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## **Jump Rope Connecting the Past, Present and Future**

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Nicholas Woodard entitled "Jump Rope Connecting the Past, Present and Future." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Recreation and Sport Management.

Steven Waller Ph.D., Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Jeffery Graham Ph.D., Angela Wozencroft Ph.D.

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**Jump Rope:  
Connecting the Past, Present and Future**

A Thesis Presented for the  
Master of Science  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Nicholas Dean Woodard  
May 2020

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Jump rope is an activity that most people have experienced at some point in their lives. It is the type of activity that can help bring joy, build physical fitness, and for some it is an internationally competitive sport. The competitive aspect of jump rope is unfamiliar to most people. The activity dates back to the 1600's, but formally organized competitions did not take place until the 1970's.

The sport of jump rope has a rich history, but the story has not been fully documented. This thesis examines the history and the current landscape of jump rope in the United States, as well as how the sport has spread around the world. An additional purpose of the study was to explore public awareness of the sport's existence. The theoretical framework of leisure constraints was used to aid in understanding current participation in competitive jump rope and to discuss potential methods for increasing involvement in the future.

The principal investigator conducted eight one-on-one, semi-structured interviews throughout this study. A combination of deductive and inductive coding was used to for the analysis. Although themes such as growth and outside perceptions were predetermined, other themes emerged throughout the data analysis process. The themes that emerged were exposure, participation, and current landscape of the sport. For example, participants expressed that the sport of jump rope needs viral attention, and that organizational tension is hindering forward movement in the United States.

Through this research we began to understand the history and evolution of jump rope, but there are aspects of the sport and organizational structure that still require further research. This thesis is one of few academic studies that attempts to expound upon the historical aspects of jump rope in the U.S. It also provides a systematic connection between the current state of the sport and its future potential for expansion.

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

Do you remember a childhood game that could be done indoors or outdoors, with friends or individually, that made you sweat a little, but was ultimately a lot of fun? There aren't many games or activities that fit this description, but one that many people may remember is jump rope! Jump rope is an activity that requires little space and all ages can do it (Dinwiddle, 1980).

When individuals first began to jump rope, they often played certain games during which someone would jump a long rope turned by two other individuals. A popular game in the 1880s called "chase the fox" held youths' attention because it could be played with multiple people. Two jumpers turned a rope and the first person who jumped through was the "fox". The remaining jumpers would pass through following the "fox", and if there was a miss, the turners would switch places and become jumpers (Jumping the rope, 1888, p. 2) There are also several "classic kid jump rope songs and rhymes" that most have heard, including Cinderella, Miss Mary Mack, Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, etc. (Brown, 2019).

Jump rope for others can be a means of exercise. There are several types of cardiovascular exercise that people can choose, but some might find jump rope more amusing than running (Deslys, 1912). Jump rope helps build cardiovascular endurance and agility (Partavi, 2013). Because a jump rope is small and inexpensive, it is a piece of equipment that can be brought anywhere.

So, for individuals who travel, having a jump rope handy can be perfect for a quick workout. Jump rope helps exercise enthusiasts with muscular endurance. It also helps athletes develop footwork and agility thereby preparing them to perform effectively in their chosen sport (Seabourne, 2006). From athletes to the lay individual who is looking for effective cardio, jump rope is a form of exercise most have experienced to some extent.

Some individuals remember jumping rope at school during *Kids Heart Challenge* or *Jump Rope for Heart* events in school. *Jump Rope for Heart* is a fundraising program used in schools throughout the year (Kids Heart Challenge, 2019). The program is connected with the Kids Heart Challenge initiative by the American Heart Association and the proceeds fund heart disease research and education. Many times, schools will have a four to six-week jump rope program, and for the majority of students it is their first introduction to the activity. The Jump Rope for Heart program teaches students the basics of jump rope, as well as how their hearts work. Although the kids are raising money for a good cause, they are also learning another way to stay physically fit and have fun.

To a much narrower population of people, jump rope is a competitive sport. Since 1974, jump rope has had organized competitions all over the world (About us, n.d.). These competitions have been organized by both national and international organizations. There are a variety of different events in which athletes compete underneath the two disciplines of *single rope* and *double*

*dutch*. Single rope is a form of jump rope that involves one individual with one rope. Double dutch involves two turners, one or more jumpers, and two ropes that are turned in an alternating fashion. Within those two disciplines there are speed and freestyle events that are competed. The competitions can range from a small local tournament to an international competition. These organizations provide opportunities for the elite athletes to compete at a high level throughout the world.

The sport of jump rope is relatively young compared to most sports. Broad aspects of the sport's history have been explained on several existing websites, but the recorded history of many prominent jump rope organizations is incomplete.

### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to unpack the history of the sport of jump rope within the United States and how it has made an impact on the international jump rope community. The paper will examine the historical context of the major United States jump rope organizations. This research endeavor is relevant because it will expand the current knowledge and understanding of the evolution of competitive jump rope.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Jump rope is a fun pastime activity for many people but few know where it began and that it is a competitive sport. Throughout this section information will be provided on the origin, major United States and international organizations, and the evolution of the sport of jump rope.

#### **Origin of Jump Rope**

Jump rope has been an activity that has existed for centuries. There is not much written history of the sport, but it can be traced back as far as the 1600s in China (Rope Skipping History, 2015). It was a pastime that many of the children took part in during the Chinese New Year's Festivals. Jump rope came across the Atlantic with the Dutch in the late 1600s. Once they settled in America, children were seen jumping and developing games with songs to keep themselves engaged. As the children sang their songs in Dutch, the English and French settlers could not understand what they were saying. The children often placed two ropes together and when this happened the French and English settlers called it "Double Dutch." It received its name because the French and English speakers categorized anything the Dutch did as confusing or absurd (Rope Skipping History, 2015).

From the 1600s until the 1950s, double dutch continued to surface throughout the United States. Girls could be seen using whatever materials they could find to make a rope so they could play with their friends. In the

1950s, double dutch started becoming more extinct (Rope Skipping History, 2015). With the expansion of television and radio in the 1950s, youth began spending more and more time watching television programs. In fact, youth spent between 12 – 24 hours a week in front of a TV (Schramm, 1961). This caused a dramatic decrease in recreational activities such as jump rope since it was not a well-established sport

### **Evolution of Single Rope**

In the 1960s, Richard Cendali began the evolution of single rope. Cendali is from Boulder, Colorado and was an offensive lineman on the University of Colorado football team. For a conditioning workout, the head coach had Cendali choose between jumping rope for 15 minutes and running the stairs outside in the cold (Clark, 1985). He chose to jump rope and found it very interesting, so he continued to practice and improve throughout college. After receiving his master's degree in education, Cendali began his career as a Physical Education (P.E.) teacher at a local elementary school in Colorado. During a convention, Cendali heard a presentation by Frank Prentup about jump rope. Prentup emphasized the sport as a competitive team activity that never got off the ground in the 1930s. Cendali was inspired to take a new approach to single rope and began teaching his students intricate skills (Clark, 1985). He formed a local team called the *Skip Its*, and they started doing performances around the country and around the world. Cendali helped establish a United States organization called the International Rope Skipping

Organization (IRSO) in the early 1980s. The organization helped promote and develop single rope, double dutch, long rope and more throughout the world by teaching camps, leading workshops and performing at multiple venues (About USA Jump Rope History, 2018). Cendali was instrumental in starting USA Jump Rope (USAJR), European Rope Skipping Organization (ERSO) and Federation Internationale de Saut a la Corde” (FISAC) (ERSO History, 2018). These organizations grew and held national, continental and world tournaments from the mid-1990s to the present in order to help grow the sport of jump rope.

### **Evolution of Double Dutch**

While single rope was being developed in Colorado, there was a strong movement for double dutch in New York City. In 1973, double dutch reappeared thanks to Ulysses Williams and David Walker who were New York police officers (About us, n.d.). The police officers revitalized double dutch and began using it as a youth outreach program called “rope not dope” throughout New York. Their aim with double dutch originally was to use it as a way to get youth off of the inner-city streets of New York (Rope Skipping History, 2018). While the program was helping youth get off the streets, both men saw it was evolving into a competitive sport. By 1974, they hosted their first double dutch competition in which nearly 600 fifth through eighth grade students participated (About us, n.d.). After a successful tournament, David Walker started the American Double Dutch League (ADDL). Their aim was to govern double dutch around the world. After holding successful competitions and having a huge

impact in spreading double dutch, David Walker resigned from ADDL in 1992 and started another double dutch organization called the National Double Dutch League (NDDL) (The History of Double Dutch, n.d.). The organization has continued to spread double dutch in New York and around the world. NDDL hosts a big double dutch event every year at the famous Apollo Theater in which teams from around the world participate.

### **Historical Development of Jump Rope in the United States**

**American Double Dutch League (ADDL) and National Double Dutch League (NDDL).** With the successful double dutch program developed by David Walker and Ulysses Williams, they started ADDL in 1974. David Walker resigned and started NDDL in 1992. Both organizations are still in existence and run several tournaments each year. Beyond the initial information, there is no additional documented history, so further research is needed to fully understand the impact and significance of these two organizations.

**United States Amateur Jump Rope Federation (USAJRF).** The United States Amateur Jump Rope Federation was formed on October 1, 1995 (About USA Jump Rope, n.d.). The organization was created as a merger of the International Rope Skipping Organization and World Rope Skipping Federation (About USA Jump Rope, n.d.). The stated purpose of the merger was to unify the sport of jump rope in the United States. USAJRF held its first national championship tournament in 1996 at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida (About USA Jump Rope, n.d.). The finals of the championship were televised

on ESPN that summer and continued for several years. In addition to hosting national championships, USAJRF, now called USA Jump Rope, has been involved in promoting the sport of jump rope through workshops and annual summer camps across the country. USA Jump Rope developed an All Star Team in 2005 with Shaun Hamilton as the head coach. The All Star Team helped promote USA Jump Rope and the sport by engaging in workshops, performances, camps, etc. across the United States. Currently, USA Jump Rope continues to host national championships and produce workshops and camps.

**American Jump Rope Federation (AMJRF).** The newly formed American Jump Rope Federation is the designated national governing body for the sport of jump rope in the United States (Membership, n.d.). Their mission is to enhance the sport in the United States through innovation, best practices of sport, etc. (Bylaws of American Jump Rope Federation, Inc., 2019). AMJRF hosts camps, workshops and national championships for the jump rope community in the United States. The organization is responsible for selecting Team USA for the world championships hosted by the International Jump Rope Union (IJRU). There is not a significant amount of information on the formation, history, etc. of AMJRF. Further research is needed to understand the significance of this U.S. entity.



## **International Organizations**

**Federation Internationale de Saut a la Corde (FISAC).** With the sport of jump rope having national organizations in the U.S. and across the world, the sport needed an international governing body. In 1995, the U.S. discussed making an international organization to help host world competitions for the sport. A meeting was called in San Francisco with U.S. representatives along with representatives of several other countries, to discuss the bylaws and create a board of directors (Rope Skipping History, 2015). The name that was chosen was “Federation Internationale de Saut a la Corde” (FISAC), and they began drafting bylaws for the organization. FISAC also decided on a board of directors that had representation from several countries to ensure that everyone’s views were represented. After the meeting, the organization held its first world championship in Sydney, Australia in 1997. The event was small, with nearly 120 competitors. However, it was successful and helped spark more world championships (Rope Skipping History, 2015). Since their first world championship, the organization has held twelve more championships with the most recent one being held in Shanghai, China in 2018.

**World Jump Rope Federation (WJRF).** While competitions were steadily happening throughout the world, there were a few individuals who believed the sport could go even further. Five prominent figures in the sport met in hopes to discover ways to continue to push our sport forward. The original thought was to have an open international competition that invited the world to

display their talents. This would be different from the FISAC model because there would be no qualifiers. Their core values were centered on diversity, inclusion, innovation, promotion and the best practices of sport. Those core values were aligned with their vision statement, “to unify the sport of jump rope” (World Jump Rope Federation, 2018). As they continued discussions, it became apparent that the tournament needed a name that would attract jumpers from around the world. They decided to name the tournament the World Jump Rope Championship and Camp (WJR). During the early planning stages of the tournament, they did not know what would eventually happen, but they did know that this new endeavor would help to push the sport forward in some way.

In 2011, the first WJR tournament was held in Washington D.C. at George Washington University. The tournament was very successful with over 300 competitors from over 20 countries. The tournament was live streamed in order to help promote the newly established event. Over the next few years, the tournament continued to grow and gain more exposure throughout the jump rope community. The organization officially became the World Jump Rope Federation (WJRF) to show other countries and organizations they were not just a tournament, but a fully functional entity that wanted to change the landscape of the sport. WJRF developed an international board to begin governing the organization as they endeavored to expand the sport globally. WJRF has now hosted a tournament every year for nine years. The most

recent was held in Oslofjord, Norway in 2019 and included over 900 competitors from 26 countries. The live stream of the Norway event attracted viewership from around the world (S. Hamilton, Personal Communication, July 12, 2019).

Although the organization was formed originally to be an open tournament, the chairman's ultimate vision was to gain recognition for jump rope as an official international sport underneath the International Olympic Committee (IOC). This was an effort that had been attempted in the past, but the sport was not in a position to gain that recognition. WJRF began following a road map in order to put the organization in a position to move towards official recognition. WJRF learned about the Global Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) and saw that it was the gateway to becoming recognized. In order to be recognized, a sporting organization has to become a full member of GAISF. The organization could then be considered by the IOC as a viable option for the Olympic program. Delegates from WJRF attended an international sporting convention called SportAccord. GAISF representatives hold different business meetings throughout the convention to help govern international federations. During the convention, WJRF delegates discovered how much work it would take for them to become recognized.

The organization began developing relationships with other countries and continental groups in order to help them understand the model that WJRF was following. WJRF began traveling around the world and working with

different countries to help them gain recognition from the highest sporting officials within their respective countries. Once a country was able to gain this recognition, they could become full members of WJRF. This was vital for WJRF because in order to become a full member underneath GAISF, an international organization has to have 40 member countries whose highest sporting officials recognize jump rope as an official sport. At the time, WJRF had 20 full members and six provisional members.

While WJRF was gaining more credibility around the world, there was still something hindering the recognition the sport needed. GAIFS would only recognize one international organization per sport, and there could not be any rivalry issues. Therefore, because FISAC and WJRF were competing international organizations, they would have to come together eventually.

**International Jump Rope Union (IJRU).** In 2017 at the SportAccord Convention, WJRF and FISAC were both present but unaware that the other organization was also there. Both organizations were still seeking to gain recognition from GAISF. During the convention, the two presidents of the organizations crossed paths and decided to have a talk. This was a pivotal point because the two presidents knew that in order to move our sport forward, they were going to need to collaborate. After talking, they realized that neither organization was going to dissolve, but they both agreed that recognition for the sport was the main priority.

Over the next several months the two presidents continued to talk and discuss how to push the sport forward. They contemplated the idea of merging into one umbrella organization to help govern the sport internationally. Although it seemed like a great idea, they both knew it would take a lot of work. The presidents began having many conversations with their respective boards of directors to inform them of their meetings and what needed to be done. Both WJRF and FISAC approved the merger and wanted to move forward with a name that would best reflect the merger. In March of 2018, they decided to call the organization the International Jump Rope Union (IJRU) (2020 Road Map, 2018).

In 2018, IJRU attended the SportAccord convention as a united group in Bangkok, Thailand. Representatives from both FISAC and WJRF made up the delegation for IJRU during the convention. In recent years, GAISF has issued “provisional memberships” to international federations to help them gain a form of recognition so they could more easily acquire additional member countries. The GAISF officials met and deliberated over ten international organizations. They recognized only one organization that year: IJRU (IJRU becomes 10<sup>th</sup> Observer, 2018). The recognition given was called the observer status. This status is a provisional step on the way to becoming a full member of GAISF. This was a milestone for the sport because jump rope had never been recognized by the international sporting community in its 40 plus year history.

This recognition now allows IJRU to gain more credibility as an international organization.

IJRU still has many tasks to complete. Both WJRF and FISAC have had their respective world championships in 2018, and now that the 2019 WJRF championship and camp is finished, both organizations will dissolve and IJRU will officially govern the sport internationally.

### **Evolution of Jump Rope Disciplines**

Since the very beginning of jump rope, there have been two main disciplines. Within the disciplines, styles have varied depending on the time period, as well as the organization with which each athlete was associated. Assumedly, the jumping style was very basic at the beginning stages of the sport's history. During this time, participants simply held an individual rope and jumped or had two other people turn an end of a rope to allow one or more people to jump in the middle. That era notably continued throughout time because there was never a push to develop anything more.

Whenever Mr. Cendali began teaching jump rope to his PE students, we began to see something other than basic jumping. There were a variety of footwork skills that were introduced such as skier (feet together going side to side), bell (feet together going forward and backwards), forward straddle (scissor motion with legs) and side straddle (apart and together like a jumping jack). The tricks became even more intricate by using side swings where an individual would swing the rope by their body without jumping as if you were

rowing a boat. This led to being able to do rotations efficiently with the rope. From that innovation back in the early 1960s and 1970s, single rope has evolved tremendously. There are skills being performed now that no one would have thought possible 50 years ago. Individuals are making the rope go under the feet three, four, or five times in one jump while performing a series of side swings, crosses, and rotations. More gymnastics skills have been introduced such as handstands, front flips, back flips, side flips, twisting flips, etc. with the jump rope. Many times, while a gymnastics skill is being performed, the athlete is able to do a jump rope skill at the same time. This evolution has been extremely important because athletes continue to push the sport and try new and unique skills.

Just as Mr. Cendali was influential in single rope, David Walker and Ulysses Williams were influential in the context of double dutch. When their competitions first emerged, double dutch had a distinctive style. There was a huge emphasis on the rhythms that the ropes and the jumpers made. This definitely helped the jumpers and turners stay together and also encouraged audience members to be drawn into the musicality of the routine. Throughout the routines, different skills would be performed in the ropes such as footwork, partner skills (leap frog, holding one leg, etc.) or simply jumping fast. Over the years, that style has continued to exist, but jumpers have taken it to a new level. The fusion competitions that originated in New York are one of the many things that has helped evolve the style of double dutch. Fusion is performed to

music and instead of the audience listening to the beat of the ropes, the routine is choreographed to every beat of the music. The “fusion” style of jumping in double dutch has been adopted by several international tournaments throughout the world (The History of Double Dutch, n.d.).

Along with fusion, the difficulty of skills being performed within double dutch has continued to improve. Skills within the ropes were primarily footwork in the early 1970s, but now acrobatic skills are increasingly prevalent. Similar to single rope, athletes are jumping in handstands, push-ups, front flips, back flips, etc. While the jumper is performing their skills, it is important that the turners are adding to the routine by doing skills of their own. Turners are jumping through the ropes, rotating in a circle, switching places, etc. The idea is to have constant movement and flow throughout the performance.

Jump rope is a forever evolving sport, which makes it very unique. Skills are constantly being created. Athletes who have been in the sport for over 30 years can continue to learn something new. Each generation continues to learn from the previous generation. It is important to continue pushing the sport and creating new skills so it can continue to evolve.

### **Jump Rope Benefits**

**Physical benefits.** Jump rope has been used for years as a means for physical activity. Many have chosen to use jump rope as their cardiovascular exercise or as a means of training for other sports. Balance and coordination are key elements in order to be successful in many sports. Jump rope has been



shown to help the body become stable during combinations of upper and lower body movements (Trecroci, Cavaggioni, Cascia, & alberti, 2015). Endurance is a factor for most sports, and coaches and athletes are always looking for ways to improve their cardiovascular endurance. In a study examining cardiovascular endurance, speed and agility, jump rope was shown to be a feasible and effective method for improving cardiovascular endurance and agility performance (Partavi, 2013).

In society today, youth sports are growing more and more, and it is important to make sure the kids are developing their motor skills to help them become successful. Placing a jump rope exercise in all sports branches can accelerate the development of the players as well as contribute to the variety of training (Eler & Acar, 2018). The same study showed decreased body fat percentages after children participated in a ten-week jump rope program in a study on youth participants. Speed and agility are becoming increasingly more important in order to excel in most sports. Jump rope has frequently been shown to have a positive relationship with agility improvement (Jahromi & Gholami, 2015). For athletes who might not be experienced with specialized plyometrics, jump rope can be a great way to help with their stretch shortening cycle (Miyaguchi, Sugiura, & Demura, 2014). Jump rope has also been useful in the development of explosive reaction power within athletes (Orhan, 2013).

**Psychosocial benefits.** The sport and activity of jump rope has been shown to help individuals mentally and emotionally. Jump rope helps foster

leadership and teamwork skills (Thompson, 2009). There are many distinct opportunities for success during each jump rope practice. Recreation center leaders have noted that jump rope participation and success breeds enhanced confidence in participating in other sports (Unpublished data, Couvillion). Although jump rope can be an individual activity, certain disciplines, such as long rope and double dutch, require individuals to work together, thus encouraging collaboration and group problem solving-skills (Huber, 2019). These benefits can help individuals not only in jump rope but other facets of life such as sport, academics and careers.

**Sociocultural benefits.** Jump rope has been shown to impact not only individuals, but also communities and populations of varied cultures and socioeconomic landscapes.

**Accessibility.** The ability to play a sport or engage in physical activity can have its barriers. Certain types of sports require a specific type of playing field, a team, etc. in order to truly take part. Within jump rope that is not the case. Jump rope is an easily accessible activity because all you need is time, a rope, space, and it can be done independently (Budiman, Budiana, Mehendra, Wibowo, Meidiati, Akbari, 2019). Jump rope is even accessible to those who may have physical limitations such as blindness, physical deformities, etc. In a study working with a visually impaired population modifications such as beaded ropes, plastic cord, and JumpSnap which is a ropeless jump rope that talks and provides feedback were used to aid in jumping (Lieberman, Schedlin, & Pierce,

2009). Those who may have had a lower socioeconomic status have also jumped rope throughout history. In some urban areas, individuals did not always have traditional ropes to jump, so they would repurpose everyday items. For example, it was common to use telephone wire, an old clothesline and other easily accessible items to form jump ropes (Scott-Simmons, 2007). The unique accessibility of jump rope has allowed it to persist throughout generations and across cultures as a fun community activity.

***Cultural preservation & cohesion.*** Jump rope has helped individuals and communities discover their identities. Specifically, in African American communities, jump rope has served as a way to outwardly express feelings through songs and rhythms during difficult times, providing a sense of unity (Scott-Simmons, 2007). Jump rope has been used as a tool to pass down and preserve culture within the African American culture (Saloy, 2011). Jump rope has helped to steer many young people in positive directions (Rope Skipping History, 2018). Although the American history of double dutch is rooted primarily in the African American community, both double dutch and single rope now serve as vehicles to unify diverse populations. For example, workshops and competitions each year are comprised of athletes and coaches of different ethnicities. These athletes and coaches often work together to create innovative skills, teach each other new techniques, and compete together.

## **Jump Rope as a Competitive Sport**

Although jump rope has been used as a training tool for different sports, the competitive side of the sport is something that many people do not understand. There are two disciplines of jump rope, single rope and double dutch. Within these two disciplines, there are several speed and freestyle events. Speed is an alternating jog step that is performed with a single rope or inside of double dutch ropes. There are a series of speed events for both single rope and double dutch. In single rope, you can jump as an individual or with a group. The speed events are timed; their duration can vary from 30 seconds to three minutes, depending on the event. Thirty-second speed can be viewed as the fastest event, similar to a 100-m sprint in track and field, whereas three-minute speed is considered the endurance event similar to an 800-m run in track and field. In double dutch, there are always two individuals turning while a jumper is in the ropes. The time an athlete jumps in the middle will vary from thirty seconds to two minutes. During certain events there will be a turner-jumper exchange in order to get a new jumper in the middle. All speed events are scored by counting the right foot during the event, and afterwards the score is doubled to find the total number of jumps in the allotted time.

Freestyle events involve individuals performing a series of skills in a certain order to impress the judges and the audience. Freestyle events can be viewed as a cross between a gymnastics floor routine, break dancing and figure skating. Each freestyle routine is evaluated based on content, technical quality

of presentation, accuracy (misses) and entertainment value. In single rope, there are a variety of events from individual to a four-person single rope routine. For double dutch, the routines can have three, four, or five people for different events. The minimum length for a freestyle routine is 45 seconds and the maximum length is 90 seconds. All of the routines in single rope and double dutch are performed to music. Each routine is scored based on two main factors, difficulty and presentation. The difficulty factor will be an accumulation of all of the difficulty points and the presentation factor can sway the overall score by 40%. Average presentation will not hurt a routine, but poor presentation could decrease a score by up to 20%, and excellent presentation could increase a score by up to 20%. It's a sliding scale based on presentation points. This type of judging scale helps judge routines from novice to the very elite to evaluate the true nature of their skills. A panel of nine judges calculates the scores. There are two athlete presentation judges scoring form, execution and misses. There are two routine presentation judges who score entertainment, musicality and repeated skills. There are three difficulty judges who score the overall difficulty of the routine. Lastly, there are two judges who evaluate accuracy, time and space violations, and all of the required elements, including multiples, inversion and displacement skills, rope manipulations, spatial dynamics and time.

## **Leisure Constraints**

When looking at the history of the sport of jump rope and its impact globally, we can highlight some of the perceived constraints that can impact the continued growth of jump rope. Jump rope can be viewed as a form of leisure. The leisure constraint theory is the theoretical lens through which we will view the data. The leisure constraints model has evolved over the years. In the 1980s, the idea of the leisure constraints dealt with having a desire to take part in leisure activity, but actual participation was hindered by a barrier (Jackson, 2005). This version of the model is shown in Figure 2.1.

As shown in Figure 2.2, this leisure constraints model took on a more sophisticated approach by showing the differences between a leisure preference with or without a constraint. The model showed that when leisure encountered a constraint, it often did not result in participation. On the other hand, those leisure activities that did not have any constraints attached to them had more participation (Jackson, 2005).

In 1991 the leisure constraints model was once again transformed into a hierarchal model as shown in figure 2.3. These three constraints are intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural which represent the reasons why someone might not participate in sports/activities (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991).

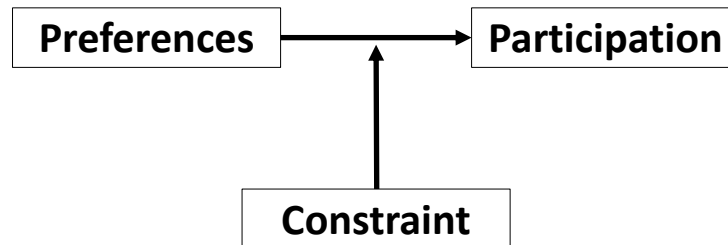


Figure 2.1 Simple model of preference, constraint and participation (Jackson, 2005)

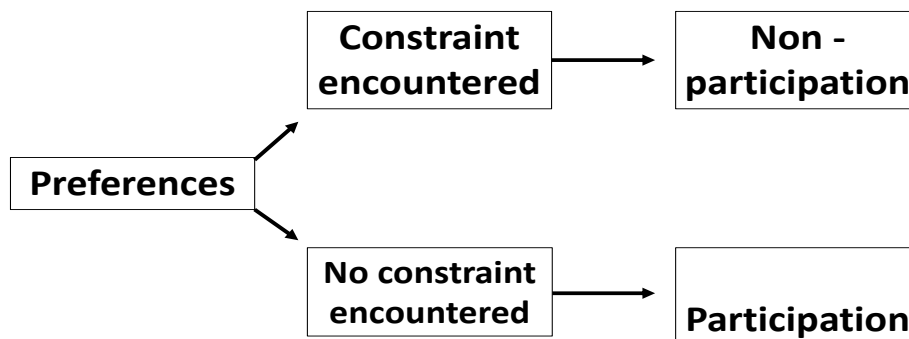


Figure 2.2 Preferences, constraints and participation/nonparticipation (Jackson, 2005)

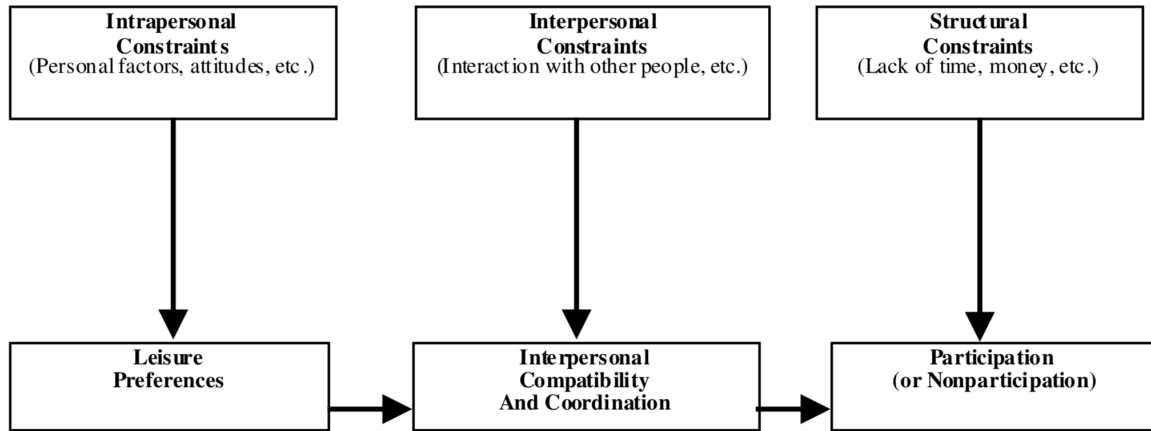


Figure 2.3 Hierarchical of Leisure Model (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991)



Within leisure, a constraint is defined as a factor that prevents or prohibits an individual from participating and enjoying a leisure activity (Jackson, 2000). When looking at sport and leisure, the leisure constraints can be placed into three hierarchical models: intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural (Crawford & Godbey 1987). Intrapersonal barriers involve an individual's cognitive state and attributes that could affect their leisure pursuits (stress, depression, anxiety, perceived self-skill, etc.) (Crawford & Godbey 1987). In a research study on constraints and negotiation strategies for charity sport events, the author lists a constraint as *discomfort in asking* (Filo, Fechner, & Inoue, 2019). This constraint referenced the feeling of awkwardness when asking potential donors for money. The level of discomfort the participants feel can be perceived as an intrapersonal constraint. Interpersonal barriers are the results of relationship between individuals (having a partner, what others want to do, etc.) (Crawford & Godbey 1987).

Relatedly, Deelen (2019) expressed how youth who live in a safe neighborhood are more likely to find sports partners and opportunities. The research explored the factors of sports frequency as it related to sport facilities. The thought of being able to have sports in a safe neighborhood and find sports partners can lessen the interpersonal constraint. Structural barriers are viewed as external factors that relate to a leisure pursuit and participation (season, availability of opportunity, financial resources, etc.) (Crawford & Godbey 1987). In a research article comparing international and domestic student participation

in competitive sport, the author found several aspects of structural constraints. Participants referred to the time it takes to study, and time of day the activities happen as reasons they do not participate (Cho & Price, 2018). As we explore the history of the sport of jump rope, we will look at the different constraints that may have or are currently hindering the sport.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Methodology**

The principal investigator conducted eight one-on-one, semi-structured interviews throughout this study. These interviews helped to guide the understanding of the landscape of jump rope through a few different lenses. There were two expert interviews along with six additional interviews with current coaches, former coaches and administrators.

#### **IRB**

All research methods have been approved by the University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board (IRB). Specifically, the interview guides and protocol were reviewed by the Department of Kinesiology and sports studies. These documents were then sent to the IRB for subsequent review and approval. The IRB approved the study on September 5, 2019. All procedures were strictly followed throughout the duration of the project. The IRB approval number for the study was UTK IRB-19-05330-XM.

#### **Procedures**

In order to gain insight into the history and future direction of the sport, qualitative methods were used. Specifically, the principle investigator conducted interviews with an expert panel of administrators within the United States. These individuals have paved the way for the sport and, therefore, can provide valuable knowledge and insight into its history and potential for future

growth. Additionally, six former coaches, current coaches or administrators were interviewed. The insights provided by these individuals will help us understand more about their contributions to the sport and their thoughts on the future.

Each participant was contacted via email (Appendix E) to determine if they were interested in taking part in the study. All participants agreed to take part, and each was sent an informed consent form (Appendix A) and was signed by the participants and principal investigator. Once consent was given, a time was set up to conduct the interview via telephone.

#### Instrumentation

Two separate interview guides were used when conducting the interviews. The experts were asked questions based on the “expert” interview guide (Appendix C), while the coaches were asked questions based on the general interview guide (Appendix B). The expert interview guide was constructed to help understand the participants’ historical contribution to the sport of jump rope. The general interview guide was created in an effort to get different perspectives on the participants’ experiences in the sport as well as outside perceptions. The experts guide had eight questions compared to fifteen on the general interview guide. The experts had fewer questions in order to focus on their historic knowledge and involvement with the sport. Follow up questions were asked as needed., The general guide had more questions to

help provide a broader context of their position in the sport and get their thoughts on current trends and perceptions.

### Data Collection

All of the interviews were recorded using an application called “Tape A Call Pro” that was downloaded through the App Store on the principal investigators iPhone 7 Plus.

To control for potential biases brought about by the primary investigator’s extensive involvement with the sport of jump rope, a bracketed interview was conducted. A Graduate Research Assistant in the Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies at the University of Tennessee conducted the bracketed interview using the general interview guide (Appendix C). The interview was held in a private room in the sport psychology lab at the University of Tennessee. The research assistant conducted a semi-structured interview with the primary investigator.

### Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed using the “Tape A Call Pro” app and through a website called Happy Scribe ([www.happyscribe.co](http://www.happyscribe.co)). Each of the transcriptions were reviewed and edited by the principal investigator to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. Once the transcriptions and editing processes were completed, a copy was sent to each participant for the purpose of “member checking.” Morse (2015) suggested that member checking helps to verify the accuracy of the content and gives credibility to the transcribed

interview. A combination of deductive and inductive coding was used in order to uncover themes in the data. The principle investigator served as the single coder for the study, performing two rounds of analysis to clarify and consolidate themes. Although the principle investigator has experience and expertise within the sport of jump rope, care was taken to ensure that the representation of themes that were discovered did not come out of the investigator's prior knowledge. In addition to the bracketed interview, careful consideration was given to each of the themes so that the participants' statements were accurately stated. Using the principle investigator as the single coder can help build a unique connection between the researcher, the current jump rope community, and future athletes, coaches and administrators. Having a coder outside of the sport might yield inaccurate interpretation of the themes. (Morse, 1994, p. 231)

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

Eight participants agreed to participate in the study and were interviewed via telephone. The IRB gave permission to use the participants' names as long as each participant gave consent to use their names (UTK IRB-19-05330-XM). The names are used throughout the manuscript to allow readers to understand each of the participant's historical contribution to the sport of jump rope. Future generations of jump rope athletes, administrators and coaches will be able to appreciate the legacy that was left before them. Table 4.1 displays brief participant profiles representing their relationships with the sport of jump rope.

Throughout the interviews, five different themes emerged, namely 1) growth (tactics & potential), 2) outside attraction, 3) benefits of participation, 4) exposure, 5) current landscape (current participation & current state). These themes were consistent throughout the majority of the participants' interviews, and they all had unique perspectives and viewpoints on each theme.

Table 4.1 Description of Participants

<b>Descriptions of Participants</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Title/Affiliation</b>
Richard Cendali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Innovator of single rope within the United States.</li> <li>~ Organizer and Founder of the International Rope Skipping Organization (IRSO)</li> <li>~ Influential figure in the formation of several continental organizations</li> </ul>
Shaun Hamilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ International Jump Rope Union (IJRU) President</li> <li>~ Former World Jump Rope Federation (WJRF) Chairman</li> <li>~ Former USA Jump Rope Board Member</li> <li>~ Former USA All Star Coach</li> <li>~ Former Team USA Head Coach</li> <li>~ Former World Champion Athlete</li> </ul>
Roger Crozier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Retired Head Coach of the Footnotes</li> <li>~ Former president of IRSO</li> <li>~ Former and original Board Member of USA Jump Rope</li> </ul>
Tom LaVecchia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ American Jump Rope Federation (AMJRF) President</li> <li>~ Former assistant coach of the Jumping Eagles</li> </ul>
Chris Holmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ AMJRF Vice President</li> <li>~ Former World Champion Athlete</li> </ul>
Janice Harrington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Forbes Flyers Head Coach</li> <li>~ Former USA Jump Rope Board Member</li> </ul>
Jamal Turner	American Double Dutch League (ADDL) Co-tournament Director
Pam Evans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ USA Jump Rope President</li> <li>~ Head Coach of the Heartbeats</li> </ul>



## **Theme 1: Growth**

Growth was a theme that was expressed several times throughout the interviews. Growth is something that the jump rope community wants and is consistently striving toward. There is a strong desire for more people to take part in the sport at any level. The jump rope athletes that are currently involved are invested and enjoy the sport. The goal is to increase the number of athletes participating at the grassroots level. This theme was divided into two subthemes, tactics and potential.

**Growth tactics.** Growth tactics are the particular strategies in place to aid in increasing the number of people participating in the sport. Throughout the interviews, the participants talked about tactics such as partnering with different organizations, building local tournaments, and working with the inner cities or underserved populations through YMCA or Boys and Girl programs. Chris Holmes talked about how “AMJRF [is] in partnership with ...a collegiate organization that has sprouted up in the last few years that [was] started by Tori Boggs, and AMJRF has sanctioned three of their first three national collegiate events.” In regard to growth within their organization, Jamal Turner said,

We've instituted what we call junior officials. And so, we have those who were in their teens who are officiating. We've done this to make sure that we keep the sport going. We have seen the growth in numbers especially because.... we understood where the sport was going, and

we understood what was necessary to maintain, and that was the thing you had to get - you had to get the youth engaged and involved.

Tom Lavecchia explains a tactic that he believes will increase participation within our sport. He stated,

One of the things that we're focused on is what we refer to as local tournaments, meaning we're trying to build a number of tournaments in any given area. So, athletes have a handful of opportunities. Along with that is getting into everybody's high school, but it's more than that, it's all levels of schools, to then have a season. Create a season so that the athletes can compete for that season.

As an additional tactic, Pam Evans expressed,

I think you need to figure out how to get it in to the inner cities. I think that's a major thing. How can you get into the inner cities and make it financially workable for these kids to have that type of outlet? I think the fact that it's getting into the colleges is definitely a plus. I think there's a lot of areas. Y programs, after school programs, boys and girls clubs - any of those areas are places that [we] should be reaching out to.

Finding ways to partner with different groups can help build more participation in the sport of jump rope. This will give people outside of the sport an opportunity to participate at some level.

**Growth potential.** Growth potential alludes to how much the sport could expand. When it comes to growth potential, Shaun Hamilton pointed out the

universal familiarity of the sport. Activities such as running, walking, and swimming are done by people all the time, and the same can be said about jump rope. The difference is that those activities have a well-known sporting component. The sport of jump rope has to do a better job of showing that this universal activity is also a competitive sport. Shaun stated,

I don't care where you are, you stand in a room and asked them how many of you have ever held a paddle oar... you know something you row a boat with like rowing, huge hands will go up. Ask them how many of you have held a fencing foil for fencing - very few hands will go up. Then you ask them how many of you have every held a jump rope before - virtually every hand will probably go up. What that tells me is everyone has touched our sport or our activities in some form or fashion. What the sport organizing groups haven't done is connect them to be a part of our sport; that's what we haven't done.

Chris talks about the potential growth through their partnership with the collegiate organization in the following statement:

One thing they did really well was they held informational sessions... and shared best practices amongst the different teams about how they organized and how they try to make it sustainable. [Two years ago] they had 10 teams represented from different colleges... This past year they had 25 different colleges represented - so just amazing growth that we've had through that program.

The growth tactics and potential that were illustrated should help bring about more participation within the sport of jump rope.

## **Theme 2: Outside Attraction Level**

Outside perceptions of the sport of jump rope can be positive or negative. The manner in which jump rope is presented to individuals can impact whether their initial exposure to the sport is an encouraging experience or an overwhelming one. Roger Crozier talks about managing expectations when individuals are first exposed to the sport by saying,

People see the incredible skills, and they think that's not for me; I can never do that. That's why simple things, sometimes, are better motivators than the incredible skills. I think if I'm going to demonstrate for some teachers and say, 'you should start a jump rope team,' I'll show some of the really cool things that can be done, because those are real attention getters....at the same time, you have to show them the basics - how do you get started; how do you get to that point. You don't just pick up a rope and be able to do those things.

Similarly, Janice Harrington talked about how people grew up knowing or thinking that it was just a playground activity -- just a recess activity. She stated, "they never saw it going any further than that because, at that time, it wasn't going any further, or they didn't have the knowledge that there was a competitive level out there." When asked about how jump rope is perceived by the general population, Shaun explained that,

If you ask anybody about jump rope in the United States, chances are they talk about Jump Rope for Heart. That's usually the default, and American Heart. I think it's been a great institution. I think they really helped the activity stay alive in many ways. It helped place in the minds of many people through school and through the American Heart thing, but ... they used the activity as a fundraiser.

When asked about the appeal for those who jumped on her team, Janice stated,

Some of them joined because of other people that were on the team. Although initially it's because they want to be with their friends, ... once they got on the team, they saw that they could be successful. So again, it's who you know, if you feel you can fit in. But then you have some kids [who] can do that, and then they don't last a week or a month. They don't give it enough of an opportunity. They see it as too hard or it's not what they expected because it is work.

These perceptions could hinder the sport from possibly attracting a certain demographic or deter more people in general from taking an interest in the sport.

### **Theme 3: Benefits of Participation**

The benefits that individuals reap from participating in any sport can be very rewarding. There are several different benefits that were explained

throughout the interviews ranging from self-esteem, confidence, goal orientation and leadership. Richard Cendali stated,

Jump rope has built self confidence and self-esteem in everything you're doing. Look at what you've done in your lifetime right now with jump rope. I look back at some of these young kids when they were in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I had doctors, dentists, lawyers, attorneys, and they all come to me and say thank you. You gave me the confidence to do that. I'd never have the confidence.

When asked about the benefits for those who participate, Roger said,

I think the opportunity to succeed and have that feeling of well-being that we talked about before - the opportunity to go and perform - the opportunity to go and travel, I think, is one of the biggest.

Roger continues by stating that

You've got a team; ... you've got to have a goal. If you don't have a goal; there's no real reason to be doing... you might as well be doing some kind of exercise. You need to have something for them to shoot for, whether that's a performance in the school, whether it's a performance in the mall, you've got to have something for them to aim for.

When commenting on the potential benefits that athletes get by participating in the sport of jump rope, Chris said

I think it gave me a lot of positive experience particularly in leadership department, because at a very early age, you are learning how to teach

in front of a group of people. Sometimes it's kids, sometimes its adults. You learn how to be organized enough to be able to travel and kind of how all that works, and so you just kind of get a lot of responsibility early on.

Pam expressed that there are a lot of benefits jumpers get from the sport. Pam stated that she,

...strongly stressed the importance of what jump rope teaches you as a leader. Giving you an opportunity to advance and become better leaders and work with other people of all ages. In my opinion, a year from now people aren't going to remember [what] medal you won. They will remember how you've treated them and what you've done for them. So, I strived [for] that more than anything else. It's nice when people [who] no longer jump come back to you and say, 'You know, it really taught me a lot, and you're a big influence in my life.' In my opinion, that's the greatest win for the sport.

The positive psychological benefits that were expressed by the participants can be utilized to market the sport to parents of potential new jumpers.

#### **Theme 4: Exposure**

Exposure for any sport is extremely important. Exposure involves public viewership and general understanding of the sport via outlets such as social media, television, radio, live interactions. For a lot of non-traditional sports, the

more exposure they receive, the more participation or interest will be generated in the sport. Jamal talks about how the exposure level is low.

Because it's become a sport and people take it inside. People don't see it anymore. Because they don't see it, those who used to do it, think that it's no longer in existence, so they still think it's a game. So those who used to do it, did it as a game and don't respect it as a sport. And those who might know people who do it, don't get a chance to see it, because it's a sport in which, in most cases, they don't go to competition.

Pam talked about making jump rope a more well-known sport by stating,

You need to have more visibility within the country, really more visibility throughout the world, and you need to find your target audiences. Then, in turn, I think if you can get it into the schools, definitely that's a plus.

Chris talked about the social media exposure he has noticed since he created his social media account, "Jump Rope Videos", in order to spread awareness of the sport.

Our sport is kind of tailor made for social media in a lot of ways because you can you can do all these really amazing tricks in rapid succession. In short little clips, they play really well on social media and can go pretty viral really quick... I think that's one area that we can really grow as the audience of people.

Hopefully, greater visibility will expand the interest in jump rope, similar to any other mainstream sport in the sporting industry.



## **Theme 5: Current Landscape**

Throughout this theme there were two sub themes that emerged while talking with the participants. These themes are the current participation number amongst the jump rope athletes and the current state of the sport of jump rope primarily in the United States, as well as where the sport is going globally.

**Participation.** The participation rate of any sport can fluctuate, and each sport is always fighting to get more and more people participating in their sport. In the sport of jump rope, participation rates and success are determined by how many people we have at the major competitions (Nationals and international events). The number of athletes within the sport of jump rope has fluctuated over the years. Shaun stated,

Nationals would have 1200 or 1500 people there. ... I remember growing up in Texas having to compete my way to nationals. In Texas, we had three levels to get to nationals - our sectional tournament, then we had our regional tournament, just to get into the national tournament, while others just had a regional, that was it.

When asked about the participation and current state, Pam explained,

[There were] seven, eight hundred jumpers at AAU Junior Olympics. You are now talking maybe 100 - 150 jumpers...So in that aspect, I would love to see that come back. Then you have, of course, USAJR and American Jump Rope, who, in my opinion, are all fighting over the same athletes....So, in my opinion, I would like to see where national

championships are actually once again the best of the best, instead of watering down these national competitions where pretty much anybody can attend.

The participation numbers have changed over the years, but the goal remains to continue finding ways to increase mass participation for the sport.

**Current state.** The current state for the sport of jump rope within the United States was a frequent topic from the participants.

**Organizational tension.** The current U.S. organizations are trying to work through their issues. In talking with Pam about the current state, she expressed,

I wish adults would put aside the past. I wish people would look at what's in the best interest of the athletes in the sport, and not just what's in the best interest for them. I've tried. That's the only reason I came on USAJR Board was to see if there was a way to unify the sport. I keep trying, but there's a lot of obstacles with people to try to overcome. Unfortunately, I'm only one person.”

Tom also explained,

Right now there is a rivalry between two organizations that are not willing to work with each other... I say each other because we haven't figured it out. And we do have conversations right now. Pam and I just started up conversations again.... [and] we're always looking to try to get us to work

together and unify, because right now ... most athletes would say that we're not fully unified in the United States.

Jamal talked about the landscape by saying,

There's been chatter of them coming together to form a unified jump rope organization to be able to participate in the Olympics. The only problem is .... you bring everybody under one umbrella, and then you kind of take the teams and you would kill the identity of a league. And so, no league is going to join an organization to lose their teams. That's ludicrous.

The current state of the U.S. organizations is not cohesive, and in order to move the sport forward they will need to cooperate.

**Financial structure.** A healthy financial structure is key to the success of any organized sport. Shaun began to discuss the financial problem that the sport of jump rope has with regard to securing funds. He explains,

We have not cracked our financial code ... The most successful sports have figured out how do you make it financially stable; how do you make it financially work, how do you make money off your sport in a good way; it's not a bad thing. What financing does in your sport is it keeps development happening, it keeps the athletes involved - your older athletes by creating professional opportunities for them to be a part of the sport. We haven't cracked that code because, I would say, it's from a lack of experience.

The formation of a financial structure can help pave the way for development in the sport of jump rope. Increased financial resources will help organizations around the world spread the sport.

**Trajectory.** The sport of jump rope has been stagnant in terms of movement toward recognition as an official sport. IJRU has progressed the sport forward so that there is now a true and tangible path toward the Olympics. Shaun explained,

Once you become a full member of [GAIFS], you graduate to another association called AIMS (Association of Independent Managed Sports). AIMS' goal is to get you in and out of AIMS as soon as possible because they want you to be recognized by the IOC [International Olympic Committee], and once you are recognized by the IOC, it doesn't mean you're officially on the program. You're recognized by them, but they see a lot of potential in you ... that's when some real dollars begin to flow your way [for] resource development ... and that organization is called ARIFS, The Association of Recognized International Federations. Now you're in ARIFS, and now you're on your way. So, everyone, if you're on the Olympic program or not, you're part of ARIFS, and now you're really trying to get there. Then that final step is to be part of the summer Olympic game organization or winter ... and that's the path. So, for the first time in our sport's history, we are at least somewhere on the map. We are on the bottom, but we're there."

With the new understanding of this path to the Olympics, organizations are now in a place where they can meaningfully contribute to the success of the sport.

These findings were based on the knowledge and experiences of these influential individuals within the sport of jump rope. Each topic is vital to the success and growth of participation in the sport.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### **Historical Development of Jump Rope in the United States**

The purpose of this study was to explore the history of the sport of jump rope in the United States. Several of the individuals I spoke with were very informative on the history of the sport, as well as several other relevant topics. There is a rich history of the sport of jump rope that was revealed based on the information that articles and websites could provide. After the interviews, many of the findings were confirmed in more detail.

Richard helped confirm how jump rope began to spread within the U.S. as it pertained to teams and organizations. Richard's team, the Skip Its, became the "national demonstration team for the American Heart Association (AHA)". His involvement with AHA helped him spread the sport of jump rope. Richard also helped establish IRSO, and he mentioned, "I know we needed something back in the early eighties to pull everybody together because there were so many teams popping up, so I built an organization called the IRSO." This organization was different from ADDL at the time because IRSO incorporated both single rope and double dutch into their competitions.

The first organization within the United States was ADDL. In speaking with Jamal, he confirmed, "David Walker and Mike Williams were two New York City detectives that decided to take a childhood game and turn it into a sport." That childhood game of double dutch helped begin ADDL, which is still in

existence today. Jamal expressed that David Walker did, however, “part ways with the American Double Dutch League and started the National Double Dutch League”, where “his daughter, [Lauren Walker], runs the League.” For ADDL and NDDL, future research is needed in order to uncover historical details of their organizations beyond what is given on their respective websites.

Roger Crozier was one of the original Board Members of USA Jump Rope and confirmed that both WRSF and IRSO decided to come together to form USA Jump Rope. When Roger was a part of IRSO, he explained that “we worked together and decided it was in the best interest, at that time not really having anything [for] the U.S., to dissolve those two organizations, merge, and form USA Jump Rope.” Those two established organizations had the same interests and goals, so they felt that becoming unified was the best way to progress the sport within the U.S.

Shaun Hamilton was able to provide some insight on the existence of the World Jump Rope Federation. He established that he called “some key people and ask[ed] them to come to Mason, Ohio, and they came. We met, talked about a competition and pretty much in the afternoon.... World Jump Rope was created.” The organization was established in order to help unify the sport of jump rope globally.

Shaun confirmed that IJRU was a “merger between World Jump Rope [Federation] and FISAC, which was the other international federation at the time, [because] if you're going to be in [the] Olympics, you can only have one

international federation... We were able to successfully come together under one banner and move forward.” Since the merger, IJRU has been awarded a certain type of recognition among international sports. Shaun explained, “We've been given what they call observer status to the Global Association International Sports Federations [(GAISF)]...They are the official ... body designated by the IOC to be kind of the gatekeeper. All of the international organizations have to start there.” Now as one united international organization, IJRU can begin paving a path for the sport of jump rope to become a recognized Olympic sport.

### **Filling in the Historical Gaps**

Richard Cendali was tremendously successful at helping spread jump rope across the country. Once he began his team, the Skip Its, he started traveling to a few Physical Education (P.E.) conventions to do demonstrations and to teach others about jump rope. During a P.E. convention in Seattle, Richard had an encounter with a man named Kelly Andrews. Unknown to Richard, Kelly was the National Chairman of Jump Rope for Heart. According to Richard, Kelly asked him “what makes you an expert” as they talked about how the national spokesperson (Tony Dorsett, NFL Player) looked “stupid” when seen jumping on a poster. Richard invited Kelly to watch his demo at the P.E. convention, but he also gave Kelly some tapes to watch of his jumpers. After ten days, Kelly called and offered Richard and the Skip Its the position of national demonstration team for the American Heart Association.



Kelly and Richard began having more conversations about how they could continue to spread what Richard had established with his jump rope team, the Skip Its. Richard suggested doing a workshop to help educate more individuals. Richard said after these conversations, Kelly invited “a representative from every state in the United States to come to Texas to the Braniff Training Center” where Richard conducted a workshop and worked with those prospective coaches for two days. Many of those representatives then went back and helped establish teams in their states.

As jump rope continued to grow, the demand for Richard and his team grew immensely. He began locally within Boulder, Co, but he continued to expand his reach as more organizations took an interest. Richard talked about how the “D.O.D.D. schools got involved”. D.O.D.D., the Department of Defense Dependents Schools, wanted them to perform around the world. Richard began traveling overseas and making more connections in various countries in hopes that they would begin teams. In the 1980s, as more teams continued to form around the world, Richard created IRSO.

Richard talks about how he “built the organization for kids to learn how to jump rope” and with all of the overseas travel, many countries “wanted to come visit the United States.” As IRSO continued to grow and with the increasing number of international teams wanting to visit, Richard decided to “develop a camp and a championship.” The championships and camps built an event that allowed everyone with whom Richard had developed relationships to take part,

compete, and then learn from each other. Although IRSO was conducting these events, others did not view it as an international organization. Roger expressed that others thought it was a “U.S. organization with a few teams from overseas to come to the camps and competitions.”

Along with producing events, Richard and IRSO were still in high demand for international travel. Richard began to select individuals from other teams throughout the United States to travel with him overseas. Chris talked about how “IRSO had established some criteria for people to be able to travel internationally”. Richard expressed that “IRSO made it possible for a lot of kids to travel”, and individuals from all over the United States began traveling with IRSO. Chris discussed how the traveling was a part of a continued effort to “interact with teams that were overseas and try to help the sport grow elsewhere.”

WRSF was a new entity that was formed within the United States. Richard expressed that “WRSF was a break from IRSO by four teams.” Roger, who was at one point the IRSO president, expressed that individuals such as “Lee Steinberger and Lee Temple and a lot of their teams that were affiliated left IRSO and formed WRSF.” Roger expressed that WRSF was viewed in some people’s eyes as very similar to IRSO because they were “U.S. based with a few friends from other countries that would bring teams to their competitions.”

WRSF and IRSO eventually began talking about establishing a specific organization focused on the sport within the United States. The two organizations merged and formed USA Jump Rope. The organization began establishing regional and national tournaments for all U.S. athletes.

AMJRF was formed when WJRF was in need of a national organization from all of their member countries. Tom explained that before AMJRF was established, “USA Jump Rope was offered the opportunity to be the national governing body for them [WJRF], but they chose not to because there was another organization that they were aligned with, and that was an organization called FISAC.” Once USA Jump Rope declined, a few individuals wanted to help create an organization that could be the U.S. group for WJRF. In the fall of 2016, there was an initial meeting that involved Tom, “Chris Holmes, Anita Gable and Brian Hsu”, and they decided that they wanted to help establish a U.S. organization for WJRF. At the conclusion of that initial meeting, the AMJRF was formed.

Since AMJRF began, Tom discussed how the organization will “focus on growth in the sport... [which] covers a lot of areas, it covers just the sheer number of people..., but then it also includes the growth of fans and spectators.” The organization has established some materials to help new coaches understand how to organize a team. These documents were written by “Roger Crozier along with some others... in the sport.” Chris talked about how AMJRF has a “partnership with... a collegiate organization that has sprouted up

in the last few years that [was] kind of started by Tori Boggs, and AMJRF has sanctioned three of their first three national collegiate events. They've done some really exciting things at those events that have really led to some really phenomenal growth in that space.” Chris expressed that “IJRU has officially recognized AMJRF as being [the] recognized national governing body in the United States.” With the new recognition by IJRU, AMJRF is tasked with determining the selection process for Team USA for future world championships.

### **Connections to Themes**

Throughout the interviews, the participants unpacked many relevant topics about the sport of jump rope. These topics were important because the information gave further insight on participation within the sport. The leisure constraint theory was extremely relevant as each interview was examined further. Throughout this section, connections will be made to further understand how the sport may be able to grow.

**Theme 1: Growth.** The growth of the sport of jump rope is extremely vital to its longevity.

**Growth tactics.** The growth tactics that began in the 1980s with the formation of IRSO helped jump rope to spread around the world (About USA Jump Rope History, 2018). Richard Cendali confirmed the formation of this organization and further explained that he worked with continents such as Europe and Australia to help develop their organizations and partner with them

for future events. These efforts have provided a way to reduce structural constraints that would hinder participation within the sport globally. The formation of continental organizations provided a structural platform for instituting the sport of jump rope throughout their countries. This culture of collaboration has continued as coaches and athletes still travel frequently to work with teams and organizations from various countries.

***Growth potential.*** Growth potential for the sport is likely facilitated by its accessibility. Research has shown that jump rope has been very accessible to various populations and cultures (e.g., Lieberman, Schedlin, Pierce, 2009) as well as it is easy to do anywhere (Budiman, Budiana, Mehendra, Wibowo, Meidiati, Akbari, 2019). Every participant affirmed their belief that jump rope has the potential to grow. The ubiquitous nature of jump rope further shows how many people have come in contact with the sport or activity at some point in their lives. The accessibility that jump rope provides lessens structural constraints that would otherwise hinder participation. Capitalizing on the accessibility of jump rope will be important for maximizing its growth potential.

**Theme 2: Outside Attraction Level.** The perception of jump rope can vary depending on the individual and their understanding of the sport. There is not much historical data on the outside perceptions of jump rope. When double dutch came over from Holland, it was viewed as confusing and absurd (Rope Skipping History, 2015). Many of the participants expressed that the general public may only view jump rope as a fitness activity or a girls' activity. Since

jump rope as a competitive sport is foreign to most, intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints can hinder individuals from participating in the sport of jump rope. Sharing knowledge and managing their expectations could help individuals who may be anxious. The public might not always understand the sport at first glance. Rather, it often must be experienced for individuals to gain a full appreciation of it. Sharing skills with new individuals and helping them succeed brings joy to them because when they experience success, it can help change their perceptions of jump rope.

**Theme 3: Benefits of Participation.** Past research has primarily viewed jump rope as a fitness activity that helps promote cardiovascular exercise, footwork and more (Partavi, 2013). There has also been research to show that psychological benefits such as teamwork and leadership skills development have been seen in participants (Thompson, 2009). Throughout the study several of the participants expressed the different psychological benefits that came from those athletes who participated. The development of psychological benefits from participating in the sport can aid with all athletes becoming more resilient and successful not just in athletics but in other aspect of life. The leadership and teambuilding qualities that jump rope participants inherently learn help lessen the interpersonal constraint when it comes to sport participation because they help break down social barriers between people and aids in successful interaction. The teamwork and leadership component of the sport of jump rope exists today as coaches and administrators continually try to

develop their athletes to contribute in leadership roles on their team and during events.

**Theme 4: Exposure.** Public visibility is a key component to the growth of any sport or organization. In today's society, visibility often happens through social media via YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, etc. Additionally, live viewership, television broadcasts and other traditional outlets offers a prime opportunity for increasing exposure. USA Jump Rope nationals was broadcasted on ESPN for a number of years, and World Jump Rope had their event live streamed on the Internet. These efforts were made to help garner more exposure for the sport and show it to a bigger audience. The participants' statements within the current study regarding exposure were likely born out their awareness of the need for increased visibility for the sport of jump rope. The more that jump rope can be seen on television or witnessed in a viral moment through social media, the fewer interpersonal constraints the sport may face because it is being seen more. Jump rope can become a sport that people recognize, and it can attract more people. As familiarity with the sport increases, the interpersonal constraints will decrease, and more people will want to participate in it. The sport's viral moments, so far, have included becoming a segment on ESPN sports shows and sports websites such as the Bleacher Report. The exposure level for the sport will continue to grow as the organizations put together a plan to allow it to be broadcasted globally.

## **Theme 5: Current Landscape.**

**Participation.** The participation rates for jump rope have varied throughout the decades. The American Double Dutch League (ADDL) hosted their first competition with nearly 600 participants (About us, n.d.). Several participants expressed that since this first competition, participation has fluctuated tremendously. This fluctuation may have risen due to structural constraints such as the financial burden of traveling to major competitions, the inconvenience of missing work or school (Cho & Price, 2018), or the lack of local competitions to aid in grassroots efforts. The organizations need to deliberately invest resources into the development of small local competition, thereby giving current athletes more opportunities to compete. These local competitions can also provide a platform to engage outsiders, and therefore, increase participation and visibility.

**Current state.** Three separate topics will be discussed related to the current state of the sport of jump rope, namely organizational tension, financial structure and the trajectory of the sport.

**Organizational tension.** The sport of jump rope is forever evolving. Change among organizations is common, whether it be a change in leadership, expansion, etc. Recent change within the landscape of jump rope in the U.S., namely the formation of AMJRF and their selection as the national governing body underneath IJRU, has heightened tensions between national organizations. These rivalries are currently hindering athletes in the U.S. from



competing under a unified body and moving forward cohesively. These tensions exemplify a way in which interpersonal and structural constraints can hinder forward movement. As a way to overcome these constraints it might be in the organizations' best interest to continue working out their differences and form an umbrella entity with equal representation from all four national organizations (AMJRF, USA Jump Rope, NDDL and ADDL). This strategy could work similarly to the way in which WRSF and IRSO came together to form USA Jump Rope in 1995.

***Financial structure.*** The sport of jump rope has had funds in the form of sponsorships in the past. As certain organizations were on TV, certain sponsors attached their name to sport, but all were short lived. Seldom have jump rope organizations figured out how to produce funds besides through memberships, tournaments or sanctioning events. Similarly to the way in which individuals are often uncomfortable when asking donors for money (Filo, Fechner, & Inoue, 2019), jump rope officials have been hesitant to solicit needed funds. The sport of jump rope needs to continue making a push for a financial structure that creates stability for generations to come. Creating a sustainable financial structure will help with the structural constraints' organizations may have in promoting growth. As jump rope continues to grow and become a sport that earns more attention, sponsorship opportunities will arise because, hopefully, companies will want to attach themselves to its

visibility. These opportunities may in turn promote even further growth and ignite an advantageous cycle.

**Trajectory.** The observatory status given to IJRU by GAISF provides IJRU with an opportunity to pave their way toward the Olympics. Gaining recognition is only the first of many steps on this pathway, but if IJRU continues to push the sport forward, jump rope will continue moving along the path and ultimately become a part of the Olympic games. The ability to showcase jump rope on this international stage would help with the continued efforts to expose more people to the sport and gain sponsorships, which could help alleviate some of the intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints that have hindered global participation. As jump rope continues on a positive trajectory and gains more international recognition, the global diffusion of the sport of jump rope will spark more participation (Dzikus, 2017). The more the sport is seen and experienced under organized global leadership, the further the sport of jump rope will be able to go in the future.

The sport of jump rope is trending in the right direction with regard to international sports. Becoming a part of the Olympic pyramid is an important milestone but accomplishing the next steps along the path will be equally vital. In order to continue on this positive trajectory, all organizations need to commit to collaborating and resolving issues related to structural stability and growth for the athletes and the sport.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

There are multiple limitations to this study. One of the major limitations to this study was the use of a single coder. A second coder is essential to establishing interrater reliability (Saldaña, 2016). Moreover, a second coder would have been able to confirm or oppose the current findings, as well as help explore more themes/topics that may have surfaced throughout the interviews. Additionally, all of the information in the current study came from coaches and administrators within the sport of jump rope. Future studies should be conducted to evaluate some of these same topics from the athletes' perspectives. Further research should also be conducted on ADDL and NDDL to help understand more about their history and culture.

## **Leisure Constraints**

Throughout the analysis process in the current study, the leisure constraints model was used to help understand why the sport of jump rope has not expanded substantially throughout its 40-year history. Intrapersonal constraints such as personal factors, attitudes, etc. were evident throughout many of the interview responses (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991). The participants gave insight on how to help overcome those intrapersonal constraints, providing options such as teaching the basics first and showing there is a path toward the more elite skills, as well as increasing exposure so that the simple act of seeing what is possible could motivate spectators.

The interpersonal constraint such as social or relational barriers when it comes to participation was also apparent throughout the study (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991). Factors such as leadership, teamwork and more exposure were suggested to help overcome some of these constraints. Consistent with the leisure constraints model lack of time, money, etc. emerged as structural constraints during the study (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991). Participants conveyed that having more opportunities to compete, developing a stable financial structure, and increasing the accessibility of jump rope may help in overcoming the structural constraints that could hinder participation.

The sport's trajectory as a whole will help lessen all of the aforementioned constraints regarding participation. As the sport of jump rope continues to gain more recognition, the diffusion of the sport will be apparent around the world. As this happens and as the leadership continues to develop a plan for pushing the sport forward, jump rope will have the opportunity to become as popular as some of the mainstream sports that are well known today. This increased exposure and popularity will undoubtedly enhance motivation and interest, lead to more competition opportunities, and help the sport to secure more financial resources. These changes, in turn, will help lessen many constraints that currently hinder growth.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The primary aim of this thesis was to ascertain more of the history of the sport of jump rope in the United States. Information pertaining to athletes' reasons for taking part in the sport, growth opportunities, and the current state of the sport within the U.S. were also discussed. Each of the participants gave great insight on the history and their perspective on how some of those topics have evolved over their decades of involvement in the sport of jump rope.

As stated, additional research is still needed to clarify the historical accounts of the ADDL and NDDL organizations. Further research is needed to explore the development of recreational and competitive jump rope around the world. The sport is prevalent in Asian, European, African, and Australian countries, so investigations of the history of jump rope in these areas would likely be fruitful.

Based on the data that was given, the sport of jump rope needs to continue making efforts for growth. With the provisional membership the sport has received, it is recommended that IJRU should provide a specific action plan to all of their member countries to help facilitate mass participation. For example, IJRU may consider providing educational materials to help member countries gain local sponsorships that will aid in developing recreational leagues. This type of support will help to encourage countries to expand participation at the lower levels which should then feed into more highly competitive levels.

To enhance exposure at these highly competitive levels, IJRU and the member countries need to produce a product that is marketable to major networks such as NBC, ESPN, etc. For example, tournaments need to be organized and broadcast in such a way that outside audience members can understand the basic rules of the sport and become engrossed in the competitive battles and ultimate outcomes of each event. An important aspect of engaging the audience in these competitive events is accurate scoring. The acquisition of sponsors would provide the necessary funds for producing higher quality judge training, judge compensation, as well as for developing the technology necessary to standardize much of the scoring. While IJRU continues to create this type of engaging product for the masses, outlets such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, etc. will be helpful for creating a larger fan base.

Strategic partners can help in the development of our sport by helping facilitate talks with leaders of multisport organizations. The sport has been secluded by doing its own competitions for over 40 years. Jump rope can be more visible if there are opportunities to participate in other multi-sport events such as the International School Sports Federations (ISF), Youth Olympic Games, World Games, Commonwealth Games, etc. Being a part of these events and thus gaining exposure could potentially spark others to want to take part in the sport.

Jump rope ultimately needs more participation at the competitive level, and that is not happening because most people do not understand the “game” of jump rope (i.e., understand how to compete). Participation in the competitive aspect of jump rope has been relatively stagnant for years. The sport has to continue making a way for people to participate and understand what the sport is truly about. With the new-found recognition that the sport has globally, it will be important for the organizations throughout the world to help spread the sport. In light of the global diffusion of the sport of jump rope, the future is looking extremely bright. Jump rope is still small compared to other major sports, but as it becomes more accessible to participants and reaches new countries, its impact will grow for generations to come. It will take more than just the leadership; it is going to take a collective effort from everyone.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **Consent for Research Participation**

**Research Study Title:** *Jump Rope! Connecting the Past, Present and Future!*

**Researcher(s):** Nick Woodard, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Steven Waller, University of Tennessee,

Knoxville

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### ***Why am I being asked to be in this research study?***

We are asking you to be in this research study because I am looking for coaches and administrators that are or have been involved with the sport of jump rope to give their perspectives on the sport.

### ***What is this research study about?***

The purpose of this study is to examine the sport of jump rope and show the evolution and impact it has made globally.

### ***How long will I be in the research study?***

You will be participating in one interview. Your interview will last approximately 45-60 and will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your responses.

### ***What will happen if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research study”?***

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to be a part of a skype or phone interview to discuss the impact of jump rope.

### ***What happens if I say “No, I do not want to be in this research study”?***

Being in this study is up to you. You can say no now or leave the study later. Either way, your decision will not affect your standing within the jump rope community.

### ***What happens if I say “Yes” but change my mind later?***

Even if you decide to be in the study now, you can change your mind and stop at any time.

If you decide to stop before the study is completed, please make sure to contact the PI (Nick Woodard). Any information that is collected will be destroyed and not used in the research study.

### ***Are there any possible risks to me?***

There is a minimal risk involved in participating in this study. The only identifiable risk is perhaps a level of discomfort in talking truthfully about your role of within the sport and the impact the sport has had globally while being audio-recorded. Given that this is a historical research thesis I will be using your names, position within jump rope (coach, administrator, etc.) to help give context throughout the paper.

***Are there any benefits to being in this research study?***

The benefit of participating in this research study is to help contribute to the body of knowledge related to the evolution of the sport of jump rope and how the sport will continue to grow

***Who can see or use the information collected for this research study?***

Your data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. For participants that do not consent to having their personal name used, a pseudonym code name will be used in transcripts and all manuscript mentions. A coding key that matches participants to their code will be stored securely and accessible only to the research personnel.

***What will happen to my information after this study is over?***

We will keep your information to use for more historical content with jump rope in the future. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be used unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. The information will be kept secure and stored on a password protect computer. We may share your research data with others without asking for your consent again. This sharing may be with other researchers or for purposes related to publishing research reports. Many journals now require authors to make data available to editors, reviewers, or other researchers if requested. Some journals also require depositing data in a public or other repository for later access.

***Who can answer my questions about this research study?***

If you have questions or concerns about this study, or have experienced a research related problem or injury, contact the researcher Nick Woodard, nwoodar3@vols.utk.edu, 281-743-2375 or my faculty advisor, Steven Waller, (865) 974-1279, swaller2@utk.edu For questions or concerns about your rights or to speak with someone other than the research team about the study, please contact:

Institutional Review Board  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
1534 White Avenue  
Blount Hall, Room 408  
Knoxville, TN 37996-1529  
Phone: 865-974-7697  
Email: utkirb@utk.edu

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the chance to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have more questions, I have been told who to contact. By signing this document, I am agreeing to be in this study. I was giving the option to keep a copy of this document in my possession.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Adult Participant  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Adult Participant

Please indicate if it is ok for the Personal Investigator to use your name on transcripts and/or manuscripts.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to have my name, position/title used on all transcripts and/or manuscripts.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would not like my name, position/title used on any transcripts and/or manuscripts.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Adult Participant  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Adult Participant

**Researcher Signature** (to be completed at time of informed consent)

I have explained the study to the participant and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to be in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Research Team Member  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Team Member



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Jump Rope! Connecting the Past, Present and the Future: Thesis**

#### **Interview Schedule**

##### **Introduction**

1. What is your position or title within the sport/team/organization, and please describe your role and responsibilities within that you handle while obtaining this position.

##### **Perceptions about the sport of jump rope**

1. How did you get started in the sport?
2. How has your team/organization evolved since you began?
3. Have you seen a difference in youth and/or the community because of your team/organization?
4. Do you believe jump rope is a positive outlet for those who participate? Why?

##### **Growth**

5. What has been the number growth for your team/organization since you started?
6. In your opinion, do you think the sport has the potential to grow? If so, how?
7. In your opinion, where are some areas the sport can provide opportunities for more participation?
8. Has your team or organization tried new tactics to engage more people in the sport?
9. Have you seen other teams or organizations try new tactics and what has been successful?
10. In your opinion does the sport need more program growth or community growth?
11. In your opinion, how does jump rope become a known sport in the sporting industry?

##### **Outside Perceptions**

12. Why do you believe the general population does not engage in jump rope as a sport?
13. In your opinion what's the best way to get more coaches/administrators.
14. Do you believe jump rope is perceived as a sport, activity, or a fitness component to the general population? Why?
15. For those who participate in the sport of jump rope why do you think it appealed to them?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Jump Rope! Connecting the Past, Present and the Future: Thesis**

#### **Interview Schedule: Experts**

##### **Introduction**

1. How did you get started in jump rope?
2. Where did you see the sport going when you started?
3. Can you tell me about the history and the evolution of the sport through the decades that you've been a part of the sport?
4. In your opinion when was jump rope at its highest point?
5. Why was it important to you to move the sport forward and what steps did you take towards that goal?
6. What roles have you held in your years with the sport of jump rope?
7. How would you describe the current state of the sport of jump rope?
8. What do you think the future of our sport in terms of being a mainstream sport and being a part of the Olympic games?

## VITA

Nick Woodard was born on December 3, 1987 in Houston, TX. He went to Sam Houston State University and graduated in 2010 with a B.S. in Business Management. He has been a part of the sport of jump rope for 26 years as athlete, coach, and administrator. Nick has won several national and world titles as an athlete and is a well-known figure in jump rope circles throughout the world. He was the head coach of an internationally known team in Seattle, Washington where he led a diverse group of individuals through practices, shows, and regional, national, and international competitions. Lastly, he served as the Camp Director for the World Jump Rope Federation as well as the Sport Development Committee Chair for WJRF from 2016-2019. Nick's love for sports and his involvement at various levels of leadership within jump rope has led him to pursue a master's degree in Sports Management at the University of Tennessee. Nick's degree will be conferred in May 2020.