Participants were parents of at least one child who was under the age of 13 and was participating in a recreational or competitive organized sport. I selected parents whose children were under 13 years old or younger because there was a greater likelihood that their children were still active in sport. Approximately 75% of youth sport participants drop out of sports by the time they reach the age of 13 years (Brady, 2004). Almost 90% end their sport participation by the time they reach the age of 16 years (Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997). Since children under the age of 13 are more likely to be active in organized sports, parents who had children in this age group were selected.

For this study, the term *parent* was considered to be the biological mothers and fathers, adoptive mothers and fathers, or the biological and adoptive caretakers of a child in a same-sex relationship. Stepmothers and stepfathers of their spouse's biological children were also included in the definition of parent. Parents who were in an intact relationship with their significant other at the time of data collection or separated were also eligible to participate.

Eleven parents participated in the study. The parents I spoke with consisted of seven females (four self-identified as Caucasian and three as African American) and four males (each self-identified as Caucasian). Participants' ages varied, as four of them were between 30-34 years of age, three were between 35-39 years and four were between 40-44 years. Four of the participants held master's degrees, two held bachelor's degrees, and three held associates degrees. One of the participants completed a technical program at a trade school and one participant held a high school diploma.

All of the participants in this sample were biological parents of their children. None of the participants were related to another participant and each of them had their own households and families. All of the male participants were married to their wives at the time the interviews were conducted. Five of the female participants were married to their husbands. Two of the female participants were single parents.

Five reported household incomes in excess of $60,000 annually. Two participants reported annual household incomes ranging from $50,000-$55,000. Household incomes of $40,000-$45,000 and $35,000-$40,000 were reported by one participant for each group. Lastly, two participants reported annual household incomes of $25,000-$30,000. Nine participants worked in a variety of occupations outside of the home. Two female participants worked inside the home as homemakers. Of those who worked outside the home, two male participants were ministers at local churches. One male participant was a government employee. One female participant was the entrepreneur of her own business. The remaining participants worked in managerial capacities in financial-based and technical-based fields.

The size of the participants' families varied. The number of children each participant had ranged from one to six. The ages of the children within these households varied as well. See

Table 1 for a summary of the age and gender of the participants' children. In addition, participants were asked to choose a pseudonym. The pseudonyms were established in order to protect the confidentiality of each participant.

Locating Participants

I utilized the Knox County school system in order to acquire participants. A request to conduct my research was submitted to the Research Specialist in the Knox County school system. The purpose and significance of the study, data collection procedures, and measures to ensure confidentiality were provided. Approval to proceed with the study was provided (see Appendix A). At this time, I was permitted to contact principals at local elementary and middle schools.

Principals at 15 local elementary and middle schools were contacted, informed of the approval granted by the Research Specialist and were asked if I could contact parents whose children attended their schools. Of the 15 principals that were contacted, two agreed to allow me to correspond with parents. I met with these individuals and shared the same information I provided the Research Specialist. I was permitted to draft a letter of introduction (see Appendix B) which was sent home with the students. Parents were informed of my research and invited to participate. I also indicated I would provide a small financial incentive ($20 per person) in order to encourage their participation. Interested parents signed the form, provided their contact information, and returned it to the school. I picked up the forms and contacted parents. Twelve parents from the two schools responded to my request.

By contacting parents of elementary school children, it insured that the parents had at least one child who was under the age of 13 years. Although the criteria for participation was clearly stated in the correspondence sent to the parents, several did not have the necessary experiences, but chose to return the form. They were not included in the sample. Several other parents

Table 1: Number, Age, and Gender of Participants' Children

Participant Pseudonym	Number of Children	Age and Gender of Each Child
Angie	1	8, female*
Sarah	4	6, male* 5, female* 2, male 1, male
Kathy	2	8, female* 6, male*
Patricia	2	11, female* 8, male*
Theresa	2	9, female* 2, female
Lindsay	1	7, male*
Leigh	6	17, female 16, female 10, female* 9, female* 6, female* 4, male
Jason	4	11, female* 9, male* 6, male* 2, female
Kevin	4	9, female* 6, male* 4, male* 1, male
Paul	3	16, male* 14, male* 9, female*
Matt	6	13, male* 11, male* 8, female* 5, male 4, male 2, male

*(child was active in organized sport at the time of the interview)

who returned the form might have fit the criteria but did not return repeated phone calls and/or e-mails to arrange an interview. Four parents whose children attended one elementary school and one parent whose children attended a different school fit the criteria for inclusion and were subsequently interviewed.

I also contacted other settings such as the YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs. These sites were selected because adults and children often participate in sport activities at these locations. General Managers at three local YMCA's and the central office of the local Boys and Girls Clubs chapter were sent an introductory e-mail. I described the purpose and significance of my study as well as measures to protect participant confidentiality. Several e-mails to the central office of the Boys and Girls Club were not acknowledged. Of the three YMCA's, I received a response from two branches. The program manager at one branch indicated that activities in which children participate were not taking place at the present time. Consequently, she was unable to assist me. A general manager at one branch responded and informed me that he would forward my request to an assistant. After meeting with this person and sharing the purpose and significance of my study, I was given permission to attend several weeks of youth basketball games.

Six parents from this YMCA fit the criteria needed for inclusion and were interviewed. Several others were interested in participating; however, they did not have sport participation experience as a youth or did not have a child under the age of 13 years who was currently active in an organized sport program. I thanked them for their interest but could not include them.

Sampling Techniques

Purposeful sampling techniques were used in order to acquire participants for this study. As Patton (1990) stated, "Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 169). I wanted to gain

insight into the personal, social, and structural factors they perceived were significant in shaping their own and their children's experiences. Therefore, participants with firsthand participation experience in organized sports were needed because of their potential to be the information-rich cases that could contribute to the purpose of the study. When considering a sample, the researcher must ask, "Has the person lived through the kinds of experiences and participated in the types of events you want to explore" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 57)? When I located participants, I inquired about their own as well as their children's sport experiences. Those who possessed the desired experiences and had children who possessed the desired experiences were selected for the study.

There are several different strategies for purposefully selecting participants for a research project. Since participants needed to fit some criteria, criterion sampling was utilized. Within criterion sampling, all cases must meet some pre-determined criterion of importance (Patton, 1990). The criteria for participation in this study included several parameters. First, the participants must have had some type of firsthand organized sport experience during their childhood and/or adolescence. Second, the participants needed to have a least one child under the age of 13 who was active in at least one organized sport at the time of data collection. Similar to participants, the experiences of non-participants may have been shaped by personal characteristics, significant others, and/or various structural factors, however, these individuals were not useful for this particular study because the goal was to explore how these factors shaped their *participation* as opposed to *non-participation* experiences.

Interview Guide

The interview guide (see Appendix C) was developed within the framework of the study and based on background from the literature review. The interview questions were deemed

appropriate by the dissertation committee. The interview guide consisted of a number of open-ended questions which focused on factors participants perceived were significant in shaping their own and their children's sport experiences. Inquiry regarding their experiences in sport was conducted in relation to Cote's (1999) stages of sport participation. These stages include the sampling period (ages 6-13), specializing period (ages 13-15), and investment period (ages 15 and above). An additional stage, the recreational period, overlaps the three stages mentioned above. The recreational stage commences when a person continues to participate but without a dedicated attempt of improving performance (Cote & Hay, 2002). Since a very small percentage of youth sport participants proceed to advanced/elite levels of participation, it was anticipated that most if not all participants in this study entered the recreation stage of participation after their sampling years concluded. This was true for most of the participants, however, one of the participants took part in basketball at an NCAA Division I institution.

Participants' perspectives with regard to their own experiences were explored. This discussion included "how" and "why" personal, social, and structural factors shaped their experiences in sport. The purpose of incorporating these questions into the interview was to achieve additional depth to their realist tale and to address the hermeneutical element of considering the conditions under which an action took place.

Because participants were parents with at least one child under the age of 13 who was active in at least one organized sport, questions which would flesh out the similarities and/or differences between the participants' experiences and the experiences of their children were asked. In addition, parents' perceptions of factors that shaped their children's experiences in sport were explored. If the experiences of the participants' children were similar to or different from their own, I wanted to know what they perceived was responsible for that experience.

The Investigator's Positionality

It is common for realist tales to be defined as investigator-evacuated texts (Sparkes, 1995). They are written entirely in the third person and do not include any indications of the investigator's positionality. However, the absence of the investigator's voice in realist tales can be modified and the distance that appears to exist between the investigator and his/her work can be lessened by including the investigator's positionality into the study.

In qualitative inquiry, an investigator brings personal histories, biases, dispositions, and perspectives to his/her work (Simon & Dippo, 1986). Subsequently, his/her research is not neutral or detached, but rather is personal, emotional, and identity-oriented (Sparkes, 2002). The investigator's placement or position in society as a result of gender, race, and/or social class can influence how s/he sees the world and makes sense of it (Sparkes, 1992). This placement prevents complete objectivity, which is desired in scientific inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Therefore, an investigator should engage in a self-reflective analysis of the social categories to which s/he belongs and acknowledge that his/her social positioning serves as a perceptual lens through which s/he sees the world (Cole, 1991; Sparkes, 1995).

Since the investigator is conducting his/her research through this perceptual lens, it is important that the investigator recognizes how it could affect the research process (Lather, 1986). Investigators should critically examine how their social position (e.g., insider/outsider, privileged/disadvantaged) could potentially affect their work (Krane & Baird, 2005). In this study, it was important for me to acknowledge my own positionality because it could have affected the research process as well as the trustworthiness of my work.

Based on my own social position as a white male who was raised in the Midwest in an intact household in a suburban neighborhood, I developed assumptions regarding motivations

behind sport participation, family structure and participation, and gender ideologies. For example, I assumed people from lower income households were motivated to place their children in sports in order to obtain future external rewards such as a scholarship to pay for college. I never thought my parents had aspirations of me obtaining a college scholarship because we didn't need a "way out" of the neighborhood in which we resided. My assumption was that only families from poorer neighborhoods have those ambitions of "getting out."

In the neighborhood where I was raised, all of my friends came from intact homes. The people I knew who lived in older subdivisions and in smaller houses than mine seemed to come from households where their parents divorced. I don't recall seeing any of these children on any of my teams or on other teams in the league. I also assumed that children from households where the parents separated did not participate in organized sports to the same extent that children from wealthier families did because they would have less disposable income to support participation.

My own experiences supported traditional gender ideologies in that boys should be playing certain sports such as football and baseball while girls should be playing certain other sports such as gymnastics and softball. As a youth sport participant, I assumed that parents allowed their children to participate in sports or certain sports based on whether or not they were seen as "appropriate." I assumed that my parents supported my participation in baseball because I was a boy and playing sports such as baseball was something boys were "supposed" to do. I don't believe my parents would have supported my participation in cheerleading because it was not viewed in my family as a sport that was a "proper" sport for boys. As a result of their views, I also developed opinions regarding sports I should or should not play. These perspectives were steeped in traditional gender ideologies and shaped my opinions of "appropriate" sport participation.

It was important for me to recognize that my social position may influence the research I conduct. I needed to remain mindful of the fact that this position could taint the investigation. Striking a balance between subjectivity and objectivity was essential in order to provide the reader with the confidence that what they were reading was an accurate representation of participants' perceptions of their own and their children's experiences in sport. In the next section, I discuss the bracketing interview. This exercise helped me to not only realize my positionality but also recognize how it could influence the data collection and analysis process. As someone who has studied theoretical approaches and critical sociological perspectives in sport, my positionality has changed to a broader view of possibilities; thus, a critical approach was brought to this study.

Bracketing Interview and Further Assumptions

In order to address these personal assumptions I had about my research topic, a bracketing interview was conducted with a doctoral student colleague experienced in qualitative research. As I participated in the bracketing interview, I realized that I possessed certain assumptions like those mentioned above regarding motivations behind sport participation among participants from various socioeconomic levels. Subsequently, these assumptions were more closely examined. Having been made aware of these subjective views, I was cognizant of not allowing them to interfere with the interview process and interpretation of the data.

I audiotaped the bracketing interview and carefully listened to and analyzed its contents in order to assess my biases and assumptions. Afterwards, the interview was broken down into themes to better understand this process. The three themes included: (a) motivations behind participation; (b) family structure and participation; and (c) gender ideologies influencing participation.

Participating in this process helped me avoid asking questions of the participants in such a manner that any assumptions I possessed would taint the data collection. For example, if a participant talked about the sports s/he played as a youth, I wanted to follow up and ask her/him why s/he thought s/he ended up playing those sports. If I was to leave my assumptions unchecked and allow it to influence the interview, perhaps I would have asked a follow-up question such as, "Did your parents get you in sports because they had aspirations of you getting a scholarship?" In this hypothetical case, I would have assumed that because the participant's parents were not affluent, they must have some ulterior motive for enrolling their child in sport programs.

Another example recognizing my assumptions via the bracketing interview and not letting them influence interview questions related to gender and sport participation. I was careful not to ask a question such as, "Did you recommend your daughter play softball because you felt that it was an 'appropriate' sport for her?" If I had done this, it may have influenced participants' responses. As a result, I was careful not to put any ideological notions that emerged from my bracketing interview into the participants' minds by allowing my assumptions or biases to influence the way I asked the questions.

The bracketing interview was also beneficial in the data analysis process. As I analyzed participants' interview data, it was important for me to not allow my biases and assumptions to permeate the data analysis. Becoming aware of my assumptions prevented me from making generalizations about factors that shaped participants' own experiences in sport and the experiences of their children. Had I not participated in this process, it is possible that biases and assumptions regarding motivations behind participation, family structure and participation and gender ideologies would have been present. For example, I realized I had assumptions associated

with household structure and participation. Had my assumptions been left unchecked, a comment such as, “The reason why (participant name) didn’t participate in sport to a greater extent during his/her youth was because s/he came from a single-parent household” might have been made. Confronting my assumptions made me consider other factors that might have been responsible for his/her limited participation. Many factors could be responsible for their experiences; consequently, the bracketing interview helped make me aware of the fact that I could have jumped to conclusions because I was not fully aware of the assumptions I possessed.

The bracketing interview was also helpful because it helped me to consider asking my questions in such a way that would result in receiving a significant amount of detail. The person conducting the bracketing interview said, “People think in stories.” This was valuable advice because when I was answering questions regarding my own experiences in sport during this interview, I thought about anecdotes and situations that created my own story. As a result of this comment during the bracketing interview, I focused on asking more probing questions and encouraged the participant to elaborate on their experiences. For example, the questions I asked the participants were often preceded by a statement such as, “Tell me more about…” or “Take me back to when…” By presenting the questions to my participants in this fashion, it increased opportunities for them to tell me “their story.” I felt I was able to acquire a greater appreciation of the “why’s” that shaped their own and their children’s experiences. I didn’t change the meaning of the original questions, but rather incorporated vocabulary into my questions that encouraged a greater amount of elaboration from the participant.

In summation, the bracketing interview was a beneficial exercise that alerted me to assumptions I held with regard to sport participation. As a result of the bracketing interview, I was careful not to let my own assumptions permeate the details and perspectives of the

participants' stories. In the next chapter, perceptions regarding my own experiences are included. These perceptions were integrated with the data that was collected regarding the participants' experiences. I included them because I wanted to emphasize some of the many differences that exist within sport participation experiences amongst a group of people from different races and socioeconomic levels.

Data Collection

A "Form B" which described the purpose of the study, potential risks and benefits associated with participation, and measures to ensure participant confidentiality was created (see Appendix D). This form was subsequently submitted for review. The process of data collection began when approval from the Department and University Internal Review Boards (IRB) was received.

A pilot interview was conducted prior to the participant interviews. I secured the assistance of a personal acquaintance for this interview. This person was selected because he participated in organized sports as a child, had a son who was under the age of 13 and was active in organized sports. It was beneficial for me to conduct this interview because it was an opportunity to test the questions I was going to ask. After this pilot interview, additions to some questions were needed in order to acquire a greater amount of elaboration from the participants. The questions presented during the pilot interview were not fundamentally changed; however, I realized that I needed to ask more probing questions such as, "Why do you think…" or "Please tell me more…" in order to solicit additional depth and detail. This exercise was helpful in alerting me that I needed to do more than just ask questions; I also needed to anticipate that participants may not automatically provide a significant amount of depth and elaboration in their responses.

As mentioned earlier, parents were located by contacting local elementary schools as well as local YMCA's. The initial contact with the parents who were located through the schools was made by phone or by e-mail. The initial contact with the parents who were located through the YMCA's was made in person. When parents indicated their interest, I asked them a few questions to ensure that their experiences were consistent with the parameters I established for this study. Arrangements were made with eligible participants to conduct an interview at a time and place of their choosing.

When we met to engage in the interview, I explained the potential risks and benefits associated with the study. Each participant read and signed an informed consent form (see Appendix E). As previously mentioned, participants were also asked to choose a pseudonym. The pseudonyms were established in order to protect the confidentiality of each participant. Next, they completed a brief demographic survey (see Appendix F). When this information was obtained, the interview began. Participants were first asked to provide an oral history regarding their sport participation experiences with minimal intervention from me. Data collection through an oral history can take place by allowing the participant to tell his or her own story in his or her own way (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). While oral histories can last many hours and result in thousands of pages of transcripts, some histories may be more limited. Some interviewers seek data on a particular topic or a particular period in a person's life (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). In this study, participants were asked to elaborate upon their sport participation when they were children and adolescents. This history served as the starting point from which the open-ended interview questions were asked.

Open-ended questions were utilized in order to collect pertinent data that related to the purpose of the study (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). These questions were utilized in order to

determine factors the participants perceived as significant in the shaping of their own and their children's experiences in sport. Questions asked included: "Why do you feel you gravitated to (a sport)?" "Why did you lose interest or continue playing (a sport)?" and "When you were a child, how did you get started in playing sports?" Examples of questions which attempted to gain insight into social factors shaping experience included: "Who played a significant role in getting you started?" and "Who took you to buy the equipment you needed?" Examples of questions that were asked in order to learn of structural factors and their influence upon their experiences included: "If you wanted to play a particular sport but were unable to, what happened?" and "Were the places you played sports at easy to get to?"

Questions which inquired into the personal, social, and structural factors influencing their children's experiences were asked as well. Examples of questions include: "Why do you feel (a sport) appeals to your child?" and "How did your child's participation in sport get started?" and "What lengths do you have to go through to get your child to games and practices?" It was through these questions that personal, social, and structural factors which shaped the experiences of the participants' children were identified and analyzed.

Depending on the participants' willingness and ability to elaborate on their experiences, the interviews ranged from 50 to 60 minutes in length. Occasionally, the interviews lasted slightly longer. At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked a series of debriefing questions. These questions were listed at the end of the interview guide (see Appendix D). I concluded the meeting by thanking them for their time and told them that I would contact them when the transcript of the interview and manuscript would be available for their review. A brief follow-up interview via telephone was conducted with two participants in order to receive additional details that were not obtained during the initial interview. As I reviewed the

conversations, I realized that needed to ask one of the participants about the sports each of her children played as she had more than one child who was active in an organized sport at the time of the interview. The other follow-up interview was conducted with one father who played several sports as a youth. I needed to check on the particular ages when he was active in each of those sports. These interviews were brief; each one lasted approximately 10 minutes.

The process of collecting data continued until saturation was reached. This occurs when the researcher experiences a process where a decreasing amount of new knowledge and information is obtained from each participant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). It was at this point at which the information I was receiving became redundant and little to no new or relevant data emerged. Eleven interviews were conducted before this point was reached. Because this study focused on individuals' personal experiences in sport, determining saturation was difficult. On one hand, individuals' experiences were quite different. As a result, it could be argued that a saturation point could never be reached in a study of this nature. On the other hand, saturation was achieved as similarity in participants' experiences was ultimately evident. I did not consider the size of the participant pool a limitation to this study because it was a qualitative work in which emphasis was placed on the experiences and reflections of each individual.

Although this study was not positioned as phenomenological, it did have an element of phenomenological study since the focus was on individual experiences. My interest was with participants whose experiences departed from "grand theories" that exist with regard to factors that shape participation experiences in sport. As a result, I have not attempted to position the experiences of these participants as representative of any larger population but rather attempted to gain insight into the factors that shaped the experiences of *that individual*.

Data Analysis

After each interview was conducted, I transcribed each one verbatim. An inductive process of data analysis was utilized. This process means that the "patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data…rather than being imposed on (the data) prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 390). This process included analyzing the descriptive and interpretive elements that emerged from the interview data.

Patton (1990) stated, "The first task in qualitative analysis is description" (p. 373). Organizing the descriptive element of the data was achieved through the process of coding. Coding the interview data included finding commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures within the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Coding categories were created in order to sort the data and establish meaningful themes. Participants' descriptions of their own and their children's experiences in sport were broken down and placed into categories. Codes were a mixture of words and phrases that I constructed. "In vivo" codes that evolved from the accounts of the participants during the course of the interviews were used as well (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

Several coding categories were utilized in sorting interview data. As a result of the chronological nature of the participants' descriptions of their experiences, process coding was utilized. Process coding schemes are commonly used in ordering life-histories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The progression of participants' "careers" in sport was used to organize the data. Specific process codes included words and phrases that facilitated the categorization of life events and changes in those events over time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). "Childhood," "high school years," and "early adulthood" were examples of process codes that were used.

Event codes were used in order to categorize significant events that occurred in the lives of the participants which shaped their experiences in sport. Parents' acquisition or loss of a job, for

example, significantly shaped participation opportunities as this event significantly affected the availability of discretionary income. A family move was also a significant event as it affected participants' access to facilities in which participation took place.

Participants' experiences were affected by the people with whom they associated (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). As a result, relationship codes that included family, friends, and acquaintances were utilized. Part of the participants' accounts focused on sources of socialization which shaped their experiences in sport. For example, participants identified a sibling as influential. If that was the case, then a relationship code such as "brother" was used.

The final coding category focused on physical settings. Participants identified settings such as the home and school as significant locations where their experiences were shaped. In those instances, setting codes such as "home" and "school" were created.

Patton (1990) identified interpretation as the second part of data analysis. Once the description was complete, consideration of causes, consequences, and explanations take place. He stated:

> Interpretation, by definition, involves going beyond the descriptive data. Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases, and data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation. (p. 423)

As mentioned earlier, I wanted to provide my own as well as obtain participants' interpretations of the factors that shaped their own and their children's experiences in sport. The process, relationship, and setting codes that were used for the descriptive analysis were also used during the interpretive analysis. For example, a participant's mother may have been identified as

a significant person. Perhaps it was because she was an athlete, in which case a code of "mother/athlete" was used. Perhaps the participant grew up in a single parent household and his/her mother had the sole responsibility of child rearing. In that case, a code of "mother/solo" was used.

Desired outcomes of the data analysis included accurate representation of participants' and their children's experiences in sport and an indication of measures that were taken in order to ensure the reader that the content they were reading was accurate. Various measures were taken in order to achieve accuracy. The next two segments provide detail regarding efforts that were made in order to achieve those outcomes.

Representation of the participants. Patton (1990) stated, "The task for a qualitative researcher is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world or that part about which they are talking" (p. 24). I attempted to obtain and incorporate participants' perceptions of factors that shaped their own as well as their children's experiences in sport. In addition, I attempted to incorporate my perspective with regard to those experiences in my own life. An accurate representation of the participants' views was dependent on how I reported their experiences as well as how I interpreted them. I needed to ensure that I did not create an inaccurate portrayal of the participants' experiences. In order to achieve this, I utilized the assistance of the participants and peer reviewers. I describe their contributions in the next segment. Their efforts helped me make sure that I reported and interpreted participants' experiences accurately and without preconceived biases and assumptions.

Establishing trustworthiness. Within qualitative inquiry, the investigator is the data collection instrument. Trustworthiness in qualitative studies is contingent upon the "skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork" (Patton, 1990, p. 14). Establishing trustworthiness entails the utilization of various procedures in order to convince the reader that the material s/he is reading was accurately reported and that measures were taken to ensure that the material was consistent with what the participants actually said and experienced.

Triangulation-such as external reflection and input on investigators' work-can contribute to the trustworthiness of a study (Glesne, 2006). Therefore, triangulation was used in this study in order to increase the trustworthiness of the research. Suggestions and input from sources other than the investigator provide a differing perspective and an objective view of the data. External sources can detect bias and lack of clarity that may be missed by the investigator. In this study, my advisor and members of my dissertation committee provided ongoing feedback and input. They provided suggestions and an objective view of the work. Their efforts contributed to the trustworthiness of the study as any bias I displayed was brought to my attention.

The process of member checking was also utilized in this study. Member checking includes "sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with research participants to make sure you are representing them and their ideas accurately" (Glesne, 2006, p. 38). I transcribed each interview and provided each participant with a copy of his/her transcript so that s/he could examine it and confirm that statements were recorded accurately. The codes I created were not included with the transcript. Three of the participants responded and informed me that the transcripts were accurate and that their statements were not misrepresented. The remaining participants did not provide a response.

A copy of the completed manuscript was provided to the participants as well. Participants were asked to analyze the document in order to ensure that their statements were being reported accurately. Two participants responded and confirmed that their viewpoints and experiences were described and interpreted accurately. These were two of the three who responded to me that their transcripts were accurate. The remaining participants did not respond. As a result of their feedback, I felt confident the data provided in this manuscript was accurate.

In addition, interview data were analyzed by four colleagues experienced in qualitative research. A "Form D" (see Appendix G) was provided to these analysts in order to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants' statements. These peer reviewers examined the interview transcripts and provided their perspectives with regard to emergent themes. The themes they shared with me were considered before I finalized the five themes that appear in the following chapter. Two of the themes, *self-confidence and skill* and *structural constraints upon participation*, were constructed in part through the comments and perspectives I received from this group. Since the themes evolved from the evaluation of several individuals, it contributes to the trustworthiness of the study and confirms that the findings were not solely the product of one person (Glesne, 2006). There were not any disagreements that developed among the peer reviewers and me. Although I ultimately had to decide on themes to include in the next chapter, their perspectives were helpful as they saw many of the same themes emerging from the interviews.

Generalizability

Generalizability refers to whether or not the findings in a study are obtainable if the study was to be repeated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Due to small, purposefully selected samples, it is difficult for qualitative researchers to state that their findings resulting from one purposefully

selected group of participants will be representative of the experiences of others. Social phenomena are too context-bound and variable to permit generalization (Patton, 1990). In addition, the difficulty in reproducing the original conditions under which the data was collected also makes generalizing problematic (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative researchers, however, do not think of generalizability in terms of reproducing a study's findings. Instead, "they are more interested in deriving universal statements of social processes than statements of commonality between similar settings" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 32).

This study provided information as well as perceptions of participants' own and their children's experiences in sport. It was important to inform the reader that the findings were not intended to be representative of people other than those individuals and families who participated in this study. I cannot claim that the results I obtained through my purposefully selected group of participants were representative of the experiences others may have. In some instances, similarities existed between participants' experiences in sport. On the other hand, their experiences were very different. Even if they resided in a similar neighborhood or shared other similar demographics (e.g., race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status) it cannot be assumed that other similarly situated individuals would share the same experiences as these participants.

The data from this study could be used as a starting point from which additional knowledge can be obtained. However, no attempt was made to indicate the experiences among these participants were necessarily going to be duplicated when additional people are asked to discuss their experiences. Ultimately, the data was reported so that societal structures and forces acting upon the individual were revealed, but were not positioned as representative for a larger population.

In summation, the methodology associated with this study included several aspects. First, detail pertaining to the selection of participants was addressed. My positionality was established as a result of my social positioning and experiences. However, biases that have accumulated as a result of my positionality needed to be addressed in order to prevent them from interfering with the data collection process. As a result, a bracketing interview was conducted in order to address those biases. After the bracketing interview was conducted, data was collected. Finally, triangulation measures were utilized in the data analysis process in order to contribute to the trustworthiness of the data.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, participant profiles and the themes which illustrate different personal, social, and structural factors that shaped the experiences of this group were provided. I felt it was necessary to introduce the participants and briefly describe themselves and their experiences in sport. This profile included demographic information (e.g., gender, age group, race, and education level) and a brief description of the area in which s/he was raised and his/her sport participation experience. Since this study also focused upon the sport experiences of participants' children, information regarding their children's demographics as well as their sport participation histories were included in each profile. Data in this segment was presented in a third-person format. This segment was representative of the realist tale (Sparkes, 2002) that was discussed in the introduction. In this segment, no attempt was made to analyze why or how their own as well as their children's experiences in sport has been shaped, but rather to provide a concise description of the participants and their experiences.

The analytical element of hermeneutics, presented through the question, "What conditions caused an act to take place?" was included later in this chapter. In this segment, the participant contributed to the analysis of his/her experiences. In addition, I incorporated some of my own experiences and compared their experiences to mine. Several themes emerged from the participants' interview data and were included to illustrate differences between their own experiences and their children's. The titles of these themes and subthemes were provided later in the chapter.

Participant Profiles

Angie. Angie is Caucasian, is in her early 30s, and holds a master's degree. She is a single parent. She was raised in an area that she described as being rural; however, her family was not isolated. She stated, "We grew up in the country so to speak; we were not in the city. We had neighbors down our road but it was definitely the country." The area in which she was raised had a residential "feel" to it as well. Angie continued,

> We had close neighbors. We had one that we shared a driveway with. They were very close to us. And then we had a farm across the road from us. Two neighbors and then a quarter mile down the road there were side by side houses. We were pretty close to other people.

Angie's experience in organized sports was not extensive. She participated in softball during 5th and 6th grade. This participation experience took place in a recreational community league. Angie briefly participated in track and field during 6th grade but discontinued her participation in that activity after several practices. This team was school-affiliated.

Angie and her 8-year-old daughter reside in an environment that is different from the environment in which Angie was raised. They reside in a subdivision in which some racial diversity among the residents exists. With regard to sport participation, Angie's daughter was starting her fourth season of community soccer. Angie's daughter is also interested in basketball. At the time of the interview, her daughter was about to begin her first season of basketball.

Sarah. Sarah is Caucasian, in her mid 30's, and holds a degree from a technical school. She grew up in a rural area in the Northeast United States. With the exception of family members who lived in houses across the street and next door, there were no other neighbors along the road that was approximately two miles long. She stated, "We grew up on a 100-acre farm. Our closest non-relative was probably three miles away." She first participated in organized sports when she

was in 2nd grade. This experience was with a boys' baseball team in a recreational community league. She said, "The closest sport we were able to join in was a boys' baseball team. They had no girls' team at the time. I was one of four girls on the team." After playing with the boys' baseball team for one year she played for a newly created girls' softball team. However, the team was discontinued after one season. The league had an age restriction on co-ed participation; therefore, Sarah could not resume playing on the boys' team after the girls' team folded. This was the last of her organized sport experience.

Today, Sarah and her family live in a residential area. The subdivision in which her family resides has 48 units and her family's house sits on approximately a half acre of land. The presence of other children at the house is common as Sarah stated, "I have 10-12 kids in the backyard most of the time." Sarah and her husband have four children, ages 1, 2, 5, and 6 years. Three of the children are boys and the 5-year-old is a girl. Her oldest son was active in a basketball program offered by a local YMCA. He participated in a community soccer league but is no longer involved in that activity. Their daughter was active in ballet and was also participating in her first season of soccer when this interview was conducted.

Kathy. Kathy is African American, in her early 40s, and holds a master's degree. She came from a small town where opportunities for children to engage in a variety of organized sports were limited. Her first experience in organized sports was in basketball. She began participating in a recreational league when she was 8 years old and continued until the age of 14. In junior high, Kathy joined a school-affiliated basketball and track team; however, these teams quickly folded due to a shortage of interest. After basketball, Kathy participated in cheerleading during her senior year in high school and her freshman year in college.

Currently, Kathy and her family reside in a residential subdivision where opportunities for their children to participate in sports are widespread. Her daughter is 8 years old and her son is 6 years old. Her daughter first participated in a community based soccer league at the age of 5. She participated in that activity for one season. For the past two years, she was a cheerleader for a youth football team. At the age of 7, she participated in a community track and field program for one season. Kathy's son is active in several sports. He recently completed is first season in youth basketball and football. He played tee ball the previous summer and was beginning his first season of baseball at the time of this interview.

Patricia. Patricia is Caucasian, in her mid 30s, and holds a high school diploma. During her childhood, she resided in both rural and urban areas. She and her immediate family lived with her grandmother on a farm in a rural area from her earliest memories through her kindergarten year. Her family was fairly isolated in this setting as Patricia stated, "There were neighbors but it was a quarter of a mile; we had some space between us." When Patricia was in 1st grade, she and her family moved to a residential neighborhood. She resided there through 5th grade before she and her family returned to reside with her grandmother in the previously mentioned rural area.

Patricia was involved in several sports as a youth. She participated in soccer from kindergarten through her senior year in high school. She participated in a recreational community program through junior high school. After that, she played on her high school team. Patricia was also a member of her high school's track and field team. She was a member of this squad for four years. She also tried out for the school's cheerleading squad and practiced with the team for a brief period of time, but ended participation shortly thereafter. Lastly, she participated in karate when she was 11 and 12 years old.

Patricia, her husband, and her two children currently reside in a racially diverse residential area that is in close proximity to an urban center. Her daughter is 11 years old and her son is 8 years old. The entire family has been participating in karate for just over three years.

Theresa. Theresa is African American, in her early 30s, and holds a bachelor's degree. She was raised in an urban setting. Theresa, her mom and her brother lived in an apartment complex in which eligibility to live there was based upon a family's income. Her involvement in organized sports was quite extensive. It began when she was in 2nd grade and continued until she graduated from college. She started in recreational community basketball league. After that, she began playing basketball in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) when she reached 8th grade. She maintained her participation in this league until she reached college where she played on her university's varsity basketball team for four years.

Theresa was also involved in several other sports as a child and adolescent. When she was in middle school, she participated in a recreational volleyball league. She continued in this sport until she completed high school. Lastly, she played recreational community league softball for a brief period of time when she was 12 years old.

Today, Theresa and her two daughters, ages 9 and 2, reside in a residential subdivision. Her oldest daughter is active in a number of sports. She began participating in a recreational basketball league when she was 5 years old. Shortly afterward, she started playing softball in a recreational community league. Theresa's daughter was also starting her participation in AAU basketball. She participates in an "11 and under" league. Unlike the recreational league experience, this endeavor requires some out-of-town travel. She is also involved with a tournament team in which occasional out of town and as well as out of state travel is required.

Lindsay. Lindsay is African American, in her mid 30's, and holds an associate's degree. She grew up in a residential subdivision in a primarily African American neighborhood. Lindsay was involved with swimming and dance throughout her youth and adolescence. Lindsay's participation in organized sports began at a young age. She began swimming at a local YMCA when she was 5 years old. This was a recreational program that focused on skill development. She continued participating in this activity until she reached high school. When Lindsay was in middle school, she participated in a dance program. Similar to swimming, the dance program in which Lindsay was enrolled was not "high stakes" but rather focused on skill development. She participated in this activity for approximately three years. When she reached high school, she became heavily involved with her school's marching band; consequently, the time commitment associated with band resulted in her discontinuation of all other activities.

Lindsay currently lives in a setting that is similar to the one in which was raised. It is a residential subdivision in which a significant amount of racial diversity does not exist. She has one child who is currently active in organized sport programs. Her 7-year-old son plays football. He began playing flag football in a community rec league when he was 5 years old. He began his first season of tackle football the following year. At the time of this interview, Lindsay said her son was also interested in basketball. The basketball league in which he is interested is a community rec league. He has not yet participated in basketball; however, Lindsay said he would likely play the following season.

Leigh. Leigh is Caucasian, in her early 40s, and holds a master's degree. Leigh's family moved often during her youth and adolescence. It was not until Leigh reached high school that her family stayed in one dwelling for more than one year. She stated, "As a freshman in high school, we moved to (city) in a subdivision all the way through high school. That's when they

(her parents) decided we needed to stay in one place." Although the family moved often, most of the moves took place within one metropolitan area. Leigh's family lived in single family dwellings in subdivisions in which a significant amount of racial diversity was not present.

Leigh started participating in organized sports when she was in 4th grade. At that time, she played slow-pitch softball in a community rec league. She continued playing softball with non-school affiliated teams until she graduated from high school. Leigh also played basketball. She started playing with school affiliated teams when she was in the 7th grade and continued through high school. In addition, she played non-school affiliated volleyball teams in high school.

Similar to her own childhood, Leigh's family moved a considerable amount as a result of her husband's work. Currently, Leigh and her family reside in a house with about of acre of land. This house is not located in the heart of a subdivision but could be considered residential. Leigh's household has six children. Her five daughters are 17, 16, 10, 9, and 6 years old. Her son is 4 years old.

All of her children, with the exception of the youngest, were involved in organized sports at some time during their youths. Her two oldest daughters played softball for a year. They also participated in gymnastics and cheerleading. Her oldest daughter was not involved in any sports and her second oldest joined her school's track team shortly before this interview. Her middle two daughters were involved in basketball and swimming. These were recreational programs offered through a local YMCA. Her youngest daughter played community league softball for two years.

Jason. Jason is Caucasian, in his early 30s, and holds an associate's degree. He grew up in two developments that were relatively close to one another. The second residence was approximately 10 minutes away from the previous one. The neighborhoods in which he resided

consisted of a mix of residents working in various white and blue collar occupations. Little racial diversity existed in these neighborhoods, as he identified most of the residents in these developments as Caucasian.

Jason participated in several sports as a child. He was active in baseball, soccer, and basketball. He began playing baseball at the age of 4 years and continued playing for five years. He began playing soccer and basketball at the age of 8 years and continued until he was 10 years old. After a few years in which Jason wasn't involved in any organized sports, he participated in a community youth baseball league for one year when he was 13 years old. Upon completion of that season, Jason discontinued his participation.

Currently, Jason and his wife live in a residential subdivision with their four children. Three of the four are active in organized sport programs. His daughter is 11 years old and played softball in a community recreational league. She participated in a travel league for one year before returning to the community league. His two sons are 9 and 6 years old. They participated in a recreational basketball league that was offered through a local YMCA. His youngest daughter is 2 years old and was not involved in any organized sport activity.

Kevin. Kevin is Caucasian, in his early 30s, and holds an associate's degree. Kevin grew up in a residential area in the Southeast United States. A considerable amount of racial diversity was present in the neighborhood. He stated that the neighborhood was "about 50/50 black and white." He was raised in a single parent household for most of his childhood. Kevin stated, "It was just me and my dad starting at age four." Kevin had one brother and one sister who left the household when he was 10 and 8 years old, respectively.

Kevin participated in several organized sports during his youth and adolescence. He began playing in recreational community baseball, football, and basketball leagues when he was 5 years

old. When he reached high school, he stopped playing basketball but continued participating on his school's baseball and football teams until graduation.

Today, Kevin and his wife live in a residential subdivision with their four children. Unlike the neighborhood in which Kevin was raised, a significant amount of racial diversity is not present. Kevin's children are 9, 6, 4, and 1 years old. The oldest three children were active in organized sports. His daughter is 9 years old and played softball in a community rec league. She began participating when she was 6 years old. She was previously active in gymnastics and cheerleading but is no longer engaged in those activities. His 6-year-old and 4-year-old sons play baseball and basketball. His oldest son began playing these sports when he was 4 years old. His second oldest son was in the first year of his organized sports experience. The basketball leagues were offered by a local branch of the YMCA. The baseball leagues were community rec leagues.

Paul. Paul is Caucasian, in his early 40s, and hold's a bachelor's degree. He was raised in a residential area in a small town. He described this neighborhood as working class in which a significant amount of racial diversity was not present. Paul said the schools in the area "were easily 90% white from K through 12. There were just a handful of African American students there."

The house in which Paul and his three brothers were raised was adjacent to a city park. His first organized sport experiences took place at this park. He played in a recreational youth baseball league and was also on a swim team that held its meets at this park. Paul participated in baseball between the ages of 6 and 15 years. He also played football and track when he was in junior high. These squads were school-affiliated.

Currently, Kevin and his wife reside in a residential subdivision in a populated metropolitan area with their three children, ages 16, 14, and 9 years. Similar to the neighborhood

where Kevin was raised, there was not a significant mount of racial diversity. His oldest son is a sophomore in high school and started participating in organized baseball and soccer when he was 5 years old. His participation in soccer was brief; however, he played baseball until he was in the 7th grade. He was a member of community rec teams at first and then played with a travel program for the final three years. He was a member of his high school's football team. Kevin's second son began playing baseball and soccer at the age of 5. He played each of these sports for several years before moving to basketball. He was in 8th grade at the time of the interview and was active in a community basketball program for the past three years. His daughter began participating in a community soccer league when she was 5 years old. This lasted one year. She played on a basketball team that is affiliated with a local YMCA and has been doing so for four years. She has also been a member of the swim team at the YMCA for two years.

Matt. Matt is Caucasian, in his early 40s, and holds a master's degree. Matt was raised in a residential subdivision within a densely populated metropolitan area. At the age of 4 years, his family moved to a rural area. His dad was the director of a Christian youth camp and the family resided at the camp site full-time. Matt said neighbors were not in close proximity. He stated, "It was 129 acres I grew up on, so we didn't have close neighbors." Opportunities to engage in various recreational pursuits were readily available. Tennis courts, basketball courts, as well as baseball and softball fields were on the premises. In addition to participating in informal recreation at the campsite, Matt also participated in a number of organized community as well as school-affiliated sports.

Matt's participation in organized sport activities began when he was 8 years old. He played on a Little League baseball team for three years. He participated on his school's basketball team in junior high school. He was also a member of the school's track and cross country team in

junior high. During high school, Matt played basketball for one year and tennis for four years.

Today, Matt and his family reside in an area he described as a subdivision but at the same time has a rural feel about it. Matt said, “We’re kind of in a rural setting. We have 4.5 acres and it’s a bit isolated and there aren’t a lot of kids out.” He and his wife have six children, ages 13, 11, 8, 5, 4, and 2 years. The three oldest children were active in sports when this interview was conducted. His two oldest are boys who played in basketball leagues offered by a local branch of the YMCA. They have been in this league since each of them was 6 years old. They also played in a flag football league that is offered by the YMCA for two years. Matt’s daughter is 8 years old and has been playing basketball for two years in YMCA affiliated leagues.

Presentation and Discussion of the Data

Several themes emerged from this study. They are (a) Sources of Socialization; (b) Gendered Constructions Shaping Sport Experiences; (c) Parental Presence in Youth Sport; (d) Self-confidence and Skill; and (e) Structural Constraints upon Participation. See Table 2 for the list of themes and subthemes. These themes reflect various personal, social, and structural factors that shaped participants’ experiences. Each participant’s experience was unique unto them and served as examples that illustrated differences in experience. In some cases, commonalities across participants’ experiences emerged. Throughout the presentation and discussion of data, participants’ contributions often gave support to various commonly held “truths” regarding sport experiences. On the other hand, participants’ experiences challenged common knowledge or “truths.” Ultimately, my goal was to gain insight into the many factors that shaped the experiences of these participants as well as the factors that shaped or are shaping their children’s experiences so that I could present examples of differences within the human experience.

Table 2. Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes
Sources of Socialization	• Parents and Other Adults Socializing Children • Peers Socializing Peers • Children Socializing Parents
Gendered Constructions Shaping Sport Experiences	• Gendered Expectations of Involvement • Gendered Expectations of Achievement
Parental Presence in Youth Sport	• Promoting and Protecting Physical Health • Life Lessons • Balance • Safety • Sacrifice • Support
Self-Confidence and Skill	• Lower Confidence in Sport Participation • Higher Confidence in Sport Participation
Structural Constraints upon Participation	• Costs Associated with Participation • Geographic Constraints to Participation

The theoretical rationale associated with this study was established in order to address various shortcomings and lack of clarity that existed in previous research on family involvement in sport. As previously mentioned, hermeneutics was established as a theoretical framework for this study. Hermeneutics is a theoretical perspective that considers conditions responsible for producing an action. In this study, the conditions were various personal, social and structural factors. The action was the experiences accumulated by the participants and their children. The five themes that emerged from participants' interview data reflect the conditions that emerged in participants' own as well as in their children's lives and created their experiences in sport.

Theme 1: Sources of socialization. The first theme focused on various sources of socialization. A particular person or people emerged as the primary source of socialization for various reasons. In addition to participants' analysis, I utilized existing literature as well as my own experiences in order to explain why particular sources of socialization may have emerged while others did not.

Various personal, social and structural factors such as the gender of the socializer, the gender of the participant, household structure, and significant life events emerged as factors that served to shape the participants' as well as their children's socialization into sport. These factors were incorporated into three subthemes that were established in relation to sport socialization and the shaping of experience. They are: *Parents and Other Adults Socializing Children*, *Peers Socializing Peers*, and *Children Socializing Parents*.

The first segment of the subtheme "*Parents and Other Adults Socializing Children"* focused on the presence of male sources of socialization as well as the lack of female influence in the sport socialization process. For example, when Jason was a youth, his father and grandfather were significant in shaping his involvement in sport. His dad coached several of his

tee ball teams. Jason participated in baseball, basketball, and soccer until he was 10 years old. At this time, his parents divorced. His father became less of an influence upon his sport endeavors after this event. Jason identified his grandfather as a significant influence after his parents separated.

Similar to Jason, Matt's initiation into sport was established by his father. When Matt was five years old, he began playing Little League baseball. His father remained a primary source of influence upon his participation throughout his adolescence. His mother, on the other hand, was not a significant source of socialization.

Lastly, Kevin's experiences in sport commenced as a result of his father's influence. He started playing organized sports at the age of 5 years. The household structure in which Kevin was raised for most of his youth was different from that of Jason and Matt as Kevin's mother was not in the household.

Male participants in this study often served as the primary source of socialization upon their own children. Jason was the primary source of socialization on his children. When I asked Jason who was the most significant source of influence and why, he responded:

> I pushed it all. The reason why I did sports was because I was pushed to do it. Not that I would do it with disinterest in their wants. I never intended to force anything on them. I just said, "Hey here's something and if you want to do it you have our support."

Matt was involved in sports through his youth and adolescence and maintained his involvement in various recreational leagues as an adult. He perceived his children's interests in sports developed as a result of observing his involvement in those activities. He stated that his children became interested, "from watching me play at the gym and shooting hoops. Playing at church. They grew up around it. We started playing, so it was a natural progression and they said,

‘Dad, I’d like to do this with an organization.’”

Matt served as an example for his children. His involvement in sports led toward the development of his children’s interests. His story lends support to Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory in that parents serve as sources of influence on their children when they exhibit behaviors that their children observe and subsequently desire to imitate.

Kevin had a lengthy participation history in sport. This led to him socializing his children into sport. He initiated the sport experiences for his two sons and his daughter.

A father’s interest and participation in sport exert influence upon a child’s socialization into sport (Spreitzer & Snyder, 1976; Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988). Jason’s, Matt’s, and Kevin’s socialization into sport and their role in socializing their children into sport illustrated the prevalence of male influences on the sport socialization process of their children. Their socialization into sport illustrated a relationship between the gender of the parent and child on the sport socialization process as parents of the same sex as their child exert greater influence than the parent of the opposite sex (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1973; O’Laughlin, Paradis, Kishchuk, Barnett, & Renaud, 1999). In these studies, fathers exerted more influence on their sons and mothers exerted more influence on their daughters.

On the other hand, Greendorfer (1977) found that fathers exerted more influence on female children more mothers. Male participants from this study often exerted more influence than their wives on their sons and daughters. Jason, Matt, and Kevin served as the primary socializing source upon their sons’ as well as daughters’ sport involvement. They were responsible for initiating their children’s participation in organized sports.

None of the participants in this study identified their mothers as the primary source of influence upon the development of their sport-related interests. They often recalled their mothers

as “not being very athletic,” not having much of a participation history in sports, or as someone whose interests were outside of sports. Leigh’s description as to why her mother wasn’t involved in her sport activities illustrated this commonality across participants’ experiences. She stated, “She wasn’t very athletic. She’s real shy. She would have done it if we asked, but we wouldn’t have pushed it and take her out of her comfort zone.”

Even when fathers or other male relatives did not exert a significant influence upon the participants, mothers were not influential. When male influences in the family were not influential, other sources outside of the household emerged. Leigh, for instance, indicated that her father could not be highly involved in her and her siblings’ sport involvement because of his work-related obligations. Her primary source of influence came from outside the household. This source was a male neighbor who coached her friend’s softball team.

Female outside-of-the-home influence shaped one participant’s interests to join an organized sport program. Theresa said, “When I got to 2nd grade, someone asked me to play and my mom said, ‘Sure.’” She continued, “I played on her team, she was a horrible coach. Another lady told me I could play on her team the following year and really learn the game. That was 3rd grade-my first real experience.” These particular people were the mothers of classmates Theresa attended school with.

A possible explanation as to why mothers of the participants were not influential socializing sources upon their children’s experiences in sport could be attributed to the time period in which the socializing agent was raised. The ages of the participants in this study raged from the early 30s to late 40s. Participants’ parents spent their childhood years in the 1970s or earlier. As a result, mothers’ may have exerted little influence in the sport socialization of their children due to the fact that they were children before Title IX was enacted. Consequently, they

had fewer opportunities to participate in sport and subsequently teach it to their children (Greendorfer, 1977).

Another possible explanation behind the lack of mothers' influence upon the participants' socialization into sport could be attributed to the "ethic of care." The ethic of care is linked to women's roles as primary caregiver in the family. It has been suggested that due to the ethic of care, women focus upon the needs of others first and neglect their own interests with regard to sport participation (Shaw, 1994). This possibility was supported as several participants indicated their mother's involvement with their sport activities was minimal because of various obligations associated with tending to the family or maintaining the household.

The ethic of care limited opportunities for participants' mothers to participate in sport. It also limited opportunities for spouses of male participants to take an active role in their children's sport activities. For example, Matt's wife was active in sports as a youth. However, she did not have a significant influence in shaping her children's interests. When I asked why, Matt replied, "Her role now with three little kids at home, she doesn't have the time to do it."

An exception to the norm regarding the ethic of care emerged. Although the ethic of care is commonly thought to limit participation opportunities for females, it can serve as a limitation upon males as well. The ethic of care resulted in limitations upon participation opportunities for Angie's father when he was an adolescent and young adult. She indicated that he was not influential in shaping her experiences in sport. Since he had little opportunity to play sports, he exerted negligible influence upon her sport choices. She explained;

> My father didn't play any sports. Based on his childhood, he grew up very fast. He was in a house with seven other children. He had to take on some parental responsibilities and went into the military at a young age.

Up to this point, participants indicated that fathers or other males emerged as the primary source of socialization upon their children within sport. However, as time has elapsed, differences emerged with regard to the gender of the socializing source. The second segment of this subtheme focused on stories in which a greater amount of female involvement in the shaping of their children's experience existed.

Theresa and Leigh were two female participants who were influential sources of socialization upon their children. Their involvement and familiarity with sport was a factor in socializing their children into sport. Theresa was the primary socializing source upon her daughter's basketball experience. She was a highly skilled basketball player who played competitively through college. In addition, she was a single parent. When her competitive experience ended, she continued to play in recreational leagues. Theresa recalled how she remembered her daughter being present when she played recreational basketball and attributed that experience as to the reason why her daughter became interested in the game. She recalled, "She saw me play rec ball. When she was 1, 2, and 3 I was playing rec ball. She was always there, just not old enough to play. She was dribbling so I signed her up." Theresa enrolled her daughter in basketball when she was 4 years old and she has continued to participate to the present time.

Leigh played basketball and softball as a youth. She served as a source of socialization upon her daughter's sport experiences. Leigh is not a single parent but emerged as a primary socializing source for her children. She was active in softball, basketball, and volleyball during her youth and adolescence. Three of her daughters are active in the same sports that Leigh played as a youth. She indicated that she introduced her 10-year-old and 9-year-old children to basketball and her 6-year-old into softball.

Several explanations for this change over time are offered. First, females have received greater opportunities to participate in sport. As exposure to and participation in sport activities have increased for females since the creation of Title IX, the influence mothers have on their children's sport experiences has increased (Coakley, 2009). Several mothers who participated in the study had a fairly extensive experience in sport. Therefore, they were positioned to influence their children. Second, a factor such as household structure may be responsible for that occurrence as well. If a child is not sharing a household with a male adult, then the likelihood that the child could be influenced by a female socializing source increases.

In order to socialize a child into sport, a parent does not necessarily need to have prior active involvement in that activity. The last segment of this subtheme focused on two participants who emerged as primary sources of socialization upon their children despite a limited participation history. Jambor (1999) indicated that the socialization process goes beyond physical role models as relatively few parents actually participated in the sport in which their children compete. As a result, there are many youth sport activities in which parents do not serve as role models for specific sport activities. The stories of Angie and Kathy supported Jambor's claims as they introduced their children to sports in which they did not have firsthand participation experience.

Angie signed her daughter up for soccer because her daughter was someone who was inclined to be physically active. Angie said, "She preferred to be outside rather than play with a baby doll. So, I said, 'Let's give it a go and see how she likes it.' It was just to experiment a bit." Although she did not play soccer as a youth, Angie was responsible for initiating her daughter into that activity.

Kathy also initiated her children's involvement in a sport in which she did not actually participate when she was a youth and adolescent. She enrolled her son and daughter into soccer as well. She described the process of getting them started in that activity:

> When my daughter got into soccer I wanted her to. I wanted to see if she liked it. I said, "What do you think about soccer?" and she said, "OK." She liked it from then on. Her first season was in the spring so the next season was in the fall. I asked if she wanted to play fall soccer. She said "yes." I got the correspondence in the mail, get your registration in, so I got one for her and my son just turned four and asked if he wanted to play and he said "yeah."

The second subtheme *"Peers Socializing Peers"* focused on peers as a significant source of sport socialization. The amount of influence sources of socialization have upon an individual change throughout various points in his/her life cycle. Brustad (1996) stated, "A potentially beneficial area to examine involves the nature and extent of peer influence" (p. 323). As the individual proceeds through adolescence and into adulthood, the influence of the family as a socializing source decreases (Greendorfer, 1977). Peers, therefore, exert greater amounts of influence later in a child's life when the influence of the family declines. They become increasingly important upon shaping activity choices as children proceed into their youth and adolescence (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1976; Brown et al., 1989).

Several participants identified peers as significant socializing sources. The influence of peers emerged in Angie's and Paul's experiences. Consistent with Greendorfer (1977), peers exerted their influence on Angie when she was in 5^{th} grade and on Paul when he was in 7^{th} grade.

Angie's parents were not significant sources of socialization. In addition, she was an only child until the age of 15 years. With little influence coming from inside the household, sources of

influence emerged from elsewhere. Peers were influential upon Angie's experiences as she identified her friends as a significant socializing source in softball. When I asked who piqued her interest, she said:

> My friends. The first year I played, I was in the 5th grade. That's what they did. There was a big group of us that played together and we did everything together. I liked being with my friends and I liked the feeling of being with the team. We were a close-knit group of kids and you felt like a family.

Paul's peers were instrumental in developing his interests in football. He began playing football for his junior high team. The main reason behind his involvement in starting as well as ending that activity was because of the influence members of this peer group had on one another. Paul said, "It (the drive behind playing football) was peer group. That is what my buddies were doing and I did it. It seems like all of us signed up to play middle school football."

Peers also exert influence upon an individual's decision to drop out of sports (Hultsman, 1993). The same group of peers that piqued Paul's interest to play football influenced his decision to end his participation in that sport. He said, "By the end of middle school me and half of the peer group said, 'Let's not play (football).'" As a result of the influence members of this group exerted on one another, Paul and several of his friends subsequently ended their participation in football at the same time.

Peers within the family (e.g., cousins) also exerted influence on the activities of participants' children. Two examples of inside-the-family peers were included to further illustrate the many influences that act upon an individual. The experiences of Lindsay's son and Theresa's daughter were shaped by similarly-aged family members.

Lindsay's son was active in football. He played flag football before starting in a league where tackling was allowed. She identified her nephew as the person most responsible for generating her son's interest in this sport. She discussed how her son's interest started and said:

> I have a nephew who's the same age. He took flag football the year before my son started. His cousin started the year before, so I took him (my son) to the field and let him see and from there he wanted to pick it up.

In addition to herself, Theresa's youngest brother influenced her daughter's interest in sports. Theresa's youngest brother is 22 years younger than her and one year older than her daughter. His participation in baseball led to her daughter's interest in the game. Theresa recalled, "She wanted to play because her uncle played. He's 10."

The influence of peers (within the neighborhood) upon the development of activity interests differed between participants and their children. Several participants were raised in residential areas. These areas were usually subdivisions that consisted of a large number of single family homes. Within these settings, a number of similarly-aged peers lived nearby. The influence of these sources upon several participants was significant.

First, I included several statements from a number of participants to illustrate the presence of similarly-aged peers who regularly engaged in sport with them. After their own experiences were shared, participation opportunities their children had with similarly-aged peers in their neighborhoods were also included. There were differences in the amount of influence of peers in the neighborhood had on participants' sport involvement compared to the influence peers in the neighborhood had upon their children.

Paul was raised in a house that was adjacent to a city park in a residential area. There were several children in the neighborhood the same age as him. These neighbors were excellent

playmates and activities took place with these individuals. Similarly, Lindsay was raised in a subdivision where a number of similarly-aged peers were present. She said, “The kids played outside a lot. I had about 6-7 friends that lived in different parts of the subdivision that I could go around and play with.”

Despite the fact that all participants currently resided in populated areas, most of the peers their children engaged in activities with were not from their neighborhoods. Several participants indicated that their children had few opportunities to engage in sport activities with other children in their neighborhood. To illustrate, I incorporated a statement from Kevin regarding the lack of similarly-aged peers for his children in his current neighborhood. He said, “In this neighborhood you don’t have the kids like I had; there were kids everywhere. It doesn’t seem to show in this neighborhood.” Lindsay’s assessment of the neighborhood in which she resided echoed Kevin’s. Lindsay mentioned, “It’s limited; it’s residential but he (her son) doesn’t have as many friends in his age group where we live.” Lastly, Theresa indicated that the sport opportunities for her daughter were different compared to the opportunities she had. She said:

> She only has one friend in the neighborhood. There’s one kid she rides bikes and roller skates with, but as far as sports, no. She plays with my brother, but other than that, no. When I grew up I did a lot of that [play with other children in the neighborhood] but my daughter doesn’t have a lot of friends in the neighborhood who play.

With the lack of similarly-aged peers in close proximity, it was necessary for parents to seek out participation opportunities for their children. Organized sports, therefore, became a valuable resource for parents as these outlets provided opportunities for children to socialize with similarly-aged peers.

The third subtheme focused on the reverse socialization process. It has been suggested that "young athletes are not only the socializees but also the socializers of parents through their involvement in sport and physical activity" (Weiss & Hayashi, 1995, p. 37). The influence a child has upon the parent is significant as well. Therefore, a need to focus on the reciprocal nature of the socialization process exists. The process of "reverse socialization" refers to the ways in which younger people exert influence on their elders (Green & Chalip, 1997). Hasbrook (1986) encouraged additional focus upon the bi-directional interaction from the sport learner to significant others as it has rarely been addressed. Although the family and, in particular, parents typically provide the initial sport socialization opportunities for the child, the process is not exclusively a unidirectional process (Snyder & Purdy, 1982). Angie's story was incorporated in order to show this process.

Angie's daughter is active in basketball and soccer. Unlike soccer, the commencement of this activity was not directly a product of Angie's action, but rather a product of her daughter bringing her interests to Angie's attention. Angie mentioned that her daughter's interest in the sport was generated, in part, by watching games on television which featured a local intercollegiate women's basketball team. Because of her daughter's interest, Angie has been socialized into basketball, a sport that she did not play nor had any interest in when she was a youth. Angie described this "reverse socialization" process with regards to basketball. She said, "My daughter pulled me into that world. We see (the college team) on TV, she's hooked. We like to go to the games. She likes to tell people she plays basketball. She talks about it quite a bit and starts the conversation."

In summation, differences existed with regard to *who* exerts the influences as well as *when* these sources exert their influence. Because socializing sources not only differed, but also

exerted their influence to varying extents at various times within an individual's life, it was difficult to say that "X" will necessarily be responsible for "Y." As a result of the many studies that yielded sometimes contradictory findings, it was not my intent to make statements like "Fathers are primary sources upon girls' socialization into sport before the age of 12 and then mothers become the primary source of influence after the age of 12." Instead, I provided various anecdotes from the participants to illustrate differences among socialization sources and how these sources were influential in shaping their experiences.

Theme 2: Gendered constructions shaping sport experiences. The second theme focused on socially constructed connotations associated with gender and how those constructions shaped the sporting experiences of participants. As previously mentioned, male and female are terms that carry socially constructed meanings and ideological connotations that dictate normative behaviors for each gender (Krane, 2001). Gender roles include expectations about what is desirable for each sex, taking on both descriptive (e.g., what actually is) and prescriptive (e.g., what ought to be) norms (Shaw & Henderson, 2005). The impact of gender expectations on sport choices is reflected, for example, in the large percentage of men compared to women playing tackle football and the large percentage of women compared to men involved in cheerleading (Shaw, 1994).

I was interested in comparing participants' experiences to the experiences of their children because social constructions of gender and the ways in which gender is experienced are complex, inconsistent, and ever-changing (Shaw & Henderson, 2005). Although notions of appropriate feminine and masculine behaviors continue to exist, gender as a socially constructed term is subject to interpretation and change (Kirk, 2003). Social constructions regarding sport participation based on the gender of the participant have evolved over time, as females

commonly participate in sports that were once considered traditional masculine activities. This resulted in higher availability of opportunities that were not available to an earlier generation.

As part of the overall goal of gaining insight into the factors that shaped the participation experiences of parents and their children, I focused on whether or not socially constructed ideals were significant factors upon the sports each played. Why did their parents allow or not allow them to play the sports that piqued their interests? Did participants' gender have anything to do with the sports they played? These were among the questions I asked in hopes of gaining insight into social constructions and the impact they had on participants' experiences.

The influence of social constructions of gender on participation opportunities within this group of participants emerged in various ways. Within the theme of constructions of gender shaping the sporting experience, two subthemes emerged. They were: *Gendered Expectations of Involvement* and *Gendered Expectations of Achievement.*

The first subtheme, "*Gendered Expectations of Involvement,"* focused on differences regarding limitations or lack of limitations participants' parents imposed on their involvement in sport. In addition, limitations or lack of limitations participants imposed on their children's involvement were included. Several participants indicated their parents did not have any restrictions on participation. Patricia's statement regarding her parents' perspectives was typical of the statements I received. She said:

> My dad wouldn't have any no's on that [playing any sport]. He's the one who said "if you think you can do it, try it." As far as my mom, she never said anything about us wanting us not to do something so I don't think there was anything [off limits].

In addition, as parents, most participants did not impose limitations upon their children's participation endeavors as a result of socially constructed norms associated with gender. Kevin's

statement served as a typical example of participants being open to their children's interests in any activity. He said, "I think I would encourage them to do anything they want to do. I wouldn't close them off to anything they want to try."

In order to further illustrate the example of parents who did not see any inappropriate participation choices for their children, I included the story of Sarah's daughter who is 5 years old and likes football. Her daughter's interest in football developed from spending time watching games with her husband. In order to accommodate her daughter's interest in the game, Sarah's husband was inclined to find a flag football league for her. When I asked Sarah if she was concerned about her daughter getting injured, she said that her daughter is "very rough and tumble" and "beats up on the boys." She is supportive of her daughter's interests in not only football but other sports as well. In Sarah's view, there was nothing inappropriate about allowing her daughter to participate in a sport that was not typically played by females.

On the other hand, there were a few instances in which participants expressed limits with regard to appropriate sport participation for their children. Theresa's 9-year-old daughter was active in basketball and softball. Theresa's view of inappropriate sports for her daughter contrasted traditional gender-based ideologies in which appropriate sport activities for females focused upon aesthetics, beauty, and grace. When Theresa was a youth, she excelled in basketball. I believed her involvement in a sport that isn't commonly perceived as a "beauty sport" shaped Theresa's opinions with regard to sporting activities she saw as fit for her daughter. Theresa was resistant to allowing her daughter to participate in cheerleading. She said, "Cheerleading is the only thing where I'd be like, 'Why?'" When I asked her what it was about cheerleading that would make her resistant toward allowing her daughter to participate, she said:

> It's not a sport. Any sport where you have to get cute and play is not a sport. If she wanted to cheer for my brother's football team, that's not a sport. I'd let her do it but I'd probably try to talk her out of it.

Expectations toward participation on the basis of gender also emerged when Jason discussed his daughter. Jason's daughter was active in softball at the time of this interview. He and his wife were supportive of their daughter's efforts; however, he indicated that he did not expect participation in sport to be a significant part of her life as she grows older. He stated:

> Neither myself nor my wife support women's athletics later in the years. We envision a lady coming out of her and so it doesn't match the model you see on TV. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that. I want her to be a good Christian lady first and if she enjoys doing that then she can have at it.

Jason's comment regarding his daughter's future participation in sport illustrates various complexities related to gender, age, religious convictions, parental support and sport participation. Various levels of acceptability relating to female participation in sport have varied (Metheny, 1965). Participation in particular sports has been viewed as appropriate for males and inappropriate for females (Krane, 2001). Inappropriate sports for females are those that require traditional hegemonic masculine qualities such as strength, speed, and aggression. Females who participate in sports that are deemed inappropriate encounter social stigma (Wesely, 2001).

First, I found it interesting that he and his wife were supportive of their daughter's participation *now* but indicated that they will not be supportive of her participation at a later time. Why is there a time-related limitation of their support toward their daughter's participation? Perhaps they were supportive at the present time because she was 11 years old at the time of the interview. Once she reaches adolescence, societal perceptions of appropriate activity might

influence her parents into discouraging her participation in softball. Brown et al. (1989) stated, "Adolescence is…a period in which females may be most vulnerable to direct and indirect messages that urge them to conform to cultural images of sex role appropriate behavior" (p. 407). Consequently, if she continues participating after she reaches adolescence, she may be violating gender norms and appropriate behavior in the opinion of her parents.

Also, would Jason and his wife had been more supportive of their daughter's participation had she played a different sport? For example, Snyder and Spreitzer (1976) found that mothers and fathers encouraged their daughter's participation in gymnastics more frequently than basketball. I perceived that they may be uncomfortable with social stigma surrounded with females who participate in sports that do not emphasize grace, beauty and aesthetics. Females who excel in these sports are often labeled a "dyke" or "butch" (Krane, 2001). High school age female basketball players indicated that others referred to them as "tomboys" more than gymnasts (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1976). Perhaps they do not want her daughter to become a "tomboy" as socially constructed connotations associated with that term exist.

Another aspect of his comment that further complicates the rationale behind their stance was that Jason's wife played softball as a youth. Brown et al. (1989) stated, "Mother's participation is a significant predictor of continued participation by adolescent girls" (p. 406). Why doesn't his wife support her daughter's participation in a sport she once played? Perhaps she encountered a negative experience and subsequently does not wish her daughter to encounter a similar one. As a concerned parent, her rationale behind her lack of support for her daughter's participation in softball is that she wants to protect her from the possibility of a negative incident or outcome.

Finally, I perceived that Jason and his wife felt a disconnect between sport participation and his daughter's ability to maintain a Christian lifestyle as she gets older. Inherent conflicts between Christian religious beliefs and sport are perceived to exist. Coakley (2009) stated that Christianity "emphasizes means over ends, process over product, quality over quantity, and caring for others over caring for the self" (p. 540). On the other hand, sport participation emphasizes "winning, final scores, season records, personal performance statistics, and self-display" (Coakley, 2009, p. 540). Perhaps Jason and his wife perceived maintaining a Christian lifestyle and sport to be incompatible. As a result, they will not support their daughter's participation as she gets older in order that she will not be subject to this perceived incompatibility.

In closing, Jason and his wife have two sons who were active in sports at the time of the interview. Will they hold the same perceptions with their sons as they did their daughter? Will they support their sons' involvement in sport because it is an appropriate endeavor for boys? Will a conflict between sport participation and maintenance of a Christian lifestyle exist for his boys as well or will they be complimentary? With this one statement, Jason alerted me of many complexities that tie gender and religion into sport participation.

The second subtheme, "*Gendered Expectations of Achievement,"* focused on gendered expectations of achievement in sport. When I was participating in sport, I wasn't cognizant of the expectations or the value my parents held toward my participation in sport. What kind of achievement expectations, if any, did they hold? Did my gender have any bearing upon those expectations? I asked participants about the achievement expectations their parents held with regard to their participation. I also asked them about the achievement expectations they held for their children. I included statements from a participant that supported varying achievement

expectations on the basis of gender. Kathy's father had different expectations for herself and her brother. In addition, she held different expectations of participation outcomes for her son and daughter.

I incorporated Eccles' expectancy-value model as the lens through which Kathy's comments may be viewed. This content was not included in chapter 2 as I did not anticipate comments that coincided with this material to emerge in the interviews. However, I believed expectancies regarding gender and participation outcomes could be explained more clearly by incorporating supporting material which related to parental expectancies.

Children's participation is related to parental beliefs regarding their potential for competence in those activities. Eccles (1984) expectancy-value model was established on the concept that parental expectations regarding the likelihood their children would be successful in a particular domain and the value associated with success in that domain result in different levels of parental support. Domains can include sports, music, and academics. A child's continued interest and participation in a particular domain or domains, therefore, was influenced by parental support and provision of opportunities as a result of parents' perceptions of their child's qualities (Brustad, 1996).

Eccles originally tested this model in academic domains. Gender differences were linked to competence and value beliefs. Subsequent research on parental expectancies and children's sport involvement was conducted as well. For example, Jacobs & Eccles (1992) examined mothers' perceptions of ability in sports, math, and social domains among their 11-year-old and 12-year-old children. Their findings revealed that mothers' appraisals regarding their children's abilities in these domains were affected by gender role stereotypes. Mothers held more favorable perceptions toward abilities to excel in sport and mathematics among male children while

competence in social skills was perceived for female children.

Fredricks and Eccles (2005) also found gender-stereotyped beliefs and behaviors among parents with regard to their children's sport experiences. Parents perceived their sons possessed greater amounts of athletic ability and that sport participation was more important for their sons than daughters. As a result, parents provided a greater amount of support for their sons' involvement in sport as opposed to their daughters.

The work conducted by Jacobs and Eccles (1992) and Fredricks and Eccles (2005) support the argument that parental achievement expectancies associated with sport vary based upon the gender of the child. When parents hold higher expectations toward their child's success, the more likely a child is to maintain involvement as well as succeed in a domain (Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud, & Cury, 2002). Achievement expectancies regarding children's sport participation emerged from one participant's statements.

For example, Kathy participated in recreational basketball between the ages of 8 and 14 years. When she reached high school, she wanted to try out for the school's basketball team. However, her father prohibited her from trying out. Her brother, on the other hand, was permitted to play for his high school's team. Her father's assessments of her and her brother's athletic abilities lent support to Eccles' model in that her father's expectations for sport success and the value of sport participation differed based on the gender of his children. Kathy stated, "My father thought I was more academically inclined than athletically inclined and my brother was athletically inclined. He was always thinking I was more inclined to be academically challenged. He wanted me to be more involved academically."

Kathy's father held a higher expectation and value of sport participation for her brother than herself. As a parent, the expectations and values Kathy had for her children differed based

on each child's gender. Kathy held higher expectations for her son's participation than her daughter's. The expectation that Kathy's son would participate at a higher level than her daughter supported the relationship between differing beliefs regarding outcomes based on the gender of the child. She said, "I'll never say she'll never make it to pro. I don't expect her to. Maybe she will. My son, I expect him to play at least college ball. I expect through college and who knows after that."

In summation, differences among parental perspectives regarding appropriate sport involvement emerged. Participants indicated that their parents did not restrict their participation on the basis of gender. Most participants did not impose any limitations on their children's involvement in sport. However, two participants indicated limitations toward their daughter's involvement in sport. Perspectives of expectations on the basis of gender emerged as well as one participant indicated her father held different expectations between herself and her brother. As a parent, she held different expectations for her son and daughter.

Parental Presence in Youth Sport. Parents' presence within their children's sport experiences takes several forms. The third theme focused on the ways in which parents have been involved or make their presence within their children's sport activities. Since parents play such a significant role in the shaping of their children's experiences, I constructed subthemes that focused on various ways in which parents were present in this domain. Parents of the participants affected their own sport participation and participants affected their children's sport participation.

Parental presence was significant in children's initiation into sport. Two subthemes, *Promoting and Protecting Physical Health* and *Life Lessons* centered on positive outcomes associated with participation. Examples of parental presence in this subtheme included parents' provision of sport for their children in sport so they could receive benefits from participating.

Another way parents are present in their children's participation is when they limit or prevent their children's engagement in participation opportunities if it becomes or has the potential to become detrimental. In addition, parents provide sport opportunities in order to ensure the child's safety by limiting opportunities and access to informal, unsupervised activities. *Balance* and *Safety* were the third and fourth subthemes that focused on limitations to participation.

Parents sacrifice time, money, and own interests to provide their children with beneficial opportunities. The fifth subtheme, *Sacrifice*, focused on the mother of a participant who made significant sacrifices so that her own participation in sport could continue. Lastly, parents were present in their children's activities through provisions of various types of support. The sixth and final subtheme, *Support*, focused on the ways participants' sport activities were supported by their parents as well as the ways they supported their children's participation. Within this subtheme, parental provisions of emotional, logistical, financial, and instructional support were examined.

The first subtheme focused on parental desires to promote and protect the physical health of their children through involvement in sport. Increased risk for premature death, various chronic diseases, and obesity is associated with physical inactivity (Henderson & Ainsworth, 2001). In today's society, the effect of television, video games, and computer usage upon a child's physical development is a major societal concern as American children spend more time watching television than any other activity. The consequences of that trend are evident as the rate of obese youths has doubled in the period from 1985-2008 (Coakley, 2009). Children's involvement in physical activity affects their current health status and tendency toward obesity as well as their predisposition to a variety of potential health risks during adolescence and

adulthood (Clark & Blair, 1988; Durrant, Linder, & Mahoney, 1983).

Walker (1993) suggested that “Parents must take an active role in the encouragement of healthy lifestyles for their children” (p. 106). Several of the participants initiated their children’s involvement in sport because of the positive effects an active lifestyle can have upon their children’s health. Sarah supported her children’s involvement in sports as she said, “I like to see them involved because it is healthier for them.” Paul echoed that sentiment. He said, “I want them to develop the habits of valuing activity and realize it is healthy and necessary to stay active and I want them to be concerned about their fitness and health.” Since participation in sport is commonly believed to be beneficial for a child’s physical health, participants supported their children’s involvement because numerous health-related benefits could be obtained.

Participants were encouraged by their parents to be physically active. The positive encouragement they received and their inclinations to instill a liking for physical activity in their children supported the continuity theory of social behavior. As mentioned earlier, lifestyles which were practiced at one stage of life influence lifestyles during later stages in life (McPherson, 1983). In this study, parents who were raised to be physically active introduced their children into a physically active lifestyle.

Parents value physical activity for his/her children and seek out participation opportunities for them so they may reap the benefits of an active lifestyle. On the other hand, parents also prevented activity when it posed risks to the child’s physical health. As part of the goal of illustrating differences in experience, I incorporated examples from participants that illustrated limitations with regard to the sport-health connection.

Participants’ experiences in sports were shaped by parents who discouraged participation because they saw a disconnect between participation in a particular sport or sport setting and the

sport-health connection. Now that the participants are parents, their children's experiences in sports were shaped by concerns toward their children's safety. I included this because I wanted to know if parents encouraged participation in sports to the point that they did not consider whether or not the child was physically cut out for the activity. Furthermore, I wanted to know about concerns parents held toward a particular activity which caused them to discourage their children's involvement even when they did not feel that the child was not cut out for it.

Kathy's dad was a multi-sport athlete who excelled in basketball, baseball, and football before a serious knee injury in high school effectively ended his participation in competitive sports. Kathy participated in a recreational basketball league from the ages of 8-14 years. In her junior year, she wanted to try out for the high school basketball team. Her father refused to let her try out for the team. Much to Kathy's chagrin, she didn't pursue that option. She recognized her father's refusal to let her play in an environment with a higher competition level wasn't because he wasn't supportive of her, but rather he felt she would not be safe participating in an activity where most of her competitors would be significantly larger than her. She said:

> My father never wanted me to pursue sports. He was all for it when I was in rec league. I was a small person. My father was like, "Those girls will eat you alive on the court." I'm like, 'Can you give me a chance?' and the answer was "No. Those girls are bigger than you." He in his own way didn't mean it; I'm looking at it as a parent's point of view. He wasn't trying to discourage me. He was trying to discourage me so I wouldn't get hurt. However, before I became a parent, I was resentful of my sport experience because Dad was always trying to protect us.

Kathy's brother, although competent in sport, was also restricted from playing a particular sport. Her brother wanted to play football but his father prohibited him from playing. The nature

of the activity was the reason for the prohibition. Kathy said:

> My brother is five years younger than I am and he was a powerhouse. He played baseball and basketball. My father never allowed him to play rec football when he was growing up because of his injury. He tried to shield him from that from year-to-year. My brother wanted to play and my father would say "No. I don't want you to suffer like I have."

In her experience as well as her brother's, Kathy's father was preventing his children from participating in certain activities because of his concerns for their physical health. Her father used his own life experiences to not only restrict but also possibly benefit his children. In Kathy's case, her father's presence was evident in his prevention of an activity he felt would compromise his children's physical health.

Other participants indicated their activity choices were influenced by their parents. For example, Matt discussed his father's experience in football. His father did not prevent Matt and his brothers from playing, but he did not actively encourage them to participate in that sport. Matt said:

> My dad played football in high school. He was a center. I think in his junior or senior year he needed surgery on both knees. He was afraid we'd get injured or have difficulties later in life. If we had pushed it, he would have said, "OK." But he didn't encourage it.

As parents, participants indicated the nature of some activities prevented them from actively encouraging their children from taking up that activity. For instance, Patricia was hesitant to let her 8-year-old son play football. She said:

> I don't like football. I really wouldn't stop him but my cousin had two knee surgeries before graduating high school from football. So I don't like the football thing. You're

going to have problems the rest of your life when you have those surgeries. I wouldn't stop it, but I wouldn't recommend it.

Patricia's statement illustrated that parents doesn't necessarily involve allowing a child to engage in any activity s/he wanted. Her hesitation to let her son play developed as a result of her cousin's injuries. Although she did not perceive her son as incapable, the potential of long-term health problems prevented her from seeking out participation opportunities for him.

The parents of several participants as well as several participants were uncomfortable with allowing their children to participate in sports they felt would be detrimental to their children's well being. Although the parents should be commended for being cautious, did they perform a disservice for their children by discouraging involvement in a sport they perceived was unsafe? It was understandable to see why these individuals were hesitant toward allowing their children to play football, especially when they had firsthand experience of the problems that could result from participation. On the other hand, it is impossible to say that one person's experiences would be the same as another's. I cannot blame the participants for the stance they had regarding their children's participation in football; however, I support the perspective that children should be able to try the sports that interest them because there is also the potential for a rewarding experience.

The second subtheme of "*Life Lessons"* focused on lessons a child can learn through his/her involvement in sport. Task value is characterized by the usefulness related to engagement in a task so that future goals may be obtained (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995). When value associated with engagement in a given task exists, the likelihood of engaging in that activity increases. Task value associated with sport participation can serve as a significant motivating factor for a parent to commence a child's involvement in sport if the parent perceives value in association with

involvement in the activity. In addition to physical benefits, participation can contribute to the building of strong character, social skills, self-confidence and can help children develop an understanding of sportspersonship (Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997). Moral development, relationships with peers and a sense of accomplishment can also result (Averill & Power, 1995).

Various and valuable lessons children learn through their participation in sport have the potential to serve them well as they proceed through future life stages. Siegenthaler and Gonzalez (1997) stated, “Many parents believe that (sports) are important to character-building and prepare children for adult life. As a result, parents support their children’s involvement in sport” (p. 300). Sports, therefore, have functional value. By immersing their children into sport, parents aspire for their children to learn life lessons.

The participants in this study were parents of at least one child who was under the age of 13 and active in an organized sport. Parents recognized the value of sport participation in their children’s lives and the life lessons their children would receive through these activities. Several participants indicated they were responsible for initiating their children’s involvement in order to provide those lessons.

Kevin’s participation in sports as a youth taught him valuable life lessons. Now that he is a parent, he wanted his children to learn the same lessons through sport. Kevin wanted his children to understand the importance of being a member of a team and realize they are being counted on to fulfill that role. He said:

> I want them to understand what commitment and loyalty is. I want them to understand people depend on them to be there and perform at a high level to get things accomplished. Everything is about whatever you set your mind to. Nothing is about you. The same thing I got from my experience, you can’t be so self-centered to think as an individual in anything

you do in life because you won't be successful.

Kevin's intent was to utilize sport as a way of socializing values into his children. Brustad (1992) refers to socialization via sport as "the acquisition of attitudes, values, and knowledge as a result of sport participation" (p. 60). His strategy lends support to the use of sport as a socializing mechanism that ingrains values within children that can be of use to them later in life.

Angie valued sport participation for her daughter. She viewed sports as a mechanism which could help her daughter learn those lessons. Gaining an understanding of sportspersonship through participation was a specific lesson Angie hoped her daughter would learn. She stated, "I want her to learn to be a team player and to win some and lose some. I think she can gain a lot from sports." Since participation in sports can provide many valuable life lessons for children, acquisition of those lessons often serve as a driving force behind parents initiating their children's involvement in sports as well as allowing participation to continue.

The value associated with sport participation on the basis of the child's gender emerged in Jason's comments. He valued sport participation for his boys because he perceived it could help them develop a quality that will be useful to them throughout their lives. He said, "My vision is that they enjoy playing, and have a competitive edge. I think boys need to be competitive."

Competitiveness has been identified as a hegemonic masculine trait (Krane, 2001). Gaining an understanding of competition is a valuable life lesson that can be gained through participating in sport. For this reason, many parents enroll their sons in organized sports. On the other hand, Jason's comment made me wonder, "Don't females need to learn how to be competitive as well?" Although competitiveness has not been identified as a hegemonic feminine trait (Krane, 2001), females are not shielded from competitive situations throughout their lives. As a result, females should be encouraged to be competitive.

I found this comment to be most interesting after he described his daughter's competitive drive and success in organized sport. His daughter participated on a travel softball team. It appeared that not only has his daughter effectively dealt with competition in her past experience, but competing is something that she really enjoys. He stated;

> The first one (of his children) was a girl, and she turned out to be the best of all of them and she took to it. She has a competitive spirit equal to mine. She plays hard and does well so I have let her play softball. She loves it and she likes ice skating as well, which is non-competitive but she finds a way to make it competitive.

Through our discussion, I perceived that Jason's daughter was athletically inclined and has the competitive drive to be successful in her future sport endeavors. It could be argued that parents should encourage their children to pursue activities in which they excel, even if excelling means displaying qualities that are not traditionally consistent with masculinity or femininity. I would recommend Jason and his wife value their daughter's sport participation to a greater extent as she gets older. She has displayed the potential to compete and perform well, which would appear to have positive consequences for her confidence. Perhaps the confidence she builds in herself as a youth will help her in adult life whenever she is faced with competition.

On the other hand, Theresa perceived competitiveness was an important trait for females. Theresa competed at a high level (NCAA Division I basketball). Because she had extensive life experiences in seeing how competitive can be beneficial to a person, she was adamant about instilling the importance of being a competitive person into her daughter. The assumption of competitiveness as an exclusively hegemonic masculine trait was challenged in Theresa's example. Her participation experience has to be acknowledged as a significant factor in her ambitions to ensure her daughter gains an understanding and appreciation of competition.

She initiated her daughter's involvement in basketball and believed participation provided her daughter with a sense of competitiveness. She associated value with being a competitive person as it is something her daughter would need in order to be successful throughout her life. She said:

> It's important to me that she has a lot of physical activity and that she has to play something competitive, whether it's basketball or not. I think the competitive aspect is not just about sports but for jobs and life. Competitiveness and self-confidence go together. I don't see how you could have a lot of self-confidence if you're not competitive.

In summation, participation in sport was often viewed as an activity that prepares children for challenges they will encounter as they grow older. Several participants specifically mentioned the connection between sports and the acquisition of valuable life lessons. They personally learned valuable lessons through sport and desired for their children to reap the same benefits.

Competitiveness and hegemonic assumptions of masculinity and femininity was revealed in one male participant's comments. On the other hand, challenges to these hegemonic assumptions were present in the statements provided by a female participant. Theresa's firsthand participation experience could be attributed to why she sees competitiveness as a quality her daughter needs to possess. Since Jason is a male, perhaps his gender could be attributed to why he did viewed competitiveness as necessary characteristic for his sons but not his daughter. As Jason's and Theresa's children grow older, it would be interesting to see how these philosophies regarding competitiveness affect not only the sports they play but also the occupational fields they pursue.

The third subtheme focused on sport as part of a balanced lifestyle. In addition, I focused on measures taken by participants' parents as well as the participants themselves in order to ensure balance was present in their children's lives. Sport participation can be valuable; however,

it can also become a consuming endeavor. The first example of parents ensuring balance in their children's lives focused upon Leigh's upbringing. Sports were one aspect that fit into her family's balanced lifestyle. When she was a youth, her family enjoyed sports and participated in them regularly. Sports, however, did not take precedence over other parts of their lives. Her family viewed sports as something that held value but was never a consuming endeavor. She said,

> Mom and dad felt that it was important to have something to focus on. We were brought up in a Christian home as well, so we were involved in church. Family time was important, church was important. Sport was a filler to keep you out of trouble and fit. It all fit into the big picture.

Supportive parents invest time and money into their children's sports and experience pride and satisfaction when their children experience success (Ogilvie, Tofler, Conroy, & Drell, 1998). Although positive feelings associated with the child's involvement may exist, parents need to consider decreased involvement with or discontinuation of an activity if involvement becomes detrimental (Tofler, Knapp, & Drell, 1998). In this study, parents restricted their children's involvement in or supported their children's discontinuation when it became too consuming of their own and the family's time. The participants in this study were cognizant of ensuring that their children received the opportunity to participate in activities which appealed to them. On the other hand, they were careful to ensure a situation where participation became detrimental to the children's as well as the family's well-being did not occur. One of the participants, Matt, identified the "culture of extremes" we live in as a reason why parents have their children involved in sports which consume significant amounts of time.

The culture of extremes may be responsible for the development of an achievement by proxy distortion (ABPD) in some parents. ABPD occurs when adults attempt to gratify conscious

or unconscious needs and ambitions and also attempt to obtain various goals or achievements through their child or children (Tofler et al., 1998). For instance, parents' awareness of the time and money invested in their children's athletic endeavors may cause them to expect external rewards in terms of a college scholarship or professional career (Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997). As a result, parents may push their children into intensive sport participation.

Matt's work experiences allowed him to witness negative consequences that resulted from intensive youth sport involvement. He said, "I was in youth ministry and I saw the damage it had on the parent-child relationship. I also saw a lot of it, the parents were driving it. It's their choice but I could see the kid was kind of burned out. I think he would have liked the break. But the parents are like, 'You're going to do this.'"

As a result, Matt was careful not to place his children in activities to the point where participation was going to create imbalance and interfere with other responsibilities. If that occurred, his children's participation would be curtailed or would end altogether. Matt stated, "I'd have no problem saying we're not doing this anymore. If their academics were being affected, sorry. That takes higher priority."

Other participants' children were immersed in situations where intensive participation was present. Paul's son participated in travel baseball. At first, participating at this level was very gratifying not only for Paul's son but himself as well. After three years, however, the intensive schedule began to wear on his son as well as the family. As a result, Paul supported his son's decision to end his participation. He stated:

> It was exciting because a coach called and said, "I'm putting together a new travel team. We're going to do this and we want your son to play." Part of it was "My kid's good enough and someone wants him to be on the team." Toward the end of the last season, he

> said he didn't want to do it anymore. That was because of the schedule and the intensity of those traveling teams. It got intense and competitive. He simply burned out on it. By the time he quit we were secretly glad. It was all-consuming and it was an easy decision on our [Paul's wife and himself] part to let him quit.

Another example of parents limiting their children's participation emerged in Jason's story. His daughter was a competent athlete who participated in travel softball. Although she performed well, her participation ended because of the consuming nature of the activity. Jason restricted her participation because protecting the family unit was more important than having her participate in a sport which consumed a significant amount of time and resulted in the fragmentation of the family unit. He said:

> My girl played a season of travel but we don't have the time for it. It's not beneficial to the family. We see a lot of parents who are so into the stuff. We see a lot of what we don't want to be. They're never home; they're always in a hotel room. That's not the family we want to be. We want to be in church Sunday, not on the ball field.

Matt and Jason were careful not to allow sport participation to permeate their family's lives to the extent where they perceived it interfered with other significant aspects. Their perspectives certainly complicate appropriate plans of action a parent should take with regard to their children's participation. On one hand, their perspectives should be commended as there are many parents who place a disproportionate amount of emphasis and allocate a significant amount of resources in order to support their children's sport participation. In many cases, parents with ABPD are unable to differentiate their own wants from the child's. In that regard, Jason and Matt should be commended for their stance. On the other hand, it could be argued that they are denying their children opportunities to participate, which is something that parents should not do.

Jason's daughter displayed competency in her softball participation. Although participating in a travel program can be time-intensive, if she enjoys it and excels in it, shouldn't she be permitted to pursue this opportunity to the fullest extent?

A final aspect I perceived that entered into their perspectives had to deal with the location where I located several of the participants. Jason, Paul, Leigh, and Matt were members of the local YMCA. This is a location where sport participation and Christian values coexist. All of the participants from this location discussed the fact that sport is one minor aspect among many other significant aspects in their family's lives. If I had spoken with parents whose children were members of elite teams, perhaps I would have received some different perspectives regarding the role and placement of sport in their family's lives. The responses I received from this group of participants illustrate that the location(s) where data is collected makes a difference in the results that are obtained.

At the time of the interview, Jason's daughter participated in a recreational softball league where travel was minimal and commitment to games and practices did not interfere with other functions valued by the family. On one hand, it could be argued that parents should not restrict participation when the child enjoys and displays competence in it. On the other hand, placing restrictions on children's activities when participation becomes detrimental to other family members and the family's way of life could be argued as the type of measure parents should take. These examples illustrate the difficulty in decisions parents must make when their children are involved in sports programs.

In summation, parents provided opportunities for his/her children to engage in a variety of sport activities. Although participation can result in many positive benefits, it could have detrimental effects on not only the child but the rest of the family as well. When this occurred,

reduction or discontinuation of an activity was necessary for the well-being of the child and family. Therefore, they acted in ways that seemed to be inherently opposite to one another since they supported participation but also restricted it under certain conditions.

The fourth subtheme focused on changing society and increased threats to children's safety. When children are left to engage in informal recreation in uncontrolled environments, their safety can be compromised. As a result, parents sought opportunities for their children to participate in structured sport programs.

When the participants were youths, several of them indicated engaging in informal sport activities with similarly-aged peers. They did this away from the supervision of their parents. Although they were away from the house for lengthy periods of time, safety was never a concern.

A significant part of Jason's sport experiences consisted of informal activity with peers in the neighborhood. He was out of the house and out of sight of his parents for long periods of time throughout the day. He recalled that "the roaming I did before I was 11" was a positive element in his childhood experience. It gave him the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities and build relationships with similarly-aged peers. Becoming a victim of a crime was not a concern to himself, his peers, nor his parents and the parents of his peers. He said:

> I was in a community that had a subdivision. We [his family] were at the front of a subdivision on a busy road. You could go back in the subdivision and play with the other kids. You had more interaction with other kids and there was less of a concern of other neighbors and predators and that kind of thing. We knew our immediate neighbors and anyone that had kids we played with.

The setting in which Theresa was raised was different from Jason's. Theresa spent a large part of her youth living in an apartment complex for low-income families. Similar to Jason, she

also engaged in frequent informal recreation with her friends. She said, “When I was young, we took off on our bikes and be gone all day.”

Coakley (2009) identified social changes as a reason why informal sport participation among youths has decreased while participation in organized activities has increased. When children are left to seek out informal recreation outside the home, they expose themselves to various risks. Fear of exposure to drugs and violent crime makes parents leery of allowing their children to fill their time where adult supervision is not present (Coakley, 2009).

As conditions have become unsafe for children to play outdoors in many areas, they often spend their leisure time inside the household. Since various health risks coincide with a sedentary lifestyle, parents want their children to be physically active. Organized sports, therefore, provide children with opportunities to be physically active. They are safe alternatives to informal activity because adult supervision is present.

A common assumption with compromises to a child’s safety is unsafe environments are primarily found in urban areas with high crime rates. Challenges to this prevailing assumption exist as children have been victims of various crimes in affluent neighborhoods as well. In this study, participants who lived in suburban, residential subdivisions that were not areas where many crimes were committed had concerns with regard to informal recreation and their children’s safety.

Societal changes have resulted in decreased feelings of personal safety and security. Differences between the experiences of participants and their children were present. Several participants were not comfortable with and did not allow their children to seek out informal recreation in order to occupy themselves. As Coakley (2009) stated, “Many parents…see the world outside the home as dangerous for their children” (p. 126). Consequently, parents in this

study sought participation opportunities for his/her children in safe, secure environments with adult supervision.

Several participants were concerned that if their children were to seek out informal recreation opportunities, their safety would be compromised. They were not especially comfortable with allowing their children to leave the house and create their own informal activities similar to the ways they did when they were children. Theresa lives in an urban, residential area. She did not perceive it as dangerous; however, she was not comfortable with allowing her daughter to leave the house and engage in activities which would cause her to remain unattended for long periods of time. She said:

> In this day and age you'd almost be scared to let your kids go off and play down the street. We have a basketball court at the apartment complex down the street. There's no way I'd let her go down there. It would be hard for her to live and play like we did.

Jason and his family live in a residential subdivision. Despite living in a neighborhood where threats to a child's safety could be considered minimal, he perceived informal recreation for his children as potentially dangerous. He and his wife were not comfortable with letting their children roam the neighborhood. He said, "We don't let our kids free aimlessly; maybe it's the times, maybe it's because I'm more protective. My wife is really protective."

Theresa's and Jason's statements were representative of the concerns parents had with regard to modern societal conditions and perceived threats toward their children's safety. Regardless of location, participants were cognizant of perceived threats that existed toward their children. In order to protect their children from those threats, participants sought out organized sport participation.

The fifth subtheme focused on sacrifices parents made in order to provide participation opportunities for their children. Parents often display their presence in their children's participation endeavors through their sacrifices of his/her interests as well as time and money. Coakley (2009) stated, "When sports involve the use of expensive equipment or clothing, participation occurs with various forms of financial sacrifice" (p. 324). When I was participating in sports, I wasn't aware of my parents making any significant financial sacrifices so that I could play. Perhaps it was because my father made a living which allowed for the rest of the family to live comfortably. Perhaps it was because the sports I played did not have high registration fees nor require a significant amount of travel that resulted in overnight stays at hotels, meals away from home, and other costs which would make participation expensive. I later realized that sacrifices did occur, as family leisure was influenced by practice and game schedules.

When I was working at various recreation facilities, I was able to see firsthand the financial sacrifice families made in order to support their children's interests. The primary activities that occurred in the places where I worked were ice hockey and figure skating. These activities were very expensive and required parents to make sacrifices of some sort in order to support a child's participation. Even recreational hockey can cost a family approximately $3,000 for one child to play one season. Parents of children that played in travel programs could increase the family's financial commitment to $15,000 or more on an annual basis. These experiences made me think about the concept of sacrifice. Most of the families I came into contact with were affluent and could afford these obligations so I never thought they sacrificed to the point of financial hardship. However, sacrifices of time and other interests occurred. As Snyder and Purdy (1982) stated:

> It is common for family life to be altered in order to accommodate the child's athletics schedules. Scheduling work and family vacations around a child's sport-related obligations, providing transportation to and from games and practices, changing meal times, and altering various other appointments are just a few of the ways in which parents sacrifice in order to satisfy their children's sporting lives. (p. 263)

These families spent their vacation time at out-of-town tournaments. Every weekend was occupied with practices, games, or both. Clearly, other interests had to give way as their children's obligations to their teams took precedence.

Fredricks and Eccles (2005) suggested that, "A critical area of future work is how parents with fewer resources support children's athletic participation" (p. 24). I was interested in gaining insight into how families without significant amounts of disposable income were able to support their children's participation. My goal was to obtain a sample of individuals from various socioeconomic levels. For the most part, participants whose children were members of travel teams had enough disposable income. I didn't perceive a significant sacrifice was needed in order to support participation. On the other hand, one story emerged regarding the mother of a participant who was not affluent but sacrificed her own time, money, and interests in order to support her daughter's participation in a basketball league which required significant travel.

Theresa's experience illustrated sacrifices parents sometimes make for their children. She grew up with her mother in a low-income apartment complex after her parents divorced. As a single parent, her mother worked outside of the home in order to provide for herself and her children. Theresa participated in AAU leagues. The registration cost was nominal ($15); however, additional costs made participation financially challenging. She said, "It was everything else that cost so much. The shoes and bags and the trips. The tournament fee might be $300 per team."

Theresa's mother went to great lengths to make sure Theresa was able to maintain her involvement. As a single parent, she worked extra hours in order to pay the costs. When Theresa wanted to get a job, her mother increased her workload so that her efforts weren't divided between work and basketball. As Theresa said:

> In the summers when I wanted to work, she was like "this is AAU season, so you're not going to work." She was very adamant about, "You're going to play basketball and I'm going to work these extra hours so you're going to put the effort into it."

With the help of her mother, Theresa maintained her involvement. In addition to her financial sacrifice, she also sacrificed her own time and interests as she attended many of Theresa's games. The sacrifices her mother made allowed Theresa to focus her energy on the sport. She eventually earned a scholarship to play in college. Looking back, Theresa was very appreciative of all the sacrifices her mother made. As she stated:

> You don't realize it when you're little, but she sacrificed a lot for me and my brother. She never missed a game. Because she never missed a game, she had to work a lot to make up for it. For her to get off early on Tuesday and Friday, she'd have to work weekends. Even when I was in college, she came to almost all home games and many away games.

Although parents frequently make numerous sacrifices in order to support their children's participation, I incorporated an example that illustrated limitations to the sacrifice a parent can and will make. Leigh and her husband had six children. They provided opportunities for their children to participate in sports; however, costs had to be taken into consideration. Leigh recalled how one of her daughters wanted to participate in tae kwon do. Although Leigh was willing to let her daughter participate, costs structures associated with participation were a limiting factor. She wanted to provide for her daughter but also had to consider the interests of all the children prior

to supporting the interests of one. She said:

> The expense of those things do come into play. Money-wise if there was something that's very expensive I'd have to say no. If it was outside of our budget, I'd say that we couldn't do that. She [her daughter] wanted to do tae kwon do, which was $79 a month. If you really want to do it, this is a big part of what we can spend for six children. It's not $80 a month for everybody.

Leigh perceived value in sport participation for her children; however, the amount of funding available for those endeavors was limited. As a parent, Leigh was hesitant to allow this endeavor to take place because in order to support it, opportunities for her other children would be limited. Consequently, her daughter did not participate in this activity.

In summation, participants' parents and the participants themselves provided opportunities because this is what caring and concerned parents are supposed to do. Parents make sacrifices in order to provide their children with opportunities to participate in sports they enjoy. Participants in this study sacrificed time and money as well as their own interests to support their children's endeavors. However, that sacrifice was not without limits. Participants did not sacrifice for the benefit of one child to the extent that it would limit the interests and opportunities of the others.

The sixth and final subtheme focused on parental provisions of support. Parents supported their children's endeavors in various ways. When I was a youth, my parents provided support for my activities. They provided financial support in order to pay for expenses associated with registration and equipment. They provided logistical support before I was old enough to drive. They frequently attended games and provided their encouragement. They did not frequently provide instructional support because their participation history was limited. My father would occasionally offer informal instruction but that was the extent of his involvement.

Support an individual receives from parents and other significant people can influence their experience. In this study, participants received considerable support from their parents and also provided support for their children. Support received by participants when they were youths and adolescents as well as the support they provided for their children coincided with many of the norms we assume with regard to support. For instance, norms regarding support and the gender of the supportive source emerged. However, exceptions to these norms emerged as well.

Parents have consistently held a significant role in their children's sport activities. The encouragement and emotional support they provide are significant on the affective outcomes of their children's experiences (Brustad, 1988; Green & Chalip, 1997). Parents' emotional support also increases the likelihood that a child will maintain involvement in an activity. When parents provide encouragement and support through watching games and practices and discuss the activity with the child, the child will likely remain in the activity for a longer period of time (Brown et al., 1989; Anderssen & Wold, 1992).

Two participants, Matt and Leigh, were active in sports through most of their youth and adolescence. The positive emotional support they received from their parents was a significant reason why they developed positive attitudes toward their activities as well as why they remained active in sports for several years. Matt's parents were supportive toward his involvement when he was a youth. He said, "I had encouraging parents. They were never critical or put me down, even if I had a bad game. I don't remember them getting on me about that. I think it makes sports fun. I think it helped build my self-esteem as opposed to tearing it down." Leigh's parents were supportive as well. As she stated:

> I can't remember it ever being stressful. It was encouraging. I can't think of a time where they'd be angry or pressuring us. I think more of them saying, "Do your best" because

> they'd know we'd get stomped by (the opponent). Just do your best. Don't get frustrated; take your time." After it was over, it was, "That's alright," not "You threw up three air balls." They found the positive and reinforced you.

Not surprisingly, positive parental support increases the likelihood that a child will enjoy participating in his/her activity (Averill & Power, 1995; Leff & Hoyle, 1995). In addition, the length of time a child is engaged in an activity is also influenced by the amount of positive emotional support parents provide (Brown et al., 1989). In this study, there were not any recollections from any of the parents where their parents were negative or outwardly unsupportive. As this time, Kathy's story bears repeating. Kathy and her brother were not permitted to play high school basketball and football because of her father's concerns regarding her inability to keep up with her opponents and the possibility of her brother getting injured. In her story, it wasn't that her father wasn't supportive of their endeavors, but rather he was overly protective.

Participants recognized the importance of providing positive emotional support for their children. Leigh discussed the positive atmosphere she and her husband tried to establish with their children. They provided encouragement and refrained from dwelling on any mistakes or losses. She said:

> We build them up before we get there. Remind them of things that were frustrating before and prepare for that. On the way home we're talking about the next thing we're going to do. We don't spend a long time on it, maybe because we're looking at the recreational end of it. We're going to do our best but it's not the end of the world either.

Angie's comments echoed Leigh's. She actively encouraged her daughter and provided support through her positive interactions. She said:

> I try to be that cheerleader for her and always say, “Remember what your coach taught you last week.” Just to reiterate her coach but I don’t do it in a screaming way. I don’t sit and scream at her games. I clap and cheer. I don’t want to be that parent. I want her to have a good time and for it to be positive.

Participants who came from intact households received financial and logistical support from both parents. Mothers and fathers each contributed to transporting the participant to games and practices and paid for necessary equipment. On the other hand, several participants spent parts of their own youth in single-parent households. In those cases, the logistical and financial support for their sport endeavors was provided by the person with whom they resided.

For example, Kevin was raised by his father starting when he was 4 years old. Consequently, his father provided all of the logistical and financial support. Theresa was raised by her mother who did the same for her. She said:

> When I was younger, she would take me to get my shoes. She was the primary person who bought the uniform, paid the fees, drove to practice. My mom provided all the materials, everything. My dad didn’t have any hands-on. I saw him every other weekend but he didn’t have anything to do with basketball except showing up for the games.

Jason’s father was involved with his sport endeavors before his parents divorced. He lived with his mother after this occurrence. At that time, she became the primary provider of logistical and financial support. He said, “That responsibility fell on him early. But, as I got older they separated, so all of the responsibility fell on my mom. Otherwise, it wouldn’t have got done.”

Most participants were parents within intact households. Theresa and Angie were the only two single parents. As the only parent in the household, they provided logistical and financial support for their child’s activities. I did not have any single fathers in my sample.

Parents also provide instructional support through information to improve sport performance (McCarthy, Jones, & Clark-Carter, 2008). The gender of an individual emerged as a factor upon provisions of instructional support (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000; Holt & Dunn, 2004). In this study, mothers and fathers commonly provided financial, logistical, and emotional support to an equal extent. Fathers, however, provided the majority of the instructional support. Participants did not indicate that their mothers had any instructional involvement. Participants were coached by their fathers when they were youths and adolescents. In some cases, it was as the head coach or the assistant. In cases where their fathers did not coach in an official capacity, they assisted in unofficial capacities.

A possible reason as to why participants' mothers were not involved in an instructional capacity could be explained by the same reason why they did not serve as significant sources of socialization. The lack of sport participation opportunities for women prior to the creation of Title IX is a significant factor as to why so few participants were given instructional support by their mothers. Prior to the creation of Title IX, boys and men have had far more opportunities to play organized sports and subsequently gain the skills and knowledge needed to coach. Consequently, men fulfill the role of providing instructional support (Boyle & McKay 1995).

Kevin's story was a typical example of a participant whose father participated in sports as a youth and was involved with his child as a coach. His father played baseball and football in high school. He also played minor league baseball. When his playing days ended, he continued his involvement with his child in a coaching capacity. Kevin's father coached several of his baseball and football teams and was an asset in his development as an athlete. He said:

> My dad was giving a great after action report. Very good at that. He'd preface things with, "good job" and then go into, "What did you think about this?" Always try to give me bait

to get me to recognize what I did wrong as opposed to him just telling me.

All of the male participants were involved in an instructional capacity with their children. Social role theory may help to explain inclinations toward males providing instructional support in youth sport settings. Within youth sport settings, men fill the majority of the coaching positions (Messner, 2000). Social role theory lends support to this trend as it coincides with traditional hegemonic feminine and masculine ideals as men are disproportionately present in leadership positions while women fill the vast majority of the support positions (Sagas & Cunningham, 2004). In youth sports, support positions for females may include "team mom" duties, which consist of laundering team uniforms, bringing snacks and beverages to team practices and games, and planning social events associated with the team.

Jason was the coach of his oldest son's basketball team. He provided instructional support for him in an official capacity and provided instructional support to his other children in an unofficial capacity. His story gave support to the relationship between fathers' social roles and involvement with their children. He said:

> I feel it's my duty to encourage them but also instruct them and help them get better. On the way to the game, I'm talking to them about their weaknesses like not paying attention, making sure they keep their eye on the ball. I'm talking to them about what they can do better next time and encouraging them and going over plays to give them a confidence boost.

Challenges to traditional fulfillment of social role theory also emerged in this study. As opportunities for women to participate in sports have grown, opportunities to serve in an instructional capacity have increased as well. Unlike the female participants who did not receive instructional support from their mothers, several of the participants' children received

instructional support from their mothers. One participant provided instructional support in an official capacity while several others provided instructional support in an unofficial capacity. Patricia, for instance, is experienced in karate and instructs her children. Theresa also provided instructional support. Because she participated in basketball at a high level, she was able to provide a significant amount of instructional support for her daughter. Theresa served in an official capacity as she coached her daughter's recreational basketball team. Providing instructive support in a positive fashion was important to her as she stated:

> There's a lot of instruction but I try not to be too critical. But, as a parent, I always tell her what she did right but I also tell her what she did wrong and needs to work on. We talk about what she did good and could do better and leave it at that.

Participants received all of their instructional support from their fathers. Ideologies which position males in areas of leadership and instruction and females in positions of support may explain why participants' fathers engaged in instructional support to a greater extent than mothers. However, differences emerged with the amount of instruction participants provided for their children on the basis of the participant's gender. Increased participation opportunities explain why a greater amount of female involvement in an instructional capacity emerged.

Self-confidence and skill. The fourth theme focused on participants' self-confidence and perceptions of skill level in their participation endeavors. I chose to present data from the experiences of four participants: Angie, Jason, Kevin, and Theresa. Within this group, differences regarding the levels of self-confidence they had in relation to their experiences emerged. The first subtheme, *Lower Confidence in Sport Participation*, consisted of Angie's and Jason's stories. They did not have tremendous amounts of self-confidence during their youth sport experiences and did not view themselves as exceptionally skilled athletes. Consequently, sports were not

within their personal comfort zone. The second subtheme, *Higher Confidence in Sport Participation*, consisted of Kevin's and Theresa's stories. They recalled being very confident in their abilities. They excelled in sports at an early age and continued to excel throughout their youth and adolescence.

Self-confidence influences an individual's participation experience in sport (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). Self-confidence can impact an individual's inclinations to commence his/her participation in an activity as well as maintain participation (Brustad, 1993). Young people's perceptions of their own physical abilities were instrumental in shaping their affection for participating in sport activities (Bois et al., 2002).

Perceived skill is related to enjoyment of a sport activity. When self-perceptions regarding skill are positive, the participant will enjoy the activity to a greater extent, participate in the activity for a longer period of time, and receive a more fulfilling experience than an individual who does not perceive him/herself as skilled (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986). The relationship between skill and maintaining involvement was further supported by Green and Chalip (1997) who stated, "Perceived skill seems to be particularly important for the development of enduring involvement in sport because individuals with higher levels of perceived skill are more likely to locate and value intrinsic elements of the sport experience" (p. 62). Knowing this, I was interested in seeing how perceptions of self-confidence and skill upon continuation of participation played out in the lives of the participants. When self-confidence was not particularly strong and participation opportunities were not sought out by the participant, I wanted to know more about the influential forces which led to his/her involvement.

Confidence in participation played a role in their experiences. Within this sample, those who indicated having high levels of confidence in their abilities were the ones who participated

in sports for the longest durations. Those who did not have high levels of self-confidence still participated but did so for shorter durations. In addition, participants who reported having high confidence levels expressed higher levels of enjoyment toward the activity.

During my conversation with each participant, I asked him/her about the sports s/he played as a youth and adolescent. After the response, I asked several follow-up questions such as, "Why did you gravitate to the sport?" and "Why do you think you played this sport for the amount of time that you did?" in order to learn about the relationship between self-confidence and participation. In the following paragraphs, I presented their stories in order to illustrate differences in self-confidence levels and how it influenced their experiences.

The first subtheme focused on lower confidence. Angie was a capable dancer and was involved in dance for 13 years during her youth and adolescence. She played softball when she was in the 5th and 6th grade. Angie did not perceive herself to be especially skilled in this activity. She said, "I was not a sports girl at all. I was the least coordinated in my group of friends but I decided to give it a shot." She indicated that she wasn't very comfortable with participating and did not desire to be an integral aspect with regard to the outcome of the game. When Angie participated, she mentioned that she was often nervous before games and "didn't want to be responsible for the ball."

In addition, significant others' perceptions of their children's competencies are significant on participation patterns of children and adolescents. Parental appraisals, for example, can shape children's participation experiences in sport (Bois et al., 2005). Although supportive of her desire to join a softball team, Angie's parents did not perceive her as someone who would necessarily gravitate toward sports or softball in particular. Consequently, they never made dedicated efforts to guide her into sports. When Angie told her parents that she was going to play softball, she

indicated that they were surprised by her announcement. She said, “I went home and talked to Mom. They (her parents) supported it but I think they were a bit shocked that I wanted to do it but they said, ‘give it a go.’”

Since Angie was not strongly influenced by her parents to become involved in sports, influences outside the home were strongest upon her involvement in softball. Even though she did not perceive herself as being highly skilled in softball, the opportunity to spend time with her friends while participating in a common activity was enticing enough to get her to try the activity. Her friends as well as the mother of one of her friends were instrumental in getting her to try an activity that she may not have considered otherwise. She said, “We were in the lunchroom and one of my friend’s mom worked at the school and she asked me, ‘Are you going to try out with the rest of the girls?’ and that’s probably the first time it crossed my mind.”

Similar to Angie, Jason had other interests as a youth. He said, “When I was younger I was into other things than being good at sports.” He attributed several factors to his discomfort with sports, stating, “When I was a young kid I was short, fat, and nearsighted; I wasn’t terrific back then.”

Social influences were instrumental in the commencement of Jason’s experiences as well. He stated, “My family was big on baseball. Everyone in the family played so I played.” Jason participated in baseball for five seasons and participated in soccer and basketball for two seasons each. However, he mentioned that his interest dwindled after participating for a few years. He said, “It got to the point where it didn’t do anything for me anymore.” When Jason reached middle school and high school, he elected to forego opportunities to try out for various sports teams. He chose not to do so as he indicated that he was concerned about not making the team. “I think the biggest thing was the idea that I couldn’t succeed in it,” he said.

The second subtheme focused on participants who possessed high levels of self-confidence. In this study, Kevin and Theresa were two participants who excelled in their sport activities and continued participating throughout their youth and adolescence. They indicated that they were very confident in their abilities and that confidence was a significant factor related to the continuance of their participation. In addition, their confidence grew throughout their participation experiences as they were consistently among the high achievers in their sports. Their experiences lend support to competence motivation theory which suggests that confidence accumulates through successful completion of a task. As a result of being confident, the individual will be more likely to maintain his/her participation in an activity (Brustad, 1988).

Kevin began his participation in baseball, basketball, and football when he was 5 years old. He recalled having a deep passion for sports as a child and also recalled being an effective performer. He never lacked confidence throughout his youth and adolescence when he was participating in sports. He said, “Even at a young age I knew I was better than the average player.” His confidence in his abilities helped him maintain his participation in baseball and football through the completion of high school. He was skilled in basketball but voluntarily ended his participation in order to focus on baseball and football. When I asked Kevin why he played for as long as he did he said, “I’d have to say because I was better than most of the people on the field with either one (football and baseball) of those sports.”

Self-confidence was significant with regard to Kevin’s lengthy participation history. Self-confidence was also something that brought it to an end. Kevin reflected on how his self-confidence actually served as a detriment toward the possibility of continuing his participation in college. He recalled that excelling in academics was not important to him during high school. Despite that, he was certain he would be able to obtain a scholarship. He said, “The offers I

received, the major universities wanted me to take the ACT and SAT and I was adamant about not doing that, thinking 'you'll take me for my talent.'" His participation in organized sports ended when he graduated from high school.

Theresa began playing basketball when she was 8 years old. She excelled in it right away. She indicated that she was of the best players on her teams. Performing effectively was instrumental in building her self-confidence and appeal toward the sport. She recalled not losing a game until she reached the 5th grade. As she got older, her self-confidence increased as the competition became tougher. Theresa said she enjoyed the challenge of trying to stop another highly skilled competitor and that competing "wasn't just a confidence booster but a way for me to use my brain and feel good about it."

Structural constraints upon participation. Various other factors emerged as significant upon participants' experiences in sport. Crawford and Godbey (1987) identified financial resources and proximity to programs and facilities as factors that can enable or constrain participation opportunities. The fifth and final theme that emerged from this study focused on structural factors that were significant in shaping participants' experiences. Two subthemes emerged. They were: *Costs Associated with Participation* and *Geographic Constraints to Participation.*

The first subtheme focused on the ways in which costs associated with participation affected participants' own experiences as well as their children's experiences. The presence of certain cost structures associated with participation shaped the experiences of most of the participants. Most of the participants in this study described their upbringing as middle-class. They were parents in households of various income levels. Household income varied from approximately $30,000 annually to an excess of $60,000 annually.

Socioeconomic standing influences opportunities to engage in various forms of leisure (Shinew et al., 1995). One form of leisure includes sport activities. Commonly held assumptions surrounding income and sport participation are that individuals and families with lower income levels face greater constraints toward participation (Coakley, 2009). Financial support needed for participation in various activities may not be available among families without disposable income; therefore, involvement in sports that require expensive membership fees and equipment is not especially common among those with limited resources.

Costs were a concern among the parents of several participants. Leigh, for instance, participated in softball and basketball as a youth and adolescent. Her participation in softball was in a community league that had a nominal registration fee. Her experience in basketball was with school-affiliated teams that did not require registration fees. Coming from a middle-class family, resources to participate in especially expensive endeavors wouldn't have been possible. Leigh was raised in her household with two siblings. Her father worked outside of the home while her mother worked inside the home. She indicated that participation would have been curtailed significantly had high fees accompanied the sports she and her siblings played. She said:

> We wouldn't have played as much. It (the cost) would have been a big thing for us. Mom stayed home most of the time and Dad made enough to pay the bills. If it was something really expensive, they'd say, "I'm sorry but you can't do that."

Angie participated in softball for two years. This was an activity that required a nominal participation fee. She briefly expressed an interest in cheerleading. This activity would have required a substantial financial commitment. Angie's parents were supportive of her participation in sports; however, the costs associated with participation in cheerleading caused her parents to be hesitant in supporting it. As she explained:

> I remember in the 4th grade mentioning cheerleading and wanting to try out for that. They weren't so keen on that because of the cost, all the things the cheerleaders did and it was expensive. I clearly remember talking about money at that point.

Patricia's family has been involved in karate for roughly three years. Her family's participation has continued because she volunteers her time at the location where they take lessons so they can receive a discount. She indicated that her two children would likely be in more activities if it wasn't for the cost. She said, "If they really wanted to do something I'd try and find a way for them to do it but it's not real feasible. If money wasn't an issue I'd have them in anything they wanted." Patricia was supportive of her children's interests and desires for them to be involved in various activities. However, financial constraints prevented a great deal of involvement because the disposable income needed to support it was not available.

The second subtheme focused on geographic-based factors that shaped participation experiences. Geographic factors included proximity to facilities and availability of programs which are influenced by population density. Geographic factors were influential in my experience as a variety of participation opportunities were easily accessible. Games and practices that take place within close proximity to the participant's household are significant upon continuation of participation (Anderson, Lorenz, & Pease, 1986). This was indicative of my experience as many opportunities to participate in organized sports were less than a 30-minute drive from my home. My experience, therefore, was enabled through accessibility of programs and facilities. On the other hand, not everyone is raised in a similar environment as mine.

Felton et al. (2002) stated, "People living in rural areas have fewer educational and economic opportunities, less access to health care, and greater transportation problems than people living in urban areas" (p. 250). I was interested in gaining insight into whether or not

people who live in rural areas experience obstacles to sport participation as well. Isolation serves as a constraint upon structured recreation opportunities as it is assumed that it is easier for an individual to engage in an organized sport when facilities are in close proximity (Searle & Jackson, 1985; Hunter & Whitson, 1992). Therefore, I wanted to test this assumption by speaking with people who were raised in various environments (e.g., rural, urban, and suburban) to find out if the location in which they were raised was significant upon enabling or constraining opportunities to participate.

Several participants came from an environment I would identify as being much like the environment in which I was raised. Participants indicated that being in close proximity to the locations where activities took place was significant upon their opportunities. Several participants' homes were located in a residential area. Their families had to make minimal efforts as participants often said the parks or facilities were no more than a 10-15 minute drive from their home. In addition, availability of programs was significant upon their experiences.

Participants who resided in a populated area indicated that a variety of sports were offered for children of most ages. The best example of proximity enabling sport participation was Paul's youth sport experience. He said, "My parent's house was adjacent to the city park. Little league fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and the city pool were literally next door." For Paul, access "was just a matter of walking through the back door and through the empty lot." His interest in his first organized sport, baseball, was created in part by the close proximity of the park. When I asked him why he gravitated to baseball at an early age, he said, "Having the park there and access to the field had a lot to do with it."

On the other hand, several participants were raised in environments that were very dissimilar to the environment in which I was raised. I spoke with several participants who did not

come from populated residential areas. One participant was raised in an area where a considerable distance between participants' homes and homes of the nearest neighbors existed. Two participants were raised on farms and classified the area as rural. One participant was born in a suburban area but at the age of 4 years moved with his family to a summer camp in a rural area. Two participants grew up in areas on the fringe of a populated area which they described as being "in the country."

The area in which participants were raised affected opportunities to engage in organized sports. First, the effort needed to get to the locations where activities took place was greater. A longer drive reduced the feasibility of participating in more than one activity at a time. Second, participants who were raised in sparsely populated areas did not have the opportunity to participate in leagues in which several teams for an age group existed. This resulted from there not being enough similarly-aged children in close enough proximity for a greater number of teams to exist.

Of all the participants, Sarah's opportunities to play organized sports were most affected by the area in which she was raised. When I asked her to describe the neighborhood, she replied,

> It [where she was raised] actually wasn't a neighborhood. We grew up on a 100-acre farm on a rural dirt road. There were no other neighbors that were non-relatives that lived on the road. My grandmother lived across the street with my grandfather, my cousins lived next door. Other than that there were no other neighbors on the one mile, two mile road. Our closest non-relative was probably three miles away.

In this setting, opportunities for girls to participate in organized sports were very limited. As a result, Sarah first played community league baseball on a boys' team. She stated, "The closest sports we were able to join in was a boys' baseball team, they had no girls' sports at the

time. I was one of four girls on the boys' team."

After participating in baseball for a year, an opportunity to play on a community softball team became available. However, this opportunity was short-lived. Once the team was cancelled, there were no other outlets in which Sarah could participate. As she explained:

> They [the community parks and recreation department] cancelled the team. They didn't have it going any more. It ran for two years then they dissolved it. I would have signed with the boys' baseball team but they wouldn't let girls join after they got so old. In school they didn't offer a sport until 7th or 8th grade.

Participant experiences usually confirmed norms in that those who had easiest access to facilities and programs and possessed disposable income were more likely to participate in sport-related programs. Challenges to these norms emerged as not all participants were restricted from engaging in activities as a result of these factors. Their experiences illustrated many irregularities that supported differences in the human experience.

Sarah's experience was not only enlightening; it also illustrated the strength and presence of gender ideologies and perceptions associated with female frailty and sport. The fact that she could not go back to the boys baseball team after her softball team folded indicated that the league administrators held an assumption that the female participants would be unable to effectively compete alongside the boys. Physiological differences between boys and girls can result in safety concerns; as a result, preventing co-ed participation could be argued as a sensible thing to do. In this case, however, the sport in question is baseball. Since baseball is a non-contact sport, why couldn't Sarah and her teammates participate on the boys' teams? Coakley (2009) identified social discomfort with allowing females to "invade" male teams. As a result, females are excluded from potential opportunities in which the potential to perform effectively

exists. I found it unfortunate that her opportunities to participate were cut short because of a policy that didn't take into account the possibility of co-ed participation as a *positive* situation.

In conclusion, participants' perceived various personal, social, and structural factors were significant in the shaping of their own as well as their children's experiences in sport. Personal factors such as self-confidence influenced participants' participation histories. Expectations related to gender ideologies shaped the participation experiences of one participant as well as the experiences of her children. Social influences that acted upon participants and their children and the types of support these sources provided were diverse and emerged as a result of various factors. Household structure and firsthand participation experience were significant in this element. Parents were significant in the shaping of participants' experiences. Participants in this study were parents and possessed various reasons for initiating, maintaining, and/or discontinuing their children's experiences. The next chapter includes a summary of the study, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future work.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a summary and conclusions that emerged from this study. Limitations associated with the study were included as well. Lastly, recommendations for future work which focus on participants' perceptions of their own and their children's experiences in sport was provided.

Summary

There were three major purposes of this study: (a) to gain insight into the personal, social, and structural factors participants perceived were significant on their sport participation experiences throughout various stages of their lives; (b) to gain insight into the personal, social, and structural factors participants perceived were significant upon their children's sport experiences; and (c) to illustrate differences that exist among participants' own and their children's sport experiences. I was interested in gaining insight into personal, social, and structural factors which shaped participants' experiences. Personal factors included participants' demographics as well as inclinations to and comfort with participating. Socially constructed connotations associated with demographics and social constructions of the "good parent" were also defined as personal factors. Social factors included sources of socialization and measures of support provided by these sources. Structural factors included access to participation opportunities, costs associated with participation, household structure, and significant life events.

Eleven parents participated in this study. The pool of participants included seven mothers and four fathers who had firsthand experience in an organized youth sport program when they were youths and/or adolescents. Of the seven mothers, three were African American and four

were Caucasian. All four of the fathers were Caucasian. Variety in participants' education levels, household income, and age emerged. Participants' education levels ranged from "high school graduate" to "Master's degree holder." Household income ranged from $25,000 to in excess of $60,000. Lastly, participants' ages ranged from 30 to 45 years of age.

A qualitative methodology was utilized. Criterion sampling was used in the selection of participants. Participants played organized sports as youths and had a child under the age of 13 who was involved in organized sport activity at the time of this study. Participants were also selected in order to contribute to the phenomenon of interest associated with the study, which was illustrating differences in the human experience. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary vehicle through which participant data was collected. Interview data was coded and analyzed inductively.

The framework utilized in this study included a realist approach. This aspect included descriptive accounts of my own as well as the participants' experiences in sport during their youth and adolescence. Descriptions of personal, social, and structural factors were incorporated into this study in order to illustrate the variety of factors which shaped participants' experiences.

In addition to the realist segment, an analytical element was included in this study. This element incorporated a consideration of *why* various personal, social, and structural factors shaped my experiences as well as the participants' experiences. Previous studies that examined experiences of people in various sport settings were used as a foundation from which experiences of this group were compared. Drawing upon disciplines of psychology, sociology, and history, I provided my interpretation behind the factors that were prevalent in the shaping of participants' own experiences as well as those of their children. These disciplines were also utilized as the lens through which participants' interpretations of their experiences were examined.

Several themes emerged from the analysis. They were: (a) Differentiation in Sources of Socialization; (b) Gendered Constructions Shaping Sport Experiences; (c) Parental Presence in Youth Sport (d) Differentiation in Self-Confidence and Skill; and (e) Structural Constraints upon Participation. Unique contributions to the existing body of literature developed within several of these themes and are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Part of this study's focus was on sources of socialization in sport. Parents were identified as primary sources of influence in previous work (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1976; Greendorfer, 1977). Peers were also identified (Greendorfer, 1978; Lewko & Ewing, 1980). In this study, parents and peers were influential in the experiences of participants and their children. Other sources included other socializing agents such as neighbors, friends of parents, and peers.

This study differs from previous work on this topic in that it considers various structural factors and their impact on sources that socialize an individual into sport. The impact of household structure on socializing sources was considered by the participants and me. Two participants in this study were raised in single parent households. One participant identified his father as his primary socializing source while another identified an adult outside the home as her primary socializing source. Why one participant's parent was was influential while another participant's parent was not was attributed to participation opportunities for each participant's parent. One participant's parent had many opportunities to play organized sports as a youth and adolescent. This participant's father was a multi-sport athlete in high school. On the other hand, the other participant's mother had a very limited participation history. As a result, she exerted little influence. What if her father, who she identified as an active sport participant, was residing within the household during her youth? Perhaps her source of socialization into sport would have been different.

This study also differs from others that have focused on family involvement in sport in that it includes consideration of sources of socialization and expectations for success in sport. Previous studies (Eccles & Wigfield, 1995; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005). Identify parental expectations of their children's potential to succeed in sport based on the child of the child. They do not, however, take into consideration expectations for success in sport that were socialized into the parent. Therefore, this study is unique in that it considered two generations worth of gender-related expectations for success in sport.

One participant's father held different expectations regarding her own and her brother's potential for success in sport. The fact that this participant received a lesser amount of support from her father than did her brother; it was argued that her different levels of expectancies for success on her children were created in part by this occurrence. Consequently, she held for different expectations for her son and daughter. She expected her son to play at higher levels of competition than her daughter.

Parental support for children's sport activities was focused on in the third theme. Several previous studies focused on significant others who provided support for a participant's activities. Many of these studies focused on the experiences of elite athletes (Kalinowski, 1985; Monssas, 1985; Hill, 1993; Cote, 1999). This study differs from the previously mentioned ones because it focused upon sources and types of support in the experiences of recreational athletes. Since the vast majority of sport participants do not compete at an elite level, research which focuses upon the sources and types of support received by non-elite athletes is useful as it reflects the experiences of many as opposed to a few.

The previously mentioned studies focused on support, but did not consider aspects such as household structure on provisions of support for a youth sport participant. In this study, these

factors influenced the types and amount of support received by various significant others. In single parent households, the parent who resided with the child provided all of the support. Because of the circumstances within the household, social roles and provision of sport were affected. For instance, male parents often provide instructional support while female parents provide more of the logistical support. In single parent households, participants and participants' parents sometimes took on non-traditional roles. One female participant provided a significant amount of instructional support for her daughter. One participant's father provided all of the logistical support.

The findings of this study tied into the theoretical foundation of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a theoretical approach that considers conditions responsible for the occurrence of an action. The conditions were personal, social, and structural factors exerting influence on the participants as well as the participants' children. The action was the experience they accumulated in sport.

Through the descriptive and interpretive aspects of my own as well as participants' experiences, differences emerged among this group's experiences. This work was informed by postmodernism as postmodernism challenges the grand narratives of the human experience. Within this study, challenges to the grand narrative of the human sporting experience emerged. What we think we know about sport participation along gender, racial, and social class lines was confirmed but was also challenged.

Conclusions

The following list consists of conclusions was based on participants' experiences in sport. These findings cannot be, nor are they intended to, generalized to all people because the "stories" that emerged are ultimately unique to that individual. Commonalities existed when comparing

the demographics and experiences of one participant to another. However, it was not my intent to claim that the experiences of this group of participants are indicative of the experiences of others. Although the individual factors which shaped each person's story were not necessarily unique, a collection of many individual factors which exerted influence and shaped the individual's experiences were unique to that person's story.

The findings of this study revealed many personal, social, and structural factors which shaped the experiences of this group of participants. Their experiences revealed the following:

- Parents of the participants were influential sources on participants' socialization into sport. Fathers exerted more influence upon both male and female participants. Mothers of participants were not as influential in the sport socialization process.
- Male and female participants were influential in their children's sport socialization. Male participants' involvement with their children was similar to the involvement most of their fathers had with them. On the other hand, some female participants' sport experiences with their children were similar to their mothers' and several participants' experiences with their children were unlike their mothers' experiences with them. For instance, most female participants had more extensive participation opportunities in sports than their mothers; therefore, they influenced their own children to a greater extent in this domain. Despite first-hand participation opportunities, several female participants were not significant in their children's sport involvement. "Ethic of care" obligations prevented them from assuming a greater role with their children's sport endeavors.
- Peers were influential upon participants' socialization into sports when parents were not significant in that process. The influence of peers became present as participants

reached late childhood/early adolescence. Differences in peer involvement were found when comparing experiences of participants to the experiences of their children. Participants indicated significant involvement and association with peers in their neighborhood. On the other hand, participants indicated their children had little association with peers in their neighborhoods. Changing societal conditions and concerns for their children's were identified as reasons why participants' children engaged in little informal recreation with similarly-aged peers in their neighborhoods.

- Social constructions of traditional gender ideology regarding sport involvement and achievement emerged. Most participants were encouraged to participate in sports as youths and encouraged their children's participation in sport; however, one father did not support his daughter's participation in sport as she proceeds into adolescence. Different expectations regarding sport participation outcomes were present as well. One participant's father held higher expectations of achievement for her brother than herself. This participant also held different expectations regarding participation outcomes for her son and daughter.
- Participants identified several motives/reasons as to why they initiated and encouraged continuation of sport participation among their children. They perceived several benefits could be obtained. Improved physical health and acquisition of valuable life lessons were identified. In addition, they valued restriction of participation when it became detrimental to their children's well-being.
- Self appraisals of physical characteristics and ability were factors that shaped participation experiences. Participants with higher levels of self-confidence enjoyed their activities to a greater extent and participated for longer durations than those who

were less confident. Two participants who were highly confident were active in organized sports through high school. Two others who lacked self-confidence in their abilities participated in organized sports for two and four years, respectively.

- Structural factors such as costs associated with participation and availability of programs served as a limitation upon experiences. The experiences of two participants in particular were influenced by their proximity to recreation facilities and availability of programs. One participant was raised next to a city park and was active in several sports during his youth and adolescence. Another participant was raised in a rural area in which a variety of programs were not offered for females in her age group. Consequently, her experiences in organized sport were brief.

Limitations

I recommend that future research focus upon methodological issues related to conducting research which gains insight into the lived experiences of a diverse sample of people. A limitation of this study is that it relies upon cross-sectional data or data that has been collected at one point in time. Since I utilized a cross-sectional approach for this study, participants were asked to retrospectively recall factors that shaped their experiences. Mannell and Iwasaki (2005) stated, “This mining of the past is open to the vagaries of memory and the ‘creativity’ of participants” (p. 262). A limitation of this approach was that participants occasionally had trouble recalling specific details regarding an aspect of their participation experience. As a result, I would recommend longitudinal work in which participants are asked about their experiences as they are occurring. This would require acquiring participants when they are youths and continuing to maintain contact with them as they proceed through their childhood and adolescence so that shortcomings brought on by the vagaries of memory can be reduced.

Recommendations

Coakley and White (1992), referring to how young people define and interpret their sport-related experiences and how those experiences are integrated into their lives, stated, “There seems to be a need for more accounts of ongoing, actual experiences and the decisions related to those experiences” (p. 34). I agree that additional work needs to be conducted in order to understand this phenomenon, especially among groups of people who are underrepresented in sport psychology and sociology research. Lack of diversity within participant pools has been an ongoing point of contention among many prominent researchers in the areas of sport psychology and sociology. For instance, Fishwick and Greendorfer (1987) indicated that researchers have focused in large part upon white, male athletes. Since white males have been used as the standard in much of the research which has focused on sport-related experiences, the processes by which white and non-white females experience sport have been inadequately addressed. Duda and Allison (1990) argued that involvement in sport and physical activity is not limited to the white mainstream population. Despite the passage of time, researchers still identify a problematic lack of diversity in much of the work conducted in these fields. Ram, Starek, and Johnson (2004) stated, “Despite the multi-cultural nature of the United States and other nations, researchers have not historically shown an awareness of the importance of variables such as race, sexual orientation, and ethnicity to the psychology of the human experience” (p. 251).

I find it problematic that these statements are still being made in the sport psychology and sociology literature. As a result of ongoing calls for diversity in participant pools, I attempted to conduct a study that would address those concerns. Participants were members of different social classes and races. Although the sample I achieved was not the perfect blend of diverse individuals, I believe I was successful in developing a participant pool which consisted of

members from different societal groups. I recommend researchers who conduct future studies on the human experience in sport strive to achieve more diversity in their samples. It is necessary to do this as we still "know" very little about the experiences of people who are not "in the mainstream" as Fishwick and Greendorfer (1987) stated. It is important to do so because the personal, social, and structural factors that influence an individual's experiences in sport vary considerably. Presenting a "one size fits all" model as representative of the experiences of people from various walks of life does little to advance our knowledge of the many forces that affect an individual's life experiences. It is my hope that future research will be conducted in such a fashion that it will not only continue to increase the body of knowledge on this topic but will also serve to challenge what we "know" about the factors that shape people's sporting lives.

Another recommendation is to depart from focusing on personal characteristics and the process of sport socialization. Theberge (1984) stated;

> Past research (on sport participation) has focused on the characteristics and backgrounds of sport participants or on the process of socialization into sport roles. It is recommended that future research be based on a conceptualization of participation as a process by which men and women actively create their sporting lives within the constraints of particular social and political structures. (p. 26)

Focusing on the ways in which people actively create their sporting lives would be beneficial, as it would create new knowledge with regard to the ways in which people negotiate barriers to participation and find ways to create participation opportunities for themselves. This approach would also be useful because social and political structures continually evolve and can influence the ways people's sporting lives are shaped. Theberge's recommendation retains its' relevance and timeliness because lived experiences in sport domains need to be examined on an

ongoing basis because of the changing forces which exert shape those experiences.

Acquiring knowledge with regard to factors which enable and constrain opportunities to engage in sport and other recreational endeavor can be useful not only to sport sociology and psychology scholars but sport management practitioners as well. Through gaining a better understanding of the factors that are influential upon the customer, programs and cost structures can be better tailored to accommodate potential user groups. Although interviewing every resident in a particular radius would not be feasible, quantitative measures could be employed in order to learn more about potential user groups. Focus groups could also be utilized. Therefore, I recommend a mixed methods strategy for practitioners who wish to gain greater insight into their potential customer base.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Approval from Knox County Schools

Knox County Schools

Andrew Johnson Building

August 11, 2008

Michael J. Diacin
1914 Andy Holt Avenue
233 HPER Building
Knoxville, TN 37996-2700

Michael J. Diacin:

You are granted permission to contact appropriate building-level administrators concerning the conduct of your proposed research study: *An Investigation of Factors Influencing Parental Experiences and the Experiences of their Children in Sport Settings.* Final approval of any Research study taking place within the Knox County School system is contingent upon acceptance by the principal(s) at the site(s) where the study will be conducted. Include a copy of this permission form when seeking approval from the principal(s).

In all research studies names of individuals, groups, or schools may not appear in the text of the study unless specific permission has been granted through this office. The principal researcher is required to furnish this office with one copy of the completed research document. Good luck with your study. Do not hesitate to contact me if you need further assistance or clarification of the research policies of Knox County Schools.

Yours truly,

John Beckett
Evaluation Specialist
Phone: (865) 594-1735
Fax: (865) 594-1709

APPENDIX B

Letter of Introduction to Participants

Dear Sir or Madam:

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and request your participation in a study in which I am conducting. I am currently pursuing my Ph.D. in Sport Studies at the University of Tennessee. I am conducting research in order to obtain my degree and I am interested in learning of your personal history in sport. I am looking to learn more about how factors such as gender, race, and economic conditions have influenced your participation in sport-related activities when you were a child. Now that you are a parent, I am interested in learning about connections between your experiences and your child's experiences in sport-related settings.

I am looking to speak with people who fit the following parameters: 1) Parents who participated in an organized sport-related activity when they were a child, and 2) Parents who have one or more children under the age of 13 who participate in an organized sport-related activity. If you fit this description, I would like to conduct an interview in which I hope to learn more about factors that have shaped your and your children's experiences in sport.

I hope to gain your interest in participating in this research and I welcome the opportunity to speak with you in further detail. I would like to conduct an interview with you in order to learn more about yours and your child's experiences. I would pay you for your participation in the amount of $20 for an hour-or-so of your time. This interview can be conducted any location that would be convenient to you. Your assistance with this project will be greatly appreciated, and I hope it will hold value for you as well. My contact information is listed below in the event that you may have further questions or concerns associated with this study.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Diacin

Michael J. Diacin
Principal Investigator
Department of Exercise, Sport &
Leisure Studies
University of Tennessee
1914 Andy Holt Ave.
233 HPER Building
Knoxville, TN 37996
(865) 974-3295
mdiacin@utk.edu

Joy T. DeSensi, Ph.D.
Advisor
Department of Exercise, Sport &
Leisure Studies
University of Tennessee
1914 Andy Holt Ave.
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Knoxville, TN 37996
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desensi@utk.edu

APPENDIX C

Institutional Review Board Form "B"

FORM B APPLICATION

All applicants are encouraged to read the Form B guidelines. If you have any questions as you develop your Form B, contact your Departmental Review Committee (DRC) or Research Compliance Services at the Office of Research.

FORM B

IRB # _____

Date Received in OR _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. **Principal Investigator Co-Principal Investigator:**
   Michael Diacin
   1914 Andy Holt. Ave.
   233 HPER Bldg.
   University of Tennessee
   Knoxville, TN 37996
   mdiacin@utk.edu
   865-974-3295 (office)

   Faculty Advisor:
   Dr. Joy DeSensi
   1914 Andy Holt Ave.
   332 HPER Bldg.
   University of Tennessee
   Knoxville, TN 37996-2700
   desensi@utk.edu
   865-974-1282 (office)

Department:
Exercise, Sport, and Leisure Studies

2. **Project Classification:** *Enter one of the following terms as appropriate:*
   Dissertation, Thesis, Class Project, Research Project, or
   Other (Please specify)
   Dissertation Research (Sport Studies 600)
3. **Title of Project:** The Effect of Personal Demographics, Sources of Socialization, and Environmental Factors upon Sport Participation Experiences of Parents and their Children

4. **Starting Date:** Estimated starting time, November 2008 or upon IRB approval.

5. **Estimated Completion Date:** June, 2009

6. **External Funding** *(if any)**:*** No external funding will be used for this project

   - **Grant/Contract Submission Deadline:** Not applicable
   - **Funding Agency:** Not applicable
   - **Sponsor ID Number *(if known)*:** Not applicable
   - **UT Proposal Number *(if known):*** Not applicable

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this study is two-fold. The first part is to gain insight into factors such as demographics, sources of influence, and environmental conditions which participants perceive as significant upon their experiences in sport-related settings when they were youths and adolescents. The second part is to explore which factors participants who are now parents perceive as significant upon the shaping of their children's sport-related participation opportunities and experiences.

Several objectives are associated with this research project. First, this project is being conducted in order to satisfy the requirements associated with Sport Studies 600 (Dissertation Research) in order to obtain a degree of Ph.D. in Exercise & Sport Sciences with a specialization in Sport Sociology. Second, this project will serve as starting point for future studies to be submitted to scholarly, refereed journals. Third, the project will be conducted in order to contribute new knowledge to the field of Sport Sociology with regards to parental experiences in sport-related activities and factors (personal characteristics, social influences, and environmental conditions) that have shaped those experiences.

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:

All participants will be legal adults (18 years of age or more). Participants will have participated in at least one organized sport-related activity as a child and/or adolescent. In addition, participants will be parents of at least one child who is 13 years of age or less who has at least one year of participation experience in an organized sport-related activity. Both mothers and fathers will be included in this project. Parents who reside in and have children who participate in organized sport-related activities in the Knoxville, TN area will be targeted. A total of 10-12 participants will be utilized for this study, although it is possible that an additional number of participants (perhaps 2-4 more) will take part in this research project. Organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA, and local elementary and middle schools are settings in which participants will be sought. The primary

investigator will set up a table in the lobby of the YMCA locations that have authorized the study. Potential participants can visit the table and inquire into the nature of the study and indicate their interest in participating. Various local elementary schools are settings in which participants will be solicited. Within the schools, the primary investigator will attend parent teacher association meetings as a way of introducing the study to potential participants. At this time, the primary investigator would introduce the study and ask attendees to consider participating. Included with this form is a copy of a letter of approval from the Evaluation Specialist at Knox County Schools to proceed with my project. Templates of introductory e-mails that have been sent to area elementary school principals and members of management at local YMCA's requesting their assistance with the project are also included with this form. Pending their approval, efforts to locate participants will be made.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES:

Semi-structured interviews will be the primary method of data collection utilized in this qualitative study. A brief survey (included with this form) on participant demographics will be administered as well. Solicitations for participants will be distributed at settings which include Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA's, elementary and middle school parent-teacher organization meetings. If a person indicates they would be interested in participating, a meeting will be arranged at which the person would be provided with an informed consent letter (included with this form) which includes the objectives, benefits, and risks to the study. They will also be informed that the interview will likely last between 60-75 minutes. Upon their consent, an interview with that person will be conducted. The interview would take place at a time and place convenient to the participant. The participant would participate in a semi-structured interview in which a series of open and closed ended questions would be asked (a list of the specific questions the researcher will be asking is attached to this form). A small financial reward will be offered to the participant for their participation in the interview. The reward in the amount of $20 will be provided by the primary investigator. Interview data would be audio recorded and later transcribed and analyzed. Participants will be provided with a copy of interview transcripts for the purpose of analysis and to ensure that their statements were recorded accurately. All recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed upon conclusion of the study.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES:

The risks associated with this type of research are considered minimal. The most significant risk the participant could be exposed to would involve compromising the confidentiality of their identity. Measures to ensure protection of the participants will be taken. Recorded interview data will not contain personal information of any kind (name, address, contact information, etc.). Participants will provide the primary investigator with a pseudonym which will be used in transcripts and other written material associated with the research. Audio recordings will be erased and transcriptions will be shredded upon completion of the study. Actual names and contact numbers, which will be needed to reach the participant, will be stored in a locked cabinet in room 332 of the HPER building. This personal information will not be accessible to anyone else. The safeguards to protect the participants' identity will be included in the informed consent letter.

VI. BENEFITS:

The main benefit of this study is that it will contribute to the body of literature in the field of Sport Sociology. Future publications associated with the finished manuscript have the potential to be useful in educational settings as the findings will illustrate how participants' experiences in sport are shaped by a variety of personal attributes such as the participants' race, gender, and or social class. This information can be used to educate future students with regard to factors which shape and impact individuals' experiences in sport.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS:

Each participant who expresses interest in participating in the study will receive a letter on official University of Tennessee letterhead, signed by both the primary investigator and the primary investigator's advisor. Descriptions of the purpose of the study, anticipated benefits associated with the research, and potential risks associated with participating will be provided to the participant. Within this letter, the participants will also be informed that their participation is voluntary. They may decline to participate; furthermore, they may elect to end their participation at any time during the research process without penalty. Their signature on the informed consent form will indicate that they have read and understood the objectives, benefits, data collection methods, and possible risks associated with the study.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH:

The primary investigator is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Exercise, Sport, and Leisure Studies whose area of specialization is Sport Sociology. The primary investigator has completed coursework in qualitative study as part of the requirements for completion of his Ph.D. and has conducted several qualitative studies as a doctoral student. He will be conducting this research under the direction of Dr. Joy T. DeSensi, a full-time, tenured faculty member in the Department of Exercise, Sport, and Leisure Studies who has personally conducted numerous qualitative studies in the field of Sport Sociology and has also advised numerous students' qualitative research projects.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH:

Equipment that will be used will consist of a tape recorder in order to collect the responses of the participant so that the primary investigator may refer to the data at a later time for the purposes of transcribing and analysis. Facilities to be used would include either a public area (e.g., school or recreation facility) or a private area (e.g., the participant's home).

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)

The following information must be entered verbatim into this section:

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under

the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

1. **Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.**

2. **Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.**

3. **An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.**

4. **Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.**

XI. SIGNATURES

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE ORIGINAL. The Principal Investigator should keep the original copy of the Form B and submit a copy with original signatures for review. Type the name of each individual above the appropriate signature line. Add signature lines for all Co-Principal Investigators, collaborating and student investigators, faculty advisor(s), department head of the Principal Investigator, and the Chair of the Departmental Review Committee. The following information should be typed verbatim, with added categories where needed:

Principal Investigator: Michael J. Diacin

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Co-Principal Investigator: None

Signature: _____n/a_____ Date: _____n/a_____

Student Advisor (if any): Dr. Joy T. DeSensi

Signature: _____ Date: _____

XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:

[ ] Expedited Review -- Category(s): ____7____

OR

[ ] Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC: Dr. Craig Wrisberg

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Department Head: Dr. Dixie Thompson

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services
for final approval on (Date): _____**

**Approved:
Research Compliance Services
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue**

Signature: _____ Date: _____

For additional information on Form B, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer or by phone at (865) 974-3466.

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide

Parental Participation Histories:

Personal Demographics

1. When you were growing up, what sport(s) did you participate in?
2. What was it about those sports that appealed to you?
3. Why do you feel you were able to participate in these sports?
    a. Did religious aspects have any influence or impact upon your sports participation?
    b. Do you feel that the sports you were able to participate in were influenced by your gender or race? Why/why not?

Sources of Socialization in Sport

4. Who would you say was the biggest influence upon you getting started in sport? What person or people exerted that influence and how did they exert their influence?
5. Were there any other people who were influential in getting you started? If so, who and when?
6. How did these people support your sport participation? Was it through financial, emotion, or instructional support? Was it several of these? Please describe the ways in which they provided their support.
7. Do you believe that your participation in sports was important to your parents? Why/why not?
8. Were the people who were a major influence upon your sport participation as young child still influential as you became a teenager & young adult? If so, how were they influential?
9. Were there any people who were not a big influence on you as a kid who became a big influence upon your sport participation when you became an adolescent? If so, how?
10. How did these people support your sport participation? Was it through financial, emotional, or instructional support?
11. Do you feel that anyone was a big part in *keeping* you from playing sports? Who were they and what did they do to discourage your participation?

Environmental Conditions

12. Did you participate in most of your sports through school programs or community based non-school programs? What was it about these programs that made participation possible and/or appealing to you?
13. Did the area in which you grew up (rural, urban) have any impact upon the sports that you ended up playing? If so, how?
14. What kind of facilities did you have access to at which you could play sports?
15. What kinds of costs did you have in regards to your sports participation?
16. Did economics play a role in the sports you could/could not participate in? How so/why not?
17. Were you interested in particular sports but never had a chance to play them? Why do you feel you didn't get that chance to play those sports?

18. Is there anything else that stands out that prevented you from getting a chance to start playing or continuing a sport or sports that you liked?
19. Is there a particular game or incident in your experience that really stands out when you think about your experience as a child? Why does it stand out for you?

Parents' description and assessment of their child's sport participation:

1. In what sport(s) does your child participate?
2. Who were the biggest sources of influence upon their getting started in sports?
3. What kind of involvement did these sources of influence have upon your child's sport participation?
4. What kind of support toward you child's sport activities is provided by the person/people you identified?
5. Have the sources of influence upon your child's sport participation changed over the time he/she has been active? If so, how?
6. Do you participate in any sports now? What factors do you feel are responsible for your current involvement in sport and other physical activities?
7. Why do you think your child became active in sports? Did he/she grow up in a physically active household?
8. What factors do you think have caused your child to remain active in sports? How?
9. Was there pressure from anyone (family, friends, neighbors) to have your child involved in sports? If so, who were they and how did they exert pressure?
10. What do you want your child to get out of his/her sport experiences?
11. When your child is engaged in sports, what are your expectations for her/him?
12. Would their expectations be the same or different from yours? Why do you say that?
13. What influence if any has your child's gender had upon their sport participation? Has it served as a factor that has enabled/restricted their opportunities to participate in sports? If so, how?
14. What influence if any has your race had upon you child's sport participation? Has it served as a factor that has enabled/restricted their opportunities to participate in sports? If so, how?
15. What influence if any have economic factors had upon your child's sport participation? Has it served as a factor that has enabled/restricted their opportunities to participate in sports? If so, how?
16. Have there been any other factors you can think of that serve to restrict your child's opportunities to participate in sport activities? If so, what and how?
17. The age at which you started in sports, did that play a role on the age at which your child started in sports? If so, how?
18. Did your experiences in sport and some of those incidents that really stood out for you cause you to be comfortable with/ hesitant to get your child involved in sports? If so or not, how?
19. As your child grows older and stays with sports, how do you see your role changing in regards to his/her participation endeavors?

Debriefing Questions:

1. Are there any additional comments you would like to make at this time?
2. Was there any part of the interview process make you feel uncomfortable in any way? If so, could you please explain?
3. Were any of my questions to be confusing or unclear in any way? If so, could you please tell me what was unclear to you?
4. Was it interesting and/or helpful to talk about your and your children's experience in sport? How so or why not?
5. Is there anything important I forgot to ask you? Does anything come to mind that you would like to talk about that I did not already ask?

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

Description of the Study:
This study is being conducted in order to learn about factors influencing your experiences in sport when you were a child and factors that have influenced your children's experiences in sport. Your involvement in this study will consist of participation in an informal interview that will last approximately 60 minutes at a time and place convenient for you. If necessary, you may be asked follow-up questions at a later time in order to clarify or further explain information you shared during the course of the interview. It is hoped that with your help, a greater understanding of factors which may enable or constrain sport-related participation can be gained.

Potential Risks and Discomforts:
No significant physical, psychological, or emotional risks are anticipated with your participation in this study. In order to protect your rights as a participant, please be aware of the following:

- Your participation in the process is completely voluntary.
- You may chose to stop participation at any time without penalty.
- You may also refuse to answer any question that you feel makes you uncomfortable.
- If you do not want any information you share to be reported, you may elect to deny the researcher permission to use that information in any reports or other transmissions of data.
- If you have any questions or concerns at any time, you may contact the principal investigator and/or the faculty advisor involved with this study. Your inquiry will be handled will the highest amount of respect and concern.

Confidentiality:
The interview in which you participate will be audio taped. All tapes will be kept under lock and key in a safe and secure location. Upon completion of the study, all audio tapes will be erased and all transcriptions will be shredded. Your real name, address, and contact information will not be shared with anyone. This information will also be kept under lock and key in a secure location, but separate from the audio tapes and transcripts. You will choose a pseudonym which will be used in any writings associated with the study so that those reading the interview data will not know that it is you who provided the information. The pseudonym will be the only identifying features on the audio recordings as well. Transcripts and audio recordings in which pseudonyms are used will only be reviewed by the primary investigator and the faculty advisor.

My signature below indicates that I have read and understood the above statements. I understand the purpose of this study and the nature of my involvement. Furthermore, I understand the risks associated with this study and I am aware of my rights as a participant.

Participants Signature: _____ Date: _____

Michael J. Diacin
Principal Investigator
Department of Exercise, Sport & Leisure Studies
University of Tennessee
1914 Andy Holt Ave.
233 HPER Building
Knoxville, TN 37996
(865) 974-3295
mdiacin@utk.edu

Joy T. DeSensi, Ph.D.
Advisor
Department of Exercise, Sport & Leisure Studies
University of Tennessee
1914 Andy Holt Ave.
332 HPER Building
Knoxville, TN 37996
(865) 974-1282
desensi@utk.edu

APPENDIX F

Demographic Information Survey

Gender: (Check one) _____ Male _____ Female _____ Other

Age: (Check one)

_____18-24 _____ 25-29 _____30-34 _____35-39

_____40-44 _____45-49 _____50-54 _____55-59

_____60-64 _____65 & over

Race: (Check one)

_____ White/Caucasian _____African American _____ Asian

_____Hispanic _____Middle Eastern _____ Native American

_____ Pacific Islander _____ Other

Level of Education Completed: (Check one)
_____ Last grade completed (7^{th}, 8^{th}, 9^{th}, 10^{th}, 11^{th}, 12^{th}, other, please indicate in space to the left)

_____ High School (or obtained G.E.D.) _____ Associates Degree
_____ Bachelor's Degree _____ Master's Degree

_____ Doctorate Degree _____Trade/Technical School

_____ Other degree or certifications not listed above

Occupation: (Check one)

_____ Manufacturing _____Technical _____ Homemaker

_____ Managerial _____ Entrepreneur _____ Other professional

Household Income:

_____ Less than $10,000 _____ $10,000-$15,000 _____ $15,000-$20,000

_____ $20,000-$25,000 _____ $25,000-$30,000 _____ $30,000-$35,000

_____ $35,000-$40,000 _____ $40,000-$45,000 _____ $45,000-$50,000

_____ $50,000-$55,000 _____ $55,000-$60,000 _____ Above $60,000

APPENDIX G

Confidentiality Statement for Transcript Readers

I understand that I will be reading transcripts of confidential interviews provided by participants of a study titled “The Shaping of Parental Experiences in Sport: An Examination of Personal, Social, and Structural Factors.” I understand that by signing this statement, I am agreeing to keep the information I read in the transcripts confidential. I will not discuss the transcripts or my thematization of the findings with anyone other than the researcher, Michael J. Diacin. Any violation of this agreement would constitute a breach of ethical standards, and I pledge not to do so.

_____ _____

Name: Date:

_____

Signature:

Vita

Michael J. Diacin was born in Youngstown, Ohio on November 6, 1972. He was raised in Youngstown and graduated from Austintown Fitch High School in June, 1991. After graduation, he attended Bowling Green State University (BGSU) and majored in Sport Management. He graduated Cum Laude from BGSU and received his Bachelor of Science degree in December, 1995. He began pursuing his Master's degree in Sport Administration at BGSU beginning in August 1997. He received his Master of Education Degree in Sport Administration in August, 1999.

After leaving BGSU, Michael began working in the sport management profession as a member of management in a number of multi-purpose community recreation facilities in the metropolitan area of Detroit, Michigan. He began working in this industry in November 1999 and remained in the field until May, 2006. During this time he worked for the cities of Hazel Park and Novi, Michigan. He had also served as Assistant Director at an Athletics Complex at a private high school, Orchard Lake Saint Mary's Preparatory in Orchard Lake, Michigan.

Michael was accepted to the Sports Studies program within the Department of Exercise, Sport, and Leisure Studies at the University of Tennessee and began pursuing his Ph.D. in Education within the Sport Sociology concentration in August, 2006. His research interests include parental involvement and experience in organized sport. In addition, he has research interests associated with students' assessments of sport management based curriculum and field experiences. Michael's career ambitions include working as a professor in the fields of Sport Sociology/Management after graduating from the University of Tennessee in August, 2009.