“It's Like You're Trying to Get a Meeting with the Pope”: A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Social Work Field Staff Establishing Field Placements in Sport

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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Lauren Beasley entitled "'It's Like You're Trying to Get a Meeting with the Pope': A Narrative Inquiry on Experiences of Social Work Field Staff Establishing Field Placements in Sport." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Sports Management.

Robin Hardin, Major Professor

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Doctor of Philosophy
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Lauren Grace Beasley
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ABSTRACT

Social work in sport is a growing subspecialty of social work practice. However, there is limited research on the training of social work students to work in a sport setting. As field education is considered the signature pedagogy of social work education, more insights are needed on social work field internships in sport organizations. To fill this gap in the literature, the purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand social work field staff’s narratives of their experiences establishing sport-specific field placements through their lived stories. The study was guided by three research questions: (1) What narratives do social work field staff have about the process of establishing field placements in sport settings?; (2) How do social work field staff negotiate power when establishing field placements in sport settings?; and (3) What strategies do social work field staff use to establish field placements in sport settings? Narrative interviews were conducted with eight social work field staff from six different universities across the United States. From a Labovian and narrative thematic analysis, four themes were constructed: (a) impact of sport culture and organizational context; (b) building social capital through relationships; (c) deconstructing misconceptions; and (d) operational negotiations. Findings can offer insights to both social work and sport management stakeholders into building long-lasting social work field partnerships. Further, the interpretation of the participants’ narratives through program planning theories can aid practitioners in contextualizing the complexities of planning internship partnerships between two professions that do not typically work together, such as social work and sport.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1
Background of Study ................................................................................................................... 2
College-Aged Population .......................................................................................................... 3
Student-Athlete Population ...................................................................................................... 4
*Other Elite Athlete Populations* ............................................................................................. 6
Holistic Care .......................................................................................................................... 8
A Call for Social Work in Sport ............................................................................................... 9
The NASW Code of Ethics and CSWE Accreditation ............................................................. 13

*Competence* ....................................................................................................................... 15
Program Planning Theory ....................................................................................................... 22
Problem Statement, Purpose Statement, and Research Questions ........................................ 23
Study Significance .................................................................................................................. 24
Definition of Terms ................................................................................................................ 26
Study Overview ...................................................................................................................... 28

Chapter Two Literature Review ............................................................................................. 30
A History of Social Work in Sport .......................................................................................... 30
  Jane Addams and the Hull House ......................................................................................... 31
  Practice History .................................................................................................................. 33
*Special Olympics and Olympic Sport* ............................................................................... 33
*Youth and Community Sport* ............................................................................................. 35
*Professional and College Sport* ......................................................................................... 37
Alliance of Social Workers in Sport ...................................................................................... 38
Academic History ................................................................................................................ 39
Social Work in Sport as a Subspecialty of the Social Work Profession ................................. 43
  The Field of Mental Health and Social Work .................................................................... 45
  The Mental Health Field and Social Work in Sport .......................................................... 46
  Accreditation ...................................................................................................................... 49
  Implications for the Social Work Profession .................................................................... 51
Experiential Learning and Social Work Field Placements ................................................... 54
  Sport Management Internships ......................................................................................... 56
  Social Work Field Placements .......................................................................................... 59
A Field Partnership Between Social Work Departments and Sport Organizations ............. 63
  Nontraditional Social Work Field Placements .................................................................. 64
  Social Work Field Placements in Sport Settings: Predicted Challenges ......................... 66
  *Lack of Social Workers Currently Employed in Sport Organizations* ......................... 67
  *Lack of Opportunities to Engage in Mezzo and Macro Practice* .................................. 69
  *Gatekeeping in Sport Organizations* ............................................................................. 70
  Gap in Social Work Field Placement Literature ............................................................... 71
Program Planning Theory ...................................................................................................... 72
  Program Planning Theory in Experiential Learning: The Service-Learning Program Model ................................................................................................................................. 81
  Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................ 85
Chapter Three Methodology ................................................................................................ 86
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Social Capital through Relationships</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building the Relationship</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustaining the Relationship</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deconstructing Misconceptions</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incident</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating Sport Stakeholders</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating Social Work Stakeholders</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Negotiations</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Structure</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Summary</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 3</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerations for the Program Planning Process</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Implications</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Implications</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of References</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Social Work Competencies in Sport (Moore & Gummelt, 2019, pp. 3-4)........ 16
Table 2. Participant Demographics ........................................................................ 135
Table 3. Types of Stakeholders ............................................................................ 196
Table 4. Types of Internships ................................................................................ 203
Table 5. Types of Sport Internship Sites ................................................................. 204
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 A Timeline of the Main Events in the History of Social Work in Sport in the United States .............................................................................................................................................. 32
Figure 2 Kolb’s (1984, p. 21) Model of Experiential Learning .................................................. 55
Figure 3 Sandmann et al. (2009) Service-Learning Program Planning Model .................. 83
Figure 4 Visual Representation of Professional Certification in Social Work ................. 243
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Social work in sport is a growing subspecialty of the social work profession (Lawson & Anderson-Butcher, 2000; Gill, 2008; Moore & Gummelt, 2019). Even so, there are limited sport-specific educational opportunities for social work students looking to work in sport settings. (Beasley et al., 2021; Beasley et al., in press; Magier et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2019). This may not only be a barrier for future social work students to get into sport practice but may also have consequences for competent care of athletes. Gill (2008) has suggested that field placements for social work students in sport settings can be an effective strategy for not only training social work students in sport culture, but also can be the catalyst for creating other specialized training, such as social work in sport course and sport-specific social work continuing-education-credits. Thus, social work field placements in sport-settings can be a foundational step in further professionalizing sport as a subspecialty of social work practice.

Within this introductory section, I will first explore the behavioral health needs of student-athletes and other elite athletes. I will then discuss the holistic care of athletes and make the case of the need for social work practice, followed by a review of social work education accreditation and standards of competence that relate to social work in sport. I also introduce the theoretical framework of this dissertation, and the problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, and the study’s significance. Finally, this introductory section concludes with definitions of key terms used throughout this dissertation.
Background of Study

The World Health Organization (WHO; 2020a) defines mental health as the “state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community” (para. 1). There is a plethora of risk factors to diminished mental health, such as serious mental illness (i.e., schizophrenia), other mental health diagnoses (i.e., anxiety), major life transitions (i.e., moving), physical illness (i.e., injury), oppression (i.e., racism), and other sociocultural factors (i.e., socioeconomic status; WHO, 2019). The National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI; 2020) estimates that one in five adults aged 18 and older in the United States have some type of mental health diagnosis.

It is well-recognized by health professionals that due to the many factors that may contribute to an individual's diminished mental health, treatment needs to be focused holistically with attention to the environment, body, spirit, and mind (WHO, 2004). This type of treatment is operationalized as behavioral healthcare (Alvernia University, 2020). Behavioral healthcare is an umbrella definition that includes mental health care, and is provided by social workers, psychiatrists, counselors and therapists, primary care physicians, and neurologists. Even though behavioral health treatments by qualified professionals are available for individuals with a mental health diagnosis (WHO, 2020b), around two-thirds of individuals globally who need treatment do not seek or do not have access to treatment (Henderson et al., 2013). Therefore, especially in high-risk
populations, work on eliminating barriers to and identifying best practices of behavioral healthcare is needed to ensure their mental well-being.

**College-Aged Population**

Young adults, aged 18 to 25, are a vulnerable population that are at an increased risk for mental health challenges, especially as 75% of all mental health diagnoses are onset by the age of 24 (NAMI, 2020). Statistics suggest that almost 11% of young adults have serious suicidal ideation (NAMI, 2020), 22.3% have some type of anxiety disorder (National Institution of Mental Health [NIMH], 2019), 13.1% have had at least one episode of major depression (NIMH, 2019), and around 9% have some type of eating disorder with highest prevalence at age 21 (Ward et al., 2019).

Young adults attending college experience many circumstances that may be contributing to the high rates of mental health diagnoses in this population. Studies point to changes in familial relationships, financial challenges, job searches, peer conflict, drinking culture, and the high-pressure educational system as factors that may create increased stress that precipitate a recurrence or onset of a mental health diagnosis in the college population (Blanco et al., 2008; Tessema et al., 2019). Furthermore, even though adults aged 18 to 25 have the highest rate of mental health diagnoses than any other adult age group, they have the lowest rate of help-seeking (NAMI, 2020). This means this population is not only at a high risk of mental health diagnoses, but also at a high risk of not receiving appropriate treatment from a licensed mental health professional.
Student-Athlete Population

One subset of the college-aged population that may be at an even higher risk of diminished mental health are student-athletes, due to the increased pressure of college sport. Huffman (2014) outlined several unique life stressors related to college and athletics that impact the wellness of student-athletes. These include time management, academics, family expectations, physical health, and overall cumulative stress. Additionally, physical risk factors related to sport have been linked to an increase in mental health challenges. For instance, both concussions (Kontos et al., 2012; Vargas et al., 2015) and overtraining syndrome (Kreher & Schwartz, 2012) are correlated with increased rates of depression in student-athletes. Injury, and the psychological response to injury, also can lead to increased mental health concerns due to disruption in athletic identity (Bader, 2014; Putukian, 2016). Similarly, transition out of sport has also been linked to negative mental health outcomes (Jewett et al., 2019; Smith & Hardin, 2018). Interestingly, one study found that depression prevalence was significantly higher for current student-athletes compared to those that had recently graduated (Weigand et al., 2013), which further emphasizes the immense amount of mental stress that elite student-athletes experience while playing in college.

In light of all the risk factors, it is not surprising that student-athletes are at an increased risk for anxiety, depression, drug and alcohol use, and eating disorders (Strohle, 2017). Research has found that more than 30% of student-athletes present with depressive symptoms (Cox et al., 2017), between 30 to 50% of student-athletes have experienced anxiety (Davoren & Hwang, 2014), and almost 60% of female student-
athletes are at risk for an eating disorder (National Eating Disorders Association, 2019). Research also suggests that student-athletes participate in high-risk binge-drinking activity (Druckman et al., 2015; Ford, 2007) and drug use (Gill, 2009; Yusko et al., 2008). Many environmental stressors may be impacting student-athlete mental well-being. For example, scholars have pointed to food insecurity in the student-athlete population (Mayeux et al., 2020; Poll et al., 2020), a culture that perpetuates sexual violence (Kavussanu et al., 2013), and racism (Sadberry & Mobley, 2013), sexism (Kaskon & Ho, 2016), and heterosexism (DeFoor et al., 2018).

Furthermore, although mental health rates are similar to the general student population (Wolanin et al., 2016; Vargas et al., 2016), student-athlete mental health statistics may be underestimated, perhaps due to the population’s overall low help-seeking behaviors (Drew & Matthews, 2019). Studies have suggested that student-athletes have high rates of mental health stigma (Beasley & Hoffman, 2021; Bird et al., 2018), which may be a barrier to them seeking behavioral health services, such as therapy. The cultural belief in elite sport of mental toughness wherein athletes are taught by coaches and training staff to “tough it out” discourages student-athletes from seeking mental health care for fear of looking weak” (Putukian, 2016, p. 147). In fact, behaviors that precipitate some mental health diagnoses, such as eating disorders, are encouraged by coaches and athletic trainers (Anderson & Petrie, 2012; Cain, 2019), further discouraging student-athletes from seeking help from a qualified behavioral health professional. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has recently called for member institutions to address the mental health of their student-athletes (NCAA
Sports Sciences Institute, 2017). Thus, athletic departments need to implement behavioral healthcare that addresses issues beyond individual pathology and performance and considers the sociocultural and environmental impacts on student-athletes’ mental health and help-seeking behaviors.

**Other Elite Athlete Populations**

Other elite athlete populations also face similar risk factors. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) consensus statement on mental health in elite athletes suggests that elite athletes are at an increased risk of diminished mental health when they “suffer severe musculoskeletal injuries, undergo multiple surgeries, suffer from decreased sport performance or tend toward maladaptive perfectionism” (Reardon et al., 2019, p. 668). For example, one study found that retired professional football players experience higher rates of depression and dementia related to brain damage (Weir et al., 2009). Overall, in their review of the literature, the IOC consensus statement concluded that among elite professionals the prevalence of mental health symptoms ranges from five percent to 35%. (Reardon et al., 2019). Similar to student-athletes, help-seeking may also be low in professional athletes, as they experience immense pressure to not seek help for an injury or mental health concern due to fear of losing their starting spot or their contract (Bauman, 2016).

Scholarship has also considered the mental health of youth athletes. Although there are benefits to participation in organized youth sports, there are also many aspects of elite youth sport that negatively impact the mental health of young athletes (Newman et al., 2021a; Vella, 2019). Bruner and colleagues (2008) describe the process of youth
hockey players transitioning into elite sport and found that this transition created stress on interpersonal relationships outside of sport. Research has also pointed to the increased risk of over-training and overuse injuries for elite youth athletes (Sabato et al., 2016), as well as the unique pressure of trying to please peers and significant adult figures such as coaches and parents (Hellstedt, 1987; Kerr et al., 2016). Furthermore, abusive coaching in youth sport has been identified to be a major issue facing young athletes (Kerr et al., 2019). Perhaps due to a combination of these factors, elite youth athletes are at risk for alcohol abuse (Wetherill & Fromme, 2007), sexual aggression (Miller et al., 2016), disordered eating behaviors (Thompson & Sherman, 2014), and burn-out (Gustafsson et al., 2007).

Even though it is clear that elite youth, college, and elite athletes need access to effective behavioral healthcare, Roderick and colleagues (2017) critique the vast attention in sport literature dedicated to mental toughness and individual performance and not on the cultural considerations of mental health. The authors call for more work specifically on the mental health of all athletes with attention to sociocultural and environmental factors. Indeed, due to the risk factors unique to the elite sport contexts, interventions need to be addressed beyond just the individual level through holistic behavioral healthcare (Barkley et al., 2018; Reardon et al., 2019). Sport scholars have suggested that to best meet these holistic needs of athletes—physical, mental, and spiritual health—an interdisciplinary model of care would be most effective (Bader & Martin, 2019; Doherty, 2012; Waller et al., 2016). Therefore, the next section will provide an overview of
holistic care models in sport, and in what ways the social work profession fits into the holistic care of athletes.

**Holistic Care**

Models of holistic care have been presented as a “spoke of the wheel” approach where athletes are placed at the center of the wheel and members of their support team are each represented by a spoke of a wheel surrounding the athlete (Bader & Martin, 2019; Waller et al., 2016). For example, Waller and colleagues (2016) propose a model that includes 13 different professionals: chaplains, coaches, athletic trainers, medical doctors, strength and conditioning coaches, nutritionists, academic advisors, attorneys, psychiatrists, sport psychology professionals, media advisors, mental health counselors, and life skills coordinators. This type of interdisciplinary care model is not new to behavioral healthcare (Vinokur-Kapla, 1995), and is considered a best practice across many healthcare settings (Leclerc et al., 2018; Oslund et al., 2009). Social workers have also long been considered a key professional in interdisciplinary care teams due to their training in case management and generalist practice with a theoretical foundation in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory that addresses care across systems (Craig et al., 2016; Harkey, 2017). Even so, as a profession, social work is relatively new to work in sport; therefore, many social work practitioners and scholars have been advocating for the inclusion of social workers in sport settings due to their unique practice and theoretical approach to holistic care (Beasley et al., in press; Beasley et al., 2021; McHenry et al., 2021; Moore & Gummelt, 2019; Newman et al., 2019).
A Call for Social Work in Sport

The NCAA guide for mental health programming identifies social workers, psychologists, and professional counselors as licensed professionals that are qualified to offer behavioral healthcare to athletes (NCAA Social Sciences Institute, 2017); however, social workers offer a unique skill set different from the other professions that can benefit the care of athletes. Specifically, as sport scholars seem to agree on the benefit of an ecological systems perspective in sport, social workers who practice from this perspective seem an apt professional fit to provide care to athletes. Compared to both psychology professionals and counseling professionals who take an individual approach, social workers are uniquely trained and ethically bound to address individual care with attention to these different systems (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2017).

Psychology, with a foundation in Freudian thought (Walker, 1991), sport psychology, with a foundation in psychophysiological theory (Weinberg & Gould, 2018), and counseling, with a foundation in the continuum of care (Locke et al., 2001), all focus on one-one, individual work. For example, psychology tends to focus on the impact of childhood trauma on the individual’s current well-being, and operates largely from the medical model, providing care when clinical psychopathology presents (Watson, 1953). Although professional counseling departs somewhat from this medical model by taking a wellness approach (i.e., preventative care and psychoeducation), interventions remain at the individual level (Smith & Robinson, 1995). Concerning sport psychology, it is important to note here that there is much debate in the sport field around what qualifies an individual to practice sport psychology. One camp, coming from a clinical psychology
perspective, argues that licensed psychologists (LP) can offer both performance enhancement and clinical mental health services. The other camp, coming from kinesiology and physical education background, argues that LPs have the competence to provide mental health services, while individuals with a masters in sport psychology from programs housed in Kinesiology departments, whose training does not include mental health, have the competence to provide performance enhancement services (Wrisberg & Dzikus, 2016). However, no matter if they are offering clinical or performance enhancement services, the focus is still on individual-based, focused on emotional self-regulation (Schinke et al., 2018).

Social work, however, takes a much broader approach to care. Social work practice is based largely in Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological systems theory, or Person-In-Environment (PIE) model, which was in direct response to their perceived inadequacy of traditional, individual-focused psychological treatment. PIE positions an individual’s development and well-being not only as impacted by the individual’s past trauma or physiology, but also by the micro, mezzo, exo, macro, and chrono systems they operate in.

The microsystem is the individual’s immediate environment, where they interact with different systems (i.e., people and physical spaces) on an everyday basis. For example, an athlete’s coaches and teammates would be in their microsystem. The mesosystem consists of interactions among the individual’s microsystems that may not include the individual. For example, how an athlete’s coach meeting with an athlete’s guardian may influence the experiences of the athlete. The exosystem are larger
environments and/or systems that the individual is embedded in and impacted by. For example, if the NCAA investigates a university for recruiting violations, that will impact the experience of a student-athlete. The macrosystem includes patterns of culture and belief systems that create the society that the individual is living in. For example, how Title IX impacts college athletics, how systematic racism impacts individual African American athletes’ experiences, or how playing football in the American South is culturally different than playing football in Canada. Finally, the chronosystem includes changes in time and eras that an individual is living in. Historically, one can think of these as the Great Depression and the Cold War. A sport-specific example is the “steroid era” in baseball. A professional baseball player playing in the steroid era is going to have a different playing experience than a professional player playing today where performance enhancing drugs are heavily regulated due to a pushback on the steroid era.

Interestingly, although the literature on social work in sport is sparse, Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) ecological systems theory has been applied widely in sport literature. Some of the first discussions of ecological systems in sport came out of sport psychology literature, either focused on work with athletes (e.g., Araujo & Davids, 2009; Bader & Martin, 2019; Barkley et al., 2018; Horn, 2004; Krebs, 2009), coaching practices (e.g., Gilbert et al., 2006; Woodcock et al., 2011), or best practices for youth sport (e.g., Duerden & Witt, 2010; Holt et al., 2008). Taken together, this research examines how the micro system, such as individual characteristics of the athlete and close members of their network (i.e., coaches), the meso systems, such as interactions between coaches and parents, the exo system, such as specific athletic organizations or parent
teacher associations, and macro systems, such as policies and laws, impact athletes across age groups. Outside of sport psychology literature, ecological systems theory has been used to analyze specific social issues in sport, such as the lack of female coaches (LaVoi, 2011; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012) and the experiences of Black athletes (Cooper et al., 2016; Harris et al., 2014). Each of these analyses look at the different systems that impact the experiences of marginalized and vulnerable populations in sport. Even though the theoretical foundation of the social work profession, ecological systems theory, is considered a key lens to understanding the holistic needs of athletes, literature on holistic care in sport has neglected discussing how social workers could be an asset on holistic care teams.

Specifically, social work practice takes a different approach to care in comparison to other professions that take a more individual approach. This different perspective is important for the care of athletes. For example, even if a social worker is providing individual clinical therapy, they will consider how social issues are contributing to an individual’s mental health and thus may implement interventions on the individual, community, and policy level. A social worker can also work in a case management role. In this model of care, an athlete could meet with the social worker, who would complete an assessment, and work with the athlete to identify which types of services best fit their presenting needs. Then the social worker could make the appropriate service referrals to the best-suited professionals to work with the athlete. In this model, case management is a unique skillset social workers can bring to the holistic care of athletes.
Social justice work and the empowerment of vulnerable populations is an ethical mandate, and defining aspect, of the social work profession (NASW, 2017). Specifically, macro-level work includes attention to agency, state, and federal policy that are discriminatory and advocating for policy change (Burghardt, 2010). Moore and Gummelt (2019), in their seminal textbook on social work in sport, identify social justice and policy work as one of the unique contributions social workers can make in sport-contexts. Specifically, the authors point to the role social workers can play in eliminating structural barriers that athletes face by advocating for policies related to sexual assault in sport, access to mental health services, access for athletes with disabilities, player safety, and gender and racial equity.

These different values of the social work profession are inherent in the profession’s code of ethics and the accreditation standards of social work education programs. The following section will review these standards and how they are applied in sport settings.

The NASW Code of Ethics and CSWE Accreditation

The National Association of Social Worker’s (NASW, 2017) Code of Ethics and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2015a) competencies translate the unique systems focus of social work into practice. Looking first at the Code of Ethics, the NASW (2017) articulates six ethical principles of the social work profession: (a) service; (b) social justice; (c) dignity and worth of the person; (d) importance of human relationships; (e) integrity; and (f) competence. Comparing these principles to both the general ethical principles of the American Psychological Association (APA; 2017) and
those of the American Counseling Association (ACA; 2014), all three recognize the importance of human relationships, integrity, and empowering the diversity and dignity of the human experience. However, the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics differs from the more individually focused ethics of both the APA and ACA in three primary ways. First, a thread through the six core ethical principles of the NASW Code of Ethics points to social worker’s ethical responsibility to address social justice issues through work on social policy and social issues (see Service, Social Justice, and Dignity and Worth of the Person). Second, the NASW Code of Ethics is also the only code to specifically state an ethical responsibility to work with vulnerable populations (see Service). And third, the NASW Code of Ethics is also the only code to address organizational and community work, as well as individual and group work (see Importance of Human Relationships). Taken together, the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics six key values of the social work profession identify the main difference between social work and both psychology and counseling: work with vulnerable populations through not only micro-practice, but also through mezzo-level and macro-level work.

The CSWE (2015a) translates the core values of social work into training competencies in which every accredited social work program must prepare their students. The CSWE identities nine training competencies that consists of what they term generalist practice: (a) demonstrate ethical and professional behavior; (b) engage diversity and difference in practice; (c) advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice; (d) engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice; (e) engage in policy practice; (f) engage with individuals, families, groups,
organizations, and communities; (g) assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities; (h) intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities; (i) evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. These general competencies are the foundation to every social work course and are meant to be practiced in what the CSWE terms their signature pedagogy, field placements (i.e., internships).

It is not surprising that social work education, with a foundation in the NASW Code of Ethics, reinforces the main differences between social work and other mental health professions. Specifically, these educational competencies demonstrate that social work students will be trained in not only individual work, but also mezzo-level (organizational, community) and macro-level practice (policy, social justice). Moore and Gummelt (2019) offer a great table detailing in which ways social work practice in sport can meet the CSWE competencies (see Table 1), which provides specific examples of how training in generalist practice means social workers can work in a case management role, a clinical therapist role, and an advocate role in sport settings. As these different standards suggest being competent to work with the athlete population is essential to effective work.

**Competence**

Competence in practice is also an ethical mandate of the social work profession. The NASW (2017) Code of Ethics states:

Social workers should provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification,
### Table 1

*Social Work Competencies in Sport (Moore & Gummelt, 2019, pp. 3-4)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSWE Competency</th>
<th>Social Work in Sport Practice Behaviors</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1. Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior | • Understanding the value base and ethical standards of the social work profession  
• Understanding current policies and regulations guiding the treatment of athletes  
• Applying principles of critical thinking to athletes’ personal stories  
• Recognizing how personal thoughts about athletics can influence professional judgment  
• Understanding the roles of other professionals in promoting athlete health and well-being |
| 2. Engage diversity and difference in practice | • Understanding how diversity and individuality shape athletes’ experiences and their identity  
• Recognizing how athletic participation can lead to the exploitation of athletes and factors impacting their well-being  
• Realizing the role athletic culture and identity have on athletes’ biopsychosocial development |
| 3. Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice | • Exploring strategies that eliminate structural barriers that leave athletes’ susceptible to behavioral health and psychosocial risks  
• Ensuring all athletes’ have access to adequate services that promote their safety and well-being |
<p>| 4. Engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice | • Advancing our understanding of athlete well-being through research methods |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>CSWE Competency</th>
<th>Social Work in Sport Practice Behaviors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promoting the sport social work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>movement through research aimed at</td>
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<td></td>
<td>evaluating and improving service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>delivery to athletes</td>
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<td>5. Engage in</td>
<td>• Advocating for policies that promote</td>
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<td>policy practice</td>
<td>athlete well-being at the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>organizational and governmental</td>
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<td></td>
<td>levels</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Understanding the history of college</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and professional athletics and how</td>
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<td>this history influences the present</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Examining how the current state of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>athletics impacts athletes at the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>micro, mezzo, exo, and macro levels</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Identifying the influential social,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>cultural, economic, organizational,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and environmental factors that affect</td>
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<td>policy aimed at athlete well-being</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Engage with</td>
<td>• Understanding how theories of human</td>
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<td>individuals,</td>
<td>behavior and the social environment</td>
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<td>families,</td>
<td>provide a framework for engaging</td>
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<tr>
<td>groups,</td>
<td>athletes’ in discussion about their</td>
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<tr>
<td>organizations,</td>
<td>well-being</td>
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<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>• Exploring strategies for engaging</td>
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<td>communities</td>
<td>with athletes’ of culturally diverse</td>
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<td></td>
<td>backgrounds</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Utilizing a strengths-based approach</td>
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<td></td>
<td>to build trust-based relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Valuing principles of relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>building and interprofessional</td>
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<td></td>
<td>collaboration to improve athletes”</td>
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<td>well-being</td>
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<td>CSWE Competency</td>
<td>Social Work in Sport Practice Behaviors</td>
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</table>
| 7. Assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities       | • Assessing strengths, risks, and needs of athletes  
• Assessing an athlete’s motivation for change  
• Developing intervention goals with athletes and organizing the steps needed to achieve those goals  
Selecting appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, values of the social work profession, and preferences of the individual athlete |
| 8. Intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities | • Implementing interventions to achieve goals and enhance the capacities of athletes  
• Using interprofessional collaboration to achieve beneficial practice outcomes for athletes  
• Facilitating effective transitions for athletes  
• Evaluating the effectiveness of sport social work on behavioral health, psychosocial, and competitive outcomes  
• Applying evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo, exo, and macro levels |
| 9. Evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience…Social workers should provide services in substantive areas or use intervention techniques or approaches that are new to them only after engaging in appropriate study, training, consultation, and supervision (para. 49-50).

Social workers certainly have the professional training to be an asset to the care of athletes (Moore & Gummelt, 2019). However, there is a lack of opportunities for social work students to gain competence in athletic culture outside of individual research, because there is a paucity of social work departments that offer sport-specific courses, a limited number of sport management departments that offer courses related specifically to mental health of athletes, and very few opportunities for social work students to have their field placements (i.e., required internship hours) in sport organizations. In light of the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics, to provide ethical care to athletes moving forward, education, training, and credentialing specific to sport-based social work must become normative.

My own recent work has empirically supported this call for specialized education opportunities. In two separate studies on licensed social workers working in collegiate athletic departments, the participants specifically pointed to the lack of training in social work in sport and suggested that sport-specific field placements would be an important way for future social workers to gain specialized competencies (Beasley et al., in press; Beasley, 2021). The same sentiment was mirrored in studies with social workers employed in various sport organizations, including college sport, professional sport, and
youth sport, as participants also lamented the lack of specialized training (Magier et al., in press; Newman et al., 2021b).

Research on other social work subspecialties have pointed to similar concerns over lack of specialized training. Brezin and O’Connor (2010) did a content analysis of course syllabi of school social work classes and found that there were inconsistencies between universities. They conclude with a call for social work courses to further define competencies that reflect the changing landscape of education. Similarly, focusing on hospice social work, Bosma and colleagues (2010) sought to define specific competencies related to the profession’s role in this unique context through focus groups with expert panels. The authors call for social work programs to offer specialized curriculum for social workers looking to work in palliative care to help develop these competencies. Furthermore, macro-level social workers have been advocating for the need of a macro-level specialized license, similar to the clinical license currently offered to social workers (Donaldson et al., 2014). Along these same lines, there is a need for collaboration between the sport management and social work professions to train social workers to ethically work with the athlete population through specialized curriculum and experiential learning opportunities, such as field placement opportunities in sport organizations.

As both sport management organizations and social work departments are familiar with the internship process, there is certainly an opportunity to establish a long-lasting partnership between these two disciplines through the implementation of social work field placements in sport organizations. In reviewing the literature on experiential
learning in both sport management and social work literature, there are similarities that may inform the creation of these social field placements in sport (Boitel & Fromm, 2013; Kelley, 2004; Schelbe et al., 2014; Schoepfer & Dobbs, 2011; Wertheimer & Sodhi, 2014; Williams, 2004). Both disciplines point to the importance of the field/task supervisor in creating a successful field experience for students, lack of quality field sites, time and availability challenges, liability concerns, and the central role of the internship coordinator/field director and staff in creating a positive internship for both the student and the host organization.

Although these similarities offer a foundation to begin to establish a model of collaborative experiential learning opportunities for students interested in the intersection of social work and sport, there is little discussed in the literature on this specific interdisciplinary partnership. Indeed, Iachini and Chelladurai (2007) state, “Scholars in the field of sport management have not made any serious overtures toward building bridges with the field of social work” (p. 245). Similarly, Gill (2008) laments that there are limited discussions of sport in social work literature. Therefore, attention to this partnership, through the shared lens of experiential learning, is an important step in developing the role of social work in sport.

However, it can be difficult to establish experiential learning opportunities, such as social work field placements, between two types of organizations that do not typically work together (Hughes, 2009). Thus, empirical research needs to be conducted to develop best practices in implementing these types of partnership. One theoretical perspective that can be helpful in understanding the power structures, the relational aspects, and practical
steps of planning these types of programs is program planning theory (Daffron & Caffarella, 2021; Cervero & Wilson, 2006; Sandmann et al., 2009; Sork, 2010). Therefore, the theoretical foundation of this dissertation was program planning theory.

**Program Planning Theory**

Netting and colleagues (2008) define program planning in social work as, “moving toward idea implementation and achieving the intent of the many stakeholders to the planning process” (p. 43). In adult education, theories of program planning can be traced back to the work of Tyler (1949). Although many scholars have expanded on the so-called ‘Tyler Rationale’, Forester (1989) and Cervero and Wilson (1994, 1998, 2006) have expanded on the power relations inherent in program planning in their critical program planning theory, Caffarella (1994, 2002) and Caffarella and Daffron (2013) have provided a more practical model of program planning, and Sork (1996, 2000, 2010) has provided a perspective of program planning that acknowledges power relations, but at the same time presents practical aspects of the planning process. These foundational approaches to program planning theory have been used to understand the planning of experiential programs in adult education.

Specifically, Sandmann and colleagues (2009), building on the critical program planning theories of Forester (1989) and Cervero and Wilson (2006) as well as the Interactive Model first proposed by Caffarella (2002), suggest that program planning theories can help scholars and practitioners understand the process of creating effective experiential learning opportunities for students, especially in light of the multiple stakeholders involved in such processes. In line with Sandman and colleagues (2009)
suggestion, using program planning theories to inform my dissertation was helpful in identifying the key steps, stakeholders, negotiations, power dynamics, and contextual factors related to establishing a relationship between a sport management organization and a social work department to implement a sport-specific field placement for a social work student intern.

**Problem Statement, Purpose Statement, and Research Questions**

Although considered a best practice in sport management and social work education, there are currently very few field placement opportunities for social work students in sport organizations. These field placements are needed, as they can not only further professionalize social work in sport as a practice subspecialty (Gill, 2008), but can also better prepare social workers to work with athletes and ultimately improve the model of interprofessional care teams in sport. Currently, there are a few, albeit limited, resources to aid social work departments in establishing placements in sport organizations. Moore and Gummelt’s (2019) detailing of sport-specific social work practice behaviors that fit the CSWE’s (2015a) nine competencies is a good resource for determining the fit of a sport organization as a field site and training sport professionals in social work practice and values. Even so, a specific exploration of how sport field placements have been successfully implemented is missing from both theoretical and practice-based literature. An understanding of the barriers and strategies to developing social work field placements in sport organizations can help inform best practices for both social work field staff and sport management professionals in creating this non-traditional partnership. Thus, in response to this gap in literature, the purpose of this
narrative inquiry was to understand social work field staff’s narratives of their experiences establishing sport-specific field placements through their lived stories. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What narratives do social work field staff have about the process of establishing field placements in sport settings?
2. How do social work field staff negotiate power when establishing field placements in sport settings?
3. What strategies do social work field staff use to establish field placements in sport settings?

By exploring these questions, this dissertation focused on the program planning process of establishing social work field placements in sport settings. As the process of establishing social work field placements in sport organizations has not yet been empirically explored, this dissertation was exploratory research through narrative inquiry. Due to the exploratory nature and the little known about what these placements look like in practice, I looked at field placements for both bachelors level (BSW) and masters level (MSW) social work students, as well as field placements in any sport settings (i.e., community to professional sport). Thus, the context of this exploratory narrative inquiry was sport organizations across levels and in both BSW and MSW CSWE-accredited social work field departments.

**Study Significance**

This study contributed to practice and research in both the field of social work and sport management. First and foremost, understanding how successful field placements
have been established between social work departments and sport organizations can begin to establish a long-lasting relationship between the two disciplines. Specifically, the findings of this study may aid social work field departments in establishing field placements in sport organizations and may aid sport organizations in furthering understanding the social work profession. This may increase the opportunities available for social work students to gain a placement in a sport setting. Indeed, Gill (2008) argues that field placements in sport is one of the first, and foundational steps, to professionalizing the subspecialty of social work in sport.

This study also has the opportunity to improve the behavioral health care of athletes. As knowledge of the sport culture has been identified as key to effective mental health work with athletes (NCAA Sports Sciences Institute, 2017), establishing opportunities for social work students to gain this knowledge is needed to effectively train future therapists and case managers working with athletes. Furthermore, this type of specialized training opportunity introducing more social work students to social work practice in sport is in line with the NASW (2017) ethical principle of *competence*.

Theoretically, this study extended the application of program planning theory to experiential learning literature. Sandmann and colleagues (2009), pulling from the work of both Caffarella (2002) and Cervero and Wilson (2006), have established a theoretical model for program planning in experiential service-learning. However, this model has not been used to look at experiential learning opportunities outside of the adult education field. This study extended the use of program planning theories, and Sandmann and colleagues’ (2009) model, to understand implementing experiential learning partnerships.
in the specific context of social work field placements in sport organizations. Ultimately then, at a societal level, this study can offer insights to practitioners on implementing meaningful university and community partnerships across disciplines that not only benefits the education of students, but also benefits community members (Cervero & Wilson, 1994).

**Definition of Terms**

**CSWE**

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE 2015a) is the sole accrediting body of social work education programs that oversees curriculum content as well the standards and requirements for bachelor’s level and master’s level field placements. This includes defining the type of standards students must meet during their internship and the number of field hours students must meet, as well as what individuals, or “field instructors”, can supervise students during their internship.

**Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning can be broadly conceptualized as learning by doing (Dewey & Dewey, 1915). Experiential learning is based in the epistemological assumption that knowledge is created through experience and then continuously validated through future experiences (Dewey, 1938). Many practical professions, including social work, consider experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, an important pedagogical approach as having on-the-job experience can bridge the theory-practice gap (Baird, 2002).
Field Placement

In social work education, field placements are the primary experiential learning modality (Bogo, 2010) and considered the signature pedagogy of social work education (CSWE, 2015a). Social work field placements refer to the internship hours required for both bachelors and masters social work students (CSWE, 2015a). Social work students are placed as an intern at certain behavioral health or social service organizations, are supervised by a social worker or other professional on staff, and usually take an academic course related to field placement to process their experiences. Bachelor’s students must complete 400 field hours, and master’s students must complete 900 field hours (CSWE, 2015a). In this dissertation “field placement” and “internship” are used interchangeably.

Nontraditional Field Placement

Nontraditional field placements in social work have been defined as any internship site where the organization has a core business not related to social work or welfare services (McLaughlin et al., 2015). Therefore, the social work student is not surrounded by other social work professionals (Jasper et al., 2013; Hughes, 2009).

Program Planning

Program planning as a practice refers to individual and stakeholder negotiations to construct a program (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Netting et al., 2008). It is key to note that programs are not planned in a silo, rather they are planned by real people in specific organizational, cultural, and historical contexts (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Cervero & Wilson, 2006). Due to the complex nature of program planning, scholars have begun to develop specific program planning theories to be the foundation of practice (Cervero &
Wilson, 1994; Netting et al., 2008; Sandmann et al., 2009). In the context of this doctoral dissertation, the program is the field placement partnership between social work departments and sport organizations, and the program planners are social work field staff.

**Social Work Field Staff**

Due to the field requirements of social work students, the majority of social work programs have a dedicated field placement staff whose responsibility is to cultivate community partnerships, work with students to place them in their internships, and monitor and evaluate student experiences in their field internships (CSWE, 2015b). For the purpose of this doctoral dissertation, the term field staff is used to refer to any individual specifically hired by a CSWE-accredited social work program that works specifically with community organizations and students as it relates to field placements.

**Study Overview**

Chapter One has introduced the background of the topic of this doctoral dissertation, including an overview of the behavioral health needs of athletes, the role of social workers in the holistic care of athletes, and program planning theories. I concluded this chapter with the purpose statement and research questions of this particular study, as well as the significance of the study and definition of key terms. Chapter Two provides a literature review of social work in sport, an exploration of social work in sport as a subspecialty of the social work profession, experiential learning in both sport management and social work education, and possible barriers to establishing this partnership. It concludes with an exploration of program planning theories, and the application of program planning to experiential learning partnerships. Chapter Three
covers the methodology and methods of this narrative inquiry. Specifically, I review the characteristics of qualitative research, the epistemology and theoretical framework of the study, as well as a discussion of narrative inquiry. I then provide an overview of the specific methods of the study, as well as my subjectivity statement. Chapter Four includes the findings and discussion of this narrative inquiry, and Chapter Five concludes the study offering specific implications of the study’s findings for theory and practice in both the social work and sport management disciplines.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins by outlining the history of social work in sport and discusses the challenges of defining sport as a subspecialty of social work practice. I then discuss the importance of field placements in both cementing a partnership between the social work and sport management fields, as well as further professionalizing social work in sport. I then outline challenges in establishing field placements in sport organizations, including a review of the literature on nontraditional field placements. I conclude with an overview of the theoretical framework of this study, program planning theory, and what program planning theory adds to understanding the implementation of experiential learning opportunities, such as field placements in sport.

A History of Social Work in Sport

Social work scholars agree that the intersection of social work and sport can be traced to the beginning of modern-day social work practice in the United States with Jane Addam’s Hull House in 1889 (Moore & Gummelt, 2019; Reynolds, 2019). The Hull House utilized sport as an intervention in many ways, including implementing many youth sport programs for young immigrants in the Chicago area. Moore and Gummelt (2019) argue that the Hull House provided the foundation for, what they are terming, sport social work. The next well-documented, and perhaps, most influential step towards the professionalization of social work in sport was the creation of the Alliance of Social Work in Sport (ASWIS) in 2015 by the work of social work faculty (Moore & Gummelt, 2019).
Interestingly, very little is documented about the social work profession in sport between the work of the Hull House from the late 1800s to mid 1900s and the creation of the ASWIS in 2015. In the following sections I review what is known about this history (See Figure 1).

**Jane Addams and the Hull House**

Considered one of the foundations to modern-day social work, the Hull House, established by Jane Addams, provided advocacy and community building to the impoverished, mostly immigrant, neighborhoods in Chicago (Woods & Kennedy, 1911). Reynolds (2017), in their historical overview of the use of sport at the Hull House, details many ways in which the Hull House utilized recreation as an intervention for high-risk youth. Specifically, with the goal to decrease truancy among adolescents, the Hull House sponsored both girls’ and boys’ basketball tournaments, indoor baseball tournaments, and boxing and wrestling programs. A consideration of recreation was also included in the advocacy efforts of the Hull House. Addams advocated for the creation of public spaces for recreation, such as parks and playgrounds, in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods for the health of children (Reynolds, 2017), eventually positioning Addams as a leader in the national playground movement (Gems et al., 2017).

Addams, who taught social work courses at the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, was also influential in advocating the university to include education on the importance of recreation as intervention (Reynolds, 2017). In 1918, the school offered social work students an opportunity to enroll in a certificate program for work in recreational programming with a focus on child development. Indeed, the Chicago
Figure 1

A Timeline of the Main Events in the History of Social Work in Sport in the United States
School of Social Work was once tied with the school of recreation (Todd et al., 1938). In 1914, the Chicago Training School of Playground Workers was subsumed as a recreation department into the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy, alongside the Department of Social Work. However, in 1920, when the Department of Social Work was transferred to the University of Chicago, the Department of Recreation remained as its own school, with quarters at the Hull House until 1927 (Todd et al., 1938). Thus, even social work education has a past with sport and recreation.

Reynolds (2017) concludes that recognizing the work of Addams in recreation might motivate social work professionals, sport practitioners, and scholars to continue creating a bridge between the two disciplines. Indeed, Moore and Gummelt (2019) argue that the use of sport at the Hull House set the foundation for the intersection of sport and social work. However, very little is documented about the history of social work professionals in sport-settings after Addams up until the more recent renewal of advocacy for the subspecialty by ASWIS in 2015. The following sections offer a brief overview of the many ways in which social workers have maintained a role, albeit lesser known, in sport settings.

**Practice History**

*Special Olympics and Olympic Sport*

Perhaps the most significant social work contribution to sport and recreation after the Hull House was the creation of the Special Olympics. Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who established a camp for children with intellectual disabilities in 1962 that grew into the modern-day Special Olympics, actually began her career as a social worker (McNamara,
After graduating from Stanford University in 1943, Shriver took a job as a social worker at the Penitentiary for Women in West Virginia, before moving to Chicago to work with the House of the Good Shepherd, where she counseled adolescents in the juvenile court system. In 1957, she became the executive director of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation, whose purpose was to advocate for the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities. After much effort, the modern-day Special Olympic World Games was established in 1968 (McNamara, 2019). In many ways, Shriver’s work and her dedication to individuals with disabilities closely follows the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2017) Code of Ethics by providing access to competitive sport for a marginalized population. Following in Shriver’s footsteps, many social workers have continued to work with the Special Olympics. For example, school social workers serve in coordinating roles for local Special Olympics (Cartwright, 2019), and volunteering with local Special Olympics is used to introduce social work students to work with individuals with intellectual disabilities (Leyba, 2010).

Perhaps due to the social work connection with the Special Olympics, there is evidence that social workers have also been working with Olympic athletes for decades. To the extent of this literature review, the first documented example of a social worker directly working with Olympic athletes was published by Edward Hanna in 1993 in the *Clinical Social Work Journal*. In the article, Hanna (1993) presents a case study of their work Olympic wrestlers, who were having performance issues. The athletes’ coach sought professional help, and asked Hanna, who the coach knew through academic affiliation, to work with the athletes on the team. Hanna, who did not have professional
training in sport psychology, approached his work with the team through the lens of clinical social work. They found that, “Psychodynamically oriented in-depth clinical interviews of the type conducted by psychotherapists for diagnostic purposes do have promise in the task of identifying internal vulnerability which leads to performance-inhibiting anxiety or depression” (Hanna, 1993 p. 296). Hanna concludes with a call for social workers to work with athletes to identify and work through internal vulnerabilities, whereas sport psychology consultants tend to work with external vulnerabilities, and a call for work with coaches to improve their relationships with athletes.

Although the literature on social work with Olympic athletes is almost nonexistent after Hanna’s (1993) case study, social workers continue to be engaged with both Olympic athletes and with the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Olympics’ governing organization. For example, social workers have sat on Olympic committees, such as the IOC’s Conesus Meeting on Mental Health and Elite Athletes (ASWIS, 2018), and worked as consultants to Olympic athletes, such as Greg Harden, who has worked in sport since the 1980s, and provided services to athletes such as Michael Phelps (Greg Harden and the Story Factory, 2020).

**Youth and Community Sport**

The use of sport as an intervention in social work with children has been well-documented since the Hull House, spanning the last 100 years (Azzarito et al., 2004; Moore & Gummelt, 2019; Reynolds, 2017; Reynolds, 2020). The NASW even recognizes sport as a key intervention in work with adolescents. In the *NASW Standards for the Practice of Social Work with Adolescents*, sport is specifically mentioned twice...
(Bailey et al., 2003). First, under standard one “Knowledge of Adolescent Development”, the authors state that there is an “importance of opportunities for adolescents to establish positive relationships with open expression of thoughts and feelings with family members, peers, and role models such as teachers, clergy, and sports team coaches” (p. 8; emphasis added), and second, under standard 6 “Understanding Adolescents’ Needs”, they state that “opportunities for collaboration among community, religious, and athletic groups are supported” (p. 15; emphasis added).

Since the Hull House, social workers have remained active in youth sport, either through school social work (Greville, 2014), residential treatment facilities (Linehan, 1993), or community organizations such as the Young Men’s Christian Academy (YMCA). There is historical evidence that social workers have been providing services to members of the YMCA as early as the 1940s during World War II (Dumenil & Boyer, 2012). There is also historical evidence that social workers have used sport and recreation as an intervention with youth as early as the 1900s. A 1904 article published in the journal Work with Boys entitled “A Directory of Social Work with Boys: Methods, Workers, and Advisors” detailed the positive impact sport and recreation could have on the development of adolescent males (Berryman, 1975).

Today, there are several examples of youth sport programs integrating social workers (Greville, 2014; Riley et al., 2017; Simard et al., 2015). For one example, Riley and colleagues (2017) detail the LiFEsports program, a free youth sport program created by social work faculty that takes place over 19 days. The camp provides at-risk youth with six hours of daily programming that integrates educational initiatives with sport
activity. The authors found that at the end of the 19 weeks, youth reported increased self-control (Riley et al., 2017). Considering community organizations, YMCAs still today employ social workers in clinical counseling services (YMCA of Greater Monmouth County, 2020), and offer field placements for social work students focused on youth development (YMCA of East Tennessee, 2020).

**Professional and College Sport**

There are much less recent documented examples of social workers working in professional and elite college sport, which may be in part due to the fact that the majority of professional leagues and the NCAA have only recently made mental health programming a priority. However, there is evidence that social workers have been working with elite athletes in professional leagues since the 1980s. For example, a March 1981 *New York Times* article titled “N.B.A. Adds Counseling Service” states:

> The National Basketball Association yesterday became the first professional sports league to hire a 24-hour-a-day counseling service to help its players deal with a wide range of problems...Thirty full-time and 30 part-time psychologists, social workers, lawyers and financial and physical rehabilitation counselors will be available. Most of the counseling will be done on the telephone (Goldaper, 1981, para. 1-3; emphasis added).

The article also notes that the same company was hired at the time by the Minnesota North Stars (now the Dallas stars) of the National Hockey League (NHL). However, there is not much record of social workers in professional sports after this until the National Football League (NFL) Player Care Foundation, initially founded in 2007,
shifted from a financial education resource for retired NFL players to providing mental health services around 2014 (Grobman, 2017).

Social workers working in college athletics can also be traced back to the 1980s when Greg Harden, a social worker, was hired as an athletic counselor at the University of Michigan in 1986 (Chengelis, 2020). Harden eventually became the university’s Associate Athletic Director of Athletic Counseling and was undoubtedly influential in the University of Michigan becoming a leading example of integrating social workers into athletic departments (University of Michigan Social Work Department, 2016). Specifically, the university has one of the only student organizations dedicated to social work in sport—Social Work and Sport Association (University of Michigan Maize Pages, 2020)—and currently employs five licensed social workers on their Athletics Counseling Team, which is housed in the athletic department (University of Michigan Athletics, 2020). Following the University of Michigan model, other NCAA athletic departments have hired social workers over the past few decades. For example, Kristen Martin has provided therapy to student-athletes at the University of Tennessee since 2002 (University of Tennessee Athletics, 2020) and Dawn Shadron has been working with athletes at the University of Connecticut since 2006 (University of Connecticut Division of Student Affairs, n.d.).

**Alliance of Social Workers in Sport**

Perhaps the most influential step towards the professionalization of social work in sport was the creation of the Alliance of Social Work in Sport (ASWIS) in 2015 (Moore & Gummelt, 2019), as this is the first formal organization that brings together social
workers in sport. Specifically, ASWIS (n.d.) has eight different committees each dedicated to advocating for both the role of social workers in different sport settings, as well as for the rights and well-being of athletes of all levels. For example, members have co-authored and sent a position statement to the NCAA addressing the financial exploitation of student-athletes, and to the NFL on the rights of players to protest. The Research Committee is dedicated to advancing the scholarship of the field in both sport-based and social work-based academic journals, and the Committee on Clinical Practice focuses on educating sport organizations on the roles and responsibilities of a clinically licensed social worker. They also host a job board that posts different positions in sport organizations social workers can apply for.

ASWIS (n.d.) describes their mission as to provide “an opportunity for social workers to develop a professional network of colleagues who can create a national (and international) movement to promote the safety and well-being of athletes of all ages and abilities” (para. 2). To achieve this goal, the organization offers continuing education credits (CEUs) for social work professionals, hosts an annual conference dedicated to social work in sport, and even provides a social work in sport certificate with courses and internship opportunities in sport-settings; however, this certificate is not recognized by any of the social work governing bodies.

Academic History

Although social work literature has pointed to the use of sport as intervention for decades (Reynolds, 2020), vast academic attention to the social work profession in sport did not appear in literature until the early 2000s. To the extent of this literature review,
there are 31 articles or book/book chapters published in both sport-specific and social
work-specific journals that explicitly focus on the integration of social work in sport or
provide specific implications for the work of social workers in sport. Of the 31
publications, 16 address college sport (Beasley et al., in press; Beasley et al., 2021; Dean
& Reynolds, 2017; Gill, 2008; Gill, 2009; Gill, 2014; Gill et al., 2017; Gill, 2017a;
Gummelt, 2017; McCoy et al., 2017; Miller & Buttell, 2017; Moore, 2016; Moore, 2017;
Moore et al., 2018; Stowkowski et al., 2017; Waller et al., 2017), five address youth sport
(Lawson, 2005; Lower et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2021a; Teasley & Gill, 2014;
Newman, 2020), one addresses social work contributions to coaching (Felizzi, 2017), one
addresses social work with Olympic athletes (Hanna, 1993), and seven address social
work’s general fit in sport-contexts (Dean & Rowan, 2013; Lawson & Anderson-Butcher,
2000; McHenry et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2021b; Magier et al., in press; Moore &

The majority of the literature are conceptual pieces that advocate for the role of
social workers across various sport settings to address the varying vulnerabilities of
athlete populations (Dean & Reynolds, 2017; Dean & Rowan, 2014; Felizzi et al., 2017;
Gill et al., 2017; Gill, 2008; 2009; 2014; Lawson & Butcher, 2000; Lawson, 2000;
McCoy et al., 2017; McHenry et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2018; Moore, 2016; Newman et
al., 2019; Teasley & Gill, 2015; Waller et al., 2017). For example, Lawson (2000)
presents a partnership between sport, exercise, and physical education professionals and
social workers to use sport as a positive community intervention, especially for
vulnerable youth. Similarly, Gill (2008) provides an overview of the psychosocial
challenges college athletes face and argues why a social work lens could benefit college athletes due their unique systems perspective, and McCoy and colleagues (2017) address that ways in which social workers can participate in macro-level practice in collegiate athletics by advocating against the various social injustices that face the population.

While the conceptual work advocated for the unique subspecialty of social work in sport, more empirical research began to be published. Gill (2017a) completed a secondary data analysis of newspaper articles and found that White student-athletes committed statistically significant more property and drug related crimes than Black student-athletes. In light of the findings the author calls for social workers, especially in the case management role, to be a key member of the support staff for college athletics. Reynolds (2017) provides a historical analysis of the ways in which sport was used as an intervention at the Hull House, which is considered the foundation of modern-day social work in the United States. Lower and colleagues (2017) created and validated a scale to assess young athletes’ teamwork competency for use by social workers and other practitioners providing sport development interventions.

Many studies focused on the athletes themselves. Both Stokowski and colleagues (2017) and Gummelt (2017) focused on specific issues that student-athletes face that may require intervention from a social worker. Stokowski et al. (2017) conducted semi-structured interviews with nine Division I football players diagnosed with a learning disability, and Gummelt (2017) conducted surveys with female student-athletes and found that female student-athletes have lower self-efficacy and higher self-conscious emotions than non-athlete peers. Both papers provide clear implications for social
workers working with the student-athlete population. Moore (2017) surveyed student-athletes on their perceptions of help-seeking and found that they are less comfortable with seeking mental health services compared to academic and other services. The author concludes with recommendations for social workers to reduce the stigma associated with mental health help-seeking in the population.

Two studies focused specifically on assessing empirically the fit of social work practice in sport. Newman (2020) completed interpretive qualitative interviews with 13 youth on the skills they learned from participating in sport, concluding that sport-based social work interventions can meet social work’s grand challenge of Healthy Development for All Youth. Finally, Moore and colleagues (2018) surveyed 221 student-athletes on if social work values were incorporated in their behavioral healthcare. Results suggest that student-athletes only believe social work values are moderately present in their care. For example, 32% of college athletes did not report a sense of importance of human relationships, and 30% of college athletes did not feel that service and social justice were readily present (Moore et al., 2018). The authors conclude that the inclusion of more social work services would benefit student-athletes.

Only four studies (Beasley et al., in press; Beasley et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2021b; Magier et al., in press) interviewed social workers actually working in sport settings. Beasley and colleagues (in press) explored the ways in which social work practice in collegiate sport fits the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics, and Beasley and colleagues (2021) explored the professional and work experiences of social workers practicing in NCAA DI sport. Similarly, both Newman and colleagues (2021b) and
Magier and colleagues (in press) interviewed social workers practicing across sport settings to understand their educational and professional experiences. A common theme across these three studies was the need for more sport-specific social work education, including field placement opportunities in sport organizations.

Although these studies have all added to the social work in sport literature, the majority of articles have focused conceptually on how the social work profession and values fit and could be an asset in sport settings, and very few of the articles offer empirical data analysis and even less ($n = 3$) include the voices of social workers themselves. Furthermore, although many call for the inclusion of social work in sport organizations (Gill, 2008; 2009; Moore et al., 2018), no study has focused on the actual implementation of social work programming in sport, and, conversely, how social work departments are integrating sport into their curricula. Consequently, empirical research on how the social work profession and social work education programs are preparing students to work in this unique practice field is lacking, both concerning absences considering the importance of both areas of research to the professionalization of profession subspecialties.

**Social Work in Sport as a Subspecialty of the Social Work Profession**

The three key components that define a profession are: (a) specific standards of training and education, (b) an ethical code, and (c) a theoretical foundation and applied knowledge base (Broman, 1995). For health care professions, such as social work, governing bodies will offer licensure and certification based on an education from an accredited program to assure that the three components proposed by Broman (1995) are
met and upheld by the professional (Adams, 2017). Licensure and certification are imperative to ensure ethical practice, and ultimately the safety and wellbeing of clients (Patel & Sharma, 2019) and are essential to professionalization (Flexner, 2001). Many emerging professions, however, struggle to define what accreditation, licensure, and certification should look like (Bres et al., 2019).

Demarcation, or boundaries that define and limit a profession and its subspecialties, is a defining characteristic of a profession (Gieryn, 1983; Lamont & Molnar, 2002; Siebert, 2020). In one of the first academic examinations of professions, Abbott (1988) argued that professional boundaries and symbols, such as credentialing, are formed due to competition between professions as they seek to legitimize their knowledge and expertise. Building on this theory, scholars have looked at similar phenomena in subspecialties within professions (Martin et al., 2015; Fayard et al., 2017; Siebert, 2020). Specifically, Siebert (2020) applied the Simmel effect to professions and sub-professions, wherein the subordinate profession or specialty adapt and imitate the symbols and rituals of the superior profession to legitimize themselves, and, consequently, the superior profession will adapt new symbols and rituals to continue to distinguish themselves (Simmel, 1890). Thus, professions are never static and ever evolving (Abbott, 1988). We can find similar processes within the field of mental health professions, the social work profession and its subspecialties, and within mental health fields in the sport context, all of which have implications for the future development of sport-based social work.
The Field of Mental Health and Social Work

The field of mental health has long been marked with professional conflict between psychologists, counselors, and social workers, as all provide similar services from different theoretical backgrounds (Robiner, 2006). Applying Abbott’s (1988) discussion of professional demarcation to the field of mental health, it would then make sense that each profession has their own distinct educational path and credentialing requirements. However, psychology has long been held as the gold standard for clinical mental health work by both consumers and other health providers (Fall et al., 2000; Koeske et al., 1993; Sharpley, 1986); this is perhaps due to the requirements of a PhD to practice, compared to counselors and social workers who can practice at the master’s level. Furthermore, social work services are many times perceived incorrectly, missing key components of social work practice that distinguish it as a unique profession (LeCroy & Stinson, 2004; Leegood et al., 2016; Olin, 2019; Staniforth et al., 2016). Therefore, social workers seem to be recognized less often than counselors as competent mental health professionals, making them perhaps the lowest profession in the perceived hierarchy of the mental health field.

This may have led to the general social work profession favoring clinical work over macro-level work or case management as an attempt to legitimize the profession through imitation of superior professions, such as psychology (Simmel, 1890; Seibert, 2020). Due to this, some scholars have argued that the social work profession has disregarded macro practice, even though it is a defining aspect of the social work profession (Donaldson et al., 2014; Grise-Owens et al., 2016). Specifically, Donaldson
and colleagues (2014) argue that there are limited CSWE-accredited programs that focus on macro practice, no exam for a macro practice license, and no advanced certification for macro-level practice, which may be leading to a smaller number of social workers now working at the macro-level. The licensing and specialty certifications available for clinical practice, which are not available for macro practice, are an example of boundaries limiting access to specific subspecialties within an umbrella profession (Fayard et al., 2017; Seibert, 2020), and thus creating the hierarchy of clinical social work as the superior specialty in social work.

Considering the hierarchies of professions and practice within both the mental health field as a whole and in social work specifically, social work practitioners in sport face two major uphill battles in creating professional credentialing and ultimately a professional identity. First and foremost, distinguishing social work from sport psychology, and second, advocating for the role of both macro-level and case management work in sport, which can further distinguish the profession from psychology and counseling.

The Mental Health Field and Social Work in Sport

Subspecialties in social work are defined by highly specialized knowledge of work with specific areas or with specific populations (NASW, 2020a). Within this definition, sport-based social work is, and should be, considered a subspecialty. There are aspects of the athletic culture that have a major impact on athlete mental health, including athletic time commitments, athletic identity, constant public scrutiny, grueling daily workouts, and overwhelming expectations (Divin, 2010; Gill, 2008). Indeed, research has
linked clinical depression and anxiety to overinvestment in athletic self-identity (Taylor, 2014; Miller & Buttell, 2018; Wolanin et al., 2015). Additionally, the unique structure of an athletic organization will have an impact on social work practice. For example, social workers in collegiate athletic departments spoke to the importance of working with coaches and attending practices to normalize their services, which is different from traditional social work practice (Beasley et al., 2021). Furthermore, knowledge of sport psychology and kinesiology is needed, as the mental health of athletes is intertwined with their athletic performance (Tod et al., 2015); this type of education, although imperative to care of athletes, is missing from traditional social work, psychology, and counseling programs. This is not to say that social workers should be providing sport psychology or kinesiology services, rather basic knowledge of this is needed to have a holistic view of the mental health of the athlete. There are also many unique regulations that must be followed when working with a professional or college team, such as contract laws and eligibility requirements. Taken together, these differences warrant the need for specialized education, training, and experience to best meet the mental health needs of athletes (NCAA Sport Institute, 2017; Magier et al., in press).

There are certainly challenges when establishing subspecialties in professions related to the fact that professions have symbolic barriers in place “to maintain their share of rewards and exclude other related professions,” including emerging sub-professions (Siebert, 2020, p. 47). However, even with the need for specific training in athletic culture, the general competencies of social work practice in sport have a similar ethos to general social work practice, as sport-based practice aligns with the NASW Code of
Ethics (Beasley et al., in press). If anything, social work in sport has mirrored the professional development of social work in general, favoring clinical social work over other facets of social work practice. Thus, ultimately, perhaps the biggest challenge facing sport-based social work is not necessarily its difference to the parent profession of social work, but rather its similarities to sport psychology.

There has long been a turf battle in the field of sport psychology between professionals who are trained in the sport sciences and individuals who are trained in clinical psychology (Wrisberg & Dzikus, 2016). Similar to the general mental health field, advocates have argued that individuals who hold a PhD in clinical psychology who can offer both performance enhancement and clinical services to athletes are the gold standard (Martin, 2019). This has translated to practice, as the majority of mental health professionals hired in athletic departments are licensed psychologists (Sudano & Miles, 2017), and athletic administrators prefer to hire an individual to provide both sport performance and mental health services (Connole et al., 2014). Thus, social workers in sport have many times fallen under the umbrella of sport psychology services. For example, in my qualitative interviews with social workers working in Division I athletic departments, I found that many would advertise their social work services, and in some cases even provide, sport performance services as it was the only way their practice would be taken seriously by athletes and administrators (Beasley et al., 2021).

Furthermore, of the social workers I interviewed, only one was operating in a case management role, and one in a more macro-level role, with the majority having an LCSW and providing one-on-one clinical therapy to student-athletes. This is indicative of both
the superiority of sport psychology in the athletic world and clinical practice in the social work profession. Interpreting this through the lens of the Simmel (1890) effect, social workers in sport have adapted aspects of the sport psychology profession to legitimize their subspecialty, which is leading to perhaps unethical practice (Beasley et al., 2021). Consequently, it is imperative to consider how the essential aspects of professionalization, such as accreditation, relate to social work in sport to develop a schema of ethical social work practice in sport.

**Accreditation**

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE; 2015a), the accrediting body of social work education programs, defines accreditation as, “a system for recognizing educational institutions and professional programs affiliated with those institutions as having a level of performance, integrity, and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public they serve” (p. 4). Stated another way, accrediting bodies monitor the education and training standards, usually at universities or community colleges, that prepare applied professionals for a specified practice (Zorek & Raehl, 2013). It is important to note that accredited universities are different from accredited programs, the former considering the entire institution, and the latter looking at specific programs and degrees (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Within this monitoring, these accrediting bodies consider faculty, budget, admission procedures, and primarily course content and outcomes. Accreditation is thus important to assure that students graduating have demonstrated the needed competence to enter the profession (CSWE, 2015a).
Therefore, the first step to becoming a licensed social worker, whether in sport or in any other domain, is to graduate from a CSWE (2020) accredited program. Although a thorough review of the accreditation requirements of CSWE are outside the scope of this paper (see CSWE, 2015a for full accreditation guide), it is important to note that any accredited program must prepare social work students with a “competency-based education” couched in experiential learning through supervised internship hours completed at one to two field placement sites (CSWE, 2015a, p. 6). There are nine specific social work competencies that every accredited program must prepare their students in: (a) demonstrate ethical and professional behavior; (b) engage diversity and difference in practice; (c) advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice; (d) engage in practice-informed research and research-informed practice; (e) engage in policy practice; (f) engage with individual, families, groups, organizations, and communities; (g) assess individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities; (h) intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities; and (i) evaluate practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities (CSWE, 2015a, p. 8). These competencies operationalize the schema for generalist social work practice (Krist-Ashman & Hull, 2011).

Recently, however, there has been a surge in what CSWE (2015a) defines as specialized practice curricula, where a social work program can become accredited in “a concentration, area of specialized practice, track, focus on specific populations, problem area, method of intervention, or approach to practice” (p. 12). The CSWE (2015a) provides four accreditation standards for these specialized programs. First, the program
must define their specialty and show how it expands and supplements generalist practice. Second, the program must provide rationale for its curriculum design with emphasis on specialized coursework and field placements. Third, the program must demonstrate how their specialized curriculum includes the nine generalist social work competencies, as well as define any additional competencies needed for the specialized area of practice. And fourth, the program must create a matrix for evaluation purposes of the nine generalist competencies as well as any additional specialized competencies and the accompanying curriculum components that meet these competencies.

Considering the barriers and ethical implications of social work in sport trying to flesh out its own professional identity, it may be important for educational programs to begin to provide some type of this specialized curricula related to social work in sport. This may ultimately help define the profession as distinction from sport psychology, as well as define the specific roles social workers in sport can take (i.e., therapist, case manager, and activists) furthering bounding as its own subspecialty.

**Implications for the Social Work Profession**

Social workers have been working in sport contexts since the late 1800s. However, it was not until the 2000s that academics and practitioners have called for a social work in sport subspecialty. I argue that the lack of attention to this history of social work in sport is perhaps because it has not been recognized by the NASW as a specialization. Without specialized credentials to distinguish the sport subspecialty, the work of social workers in sport organizations have gone somewhat unrecognized, as it is many times lumped under the controversial term of “sport psychology” (Beasley et al.,
This is problematic for several reasons. First and foremost, social work is a fundamentally different profession than psychology, and therefore is misrepresented when identified as such. Furthermore, by not recognizing the social work profession in sport as distinct from sport psychology, sport practitioners and social work professionals have stalled the professionalization of social work in sport. It is troubling that social workers have been serving athletes for so long, without the opportunity and access to specialized training on the athletic culture. This is in sharp contrast to the NASW (2017) Code of Ethics, which states explicitly:

Social workers should provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience…Social workers should provide services in substantive areas or use intervention techniques or approaches that are new to them only after engaging in appropriate study, training, consultation, and supervision (para. 49-50). Therefore, to provide ethical care to athletes moving forward, education, training, and credentialing specific to sport-based social work must become normative.

This argument is furthered when exploring professional credentialing and licensure research, which highlights the importance of credentialing for professionalization (Colby & Dziegielewski, 2004) and ethical care (Brummett, 2020; Patel & Sharma, 2019). In their analysis of licensure research in social work, Grise-Owens and colleagues (2016) found that the major benefits of social work credentialing are professionalizing practice, protecting clients, accountability, developing and
enhancing the social work profession, gatekeeping, and creating professional standards. Other research has linked social work licensure to less needed on-the-job training (Bern-Klug & Sabri, 2012) and the self-confidence of social workers in their skills (Baines, 2004). Notwithstanding the benefits of licensing, Grise-Owens and colleagues (2016) further conclude that the largest critique of professional credentialing in social work is the disconnect between social work licensure and social work education, wherein education programs do not prepare students for the exam and further certifications in both neglecting specialized content and test preparation.

To assure that social workers in sport are providing ethical care, specialized programs that focus on social work in sport should be developed with a foundation in both the generalist and specialized CSWE accreditation standards, and then seek accreditation from CSWE as a specialty. A sample of how this may look for sport-based social work is provided by Moore and Gummelt (2019) in their seminal textbook on social work in sport. However, this is a large endeavor, and until then, social workers working in sport should seek other ways to gain and maintain competence to provide care to athletes. One way social work programs can offer this, without a specialized program, is providing social work students the opportunity to have their field placements, which the CSWE (2015a) calls its “signature pedagogy” (p. 12), in sport settings. This will allow students, under supervision, appropriate hands-on experiences providing social work services to athletes.

In summation, social work literature recognizes the need for and professional benefit of licensing and subspecialty training and certification; however, it appears that
social work education programs need to better prepare their students in specialized
content, through courses and field placements directed at work with specific populations.
Thus, although the work of ASWIS is admirable, they appear to be more focused on
advocating the sport community to include social workers. The focus first needs to be on
advocating social work educational programs to offer classes and, especially field
placements in sport, which can then set the foundation for a specified certification in
social work in sport. The findings of this dissertation addressed this aspect of accredited
social work education by providing insight into the ways social work programs can set up
field placements in sport organizations.

**Experiential Learning and Social Work Field Placements**

Experiential learning can be broadly conceptualized as learning by doing (Dewey
theoretical work of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget: (a) learning comes from the process not
content and outcomes; (b) learning is a continual, transformational process not something
that can be acquired or transmitted; (c) learning transforms experience; and (4) to truly
understand the learning process, an epistemological understanding of knowledge is
needed. Underpinning experiential learning then is the epistemological assumption that
knowledge is created and then continuously validated through concrete human experience
we have concrete experiences, we observe and reflect on those experiences, we formulate
generalizations from these reflections, and then we test these generalizations in new
situations (see Figure 2). Consequently, in applied professions, such as social work and
Figure 2

Kolb’s (1984, p. 21) Model of Experiential Learning
sport management, experiential learning offers key opportunities for students to bridge theory to practice and learn from on-the-job experiences (Baird, 2002).

Both social work education (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2015a) and sport management education (Commission on Sport Management Accreditation [COSMA], 2010) accreditation organizations recognize experiential learning through field practicums and internships respectively as one of the key components of a professional education. Therefore, creating a partnership between sport management and social work may be most effectively done through creating partnerships for experiential learning opportunities. Indeed, Gill (2008) argues that social work field placements in sport settings will aid faculty in developing sport-specific specialized courses and curricula. Attention to experiential learning opportunities in sport then may be the first step in cementing a long-standing relationship between sport management and social work education departments.

**Sport Management Internships**

Sport management scholars agree that one of the most important experiential learning opportunities in a sport management education are student internships in sport organizations (Brandon-Lai et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2016; Brown et al., 2018; Cuneen, 2004; Jowdy et al., 2004; Kelley, 2004; Moorman, 2004; Odio et al., 2015). Indeed, an overview of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral sport management programs in the United States found that 77% require internship credits in their curriculum (Schoepfer & Dobbs, 2011). Brown and colleagues (2016) found, in their survey of sport management
departments, that the majority of programs require 200-300 contact hours, weekly written reports completed by the students reflecting on their internship, a project related to their internship, and two evaluations completed by the student’s site supervisor.

There are many documented benefits to sport management internships (Brown, 2018), including competitive advantage in the job market (Southall et al., 2003), bridging the gap between theory and practice (Young & Barker, 2004; Fox, 2001), professional networking (Koo et al., 2016), professional and career development (Sauder et al., 2016), and deciding if a career in sport is a good fit (Cunningham et al., 2005). These benefits to the student do not go unnoticed. A survey of sport management students found they perceived internships to be the most beneficial element of their four-year university education (Brown et al., 2018). Scholars have also found that there are many benefits to sport organizations themselves (Gault et al., 2000), such as exposure (Verner et al., 2001), that should be emphasized when establishing internship sites.

Brandon-Lai and colleagues (2016) present a model of the sport management internship that posits students gain from internships political skill, domain specific self-efficacy, sport industry identification, and future intentions of employment opportunities. However, they argue that these outcomes are moderated by the quality of the internship experience. For example, if students are not challenged in their internships, and instead assigned more menial tasks, they are less likely to have a positive experience (Stratta, 2004). Similarly, the quality of on-site supervision has also been linked to student outcomes (Kelley, 2004). Therefore, research has been done on establishing these
practicum opportunities effectively, especially as there are many challenges to implementing successful internships.

Williams (2004) identified four primary challenges to implementation of a successful internship in sport. First, there are several barriers to the recruitment of interns. For example, many sport organizations have overly detailed recruitment criteria, as they expect the most high-quality interns. However, these qualifications may eliminate a large pool of students who may be successful. Additionally, sport organizations are most likely to accept interns through recommendations from individuals and departments in which they already have a relationship; therefore, internship coordinators must be well-connected. Finally, time requirements at sport organizations many times differ from that of the normal school schedule and therefore student availability is a large concern for many host organizations (Williams, 2004).

Second, the professionalism and preparedness of a student is considered key for the host organization (Williams, 2004). Many sport organizations base their decision to bring in an intern on the experiences they have had with past interns from the same sport management department. Therefore, if past interns were unprofessional, unprepared, and lacked knowledge of the organization, the organization is less likely to bring in future interns from the same department (Williams, 2004). Third, the structure of the internship can cause challenges. For example, many internships are unpaid, yet many students need or would certainly like compensation of some sort for their time. Additionally, many sport organizations prefer a full-time intern, which is many times unrealistic due to a student’s school schedule (Williams, 2004). Finally, the level of responsibility of the
intern supervisor is many times a barrier. There needs to be clear expectations between the sport management departments and the supervisor on the expectations of the role before they bring in an intern (Williams, 2004). Other challenges include legal considerations (Moorman, 2004; Schoepfer & Dobbs, 2011), the work environment of the organization (Stratta, 2004), and lack of availability of internships that match the student’s professional goals (Stratta, 2004).

Williams (2004) concludes that one of the most important factors to a successful internship for both the sport management student and the sport organizations is a quality relationship between the internship site and the sport management department, which ensures the student is getting a quality experience and that the sport organization is getting quality work from the student. This further emphasizes the importance of all the stakeholders in an effective internship experience (Brown et al., 2018), and underscores the importance of research on the experiences of these stakeholders in establishing internship opportunities.

**Social Work Field Placements**

In social work education, field practicums are the primary modality of experiential learning (Bogo, 2010). Unlike in sport management that considers internships a best practice, field education is a required element of social work education. Indeed, CSWE (2015a) defines field education as social work’s signature pedagogy. Field placements connect “the theoretical and conceptual contribution of the classroom with the practical world of the practice setting” (CSWEa, 2015, p. 8) by giving students internship experience at community organizations, such as behavioral health hospitals,
child protective services, and skilled nursing facilities. Due to its importance, field education is systematically designed, integrated into the curriculum, and evaluated to ensure that social work students are trained in and able to practically apply the nine core competencies of social work practice. Therefore, the CSWE (2015a) defines 13 accreditation standards specific to field education that programs must meet, and continue to meet, to remain an accredited social work program. For example, CSWE requires bachelor’s level social work students to complete at least 400 hours of field education, and master’s level social work students to complete at least 900 hours of field education. The accrediting organization also defines the requirements needed to be a field instructor—the individual that will supervise the student at the field site who works for the organization—and specifies that students must have a chance for in-person contact with clients and work at the individual, family, group, and organizational levels during field as part of a generalist education.

The importance of field placements is well-documented in social work literature. Bogo (2015) states that the field experience prepares students to be ethical, competent, innovative, and effective social workers. Supporting Bogo’s assertion, several studies have considered how the field experience prepares social work students and is key to their professional identity as it links theory to practice (Bogo, 2010; Bogo, 2015; Shlomo et al., 2012). For example, students experience and reflect on ethical dilemmas (Barsky, 2019), practice important social work skills (Fortune et al., 2007), and develop critical thinking and innovation (Lit & Shek, 2007). Specifically, in interviews with baccalaureate social work students, Schelbe and colleagues (2014) found that students
identify four distinct benefits of field placements: (a) building community connections; (b) applying theory and skills; (c) socializing to the social work profession; and (d) increasing self-awareness and exposure to diverse populations. Indeed, one study found that social work students actually desire more time and hours at their internship (Tham & Lynch, 2014).

Considering the factors that ensure students gain these benefits from their field placement, several studies point to the role of field supervision and the field instructor in effective field education (Barlow et al., 2006; Boitel & Fromm, 2013; Kanno & Koeske, 2010; Killick, 2005; Shlomo et al., 2012). As many social work students enter field with anxiety (Barlow et al., 2006; Maidment, 2003), other indicators to successful field experience are student preparation and feelings of self-efficacy (Kanno & Koeske, 2010), and positive coping skills (Kaye & Fortune, 2002).

Although field placements are central to social work education, there is actually not a vast amount of literature on the implementation of field placements. Some literature has pointed to challenges in entering into a relationship with a new placement site, such as the field placement contract (Abbott, 1986) and liability (Gelman & Wardell, 1988). Furthermore, research has pointed to the lack of quality organizations and lack of qualified field instructors (Dhemba, 2012; Wayne et al., 2006), and that there are limited sites that can offer opportunities for a generalist practice experience (Teigiser, 2009). Furthermore, students have identified the challenge of navigating time and logistical constraints of a field experience (Schelbe et al., 2014). Overall, Rhodes and colleagues (1999) identified seven threats to social work field education, many of which are still
relevant: (a) the academization of social work education that shifts away from practical education; (b) loss of autonomy of programs in the larger university structure; (c) devaluation of field directors; (d) growth of programs; (e) changes in student population; (f) gatekeeping; and (g) low faculty commitment to field education.

To meet these challenges, Wertheimer and Sodhi (2014) present a model of field director leadership that places the field director as the primary liaison between the social work department and the community. Similarly, Boitel, and Fromm (2014) argue that the integrated field contract, developed by the university’s field office that outlines learning expectations, is the foundation to a successful field experience for all stakeholders, as it explicitly states what is expected of the field instructor. Pulling from organizational theory, this positions field directors as one of the key organizational players at senior levels that are influential in creating new and innovative field partnerships (Sowa, 2009).

Even so, there is limited research with field directors or field placement specialists, a key gap in the literature considering the importance of their position in developing successful field placements for social work students. Dalton and colleagues (2011) did survey field directors at the master’s level in the United States about certain aspects of field implementation. They found that the majority of field departments interview the student (91%), the placement office (79%), and the field instructor (95%) prior to placement of a student. Dhemba (2012) similarly found four major challenges facing field directors in South Africa: (a) shortage of qualified supervisors, (b) shortage of suitable agencies for fieldwork, (c) financial support for students, (d) and lack of visitation by supervisors.
The CSWE (2015b), in their report on the state of field education in the United States compiled from surveys of 312 social field staff, similarly found the biggest challenge to placing an increasing number of students in appropriate field placements is that there are simply not enough field organizations. Additionally, 30.6% of respondents also indicated that it is difficult to create new field placement opportunities with organizations that the department does not already have a partnership with due to time constraints, and another 29.8% indicated it is difficult to establish new field placement partnerships that meet the unique needs and wishes of students. Further research is thus needed with field placement staff to consider these challenges and strategies to overcome these challenges.

A Field Partnership Between Social Work Departments and Sport Organizations

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of field education for social work students is that it provides opportunities to gain experience in their desired subspecialty (Deal et al., 2007; Esqueda et al., 2014). Indeed, some scholars suggest that specialized education, such as these field placements, is needed for effective training of professionals in specialties (Bres, et al., 2019; Matarazzo, 1977). Concerning sport-based social work specifically, Gill (2008, 2014) argues that field placements in sport are the primary way that social work students can gain competencies to work with athletes. Tellingly, in interviews with social workers working in athletics, two separate studies found that social workers acknowledged the gap in their own education related to lack of specialized courses and field opportunities in sport (Beasley et al., in press; Beasley, 2021; Magier et al., in press). Furthermore, creating these sport-related field placement is important, as it
allows more access to social work students who want to work in a sport setting. Research has suggested that having some type of prior internship and mentoring opportunities in sport increases the likelihood of getting hired in a sport organization (Smith et al., 2018). Therefore, by providing opportunities for social work students to have field placements in sport-settings during their education, the path to gaining employment in a sport-setting post-graduation will hopefully become easier. Even so, as this would be a nontraditional field placement site, there are several challenges that may face the implementation of a sport-based field placement.

**Nontraditional Social Work Field Placements**

Nontraditional field placements in social work have been defined as any setting where the social work student is not surrounded by other social work professionals (Jasper et al., 2013; Hughes, 2009) and the organization has a core business not related to social work or welfare services (McLaughlin et al., 2015). In recent years, as the number of social work students globally has increased, social work programs are struggling to find suitable organizations to place students (Cleak & Smith, 2012; CSWE, 2015b). Consequently, there has been an increase in nontraditional field placements, as field departments have had to look outside of traditional placement sites to meet the demand (Hek, 2012). Furthermore, in the United States specifically, due to the uncertainty of the economy and a need to expand the job market for social work students, more and more field departments are seeking out nontraditional field placements for their students, including placements at museums, tax-preparation organizations, and in theater (Elswick et al., 2015). Even as nontraditional field placements are becoming more common, to the
extent of this literature review, there are very few empirical studies looking at nontraditional field placements generally, and even less looking at these types of placements specifically in the United States.

There is some literature that has identified benefits to these nontraditional settings for social work students. For example, students in these settings many times improve their social work skills (Scholar et al., 2012), it provides students with the opportunity to learn to operate in an interprofessional team (Hughes, 2009), and, due to having to educate other professionals on the social work profession, students may exit the placement with a better understanding of social work values and ethics (Jasper et al., 2013). Specifically, Scholar and colleagues (2012), in their survey of social work students at nontraditional placements in the United Kingdom, found that many students that completed nontraditional placements now had an expanded view of the social work profession.

There are also challenges related to field placements in these nontraditional settings (Elswick et al., 2015). The two major challenges described in the literature are the hesitancy of students to be placed in nontraditional settings, and the use of a task supervisor, who is not a social worker, rather than a field instructor, who is a social worker. Many social work students considering placements in nontraditional settings express their fear of not getting to practice social work skills (Scholar et al., 2014; Rawsthorne et al., 2018). Therefore, field staff may have difficulty finding students willingly to be placed in these settings. However, for students that do decide to take the nontraditional placement, they tend to change their mind. In interviews with students
doing a placement in community planning, Rawsthorne et al. (2018) detailed one student’s experience: “Initially, social work practice seemed to me is completed in a clinical setting. However, within the first three to four weeks I learned that social work within the community is crucial” (p. 83.).

Secondly, there are detailed challenges of having a professional who is not a social worker act as task supervisor for the social work student. Jasper and colleagues (2013) found that some task supervisors lacked knowledge of the social work profession, which may impact student learning. Additionally, there are logistical challenges with this arrangement (Cleak & Zuchowski, 2018; Zuchowski, 2016). Other challenges identified include student start dates, identifying the social work student’s role in the organization, and additional pressure on task supervisors (McLaughlin et al., 2015). Even so, there appears to be a growing recognition that these nontraditional placements can provide great field experiences for social work students, and should be considered by all field departments (Scholar et al., 2012).

As sport organizations do not currently extensively hire social workers (Sudano & Miles, 2017) and their core business is not social welfare services, sport organizations are a nontraditional field placement setting. Thus, there can be predicted challenges to implementing sport-based social work field placements.

Social Work Field Placements in Sport Settings: Predicted Challenges

Considering the process and requirements of field education required by the CSWE (2015a) for accreditation purposes, and the challenges to establishing qualified field sites identified by the literature addressed previously, there are three main
challenges to coordinating the placement of student social workers in sport organizations: (a) the lack of social workers currently employed in sport organizations; (b) the lack of opportunities to engage in mezzo and macro practice; and (c) gatekeeping of sport organizations.

Lack of Social Workers Currently Employed in Sport Organizations

CSWE (2015a) standards B2.2.9 and M2.2.9 state that field instructors for both bachelor’s level and master’s level social work students need to hold a bachelor’s or master’s degree respectively in social work from a CSWE-accredited program and have two years post-graduation practice experience. However, the CSWE does acknowledge that not every field site will have a qualified social worker on staff that can act as a field instructor. In this case, the CSWE (2015a) accreditation standard states, “The program assumes responsibility for reinforcing a social work perspective and describes how this is accomplished” (p. 13). Although this rare (Martin & Ciarfella, 2015), at field sites where there is not a social worker, many times a professional at the organization from a similar background (e.g., psychology or counseling) acts as the student’s on-site task supervisor. In this case, many times a staff member from the university, either a faculty member or member of the field office, will make visits to the site throughout the semester to provide social work supervision hours to the social work student (A. Manning-Thompson, personal communication, February 24th, 2020).

Currently, although there are more social workers being hired in sport organizations, the field is still dominated by psychologists and sport psychology professionals (Beasley et al., 2021; Sudano & Miles, 2017). Therefore, the first challenge
to placing social work students at sport organizations is the lack of a qualified field instructor onsite, which then places the onus on the social work field department to assure that the student is getting appropriate social work instruction and supervision. A member of the social work department would likely have to make several visits to the field site and meet with the students multiple times to reach needed supervision hours. This creates more time-demands on the department (Wayne et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the social work student would still need a task supervisor on site to oversee their day-to-day practice. Although this professional does not need to be a social worker, as discussed above, they are still expected to be knowledgeable of social work practice, ethics, and values (Martin & Ciarfella, 2015). This means that aside from the general training every field instructor must go through, more training is done to assure the non-social work professional acting as a task supervisor is well versed in social work practice. This again may require an extra time commitment from the field department (Wayne et al., 2006).

Overall, although there are processes in place if a field site does not have qualified social work professionals on staff, it does require extra work from the social work field staff to assure the social work student is still receiving appropriate supervision (CSWE, 2015a). It is also important to consider the needs of the social work students in these types of situations. Several studies point to the role of field supervision and the field instructor in effective field education (Boitel & Fromm, 2013; Kanno & Koeske, 2010; Killick, 2005; Shlomo et al., 2012). If the field site does not have a social worker on staff or does not have a professional on staff with knowledge of the social work profession,
values, and ethics, it could negatively impact the student’s field experience. Therefore, extra time and training is certainly needed for these task supervisors.

**Lack of Opportunities to Engage in Mezzo and Macro Practice**

CSWE (2015a) standards B2.2.2 and M2.2.2 state that field placement sites must provide “generalist practice opportunities for students to demonstrate social work competencies with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities” (p. 13). However, as discussed previously, athlete mental health is most often provided by clinical psychologists (Sudano & Miles, 2017). Consequently, athlete mental health is many times treated through the medical model with traditional psychotherapy. In fact, Moore and colleagues (2018) found, in their survey of NCAA student-athletes, that social work values (e.g., attention to social justice and policies) were only moderately present in their mental health care. Therefore, it could be that mental health programming in sport organizations do not offer opportunities or would not support social work students in experiences to practice outside of the individual and group level, which would not provide the generalist practice experience required by the CSWE (2015a) for a field site. This may be even more true when there is not a social worker already on site who understands social work practice and is thus not prepared to work with students to provide mezzo and macro practice opportunities.

Interestingly, this dilemma is not necessarily unique to sport settings. Academic literature has pointed to the lack of effective mezzo and macro level opportunities for social work students in field education (Deal et al., 2007; Hunter & Ford, 2010), many times due to the lack of field instructors comfortable overseeing macro-level practice
(Teisger, 2009). Both Teisger (2009) and Pritzer and Lane (2014) suggest that one strategy is for field directors to work with field instructors to incorporate mezzo and macro level practice opportunities into more clinically oriented field settings. For example, having students attend community coalition meetings focused on issues impacting the organization’s clientele. As the majority of mental health programming offered in sport organizations currently focuses on individual therapy, field directors would have to work with field instructors or task supervisors to incorporate these types of opportunities. Luckily, there are some sport organizations that are utilizing a case management structure to provide mental health care (Beasley et al., 2021). Field directors may have to spend more time seeking out these opportunities (Pritzer & Lane, 2014), but they are available in sport. Overall, although it may require some extra vetting of field sites and training of field instructors or task supervisors, sport organizations can make viable field placements that meet the generalist practice requirements by CSWE (2015a).

**Gatekeeping in Sport Organizations**

It is common knowledge in sport research communities that sport organizations are somewhat closed-off and can be weary of bringing in outsiders (Coombs & Osborne, 2018). Consequently, it may be a challenge for social work field departments to even make the initial contact or begin the process of establishing field placement agreements. This may be due to the many rules and regulations sport organizations must adhere to, as well as the celebrity-status of many of the athletes in elite college and professional sport. Although social work field departments are not unfamiliar with working with organizations with many regulations (i.e., large hospitals; A. Manning-Thompson,
personal communication, February 24th, 2020), clientele possibly in the public-eye adds another layer of legal considerations that would need to be addressed in affiliation agreements. Looking at literature on both sport management internships and social work field practicums, liability is consistently cited as a major consideration in establishing internship opportunities (Gelman & Wardell, 1988; Moorman, 2004; Schoepfer & Dodds, 2010).

However, working with the collegiate athletic department may be a prime opportunity for field departments, if they can make the initial connection. As the athletic department is part of the university, there does not have to be a full affiliation agreement, which makes the field process much smoother and less complicated for field staff (A. Manning-Thompson, personal communication, February 24th, 2020). Thus, working with the athletic department at the same university offers perhaps the most direct access-point for social work field departments to begin establishing field placement opportunities in sport.

**Gap in Social Work Field Placement Literature**

Although these challenges can be foreseen based on the limited academic literature on both field placements and nontraditional field placements, no study thus far has looked specifically at field placements in sport organizations. As these field placements can be the foundation for both a further partnership between social work and sport management and are an imperative step for the professionalization of sport as a subspecialty of social work, this is a gap in literature that needs to be addressed.
Furthermore, although considering the benefits and challenges of nontraditional field placements from the student perspective is needed, no studies on nontraditional field placements to my knowledge have been conducted with field placement staff considering specifically the implementation of these placements. Thus, this study will not only expand on the nascent literature on nontraditional field placements, but it will also bring forth the voices of field placement staff, who are key stakeholders in the field placement process.

**Program Planning Theory**

Program planning theories have also been developed out of the adult education field, mainly under the umbrella of the technical-rational, practical, and critical approaches to program planning (Sork, 2000). One of the first and foundational approaches to program planning is now termed the “Tyler Rationale” (Sork, 2000), based on the early work by Tyler (1949) on curriculum development in their foundational text *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. The Tyler Rationale offers four specific linear steps to program planning in education based on the four core questions of the planning process: (1) What educational purposes need to be attained?; (2) What educational experiences are most likely to attain these purposes?; (3) How should these educational experiences be organized?; (4) How can it be determined if these educational purposes were attained through the chosen educational experiences? In answering these sequential questions, the program planner walks through the linear process of educational program planning: (a) identifying program objectives through completion of a needs assessment (i.e., systematically identifying the educational needs of the population of
interest); (b) identifying and creating the content of the educational program; (c) organizing the learning experience; and (d) evaluating the educational program and making needed changes.

Other scholars, such as Houle (1972) and Knowles (1980), have built on Tyler’s work further supporting the stepwise approach to program planning. For example, Houle (1972) offers a similar stepwise approach to the development of an educational program, but aptly adds repeating the cycle as the last step, and Knowles (1980) extends aspects of the Tyler Rationale to educational programming specifically in adult education in their definition of andragogy. However, many other scholars have criticized the technical-rational approach due its lack of consideration of not only the political and ethical context of program planning (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Wilson & Cervero, 1996) and of any philosophical orientation (Monette, 1979), but also the mismatch between this theoretical conceptualization of planning compared to how planning actually happens in the real world (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Forester, 1989). As Monette (1979) critiques, the Tyler Rationale perceives education as “a system of production with its input (student), processes (learning experiences), and output (behavioral objectives)” which ultimately does not value the ethical, political, aesthetic, or real world dimensions of program planning (p. 86).

Although these technical-rational theories of program planning offer an ideal step-by-step process of planning, in reality program planning rarely falls into such a neat progression (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Daffron & Caffarella, 2021). Therefore, the “foreground” of practical approaches prioritizes the practical, real-world experiences of
planners that takes into consideration that the desired results stated at the beginning of the planning process may ultimately change throughout the process.

In the line with this perspective, Caffarella (1994, 2002), Caffarella and Daflron (2013), and Daffron and Caffarella (2021) suggest the Interactive Model of Program Planning, which certainly barrows from aspects of the technical-rational model. For instance, Caffarella (1994, 2002) does offer a practical model for program planning in education, wherein they provide 12 specifics steps: (a) discerning the context; (b) building support; (c) identifying program ideas; (d) sorting and prioritizing program ideas; (e) developing objectives; (f) designing plans; (g) devising transfer of learning plans; (h) formulating evaluation strategies; (i) providing recommendations and disseminating results; (j) defining formats, schedules, and staff needs; (k) preparing budgets and marketing plans, and (l) coordinating facilities and on-site events. Providing specific steps to the program planning process is similar to the technical-rational approach, however the authors suggest that, unlike the Tyler Rationale that has a clear beginning and end, the Interactive Model is cyclical in nature, and the program planner can begin the process at any step (Caffarella, 2002; Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Daffron & Caffarella, 2021). For example, although certain objectives for the educational program might be determined prior to designing the lesson plans, an unexpected need may arise during a stakeholder meeting, which results in a change to program objectives. In this way, this practical approach to program planning considers that unexpected situations will inevitably come up in the planning process, disrupting the assumption made by Tyler (1949) that planning can happen in predetermined steps. Therefore, it can
be argued that the Interactive Model offers a more realistic and applicable model that
program planners can use in their real-world work. Tellingly, aspects of Caffarella and
Daffron’s (2013) model has been used extensively to plan educational programs; for
example, an educational program for healthcare patient navigators (Toal-Sullivan et al.,
2021), and a community re-entry program for recently released female inmates (Schmitt-
Matzen, 2019).

Furthermore, the more recent iterations of this model (Caffarella & Daffron,
2013; Daffron & Caffarella, 2021) extend their previous work by further prioritizing the
importance of culturally competent approaches to program planning, especially during
the “discerning context” step. Drawing on the importance that context plays in the
program planning process, the Daffron and Caffarella (2021) specifically address the idea
of ‘wicked problems’ in the program planning process, extending the work of Sork
(2019). This perspective acknowledges that there are large social and political issues that
make the specific educational issues planners want to address complex, and ultimately
makes the political goals and outcomes of a program hard to discern. Even so, seeking
ways to make a macro-level difference, to address those wicked problems, needs to be an
important consideration of educational program planners (Daffron & Caffarella, 2021;
Sork, 2019). In these ways, the Interactive Model does attend to aspects of program
planning from a critical perspective; however, compared to scholars specifically writing
from a critical perspective (i.e., Forester, 1989; Cervero & Wilson, 1994), this model
would still fall short in prioritizing the sociopolitical context of program planning.
In one of the first applications of critical theory to the program planning process, Forester (1989) argues that planners must place an understanding of the power relations they are operating in at the foreground of their planning process. Forester posits that information is power, and who has what information, and misinformation, influences the construction of programs. Specifically, this power influences three primary aspects of the planning process: (a) decision-makers, who hold the power, can decide which information the citizens get about the program; (b) power dictates who gets to make the program agenda; and (c) power shapes how the needs of the community are defined. Thus, to be a true progressive planner and participate in a democratic planning process, planners need to anticipate power relations and anticipate the inevitability of distortions of communication. Ultimately, Forester’s (1989) application of critical theory pushed program planning literature to recognize that people plan programs within specific political contexts structured through power relations.

Cervero and Wilson’s (1994, 2006) program planning theory attends more theoretically to the social, political, and ethical contexts of program planning, and prioritizes the political process of negotiation. Extending Forester’s (1989) work, Cervero and Wilson (1994) proposed a four-pronged theory of program planning that places negotiation in the foreground, arguing that the planning process always has two outcomes: the construction of an educational program, and the reconstruction of power relations that is ultimately related to the political objectives, or the hidden agendas, of the various stakeholders. In line with Forester (1989) and critical theory, the first concept of their theory is the role of power, which they define as “the socially constructed capacity
to act” (Cervero & Wilson, 1994, p. 253). The second component is the interests, or the reasons people act, of the program stakeholders; as individuals will use their constructed power to make decisions about the educational program based on their own interests, “All educational programs are causally related to the specific interests of the people who planned them” (Cervero & Wilson, 1994, p. 255). Therefore, as it is the interests of stakeholders who are planning the educational program that ultimately determines the structure of the educational program, the third component of negotiation between power and interests is the primary activity of planning. Planners negotiate their own interests in the program planning process, negotiate between the interests of other program stakeholders to actually construct the program, and negotiate about power relations itself. Finally, due to the political context of all programs, the final component is the ethical and political responsibility of program planners as all educational programs ultimately take some ethical stance. Cervero and Wilson (1994) argue that this responsibility is to make the planning process democratic, where the interests of all stakeholders are represented. Ultimately then, although the technical-rational and pragmatic approaches offer key technical skills, the practice of planning also requires the skill of negotiation and recognition of power relations (Wilson & Cervero, 1996).

Interestingly, Sork (1996), although crediting Cervero and Wilson’s (1994; Wilson & Cervero, 1996) with the important inclusion of negotiation into program planning theory as one of the most important theoretical shifts in program planning literature, cautions that in bringing power negotiations to the foreground of the theory, there is an opportunity to lose the important practical and applicable steps afforded to
planners in the technical-rational and pragmatic approaches. For instance, Sork (1996) praises the idyllic concept of democratic planning, in the same way that the Tyler Rationale provides an idyllic four step process but asks us to consider the reality that democratic planning may not be feasible. Furthermore, he critiques the very generalized nature of Cervero and Wilson’s (1994) four concept theory of program planning, as they do not define types of power, types of negotiations, and specific negotiation strategies. In bringing together both the helpful contribution of more stepwise theories, as well as the importance of recognizing the real experiences of planners embedded in power relations, Sork (1996) suggests that “people with theories” plan programs (p. 90). Thus, Sork (2000) eventually lands on a framework, rather than a theory of program planning, that allows for both a discussion of the practical and theoretical aspects of planning that is meant to guide, rather than prescribe, the planning process. In this framework, a formative evaluation is the center of the circle, surrounded by the interconnecting basic elements of planning: justify and focus planning, clarifying intentions, prepare the structural plan, prepare administrative plan, develop a summative evaluation plan, and analyze content and the learner community (Sork, 2000, p. 7). Although less specific than Daffron and Caffarella’s (2021) Interactive Model, it is similar in that there is no beginning and end; however, it stresses the importance of formative evaluation in determining what part of the process the planner goes.

As an extension of their four-concept theory of program planning, and in response to Sork’s (1996) critique, Cervero and Wilson (1998) bring forth the metaphor of the program planning table, where it is the negotiations about power, such who and who is
not invited to the planning table, not only power itself, that is at the core of the program planning process. The metaphor allows for a more practical, and applicable transfer of their four-concept theory to real-world planning situations. Furthermore, they extend their discussions of negotiations to include two specific types of negotiations: substantive negotiations around construction the educational program, and meta-negotiations about the power relations themselves. In this way, program planning is a social and political process. Overall, in the many iterations of Cervero and Wilson’s work, there are elements of the technical-rational approach, wherein they do discuss a stepwise approach (i.e., from needs assessment to evaluation; Cervero & Wilson, 2006), as well as from the practical approach as they prioritize the planning stories of real program planners, and argue real programs are planned by real people (Cervero & Wilson, 1998). However, their work always returns to the political context, and the negotiation of power.

Many scholars from many difference disciplines have used and built on these iterations of critical program theories to examine power relations in planning adult education programs, ranging from Hopkins and colleagues (2009) used critical program planning theory to explore the ways in which educators and other stakeholders negotiated funding allocations of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and to understanding critically planning process in wildlife management (Raik & Wilson, 2006). Scholars have also extended critical program planning to include program planning specifically from a feminist perspective (Bracken, 2011) and from postmodern and postcolonial perspectives (Sork & Käpplinger, 2019). Critical program planning theory has also been used in planning practice. For example, Cervero and Wilson’s program planning model has been
used to guide the assessment of physical activity and health behaviors of adults in a rural environment (Maley et al., 2010),

Although each of the aforementioned theoretical approaches bring differing aspects of planning to the foreground (Sork, 2000), each has contributed to the theory and practice of program planning in adult education. However, Sork (2010) continues to call for scholars to extend program planning to different fields and different contexts to continue to explore the nuances of program planning. As he states, “The diversity of planning frameworks will increase as more people with different backgrounds and analytical perspectives introduce new ways of thinking about this important process” (Sork, 2010, p. 163). In line with Sork’s (2010) call, this dissertation extended Sandmann et al.’s (2009) model of program planning in service-learning, which finds its roots in all three traditional approaches to program planning theory, to understand the process of planning social work field partnerships.

Although these theoretical models provide a needed step in narrowing the theory-practice gap in program planning, the application of these theories have not been meaningfully applied to specifically planning experiential learning opportunities (Sandmann et al., 2009). Consequently, Sandmann and colleagues (2009) state, “Service-learning practice is not informed by planning theories that connect curriculum design with context, social relations, and stakeholder power and interests” (pp. 20-21). Therefore, the authors developed the Service-Learning Program Planning Model (SLPPM), pulling together both Caffarella’s (2002) and Cervero and Wilson’s (2006) models in the context of experiential learning implementation.
Program Planning Theory in Experiential Learning: The Service-Learning Program Planning Model

Although creating effective community partnerships is essential to effective experiential learning opportunities for students, there is a paucity of program planning theory related to experiential learning partnerships (Sandmann et al., 2009). Sandmann and colleagues (2009) offer, to the extent of this literature review, the only consideration of program planning theory as a foundation to experiential learning implementation. The authors identified two specific issues with neglecting to incorporate programming planning theory into experiential learning research and practice. First, they argue that experiential learning research is not theoretically informed, which has led to a lack of theoretically based research on the development of partnerships with stakeholders in specific contexts, and a lack of theoretical understanding of the process of planning, maintaining, and evaluating service-learning programs. Second, without theoretical foundations in program planning theory, research on experiential learning has somewhat neglected social, political, and ethical considerations of developing partnerships between the university and community organizations (Sandmann et al., 2009). The authors suggest that using program planning theory in research on experiential learning can help address these issues.

In response to this gap, Sandmann and colleagues (2009) conducted a comparative case study analysis of three different service-learning graduate level courses in an adult education department. From the data and the application of both Caffarella’s (2002) and Cervero and Wilson’s (2006) program planning theories, the authors
conceptualized the Service-Learning Program Planning Model (SLPPM; see Figure 3)
The SLPPM has five specific domains, which are also connected cyclically through
relationships: (a) partners or stakeholders (in the middle of the model); (b) resources; (c)
research; (d) roles and responsibilities; and (e) representation. Partners refer to specific
stakeholders, whereas Resources are the specific capital that each partner brings to the
service-learning partnership. For example, skills, funding, labor, and physical space.
Research can relate to the outcomes of the project (i.e., a program evaluation to share
with the organization) or the research needed to understand the problem the service
project is addressing, such as stakeholder identification. Sandmann et al. (2009) define
the Research dimension as something unique to this particular program planning model
that was especially important to establishing successful service-learning partnerships. The
Roles and Responsibilities domain refers to the negotiation process that takes place
between partners in all aspects of the service-learning partnership, focusing on both long-
term and short-term goals. The Representation domain focuses on the evaluation,
transferability, and sustainability of the partnership. Finally, Relationships, which attend
to social, political, and ethical factors, are essential to ensuring each other domain is
effective.

Overall, this relational model extends both technical-rational program planning
theories (Netting et al., 2008), which offer formulaic techniques but ignore the
environmental and contextual factors of experiential learning, as well as the
aforementioned program planning approaches out of adult education (Caffarella, 2002;
Cervero & Wilson, 2006) that attend to the contextual factors, but fall short in prioritizing
Figure 3

Sandmann et al. (2009) Service-Learning Program Planning Model
the relationship between stakeholders in experiential learning partnerships (Sandmann et al., 2009).

Although the SLPPM is a needed extension of program planning theories traced throughout this section, it was conceptualized in course-based service-learning project in an adult education department. Thus, there is an opportunity to extend this theoretical model to understand other types of experiential learning opportunities, such as social work field placements. Returning to the two major issues Sandmann and colleagues (2009) found in the literature on experiential learning implementation, my dissertation fills both gaps by using program planning theories and the SLPMM as its theoretical framework. First, my dissertation specifically sought to understand “How partnerships are developed with stakeholders in specific contexts” (Sandmann et al., 2009, p. 17)—how social work field placements are developed in sport organizations. Second, by using program planning theories as the theoretical framework of my dissertation, I am able to “address issues related to negotiating diverse stakeholder power, roles, and interests” (Sandmann et al., 2009, p. 17), which the authors argue is lacking from experiential and service-learning implementation literature. In this way, the findings of my dissertation may not only offer social work programs and sport management professionals a guide to implementation of a field partnership, but also extend experiential learning scholarship by further understanding how program planning theories can act as a theoretical framework to this type of research and practice.
Chapter Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the history of social work in sport and discussing the challenges of defining sport as a subspecialty of social work. I then discussed the importance of field placements in both cementing a partnership between the social work and sport management fields, as well as further professionalizing social work in sport. I then outlined the challenges in establishing field placements in sport organizations, including a review of the literature on nontraditional field placements. I concluded with an overview of the theoretical framework of this study, the SPLMM theoretical model, and what program planning theory adds to understanding the implementation of experiential learning opportunities, such as field placements in sport. The next chapter will provide a detailed description of the methodology and methods of this narrative inquiry.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

In response to the gap in literature around establishing nontraditional social work field placements, such as field placements in sport organizations, the purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand social work field staff’s narratives of their experiences establishing sport-specific field placements through their lived stories. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What narratives do social work field staff have about the process of establishing field placements in sport settings?

2. How do social work field staff negotiate power when establishing field placements in sport settings?

3. What strategies do social work field staff use to establish field placements in sport settings?

This study’s methodology was narrative inquiry, which is one of the five most common methodological approaches to qualitative research (Given, 2016; Johnson & Christenson, 2017). O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015) define methodology as, “The particular research approach grounded in a particular school of thought” (p. 3). In essence, the chosen methodology guides the ways in which a researcher designs and implements their study (Crotty, 2003), from the research question asked through the write up of the study (Given, 2016). As Carter and Little (2007) describe, methodology “justifies, guides and evaluates” the chosen methods of both data collection and analysis (p. 1317). Therefore, this chapter begins with an overview of qualitative research generally, then describes the
narrative inquiry design, and finishes with detailing the specific methods of data
collection, analysis, and trustworthiness.

**Qualitative Research Design**

This project was a narrative inquiry, which is one of the five most common
qualitative methodologies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Succinctly, qualitative research is
the attempt to understand the lived human experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Josselon,
2014; Stake, 2010). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define qualitative research as, “A situated
activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material
practices that make the world visible” (p. 3). They extend this definition in their latest
chapter to include that qualitative research attempts to, “Make sense of or interpret
phenomena in terms of meaning people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 10).
However, due to the varying philosophies and disciplines through which qualitative
methodology was formed, it is a complex term to define (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
Indeed, in a recent content analysis of research on qualitative methodologies, Aspers and
Corte (2019) found that there is no common definition. Instead, most foundational
scholars define qualitative research through its characteristics. This work of qualitative
scholars in attempting to define these characteristics of qualitative methodology was
imperative, as early conceptualization of qualitative work either did not offer any sort of
formalized definition (Erickson, 2018), or was contradictory in holding strong to
positivistic and quantitative terminology (St. Pierre, 2014).

In their early work, Merriam (1998) defined five aspects of qualitative research:
(a) the construction of meaning; (b) the role of the researcher; (c) the importance of field
work; (d) inductive research; and (e) rich description. Although these characteristics certainly fit early qualitative research, the focus on field work in this definition of Merriam’s (1998) is perhaps because qualitative research was first introduced formally through ethnography, which requires extended time embedded in the field (Erickson, 2018). Other scholars have redefined the concept of field work in qualitative research. For example, critical and feminist scholars have pushed back on the othering of participants in observational field work (Munoz, 2010), which has led the way for more inclusive methodologies, such as autoethnography (Hughes & Pennington, 2017) and participatory action research (Carr, 2007). Thus, as qualitative research as whole shifts more into postmodernism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), including terms such as field work as a key characteristic of qualitative research may be limiting. It may not be surprising then that in a more recent writing Merriam (2004, 2009) does not include traditional field work as a key characteristic of qualitative research.

Perhaps to more fully define in detail qualitative research, Flick et al. (2004) offer 11 characteristics of qualitative research, pulling from, revising, and further explaining Merriam’s (1998) early characteristics. For example, the authors do not include field work as a characteristic; but they do include that qualitative research focuses on understanding, along with attention to the diversity of participant experiences, and attention to everyday experiences. However, when a definition is too comprehensive, there is still a lack of room to evolve. For instance, Flick and colleagues (2004) also state that one characteristic of qualitative work is that it relies on text as its medium of
analysis. Of course, this would exclude qualitative methodologies that rely on visual mediums for analysis, such as photovoice (Simmonds et al., 2017).

Due to this difficulty in creating an umbrella definition, Denzin and Lincoln (2005, 2011) extend their definition of qualitative research by describing how it is different from quantitative research: (a) less use of positivist and postpositivist perspectives; (b) acceptance of postmodern sensibilities; (c) capturing the individual’s point of view; (d) examining the contracts of everyday life; and (e) securing rich descriptions. In the most recent edition of the introductory chapter to their SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin and Lincoln (2018) further emphasize the tensions in defining qualitative inquiry, and ultimately land that qualitative researchers “are variously committed to modern, postmodern, and postexperimental sensibilities and approaches to social research that these sensibilities imply” (p. 13). Other qualitative scholars have taken this approach. Aspers and Corte (2019) state specifically, “We have defined qualitative research…in relation to quantitative scientific work” (p. 155). Thus, in their conceptualization of qualitative methodology as research they include that, unlike quantitative work, qualitative research makes distinctions, includes many processes and iterations, requires closeness to the data, and focuses on understanding. By defining the characteristics of qualitative research as the ways in which it differs from quantitative research in an epistemological, ontological, theoretical, and methodological sense, rather than its specific methods (e.g., field work), it allows for different, progressive, and innovative methodologies to develop under the umbrella of qualitative research. Telling, in the most recent edition of the Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin and
Lincoln (2018) introduce newer methodologies, such as narrative inquiry, autoethnography, and visual research in their introductory chapter and include entire chapters dedicated to them, which were not included in the previous edition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

In a departure from Merriam’s (1998) earlier work and extending on their more recent texts (Merriam, 2002, 2009), as well as bridging the discussions of the characteristics of qualitative research from varying scholars, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identify four primary characteristics of qualitative research common among conceptual definitions: (a) focus on meaning and understanding; (b) researcher as primary instrument; (c) inductive process; and (d) rich description. Across the varying characteristics different authors offer, I am drawn towards Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) four characteristics of qualitative research as they are broad enough to encompass various methodologies, and at the same time condense the primary differences from quantitative research as identified by Denzin and Lincoln (2011). Thus, in the following sections, I describe each of these four characteristics pulling from several foundational qualitative scholars.

Focus on Meaning and Understanding

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that the goal of qualitative research is to achieve an “understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 15). Compared to quantitative research which focuses on examining large social issues from a macro-perspective, qualitative research focuses
on understanding individual human experience in social context (Austin & Sutton, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Specifically, qualitative researchers seek to describe everyday life in a way that is attuned to the “subjective orientations and meaning perspectives” (Erickson, 2011, p. 45) of the participants. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to find the meaning of everyday human experience, which may seem mundane, but have major implications in understanding the larger human experience. By focusing on the everyday, qualitative research highlights particular cases (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Importantly, this does not mean ignoring large scale social issues, but rather privileging individual experience of these social issues. As Flick and colleagues (2004) describe this distinction, qualitative research looks at the how of human behavior within the context of the social structure in which the behavior takes place. Overall, qualitative researchers “interpret participants’ experiences of the phenomena of interest, in order to find explanations for human behaviour in a given context” (Austin & Sutton, 2014, p. 436).

This characteristic of qualitative research has its roots in the rejection of the positivist epistemology, which Denzin & Lincoln (2011) define as one of the key characteristics of qualitative research. Quantitative research operates from the epistemology of positivism and by extension post-positivism. A positivist perspective assumes that there is a known, observable reality that researchers can objectively find through experiments and measurements, and then generalize their results (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015; Paley, 2008). Beginning in the 1950s, scholars pushed back against the assumption of positivism that there is absolute truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Thus, the post-positivist perspective offered the idea of falsification that researchers cannot verify a
known truth, but rather can prove hypotheses false, which then accepts objective truth as that which cannot be disproven (Fraser & Robinson, 2003). Although a departure from traditional positivism, post-positivism still assumes the objectivity and generalizability of the research.

Some qualitative research draws from post-positivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Paley, 2008), yet the majority of epistemological foundations of different qualitative approaches reject the idea that there is known truth (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define a postmodern perspective as the assumption that “There is no single ‘truth’ with a capital ‘T’; rather, there are multiple ‘truths’” (p. 11). That is, there is no one observable reality, but many individual interpretations of the same event (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007), which replaces the goal of research to generalize the human condition for the goal of understanding human experience (Josselon, 2014; Stake, 2010). Postmodern research further looks to deconstruct and problematize social situations by placing individual experience within specific, situated contexts (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To do this, postmodern research seeks the researcher’s interpretation of individual experiences in context, what Grbich (2013) terms, “individual interpreted mini-narratives” (p. 8). Today, although there are many different epistemologies (e.g., interpretive, critical) that inform different forms of qualitative research, the majority have a postmodern foundation in that they assume multiple realities and multiple truths (Grbich, 2013) and seek understanding of those multiple truths (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
Researcher as Instrument

Unlike quantitative research, which relies on pre-written scales and surveys as research tools, in qualitative research, the researcher themselves is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Glesne, 2006; Johnson & Christensen, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is the researcher who conducts the interviews, takes field notes, makes observations, transcribes the interviews, analyzes interviews and field notes, and then writes up the findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The researcher is not only the data collection instrument, but also part of the research process itself. The researcher can take part in both “nonverbal and verbal communication, process information (data), clarify and summarize material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). A major aspect of maintaining a postmodern sensibility as a qualitative researcher then is to critically place oneself in the research, with the understanding that knowledge is co-constructed between researcher and participant (Given, 2016; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). In this way, qualitative research is constructivist in nature, with the assumption that we construct collective knowledge through interactions, relationships, and experience (Creswell, 2014). Its goal then is to understand from a personal lens, rather than to explain from an impersonal lens. Therefore, the researcher’s interpretation, inevitably impacted by their positionalities and subjectivities, of human experiences is the base of qualitative methodology (Astalin, 2013).

However, this makes understanding the researcher’s own positionality—one’s differing identities—and how they relate to research and participants imperative, as the
researcher’s own world view and experiences will inevitably impact the research process from formulation to dissemination. Succinctly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define this as continuously reflecting on “the researcher-participant relationship and how one affects the other in the research process” (p. 63). Consequently, depending on who conducts the research with whom, analysis and results will be different. Instead of trying to rid oneself of these biases, or subjectivities, qualitative researchers should identify them and examine how they relate to the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Peshkin, 1988). Indeed, as knowledge is co-constructed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), it is the researchers’ own individual subjectivities, and how they interact with participants’ subjectivities, that makes the knowledge gained in each qualitative study a “distinctive contribution” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18).

**Inductive Process**

Compared to quantitative research that seeks to generalize findings through measurement, qualitative research seeks to capture the perspective of individual participants through “detailed interviewing and observations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12). To achieve a true representation of the individual’s point of view, qualitative research maintains the words and point of view of each individual participant. As Austin and Sutton (2014) aptly critique quantitative research, “What is missing from quantitative research methods is the voice of the participant” (p. 436). Privileging the individual’s point of view makes qualitative research inductive—going from findings to theory—rather than deductive—going from theory to findings (Merriam, 1998; Merriam, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research does not test hypotheses
nor complete experiments in the lab, instead knowledge is co-constructed between researchers and participants through interaction, and the researcher interprets findings seeking common themes, categories, concepts, etc. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Of course, qualitative research is still theory-based and uses theoretical frameworks to aid in interpretation of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Thus, it should be noted that some scholars argue credible qualitative research can be deductive in that they approach data analysis specifically from certain theories and frameworks (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). However, the difference between qualitative and quantitative research still is that qualitative work is not testing the theory, rather it is seeking to understand the participants' experiences through the interpretative lens of that theory (O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015).

**Rich Descriptions**

Walcott (2009) argues, “Description provides the foundation upon which qualitative inquiry rests” (p. 27). As quantitative research seeks to generalize findings, quantitative researchers are not concerned with in-depth detailed descriptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research, on the other hand, seeks to understand individual human experiences by capturing participants’ points of view and examining everyday life. Qualitative researchers ask open-ended questions, observe behaviors, focus on listening and capturing the participants’ verbal and nonverbal communication, transcribe interviews verbatim, use member-checking procedures so participants ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions and data analysis, and include full participant quotes in the write-ups of research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). To achieve this type of rich description,
qualitative researchers utilize “ethnographic prose, historical narratives, first-person accounts, still photographs, life histories, fictionalized ‘facts’, and biographical and autobiographical materials” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12).

Specifically, you will find detailed descriptions of whom the participants are and the context of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, the findings of the research will be presented with direct quotes from the participants’ interviews, the researchers’ field notes, and/or documents of interest. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue, “These quotes and excerpts contribute to the descriptive nature of qualitative research” (p. 18). In many ways this places the researcher in the role of storyteller (Walcott, 2009). This type of rich description is essential not only in reporting findings, but also in writing up the epistemology and theoretical paradigm of the research, as clarity and transparency across all parts of the research is imperative to the credibility of qualitative work (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017).

Overall, qualitative researchers make sense of individual lived human experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), by focusing on meaning and understanding, being the primary research instrument, using an inductive process, and providing rich description (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). In these ways, the researcher’s interpretation of participants’ experiences is the foundation of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and was the foundation of this narrative inquiry.

A Constructionist Epistemology

Epistemology refers to the way in which knowledge is acquired, simply the philosophy of how we know what we know (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Most
epistemological foundations of qualitative research methodologies reject the idea that there is known truth (O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). One such epistemological belief that underlines much narrative inquiry is constructionism (Alleyne, 2015). The term social construction was first coined as a sociological concept by Beger and Luckmann (1996), who argued that society is produced, created, and continually re-created by humans. Constructionism, as an epistemology, “advocates that knowledge is culturally and historically specific, emphasizing that language constitutes, rather than reflects, reality” (O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015, p. 19). What we say, what we communicate, is reality. Thus, instead of a singular objective truth, there are multiplicities of truths constructed across varying cultural and historical contexts. Specifically, research based in social constructionism assumes knowledge of reality is constructed through the interactions of people (Young & Collins, 2004), including researcher and participant, and are not static but rather ever changing (Esin et al., 2014; O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015).

It is important to note the key difference here between constructionism and constructivism, as the two different positions are many times wrongfully interchangeable in literature (O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Rather than focusing on the individual knowledge of reality that is learned through interactions, which is the fundamental focus of constructivism, constructionism focuses on shared social constructions that are created through interaction. In summation, constructionism prioritizes the diversity of meaning, individuals’ own meaning generation, and the co-construction of knowledge between participants, researchers, contexts, and power relations (Esin et al., 2015).

Constructionism is a congruent epistemology for narrative inquiry as it “gives emphasis
to language and narrative” (O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015, p. 19) in the creation of knowledge. In narrative inquiry, there is an understanding that the story is co-constructed by teller(s) and listener(s) within specific interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts (Essin et al., 2014). Knowledge then is co-constructed and passed down through story. In this way, “narratives themselves are...social phenomena” that are constructing new knowledge through the interaction of researcher and participant (Esin et al., 2014, p. 204).

In this narrative inquiry, I listened to social work field staff’s stories of establishing social work field placement opportunities in sport organizations. The participants and I also engaged in the conversation phase of narrative interviewing (Kim, 2016). This co-construction of knowledge was the base for analysis, which was then shared with participants through member-checking, and further re-constructed for a deeper understanding. In these ways, knowledge of the planning process was co-constructed by the interaction between me as the researcher and the participants of this study.

**An Interpretivist Theoretical Paradigm**

A theoretical paradigm combines the researcher’s ontological and epistemological positions, and methodological decisions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This narrative inquiry was based in the theoretical paradigm of interpretivism. Interpretivism has its roots in Kant’s refute of observable knowledge in their 1781 book *Critique of Pure Reason* (Ormston et al., 2013). Kant argued that knowledge not only comes from observations and experiences, but also from reflecting on those experiences and our individual and
shared interpretation of those experiences. Therefore, research from an interpretivist theoretical paradigm emphasizes both the participants’ and researchers’ interpretation of the topic under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Within the research process, there is an attempt to understand how participants view, perceive, experience, interpret, and feel the world around them to begin to understand, through the researcher’s interpretations, individuals’ motivations, and behaviors within certain contexts (O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015).

An interpretivist paradigm is congruent with constructionist inquiry (Ormston et al., 2013), and narrative inquiry specifically as Riessman (1993) points out, “Interpretation is inevitable because narratives are representations” (p. 2). Spence (1986) calls the process of researcher interpretation in narrative inquiry “narrative soothing” (p. 212). Narrative soothing refers to the way in which the narrative researcher interprets and presents participants’ narratives in a way that is coherent, engaging, and theoretically impactful to the audience (Kim, 2016). However, both Spence (1986) and Kim (2016) caution that in the interpretation of narrative data, the narrative researcher must provide enough context and information to assure that the story they tell is not a misrepresentation of the participants’ original interpretation of their experience. This underlies perhaps one of the most important concepts in any interpretivist research, including narrative inquiry, that research and knowledge is never value-free, and the researcher brings with them their own feelings and beliefs about the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).
In this narrative inquiry, participants shared their own interpretation of their planning stories, which I, as the researcher, then analyzed through narrative analysis methods (Wells, 2011). I then completed a final narrative write-up of the findings from all the participants’ planning stories (Riessman, 1993), wherein I engaged in the narrative soothing process (Spence, 1986; Kim, 2016). Thus, in line with the interpretivist theoretical framework of this study, I gained a deeper understanding of the participants’ planning narratives through the co-constructed interpretation of knowledge.

**Narrative Inquiry**

Based in postmodern ontology, a constructionist epistemology, and an interpretivist theoretical paradigm, this project was a narrative inquiry. Broadly, narrative inquiry is the investigation of human experience through individuals’ stories (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Riessman, 1993, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2020). Clandinin & Johnson (2017) define narrative inquiry as the “study of experience when experience is understood as lived and told stories” (p. 425). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) indicate that the central components of narrative are emplotment, character, scene, place, time, and point of view. Daiute (2014) argues narratives include “characters—humans and otherwise—presented in spatial and temporal context to share some meaningful experience or idea” (p. 2), whereas stories consist of plot (i.e., beginning, middle, end). Riessman (2008) defines narrative broadly as a speaker connecting “events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story” (p. 3).
Thus, multiple stories of experiences make one narrative of experience by which individuals construct meaning. Indeed, Riessman (1993) asserts that “A primary way individuals make sense of experience is by casting it in narrative form” (p. 4). Specifically, Alleyne (2015) defines this as the narrative way of knowing, which creates “meaning by organizing knowledge into connected sequences of events or stories” (p. 51). A narrative way of knowing is thus distinct from other qualitative methodologies which employ different ways of knowing; for instance, ethnography is based in an observational way of knowing, making meaning out of the researcher’s observation (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Narrative inquiry is an appropriate methodology when researchers are interested in understanding an individual’s lived experiences through their told stories (Clandinin & Johnson, 2017).

Narrative inquiry initially grew out of the field of literary theory with the exploration of narrative as literary form (Riessman, 1993; Webster & Mertova, 2020). It is a relatively new social research methodology, appearing widely in academic literature, mostly in the discipline of education, around the 2000s (Clandinin & Johnson, 2017). Specifically, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) describe four primary turns of social research that lead to narrative inquiry: (a) the attention to relationships among participants; (b) the move to words as data; (c) the focus on the particular; and (d) the recognition of blurred genres of knowing (p. 3). The first turn, popularized in the social sciences during the late 19th century, was a shift away from the traditional positivist view of research, to a relational one that recognizes that both the researcher and participant will learn and change during the research process. The second turn emphasized the shift from using
numbers as data to using words as data. Using narrative inquiry instead of statistical analysis “provide(s) ways of holding meaning together in more complex, relational, and therefore more nuanced ways than flowcharts or number tables” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 20). The third turn is the move from seeking generalizability from research to finding the value in the particular—specifically, what we can learn from “a particular experience, in a particular setting, involving particular people” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 21). The fourth and final turn towards narrative inquiry is the belief that there are multiple ways of knowing and understanding an experience, which further reinforces the importance of the particular. Taken together, the full narrative turn in social research began in the 1960s, and grew during the 1980s, until widely recognized as a methodology in the 2000s (Webster & Mertova, 2020).

These turns are foundational to narrative inquiry, but they are not exclusive to a certain cohort of researchers (Riessman, 2008). Researchers from across disciplines—from education to social work to organizational studies—are exploring taking these turns to narrative inquiry, creating a true interdisciplinary methodology with many different methods (Riessman, 1993; Webster & Mertova, 2020). How an anthropologist approaches narrative inquiry is inevitably different than how a sociologist may approach narrative (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). One does not have to look further than Clandinin’s (2007) foundational Handbook of Narrative Inquiry to see how many disciplines employ narrative inquiry: archival research, language arts research, art research, education research, organizational research, psychotherapy, and policy research to name a few. Within each of these approaches, they borrow from the narrative tradition
to utilize their own narrative methods. For example, a visual narrative researcher uses pictures as the primary means to tell story (Bach, 2007), a researcher from the mental health field may focus on life stories for analysis (Baddeley & Dinger, 2007), whereas an archival researcher may turn to social media posts (Morgan-Fleming et al., 2007).

No matter the home discipline, narrative inquiry will find its foundation in and always return to the individual narrative of experience (Riessman, 2008). Thus, the methodology finds its philosophical and theoretical foundation in the discipline of narratology (O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015), and specifically in John Dewey’s philosophy of experience (Clandinin & Johnson, 2017; Kim, 2016). John Dewey’s (1938) pragmatic philosophy has two primary assumptions: one, experience, forever changing in the personal, social, and material environment, is the foundation of all types of inquiry, and two, experience is transactional, in that we gain knowledge from individual experience and then must continually return to those experiences to validate that knowledge. This philosophy of experience differs from the positivist ontological assumption of one truth, and the ontologies of post-structural and critical research that privilege social structure and social construction over individual experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Instead, narrative inquiry begins and ends with the participants’ stories.

Pulling from Dewey’s theory of pragmatic philosophy, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) detail three specific ways Dewey’s theory fits as an ontological foundation to narrative inquiry. First, experience can never be fully explained in a single representation, and therefore narrative inquiry explores experience over time. Second, experiences are continual and build upon one another—the idea that many stories make a narrative.
Lastly, experiences exist in a social dimension, and thus narrative inquiry explores narrative in context, not as created by social context. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) synthesize these three dimensions of narrative inquiry that fall into the Deweyan ontology of experience as temporality, sociality, and place. Temporality refers to all experiences having a past, present, and future. Sociality refers to personal experiences as part of a larger social context. Place refers to the unique physical and geographical location that every experience occurs, which then rejects generalizability. Narrative researchers, across disciplines, remain true to these three dimensions.

In summation, no matter the different approaches, there appears to be three common strands in the scholarship on narrative inquiry that define the methodology. First and foremost, the research begins and ends with the lived experiences of participants, in line with Dewey’s pragmatism and ontology of experience, even if authors do not explicitly point to Deweyan thought. Second, “data” is collected and/or analyzed by means of stories—narrative researchers are either collecting stories, analyzing all data from a technique based in story (e.g., Labovian structure; Saldaña, 2016), or both. Third, narrative inquiry is considered a postmodern methodology that rejects the belief in one capital-T Truth in favor of the multiplicities of truths and the co-construction of knowledge (Webster & Mertova, 2020). Narrative scholars, even as they play with the so-called borderlands of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007) resulting in different methods from different epistemologies from different academic disciplines, all seem to return to these three main points. Therefore, a researcher should utilize narrative methodology if they believe that knowledge is constructed through story. Overall, then,
narrative inquiry is “a fluid type of research, not a set of procedures or steps to be followed but a relational inquiry methodology that is open to where participants’ stories take a researcher” (Clandinin & Johnson, 2017, p. 426).

**Justification for Narrative Inquiry**

Similar to other qualitative methodologies, narrative researchers should begin with a research design based in congruence between ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). My ontological belief is postmodern in that there are multiple truths (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and that we know those truths through experience (i.e., Dewey’s ontology of experience; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Epistemologically, this narrative inquiry was constructionist in nature in that the human experience of the participants is constructed historically, culturally, and linguistically (O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Theoretically, this narrative inquiry was based in interpretivism, in that I, as the researcher, interpreted the knowledge that me and the participants of the study co-constructed (O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). Therefore, in taking a narrative design to this study, the participants and I co-constructed knowledge through the telling of their stories, which I then interpreted through analysis.

Additionally, I chose narrative inquiry for my dissertation for three other primary reasons. First, I was not interested in the culture of social work field placement staff (i.e., ethnography), rather I was interested in the experiences of field placement staff and their planning stories of establishing placements in sport settings (i.e., narrative). Privileging the voices of planning practitioners through representation of their planning stories is important to both practically and theoretically understanding program planning in
educational contexts (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Cervero & Wilson, 2006). Secondly, I was especially interested in the sequence of events, and the who, what, when, where, and how of establishing sport-specific placements, which lends towards narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2008). And finally, in line with Kim’s (2016) model of the link between theory, practice, and personal experience, I am professionally trained in narrative therapy (practice) and have experienced the transformative power of stories (personal experience), and thus guide my research through the privileging of stories of personal experiences (theory). Therefore, I can trace my use of narrative inquiry for my dissertation not only from the purpose of the research, but also from my ontological, epistemological, and theoretical positions.

Methods

Compared to methodology which guides the overall design of the research project, methods are the practical step-by-step actions taken to complete all aspects of the research process (O’Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015). All procedures for this narrative inquiry were first approved by the University of Tennessee Institutional Revenue Board (IRB; see Appendix I). Purposeful criterion sampling was used to recruit social work field staff (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured narrative interviews, and field notes were used for data collection (Kim, 2016). Narrative data analysis (Riessman, 2008; Wells, 2011) was completed. Additionally, several methods were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and data analysis. Overall, this narrative inquiry followed Riessman’s (1993) proposed five levels of representation in the research process: (a) attending to the
experience; (b) telling of the experience; (c) transcription of the experience; (d) analyzing the experience; and (e) reading experience.

Research Context

The study took place in the context of accredited social work departments across the United States. There are 531 CSWE-accredited social work departments at the bachelor’s level and 272 at masters level in the United States (CSWE, 2020). Most recent numbers from CSWE (2020) indicate there are 56,530 bachelors-level social work students and 68,793 masters-level social work students that would need to complete hours in field placements. It is unknown how many social work departments offer field placements in sport organizations; although more and more social workers are getting hired in sport organizations, the mental health field in sport is still dominated by psychologists (Sudano & Miles, 2017). Therefore, social work field placements in sport offer an innovative and nontraditional field placement opportunity for social work students. Participants were staff members of the field office in social work departments that are, or have in the past, placed a student in a sport organization.

Population

The population for this narrative inquiry was social work field placement staff. Field placement staff were chosen as the population of interest because they have been identified as the key liaison between the social work program and the outside field organization, thus placing them as the key planner in the process of establishing new field placements partnerships (Sowa, 2009). According to CSWE (2015b), the majority of field
staff are employed full time on an annual contractual basis, not tenured track. Field staff are usually either a faculty member with a clinical or academic distinction, or an administrative position.

**Study Participants**

Participants were recruited via the Alliance for Social Workers in Sport (ASWIS) listserv, the CSWE field director listserv, from professional contacts, and from publicly available university email addresses of field staff. Recruitment was based on purposeful criterion sampling (Patton, 2002, 2015), where specific characteristics need to be met prior to participation in the study. Patton (2015) suggests that purposeful sampling yields “information rich” qualitative data because participants are specifically selected within the aims of the study (p. 264). In line with qualitative methodology, purposeful sampling allows for in-depth understanding of individual, case-centered experience, rather than seeking generalization (Patton, 2015). The criterion for this study were social work field placement staff employed, in a faculty or administrative role, at an CSWE-accredited social work department that has either currently placed or has placed in the past a BSW or MSW social work student at a sport organization.

Although there is no agreed upon range of appropriate sample size for qualitative work (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), Wells (2011) suggests that between one to five participants for a study using narrative analysis is sufficient, whereas Kim (2016), pulling from qualitative methodologists Beitin (2012) and Kvale (1996), provides evidence for anywhere between five and 25 participants as sufficient. Nevertheless, both authors reiterate that there is no specific sample size needed for quality narrative inquiry as it is
study and topic specific. As it is currently unknown the number of social work departments offering sport placements, sample size was also dependent on available participants that meet the criteria. Ultimately, recruitment stopped when themes become redundant suggesting saturation (Kim, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Overall, eight social work field placement staff participated in this study. One participant was recruited form the ASWIS listserv, three were recruited from the CSWE field directors listserv, three were recruited from professional contacts, and one was recruited via a publicly available email address on a university website. Three participants identified as male, and five participants identified as female. The participants all identified as White, were an average age of 53, all received at least their master’s in social work, and all had professional experience in a social work field department. See Chapter Four for full participant demographics.

**Data Collection**

Data collection took place between the months of May 2021 and July 2021. The primary data collection method was narrative interviews (see next subsection). Participants were sent the consent form (see Appendix H) to complete prior to the first interview. Consent forms were sent through the UTK Vault email systems, which is a protected server. Interviews took place via Zoom, due to both geographic limitations and the COVID-19 pandemic. Cachia and Millward (2011) and Novick (2008) both argue that virtual interviews have other benefits aside from access, such as allowing the participant to feel more relaxed. All interviews were recorded on an IRB-approved device. Once interviews were complete, they were first transcribed using the online
website *Otter*. *Otter* has a clear privacy policy, and any information is stored on a secure server (Otter.ai, 2020). Once the transcription was complete on Otter, there were exported from Otter to a Microsoft Word document, where initial data analysis took place; subsequent rounds of coding took place on a Google Sheets document. All recordings and transcriptions were deleted from my Otter account at the conclusion of data analysis.

However, transcription itself is an interpretive process (Riessman, 2008; Wells, 2011), and thus an essential step for the researcher to complete to become familiar with the data. Therefore, after the initial transcription was made, I then went through a second transcription process, re-listening to all recordings and making needed changes and additions to the transcript (e.g., indicating important pauses) for analysis. During this transcription, all identifying information was excluded, and pseudonyms were used in place of participants’ names (Patton, 2015). Seven of the eight participants chose their own pseudonym; for the participant that indicated that they did not want to choose their own pseudonym, I assigned them one. The pseudonymization of the data is important to protect the identity of the participants and is a foundation to ethical research (Patton, 2015). All final recordings and transcriptions were stored on my University of Tennessee Google Drive, which is protected.

**Narrative Interviews**

The primary mode of data collection was narrative interviews. Kim (2016) defines two stages of the narrative interview. The first stage, which they term the narration phase, is the time to ask open-ended questions and listen. During this phase, the researcher can ask participants to tell their story of the experience of interest (Clandinin & Johnson,
2017), in this case establishing a field placement in a sport organization. The second phase Kim (2016) identifies is the conversation phase, wherein the interview becomes more semi-structured, and the researcher can ask clarifying questions and further illicit stories from their participants. There is not an agreed upon ideal length for a narrative interview, but it is warned that if an interview is too short, it will not capture reliable narratives (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Life story interviewing is a common, in-depth narrative interview method, which Atkinson (2007) suggests should be at least two separate one hour interviews. Although I did not do life story interviews, as I was interested in a specific phenomenon (implementing field placements), to maintain narrative depth I completed two interviews with each participant. After the completion of the first interview with each participant, the interview transcripts were transcribed via the aforementioned process. Prior to the second interview with each participant, I then re-read the first interview transcript, and took notes on the interview guide indicating where the interview left off, and specific follow-up questions needed related certain stories. After the second interview with each participant was complete, the interview transcripts were transcribed via the aforementioned process. The first interview ranged from 50 minutes and 10 seconds to 66 minutes and 59 seconds, with an average time of 54 minutes and 9 seconds. The second interview ranged from 36 minutes and 26 seconds to 85 minutes and 43 seconds, with an average time of 58 minutes and 35 seconds. The average recorded length of all interviews was 56 minutes and 56 seconds.

In line with both Clandinin and Johnson’s (2017) and Kim’s (2016) suggestions, a semi-structured interview guide was created to guide the narrative interviews. A semi-
structured interview guide has pre-written questions and follow-up questions, but at the same time the flexibility to allow participants to lead the conversation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using a semi-structured interview guide also maintains study credibility by assuring participants answer similar questions (Barriball, 1994). Furthermore, the use of a semi-structured interview guide is in line with the constructionist epistemology and the interpretivist theoretical paradigm of this narrative inquiry (Hollingsworth and Dybdahl, 2007). Interview questions were developed following Kim’s (2016) guidelines and suggestions for structuring narrative interview questions. See Appendix A for the interview guide.

**Field Notes**

In qualitative research, field notes refer to specific notes taken by the researcher during the data collection process related to thoughts “for future analysis or to document details that are not captured on the recording” (Given, 2016, p. 84). In this study, I took field notes during each interview, as well as during each of my re-listenings of the recorded interviews (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that attended to the place, culture, and contexts of the interview and co-constructed narrative (Wells, 2011). The field notes also included observations I made during each interview (Webster & Mertova, 2020), including both visual observations of participants’ environments, and observations of the participants’ body movements and vocal changes. Additionally, field notes included my own thoughts throughout the interview to encourage critical and reflexive analysis of my observations (Wells, 2011). Tellingly, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that “field notes combined with journals written of (the) field experience provide a reflective
balance” (p. 104) for any narrative inquiry. Therefore, reflexive journaling was also employed. This is discussed further in the “Trustworthiness” section.

Pulling from ethnographic methodology, Gobo and Molle (2017) suggest that qualitative researchers can take five different types of field notes, all of which I find similarly important for narrative inquiry, especially as Kim (2016) argues observation is just as important in narrative research as interviews. Observational notes are descriptions of any actions seen or heard by the researcher (Gobo & Molle, 2017). Methodological notes are any reflexive thoughts on the methodological process itself, such as areas of improvement for the next interview, what probing questions were successful in eliciting stories and which were not, etc. (Gobo & Molle, 2017). Theoretical notes include any thoughts on certain observations or parts of the interview that may relate to the theory or phenomenon of interest. Succinctly, these can be thought of as reflecting on the question, “What new things have I learned today” (Gobo & Molle, 2016, p. 199). Emotional notes capture the researcher’s own thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the observations and interviews (Gobo & Molle, 2017). These notes are important in remaining reflexive in the research process, especially considering the subjectivities I brought into the research and the co-construction of knowledge. Finally, environmental notes refer to observations of the physical location of the research (Gobo & Molle, 2017). I was not physically in the field, but, as I used Zoom, there was still an opportunity to observe the participants’ physical environments. Thus, my field notes for each interview were organized in sections based off of the aforementioned five types of field notes (see Appendix B).
Program Documents

To triangulate the data, I also collected program documents (Lindolf & Taylor, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). There are several different types of documents that can be collected in qualitative research, including both personal and official documents. For this dissertation, I analyzed official documents related to the partnership between the social work department and the field organization. Official documents are “written, photographed, or recorded by some type of public or private organization” (Johnson & Christensen, p. 247) that can provide more insight into organizational policies. Different social work field departments have various types of forms that differ in name, content, and format. However, the forms generally fell into three categories: (a) agreements between the university and field agency, such as a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or an affiliation agreement; (b) field manuals for both social work students and field instructors; (c) field agency information forms; and (d) student learning contracts. The field agreement is the contract that the social work field department and the field organization sign that outlines the responsibility of each organization in carrying out the social work student’s field placement. For example, the field contract usually includes details about who assumes liability. The field manual provides detailed information about the university’s field policies and specific steps needed to implement a successful field placement. The field agency information form is where field agencies list important information needed to assess their fit as an internship site. The student learning contract identifies and lists the exact CSWE (2015a) standards that the social work student must meet during their internship; for instance, this document will list which types of
activities, such as client contact hours, the student must meet during their field placement, and what specific learning activities the student will complete to meet these competencies.

Overall, of the six universities represented, I was able to collect five agency agreements, four agency information forms, five field education manuals, three student learning contracts, and one field evaluation form. These documents were either publicly available on the university’s website for download, or they were directly sent to me by the participant if they chose to do so. Two participants sent additional documents. The documents I reviewed were blank or redacted, so that no individual agencies’ or students’ privacy were violated. These official documents provided more insight into the program planning process of planning field placements in sport organizations. Reviewing these documents further enhanced my understanding of the requirements the field partnership between a sport organization and social work department as well as the specific evaluation measures used, which are both essential parts of the educational program planning process (Caffarella & Daffron, 2021).

Data Analysis

For my data analysis I employed two types of narrative analyses. Wells (2011) defines narrative analysis as one that “takes stories as its primary source of data and examines the content, structure, performance, or context of such narratives considered as a whole” (p. 7). Similarly, Kim (2016) states that narrative analysis interprets “meanings through an analysis of plotlines, thematic structures, and social and cultural referents” (p. 190). Thus, the first step of narrative data analysis is separating the data into story
stanzas (Gee, 1986; Labov, 1972; Riessman, 2008; Saldaña, 2016). I put all stories into a Microsoft Word document for analysis. From there, I did two rounds of coding. Specifically, I used both forms of data analysis Polkinghorne (1995) identifies as central to narrative injury: narrative mode of analysis and analysis of narratives.

Narrative modes of analysis remain in narrative cognition, and thus focus on the actions and events of narratives producing stories out of this analysis. Specifically, Kim (2016) defines the goal of narrative modes of analysis as “to help the reader understand why and how things happened in the way they did, and why and how our participants acted in the way they did” (p. 197). This outcome was helpful in answering my first research question on the process of establishing field placements in sport settings. My first round of coding was a narrative mode of analysis, specifically Labovian structural analysis (Kim, 2016; Labov, 1972).

Analysis of narratives, on the other hand, still analyzes story stanzas, but seeks to arrange findings “around descriptions of themes that are common across collected stories” (Kim, 2016, p. 196). This type of narrative analysis was helpful in answering my second and third research questions as I was curious about how field staff negotiated power in the planning process, as well as strategies used to overcome challenges which may be common across the narratives. To achieve this analysis of narratives, I used narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008) as my second round of coding. Thus, findings in the next chapter are represented as the as themes across narratives with individual planning stories represented under each theme.
First Round: Labovian Analysis

Structural analysis focuses on the actual structure of the story—plot, word choice, etc.—and how the story is told (Labov, 1972). This analysis focused on identifying a “sequence of moves" using Labovian methods (Riessman, 2008, p. 86). Following the Labovian method (Labov, 1972), I first coded in the Microsoft Word document each story stanza using my Labovian code book (see Appendix C) for abstracts (a), orientations (o), complicating actions (ca), evaluations (e), resolutions (r), and codas (c) in each story stanza (Riessman, 2008; Saldaña, 2016; Wells, 2011). Abstracts open the story and establish what the story is about, orientations describe key players, environments, and time frame of the story, complicating actions refer to the events of the story and are usually identified by phrase such as “and then”, evaluations show the point and meaning of the story for the participant, resolutions indicate the conclusion of the story, and codas end the story by bringing the narrative back to the current time (Wells, 2011). Identifying these sequences sensitized me to the overall process (i.e., sequence) of establishing sport-specific field placements, as well as the subtleties of each different experience. See Appendix D for an example of my Labovian analysis.

Second Round: Narrative Thematic Analysis

Narrative thematic analysis prioritizes the analysis of the actual content of the story identifying themes in each individual story and themes across stories that create a larger narrative (Riessman, 2008). Riessman (2008) suggests that narrative thematic analysis is similar to the process taken in grounded theory analysis. My narrative thematic analysis thus took place in the three steps suggested by Strauss and Corbin
(1998). First, I engaged in initial coding, during which the researcher begins to break the data into discrete parts and begins to look for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Saldaña (2016) suggests that initial coding can be implemented using different coding strategies. Thus, as in-vivo coding is a good fit for narrative analysis (Saldaña, 2016), I specifically employed in-vivo coding for my initial coding. In-vivo coding preserves the voice of the participants, by labeling codes with direct phrases from the interview transcripts (Saldaña, 2016). I completed in-vivo coding in the Microsoft Word document already with completed Labovian codes through tracked-changes comments. Second, I did axial coding in which I examined patterns in the data, discarding and merging concepts as well as retaining others (Saldaña, 2016). Axial coding was completed on a Google Sheets page, where the in-vivo codes for each interview were copy and pasted and then categorized in the second column; a process of coding the codes (Saldaña, 2016). Third was selective coding, identifying the core themes and re-coding the story stanzas for the finalized themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Selective coding was also completed in the Google Sheets page using a finalized code book created from my narrative thematic analysis (see Appendix E). Succinctly, this process can be explained as going from initials codes, to categories, to finalized themes (Saldaña, 2016). See Appendix F for an example of my narrative thematic analysis.

Riessman (2008) notes that there are four main differences between grounded theory analysis and narrative thematic analysis. First, prior theory guides the analytical process in narrative thematic analysis. Specifically, I was guided by aspects of program planning theory (Daffron & Caffarella, 2021; Cervero & Wilson, 2006; Sandmann et al., 1998). First, I engaged in initial coding, during which the researcher begins to break the data into discrete parts and begins to look for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Saldaña (2016) suggests that initial coding can be implemented using different coding strategies. Thus, as in-vivo coding is a good fit for narrative analysis (Saldaña, 2016), I specifically employed in-vivo coding for my initial coding. In-vivo coding preserves the voice of the participants, by labeling codes with direct phrases from the interview transcripts (Saldaña, 2016). I completed in-vivo coding in the Microsoft Word document already with completed Labovian codes through tracked-changes comments. Second, I did axial coding in which I examined patterns in the data, discarding and merging concepts as well as retaining others (Saldaña, 2016). Axial coding was completed on a Google Sheets page, where the in-vivo codes for each interview were copy and pasted and then categorized in the second column; a process of coding the codes (Saldaña, 2016). Third was selective coding, identifying the core themes and re-coding the story stanzas for the finalized themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Selective coding was also completed in the Google Sheets page using a finalized code book created from my narrative thematic analysis (see Appendix E). Succinctly, this process can be explained as going from initials codes, to categories, to finalized themes (Saldaña, 2016). See Appendix F for an example of my narrative thematic analysis.
2009; Sork, 2010). Second, sequence is preserved, thus my narrative thematic analysis was completed in story stanzas. Third, analysis still attended to time and place, which are essential elements of narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). And fourth, narrative thematic analysis remains case-centered, whereas grounded theory tends to theorize across cases in an attempt for theory creation, which is not the goal of narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008). This preserves the narrative way of knowing, which organizes knowledge through sequences rather than through strictly categorizing (Alleyne, 2015; Riessman, 1993).

**Document Analysis**

Documents provide a “ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator” (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). Document analysis is especially fruitful in organizational and educational settings, as these official documents can provide factual insight into the higher educational setting’s policies (Lindolf & Taylor, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Owen, 2014). Bowen (2009) specifically defines document analysis as, “A systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic” (p. 27). As was the case of this dissertation, document analysis is many times combined with interviews and observations to increase the credibility of other qualitative data (see “Triangulation” section; Bowen, 2009).

Saldaña (2016) suggests that descriptive coding, because it looks to code factual information, is a good match for analysis of documents, and provides researchers “a detailed inventory of their contents” (p. 73). Essentially, descriptive coding finds the
different topics present in the documents by summarizing an excerpt of qualitative data with a word, usually a noun or short phrase (Saldaña, 2016; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2016). As I was looking for specific details of the program planning process in these documents, I reviewed each document and descriptive coded for aspects of program planning presented by Daffron and Caffarella (2021), Cervero and Wilson (2006), and Sandmann and colleagues (2009). To organize the descriptive coding and interpretation of the document analysis, I used a document analysis matrix (see Appendix G).

**Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research methodologies, researchers should discuss how their data are trustworthy and credible, rather than how they are reliable and valid (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Webster and Mertova (2007) specifically challenge narrative researchers to rethink the traditional concepts of reliability and validity. They argue that in narrative inquiry, reliability is “the dependability of the data” and validity is “the strength of the analysis of the data, the trustworthiness of the data and ease of access to that data” (p. 89). Blumenfeld-Jones (1995), on the other hand, argues that fidelity is the primary way of distinguishing trustworthy narrative inquiry—that is, rather than researchers presenting a “truthful” account, they present the narratives in a way that shows what the experiences meant to the participant. For Kim (2016), fidelity of narrative research lies in the researchers’ honoring of the participants words; they argue that “A narrative text that has fidelity to our research data depends on the use of vernacular language used by our research participants in a particular context” (p. 112). For me, this required the stance of “interpretation of faith” (Kim, 2016, p. 193), the belief that the participants in this study
told tell me a story that is true to their subjective experience. Specifically, this was carried about by the use of in-vivo coding, member-checking, analyzing data in story stanzas, and presenting findings as contextual stories, rather than solely in decontextualized quotes.

Furthermore, many qualitative scholars argue that congruence between ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods are central to the credibility of the research (Carter & Little, 2007; O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015; Staller, 2012). Specifically, qualitative researchers should explicitly answer three questions: what I did (methodology), how I did it (methods), and why I did it (reflexivity; Tuval-Mashiach, 2017, p. 131). Throughout this chapter I have discussed the congruence of my ontology, epistemology, and my theoretical paradigm with my chosen methodology of narrative inquiry, as well as provided discussion of the exact methods I used for data analysis. Furthermore, I used triangulation to ensure the quality of the data I have collected (Carter et al., 2014). To meet Tuvual-Mashiach’s (2017) call for reflexivity I engaged in memoing, kept a researcher’s journal, and ensured member-checking was completed. Additionally, I have included, and consistently returned to throughout the research process, my subjectivity statement. All of these methods enhanced the trustworthiness of this narrative inquiry.

Triangulation

One way to enhance both the dependability (i.e., reliability) and trustworthiness (i.e., validity) of the narrative data is through the triangulation of data sources (Patton, 2015). Triangulation enhances the trustworthiness of the data by providing additional ways to verify the qualitative data that would not be possible with a single approach
(Flick, 2007). Usually by providing three different sources exploring the same phenomenon, triangulation results in a fuller understanding and conceptualization of the phenomenon under study (Given, 2016; Patton, 2015). There are several different types of triangulation in qualitative research, including investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, method triangulation, and data source triangulation (Carter et al., 2014; Denzin, 1978). I specifically used data source triangulation to ensure the trustworthiness of the data in this dissertation.

Patton (2015) suggests that triangulation of data sources can be accomplished by “comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information at different time and by different means from interviews, observations, and documents” (p. 661). In this study, the data from the interviews was compared to both the observations made by me and recorded in my field notes and to the program documents (e.g., the field manual) that can corroborate what participants described in their interviews. Either finding consistency across these three data sources, or being able to explain any discrepancies, enhances the trustworthiness of the findings (Patton, 2015). Overall, the documents and observations remained consistent with the participant stories, which is further discussed in my findings.

**Memoing**

Although most commonly identified as method in grounded theory research, memoing can be an important trustworthiness method in any qualitative research (Birks et al., 2008). Memoing is the process of recording reflexive notes throughout the research process that focus on the relationship of concepts (Given, 2008), and the reasons certain
data were coded in particular ways (Saldaña, 2016). In this way, memoing acts as the audit-trail for the decision-making process throughout the research project that “demonstrate(s) to the reader how decisions were made and conclusions reached” (Birks et al., 2008, p. 70). Thus, memoing adds trustworthiness to the research by increasing the transparency of the data analysis process (Given, 2008).

Birks and colleagues (2008) suggest that, due to the importance of memoing to the credibility of the research, qualitative researchers should have a formalized memoing process, rather than the simply notes in the margins of the interview transcripts. Thus, in line with their recommendations, for this study, I kept a document for my memos, separate from both my researcher’s journal and the data analysis documents, that was dated and systematically organized to establish a transparent audit trial. In these memos, I kept track of my reasons behind coding items specific ways, and my reasoning of why and I how I organized codes into categories into themes (Saldaña, 2016).

**Researcher’s Journal**

A researcher’s journal is a reflexive document for researchers to critically reflect on all their experiences related to the research project (Annink, 2017; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As a reflexive tool, the researcher’s journal “contains a critical analysis of the (political) context in which actions unfold, the researchers’ knowledge, skills, expertise, values, assumptions, and the emotions evoked by the research” (Annink, 2017, pp. 3-4). Overall, although less structured than memoing as it can focus on any experiences, feelings, and thoughts of any part of the process, the researcher’s journal is
another document that lends to the transparency, and thus trustworthiness, of qualitative research (Ortlipp, 2008).

In narrative research, as audiences are ever present, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) offer the researcher’s journal as key to understanding the researcher’s own experiences in narrative inquiry. Therefore, for this study, my journal acted as a space for me to expand on the emotional notes that I took during the interviews (Gobo & Molle, 2017), and to reflect on my thoughts, feelings, and experiences when I engaged in some part of the research process. Due to the co-construction of narrative between participant and researcher, the researcher’s journal in a narrative inquiry also becomes a field text itself that aids in creating an assemblage of the knowledge gained (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Additionally, as the narrator’s voice, along with the participants’ voice, is essential in narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016), my researcher’s journal was a reflexive space to develop my own voice in the research process. I made at least one entry in my researcher’s journal a week throughout the life of this project.

**Member-Checking**

In qualitative research member-checking is the process of “consult(ing) with participants themselves during analysis” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 37), which helps ensure the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that member-checking is one the most essential processes to establish credibility of any qualitative research. In this project, member-checking took place at two points in the research process (Bri et al., 2016; Lindolf & Taylor, 2011). I first sent each participant a copy of the initial transcription after each of their interviews, and they were asked to check the
transcript for accuracy and make any needed changes. They were given two weeks to complete the process and were instructed in the email that if no edits are received in the first two weeks, then it was assumed they have approved of the transcription. Three participants responded that they had no edits, one participant responded with edits, and four participants did not respond.

The participants were then sent a copy of the consolidated results after all analysis was complete to review. They were asked to assess as the accuracy of their narrative demographic introduction and the interpreted results, and to make any suggestions for changes or edits to items that may have been misinterpreted. They were given two weeks to complete the process and were instructed in the email that if no edits are received in the first two weeks, then it is assumed they have approved of the interpreted findings. One participant responded that they did not have edits, two participants responded with further edits, and five participants did not respond. All documents were sent through the UTK Vault email systems, which is a protected server. This process of member-checking helped assure the fidelity of this narrative inquiry, as participants not only verified that the vernacular of their stories were correct (Kim, 2016), but also that the data analysis accurately represented what these experiences meant to them (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995).

**Insider/Outsider Positionality**

Originating in ethnography, the discussion of a researcher’s positionality as an insider (emic) or outside (etic) has become an important consideration across all qualitative methodologies (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). At its most basic, an insider perspective refers to the researcher being a member of the population they are studying,
whereas an outsider perspective refers to the researcher being a member of different populations than they are studying. There are advantages to being an insider, such as rapport building with participants and reliability in data interpretation (Johnson-Bailey, 2004), and advantages of being an outsider, such as less likelihood of assumptions in the interview process (Misawa, 2009).

Many scholars, however, have dismantled the idea of a dichotomous view of the insider-outsider phenomenon, and argue that due to the multiple identities of individuals, the researcher’s positionality as an insider or outsider is not static and can change throughout the research process (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Naples, 1996; Ryan, 2015). At times, the researcher may be an insider, at others an outsider, at times both, and at others somewhere else along the continuum. The view of this as a continuum better captures the intersectionality of the researcher as it relates to the population of study. For example, in their textbook on action research, Herr and Anderson (2005, p. 40) offer a continuum of positionality: (a) insider; (b) insider in collaboration with other insiders; (c) insider(s) in collaboration with outsider(s); (d) reciprocal collaboration (insider-outsider teams); (e) outsider(s) in collaboration with insider(s); and (f) outsider(s) studies insiders(s). Of course, this continuum may look different depending on the methodology of the inquiry; however, due to the importance of the explicit acknowledgement of the researcher’s positionality, a reflection on the researcher’s positionality on the insider-outsider continuum is important to the trustworthiness of the research process.

Relating the insider-outsider continuum to my dissertation, I saw myself as both an insider and an outsider. As a licensed social worker, I inherently bring in biases as a
member of the population that I interviewed (Peshkin, 1988). My shared identity with participants diminished, although certainly did not abolish, the power structure between me as the interviewer and them as the interviewee, which is inherently hierarchical in nature (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). I easily built rapport and understood the language and the professional context of their experiences; in fact, in many moments throughout the interviews, the participants and I diverged from the traditional structure of interviews, and networked ourselves, discussing possible opportunities for field placements related to share professional contacts. Conversely, I am coming in as a researcher already biased towards the benefits of social work in sport. This may have influenced my construction of interview questions, the way I framed questions, or even how I interrupted the data.

Furthermore, I am an outsider in that I am in academia and no longer actively working in a social work environment, and although I have gone through the field placement process as a student, I do not have any experience as a field placement specialist. These different positionalities make it important to include and continuously return to a subjectivity statement (Christians, 2005; O'Reilly & Kiyimba, 2015).

Peshkin (1988) defines subjectivity in research as “an amalgam of the persuasions that stem from the circumstances of one's class, statuses, and values interacting with the particulars of one's object of investigation” (p. 17). As the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research, the researcher uses their subjectivities— their personal experiences and biases—in the interpretation of data (Stake, 2010). Consequently, it is important to be explicit in our subjectivities. This is accomplished by including a subjectivity statement,
which outlines the researcher’s subjectivities and positionalities and how they inform the research process (Johnson-Bailey, 2004).

**My Own Subjectivity**

There are several aspects of my current work that are influenced by my subjectivities. First and foremost, my subjectivity begins with the fact that I am researching what I am and what I know—social work. I hold my identity as a social worker closest to my heart. In every aspect of my life, I adhere to the values of being a social worker. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) identifies six core beliefs of social work: service, social justice, dignity and worth of a person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2017). Prior to my professional training as a social worker, I had lived my life by many of these core values, however it was not until I completed my master’s degree and became licensed that I dedicated both my personal and professional life to upholding these values. Thus, I approach all my academic work from these values as well. As it relates specifically to this dissertation, I am passionate about bringing competent social work care to athletes.

Reflecting on my own social work education, my field placements—one at a skilled nursing facility and one at an inpatient/outpatient behavioral health hospital focused on work with their adolescent population—are where I truly learned social work, and specifically social work with these populations. Even then, though, I knew I wanted to explore social work in sport. I had asked a professor once if there were opportunities for an advanced field placement in a sport organization. I was told, flat out, that our field department was not able to make a sport placement happen. With this research, I hope
any social work student who wants a field placement in sport to gain competence to work with the athlete population can get one.

Out of my social work training comes a few prominent biases. First, I will always give someone the benefit of the doubt—many times getting me labeled “a bleeding heart”. Second, I tend to assume that everyone values and shares my passion for social justice, and I tend to judge too easily others who do not, especially in the current political climate of the United States. Third, I view social work as the most effective form of therapy, and while I value the work of psychologists and counselors, I will always refer a friend, family member, or client to a social worker for help. And finally, I highly value professional licensure, especially in the mental health field, and am critical of individuals who act as informal counselors, such as chaplains, who many times offer services without licensure (Waller et al., 2016). With this professional training also comes power, especially in work with clients. Although the goal of a therapeutic relationship is to diminish power structure, with training, license, and profession, there is an inherent power difference between therapist and client (Shulman, 2016). This educational power difference is even more exacerbated being a PhD student and in academia. There is explicit power here, especially in research, that we as academics and professionals need to understand and wrestle with. Furthermore, just as Peshkin (1988) describes his journey as a Jewish man researching Jewish schools, when you see people doing things similar to you, you value it as a researcher. This certainly mirrors my journey. I saw social workers doing social work in athletic departments, and as a social worker myself, I highly value
that. Furthermore, I am comfortable, as a social worker, talking to social workers about social work.

My identity as a White female also has implications, especially considering power relations, in this research. I am representative of the social work profession as a whole: 68.8% of licensed social workers are White and 83% are female (Salasberg et al., 2017), which is important considering our professions ethical commitment is to serve minority populations (NASW, 2017). Considering this, it is extremely important to recognize that the majority of clients these social workers and social work interns are serving are African American male athletes (Sailes, 2013). Not including the voices of these athletes in my current study inherently perpetuates the racial power structure of our profession—a study done by a White female with (most likely) other White females about services offered to mostly vulnerable African American males.

As the research involves social work in sport-settings, my identity as a sports fan is another bias I bring into my work. I love sports. My family watched sports, especially baseball, every day, and the majority of my earliest memories revolve around watching sports. However, when my father passed away when I was twelve, sports became a way to remember and honor him. We would always go to baseball and basketball games together, so now whenever I watch a game, I feel close to him again. This is perhaps the reason watching baseball is one of the only things that helps when I feel intense anxiety, something I struggle with daily. Sport is a release for me. It gave me a community when I felt alone and lost. It showed me joy when I did not think there was joy left in the world. And it truly gave me hope. So, I am more than a sports fan. Sport is part of who I am.
Being a fan, as I have evolved into a sport researcher, has exposed one major bias that I hold: sport is good, or the “great sport myth” as sport research labels (Coakley, 2015). The great sport myth holds that sport is inherently good and teaches people to be good, which leads to positive individual and community development through sport. This continually gets challenged in my class work and research, but as sport has done so much for me, I strive to show the good of sport to others. I bring this view into the research. However, as my research centers around mental health, I am constantly learning about the negatives of sport, and the extreme negative influence sport can have on a athletes’ mental health (Thompson & Sherman, 2014). Exploring this tension, and how it may partially be resolved through providing social work services in sport, is what initially led me to pursue my PhD in Sport Management.

Another content of the research that I bring into this research was my own history of trauma. Just as considering the risk of traumatization and emotional risk of participants in qualitative research (Stahlke, 2018), considering how yourself as the researcher may be triggered is equally as important. This is especially essential for me in the current study as social work inherently is trauma work and going through my two field placements were some of the hardest, most challenging, albeit most rewarding, years of my life. As in this project focused on field placements, similar experiences to mine were discussed. In the clinical therapy world, this is known as countertransference. This happens when the therapist projects their own feelings or trauma history onto the client (Holmes, 2014), which has strong implications for the therapeutic relationship. This concept has been extended to qualitative research, urging qualitative researchers to be aware of the feelings
that come up for them during interviews and how that may be influencing their interactions with the interviewee, including word choice and body language (Holmes, 2014).

I would like to conclude then by making the case that even with my biases—or perhaps because of them—I am the right person to do this research. I am a social worker, who understands and values the role of social workers in all aspects of life, including sport. I was a social work student, who experienced the challenges and rewards of field. I value sport and am driven by a purpose to make sport better. I know the need for mental health and social work programming because I have had access to these services. I understand both the social work and sport management world, and can write and speak in both worlds, making multiple avenues for advocacy for social work services in sport organizations. This is my passion because of, and not despite of, my positionality and subjectivities.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined both the methodology and methods of this narrative inquiry. Specifically, I discussed the characteristics of qualitative research, and outlined the constructionist epistemology and interpretivist theoretical framework of this study. I then discussed the research design of this study, narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is the understanding of human experience through lived and told stories (Clandinin & Johnson, 2017). Specifically, this narrative inquiry sought to understand the planning stories of social work field staff establishing social work field placements in sport organizations. I then outlined my methods for data collection through narrative interviews, data analysis
through Labovian analysis (Labov, 1972) and narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008), and trustworthiness of the study. I concluded this chapter with my own subjectivity statement. The following chapter will present the findings of this narrative inquiry.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This narrative inquiry sought to understand the experiences of social work field staff establishing field placements in sport settings through their lived stories. The previous chapters contextualized this research by overviewing the history of social work in sport, internships in both social work and in sport management literature, and reviewed program planning theory with specific attention to how it relates to planning of service and experiential learning partnerships between higher education institutions and community organizations. Chapter three detailed the research design, methodology, methods, trustworthiness of the study, and my subjectivity. This chapter begins with a narrative introduction of the participants, followed by the four primary themes constructed in data analysis, and then ends with a conclusion.

Narrative Introduction of Participants

This study included eight participants. Demographics of participants are included in Table 2, which includes participants’ pseudonyms, gender, race and ethnicity, age, license, highest degree, and current position title. In the narrative introductions, more detail is included about the participant, their connection to social work in sport, and their career as social workers and within social work field departments.

Dante

Dante is a participant-selected pseudonym for a 53-year-old White male who has been working within a field department for over ten years. Prior to entering his role as the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Licensed</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Associate Director of Field (Former)/Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Assistant Field Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leo</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Field Instructor/Field Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merritt</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Field Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Field Instructor/Field Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Director of Field Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toni</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Assistant Field Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ty</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>German American</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Formerly</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Assistant Dean of Field Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Associate Director of Field, where he oversaw virtual field placements for social work students, he worked in the K-12 school systems and in private practice, and he has hosted interns himself.

Dante described that in his role as Associate Director of Field, he “Was kind of the glue that held the operations together and oversaw management of the whole process.” Dante’s passion for field education is evident. He describes himself as a “research-practitioner”, which is what drives his love for field education:

I feed off people for sure. I'm an extrovert. So, I really enjoy being around people. And I enjoy kind of that, the learning that goes on just through the engagement interaction with people, and so field was that, turned out to be the perfect fit for me, because I love the ability to stay connected to the community through the agencies and through the student experiences, to be able to rely on my practice and experience…I could bring in what I'd done. That's one thing I love about field. We've all been practitioners, so we all know what it's like…we know what it's like to be in an organization that requires community and collaboration.

Dante holds an LCSW license and received his PhD in higher education and leadership. He has recently left his old institution for a new position, but still stays connected with the social work in sport and macro social work communities.

Ella

Ella is a participant-selected pseudonym for a 46-year-old Caucasian female who has been in her role as the Assistant Field Coordinator for “Almost eight or nine years.” Ella played elite sport in college, and then coached before deciding to pursue her MSW.
Before entering her current position, she worked in several different social work positions including, “School social work, inpatient psychiatric, residential, and then private practice.” Ella states that her job responsibilities differ depending on the time of year, but at the time of the interview, she said her days consist of “Checking in with students, checking in with agencies, updating spreadsheets, and just a lot of navigating student needs, student concerns, agency concerns. So, a lot of calls, emails, and Zoom meetings.”

Ella holds an LCSW, and she is committed to advocating for the role of social work in sport. She views her position in higher education as a way to bring together her two passions of social work and sport, explaining that in her current role as the Assistant Field Coordinator she has, “Started to see a way to kind of mesh the two, and promote and advocate for sports social work.”

Leo

Leo is a participant-selected pseudonym for a 67-year-old White male who has been working within a field department as field faculty since 2005. Prior to entering the role as field faculty, Leo primarily worked in clinical settings. He began working as an adjunct instructor, which lead him to this position within the university’s field department. Leo’s dedication to field education stems from connection with the students: “I know the field of social work is very difficult. And yet, I love it. And I wanted to encourage and mentor other students, and I wanted to have them have a very positive approach to working with clients and families.”
Leo is a licensed social worker, and just recently retired from his full-time position. He currently supports the institution’s field department by acting as the social work supervisor at practicum sites that do not have a licensed social worker on staff.

Merritt

Merritt is a participant-selected pseudonym for a 39-year-old White female who has been in her position as a field coordinator for several years. She is a licensed social worker, with a background in several different direct practice positions before moving into higher education. In her current position, she works on establishing field placements and develops relationships with community partners within the state, nationally, and internationally. Merritt describes her job as: “I answer a lot of emails, and communicate with students a lot, but it's also just making sure that the pieces are running for the students.” Similarly to other participants, she also states that work in field has seasons. For her department in particular, “Summer is kind of our building time, and then in the Fall, it's kind of maintenance, and it's making sure things are going well, and checking in and getting updates.”

Merritt is active in the social work in sport community, and she has a connection to sport as she played elite athletics through college.

Ryan

Ryan is a participant-selected pseudonym for a 70-year-old Caucasian male who has been working with his school’s field department since 1997. He worked for almost 15-years as a medical social worker before moving into higher education. He describes
his job as, “We place the students, and then we are the field liaison with them, and then of course, we're grading them along the way, and evaluating their performance. We have a meeting with the field instructor out in the field, and so, that's really the crux of the job: developing agencies, placing in agencies…” He also teaches courses for the social work department.

Ryan is a licensed social worker and currently moving away from his full-time position. Ryan states that he has been focusing on promoting social work in sport since 2012, and he has a background in coaching where he integrates his social work skills.

Sarah

Sarah is a researcher-selected pseudonym for a 42-year-old White female who has been working within a field department since 2010. She began her career doing direct clinical practice with mandatory populations and with individuals with intellectual disabilities. She then moved on to a more macro-role doing program development before the field department position “Just fell into my lap.” Sarah is a licensed social worker, and her current title is Director of Field Education. She now primarily coordinates the institution’s MSW field placements.

Sarah says her favorite thing about her position is that she gets to connect with students as well as gets to work with community agencies:

I always describe it, like half of my job, I still get to be an educator and be with college students who are, have so many ideas, so much energy, like that just energy is awesome to be around. But then also the other half of my job is still maintaining those relationships with agencies and kind of trying to keep my finger
on the pulse of what's going on in practice, which is cool, and having all of those, you know, the network and those relationships. So yeah, kind of best of both worlds I feel like, because it's like half of my job is teaching, half of it is the practicum coordination.

Sarah describes her job responsibilities as mainly administrative meetings, meetings with students, and, what she terms, “site development.”

**Toni**

Toni is a participant-selected pseudonym for a 54-year-old Caucasian female who has been working as the Assistant Field Director for a social work department since 2016. Toni is a licensed social worker, and in her current position, she works to coordinate the university BSW field placements and teaches macro-level social work courses. Prior to deciding to make a career change, Toni worked primarily with older adults, and was the associate executive director of a prominent organization serving older adults, where she spent much of her time in program development and advocacy.

Toni describes her job as working one-on-one with students to match them with agencies. Additionally, she describes her work with agencies as:

Meeting with them, then making the calls, screening the agencies to make sure that they have someone who can supervise, that they can do you know all of the competencies and have practice behaviors for each one of those, that they're willing to do weekly supervision, develop learning contracts, that type of thing. I work with faculty liaisons on which agencies they're going to be working with. And when we actually get in, I obviously have to confirm all the placements, I
have to work with background checks, all of that, and anything else that the agency requires in regard to any type of background work. And then, in the actual semester, I coordinate the seminar.

Toni loves that her job includes networking and working with community organizations. She states that working in a field department is a good fit for her because, “What I found was that I really enjoyed in my job being able to network and work with agencies in the community. I'm pretty much an extrovert.”

Ty

Ty is a participant-selected pseudonym for a 53-year-old German American cisgender female. She has been in her role as the Assistant Dean of Field Education in a social work department for almost 14 years. Prior to entering her current position, she worked as a field liaison and in various capacities with several other community service organizations in the area. Although she does not have an elite sport background, Ty did work at an experiential outdoor education program and formerly held a clinical social work license.

Ty describes her current job responsibilities as “Lots of email, lots of email, lots of program coordination, lots and lots of program coordination.” Ty states that a job as field director is not for everyone:

Field directors come and go, because it's, it's a hard job… I mean, there are so many jobs hard in so many ways. I don't mean to say that it's harder. It's, it's, um, it's just so dadgum constant. You're just constantly on a treadmill. There's never, never, never, never a down time.
However, she loves the hard work and constant challenge her position provides. The fact that her work provides constant change and problem solving energizes her. Ty states that in her role she “Feels like a power lifter… field directors are power lifters.”

**Study Themes**

Between the Labovian analysis (Labov, 1972) and the narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008), I constructed four themes: (a) impact of sport culture and organizational context; (b) building social capital through relationships; (c) deconstructing misconceptions; and (d) operational negotiations. Impact of sport culture and organizational context includes the categories of differences between elite and community sport, gatekeeping, and negotiating insider/outsider positionality. Building social capital through relationships includes the categories of networking, building the relationship, and sustaining the relationship. Deconstructing misconceptions includes the categories of critical incident, educating sport stakeholders, and educating social work stakeholders. Operational negotiations includes the categories of stakeholders, program structure, and evaluation. See Appendix C and Appendix E for the codebooks that show the construction of codes to categories to themes in my data analysis process.

**Impact of Sport Culture and Organizational Context**

The first theme constructed from participants’ narratives was the impact of sport culture and organizational context. This theme provides insights into the cultural differences in working with an elite sport organization (i.e., professional or collegiate athletics) versus working with a community or youth sport organization. The closed off
culture of sport, especially elite sport, lead to many stories involving gatekeeping, as well as the ways in which participations negotiated their insider/outsider positionality in their work with the sport organizations.

**Differences Between Elite and Community/Youth Sport**

Throughout each participant’s planning stories, there were clear differences between the process of planning a field placement with an elite sport organization, primarily collegiate athletic departments and professional sport organizations, and the process of planning a field placement with community and/or youth sport organizations. Much of these differences were related to the cultural differences of the organizations.

Several of the participants consistently discussed the culture of elite athletics as a closed system. As Ryan described in discussing difficulty in access to the athletic department on his campus, for both himself and for students who may be interested in an internship, “I don't know if it's like this all over, but the athletic department here is sort of a cloistered unit, you know. They don't like to talk about what happens or what they do inside the athletic department.” Indeed, a few participants, when speaking about the culture of elite collegiate athletics, likened it to the military. Laughing somewhat, Ty explained,

Athletics is, at least here at [current institution], but I understand in other places as well, is kind of an entity unto itself, a fortress. You know, I think last time I made the parallel to a military culture, like they have their way of doing things, and I don't mean to place blame at all. I mean, I think that the reality is, they are dealing with a lot of different tensions and pressures. They've got the NCAA, rightfully,
monitoring them, you know, and making sure that they're held accountable, so that means that they have a lot of rules and structure in place, so it's a big bureaucracy. And it is insular by design. It's designed to kind of protect the players, to protect the program to protect the coaches. In terms of a closed system versus an open system, it's a much more closed system.

Ty’s description of the athletic department as a closed, military-like system opened her story about how, it “just felt different” than work with other agencies, even though the process of establishing the field placement with the athletic department was similar (i.e., same timeline, same official forms):

I don't want to say normal, but for a typical internship, if you have a conversation with the field instructor, you have a conversation maybe with somebody higher up in the agency somewhere, but it tends to be less formal, it tends to, you know, there's a little bit of paperwork to fill out on the front end, then you meet and everybody's talking and amicable and trying to figure out where the expectations are at. With athletics, my experience was, like, even when we sent the database stuff and said, “Hi, would you please register in the database?” They were like, “What is this for?” You know, so there was questioning from the very beginning about even our introductory onboarding processes. “How is it going to be used?”

Ty concluded that her work with the athletic department on campus was more about gaining appropriate approval. She laughed and stated, “In many ways, it was a more, certainly more confidential space, so it was like I was applying for higher levels of
clearance with the FBI.” To demonstrate how the closed off nature of elite athletics might impact the relationship with the social work department, which ultimately may hinder implementing field placements, Leo recounted a story of a student-athlete on his campus that was accused of sexual assault. During the investigation, the student-athlete was admitted into the social work program, leading to push back from several student organizations on campus. Leo concluded the story referencing back to some of the challenges facing social work departments in placing social work interns in athletic departments:

He ended up leaving the program, but it's funny, our perspective and the athletic department perspective, you're just (trying) to get everybody understanding each other and communicating with each other, but I think it's mainly that they don't want to talk about it, or when it does happen, they want to cover it up…So, they're afraid you know that if we have social workers around maybe they'll do more uncovering of things, where we say that social workers could help in dialogue and working it through and doing healing and reparation.

Tellingly, some participants also discussed that the closed off nature of elite athletics limited the ability to establish a field placement in the first place, as sport organizations were weary of bringing in individuals they viewed as outsiders. For example, Dante, in describing his experience of trying to establish a field placement in his former institution’s athletic department, told the story of why the placement never happened, even though they were able to get an initial meeting. He sets up the story describing the athletic department as a “closed system” and one that does not want
“prying eyes”. He continued, recounting a meeting he had with the athletic department’s academic advising staff:

I remember doing a presentation to them, and just kind of, you know, talking with their leadership, and it just kind of got squashed, and we were really hopeful that it could happen, and we kind of pushed back to where like, “I don't know if the advisor thing, some of that could be a good internship, but we also would like to do some counseling with the students. We would like to be involved with them in other ways.” You know, and they were like, “That's a little too much for us.” So, they really, they were going to prescribe the terms of how they wanted the services to be delivered. I think they were concerned about what might happen if others got involved. So, it ultimately didn't really transpire.

Similarly, many participants discussed how the main concern elite sport organizations had around bringing in social work interns in a clinical role was around confidentiality. Merritt, who has just recently begun placing interns with the athletic department, recalled that there several discussions about confidentiality. She explained, “We do have big name athletes in [the university], there is that piece where there's some national recognition, but at the end of the day, our students should be protecting the confidentiality of any client they're working with, regardless of who they are.” Leo also discussed that the primary concern when working with elite athletic organizations was, “They're afraid about confidentiality.”

To overcome the challenges of working with a closed off and protective system, many participants pointed to the importance of being explicit and transparent in the
planning process. For example, Ty stated you have to be prepared, which starts with “Sharing lots of documents.” She continued explaining, “Which you know of course we always do, but I got the impression that they read them.” In reflecting on the formality of this process, she continued,

It took us a long time to get an audience with the guy, and so when I met with him, you know, it was an auspicious occasion. You dress up, you go to the big meeting room with a big table, and we had kind of a normal-ish conversation, but it just, you know, you had to really have your ducks in a row to get into the room.

Ella, who has worked on placements both in her institution’s athletic department and at a local community college athletic department, stated that her main strategy was to validate the athletic departments’ concerns about bringing in a social work intern: “I did a lot of validating and reassuring about respecting the culture and understanding and demonstrating that I had enough awareness to know, so really, that was really the kind of main thing I tried to convey.”

Many of the participants also placed students in community and youth sport organizations, where sport was used as one of the primary forms of intervention for at-risk populations. Sarah, who has worked mainly with youth, community-based organizations, described an exemplar of this type of placement:

We have a student that is now doing part of her advanced placement at a camp for at risk kiddos in our community, like a day camp. And so, they're doing, you know, archery and all kinds of different sports like that. So, they're fishing, they're learning all kinds of stuff together and she's providing the leadership to the
student teachers that are actually, they're the ones that are partially responsible for the curriculum, but then she's there as a social emotional behavioral support, and also to help them in understanding what's going on perhaps in their larger environment, what's going on with their diagnosis, that kind of thing. So that's been neat.

Several participants also placed students in virtual sport-related organizations, primarily related to the need for more virtual placements due to the COVID-19 pandemic that limited in-person interaction beginning in March of 2020. One organization that came up in almost every interview was the Alliance of Social Workers in Sports (ASWIS), which is an international organization focused on advocating for the role of social work in sport. They also offer virtual, macro-level internships for students, where students work on organizational policies and other organizational tasks.

Interestingly, whereas the stories surrounding elite sport focused on the closed off nature of the organization, the stories surrounding youth and community sport did not indicate challenges entering into a partnership with the organizations, but challenges ensuring social work interns were getting the opportunities to engage in specific social work-related learning activities. Ty stated in reference to social work students who had completed their bachelors-level internship at other universities in youth sport organizations, “There are definitely programs that just let them go and never check in on them, and it makes me crazy, because then those students apply to our program, and we're like, ‘What do you know how to do?’ They're like, ‘Oh, kick a soccer ball. That's it.’” Ty ended this story by re-iterating the importance of the one-hour per week social
work supervision with the social work interns. Leo recounted similar challenges in working with youth and community sport organizations. Leo told a story of a student he was working with who was placed in a youth sport organization that used squash as an activity with the kids. The student intern was initially not getting much specific social work-related learning activities:

The first student that was there said, “I really like it there, and I love working with the kids, but I feel like, I'm basically just playing with them, and they're teaching me how to play squash, and the kids love that. They’d say, “Oh, yeah, come on, Miss (student name), we're going to show you how to do it.” And that was the way of them to sort of test her out and build a relationship with her, and they always want her to play squash. So, she was willing to do that, but then I had to work with the field instructor and have a meeting and say, “Now let's see what we could do to move this to the next level.”

Similar concerns arose around having students work with community and youth sport organizations that offered virtual placement opportunities. Sarah, who worked with ASWIS several times to place students, described her initial hesitations about a virtual placement. Commenting specifically on the lack of a physical space for the student to work, Sarah stated,

At that point in time, my mind was thinking, you know, you need an office space, some sort of physical space, some sort of place so that you could have a routine, so that you knew, hey, this is your start date for the day, this is your end date for the day. That was my thinking back then. Like I said, my view has changed, but I
was just wanting to make sure that she had the structure that she needed, so that it
would be an organized experience.

Toni had similar hesitations about a virtual opportunity for a student with a therapeutic
riding placement: “I was probably a little reticent when somebody said therapeutic horse
riding and it could be all virtual. It's like, what do they ride? You know, what do you
mean it can be all virtual?” Although the student ultimately had a positive experience
working on organizational policies and other macro-level tasks.

Like with the elite sport organizations, overcoming the challenges of working
with youth and community sport organizations also involved clear communication and
expectations so that the participants were certain the social work interns were having
meaningful social work experiences, such as Leo’s follow-up conversation with the field
instructor at the squash organization. Sarah also explained that her worries about the
unstructured nature of the ASWIS virtual placement were quickly quelled by how
organized the field instructor was:

One of the things that (the field instructor) did that I liked is he actually typed up
a weekly to-do list for her. So, in addition to her learning contract, and not very
many instructors or agency supervisors do that, so that was kind of unusual, and
very much appreciated for her. You know, you have your learning contract, but
then sometimes you don't actually go back and reference that every week, and so,
he would, you know, “Let's check on your progress on each of these. How are you
moving along with this project? Here's what you need to get done this week.” So,
she really had some very concrete tasks that she needed to accomplish in that
weekly list.

Toni had an interesting perspective, recounting an experience over the summer that made
her re-think how she approached nontraditional field placements. She was working with a
student, who brought up the desire to have their internship in an organization that Toni
did not think would have the right type of social work learning experiences. As Toni
explained,

I tried several other places, and finally, I talked to (the student) again and I said,

“I'm just struggling, I'm getting no’s all over the place.” And she said, “You know,
I know that you said that you didn't think this was a good one, but I really am still
interested in it, and I've had a good interaction with the woman. I actually
interviewed her for a paper in your class.” And I said, “Okay, I'm going
to call her.” And I called the woman I said, “I owe you an apology, I said, “I
should have allowed you to share with me what the possibilities were rather than
me making a prejudgment about, well, they just do visitation with children who are
separated from their parents. I should know better than that.

Bringing her story back to working with non-traditional community and youth sport
placements, and specifically referencing her openness to try the virtual therapeutic riding
placement, Toni concluded, “I think that was a learning experience for me to really allow
people to tell me their story, rather than me assuming that I knew what was best for
students. A learning experience.” In conclusion, the culture of youth and community
sport was open, but there was more concern around if students would get actual social
work experience. Yet, with appropriate communication, clear expectations, and willingness to consider innovative placements, the placements were a success. The importance of the clear expectations for both elite and community and youth sport organizations was affirmed in reviewing the documents provided. Of the five field manuals and/or field instructor guides reviewed in the document analysis, the length ranged from 41-222 pages, which an average length of 97 pages. These manuals provide information related to the placement process, the field internship requirements, field policies, and field evaluations.

Overall, the cultural context of the sport organizations, whether a youth or community sport organization or an elite sport organization, were clearly important to participants’ telling of their planning stories. Tellingly, many of the orientations of their stories focused on describing the culture of the organization or of sport generally to contextualize their reasons for certain actions in their planning process.

**Gatekeeping**

The category of gatekeeping appeared solely in the planning stories related to elite sport. Gatekeeping came up in two ways across the stories of the participants who worked with elite sport organizations. First, the participants experienced gatekeeping themselves in that it was difficult to get initial meetings with a sport administrator, so they stressed finding the “right” person. Second, many of the participants discussed how there was gatekeeping related to student access to the elite sport internships, as organizations would only take certain types of students.
In describing the general process of establishing filed placements, Sarah captured the importance of finding the person who is the gatekeeper in the organization, or the person who can make the decision if the organization can take a social work intern. She suggests that a successful field partnership begins by “Getting to the right person.” Leo agreed. In recounting his initial efforts to establish a relationship with the athletic department at his institution, he recalled being strategic in choosing to reach out to the one of the assistant athletic directors, who had a background in social work and was foundational in setting up the department’s student counseling services. Due also to this administrator’s close relationship to the head football coach, Leo knew that “He was a person that I wanted to cultivate a relationship with.”

Dante’s experience setting up a placement with the local major league baseball (MLB) baseball team also exemplified the importance of meeting with the right people, which he described as the decision makers. He recalled the meeting he had with the sport administrators about figuring out payment for an outside social work field instructor, because the organization did not have a social work hired on staff, as well as for a stipend for the social work intern. He described this conversation:

I remember distinctly with the (local MLB team), we were sitting in the (famous player) conference room, which is just unbelievable, having this conversation with their management around the program, and you know, they had me ask the closing question like, “Can you pay for a field instructor? Can you pay the stipend?” They said yes to the stipend, no to the field instructor…They could say on the spot whether they were going to do it or not.
He concluded that this was actually the benefit of working with an elite sport organization, as, in those initial meetings, you were already talking with the higher-ups of the organization. He explained that in more traditional field placements, his initial conversations were with the possible field instructor, “And a field instructor doesn't necessarily have the wherewithal to make the financial decisions sometimes. So, this was nice, because we have decision makers there and we can know one way or the other where we're going with it.” Ella shared a similar experience that highlighted the importance of getting the buy-in from the right person. In her work the athletic department at her university, she had spoken to many different individuals in athletics in the hopes to set up the field internship, but it was not until she got a meeting with the Assistant Athletic Director, one of the highest positions in the athletic department, that the internship took off. As she described:

Then I met with (the student services) director, and then the athletic trainer. I met with him, because a lot of athletic trainers see a lot of social work type stuff. So, I met with him, and everyone kept saying, “Yeah, yeah,” like, “We've tried, we're trying.” And so, then I met with the assistant athletic director, and she was full on board.

As Ella’s story suggests, it was essential for the participants working with elite sport organizations to find the decision-maker, or the right gatekeeper, whose approval was needed for the field placement to be established.

Ella’s work with the Assistant Athletic Director also exemplified the gatekeeping that happened with students themselves. In her initial conversations with the Assistant
Athletic Director about the possibility of a social work internship in the athletic department, Ella stated specifically, “And (the Assistant Athletic Director) said, ‘I don't think this could work with anyone who's not a former student athlete or an athlete themselves.’” Both Ryan and Leo mentioned similar attitudes from the athletic department at their institution. Ryan described the view of the athletic department as, “They like to pick their students, they always (have a background) with sports.” Leo believed this was an ethical dilemma, as he explained his experience with the athletic department:

I wanted the opportunities to do a field placement to be open to everybody, but they wanted more, at the athletic department, more of an elite athlete. Now our other field placements at (another university in the state) or our community-based placements, they were open to taking anybody, which I really liked. But in, at (the university), we did have a problem with them wanting just the elite athletes, and many times they wanted somebody that they knew already, which I thought was really sort of an exclusive club attitude, you know, like, “Well, you're in the club,” you know, “We'll take you. The other people we don't want.”

Ryan agreed this was an ethical dilemma, stating “In my mind, that's a little bit of a dilemma, because I don't think it really conforms to (diversity, equity, and inclusion) principles.” In recounting a story of placing a recent student, who was a former soccer player, in the athletic department, Ryan reflected on his own role in the process:

I referred a student there last year, who, well did play soccer, but I told her to contact (faculty colleague), our connection (in the athletic department), so I said,
“You want to meet her.” So, you know, they want people with that kind of background. So, I'm kind of facilitating that process, but it's a dilemma for me, how do students get referred. They don't like it to be completely open, because then, like some of our placements that become very popular, they don't want to have to sift through, you know, 25 applications for one spot, (or) interview 25 students for one spot. They want to do some pre-groundwork and know the student and do it that way.

Another diversity, equity, and inclusion ethical issue was brought up by Ty. Ty described the athletic department as her university as, “Almost all of the employees within (university’s) athletics are White, and the majority, of the employees that are within (university’s) athletics are White. The majority of athletes, student athletes, are BIPOC.” Therefore, she discussed how it was important to place BIPOC student interns in the athletic department to work the student-athletes. However, due to the culture of the athletic department, this has proven difficult. Ty described one specific instance of trying to place a student in the clinical placement at the athletic department:

We had a candidate for that placement, who was a young Black male and he applied for the placement. He and I met and talked about it individually, and I was encouraging this and that and my understanding from him was that he didn't really want that placement. He felt like he should have that placement, he went a different direction, and it seemed a really good fit for him. That was my take on it. But then, (former colleague) reached back after the fact, and said, “What happened? How come this guy didn't get it?” You know, “Why did they pick
another White female?” And so, we had a frank conversation about that, and we continue to advocate and try to direct BIPOC candidates to them, because that would better match the predominant population.

Interestingly, both Ty and Ella spoke about how they had to be selective in the students they spoke to about the opportunities for a field placement in a sport organization due to the limited number of partnerships. In reflecting on the beginning of her own awareness of social work in sport, Ty considered when students began to ask her about possible field placements in sport organizations. Ty suggested that student interest has been more recent, and therefore the field department does not advertise those placements to incoming students because, “We don’t have enough to offer to give back, and so, we’re trying to manage expectations by not putting it out there as an option.” To further exemplify the point, she told a story of another type of nontraditional field placement:

As an example, at orientation (we talked) about a student who did some dolphin-assisted therapy for kids with developmental disabilities. Now, everybody wants to do dolphin-assisted therapy, and I am like, “We're in (a land-locked region), we don't have that, I’m sorry!”

Ella shared a similar approach to recruiting students for sport-specific field placements: “I have to kind of be careful, because I don’t want to talk about (it) too much, because then if I get, you know, five or six students and they really want to, and right now we have barely one or two (placements in sport settings).” She continued that an ideal student for the placement would be a former athlete themselves, suggesting, “This one's
Taken together, the protective nature of the sport culture led to an increased need for the social work field staff to identify and get buy-in from the right gatekeeper, as well as the sport organization’s preference for a specific type of social work intern, which ultimately hindered equitable access to these internships. This inequitable access may then be further exacerbated by the limited number of internships available, leading some field staff to not advertise the internships to all the social work students.

**Negotiating Insider/Outsider Positionality**

Throughout the planning stories of the participants, it became clear that the social workers were coming into the partnership as outsiders. However, every participant negotiated their outsider positionality by positioning themselves as an insider. This was done in three ways. The first, for participants who had a background as an athlete, they used their athlete experiences to connect with the gatekeeper. Second, some participants strategically adapted part of the sport culture in their negotiations. And third, for participants with limited or no background in sport, they found an insider to help them in the planning process.

For participants who had a background in sport, their identity as an athlete was key to initially gaining buy-in from the sport organizations’ gatekeepers. Ella, who played elite sport as a student-athlete, explained how her athletic background helped her gain buy-in from the Assistant Athletic Director:
I used a lot of my own experiences as a student-athlete in college and kind of sharing what my experience was, what I saw, and so I had to rely a lot on my own athletic experience, and there was a lot of banter about everyone's own athletic experience. So, that was a common shared experience that kind of made it all relatable, and not just some random person coming in (to the athletic department) saying, “Hey, I want to have interns here.”

Ella also used her network of former teammates to help in her initial planning preparation to gain some insight into how athletic stakeholders may react to having social work interns working with athletes. She explained, “I actually reached out to all of them and talked about, ‘How would you feel about (social work interns)?’ And so, I got a lot of good feedback and kind of perspective from them.” Merritt similarly recalled that her experience as a former athlete helped her in the initial conversations that she had with the athletic department at her campus:

I think even walking into athletics and knowing, I mean, I just played (non-Division I sport), but there's still that, “Okay, that was a student athlete, they get it at some level.” So, it wasn’t Division I, but I know what it's like to show up at 6am for practices, go to class for a few hours, come back in the afternoon for conditioning and manage a travel schedule and classes and tests. There are just those pieces that I think, you know, for what we're doing, we're working with (university athletics), that you know about in a different way than just maybe hearing about it, just having that experience. So, I think there's, I don't know, maybe it legitimizes a little bit.
Ryan explained that when he first began working with sport organizations, he “wasn't as versed” in sport culture, but could rely on “my own experience in coaching” to contextualize his conversations with the athletic department at his institution.

Another strategy some participants used to position oneself as an insider was to match the business-like nature of sport organizations, which was different than approaching a traditional social work organization. Dante, for example, discussed how in working with more business-oriented organizations, such as elite sport organizations, he and his colleague approached discussions about field placements from a “closer mentality.” To Dante, this meant approaching conversations about placing interns in these organizations as making a business deal, and to do so, needing to match the business culture. To exemplify his point about working with sport organizations, Dante told a story of his work to set up a field placement with a lawyer, who was head of a charter school:

So, we're talking with him. He said, “Do you know that attorneys volunteer way more hours than social workers do? Did you know that?” And (colleague) and I were just like, “Oh, the challenge, here we go, great!” I was like, “Well, that's because we get to the office every day,” you know, kind of back-room stuff. He needed to sort of have his ego trimmed slightly, not a lot, but I think what he wanted to know he had a worthy adversary. And all that sounds maybe weird to say, but that's kind of what he wanted to know, that he was dealing, like he didn't want pushovers. So, when I sensed that, and (colleague) and I sensed that, we just
held strong and looked him right in the eye and became the social workers that can look you right in the eye and are serious about whatever it is.

Merritt shared a similar story of her first meeting with a community-based sport organization, whose program head had a background in elite college sport. She explained:

In the beginning, (they were) kind of standoffish, just like, “Social work?” You know, you can just tell. You get the vibe, like, (they are) not really sure. So, I'm selling and working it, then we get to the end, they were like, “We don't have a social worker here,” or something, and I said, “You don't have one yet!” And they looked at me, and had bought in. They were like, “When can we start? What do we do? We don't have a social worker. I know that it’s needed,” and it was just like this, “You're right.”

Merritt reflected that she believed this approach worked because it was “strong and direct.”

Finally, for individuals without a background in sport, they relied on relationships with insiders to help them establish field placements in a sport organization. Both Sarah and Toni relied on relationships with social work faculty members who worked with sport organizations already. For example, Toni discussed the first time she worked with ASWIS was because the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible for a student to complete their field hours in their original placement. Therefore, she was searching for alternate placements and connected with a faculty member who was a board member of ASWIS. She recalled the conversation:
It was basically, “(Faculty colleague), I'm desperate. I've got to find more hours for the student. What do you suggest?” And he was our BSW program director, so that's why I was having that conversation. And he said, “I have work that’s available, if you want me to talk with her, see if she thinks it's work that she'd be interested in, we can get her those hours.”

In this instance, Toni was able to use her positionality as a colleague to leverage the faculty member’s own inside connection to a sport organization to establish the field placement in short amount of time. Ty similarly used the insider perspective of a colleague who was “50% with our program and 50% there (in the athletic department)” to assure the success of the field placement. As she explained, this colleague told her, “In order for this (the field placement) to happen, we need to do all of these things.’ So, I said, ‘Okay. We will do all those things.’” As all these stories show, although participants approached negotiating their outsider positionality in different ways, strategically positioning oneself as an insider was an essential step to successfully setting up a field placement in a sport organization.

Overall, the stories in the theme of the impact of sport culture and organizational context showed how the participants had to make certain planning decisions based on the culture of the organization, which was different for elite versus youth and community sport organizations. These different types of organizational contexts also led to different types of challenges in the planning process, although the strategy of remaining open and transparent about the expectations of the field department was used to overcome both the challenge of the closed off elite sport system and the need to assure social work-specific
tasks for students in youth and community sport settings. Finally, due to the unique
culture of sport, the participants needed to negotiate their insider and outsider
positionalities to prove their understanding of sport culture to gain buy-in of gatekeepers
throughout the planning process.

**Building Social Capital through Relationships**

The second theme I constructed from the data was building social capital through
relationships, specifically focused on the relational aspect of growing a professional
network (James, 2000). This theme speaks to the importance of building and sustaining
relationships with both staff at field placements sites as well as forming a larger network
of people in sport, who might be able to facilitate new field partnerships. As Leo
recounted in reflecting on why his early conversations with the local NBA team went
well:

> I think that the fact that I have had a good relationship with (local NBA team staff
> member), that, as you know as a social worker, it's all about relationships and
> trust, because sometimes sports organizations, I have found, are really very
> protective, and it's sort of like you're trying to get a meeting with the Pope.

In the line with this process, the categories within this code are networking, building the
relationship, and sustaining the relationship.

**Networking**

Every participant spoke to the importance of networking in establishing new field
placements in sport organizations, as Toni aptly summarized, “Networking, networking is
critical in this.” Several of the field placements opportunities came directly from networking efforts. Dante explained that the internship at the local basketball arena “Come up through networking”. Several of his field department’s partnerships came from the work of one of his colleagues, who would purposely go to alumni events to network with individuals in nontraditional social work organizations that may be able to take a student as a social work intern. As Dante described his colleague’s efforts:

He would be at these alumni events and just meet people. Go up to them and just be like, “I'm (name), Hey, I'm so and so, you know, okay”, “Oh social work, who knew?” And so, he met somebody who was working with that group in the (basketball arena) during some of those networking events. I kind of said (to my colleague), “Well, I think we can do something here.” …So, the (basketball arena internship) came from kind of interaction.

Ty’s partnership with the athletic department at her university also started from her own networking efforts. Ty shared a story of how she ran into a former student at a prominent social work conference, a chance encounter that led to the clinical field placement in the athletic department:

I was at a different conference, (conference name) maybe, and ran into our alumni, who was, unbeknownst to me, employed as a therapist (in the athletic department), at the event. Of course, we were talking, we shared a cab, a ride-share or something, we shared a vehicle back to the hotel, and we're talking about it, and talking about hosting interns, and that sort of thing. And so, that crossing paths that way helped us move that direction.
Toni shared a similar experience about setting up the initial partnership with the therapeutic horseback riding organization. She was working with a student, who had medical concerns during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and was not able to complete an internship in-person. Therefore, Toni reached out to her network to see if anyone knew of a good a virtual placement: “(I) just put out a feeler to a couple of our adjuncts as well as other faculty and said, “Do you have any ideas about something that would work?” And this (the placement) came from that,” because one of the adjunct faculty members sat on the board of the therapeutic riding organization.

Building off the network of one’s own network was not uncommon for the participants. Merritt explained her connection with a local community sports organization that she is currently setting up a new placement with came from “Connections through friends and coworkers, people they knew that could get me on the agenda.” Ella too built a field placement partnership with the local community college’s athletic department through a personal connection of her boss. She explained:

Our Field Director had a personal relationship, as far as knew them (the Athletic Director) outside of work, and kind of started a conversation and they were like, “Yeah, we'd be open.” And then, we had a bunch of meetings with them, and they were open, so that's kind of how we were able to start that partnership.

Some participants also spoke about their own role in networking and connecting other social work field professionals to opportunities in social work in sport. Both Toni and Sarah discussed the social work field directors email listserv through CSWE as an important tool in networking. In reflecting on advice she might give to another social
worker looking to find a placement in sport, Toni recalled an interaction she had on the listserv:

We've had some of these kinds of conversations through the listserv, that field listserv, and I've referred people to (faculty colleague) to say, you know, you say you might be interested in this (social work in sport), this is a way you might learn more about it, he may know somebody that you can call, he may have a contact in that area.

She continued that this type of networking is important for field professionals because, “Obviously we don't mind making cold calls, but if we don't have to, nothing makes me happier to call somebody and say, you know, ‘(Name) told me to call!’” Sarah recalled a similar instance on the listserv where a conversation come up about social work field placements in sport organizations:

On our field listserv several months back, somebody had posted in there like, “We didn't even know this was the thing, what is this?” And several of us, including myself, said, “You need to go to this link, and look at this page or this organization, because it's amazing, you know, what they're doing.” So, really just connecting them to their (ASWIS) website is all I did in that instance. But, and then someone else also hopped on there and said, “Also important, you know, letting you know, they have conferences, they'll take interns.”

Leo explained that his own networking efforts of social work professionals and other professionals in sport organizations have made him the “informal information and referral person” in his state when it comes to social work in sport. Being well-known in
the field and having a large network has led to creating field parentships for Leo. In re-telling the story of how he initially got meetings with the local NBA team to discuss a possible field placement for a student, he stated:

Well, they reached out to me, because they had heard, I don't know how. It was sort of funny how things happen. People will say, “Oh, yeah, I know, (Name), she's great. Call her. Here's her number.” You know, that type of thing. But, I just got a call from the (local NBA team), from (local NBA team staff member), and he's all, “You know, we were wanting to get connected with (the university) about having some guest lecturers, and we're going to have a panel.” And so, it just kind of happened. I said, “Oh, by the way, you know, we have MSW students that are available for field placements.”

Ryan, even in thinking about the future of his work, brought to the forefront the importance of networking: “I've re-joined ASWIS, so that'll be a good thing, and so hopefully through that we'll be able to network more and make connections.” Ryan’s comment demonstrates the importance of networking to establish field placements in sport organizations that was reiterated by all the participants.

**Building the Relationship**

The category of building the relationship refers to participants’ stories of both initiating the relationship with a sport organization and then building buy-in and trust from the organization to the point where they were comfortable bringing in a social work student intern. For many participants, the initiation of the relationship began with a cold call, as Toni joked, “I would cold call the president!” Ryan explained that his relationship
with the athletic department at his institution began with a cold call to a social worker in the department, as the Dean of their school had tasked the field department with developing new field placements. He continued to explain:

I just took initiative to look up the athletic department and see who was over there, and I saw the name of (athletic department staff), who I, at the time I thought, “Well, I think he played football at (the university).” So, I was just like, I would just haul off and call people, so just taking initiative, just haul off and call people. I called him and talked with him and, you know, introduced, and all this kind of stuff.

This initial phone call set the foundation for re-igniting an internship that had somewhat gone “defunct”, as Ryan described, several years ago. In further reflecting on his work with the athletic department, Ryan went back to this phone call:

I saw (athletic department staff) name and that he was in counseling. I said, “Well, I'm going to, I'm calling him,” because the people in the outreach program are not social workers, so he is a social worker. So, I said, “I'm calling (athletic department staff) and see what's happening there.” And so, I initiated and pursued another line, which is pretty common with what we'll do in field.

Ryan concluded stating the importance of this conversation for building the relationship with the athletic department: “It's pretty informal in that way, but it was through a get to know you discussion. So, he got to know me, and we hadn't met yet, but you know from that I think he trusted me, I trusted him.” Merritt also discussed the importance of the initial meeting in gaining buy-in from the organization. She described her initial meeting
with a community sport organization, where she has not yet placed a student, as “Spent that meeting getting in the door and getting social work on the table and the agenda and in their minds.” From there, she made “multiple touches” with the organization through emails, so that when she makes the request to place a student it does not feel like it is out of the blue for the organization. Merritt came back to this point when reflecting on how she built a relationship with the athletic department at her institution, suggesting that “the follow up communication as there were questions” was helpful.

Both Ty and Ella discussed how being open and transparent with field organizations and their field instructors and task supervisors helped build an effective relationship. In discussing how she alleviated the concerns of the athletic department, Ty stated:

You try to speak their language, right. They want forms and structure and whatever, so you provide them everything that they need. You try to be as open: “I am not scary. We are not trying to get you. Of course, we would not share anything on social media. Of course, we will abide by FERPA. Of course, we would.” You know, so just (being) very reassuring.

Thus, Ty concluded, effective relationship building with the athletic department came from being “Consistent and predictable and transparent.” Ella made a similar point, stating that she “kind of developed friendships” and as “enjoyable conversations” with the organizations and field instructors she works with. To exemplify this, Ella told a story about her relationship with a field instructor in a non-sport organization:
I just talked to the field instructor today, and she was a former student of mine when she was a BSW, now she has her LCSW, she's doing substance abuse. And she interviewed a student that I'm trying to place, that I was going to place with her, and it didn't go well. She was like, “I have some concerns about the student,” and she was like, “I'm going to be real frank with you, Ella, I'm open to anything, but I just had some reservations.” And I'm like, “If you have reservations, then trust your gut. Let's not force it.” And so, that's the kind of banter that I promote, like be honest with me and I'll be honest with you.

Ella concluded her story reiterating the point that relationship building with field organizations in general starts with “A lot of transparency.”

Many participants had difficulty pinpointing exactly how relationships with sport organizations were built, instead suggesting it was an organic process. As Leo described after recounting a field placement he facilitated in a high school setting where the student worked with track and field team, “It's more organic. It's not as if we have the playbook, you know, this is what you do when you want to contact an organization and here's step 1, 2, 3, and 4.” Merritt described her relationship building with ASWIS similarly as “A natural conversation.” As she reflected, “I think it was a very natural progression of just that relationship building with them, going into (the ASWIS) conference, meeting everyone, things like that.” Sarah also reflected on her relationship building with ASWIS in this way, as she remembered the first time she thought about a placement with a sport organization was “when I was having a casual conversation” with a faculty member who was on the ASWIS board. For Sarah, these more casual conversations then grew into
more formal conversations about the logistics of what a field placement with ASWIS would look like, “Because I was definitely interested, and thought he is so student oriented, I knew that there would be students somewhere along the way that would be interested.” Now, she has placed several students with ASWIS.

Whether through very specific strategies, such as a cold calling and being purposefully transparent, or through a more organic process, relationship building was a key step for all the participants in establishing new, and many times innovative, field partnerships with sport organizations.

**Sustaining the Relationship**

Interestingly, sustaining field placements with sport organizations was the most difficult for the participants. Many participants further emphasized maintaining strong relationships with individual staff members as important to sustainability efforts, especially when the field organization does not take a student every year. Ryan, who had built a relationship with a social worker embedded in the athletic department at his institution, explained how he sustained their relationship:

> You know, (athletic department staff) and I became sort of like acquaintances and friends, and you know, we'd play golf together here and there. And we just stayed in contact. At the (university basketball arena), I would see him, my son and I would see him, he was like the mayor of (university basketball arena), basketball is his sport. So, I would see him around campus, at sporting events, and talk to him, and so, we just stayed in loose contact. And then, they would take a student here and there.
Toni also pointed to the importance of sustained contact with a staff member at a sport organization, even when the correspondences or conversations were not directly related to a field placement. As she recalled her relationship with a faculty college and board member of ASWIS:

You know, just really kind of always being very interested in saying, “What is it you're working on? What is it you're doing? And is there anything that I can do to be helpful?” You know, (faculty colleague) would call on me if he knows that there’s something that I could do that would be beneficial, or anything that he's doing that would be beneficial to me as well. So yeah, so just keeping that real, open communication and inquisitiveness, I think this is the key to cultivating the relationship with him.

Sarah shared similar reflection on her own relationship with the same faculty colleague, stating that sustaining the relationship with them has “Been pretty informal.” She continued:

He shares with our department new opportunities through ASWIS. Like, for example, a couple of years ago, they had a really cool thing where they went to (an NBA) game, I think it was, and offered this whole mental health training and just get to stay and watch the game. Like anything, their annual conference, of course, he always shares with the department what the theme is, when it's offered, those kinds of opportunities to connect

As the interviews for this dissertation took place over the summer months of 2021, not surprisingly several participants discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic
impacted the sustainability of their field partnerships with sport organizations. Merritt, in discussing the progress she made with field placements in the athletic department at her own institution, stated, “Then the pandemic hit that spring, so we didn't place (there) this last Fall.” Merritt continued that she knew the task supervisor she had been working with at the athletic department “Was having to take things off her plate…I was like… I know where you are coming from!” Luckily, now that the United States has access to vaccinations for COVID-19, and more and more workplaces are going back to in-person work, she is back in discussions with the athletic department about placing social work students there.

Ella similarly discussed that the COVID-19 pandemic had put a halt on the conversations she was having with the athletic department at her university, and it was not until a former student-athlete entered the program and wanted a sport-based internship that she reinitiated conversations with the athletic department:

I really was just waiting to see when we got back to typical times, because if I knew anything, (for) the athletic departments, it was crazy this year. (With) COVID, the “We can't practice, we can practice, how are we going to have a season, what are we going to do?” And I was like, they do not have, I think that was more of my thing was like, you know what, I'm not going to damage the work I have already done by badgering them. This is not a priority right now, but I knew once we get back into typical times, it's going to be a priority, because we're going to start to see a lot more mental health from this past year. So, I think that that's been kind of my game plan of like, I'm just going to sit tight and wait
until they can actually move forward. So, the student thing is going to be great. I don't, it's like I didn't have to be the annoying one. It just kind of came and reignited, so I'm curious to see how it’ll work.

Therefore, part of sustaining the partnership, even at a time period as difficult as the COVID-19 pandemic, was being sensitive to the needs of the organizations and the needs of the individual staff member they were working with, and thus figuring out the best timing to reignite field placement discussions.

Throughout participants’ stories, clearly sustaining the relationship with individual staff members was important; however, one of the biggest challenges to sustainability come from lack of buy-in from the organization as whole, as several participants spoke about how when field placements ended, it was because the staff member they were working with left the organization. Leo recalled a field placement he had built ending this way:

I did have (a student) at (another university in the state) in their athletic department, but she's graduated now. And unfortunately, the task supervisor left, and they have a new one, and they didn't renew the slot for a social work student. That's what we were having trouble is that we've had a hard time maintaining field placements.

Ryan discussed a field placement with a youth sport organization where he had several social work student interns placed: “We had management students in there, and then the director left.” Ty, whose field department had placed both case management and clinical student interns in the athletic department at her institution, reflected on how after the field
supervisor left for the case management placement, there was not an effort to continue the placement:

There were not conversations about keeping that up, because they didn't have anyone to supervise it, and because, again, I don't want to speak for (the field supervisor), but, my sense, as someone who was meeting with him regularly for supervision, was that they never, he never got enough traction, that it wasn't valued by the powers-that-be, maybe it was valued by the students, maybe it was valued by a coach or two, the basketball coach. And that reminds me of a school setting, right? We have internships in different schools, and it makes all the difference in the world if the principle supports having social work services, and if they don't support having social work services, then it doesn't matter how many needs there are, it's not going to work. So, people shift their focus. So that's what it reminded me of. He was able to make some inroads with the basketball coach, because the basketball coach supported it, maybe because (the field instructor) had some experience with basketball, and so therefore, they had that connection. I don't know if that played a role, but he never really got traction in the other settings. And then once he was gone, and that happens a lot in field is it's very dependent on the person, if you've got somebody there who wants it, then it's good, and if you don't, then it doesn't work and it doesn't matter how many educational opportunities or needs are there.

In a follow-up to this discussion, Ty reflected on what would happen if the field instructor for the clinical placement similarly left:
We would get in there (and say) “How can we help?” One of the things that we do is, when an agency loses their social worker, we have tried to get in there and help them identify in their job posting, we want them to request somebody with a social work degree. We have been on panels, interview panels, on teams. So, we find ways to do things like that. With (the university) athletics, we would absolutely have to do something like that. As soon as, if one or both of those people left, we'd have to get in there immediately and start, “Okay, how are we going to get another social worker?” We have to be very proactive.

As both of Ty’s stories exemplify, organizational, not just individual, commitment to have a social work intern is needed for sustainability.

Dante summarized a similar challenge of sustainability succinctly in stating, “There's the agency, and this was oftentimes the nontraditional social work agency, that they're going to try with one (intern) and they get one that fills the need, and then they hire that one, and then they don’t have a need for another one.” He continued explaining, “The sustainability piece is sort of finding that sweet spot where an agency has a need, has a continual need, but also has a hiring need, (because) you're going into spaces that don't have a social worker there.” Dante gave an example of his work with the local MLB team as a successful sustainability effort:

We were fortunate with (the former student intern) at the (local MLB team’s) foundation. He got there, they loved him, they hired him, and then the next year, (with) the same field instructor, we supplemented him supporting another student
there while (the former student intern) was the (task supervisor). And then once he hit his two years, he became the field instructor. So, that worked.

He concluded that with these types of nontraditional social work field placements, such as sport organizations, the sustainability effort is “More sustainability of the idea (of social work in sport) or the network of ideas than it is the individual placement.”

Similarly, Ryan described his and his team’s approach to growing a network of field placements in sport settings as a “multipronged approach”, where advocacy and education around social work in sport was a foundational and on-going effort. The challenges around individual internship sustainability—i.e., losing a field placement site because the task supervisor left or losing a field placement site because the coach who supported the internship left—are related to the lack of macro-level sustainability. In other words, because social work in sport is not yet a normalized practice in either the social work profession or in sport organizations, even when there is individual buy-in, there remains less organizational buy-in.

Overall, the theme of building human capital through relationships captured the importance of using the participants’ own interpersonal skills to build a network of professionals in sport organizations and then build personal relationships with these individuals. However, it appears that the social capital built at an interpersonal level, for many of the participants, did not translate to building a long-lasting relationship with the organizations themselves, which limits sustainability efforts. Ultimately, participants thus spoke to the need for more macro-level efforts to build a growing field of social work in sport as key to sustainability of field placements in sport settings. This challenge and
approach to the sustainability of placements leads into the next theme, deconstructing misconceptions.

**Deconstructing Misconceptions**

As the subspecialty of social work in sport is an emerging field, there are many misconceptions surrounding the practice of social work in sport. The theme of deconstructing misconceptions encapsulated the experiences of the participants needing to educate social work and sport stakeholders—as well as themselves—on social work in sport as part of the multipronged approach to establishing field placements in sport organizations. This theme has the following categories: (a) critical incident; (b) educating sport stakeholders; and (c) educating social work stakeholders.

**Critical Incident**

Each participant spoke about their own journey into social work in sport, and how they experienced some type of critical incident that led them to consider the role social workers could play in sport. These critical incidents ultimately resulted in participants’ own advocacy for sport-specific field placements. Ella shared how her own experience as a collegiate-level athlete opened her eyes to need for student-athletes to have access to behavioral health services:

I started out at (a university) and played for a year and then redshirted my sophomore year, and then I transferred to (another university), and then played three years there. So, in looking at the transition of transfers and seeing the support that could have been given…there was a lot of academic support, and
what I saw with my teammates, there was a lot of academic support, but not social-emotional support.

She concluded, “Knowing what I know having been a clinical social worker, how much support would have definitely improved a lot of student athletes (experiences).”

Ryan also discussed how his experience coaching opened his eyes to the needs of athletes. He discussed that, although he had worked on and off with some sport placements, they were not consistent. However, he recalled a turning point for him when he attended a coaching workshop:

I didn’t really go out seeking sport type placements at that time. And it really wasn't until about, you know, as I started to coach youth baseball, and I went, and honest to God, I went to an all-day clinic put on by (the university) baseball coach and his staff in the winter, in one winter in about 2009. And he (the baseball coach), only he's down at (another university) now, and he brought his playbook and as I'm sitting there, the light bulbs just go up, and I’m like this guy's a social worker! The way he’s doing strength-based and he's behavioral this and that, he is giving us all these tips about how to coach kids and being positive, and he said, “Don't tell them what the adults want them to do.” All the stuff that he built into us, and the whole way he ran his team. My head was about ready to explode that day. So, I caught fire and realized that I could, and I am getting chills because it was so powerful. So, I went back and I'm starting to talk to my colleague (in the field department)…
Ryan went on to describe many other steps in the building of momentum around social work in sport in his field department, including the influential work of two students who interned, and then worked in, the university’s athletic department. However, for Ryan, his passion for social work in sport goes back to that moment at the coaching clinic. As he concluded his overall story of the field initiative at his university, “But I attributed a lot to the baseball coach. He just he just put me on fire.”

Other participants spoke about moments during their sport fandom that opened their eyes to the human issues that athletes face. Dante, for instance, explained:

I'll tell you, I didn't know it was sports social work at the time, but it was back in my college days, I might have shared the story with you, that one of our star point guards, he went up against (big name university) and I went to (a different university), we weren't a big basketball power, we had a good stretch. And he went up against (a star player), who was a nationally recognized point guard, and he schooled them during the NCAA tournament, and he was hot property. And two years later, he was homeless and penniless. And you know, I remember feeling like something's wrong with this scenario where someone can be celebrated so much, and then the next thing, you know, they're out in the street. And then I started realizing how widespread that was. So, by the time I got to (former institution) as a full-time employee, I was well on the sports social work bandwagon.

Similarly, Ty pointed to the experience of the elite college football player: “I've worked with children of incarcerated parents, and (the football player has struggled with similar
issues). I think it's very heavy to go from small town, high school football to big stage.”

Ty also pointed to her interactions with colleagues who had work experience in athletics as influential in increasing her own understanding of social work in sport. She spoke of her relationship with two social work colleagues, stating:

The two people that I've been closest to at (the university) athletics related to student activities have both been Black, both African American, and they have talked about how challenging it is to be in the hierarchy, and how they feel very, they are very much in the minority and feel very much in the minority, and the importance of that representation, particularly in that environment.

She continued that one colleague in particular, “Brought to my awareness a lot more about some of the stuff that's in the news right now, where you know, maybe athletes should be paid. Are they being exploited?”

Toni also discussed how conversations with social work faculty colleagues who studied sport were influential in her understanding, as she suggested it was “not until I interviewed” at her current university that she ever thought about social work sport. She continued, laughing, “I am like a bloodhound. Somebody tells me something interesting, and I put my nose to the ground, and I just start looking for stuff.” Toni pointed to several professional development opportunities, including attending webinars on the legal issues in sport and attending a talk given by student-athletes on their mental health. She also spoke about getting involved in ASWIS and was especially impressed by their advocacy and policy positions. Connecting their work on family etiquette in youth sport, Toni reflected on her own sport experience:
I play golf with my dad, and he coaches me constantly. I'm like, “I'm 55. I'm never going on the tour, dad. Let’s just play and have fun, you know, knock it off.” And so, I think that that's something that's really interesting to me is thinking about it from that perspective, is, you know, how do we encourage people to be fans, but also to have some civility?

However, she pointed to one specific experience that was really impactful for her:

(Faculty colleague) had to be out of town one weekend, and since I live close, I'm one of the closest ones to campus, he asked me to go over and meet with a football recruit with him and his family and talk to them about the social work curriculum. So being able to do that, you know, they want to make sure that they’re son gets to do the sports, but they also want to make sure he gets his degree. And so, how do we work with those students around flexibility with class? What types of support are available to them in regards to writing, learning, you know, that type of stuff? So, that was kind of a neat experience for me to have.

Sarah similarly connected the work of a colleague focused on fan etiquette to her own experience, reflecting, “As a parent, even personally, I'm just kind of fascinated with that whole thing. Going to my kiddos’ sports and seeing the wide variety of spectator behavior and how that influences athletes.”

Both Leo and Merritt shared how their social work experience prior to entering field incorporated aspects of sport, even if they did not conceptualize their work as social work in sport at the time. Merritt shared that in a previous social work position, leading group therapy with adolescents, she would focus on, “Designing things for them to do
outside, playing different games, learning the rules, working through frustrations in that way, how can we do some anger management here versus just working through a workbook.” In this way, she acknowledged that she was using sport as a social work intervention without “really knowing that it was a thing” yet. Leo similarly described his path into social work in sport as “the most unusual entrance”, as he was not an elite athlete himself, rather worked in after school programs with children. However, in this work, he also used sport as an intervention: “I started a program with a colleague of an after-school sport program. And it was, it was very unusual, because it was non-competitive and it followed a model called ‘new games’, where it was mainly activity where kids would play together.”

Every participant shared their own story into social work in sport, which was influential in their own advocacy for the subspecialty of social work in sport. These advocacy efforts are captured in the next categories, educating sport stakeholders and educating social work stakeholders.

**Educating Sport Stakeholders**

Several of the participants spoke about the importance of educating sport stakeholders about the social work profession as an important strategy to establish field placement in sport organizations. Ty shared a story about the importance of expanding the knowledge of social work in the sport world, recounting the reason that the first time the field department attempted to get a field placement set up in the athletic department over ten years prior was not successful:
We had a representative who was a full professor, full tenured, you know, has a center on campus named after her that sort of thing, so she's on the athletic board. She's like, “Yes, this would be great.” And the people were like, “Yeah, that'd be great. Wouldn’t that'd be great?” “That'd be great, wouldn't it?” And so, you know, you try to say, “Yeah, let's, that'd be great. Let's talk about how great it would be.” They'd be like, “Okay, yeah let's do that.” Yeah, so it seemed like a gentle person’s agreement that it would be great, but there was no political will or the resources. I don't know, 10, 12 years ago, I don't know that they valued social work within sport, I mean, that's indicative of the whole field, right?

As Ty’s story shows, it was not until more recently that sport organizations began to value a social work perspective, and without a foundational understanding, it makes it more difficult to get the organization to buy into hosting a social work intern. Therefore, many of the participants discussed how, even if it was not specifically towards establishing a specific field placement with a specific sport organization, general education of people in sport on social work would ultimately increase the number of organizations who may be willing to take an intern. As Leo stated:

We need to educate the field of sport around the value of sports social work, because I remember, we went over to the athletic department and kind of a big deal in philanthropy and sport flew in from (another state), and we met with him, and we really tried to explain to him about what would be the value of having social work students involved. So, it's a lot as I said, I know I'm repeating myself, but it's education, education, education.
Dante agreed, “When it came to sports, we would be advocating for the fact that there are these undercurrents of issues that are taking place.” He gave the example of one specific conversation:

In fact, one of the conversations, I’m not sure who was with, it may have been with the (basketball arena), when we kind of talked about the referees, like the amount of mental health challenges that the referees have, and just having been like a referee for some college and intermural games, I can attest it’s no easy gig. So, you know, there were some good conversations that came out where we can say, “Look, we know there's these undercurrents that are in existence, and we have skill sets that can match or can feed into those, and, and allow them to kind of be talked about and dealt with, and so, you can be more comfortable in your role.”

These educational efforts were also essential during early conversations in work with sport organizations. Ella explained in her efforts to create an internship placement in the athletic department for a graduate student who was also a student-athlete, she and her field colleague met with the student and her coach to speak about what the internship would look like. She stated that the conversation was effective, as “It was fun for me to talk with the coach and educating him on social workers.” Both Leo and Ryan discussed that the lack of knowledge many sport organizations have about social work was one of the biggest challenges they faced. As Leo explained the biggest challenge he has faced has been, “People not understanding the nature of social work, and not seeing how a social worker would be an asset to their organization. So, I try to have very specific
examples of how a student would be able to serve them.” He recalled one specific conversation:

I remember talking to the field instructor, and she was, I think, I don't know if her degree was in higher ed or in counseling or whatever, but we were talking about the social work perspective and our unique way of working with athletes and I would give her, we were talking about situations and how we might approach it. So, I think a big part of it is educating, you know telling them about it, because people have, at least I don't know how it is in (another state) or in (another state), but in (this state) people have a very weird view of social work that we're the welfare workers, and we're going to come in and say, “Well, you can't have a refrigerator,” or, “I'm going to take your baby away.” They don't really understand us as clinicians, as political social workers, as managers, as educators, as program design people. So, we in (this state) have to do a lot of education about what is contemporary social work, and a lot of the people we talk to, they have no idea that macro social work is something that we could do, you know, what you do in management and leadership. That's not even on their radar screen. So, we have to say, “Well, no, we have people that are experts in corporate design and diversity training and team development.” And so, it's a lot of education. I would think that is the biggest part.

Ryan agreed that being prepared to do this type of education was a key skill for field staff working with sport organizations. In reflecting on his own experiences, he stated:
It's good to do your homework and, so that you're educated, because again, the agencies that I always got the best responses were from when we were sitting there, when we talked about the specifics of what they do, and what the competencies are. So, if they're working in a sports organization, or sports specific program, boom, we talk about well, “What do the assessments look like, and what is the intervention? Sports are the intervention. How are you going to use that in your working with your team? How’s the social work student going to use that in working with your team? Are there things that you wanted to do more in your sports organization and your programming? Let's talk about those.”

Merritt’s work with the establishing two different field placement opportunities in the athletic department at her institution were exemplar of these types of educational efforts. In Merritt’s early conversations with athletic department, she spent time educating athletic department staff on social work, on CSWE competencies, and the social work intern’s role. As she explained, the conversations focused on:

Protecting the student-athletes, and what that looks like. So, what they require from people working with their program, and what we require from all students. You know, even explaining about our code of ethics and confidentiality. We follow FERPA, if there's any health information then HIPAA. Really talking through that, and how we train students, what we do, because students would have access to information about the student-athletes that needed to remain confidential. So, I think that was kind of a make or break. Not that anybody said
that, but we had to get past this at a comfort level that everybody could manage
before we could move forward.

As Merritt’s story shows, the early education on a social work interns’ role, and
specifically social worker’s legal and ethical obligation of client confidentiality, was an
essential foundation to the field partnership with the athletic department. Similarly, in her
work with a non-social worker task supervisor, Merritt also recalled they had “A lot of
conversations.” She recalled one conversation in particular:

I know that I spent a lot of time with them going over our processes, what
the expectations were, what the social work students needed, and things like
that. So, one conversation was, “Well, could (the student perform performance-
related tasks for the athletes)?” Or something along those lines. And I mean,
you're thinking, at some level, yes, that's rapport building, that's getting to know
the athletes, that's establishing that baseline, but they can't (just do that). So, it's
finding the balance of how do we get in and establish that trust and rapport with
an athlete in order to do the social work things we want to do?

Ryan also discussed finding these common types of integration between social work and
the need of the sport organization, as he suggested one of the most important skills in
working with sport organizations is, “You have to be able to listen to what they do in
order to help them integrate through the social work competencies.” He reiterated this
point in further reflecting on his work:

The starting point (with sport organizations) is way more at the beginning, and
you have to be aware of that. And then, which I guess we're always supposed to
listen and do all that, but I think it's more important to with the sports organization, because you just don't have the common language yet.

Overall, educating sport stakeholders on social work practice, CSWE competencies, social work ethics and legal obligations, and the overall process of hosting a social work intern was essential to setting up successful internship partnerships with sport organizations. As Leo succinctly described his own process of establishing a field placement in sport setting, “It is reaching out, educating, and then following up.”

**Educating Social Work Stakeholders**

Just as the participants stressed the importance of educating sport stakeholders on social work in sport, they similarly spoke on the need to also educate social work stakeholders, such as students, other field staff, and faculty members, on the need for social workers to provide services to people in sport. As Ty reflected on the growth of field placement opportunities in sport organizations:

At the very beginning, especially when I think sports placement started coming on into more of the general consciousness and awareness, and I think there was a little bit of pushback (from the social work community) about that they (athletes) already had everything. What would student athletes possibly need?

Ty continued that this lack of understanding by the general social work profession was the “little hurdle at first” that social workers interested in sport needed to overcome before there was more wide-spread social work internship opportunities in sport settings. Tellingly, in explaining how he and his colleagues approached building sport-based field placements, Ryan reflected that much of the education was focused on other social work
staff and faculty in the department. He explained that education efforts need to be focused on the connection between social work values and the needs of athletes, across sport systems. Although, he admitted this is a challenge:

(For) some people in our school, it's not an easy sell for people. We think of sports and (university) athletics and football on Saturdays and rah, rah rah. It's not what the visuals are. That's the obstacle to being able to see it, and then to see it and maybe not accept your narrative about the connections.

Leo recalled similar challenges when he and his colleagues first considered building a more comprehensive field initiative to develop sport-based field placements:

We thought, “Well, why don't we meet with the faculty and talk to them about it?” Well, people were very mixed about it, because they said, “Well, we like sport, but we don't really see how social work and sport go together. And it really doesn't fit in with the social or social work values and ethics.” We said, “Well, I don't know, we think it does.” So, we talked to them about how we can incorporate the social work ethics and values of the dignity of worth of every kid, that boys and girls are equal, they should have equal access to sport, the power of relationships, the power of the coach, and how she or he can really bring out the best in the kids and teach values and help them grow personally.

Ryan spoke about one strategy he and his colleagues have prioritized is educating members of the admissions committee to admit more social work master’s students who are interested in pursuing a career in social work in sport. He recalled advocating for one student who had a background in sport:
We have a student now, who in her (sport) program, she worked as an informal counselor with the coach. So, I said, “Well, she's doing assessments, look at what she's talking about here. She’s developed interventions.” So, I relate the student experience and what they can learn here into how social work’s competencies, they've already integrating without naming them necessarily, (and that) they would be able to do that in their field placements here.

Even though these education efforts were important, many of the participants spoke more about the importance of educating social work students, as they are the next generation of social workers. From a practical perspective, many participants also discussed how they cannot put more resources towards building more sport placements, unless there is increased student interest. Thus, it was not surprising that many stories that the participants shared focused on educating social work students on the field of social work in sport and on specific field placement opportunities in sport organizations. Dante remembers one story fondly, recalling it several times in speaking about educating students on the emergence of sport as a scope of social work practice:

(Several years ago), (the university) developed a military social work program. And I said to the students in seminar, I said, “What's the next thing that's going to be developed?” And they were like, “Well I don’t know,” and I go, “Sports social work.” I was like, “That's it,” you know, “that's it.”

Sarah recalled a specific conversation with a social work student, who was an elite gymnast. The student did not know that she could pursue a career related to social work
in sport, until they had conversations about the possibility of a sport-based field placement. Sarah concluded her recollection of this conversation:

It was just cool, because she was like, “I can really do these things after I graduate. Like I can, I can have this job, not just for practicum, but maybe do something in this area that’s always been such a big part of my life.

Ryan reminisced on a similar experience fondly. At his institution, they began offering a course on social work practice in sport to introduce students to the subfield. He remembered one specific student who came through the course:

She took our class, and she wrote back, and I'm getting chills, she wrote back that she had never, she was one of the ones I referenced who had never thought that this could be an option for her. I think she had her placement in the athletic department. She got in there, and then they hired her.

He concluded reiterating the importance of “that education and those conversations” with students. Merritt also recalled that the first few students she worked to place in the athletic department were not familiar with social work in sport: “The students were not necessarily interested in sports social work at that time, like didn't even know necessarily that it was a thing but were interested in potential clinical work and working with systems.” She continued that this was many times a good thing, as she did not want to place fans of the athletic program to work with the athletes. However, she did have to discuss the internship with the students prior to the placement, so that they understood the clinical work they would get exposed to in work with the student-athletes.
Similarly, another important aspect of education with social work students was education on sport culture prior to beginning their internship, so that would be more successful in their placement. Ty spoke about the benefit of connecting students with ASWIS to learn more about sport culture and the role of social work in sport. She explained, “One of the ways our students have gotten some of those placements is being involved with ASWIS. It didn't help them exactly make the connection with the sports-related placements, but it did inform them, make them better prepared candidates.” Toni, in speaking about a current student that she was working with to place in sport-based field placement, also discussed the importance of educating the student on sport culture. In thinking about next steps with student, Toni said:

Obviously, there are certain sports that I wouldn't have a clue if they told me to call somebody and talk to them about it, and they started using acronyms or whatever, I'd have no clue what they were saying. So, I want (the student) to make sure that they are very comfortable asking, just like you would the jargon in social work, if somebody says to you CBT and you don't know what that is, ask. You know, ask sports questions, but also ask about the social work part of it.

Clearly, educating social work stakeholders and social work students is a foundational step in creating a need for sport placements in the first place. It seems that these education efforts have made some inroads. Toni reflected excitedly:

I have a strong feeling that going forward that we're going to have a number of students that are probably going to be interested in sports work, especially the athletes, and the ones that were involved in football, but I've had a few students
that have said, “You know, I think that's a great area, something that I'd definitely like to go into.” So, I think that there's going to be more placements, and I was actually talking to (faculty colleague) this morning, and he says he would like to get some involved at maybe local levels, you know, youth sports organizations, or in sports leagues, YWCA or YMCA. So, looking from everywhere, from children and youth sports to public collegiate sports, and maybe even community sports leagues too.

As this short story of Toni exemplifies, student interest in social work in sport can prompt more intentional efforts of social work faculty and social work field staff to establish field placement partnerships with sport organizations.

Overall, due to the misunderstanding and misconceptions about social work in sport, education was an important step in broader advocacy for social work in sport, efforts addressed in the theme of deconstructing misconceptions. For all participants, their own advocacy efforts stemmed from a personal critical incident where they first recognized the need for social work sport. From there, with the goal to develop more field placement opportunities, advocacy efforts took the form of educating both sport and social work stakeholders.

**Operational Negotiations**

This theme encompasses the logistics of the program planning process, from identifying stakeholders, to structuring the field placements, to evaluation. The categories in this theme include: (a) stakeholders, (b) program structure, and (c) evaluation. Throughout this theme, you will see tables accompanying the participants’ narratives to
visualize the logistics of the participants’ planning stories. Although the document analysis (see Appendix E) aided in understanding each of the previous themes, the documents provided by participants were especially helpful in providing a fuller understanding of the logics of planning these field placements.

**Stakeholders**

Even though participants were planning field placements in various types of institutions across the United States, the stakeholders involved in the planning process were remarkably similar. Table 3 shows the various identified stakeholders, as well as which participants’ stories these stakeholders were mentioned. Social work students, other social work faculty, and task supervisors were present in at least one story of each participant. Social work students were identified most often as the individual that initiated the field placement by asking the field staff for a specific placement in a sport setting. For example, Dante explained that for the macro-level human resources internship with a local basketball arena, the “Student was more of the conduit, and was like, ‘Look, I'm pulling for this, what do you think?’ So, we were working together on that aspect.” Similarly, when the COVID-19 pandemic began, CSWE allowed students to count hours at their workplace towards field hours, so Ella had a student reach out requesting to count work hours with a youth sport organization. As she explained, “This student proposed that they worked with (the youth sport program), which is the youth sports thing. And so, we said, ‘Sure, we're willing to see if we can make this work for hours.’” Ryan also described a field placemat opportunity in the K-12 setting that was initiated by the student:
### Table 3

**Types of Stakeholders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dean/Associate Dean</th>
<th>Internal or External Social Work Faculty</th>
<th>Other Faculty (i.e., kinesiology)</th>
<th>Other Field Staff</th>
<th>Social Work Students</th>
<th>Task Supervisor</th>
<th>On-Staff Field Instructor</th>
<th>Athletic Administrators/Staff</th>
<th>Alumni</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
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They were placed in a high school. And their field instructor was just great, and they afforded them the opportunity to develop and work with kids and through track. And so, the student really kind of developed it. This is a great example of that: how do we recruit them? Well (the student) recruited.

Task supervisors are the day-to-day supervisors of the social work intern who are not social workers. Task supervisors were needed in organizations where no social worker was currently employed. Encapsulating the definition offered by several participants, Ryan stated the task supervisor is, “the day-to-day person, usually someone with extensive experience and base knowledge” of the organization. Task supervisors, understandably, varied by organization. For some placements, the task supervisor was the Director of Outreach for the athletic department, for others it was staff that worked directly with the athletes such as athletic trainers, and for others it was someone higher up within organizational leadership. As there were not social workers on staff, the participants stated that their own role with these organizations was working with the task supervisor to ensure that the social work student could meet the competency-based practice behaviors set forth by CSWE. As Sarah described her work with the task supervisor at a youth recreational camp:

Once I met with (the task supervisor) and they described what they would picture an MSW student doing, I was really confident that it was a match. You know, my main thought is, “Can you give (the student) the learning experience that we need them to get?” Yes, that can be a really different, because social work goes in a
million directions, but can we for sure say that this is going to qualify for the learning experience they need.

The task supervisors were essential in the day-to-day supervision of the social work students; however, for the field placement to meet the standards set by CSWE, the social work students also needed to have social work-specific supervision, which could not be done with a task supervisor. Therefore, the students in sport organizations that did not have a social worker on staff completed outside supervision hours, many times with the field staff themselves, a social work faculty member, or with a contracted external social work supervisor either paid for by the university or by the organization itself.

Many sport organizations, most commonly the youth or community sport organizations, did have at least one social worker on staff that acted as the social work student interns’ field instructor, offering the day-to-day and the social work specific supervision. Although not as common within sport organizations, having a social work field instructor on staff that could supervisor social work interns certainly has benefits, especially if they have worked as a liaison or supervisor for other social work students. As Sarah explained, her work with a supervisor for a macro-level sport placement went smoothly because the field supervisor, “Knew our documentation, and the learning contract and their midterm and final evaluation forms or competencies, our expected practice behaviors, how we track their performance, and also their assignments.” Almost every participant had at least one planning story that included work with an on-staff social work field instructor in a sport organization, with the exception of Ella, whose work with three different sport organizations did not have a social worker hired on staff.
Overall, both day-to-day task supervisors and social work field supervisors were an essential part of social work internships in sport organizations; thus, both task supervisors and on-staff field instructors were important stakeholders in the planning process.

Two other stakeholders that were present in at least one of each participant’s planning stories were other field staff and other social work faculty, both within the university or outside the university. Every participant worked within a larger field department within the university’s social work department. Therefore, they leaned on other field staff for support throughout the planning process. Similarly, social work faculty, both internal and external, also played an important role in the planning process. External and internal social work faculty who studied social work in sport and/or worked with sport organizations proved to be a good resource for the field staff to build a growing network of field placement opportunities. However, as seen in several of the stories in the “educating social work stakeholders” category, many of the participants also spent time educating internal social work faculty about the need for social work in sport to gain greater buy-in from the social work department to establish field placements in sport organizations.

Another internal stakeholder that was present in several of the participant’s planning stories were various Deans in the universities. For example, Ryan spoke about how he got more latitude to develop field placements in sport organizations, because the Dean of the college at the time prioritized innovation: “The innovation piece was always there, and that was something that our Dean at the time brought, and so, from the field side, our field director was like, ‘Let’s see where it goes.’” Similarly, Ty expressed the
field department does get some pressure from the Dean to develop more field placements in sport organizations: “The prestige piece and kind of the pressure of like, I know that my Dean would be happier with me if we had a lot of student athletes (in the social work program) and a lot of student athletic placements.” Ryan also spoke about he and his team spent time advocating the Deans in the college to support a more comprehensive development of social work internships in sport organizations. For many of the participants, buy-in and support of the school and university Deans was important to building a larger network of sport-based field placements.

Many of the participants also spoke about the importance of including an athletic administrator, who was not otherwise the task supervisor, in the planning process. These stakeholders were important for gaining entry into the organization or for ultimate approval of the internship partnership, as seen in the “gatekeeping” category. These administrators ranged from front-end development staff all the way to athletic directors, depending on the organization and the organizational chart—as Ty jokingly recalled the individuals involved in her planning meetings with the athletic department, “It wasn't the high muckety mucks. It was the middle muckety mucks.” Both Sarah and Ty did not interact with athletic administrators in their planning stories, which may be due to the fact that they worked solely with youth, community sport, and macro-level organizations, where they interacted directly with the field instructor and task supervisors. Therefore, it appears that including athletic administrators in the planning process is most relevant for work with collegiate athletic departments and professional sport organizations.
Although not as common, some of the participants brought program alumni into the planning process. For all four of the planning stories that included alumni, alumni of the social work program got hired as a social worker in a sport organization and then acted as a field instructor for future social work students, a sustainability effort suggested by Dante. For Dante, Ryan, and Leo, the alumni had their own student internship in the sport organizations (all were either in a collegiate sport organization or in a professional sport organization), they were hired out of their internship, and then began taking student interns themselves. For Ty, the alumni did not have their internship in a sport setting, but eventually got hired as a social worker in their alma mater’s athletic department. Ty did not know this until they ran into each other at a social work conference, which then sparked conversations about establishing the internship. Either way, having the alumni in the sport organization was helpful in that the field staff had an already established relationship with an insider who could act as the field instructor.

Interestingly, four participants (Ella, Leo, Ryan, and Sarah) included outside faculty members in a different discipline than social work in their planning processes. Leo and Ryan, who had worked together with a group of students to put on a conference related to social work in sport that specifically included a field component, brought in, according to Leo, “People from the business school, kinesiology, psychology, nursing, all different disciplines. It was very multidisciplinary.” Sarah, in establishing a field placement in youth recreational camp, worked with a faculty member from education, who ran the camp and was looking for people to train the teachers to work with at-risk children. As Sarah described:
(The education faculty) said, “It's really great to have a social work student come in, or somebody that has that experience already with at risk kiddos or school settings to say, you know, “Here's really what you might see, here are some strategies.” It worked out beautifully.

It seemed, however, that Ella was the most strategic and intentional in reaching out to faculty members in the kinesiology department, who already had interns placed in the athletic department:

I talked with people in my college, because in our college, we have the athletic training and sports and recreation therapy. So, they already had (internships), so it was more of trying to work off relationships that were already built.

For these four participants, working with faculty outside the social work department helped build a larger network, and for both Sarah and Ella, helped establish a field placement in a sport organization.

**Program Structure**

Due to the many different types of sport organizations and the varying roles social workers can perform, the participants described many different structures of internships. As seen in Table 4 and Table 5, social work students did clinical, case management, and macro-level work across various types of sport organizations. The types of sport organizations participants in this dissertation worked with were: (a) youth sport organizations, indicating any work with the K-12 population; (b) community sport organizations, which are any organizations that are not connected to an educational setting, a professional sport organization, or a national social work in sport organization;
### Table 4

*Types of Internships*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clinical</th>
<th>Case Management</th>
<th>Macro</th>
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<td>Dante</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
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<td>Leo</td>
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<td>Merritt</td>
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<td>Ryan</td>
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<td>Sarah</td>
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<td>Toni</td>
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<td>Ty</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5

**Types of Sport Internship Sites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Youth Sport</th>
<th>Community Sport</th>
<th>Collegiate Sport</th>
<th>Professional Sport</th>
<th>National Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dante</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Ella</td>
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<td>Merritt</td>
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<td>Ryan</td>
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<td>Toni</td>
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<td>Ty</td>
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(c) collegiate sport, indicating work in an athletic department; (d) professional sport organization; or (e) a national social work in sport organization, such as ASWIS.

For Ty, Leo, Merritt, and Ryan, the placements directly within athletic departments were clinical in nature, as Ty described “Counseling, therapy.” However, there was overlap, with some internships incorporating two or more types of tasks. For example, Merritt described the student interns work in the athletic department as:

They were working one-on-one with the athletes, but there was a case management component to that too, for appointments and making sure that they're getting what they need, academics are staying where they need to, and pieces like that, navigating schedules, some advocacy pieces. They also did some informational/educational tasks… So, sleep hygiene, the dangers of smoking and vaping, nutritional type things, so different ways that our students can help get information out and lead small groups on different topics as well. They were involved in a lot of those pieces.

Although no longer offered, Ty also spoke about a former placement in the athletic department where students worked in a “a case manager, mentoring” role with student-athletes.

In a youth sport setting, Ty described the students’ work as generalist with a focus on case management services:

They are doing counseling light, supportive guidance, they're doing psycho-educational groups, they're helping the students learn about emotional regulation. They're helping the families identify, so the kids are there for sport, at the same
time they can be doing things like addressing food insecurity and helping the family members who are there waiting for practice to be over. You know, that's a captive audience, you can provide services for those family members. So, kind of community building, case management, light supportive guidance, psycho-educational efforts.

Leo described similar, more clinical roles of the social work interns in a youth sport organization:

I would talk with the students about things that they might be able to do there with the kids, like maybe doing a vision board. We were looking at their identity in sport or talking about having a girl’s group and talking about women in sport, and just different ideas, having the kids journal, having them do different kinds of interactive activities, borrowing from psychodrama. All kinds of things where we really are creative.

At the macro-organizational level, internships included both human resource (HR) and policy, as well as program development. Dante described the placement of a student in the HR department of the local basketball arena as “With their management, it was in their HR department.” He continued:

It wasn't directly with a team. So, there was another piece about like, well does our skill set transfer to HR, which there's so many things that does in terms of professional development, in terms of asset mapping, scanning the environment, seeing what the needs are for the organization as a whole, and then delivering that
to the HR. And so, we would talk about those kinds of things also, so it wasn't necessarily always just about the athletic achievement or athletic endeavors.

Similarly, Toni, due the COVID-19 pandemic, placed a student in a virtual placemat with a therapeutic horseback riding organization where the student focused on organizational policy and organizational development. Toni described the needs of the organization as working on, “Vision statements, policies and procedures, working on what their website would look like to get information out into the community.” The student intern “was able to really help them with a lot of their administration, and even making contacts with folks that can make referrals to them when they did open back up” after the COVID-19 lockdown.

Another type of macro-level work revolved around program development. Ryan recalled the important work of two social work interns, who ultimately got hired within the athletic department:

They set up a program initially, that was brought in by (new football coach), and a man named (Name), and it was (a youth sports program). So, they developed this, and I think it's still going, but the camp was set up to bring in middle school boys for football. And so, it was a one-week camp where they would come, and they would have sports, social emotional learning, and STEM classes. And so, the students worked in that, that was their field placement when they came into the social work school. They've already been working with that project when they came into school. They turned that into their internship, and I was their field instructor, because there wasn't anyone there who had a license. So, they
developed this camp, did all the outreach. It was awesome. It’s just incredible. They had marines there for discipline. And the classrooms and everything took place, there’s a suite level at the (football stadium), so it's just wide-open space with space, and it's where all suites are, so it's really wide open. So, all the classes were up there, they brought in former (university) athletes, (well-known university football players) came and talked, and they brought in a police officer, and they had several different guest speakers, and then they had part of the day for class. They brought in the actual teachers from the schools where these boys went, and so, they were teaching them the basics again, reading, writing, math, you know, all that. And then they would have social emotional (learning), and then they would play sports in the afternoon. They would go down to the football field, and they had drills and they played flag football out there. And they had sophomores from the football team who were the actual student-athlete workers with the boys through football. So that that was (their) internship.

After the two social work students graduated, they were hired fulltime by the athletic and established a similar program for young women in the area. They also brought on their own social work student intern to work on the new program. Ryan credited these two former students with being very influential in advocating for social work in sport and creating more buy-in from the school and athletic department for social work field placements in sport settings. Interestingly, the strategy of placing two students in the athletic placement was also mentioned by Merritt, who intentionally placed two students in the athletic department. She expanded on her reasoning for this creative approach:
With any new innovative placement, not just sports, and we have found that placing two students with an agency sometimes helps, because they can support each other, they can bounce ideas off, they can brainstorm, there's a little bit of solidarity when you have a partner in things. And so, I wanted to follow that model, because I think even just walking into athletics can be intimidating.

Ella spoke about an internship placement at a community college athletic department, which was not as successful for the first BSW student placed there. Therefore, in looking forward, she was currently working on placing an MSW student in a program development role:

We have potentially an MSW student who has some interest in sports social work, and we were going to see if part of their regular internship would be to work to develop an internship program at (the community college). So, internships right now are looking more of creating internship programs for future interns, and that's where we have to start with the internships, rather than throw (interns) in. There needs to be some type of development phase for internships.

Another common social work sport-specific field placement structure, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, was a virtual placement. Sarah recalled that she had initial hesitations about a student doing a completely sport-based virtual placement, due to the possible lack of structure. She recalled the process of setting up this placement:

I was basically going to (the field instructor) saying, “Okay, we have this student that is interested, but can we sit down and talk about logistics, because where's she going to work? She can't work in your living room, so is she going to work in
the office, is she going to work at home on our own?” Because that had not been
our norm in the past, if an agency couldn't offer a physical location for them to
come, even if it was just, here's your seat, you know, and here's your place to do
your work or write your notes or whatever, hang your coat…so that was new
territory to talk to (the field instructor) about how we would make this work to
be remote. Now that seems kind of silly, because like in the last year, everybody's
adjusted to doing all kinds of stuff remotely, so, we know what we can do now. I
just didn't know at the time, I thought, “Oh, that's, that's unusual structure.” So,
we talked through that, and we decided and talked to our admin staff to make sure
that we could use office space, because we did have some extra office, like office
space that adjuncts would use some time and things like that, so that was fine.

This specific virtual field placement ended up being a success, and Sarah has placed more
students since with this virtual sport organization. Merritt also placed students in a virtual
sport organization but used a hybrid model to ensure structure and to explore what a
placement in the athletic department might look like.

Ultimately, there were several different types of sport-related placements in
various types of sport organizations with diverse internship structures (i.e., virtual,
hybrid). Yet, due to the innovative nature of social work field placements in sport
organizations, as Toni summarized the sentiment of many of the participants, “We try to
be pretty creative.”

210
**Program Evaluation**

Participants shared the importance of both formal and informal formative and summative evaluations. Formative evaluations take place while the program is in progress, and summative evaluations assess the results and outcomes of the program (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). Formal evaluations are systematic in nature, whereas informal evaluations are somewhat spontaneous and focus on listening to and observing program participants in the moment (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). All participants spoke broadly about their department’s formal evaluations, which usually involved some type of form and were more summative in nature, taking place at the end of the internship placement. Sarah explained her department’s formal summative evaluation process:

We created a form and we're just now this semester going to be asking our liaisons to complete it, asking those questions of our liaisons, so part of it is about rating the agency supervisor, the field instructor, part of it is just overall the agency's health or dynamics, and then any thoughts, also then giving us more feedback on do you have any thoughts on whether or not they want to or don't want to continue offering placements, do you have any thoughts on whether or not they'd ever be willing to offer a stipend or pay in some fashion.... Another thing that we have done successfully is asking the students to complete, and this has been 10 plus years, so way before I started, asking the students to complete a several page evaluation at the end of their practicum experience just describing, so they rate lots of things about their liaison, but also about their supervisor and their agency and their learning experience, as well as the seminar and the
practicum assignments. So, part of that evaluation is about the health of the supervisor and their relationship and the organization.

Ella described a similar process in her department:

We get feedback from the student at the end of every year. All students fill out a field evaluation. And then, we also have our faculty liaison, so we get feedback from, so those are the individuals that teach the students in field seminar class, and they're the ones that do the actual evaluation with the student at their placement. So, we get the student feedback, we get the faculty liaison (feedback).

Considering formative summative evaluations, these two examples were fairly common across participant’s field departments and were representative of the field evaluation forms included in the document analysis. However, for sport-based placements, the participants spoke more to the formal formative evaluations and informal evaluations as important indicators of success.

Formal formative evaluations usually took place during mid-semester visits, where field staff or faculty members would meet with the social work student and the field instructor or task supervisor to assess how the internship was going. For example, Leo recalled one placement in a youth sport organization where the student was struggling. In their formal mid-semester meeting, the student spoke of issues happening in the placement. Leo recalled that, “There was no supervision. There was just saying, like, ‘You go, girl,’ you know, ‘You're doing great,’ and then she would just be out there and didn't know what to do.” Because of this feedback, Leo met with the field instructor to come up with a plan to increase weekly supervision with the student, and ultimately
the field placement was a success. Ryan, in speaking about a field placement in the athletic department, also spoke about the formative formal visit, but also how informal evaluations were important for ensuring student success throughout the internship:

So, even though we only have one set liaison meeting per term with the students, she and I have spoken somewhat in between, a little bit outside the formal structures. Well, they have questions, we might set up a Zoom meeting or just know, so there's contact, but there's one official meeting set up per term.

As Ryan begins to touch on, informal evaluations were very common in the work of the participants. Both Sarah and Toni acknowledged the importance of the formal summative evaluations, but really how the informal evaluations provided further evidence of the success of sport placements. In discussing the evaluation of the placement with a virtual sport organization, where the intern had an office set up near the field office to complete their virtual work, Sarah reflected:

Still those formal documents, so those students still filled out, the BSW students that were placed there, filled out a three-page evaluation, filled out the anonymous critique, gave their faculty liaison feedback, and based on those things, certainly no concerns (or) red flags with that placement, not at all. And then just anecdotally, because I got to see those students more often, especially (student) was the one that I could recall really well back in 2018. I'd see her in the hallway, you know, “How are you doing?” And I certainly thought she was having a robust learning experience, but also really enjoying it and handling, I think mentioned that I was a little bit tentative about that at the time, because we
weren't used to remote placements, where it was like part of the time she was working totally on her own, which was not the norm at that time, and then sometimes she'd be in our office, and she handled it quite well. So, that was another thing that I thought, “Oh, this can really,” it opened my eyes to how a remote placement could be so successful, because it did seem like it was.

Similarly, Toni reflected on the informal evaluations of a youth sport organization where the student was tasked with more macro-level work, such as working on a vision and mission statement, and advertising the organization’s services:

I think one of the ways that I could tell it was a big success was in seminar when the student would talk about the great things that she was doing, and that she actually invited students to participate in things that were coming up at the agency that were for the public that she wasn't even going to be able to participate in. So, I think that her being willing to share those experiences, and the supervisor just being, she wanted to do such a good job. She checked in with me several times during the semester, even though I wasn’t her liaison, to just say, you know, “I think we're doing okay. I have a question about blank.” You know, so I think that was primarily it, but really seeing the evaluations being very positive.

Other participants shared experiences where they realized the success of their holistic social work in sport field initiatives. In a story that was representative of the sentiment shared by many participants, Dante recalled a specific moment where he realized the success of his work in the area of social work in sport:
I was on a panel with (former intern), the gentleman I said who got placed at the (baseball team’s) foundation. And, I mean, it was a panel about sports and social work, and I was going to give them the field side of it, and he started describing his sense of impact. It was amazing. I mean, I got like shudders, you know, like my hair on my neck stood up. I was just like, “Oh, man, that was something,” because he was talking about the power of sport to reach through race, to reach through poverty, to reach through all these things, and that it's an open avenue for engagement that we haven't utilized with social work, and he was just talking about these things. I was super proud too, like, “Wow!” He wasn't my student, but I was like, “That guy's representing us. And he's out there. And he's found the niche, as you see, he found the space and the place. And he's representing us well.” I mean, it was just a great moment. This kind of felt like, you know, all that work had paid off to get the placement, even though I'm no longer there and the guy that developed it was no longer there, like we're no longer there, but to see the legacy was just super cool.

Overall, participants used both formal and informal summative and formative evaluations in their work with sport-specific field placements. However, in recalling moments that were most memorable to them, they spoke specifically about informal evaluations of student success, both in the internships and in their professional roles after graduation.

Overall, participants worked with specific stakeholders, established various internship structures based on the role of the social work intern (i.e., clinical) and the type
of organization (i.e., collegiate sport), and then evaluated the program using both informal and formal summative and formative evaluations.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter began with a narrative introduction of each participant that included a brief overview of their career path, a description of their current position, and details related to their passion for social work field education. These narrative introductions provide readers with a deeper understanding of each participant, and the similarities and differences in their positionalities to provide context to the stories shared. The chapter then detailed the four main themes I constructed in data analysis, and the categories within each theme.

The four themes are impact of sport culture and organizational context, building social capital through relationships, deconstructing misconceptions, and operational negotiations. The chapter provided exemplar participant stories for each theme and its categories. The impact of sport culture and organization context theme spoke to the ways in which the culture of sport and difference in organizational contexts impacted planning decisions by participants. It included the categories of the difference between elite and community sport, gatekeeping, and negotiating insider/outsider positionality. Building social capital through relationships encompassed the interpersonal skills the participants used to build networks and meaningful relationships with individuals involved in social work in sport. These relationships were essential in building internship partnerships with sport organizations. The theme included the categories of networking, building the relationship, and sustaining the relationship. The next theme, deconstructing
misconceptions, illustrated the various misconceptions stakeholders held about social work in sport, and how educating these stakeholders on the importance of this subspecialty was a foundational step in establishing field placements in sport organizations. Deconstructing misconceptions included the categories of critical incident, educating sport stakeholders, and educating social work stakeholders. The theme operational negotiations represented the essential parts of planning the internships, which included the categories of stakeholders, program structure, and program evaluation.

The next, and final chapter, of this dissertation will begin with a discussion of the study in relation to academic literature from the field of studies of social work, sport management, and program planning. It will conclude with a discussion of the study’s limitations, implications for policy, practice, and future research, and a conclusion.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation explored the narratives of social work field staff establishing social work field placements in sport organizations. Eight social work field staff from six different universities across the United States shared their stories of working with sport organizations to place social work interns. Their stories showed not only the different types of sport-based social work internships available and the logistics behind these planning processes, but they also highlighted the different challenges they faced and the power dynamics they needed to negotiate to establish relationships and provide students with successful internship opportunities in sports. The knowledge gained from the findings of this study can provide other social work field departments—and the social work and sport management professions as a whole—insights into building a long-lasting, sustainable partnership between social work and sport that begins with effective social work internships in sport organizations.

Study Summary

Field education through social work internships is the signature pedagogy of social work education (CSWE, 2015a). Therefore, Gill (2008) has suggested that social work internships in sport organizations should be one of the foundational steps in professionalizing the subspecialty of social work practice in sport. There is limited research on social work field placements in sport organizations, and none considering the perspectives of social work field staff, even though they are considered the key liaison between the social work department and community organizations (Sowa, 2009).
Therefore, the purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand social work field staff’s narratives of their experiences establishing sport-specific field placements through their lived stories. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What narratives do social work field staff have about the process of establishing field placements in sport settings?
2. How do social work field staff negotiate power when establishing field placements in sport settings?
3. What strategies do social work field staff use to establish field placements in sport settings?

The study was guided by program planning literature (Caffarella & Dafron, 2013; Cervero & Wilson, 1994, 2006; Dafron & Caffarella, 2021 Sork, 2000), and specifically Sandmann and colleagues’ (2009) Service-Learning Program Planning Model (SLPPM). Together, these program planning models sensitized me to the logistics of program planning, relationships and the power dynamics that take place during the program planning process, and the contextual and cultural considerations of planning social work internships in sport organizations.

Eight social work field staff shared their stories of establishing field placements in sport organizations. A narrative interview guide was created, and two-phased narrative interviews were conducted in line with Kim’s (2016) suggestions. Data analysis was completed in two rounds. The first round was a Labovian structural analysis (Labov, 1972), and the second round was a narrative thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008). From the data analysis, I constructed four themes: (a) impact of sport culture and organizational
context; (b) building social capital through relationships; (c) deconstructing misconceptions; and (d) operational negotiations.

**Discussion**

The discussion of research findings is organized by research question. Research Question 1 focused on participants general narratives of establishing field placements in sport organizations, Research Question 2 focused on how participates negotiated power in their planning process, and Research Question 3 focused on the strategies participants used to overcome the challenges of working with sport organizations. The discussion section concludes with a summary of considerations for the program planning process, including the importance of the reciprocal relationship between the planning process and the larger cultural context.

**Research Question 1**

The first research question of this study was: What narratives do social work field staff have about the process of establishing field placements in sport settings? The intent of this question was to gain an understanding of what moments and details were important for participants in their program planning processes. One theme that came out in both the Labovian and narrative thematic analysis was the difference between working with elite professional and collegiate organizations compared to work with youth and community sport organizations. Elite sport organizations were significantly more closed off than youth and community sport organizations, related to the protective nature of the organizations. Several of the participants in their story orientations described elite sport
organizations as “military-like.” The intersection of elite sport culture and military culture is not uncommon in sport management and sport studies literature, with scholars examining the militarization of American sport (i.e., Jenkins, 2013; Kelly, 2016; Ternes, 2016; Vasquez III, 2020). At a practical level, the participants in this study were noticing and experiencing the military-like culture of elite sport.

On the other hand, youth and community sport organizations were not closed off and were easier for participants to establish initial relationships. Even so, challenges centered on ensuring that social work interns still had opportunities to practice the CSWE (2015a) competencies. Consequently, in work with youth and community sport organizations, the participants were more intentional in assessing the student learning activities through formal and informal formative evaluations, whereas more work needed to be done on the frontend with elite sport organizations. As these differences show, the cultural context and the different organizational contexts impacted the program planning processes. This supports the suggestion by program planning scholars (Daffron & Caffarella, 2021; Wilson & Cervero, 1996) that understanding the cultural and organizational context of the planning process is a key component of program planning generally, and of planning experiential learning opportunities (Sandmann et al., 2009).

A commonality across planning stories were the stakeholders involved, with social work faculty, social work students, and task supervisors present in at least one of every participant’s planning stories, and field instructors, deans, and athletic administrators present in the majority of planning stories. The stakeholders most often excluded from the planning stories were other faculty in sport-related disciplines and
program alumni. Who is and who is not included in the planning process is an important political consideration (Cervero & Wilson, 2006). It is promising that social work students were included in the planning process, as the students are the main beneficiary of the learning experience (Cervero & Wilson, 1994). The inclusion of alumni, however, was less common. For participants that did bring program alumni into the planning process, the alumni were currently working in a sport organization and could act as a field instructor for current students. Not surprisingly, the participants that worked with alumni had a longer history of social work in sport internships, whereas the four participants that did not were relatively early in their work establishing internships in sport organizations. Therefore, in building a network of internship opportunities, tapping into the alumni network seems a promising strategy.

Sport faculty, such as sport management and kinesiology faculty, were only present in three of the participants stories, and only Ella intentionally met with kinesiology faculty to gain information about their already established internships in the university athletic department. Consulting with experts on the culture and context of organizations is an important task for program planning, which it seems most participants in this study did not do. Obtaining contextual knowledge from people that are “in the know” and have power within and access to an organization is an important way program planners can gain knowledge and insight (Daffron & Caffarella, 2021, p. 125). Yet, most participants in this study have not tapped into this knowledge source. Even if unintentional, not including these faculty members in the planning process may speak to the larger lack of interdisciplinary relationships between sport management and social
work departments that remains a significant barrier to further professionalizing the subspecialty of social work in sport (Gill, 2008). More intentional efforts thus can be made to include these experts in the planning process. Specifically, they already have a knowledge of sport culture and may have already established relationships with sport organizations that can be leveraged to create social work internships and may also aid in creating sustainability, a major challenge present across participants’ planning stories.

Sustainability was the most common challenge discussed by participants. Many participants recalled stories where an internship partnership fell through after their initial contact left—whether that be the field instructor, a task supervisor, or an administrator. This suggests that individual buy-in for a field partnership with the social work department does not equate to organizational buy-in. Lack of organizational buy-in is a common challenge identified by sport management scholars in discussing community-sport partnerships (Babiak & Willem, 2016; Peachey et al., 2017). Scholars suggest that buy-in from sport organizations begins with matching of organizational vision, mission, and goals (Babiak, 2009; Babiak & Thibault, 2009; Babiak & Willem, 2016; Peachey et al., 2017). Babiak and Willem (2016) in their discussion on interorganizational partnerships in sport posit:

A number of issues then arise which pose challenges in a relationship including differing organizational cultures, values and objectives, or different skills and backgrounds of those interacting (i.e. paid staff vs volunteers). Internal legitimacy and acceptance is in such cases not guaranteed and partnership relationships might be very difficult to maintain. (p. 285).
In many ways, this exact process played out in the planning for the social work internships, with difference in culture between sport and social work, different values and objectives of the social work profession compared to the sport management profession, and vastly different backgrounds between the social work field staff and the sport administrators, which as Babiak and Willem (2016) suggest may be contributing to lack of organizational buy-in to the partnership. Babiak and Thibault (2009) argue that a key strategy is therefore finding some type of congruence between the needs and values of the two partnering organizations. Although participants did discuss using this strategy in initial conversations with organizations, perhaps the fundamental mismatch between social work as a profession and sport management as a profession contributes to sustainability issues. Dante spoke to this in his interviews, stating:

Sports, oftentimes, (revolves) around sort of a male dominance, a dominant sort of male presence, like powerful, in control, strong, and social work comes from an entirely different angle, right. And those kinds of traits have often been associated with abuse and with domestic violence and things like that. So, as the circles come together, there's a space where it works, and then there's a space where it doesn't, and some of that has to do with just the long standing traditions of social work in terms of being there for those of us who are under the thumb of authority or victims of someone in power, and then you say, “Oh, we're going to provide these services to somebody in power.” That's sort of a piece that has to kind of be worked out I think long term.
We are beginning to see shift in the sport industry towards prioritizing the well-being of people in sport (Waller et al., 2016); however, overall organizational commitment is still lacking (Beasley et al., 2021), perhaps due to the mental health stigma prominent in sport culture (Breslin et al., 2019; Kern et al., 2017). Similarly, we are seeing more and more acceptance of athletes as a population of need by the social work profession (Dean & Rowan, 2014), but there is still some resistance, as discussed by participants in this study. Limited organizational buy-in, in both the social work and sport professions, could result in loss of an internships placements. If the individuals invested, such as a coach or task supervisor, leave the organization, incoming staff and upper administration in the sport organization could decide to not bring in another intern or conversely new social work field staff could choose to not place students at the organization. Therefore, without macro-level sustainability, sustainability of individual placements becomes more challenging. Consequently, as will be discussed further on, education and advocacy in both the sport management and social work fields for this specific interdisciplinary relationship is a strategy needed as part of a holistic approach to establishing field placements in sport organizations.

The COVID-19 pandemic was also mentioned by a few participants as a reason for certain placements being put on hold, as many sport organizations had to prioritize changing policies involving in-person practices and competitions (Skinner & Smith, 2021). Participants discussed how they had to be conscious of not over-burdening the organization with continued internship requests. Even so, Toni, Ella, Sarah, and Merritt also detailed ways in which the changing CSWE regulations due to COVID-19—for
example, specific rules allowing virtual opportunities (CSWE, 2021)—actually opened the doors for students to work with certain sport organizations, which they would not have otherwise. The shift in CSWE policy related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the pandemic’s overall impact (both positive and negative) on field education is another example of how political, social, and cultural context affects the planning process (Daffron & Caffarella, 2021).

In considering the entirety of planning stories of the participants, one major gender difference was clear. Even though the social work profession is 83% female (CSWE, 2017), the participants in this study were only 63% (n = 5) female. Even more tellingly, the three men interviewed for the study had the most collective experience establishing field placements in sport organizations, suggesting the social work in sport field is more male dominated than the rest of the social work profession. In many ways, this actually is a positive, in that it provides space for male social workers in a profession that is overly dominated by women. However, it also may reproduce assumptions of sport as a male space, where women do not belong (Burton, 2015; Fink, 2008). In sport, women face barriers not only to enter the profession, but also to advance into leadership roles (Burton, 2015; Kamphoff, 2010; Taylor & Hardin, 2016). This may be due to the principle of similarity, wherein sport administrators will hire and promote others who look like and present like themselves (Kilty, 2006). As a result, there is homologous reproduction of men in higher-up positions hiring men for entry-level position, who then are more likely to be promoted throughout their career in sport (Taylor et al., 2018). It is interesting that this process may lead to the overrepresentation of women in social work
but men in sport. Therefore, gender dynamics in the social work in sport field, and in the planning of social work in sport internships, need to be considered.

Overall, the overarching planning narratives of all the participants reaffirm findings of program planning scholars that the social, political, and cultural context impacts the planning process (Daffron & Caffarella, 2021; Cervero & Wilson, 2006; Sork, 2000), and extends Sandmann and colleagues’ (2009) argument that using program planning theories, which are traditionally missing from scholarship on experiential learning partnerships in adult education, can sensitize scholars to the impact of culture and context on the planning of service-learning. As the culture of sport provides a unique context, it should be considered in any program planning with sport organizations.

**Research Question 2**

As power is ever-present in program planning (Cervero & Wilson, 1994, 2006; Forester, 1989; Sork, 2000; Wilson & Cervero, 1996), the second research question focused on how participants negotiated power in the planning process. The second research question was: How do social work field staff negotiate power when establishing field placements in sport settings? Wilson and Cervero (1996) define power in the planning process as the capacity to act based on one’s positionality. Throughout the participants’ narratives, the uneven power relations present in the planning relationship was apparent. In partnerships with elite sport organizations, the organization initially held more power in the planning relationship, whereas in work with youth and community sport organizations, the social work department held more power in the relationship than the organization. For example, many nonprofit sport organizations needed volunteer
labor. Bringing in a social work intern was a way to increase organizational capacity, similar to strategies discussed in the sport for development and peace literature (Whitley et al., 2015; Peachey et al., 2017; Svensson & Hambrick, 2016). Therefore, when participants made specific requests, there was rarely any push back aside from the expected negotiations. However, the power elite sport organizations had in the relationship created a closed-off culture making it more difficult to get initial meetings with the organizations. This closure to individuals who they view as ‘outsiders’ may be related to the elite sport organization’s desire limit access to athletes (Gill, 2017b), both to maintain control of as well as protect athletes.

The primary way that participants in this study negotiated power relations was through negotiating their insider/outsider positionality. When participants were able to demonstrate that they “belonged” in sport, either by discussing their own identity as an athlete or by leveraging a relationship with a colleague who was already an insider in the organization, more trust and rapport was built. Then, the sport organization became more open to discuss the possibility of a social work internship. Although the internship did need to meet certain CSWE standards and policies set by individual social work departments, rarely any request of the elite sport organization was compromised in the planning process. It appeared that participants feared ruining the relationship if power was challenged. In fact, throughout the research process, several participants were hesitant to share stories about their work with these organizations, specifically the athletic department at their institution, for fear of harming the relationships. As Ryan quipped, “You don't make waves with the athletic department too much.” The power of DI athletic
departments within a university is well-established in sport management literature, with both positives and negatives of this power differential discussed. For example, the athletic department does bring in increased revenue for the university as a whole, either through actual profit for a few of the top-tier institutions or through being the ‘front porch’ of the university leading to more organizational exposure; yet, at the same time, it may take funds away from other university departments in efforts to prioritize athletics (Bass et al., 2015). Throughout the narratives presented in this study, this power differential was reinforced, as the participants remained protective of their relationships with the athletic department.

Even with these power negotiations, the initial difficulty created by the uneven power dynamics has resulted in fewer placement opportunities for students in elite sport. An interesting consequence of this was gatekeeping of the students themselves, with many of these placements only available to former athletes. Recruitment of the “right” intern to work with sport organizations is a challenge also recognized by sport management scholars in internships for sport management students (Williams, 2004), further suggesting that elite sport organizations tend to hold more power than the university in the internship process. For many participants, the inequitable access to elite sport internships, especially within collegiate athletic departments, was the main ethical issue they faced. As Leo, Ryan, and Toni discussed, to remain true to diversity, equity, and inclusion principles, the internships should be open to all students. Instead, the internships in elite sport organizations end up reproducing the lack of diversity present in both the social work profession, majority White female (CSWE, 2017), and the sport
management profession, majority White male (National Collegiate Athletic Association, 2020). Tellingly, all the participants in this study also identified as White. As both Cervero and Wilson (1994) and Sork (2000) acknowledge, all program planning efforts have some political context, which means all program planners have ethical responsibilities. Increasing the diversity of social work students in these internships, with the ultimate goal to graduate a social work in sport workforce that better mirrors the athlete population, seems an important ethical responsibility for social work field staff and elite sport organizations moving forward. This may be especially important for better therapeutic outcomes. Although helping professionals with different intersectional identities can certainly have successful helping relationships (Sue & Sue, 2006), there are benefits to working with a social worker with a similar ethnic and racial identity, such as better rapport-building (Karlsson, 2005). One meta-analysis found that the benefits of ethnic marching in the therapeutic dyad were the highest for the African American population (Cabral et al., 2011). Therefore, with a population of athletes that already has low rates of mental health help-seeking (Davoren & Hwang, 2014; Gulliver et al., 2012; Wahto et al., 2016), having helping professionals that do not match athletes’ racial and ethnic identities could further discourage help-seeking behaviors.

Cervero and Wilson (1994) ask program planners to consider “If people always plan in the face of power, to whom are they responsible for the educational programs they create?” (p. 249). Within the context of youth and community sport, it seems the participants as the representatives of the social work department, held the power to decide internships’ purpose, content, and format. However, with elite sport organizations, and
especially university athletic departments, the needs of the sport organization were prioritized. This mirrors the process in planning suggested by Cervero and Wilson (1994). The authors argue that planning always has two specific outcomes. The first is the construction of the program, or internships in this case. And two, the reconstruction of power relations, either by maintaining or transforming power. In the case of planning social work internships with elite sport organizations, the power of the elite sport organization was certainly maintained, which resulted in inequitable access of these internships for social work students. Yet, as this is a growing field where sustainability is a key issue, social work field staff may need to acquiesce power if they want to have any internship opportunities available in elite sport organizations. For instance, if the social work field staff push back on the organization’s demands too much, the sport organization could choose to not take an intern and end the possibility of any sort of interorganizational partnership. This happened when Dante tried to establish a field placement in the athletic department at their university; at the time of the interviews, the social work department still had not been able to place an intern with the athletic department, despite several future attempts. This further enforces the complexities of power relations in the program planning process (Cervero & Wilson, 2006), and that, in reality, true democratic planning is a hard ideal to reach (Sork, 1996).

**Research Question 3**

The third research question focused on specific strategies the participants used to plan social work internships in sport organizations. The third research question was: What strategies do social work field staff use to establish field placements in sport
settings? As program planning is at its core people work (Cervero & Wilson, 1994, 1996, 2006), it was not surprising that participants used people skills to build rapport and trust. Many participants began building relationships with potential placement sites through cold-calling, meeting individuals at professional events (i.e., conferences, alumni events), and tapping into the networks of their friends and colleagues. Trust in the relationships were established through being open, transparent, in consistent contact, and setting clear expectations of the internship partnership. Sport management literature has also suggested that building trust and rapport through the setting of clear expectations is the foundation to any successful interorganizational partnership (Babiak & Willem, 2016).

Throughout the participants’ planning stories, the network of individuals they built through these relationships was an important resource in establishing field placements, whether their connections became field instructors themselves or helped them get an “in” with a sport organization. Developing and leveraging one’s social capital, defined in management (Lin, 2001) and sport management (Wicker et al., 2016) literature as someone’s relationships and social network, seems the first step in building social work internships in sport organizations. Indeed, in the sequence of events in participants’ stories, the building of a relationship and the importance of leveraging of networks began many of the planning stories.

Due to the misconceptions of the subspecialty of social work practice in sport, the participants also pointed to educating their network of both social work and sport stakeholders as part of their efforts to build sport-based field placements. This education, taking place in the form of everything from individual conversations to continuing-
education courses to full conferences, was an investment in growing stronger relationships as well as investing in human capital for the social work in sport movement. Management scholars have defined human capital as investing resources in people, through efforts such as on-the-job training (Becker, 1962). Human capital is many times connected to social capital (Coleman, 1988; Schuller, 2001). With this understanding, participants in this study invested time and resources to educate stakeholders (human capital) to build stronger relationships and a larger network that supports the social work in sport movement (social capital), which ultimately created more buy-in and opportunities for individual social work internships.

From a program planning perspective, this again reinforces the impact of culture and context on the planning process, and the reciprocal process that program planning has on the broader culture. The planning of a single internship, for many participants, became a discussion of the larger multi-tiered process that included education and advocacy for the broader need for the social work in sport subspecialty. Thus, the planning process took on larger cultural implications than the single program itself (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Cervero & Wilson, 2006; Daffron & Caffarella, 2021; Sork, 2019; Wilson & Cervero, 1996, 2016). Essentially, planning the internship or establishing more placements in sport organizations is not enough. Intentional efforts on shifting the context of the planning process by decreasing the misconceptions and stigma around social work and mental health care in the sport field are needed at the macro-level alongside individual relationship building. In this way, as Wilson and Cervero (1996) suggest, the participants were acting both within and on the context of the program planning process.
Another strategy was thinking creatively about the structure of the internship due to the fact that sport organizations meet the definition of a nontraditional social work organization (Hughes, 2009; Jasper et al., 2013; McLaughlin et al., 2015). For example, working with external social work field instructors, implementing hybrid and virtual placements, and strategically placing two social work interns in the organization at a time. Additionally, many participants discussed being creative in the type of internship activities, as social worker interns can support micro, meso, and macro-level programing. For instance, many interns supported organizational efforts, such as human resource trainings, vision and mission statements, program development, and community partnerships. This shows the wide range of roles a social worker can perform that separates social work from other mental health professions in sport (McHenry et al., 2021; Beasley et al., 2021). Social workers, unlike psychologists, sport psychology consultants, and licensed professional counselors, are trained in clinical work, case management, and macro-level organizational and social justice practice (McHenry et al., 2021). Social workers thus provide a unique perspective to the holistic care of athletes.

A promising macro-level internship task discussed by Leo, Ryan, and Ella was using the first internship placement to develop a larger internship program. Leo and Ryan both discussed two social work students who were influential in developing a program through the university athletic department aimed at providing psychosocial developmental programs to at-risk youth in the area. This program grew and continued to support other social work interns throughout the years. Similarly, in an internship Ella is developing in the athletic department, the student intern is going to complete a needs
assessment to determine what programming the athletic department actually needs a social work intern to fill. This strategy can better find congruence between the internship and organizational goals, which certainly could enhance sustainability of the partnership (Babiak & Willem, 2016).

**Considerations for the Program Planning Process**

The planning narratives of participants did support many of the domains of SLPPM (Sandmann et al., 2009). First and foremost, the centrality of stakeholders (Partners domain), and priority placed on relationships and negotiating power dynamics in relationships (Relationship domain), was also a central element found in this dissertation. The logistics of planning the internships (Roles and Responsibility domain), such as determining an external social work supervisor model, was also a key component for participants. The need for each organization to bring in certain resources to the partnership (Resources domain) was also represented in the participants’ stories. However, the resources of social and human capital were also essential to the participants in building larger networks, suggesting resources in the planning of social work internships in sport goes beyond material capital. Additionally, the participants’ planning stories support the non-step wise structure of the model. Due to the importance of culture and context, there was not a uniform step-by-step process each participant followed. As Leo explained, “It's not as if we have the playbook, you know, this is what you do when you want to contact an organization and here's step 1, 2, 3, and 4.” In this way, as Daffron and Caffarella (2021) argue, the planning process has no specific beginning nor end.
There were some domains in the SLPPM, however, that did not capture the complexity of planning social work internships in sport organizations. Due to the service-learning class context of the SLPPM, it was contained in the timeframe of a semester-long class (Sandmann et al., 2009). Although most social work internships were year-long, the goal was to create partnerships that would take interns year after year. Additionally, different sports have different seasons that do not conform to the academic calendar, a unique need of sport organizations that makes internship planning with sport organizations variable and different than other industries (Williams, 2004). Thus, the planning of the social work internships in sport organizations did not focus solely on individual sustainability, but also on the importance of macro-level sustainability of the idea of social work in sport. Sandmann and colleagues (2009) also argue that Research is a domain unique to service-learning, in that it encompasses the research needed to understand the problem the service-learning project is addressing and the outcome of the project. However, in the context of internship planning, more than one intern may be working in the same organization on different tasks, and different interns in different semesters will be working on different projects with different tasks. Additionally, micro, meso, and macro-level internships have different projects and different outcomes. These two distinctions suggest there is a need to better encompass the collective approach to establishing social work field placements in sport organizations.

Furthermore, planners in this dissertation worked first to discern the context of the organization, and then strategically positioned themselves as an insider to that sport culture. This process exemplifies the importance of gaining insight on different
organizational contexts, which is suggested in Daffron and Caffarella’s (2021) Interactive Model of Program Planning, and then negotiating positionality to gain entry into sport organizations. Daffron and Caffarella (2021) also suggest that building a solid base of support is essential to the program planning process. Within the context of the participants’ planning stories, there was a need to build support for a single field placement, as well as the education and advocacy that goes into building support for the larger social work in sport movement. Finally, although the SLPMM does acknowledge the importance of culture and context (Sandmann et al., 2009), it is not central as its own domain. Yet, for participants in this study, the differences between the culture in a youth and community sport organization and in an elite sport organization impacted every domain of the planning process.

Specifically, for participants in this study, there was a reciprocal relationship between culture and the program planning process. Every aspect of the internship planning process was embedded in cultural context and this context impacted all planning decisions; and, at the same time, the planning decisions the social work field staff made, through their relationships and negotiations of relational power, changed and shifted the cultural context. In other words, as social work field staff overcome challenges created by the culture of sport to advocate for social work in sport and build innovative internships in sport organizations, the more accepting sport came of social work and social work came of sport. In this way, the planners acted in and on the cultural context of the planning process (Wilson & Cervero, 1996). Thus, where the SLPPM (Sandmann et al., 2009) seems to fall short is not representing the centrality of the program planner and the
reciprocal relationship between the individual planning process and the larger organizational and social context, especially when working within the culture of sport and with sport organizations where mental health is stigmatized (Breslin et al., 2019; Kern et al., 2017) and there are misconceptions about social work (Beasley et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2021b).

Limitations

First and foremost, despite the representative nature of the participant demographics to the demographics of the social work profession, the sample was not racially or ethnically diverse. Purposefully sampling to include the voices of field staff of color may have provided more nuanced insights into the power relations in the planning process. Secondly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and geographic limitations, all interviews were conducted via Zoom. Although I was still able to observe participants’ non-verbal communication and physical surroundings, there are inherent limitations in a virtual platform versus interviewing in-person. Finally, as documents collected for the study were limited to what was available online or what the participant was comfortable sharing, I was unable to do a direct comparative analysis.

Implications

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the findings of this dissertation have important implications for policy, practice, and future research in the fields of social work and sport management.
Practice Implications

The findings of this dissertation have implications for practice in both the social work field and the sport management fields. For social work field staff looking to continue working with sport organizations or for social work field staff interested in beginning to place social work students interns in sport organizations, the findings speak to the complexity of the planning process. In building relationships and networks with people in sport, it is important to reflect on ways in which power influences the relationship both individually and organizationally. Additionally, finding ways to position oneself as an insider to sport culture could be an effective strategy in building initial relationships. However, building organizational buy-in and commitment to social work interns may be the most difficult. I thus recommend building relationships with sport management and kinesiology faculty and educating them on the social work profession and social work in sport. Then, bring these sport management and kinesiology faculty into the program planning process to leverage their insider knowledge and understanding of sport as well as their already established relationships with sport organizations.

As creating sustainable interorganizational partnerships with sport organizations begins with congruence between vision, mission, and goals (Babiak & Willem, 2016), it may be a good strategy to use the first internship to develop a larger social work internship program. This would include conducting a needs assessment for the organization and determining what type of social work programming could best meet the organization’s needs. Additionally, social work field staff can consider establishing meso
and macro internships in sport organizations, along with clinical internships. This would also benefit sport organizations, who can leverage social work student interns to build larger mental health staff, as well as create programming related to diversity, equity, and inclusions, human resources training, and community campaigns. In this way, social work interns can increase the organizational capacity of sport organizations to address these important issues.

However, as seen through the participants’ narratives, no efforts to establish sport-based social work internships will be sustainable without also addressing the cultural stigma around mental health and social work in sport. Therefore, social work field staff must include education and advocacy efforts in their planning processes through interdisciplinary efforts such as webinars, conferences, courses, and continuing-education-unit opportunities. These efforts should intentionally include educational campaigns for athletic administrators prior to any conversations about social work internships to decrease misconceptions and eliminate some of the educational work on the front-end.

These strategies may also be helpful for social work field staff looking to place students in other areas of innovative social work practice. For example, social workers are offering services at museums, tax-preparation organizations, and in theater (Elswick et al., 2015). Similarly social work scholars have called for more opportunities for social work students to get field placements in macro social work settings (Deal et al., 2007; Hunter & Ford, 2010), which are many times not traditional social work service organizations. The planning stories of the field staff in this study, although focused on
work with sport organizations, can provide valuable insights to breaking down barriers with other organizations. Ultimately, as the social work profession continues to expand into nontraditional settings, social work field departments will also need to continue to innovate so that social work students can gain competence to work with these populations.

**Policy Implications**

The findings of this dissertation also have implications at the university level as well as at the national governing level for the CSWE and the NASW. At higher education institutions, the results of this study support the need for interdisciplinary partnerships to be formed between social work and sport management departments by developing social work in sport courses and interdisciplinary research opportunities, in line with recommendations by other social work scholars (Beasley et al., in press; Beasley et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2021b). This can not only help facilitate relationships between social work field staff and sport management faculty but can also reach students as well. First, as participants discussed the need for more student interest in social work in sport to justify time and resources dedicated to developing social work in sport internships, these classes can introduce social work students to a career in sport. Secondly, these interdisciplinary courses can introduce sport management students, who will ultimately become sport administrators, to the social work profession and de-stigmatize mental health and social work services in sport. Overall, although social work field placements in sport organizations have begun to bridge the two professions, more intentional efforts
need to be made to introduce pre-professionals to the opportunities to work at the intersection of social work in sport.

At the national governing body level, the findings of this dissertation have implication for both CSWE and for NASW. Much advocacy has been done for CSWE to alter their field education policies to better meet the structure of macro-level and nontraditional social work internships (Deal et al., 2007; Hunter & Ford, 2010; Teisger, 2009). Many participants in this study spoke to similar challenges in establishing field placements in sport organizations, such as the lack of a social worker on staff. This is then another call for the CSWE to continue to reconsider their field education standards to better capture the diversity of social work practice. They may be able to look to organizations such as ASWIS, commonly mentioned by participants, an organization that has done work to create models of social work in sport internships.

Ultimately, the availability of social work field placements will be an important step for professionalizing the subspecialty of social work practice in sport, and conversely, as the subspecialty professionalizes, more social work in sport field placements will come available. Therefore, NASW needs to consider officially recognizing sport as a subspecialty of social work practice and offering a social work practice in sport certificate. This process is visually represented in Figure 4, which lays out the steps for social work specialty certifications as required by the CSWE (2015) and NASW (2020a).

The first step is a pre-graduate education, whether that be a four-year program or a two-year program in social work or a related field, followed by graduation from an
Figure 4

Visual Representation of Professional Certification in Social Work

Note. A grey box indicates the need to follow specific state guidelines for licensure as these will vary between states. A blue arrow indicates a required step, while a white arrow indicates an optional step.
ASWB-accredited Master of Social Work program, as this is required for future licensure (Dyeson, 2004). During their master’s education, students will have to take the core social work courses that meet the CSWE’s (2015) nine core competencies, which ideally would include the interdisciplinary social work in sport courses. The CSWE (2015a) requires 900 supervised internship hours. Students could complete their field internship in a sport-setting, which would be established by social work field staff, such as those planning stories presented in this dissertation. After completing the educational requirements, the individual must become licensed at the master’s level through the state in which they wish to practice. These requirements will differ by state; however, it is imperative that the individual becomes licensed before, or soon after beginning work experience. The licensed social worker then completes 3,000 hours of work experience in an athletic organization or direct work experience with athletes, coaches, or other people of sport. During this time, they must also complete and document at the minimum 20 CEU hours related to practice in sport. This is in line with the definitions of experience provided by many states (Pennsylvania Society for Clinical Social Work, 2014) and modeled after several other social work certifications (NASW, 2020a).

In this time, the social worker can also choose to pursue clinical licensure. However, clinical licensure is not required for the sport-specific certification. I made this decision intentionally for two primary reasons. First, to not privilege clinical social work over other facets of social work, as many of the internship tasks detailed by participants were at the meso and macro level. Second, to diminish social closure that many times happens due to advanced requirements (Adams, 2017; Siebert, 2020), as clinical licensure
requires an additional licensing exam, additional CEU hours, and supervision hours that
social workers usually have to pay for out-of-pocket creating a cost barrier for many
professionals (Miller et al., 2015). However, social workers not clinically licensed should
be aware of the boundaries of their work and hiring administrators should assure to hire a
social worker with a clinical license or actively working towards clinical licensure if they
want someone to do clinical psychotherapy. Once a social worker holds at the minimum a
masters-level license, completes 3,000 contact hours with athletes or other people in
sport, and completes at minimum 20 CEU hours in sport-related practice, they can apply
for certification through the NASW, utilizing a similar process as other specialized social
work certifications (NASW, 2020a). The renewal cycle will be every two years, and
would require maintenance of state license, good standing with the state regulatory board,
and a minimum of 20 CEUs related to sport practice, in line with other specialized social
work certifications (NASW, 2020a) and other professional certifications in sport
(Commission on Dietetic Registration, 2019).

As this process emphasizes, social work field departments providing sport-related
field placements are important, because it allows more access to social work students
who want to get into sport. Adams (2017) argues that credentialing and specifically
specialized certificates many times prevent access to the profession for individuals in
non-privileged positions. Thus, scholars suggest that specialized education may be more
appropriate than specialized credentialing (Bres, et al., 2019; Matarazzo, 1977); however,
other scholars point to the need of this type of credentialing for the ethical care and well-
being of clients, especially in the health care professions like social work (Chamberlin,
2015; Grise-Owens et al., 2017; Monahan, 2018; Patel & Sharma, 2019). Combining both camps, I call for specialized education in sport-based social work as the road to specialized certification. Research has suggested that having some type of prior internship and mentoring opportunities in sport increases the likelihood of getting hired in a sport organization (Hardin et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2018). By providing opportunities for social work students to have field placements in sport-settings during their master’s education, the path to gaining employment in a sport-setting post-graduation will hopefully become easier. Establishing more social work in sport field placements will allow more social work students the opportunity to have an internship in sport, and therefore employment in sport post-graduation. As more social workers become employed in sport-settings and thus more accredited programs incorporate sport practice into their curricula, such as offering sport-based field placements, the need will increase for the NASW to offer a sport specialty certification.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As this is one of the first studies to explore field placements in sport organizations, future research needs to be done to fully understand the internship experience. Specifically, future work can consider the perspective of the social work students in these internships. Insight is needed from the students themselves on what worked in these internships, what did not, what could be improved. Secondly, future research can be conducted with the task supervisors, who are the athletic department staff supervising these students, on best practices and how they can be better supported by social work departments. Finally, to better understand the larger misconceptions and
stigma around social work in sport, studies can be done to explore the perceptions sport administrators hold about social work. These insights can be helpful in developing specific educational campaigns that target the exact misconceptions sport administrators have of social workers, as they tended to be the gatekeepers and hold the power in the planning process of field placements in sport organizations.

A participatory action research project may also be insightful. Participatory action research can focus on an evaluation of on-going work and on-going community projects, or developing projects with community members (McDonald, 2012). Thus, I recommend a participatory action research project focused on developing a social work internship program with a sport organization. This may be especially effective developing this study with the first social work intern placed at a sport organization, who is tasked with developing an internship model with the sport organization. Furthermore, a quantitative survey sent out to both social work field departments and sport organizations across the United States and internationally can provide us with a better understanding of exactly how many higher education social work programs are offering sport-based field placements and what these internships look like (i.e., clinical vs. macro, youth sport vs. collegiate sport).

Program planning scholars can also take a grounded theory approach to look at the building of internship partnerships between social work and sport, and other professions and organizations with fundamentally different visions, missions, and values, to conceptualize a model that captures the complexities of this specific type of program planning process. This work can further our understanding of program planning
generally, as well as the ways in which program planners act within and on the context of the program planning process (Wilson & Cervero, 1996).

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to understand social work field staff's narratives of their experiences establishing sport-specific field placements through their lived stories. Using narrative inquiry, the participants and I co-constructed the planning stories representing the people work of establishing social work internships in sport organizations. The participants shared the challenges and strategies to working with both community and youth sport organizations, and elite sport organizations. Analysis of the stories through the lens of program planning theories provided insight into interorganizational program planning between social work departments and sport organizations.

Wilson and Cervero (1996) argue, “What is missing from most planning theory is how planning is always an integration of individual planners’ actions and the organizational context in which they work” (p. 8). Although the newer program planning literature prioritizes context and culture (i.e., Cervero & Wilson, 2006; Sork, 2010; Daffron & Caffarella, 2021), it remains less recognized in the specific context of planning experiential learning partnerships (Sandmann et al., 2009), such as social work internships in sport organizations. Thus, this narrative inquiry adds to the program planning literature by seeking to understand program planning in the context of social work internships in sport organizations.
Overall, as interorganizational partnerships between sport management and social work continue to become more common and the subspecialty of social work practice in sport grows, there is going to be an increased need for sport-based social work field placements; both to meet the need of social work students interested in the field, and to meet the need of sport organizations to address the psychosocial needs of people in sport. The insights offered by participants in this dissertation can provide current and future social field staff working with sport organizations insight on navigating the complexities of that planning process.
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310
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Interview Guide

A Narrative Inquiry on the Experiences of Social Work Field Staff Establishing Field Placements in Sport Organizations

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative inquiry is to understand social work field staff’s experiences establishing sport-specific field placements through their lived stories. The study is guided by three research questions:

1. What narratives do social work field staff have about establishing field placements in sport settings?
2. How do social field staff experience the process of establishing field placements in sport settings?
3. What strategies do social work field staff use in their narratives to overcome potential barriers to establishing field placements in sport settings?

Opening Script: Hi! My name is Lauren Beasley. I am a licensed social worker in the state of Tennessee, and doctoral candidate at the University of Tennessee in Sport Management. I am currently conducting a research project on social work field placements in sport organizations, as we have previously discussed. I want to first thank you for your time and willingness to share your experiences with me. Today's interview will last approximately 60 minutes and is completely voluntary. If at any time you are not comfortable or wish to stop, please let me know and we will end the interview immediately. Throughout the interview, please ask any clarifying questions. I will be recording the interview, but all identifiable information will be omitted during transcription. Do I have your permission to record? Do you have any questions? Ready to start?

Demographic Questions: I would like to begin by asking you some questions about your personal and professional background. A reminder that you do not have to answer any questions you do not want to.

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender identity?
3. What is your racial/ethnic identity?
4. What is your educational background?
   1. Do you have a BSW, MSW, DSW, PhD?
   2. Currently licensed?
5. What is your job title?
6. What is the description of your job role?
7. Can you tell me the story of how you got into your current position?
8. How long have you been in your current position?
9. Can you take me through an average day at work?

**RQ 1:** What narratives do social work field staff have about establishing field placements in sport settings?

**Interview Questions:**

1. Can you describe the general process of establishing a new field placement?

2. What field placement opportunit(ies) do you currently have in a sport organization?
   a) If none, what was the one you had in the past?
   b) What is the sport organization?
   c) For BSW or MSW students? Or both?
   d) Reason for this decision?
   e) What role does the student intern have there?
   f) What department is the student housed in?
   g) What are the students’ main responsibilities?
   h) Who is the field instructor, and field liaison?

3. Can you tell me how you established the field placement in the sport organization?
   a) When did this happen?
   b) Who first initiated the process?
   c) Did you, or your office, have to do any specific research before making initial contact with the sport organization?
   d) Who initiated contact?
   e) Who were the key stakeholders in the process?
   f) What were the key steps you had to take (i.e., field contract) before the student could start their placement?

4. How do you evaluate the success of this field placement for the student? Can you recall a specific moment that was exemplar of this success?
   a) For the university? Can you recall a specific moment that was exemplar of this success?
   b) For the sport organization? Can you recall a specific moment that was exemplar of this success?
   c) Do you have a specific evaluation form (i.e., “all-in-one”)?
   d) How was this document created?
   e) Who was involved in the process?
   f) What is included in the document?
g) How did you ensure that the field placement met CSWE standards?

5. Was there a moment that was specifically memorable for you during this process?

6. You began the interview describing the general process of establishing a new field placement. Can you tell me a time you established a new placement (not in sport) that went pretty much as expected (i.e., “easy”)?
   a) How was the described experience for you different, or the same, to establishing the field placement in the sport organization?
   b) If different: Is there a particular moment you can recall that is an example of that difference?

RQ 2:

How do social field staff experience and negotiate power when establishing field placements in sport settings?

Interview Questions:

1. Think back to the moment the idea of a field placement in a sport organization was first brought to your field department. What was your initial reaction?
   a) Specific thoughts and feelings?
   b) How have these initial thoughts/feelings about a placement in a sport organization changed?

2. Think back to a moment you may have faced an ethical issue in the process. What happened?

3. Think back to the moment you first were in contact with the sport organization.
   a) What exactly occurred in this first conversation?
   b) Specific thoughts and feelings?

4. Can you recall a specific time during the process that you were in conflict (i.e. differing opinions, different needs) than another stakeholder in the process?
   a) What/who helped you through that conflict?
RQ 3: What strategies do social work field staff use to establish field placements in sport settings?

Interview Questions:

1. Is the student also enrolled in a field course while they are/were in the sport placement?
   a) Who teaches this course?
   b) Specific assignments?
   c) Did you hear of any specific issues students had in completing these course assignments due to the structure of the organization?
      i. If yes, expand.

2. Can you recall this biggest challenge for you in the process?
   a) What/who helped you through the process?
   b) Any other challenges you faced in this process that you would like to talk about?
      a. What/who helped you through the process?

3. What specific skills/strategies do you think were important in establishing this field placement in a sport organization?
   a) Can you recall a specific moment where you used one of these skills/strategies?
   b) Any other examples?

4. What advice would you give to another field department looking to establish a field placement in a sport organization?

Final Question: Is there anything else you would like to share about establishing field placements in sport organizations?

Ending Script: Thank you so much again for your time today!

(1st Interview): The next step for me is to transcribe our conversation, at which point I will omit all identifying information. Is there a specific name you would like to go by in my write up? After transcription, I will email you a copy of the document. You are welcome to make any edits to the transcript, and provide any feedback or thoughts. Does DATE and TIME still work for our second conversation? Great, see you then!

(2nd interview): Just like last time, the next step for me is to transcribe our conversation, at which point I again will omit all identifying information. After transcription, I will email you a copy of the document. You are welcome to make any edits to the transcript, and provide any feedback or thoughts. I again sincerely appreciate your willingness to
participate in this study. When I have a write up of the preliminary results, I will again be in touch and you can send me any thoughts and feedback on the results too. Thank you!
Appendix B

Field Notes Template

Date:__________ Time:_______ Participant:____________ Interview #_______

Observational Notes:

Methodological Notes:

Theoretical Notes:

Emotional Notes:

Environmental Notes:
### Appendix C

#### Code Book for Labovian Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code (Labov)</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>open the story and establish what the story is about</td>
<td>“You know what actually as we're talking it reminds me, we had, we did a really intentional effort at [former institution] to try to get us involved in the athletic department…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientations</td>
<td>describe key players, environments, and time frame of the story</td>
<td>“…[former institution] has a great athletic department, lots of great things, challenges, too, of course, but [another institution], great athletic department, you know, so we were trying to get involved, you know, with, so, it was a closed system or really closed system…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It was one of the associate athletic directors. And someone who was overseeing the academic advising group.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complicating Actions</td>
<td>refer to the events of the story and are usually identified by phrase such as “and then”</td>
<td>“…we actually did an interview process at [former institution] to get our final two. And then we sent those six over for the interviews…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations</td>
<td>the point and meaning of the story for the participant</td>
<td>“So, they really, they were going to prescribe the terms of how they wanted the services to be delivered. I think they were concerned about what might happen if others got involved”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolutions</td>
<td>indicate the conclusion of the story</td>
<td>“So, it ultimately didn't really transpire…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>end the story by bringing the narrative back to the current time</td>
<td>“But every three or four years, somebody makes another run at it, and it just hasn't kind of broken free.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Example of Labovian Analysis

You know what actually as we're talking it reminds me, we had, we did a really intentional effort at [former institution] to try to get us involved in the athletic department, because we, you know, [former institution] has a great athletic department (abstract), so we were trying to get involved, you know, with, so, it was a closed system or really closed system, honestly. And so, you know, it looked like from where we were coming from that they were like, “We don't want prying eyes, in our, in our space,” right? That's what it felt like (orientations). And so, there was the advisor, like the academic advisor group, and they're like, “Well, we do academic advisement with the athletes. But we also get into all kinds of other discussions and maybe your interns could, you know, be like somebody who comes in and kind of does like an internship as an academic advisor.” We're like, “Hmm, you know, no, social workers, okay, we have to kind of figure out the supervision piece.” And I remember doing a presentation to them, and just kind of, you know, talking with their leadership, and it just kind of got squashed, and we were really hopeful that it could happen, and we kind of pushed back to where like, “I don't know if the advisor thing, like some of that could be a good internship, but we also would like to do some counseling with the students. We would like to be involved with them and other way”, you know, like, and they were like, now they're like, “That's a little too much for us” (complicating actions). So, they really, they were going to prescribe the terms of how they wanted the services to be delivered. I think they were concerned about what might happen if others got involved (evaluations). So, it ultimately didn't really transpire. But every three or four years, somebody makes another run at it, and it just hasn't kind of broken free (coda).
# Appendix E

## Code Book for Narrative Thematic Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Example In-Vivo Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Impact of Sport Culture and Organizational Context | • Difference between elite sport vs. youth/community sport organizations  | • “system that is structured and protective”  
• “kick a soccer ball, that’s it”  
• “decision makers”; “level of authority”  
• “own experiences as a student-athlete” |
|                                             | • Gatekeeping                                                             |                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                             | • Negotiating Insider/Outsider Positionality                               |                                                                                                                                                    |
| Building Social Capital Through Relationships | • Networking                                                              | • “work off relationships that were already built”  
• “be real and be yourself”  
• “supervisor left”                                                                                                                                 |
|                                             | • Building the Relationship                                               |                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                             | • Sustaining the Relationship                                              |                                                                                                                                                    |
| Deconstructing Misconceptions                | • Educating Sport Stakeholders                                            | • “common points of integration”, “explain…the value”  
• “transferable skills”  
• “I play golf with my dad”                                                                                                                   |
|                                             | • Educating Social Work Stakeholders                                      |                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                             | • Critical Incident                                                       |                                                                                                                                                    |
| Operational Negotiations                    | • Stakeholders                                                            | • “they reached out to us”  
• “associate dean”  
• “CSWE competencies”; “dual placement”  
• “formal evaluation”; “anecdotally…see her in the hallway”                                                                                   |
|                                             | • Program Structure                                                       |                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                             | • Evaluation                                                              |                                                                                                                                                    |
Appendix F

Narrative Thematic Analysis Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN VIVO CODES</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>THEME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[LB1]Research-practitioner</td>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>Building Human Capital through Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[LB2]engagement &amp; interaction</td>
<td>Building the Relationship</td>
<td>Building Human Capital through Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[LB4]points of entry</td>
<td>Gatekeeping</td>
<td>Impact of Sport Culture &amp; Org Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[LB5]word of mouth</td>
<td>Networks</td>
<td>Building Human Capital through Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[LB6]level of authority</td>
<td>Gatekeeping</td>
<td>Impact of Sport Culture &amp; Org Context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Document Analysis Matrix Example

Documents from X University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Program Planning Code</th>
<th>Document Type</th>
<th>Document Excerpt</th>
<th>Interpretation with Program Planning References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals/Outcomes</td>
<td>Learning Contract</td>
<td>“My individualized learning goals/outcomes”</td>
<td>Identify the specific outcomes as part of formative evaluation (Daffron &amp; Caffarella, 2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals CSWE Competencies</td>
<td>Learning Contract</td>
<td>“My goals link to the following Competencies”</td>
<td>Importance of CSWE as part of broader context (Daffron &amp; Caffarella, 2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasks Goals/Outcomes</td>
<td>Learning Contract</td>
<td>“My objectives/tasks to achieve each of the specified goals/outcomes”</td>
<td>Outlines the specific tasks/responsibilities the student intern will provide the organization (Sandmann et al., 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Field Instructor</td>
<td>Learning Contract</td>
<td>“As Field Instructor, I will support the intern’s learning through the following strategies”</td>
<td>Outlines the specific tasks/responsibilities of the organization in supporting student learning (Sandmann et al., 2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Intern                           | Learning Contract | “Intern’s Signature” | Student stakeholder in experiential learning partnership (Sandmann et al., 2009)  
Student inclusion as part of a more democratic planning process (Cervero & Wilson, 1994) |
| Field Instructor                 | Learning Contract | “Field Instructor Signature” | Organizational stakeholder in experiential learning partnership (Sandmann et al., 2009) |
| Field Liaison                    | Learning Contract | “Faculty Liaison Signature” | University stakeholder in experiential learning partnership (Sandmann et al., 2009) |
Appendix H

Consent Form

Research Study Title: A Narrative Inquiry on the Experiences of Social Work Field Staff Establishing Field Placements in Sport Organizations

Researcher: Lauren Beasley, LMSW, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Advisor: Robin Hardin, PhD, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Committee Members: Steven Waller, PhD, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
James Bemiller, JD, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Mitsunori Misawa, PhD, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Steven Hoffman, PhD, Brigham Young University

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

I am asking you to be in this research study because you work as field staff in a social work department that has placed at least one BSW or MSW student in sport organization.

What is this research study about?

The purpose of the research study is to gain a deeper understanding of the process of implementing field partnerships between social work departments and sport organizations.

Who is conducting this research study?

This study is being conducted as the dissertation study of Lauren Beasley, LMSW, who is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Tennessee in Kinesiology and Sport Studies.

How long will I be in the research study?

If you agree to be in the study, your participation will last for approximately 4 hours. You will participate in one two-hour interview, or two one-hour interviews, depending on your schedule and preference. You will also be asked to review your interview transcript and consolidated study themes for accuracy.
What will happen if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research study”?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to complete an approximately two-hour Zoom interview, or two separate one-hour Zoom interviews, that will be recorded. You will be asked questions about your career path, your role and job description, and your experiences developing a field partnership with a sport organization. After the recording is transcribed, you will be asked to review your interview(s) to ensure accuracy, and review the consolidated results for accuracy.

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 won’t affect your employment at your institution.

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, contact either Lauren Beasley at lauren.beasley@utk.edu and (865) 974-7697, or her advisor, Dr. Robin Hardin at robh@utk.edu and (865) 974-1281. If you withdraw from the study at any point, your data will be destroyed.

Are there any possible risks to me?

There are minimal risks involved with participating in this study. Participants may recall experiences in past that were negative in nature, and questions that are personal in nature may cause discomfort. There is a risk of breaching confidentiality of students in participants’ answers, however the researchers will not ask details about specific students to ensure student confidentiality is not breached, and participants can decline to answer any question. All participants’ names and school affiliations will remain confidential to decrease the risk loss of confidentiality. However, due to the small number of field departments currently offering placements in sport organizations, there is a risk of identification. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym, and that will be used for any direct quotation used.

Are there any benefits to being in this research study?

You may not directly benefit from your participation in this research study. The primary benefit of this study is to provide social work field staff a better understanding of implementing a field partnership with a sport organization, which may increase the opportunities for social work students to have their field experience in a sport organization. Societal benefits include a deeper understanding of the role of social
workers in addressing the mental health of athletes, and may provide sport organizations with strategies they can implement to address the mental health of their athletes.

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

I will protect the confidentiality of your information by keeping data stored securely and only made available to persons conducting the study unless participants specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. If information from this study is published or presented at scientific meetings, your name and other personal information will not be used.

I will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what information came from you. Although it is unlikely, there are times when others may need to see the information we collect about you. These include:

- People at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville who oversee research to make sure it is conducted properly.
- Government agencies (such as the Office for Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), and others responsible for watching over the safety, effectiveness, and conduct of the research.
- If a law or court requires us to share the information, we would have to follow that law or final court ruling.

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

I will not keep your information to use for future research. Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be deleted from research data collected as part of the study. I will not share your research data with other researchers aside from those on this research team.

What else do I need to know?

If I learn about any new information that may change your mind about being in the study, I will tell you. If that happens, you may be asked to sign a new consent form.

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 researchers:

Lauren Beasley at lauren.beasley@utk.edu and (865) 974-7697, or her advisor, Dr. Robin Hardin at robh@utk.edu and (865) 974-1281.
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 will receive a copy of this document after I sign it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Adult Participant</th>
<th>Signature of Adult Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Research Team Member</th>
<th>Signature of Research Team Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I

IRB Outcome Letter

April 26, 2021

Lauren Grace Beasley,

UTK - Coll of Education, Hlth, Human - Kinesiology, Recreation &

Re: UTK IRB-21-06310-XP

Study Title: A Narrative Inquiry On The Experiences Of Social Work Field Staff Establishing Field Placements In Sport Organizations

Dear Lauren Grace Beasley:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for the above referenced project. It determined that your application is eligible for expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1), categories 6 and 7. The IRB has reviewed these materials and determined that they do comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.

Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval by the IRB of your application (version 1.1). You are approved to enroll a maximum of 30 participants. Approval of this study will be valid from April 26, 2021 to 04/25/2022.

Approval Information:
Application v 1.1, Expected Categories 6 and 7, signed consent, n=30, continuing review required (student researcher)

Approved Documents:

- Consent Form v 1.0
- Member-Check Email v 1.0
- Dissertation_Recruitment Email v 1.0
- Dissertation_Narrative Interview Guide v 1.0
Please note that restrictions are in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and all in-person contact with research participants is on hold until further notice.

- Newly-approved studies with in-person interactions may not begin enrollment until further notice from the IRB/HRPP. Please submit a UTK Request to Resume In-Person Research Activity During COVID-19 if you wish to receive an exception to institutional restrictions. See https://irb.utk.edu/covid-19/ for complete forms and instructions.
- Newly-approved studies with no in-person participant interaction may begin after receiving IRB approval.

Please monitor the COVID-19 Updates at https://www.utk.edu/coronavirus/faq/ for the latest information. Human Subjects Research updates are being filed under Information for Instructors/Research.

Any revisions in the approved application, consent forms, instruments, recruitment materials, etc., must be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, re-approval of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,

Lora Beebe, Ph.D., PMHNP-BC, FAAN
Chair

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement
1104 VEB AVES | ESTATE 129 | 805-336-0867
415-974-7557 | 805-974-7433 fax | sbirb@ucsb.edu

BIG ORANGE. BIG IDEAS.

Proudly Supporting the University of California, Santa Barbara
VITA

Lauren Grace Beasley grew up in Los Altos, California, after spending some of her childhood in Carmel, California and Park City, Utah. After high school, she attended the University of Texas at Austin where she majored in American Studies and Latin. Her first job out of college was through the VISTA program at the Capital Area Food Bank working on economic opportunity programming. It was at this job that Lauren was introduced to the social work profession. After finishing her one-year contract with the food bank, Lauren continued her education earning her Master of Social Work (MSW) degree at the University of Texas at San Antonio. During her MSW, Lauren completed her generalist field placement at a skilled nursing facility doing case management and group therapy, and her advanced field placement at an inpatient/outpatient behavioral health hospital doing individual, group, and family therapy mostly with adolescents with suicidal ideation. At this time, she also worked as a research assistant for two different social work faculty members, one who introduced her to the love of research and the other who introduced her to the subspecialty of social work in sport. Lauren, therefore, decided to pursue her PhD in Sport Management at the University of Tennessee to study the intersection of social work and sport. Lauren is currently a Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW) in the state of Tennessee and will graduate with her PhD in May 2022. After graduation, she will begin her new position as an Assistant Professor of Sport Administration at Georgia State University.