

JOURNAL OF AMATEUR SPORT

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Welcome to the Journal of Amateur Sport

Welcome to the first issue of the Journal of Amateur Sport (JAS)! First, I must thank everyone who played an integral role in the development of JAS. Drs. Mark Vermillion, Brian Gordon, Kyle Bunds, and Marion Hambrick were invaluable in their guidance as original members of the editorial and development team. The first editorial board has also played a large part in the excellent quality of the first issue that follows. We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to receiving your submissions in the future!

*Jordan Bass, Ph.D., University of Kansas
Co-Editor and Founder of JAS*

Mission and Purpose

The overarching mission of the Journal of Amateur Sport (JAS) is to provide scholars an outlet in which to share scholarship relevant to the amateur sports realm. We define amateur sport as those who participate and govern at the youth, recreational, community, international, and intercollegiate level. We acknowledge the tenuous debate surrounding the amateurism of intercollegiate athletics, thus at this time we welcome examinations that are focused on the less commercialized avenues of college sport participation and governance (especially NCAA Division II, III, and other less publicized governing bodies and settings). Submissions from all disciplines are encouraged, including sociology, communication, and organizational behavior. Similarly, we welcome a wide array of methodological and structural approaches, including conceptual frameworks, narratives, surveys, interviews, and ethnographies.

As an open-access journal, submissions should be of interest to researchers and practitioners alike. In all, the content published in JAS should advance the collective understanding of the participants, coaches, administrators, and/or institutional structures that comprise amateur sports worldwide. We challenge authors to submit creative and nontraditional manuscripts that are still high-quality in nature. Authors

are encouraged to email the editors before submitting if they are unsure if their manuscript is a proper fit within JAS.

Call for Papers

Thank you for considering the Journal of Amateur Sport (JAS) for your scholarly work. Please follow the guidelines laid out below when submitting your manuscript to JAS. Manuscript submissions should be sent as a Microsoft Word file attachment to co-editors Jordan Bass and Brian Gordon at jamsport@ku.edu. To aid in the double-blind review process, please include three separate files: (1) a title page with corresponding author information, (2) an abstract of no more than 500 words with no identifying information, and (3) the full manuscript with no identifying information. In the body of the email, explicitly state the current manuscript has not been simultaneously submitted for publication or been published previously. Manuscripts should follow the current *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* with exception to the elements noted below. The document must be double-spaced, in Garamond font, size 14, and utilize one inch margins throughout. Maximum length, including references and figures, is 50 pages. Be sure to include a running header, page numbers, and footnotes (when appropriate). Authors are responsible for receiving permission to reproduce copyrighted material before submitting their manuscript for publication.

There is no charge for submission or publication. Authors will be provided with a free digital and print copy of published articles. JAS is an open-access, online journal and thus strongly encourages the posting and sharing of published articles by authors on their personal and departmental websites, Google Scholar, and e-portfolios *once they are posted to the JAS website*. Authors should expect a maximum 60 day turnaround time from initial submission to receiving the initial review. Submissions that are determined to be outside of the scope or not appropriate for JAS are subject to desk rejection. If an article is deemed fit for publication, the author(s) must sign a publishing agreement before the article is officially accepted. Submissions will be subjected to a double-blind review from at least two members of the editorial board (or outside reviewers when appropriate).

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Foreword to the Issue

Earle F. Zeigler

Earle F. Zeigler, Ph.D., D. Sc., LL.D. retired from the University of Western Ontario in 1989. Additionally, he is a past president of the International Association for the Philosophy of Sport, honorary past president of the North American Society for Sport Management, and was president of American Academy of Kinesiology and Physical Education. Since 1948, Zeigler has published over 50 books and monographs and 430 articles in five sub-disciplinary and sub-professional areas within the fields of philosophy, history, management theory and practice, comparative and international aspects, and professional preparation. He is also the namesake for the prestigious Earle F. Zeigler Lecture Award given yearly by the North American Society for Sport Management.

It is a pleasure, an honor, and indeed, a challenge to write an editorial for the first issue of a new journal devoted to amateur sport.

World society is obviously in a precarious state. It is therefore important to view present social conditions globally. I maintain that highly competitive sport and related, beneficial human physical activity (e.g., amateur sport) have developed to a point where each has greater or lesser worldwide influence. However, there is too much of the former and too little of the latter. Both of

these activities should be so organized and administered that they truly make a contribution to a much larger percentage of people of all states and conditions in a society where human concern would focus more on self-expression, cooperation, and the identity of the self.

Some go so far as to say that there are no more amateurs - at any level. This is not true. There are - and I hope there always will be - amateurs as defined in what might be called a traditional definition. However, it is my hope that people like us will bring pressure to bear

so that all will agree that the amateur is the beginner in any sphere of activity - including sport.

For example, when a young person just learning the game of golf turns in a score of 125 for eighteen holes, he or she is indeed an amateur - a beginner or "duffer" in the game of golf. This coincides with the original meaning of the term "amateur" as one who seeks to cultivate any art or pursuit for the pure enjoyment of it. The amateur may simply lack the talent, desire, or polish of the semiprofessional or the professional.

In North America during the 20th century we developed more than 100 different definitions of an amateur but none of a semiprofessional. This is why any attempt to define an amateur or a professional in sport correctly will soon bring you to a state where you begin to wonder whether you ever should have gotten involved.

Traditionally our brethren in the amateur sport organizations have described the amateur as follows: An amateur sports person is one who engages in sport solely for the pleasure and physical, mental, or moral benefits to be derived there - from and to whom sport is nothing more than an avocation.

Try explaining that definition to some of today's Olympic athletes in basketball and tennis! Even a dictionary's innocuous statement that, "an amateur is one who is not rated as a professional" leaves you high and dry. It helps a bit if

you read further and learn that, "a professional is one, generally, who has competed in athletics for a stake or purse, or gate money, or with a professional for a prize, or who has taught or trained in athletics for pay." But today, this is now an outmoded definition. However, note that nowhere do we find an attempt to define a semiprofessional, a person for whom sport is presumably not the goal of a lifetime but more that of an avocation. It may well be that serious consideration should be given to such an "intermediary" category as well.

The challenge is for all people in society is to have the opportunity to so order their lives to the extent possible that they are renewed daily through refreshing play, amateur sport, and purposeful recreation.

However the situation develops, I was so very pleased personally and professionally to learn about this new *Journal of Amateur Sport*. I offer my most hearty and sincere congratulations to Dr. Jordan Bass and his associates in this venture. Such a journal could not have arrived at a more appropriate time in sport history!

Investigating the Impact of Team Identification on the Willingness to Commit Verbal and Physical Aggression by Youth Baseball Spectators

Daniel L. Wann

Brian Belva

Sam Armstrong

Stephen Weaver

Sagan Ladd

Murray State University

The current investigation was designed to extend previous work on the aggressive actions of youth baseball spectators (Hennessy & Schwartz, 2007) by incorporating team identification into the research. Team identification, the extent to which a fan feels a psychological connection to a team, (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001) has been found to be an important predictor of a wide variety of aggressive actions among sport consumers (Wann, 2006). Spectators ($N = 80$) at youth baseball games completed a questionnaire packet assessing demographics, team identification, vengeance, anger, hostility, and the likelihood of acting in a verbally or physically aggressive manner toward a number of potential targets (e.g., officials, opposing players). Consistent with expectations, team identification predicted a willingness to commit verbally aggressive acts. However, identification did not predict physical aggression.

The affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions of sport spectators have drawn the attention of sport scientists for many decades, with some of the first publications dating back to the early 1900s (e.g., Brill, 1929; Howard, 1912; Mumford, 1937; Nash, 1938). Although researchers have focused on many

aspects of fandom, one of the most consistent issues concerns the aggressive and violent reactions sometimes displayed by fans. In fact, the violent actions of sport fans and spectators may be the most often researched topic among social scientists investigating fan reactions (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). Given the large

volume of work on the subject, it is not surprising then that we have a strong understanding of many facets of fan aggression, including types of aggression (i.e., hostile versus instrumental, see Wann, Schrader, & Carlson, 2000), forms of aggression (e.g., verbal, physical, property damage, see Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001), hooliganism (Giulianotti, Bonney, & Hepworth, 1994), and rioting (Mann, 1989; Russell & Mustonen, 1998; Smith, 1983), to name just a few.

One group of sport fans receiving increased attention in recent years is persons attending youth sporting events. Parents often encourage their children to participate in organized sport because the adults believe that the children will receive tangible benefits from athletic participation. Indeed, a sizeable body of literature now exists to substantiate the parents' beliefs. For instance, youth and/or collegiate sport participation has been linked to reduced risk of suicidal thoughts (Taliaferro, Rienzo, Miller, Pigg, & Dodd, 2010), increased perceptions of social status (Shakib, Veliz, Dunbar, & Sabo, 2011), improved self-confidence (Jones, Dunn, Holt, Sullivan, & Bloom, 2011), and enhanced self-esteem (Kamal, Blais, Kelly, & Ekstrand, 1995; Taylor & Turek, 2010; Wann, 1997). However, parents sometimes exhibit a variety of abusive and/or aggressive behaviors while watching their children compete in athletic events, actions that often result in a negative sport experience for the children (Stahura & Lough, 2012).

Thus, parents enroll their children in sport in hopes that the youth will find the activity both enjoyable and beneficial. However, many adults then act in an abusive or aggressive manner while watching their child compete, thus eliminating any fun to be had by the children, a pattern of behavior Wann (2012) refers to as the Sport Parent Paradox.

Due to advances in media and social networking, the deviance found in sport is becoming more visible and public (Bass, Vermillion, & Putz, 2014), and this is most certainly the case with violence at youth sporting events. In fact, research indicates that the extent of spectator aggression at youth sporting events is quite alarming (Shields, Bredemeier, LaVoi, & Power, 2005; Shields, LaVoi, Bredemeier, & Power, 2007). In fact, one recent survey found that 84 percent of youth parents had witnessed a violent action from another spectator (Pallerino, 2003). These inappropriate actions are of great concern to those involved in youth sport. For instance, Wiersma and Sherman (2005) conducted a series of focus group interviews with youth sport coaches. The "first and most fervent area" of concern among the volunteers involved "areas of difficulty with parents" (p. 330) and the respondents reported an overwhelming desire and need for a Parent Code of Conduct to help deal with the problem. The problematic parental behaviors do not go unnoticed by the youth athletes. These actions can have a profound effect as recent work suggests that, when

parents respond inappropriately (e.g., lack sportspersonship), the young athletes are more likely to exhibit inappropriate behaviors themselves (the children often model the adults' poor behaviors, see Arthur-Banning, Wells, Baker, & Hegreness, 2009; Shields et al., 2007). Furthermore, parents are often unaware of the negative impact they can have on young athletes. They often overestimate their level of support while simultaneously underestimating the pressure they place on the athletes (Kanters, Bocarro, & Casper, 2008). In addition, youth athletes may be negatively impacted by background anger exhibited between adults (i.e., altercations among parents that do not directly involve a child, Omli & LaVoi, 2009).

Thus, youth sport parents often exhibit abusive and aggressive behaviors, and these actions can have a negative impact on the athletes. Given this, some authors have examined potential predictors of adult anti-social behavior at youth sporting events (e.g., Engh, 1999; Wann, 2012). Hennessy and Schwartz (2007) examined personal (i.e., individual difference) variables as predictors of spectator aggression at youth baseball games. They asked male and female parents to complete a questionnaire packet assessing vengeance, trait physical and verbal aggression, trait anger, and trait hostility. In addition, participants completed a Spectator Aggression Questionnaire assessing the likelihood they would engage in several forms of verbal and physical aggression toward persons present

in the youth sport environment. Specifically, respondents indicated the likelihood that they would yell at, swear at, shove, fight, and humiliate (the aggression types) other spectators, umpires, opposition team coaches, opposition team players, their child's coach, their child's teammates, and their own child (the aggression targets).

The researchers computed a series of regression analyses in which the personal variables (in addition to demographics such as gender) were employed as predictors of likelihood of yelling at and humiliating the targets (regressions were not computed for swearing, shoving, and fighting due to low frequencies of these behaviors). The results indicated several significant effects. Specifically, yelling at other spectators was predicted by gender (males greater than females) and higher levels of trait anger. Humiliating umpires was predicted by higher levels of vengeance. Finally, higher levels of trait hostility predicted greater likelihood of humiliating a child's teammate. Thus, in various analyses (i.e., among various types and targets of aggression), gender, trait anger, vengeance, and hostility were found to be significant unique predictors of aggressive spectator actions at youth sporting events.

The Current Investigation

The current investigation was designed to replicate and extend the work of Hennessy and Schwartz (2007). Consistent with their research, we examined potential predictors of the likelihood to engage in

various verbal and physical acts of aggression among spectators at youth baseball games. With respect to replication, we computed frequency totals for the likelihood of engaging in the aggressive acts, thereby allowing for a comparison between the two data sets. However, we were primarily interested in extending their work on potential predictors by including an additional personal variable not incorporated in their study. Specifically, in addition to including variables found by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007) to be significant unique predictors (i.e., gender, anger, vengeance, and hostility), we also examined the impact of team identification.

Team identification concerns the extent to which a fan feels a psychological connection to a team (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). Level of team identification has been found to predict a variety of fan responses including perceptions of influence on the outcomes of sporting events (Kelley & Tian, 2004; Wann, Dolan, McGeorge, & Allison, 1994), amount of superstitious behaviors directed toward the team (Wann et al., 2013; Wilson, Grieve, Ostrowski, Mienaltowski, & Cyr, in press), consumption of team sponsors' products (Madrigan, 2000; Pritchard & Negro, 2001), and attendance (Bristow & Sebastian, 2001; Swanson, Gwinner, Larson, & Janda, 2003). Most germane to the current investigation, however, is the growing volume of work indicating the substantial impact of team identification on sport spectator aggression (Dietz-Uhler & Lanter, 2008; Wann, 2006).

This body of work has consistently found that identification is a significant and positive predictor of a variety of aggressive reactions among fans. For instance, team identification is positively correlated with expressions of both hostile and instrumental aggression (Wann, Carlson, & Schrader, 1999) and highly identified fans are particularly likely to aggress against rival fans (Cikara, Botvinivk, & Fiske, 2011). Highly identified fans are more likely to view verbal aggression as acceptable (Rocca & Vogl-Bauer, 1999), feel out-of-control at events (Dimmock & Grove, 2005), and believe that aggressive war-sport analogies are appropriate (End, Kretschmar, Campbell, Mueller, & Dietz-Uhler, 2003). Furthermore, team identification has been found to play a role in sport rioting (Lanter, 2011). And finally, Wann and his colleagues conducted a series of studies examining fans' willingness to engage in anonymous acts of aggression (Wann et al., 2005; Wann, Haynes, McLean, & Pullen, 2003; Wann, Peterson, Cothran, & Dykes, 1999; Wann & Waddill, 2014). These studies consistently found a positive relationship between identification with a team and willingness to commit anonymous acts.

Given the aforementioned work pinpointing team identification as a key predictor of fan and spectator aggression, we expected similar findings within the youth sport context. Thus, we hypothesized that team identification would account for a significant proportion of unique variance in estimates of likelihood of engaging in verbal

aggression (Hypothesis 1) and that team identification would account for a significant proportion of unique variance in estimates of likelihood of engaging in physical aggression (Hypothesis 2). With respect to the other variables included in the model (i.e., gender, trait anger, vengeance, and hostility), we chose not to make specific predictions with respect to whether or not they would account for a unique proportion of variance in verbal or physical aggression at youth baseball contests. Although these variables were found to be significant in the original work conducted by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007), specific hypotheses were not warranted for four reasons. First, with respect to physical aggression and swearing, Hennessy and Schwartz did not conduct regressions on these forms of aggression due to low frequency counts. Second, these authors choose to analyze each target individually. To get a more comprehensive picture of youth spectator aggression, we collapsed across target. Third, although Hennessy and Schwartz ran separate regressions for each of the five forms of aggression, we choose to classify the forms as either verbal aggression (i.e., yell at, swear at, and humiliate) or physical aggression (i.e., shove and fight) and to examine total verbal and total physical aggression scores. Again, this was executed to develop a more complete understanding of spectator violence at youth sports. Finally, we examined the impact of additional person variables within the framework of a research question asking, “To what extent does

gender, trait vengeance, trait anger, and trait hostility account for a significant proportion of unique variance in the likelihood of verbal and physical aggression of spectators at youth sporting events when team identification is included in the model?”

Method

Participants

The original sample consisted of 88 spectators attending a youth baseball game. However, eight respondents failed to return a completed protocol and were removed from the sample. The final sample consisted of 80 persons (25 male; 55 female). They had a mean age of 40.63 years ($SD = 9.46$). When asked about the specific child they were watching, most indicated that the child played both recreational baseball and “travel” (i.e., elite) baseball (60%). The remaining spectators indicated that the child played only travel (21%) or recreational baseball (19%). The average age of the players was 10.40 ($SD = 2.41$; range = 6 to 16).

Procedure

Potential participants were approached prior to a youth baseball game at one of two locations in the mid-south (approval from the institution’s IRB and the baseball leagues/facilities was acquired prior to initiating this research). The games were either tournament or regular season contests for either a recreational league or travel teams. Those agreeing to participate (refusal rate was less than 20%) were given a

consent letter providing general instructions for the study. Specifically, they were informed that the study was an investigation of adult behaviors at youth sporting events and that the questionnaire packet contained items assessing demographics, personality traits, interest in their child's team, and various fan behaviors. After reading the cover letter and providing their consent, participants were handed an envelope containing the questionnaire protocol and a pencil. They were instructed to complete the questionnaire and to return it and the pencil to the envelope when finished. They were instructed to take their time and complete each item and not to identify themselves in any way on the questionnaire so as to maintain anonymity. Finally, they were told that the research assistant would come back shortly to collect the packet. When the assistant returned, he or she retrieved the envelope, thanked the subject for his or her participation, and handed the respondent a debriefing statement describing the nature and hypotheses of the research. This form contained information on contacting the lead author should the participant have questions or desire a copy of the final report. Completion of the packet required approximately 15 minutes.

Materials

The questionnaire packet contained five sections, the first of which assessed demographics. Specifically, respondents indicated their age, gender, age of the child the participant was there to watch, and

whether the child played travel (elite) baseball, recreational baseball, or both travel and recreational baseball.

Next, participants completed the seven-item Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). The SSIS is a reliable and valid tool for assessing team identification that has been successfully used in dozens of studies (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001) and has been translated into multiple languages including Portuguese (Theodorakis, Wann, Carvalho, & Sarmento, 2010), Dutch (Melnick & Wann, 2004), and French (Bernache, Bouchet, & Lacassagne, 2007). Participants were instructed to target the child's team when completing the SSIS. A sample item read, "How important is being a fan of the child's team to you?" Response options on the Likert-scale SSIS ranged from 1 (*low identification*) to 8 (*high identification*). Thus, higher numbers represented greater levels of team identification.

The final three sections of the questionnaire were selected because of their inclusion in the work by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007; see also Hennessy & Schwartz, 2012). Given that the present investigation was both a replication and extension of their work, it seemed reasonable to maintain consistency in scale selection. The third section contained the 20-item Vengeance Scale (VS; Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). The Likert-scale items on this questionnaire ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). As a result, higher numbers corresponded to greater

levels of vengeance. A sample item on the VS read, “I don’t get mad, I get even.” The scale has demonstrated reliability and validity and is viewed as “a useful instrument for the examination of individual differences in response to revenge-eliciting situations” (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992, p. 25).

Section four contained two subscales from the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992), a highly reliable and valid instrument assessing “individual components” of aggression (p. 452). Participants completed the seven-item Anger Subscale (AS) and the eight-item Hostility Subscale (HS). Both subscales were scored on a Likert-scale with response anchors that ranged from 1 (*extremely uncharacteristic of me*) to 5 (*extremely characteristic of me*). Therefore, higher numbers equated to greater levels of anger and hostility. A sample item on the AS read, “Some of my friends think I am a hothead” while a sample item on the HS read, “I wonder why sometimes I feel so bitter about things.”

The final section contained the Spectator Aggression Questionnaire (SAQ) developed by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007). In this measure, participants were presented with a list of seven potential targets of aggression of youth sporting events: another spectator, an umpire, your child’s coach, the opposition’s coach, an opposing player of your child’s team, your child’s teammate, and your child. Participants were asked to indicate how likely they would be to engage in a set of

physically and verbally aggressive actions directed at each of the seven targets. The five aggressive acts were: yell at them (verbal aggression), swear at them (verbal aggression), shove them (physical aggression), get into a physical fight (physical aggression), and humiliate them (verbal aggression). Participants were asked “How likely would you be to engage in each of the following with (the target person was inserted here)?” Subjects provided their responses based on a Likert-scale ranging from 0 (*not at all likely*) to 5 (*very likely*). Higher numbers reflected a greater likelihood of engaging in the verbally and physically aggressive actions. Thus, the participants completed a total of 35 items (i.e., 7 targets X 5 behaviors = 35).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Items on the SSIS, VS, AS, and HS were summed to form indices for each scale. Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s alphas for the measures are listed in Table 1. In addition, an overall Verbal Aggression (VA) score was comprised by summing the 21 SAQ items designed to assess verbal aggression (i.e., likelihood of yelling at, swearing at, and humiliating each of the seven targets). Likewise, an overall Physical Aggression (PA) score was comprised by summing the 14 SAQ items designed to assess physical aggression (i.e., likelihood of shoving and getting into a fight with each of the seven targets). Means, standard deviations, and Cronbach’s alphas for the

VA and PA scales can also be found in Table 1

Correlations were computed between the child's age and team identification, VA, and PA. The results failed to indicate any significant relationships (child's age and SSIS $r = .092, p > .40$; child's age and VA $r = .154, p > .15$; child's age and PA $r = .043, p > .70$). Thus, all subsequent analyses were conducted across child's age. In addition, male ($M = 37.72; SD = 6.09$) and female participants ($M = 38.38; SD = 7.93$) did not report differential levels of team identification, $F(1, 78) = 0.14, p > .70$.

Frequency of Likelihood of Engaging in the Aggressive Acts

The initial series of key analyses involved tabulations of frequency totals for the aggressive behaviors and comparing those with the totals reported by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007). Consistent with the previous work, we computed levels of mean likelihood of engaging in each of the five aggressive responses targeting each of the seven individuals. The scores are listed in Table 2. Also consistent with Hennessy and Schwartz, we computed frequency counts (percentages) of persons indicating at least some likelihood of engaging in the aggressive acts (i.e., persons listing a minimum of 1 on the 0-5 scale). These totals are listed in Table 3.

A comparison of Tables 2 and 3 with the data presented by Hennessy and Schwartz leads to several interesting conclusions. First, the likelihood scores for

the current sample were greater than those previously reported. In fact, *every figure* reported in Table 2 and 3 matches or exceeds the results found by Hennessy and Schwartz. Second, although the current totals are higher, most are only minimally higher (e.g., almost 60% of the current likelihood scores were no more than 5% greater than those reported in the original work). Third, verbal aggression directed toward the umpires and the participant's own child was greater in the current sample. For instance, the average likelihood of yelling at the umpires was 1.15 for the current sample (see Table 2) compared to 0.33 for the Hennessy and Schwartz data set. Likelihood of yelling at one's own child more than doubled in the current study (i.e., 0.86 versus 0.41). The increase in verbal aggression aimed at umpires and one's child were also reflected in the other two items assessing verbal aggression (e.g., the likelihood score of 0.17 for swearing at an umpire in the current sample was substantially higher than the score of 0.03 reported previously) and in the percentage of persons reporting a minimal likelihood (see Table 3). For instance, in the current sample, 59% of participants reported at least a minimal likelihood of yelling at the umpires while 50% reported at least a minimal likelihood of yelling at their own child, compared to 21% and 27%, respectively, for the previous sample.

Test of Hypotheses: Impact of Team Identification

The primary purpose of the current investigation was to extend the work of Hennessy and Schwartz (2007) by investigating the impact of team identification on estimates of likelihood of engaging in the aggressive acts. Correlations among the critical variables appear in Table 4. The hypotheses were tested via a pair of regression analyses in which gender, team identification, vengeance, anger, and hostility were employed as predictor variables and likelihood of verbal (Regression 1) and physical aggression (Regression 2) were the dependent variables. The predictor variables (other than team identification) were chosen for inclusion because they were found to have had a significant impact in the data set reported by Hennessy and Schwartz.

The first regression targeted likelihood of engaging in the verbally aggressive acts (VA scores). This analysis revealed that the combined effect of the five predictor variables was significant, $F(5, 74) = 5.27, p < .001$ (see Table 5 for regression statistics). With respect to independent contributions, as hypothesized (Hypothesis 1), team identification accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance in estimates of likelihood of engaging in verbal aggression ($t = 2.01, p < .05$). As expected, higher levels of identification corresponded with higher levels of likelihood of engaging in verbal aggression. With respect to the research question, only one other predictor, vengeance, accounted for a significant

proportion of unique variance ($t = 2.20, p < .05$) as higher levels of vengeance corresponded with higher levels of likelihood of exhibiting verbal aggression. Gender, anger, and hostility did not (all $ps > .30$).

The second regression targeted likelihood of engaging in the physically aggressive acts (PA scores). This analysis revealed that the combined effect of the five predictor variables was not significant, $F(5, 74) = 1.67, p = .15$ (see Table 6 for regression statistics). With respect to independent contributions, contrary to Hypothesis 2, team identification did not account for a significant proportion of unique variance in estimates of likelihood of engaging in physical aggression ($t = 0.86, p > .30$). With respect to the research question, only vengeance accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance ($t = 2.05, p < .05$) as higher levels of vengeance corresponded with higher levels of likelihood of exhibiting physical aggression. Gender, anger, and hostility did not (all $ps > .60$).

Additional Analyses

In addition to the previously described analyses targeting frequency counts and an examination of the impact of team identification, a series of additional analyses were conducted to further understand participants' likelihood of engaging in the verbally and physically aggressive acts. First, an examination of Table 1 (as well as Tables 2 and 3) suggests that participants

were more likely to engage in verbal aggression than physical aggression. Thus, we conducted a paired-samples *t*-test to determine if there were statistically significant differences in tendencies to engage in the two forms of aggression. However, it is important to note that there were more verbal aggression items (21) than physical aggression items (14). Therefore, prior to conducting the *t*-test, we multiplied the participants' physical aggression scores by 1.5 to arrive at a scale matching the scoring for the verbal aggression scale (i.e., responses to both scales could range from 0 to 105). The *t*-test confirmed that the respondents were indeed more likely to engage in verbal aggression ($M = 5.06$; $SD = 10.44$) than physical aggression ($M = 0.71$; $SD = 3.44$), $t(79) = 4.66$, $p < .001$.

Tables 2 and 3 also suggest that certain individuals (e.g., umpires) are more likely to be the target of verbally and physically aggressive acts than are other targets (e.g., players). Thus, we were next interested in further exploring the mean scores to test for significant differences among them. First, scores were calculated for each of the seven targets for both verbal and physical aggression (thus, there were 14 total targets). For instance, verbal aggression directed at other spectators was a summation of the three verbal items targeting spectators (i.e., yell at, swear at, and humiliate). Similarly, physical aggression directed at other spectators was a summation of the two physical items targeting spectators (i.e., shove and fight with them). For both

targets of verbal and physical aggression, we conducted a multivariate test followed by a series of specific comparison (*t*-tests with Bonferroni adjustments). Means and standard deviations for both forms of aggression appear in Table 7. Concerning the analysis examining verbal aggression, the multivariate test was significant, Wilks' Lambda $F(7, 73) = 8.22$, $p < .001$. With respect to specific comparisons among targets, post hoc tests indicated that both umpires and the participant's child were, generally, more likely to be the targets of verbal aggression than the other persons. As for the analysis investigating physical aggression, the multivariate test was not significant, Wilks' Lambda $F(7, 73) = 1.21$, $p > .30$. With respect to specific comparisons among targets, post hoc tests failed to indicate differences among any pair of targets.

Discussion

In recent years, social scientists have begun to focus their attention on the abusive and violent actions sometimes exhibited by youth sport parents (Omli & LaVoi, 2009; Shield et al., 2007; Wiersma & Sherman, 2005). The current investigation was designed to extend this work and, in particular, the empirical investigation conducted by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007). In their examination of predictors of spectator aggression at youth baseball games, these authors found that gender, trait anger, vengeance, and hostility were significant predictors of various aggressive

actions at youth sporting events. We attempted to replicate and extend their research by incorporating an additional individual difference variable, team identification, into the model. The inclusion of identification was warranted by numerous studies indicating a strong positive relationship between identification and spectator aggression (see Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001).

A comparison of the current data with those reported by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007) reveals that the current sample reported greater likelihood scores for the aggressive acts, although most of the differences were small (this pattern generally holds true for comparisons with Hennessy & Schwartz, 2012, as well). Two exceptions to this pattern involved participants' verbal aggression (yelling and swearing) directed toward umpires and their own child in which the current totals were much greater than previously reported by Hennessy and Schwartz. Thus, both umpires and parents' own children were disproportionately likely to be the targets of the parents' verbal aggression. With respect to verbal abuse directed toward the participants' children, it stands to reason that many (if not most) of these outbursts are the result of the child's perceived poor performance. Recent research indicates that there are a number of strategies that parents utilize to cope with the shame they may feel in response to a bad performance by their child athlete (Partridge, Wann, & Massengale, 2012). These strategies include attacking others

(e.g., other players), attacking oneself (e.g., self-blame), and withdrawal. The current data (and those presented by Hennessy and Schwartz) indicate that it is also common for parents to directly attack their children (verbally). As for umpires, given that these persons are responsible for decisions that influence the outcome of a contest, it is perhaps not surprising that these individuals would be frequent targets of verbal harassment. Indeed, prior work with sport spectators at college events has found that the officials are frequent objects of verbal aggression (Wann, Carlson, et al., 1999; Wann et al., 2000). The current findings suggest that this pattern generalizes beyond college athletics into the arena of youth sports.

Although comparisons between the data provided by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007) and the current study are informative, the primary goal of this investigation was to investigate the impact of team identification. Prior to discussing the impact of identification, it warrants mention that identification scores for this sample were quite high. In fact, the mean identification score reported here (slightly above 38) would be classified as moderately high (see Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001) and is comparable to studies asking participants to report their level of identification with their favorite sport team (e.g., Wann, Ensor, & Bilyeu, 2001; Wann & Martin, 2008). Thus, it is apparent that the participants felt a strong connection to their child's youth baseball teams.

With respect to predictors of verbal aggression, as predicted in Hypothesis 1, identification accounted for a significant proportion of unique variance. In terms of the research question, the only additional significant predictor was vengeance. Thus, consistent with past work among sport spectators (see Dietz-Uhler & Lanter, 2008; Wann, 2006; Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001), higher levels of team identification corresponded with higher levels of verbal aggression. It appears that the oft found positive relationship between identification and verbal aggression extends to the realm of youth baseball as well. Vengeance scores also predicted higher levels of verbal aggression. This finding generally replicates the data presented by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007) who found vengeance to be a significant predictor of humiliation of umpires.

The fact that higher levels of identification predicted greater levels of verbal aggression has implications for youth sport administrators. At first glance, such a finding may lead one to conclude that we should reduce levels of identification parents feel for their child athletes and teams. However, as noted elsewhere (Wann, 2012), it seems unlikely that such attempts would be successful given that parents already strongly identify with their offspring and, in a more practical sense, it seems unwise to suggest to parents that they should care *less* about their children. Rather, it seems that the best solution available to youth sport coaches and administrators is to

alter the form of identification felt by parents. That is, rather than encouraging identification that is focused on outcomes (e.g., winning, making an all-star team, acquiring a college scholarship), identification should focus on the fun and enjoyment experienced by the players (Wann, 2012). By shifting the focus of the identification, youth sport leaders should be able to reduce the importance placed on outcomes while increasing the focus on fun, skill improvement and the like. The result should be that parents maintain high levels of identification with their children while exhibiting lower levels of verbal aggression.

With respect to predictors of physical aggression, contrary to expectations (Hypothesis 2) identification did not account for a significant proportion of unique variance. However, vengeance was again a significant predictor with those having higher vengeance scores reporting a greater likelihood of engaging in the aggressive acts. It may be that identification has a greater influence on verbal aggression than physical aggression. Such a possibility is substantiated by work indicating that, although level of identification predicts perceptions of the appropriateness of verbal aggression among sport fans, no such relationship is found for physical aggression (Rocca, & Vogl-Bauer, 1999). Conversely, level of fan dysfunction (i.e., the extent to which a fan complains and is confrontational, see Wakefield & Wann, 2006) has been shown to be a significant positive predictor of perceptions of the

appropriateness of physical aggression (Donahue & Wann, 2009).

Additional Findings

A few additional findings warrant specific mention. First, it is interesting to note that gender was not found as a significant predictor of either verbal or physical aggression. This finding is contrary to numerous empirical investigations (including Hennessy & Schwartz, 2007) indicating greater levels of aggression from males (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Russell, 2008). The precise reason for this inconsistent finding is unclear and additional research is required to see if this pattern replicates in future work or, rather, if it was simply an artifact of the current investigation.

A second demographic variable, child age, was also found to be unrelated to both verbal and physical aggression as well as level of identification. Thus, parents' psychological connection to their child's team and the frequency with which they were likely to act in an aggressive fashion was not related to their age. One may have expected that each of these variables would be positively correlated with child age. That is, one may have expected parents of older players would report higher levels of identification and aggression, given that the importance of competition and winning would presumably increase as the players get older. However, it appears that parents of children of all ages can experience high

levels of identification and display aggressive reactions.

A third additional analysis worthy of special mention concerns comparisons between levels of verbal and physical aggression. Participants reported a much greater likelihood of exhibiting verbally aggressive behaviors. In fact, verbal aggression scores were higher for each of the seven targets and the magnitude of the difference was striking (i.e., verbal aggression scores were 5 to 10 times greater than those for physical aggression). The higher likelihood ratings for verbal aggression is consistent with patterns reported in the earlier study (Hennessy & Schwartz, 2007) as well as more recent work by Cikara and colleagues (2011) examining Major League Baseball fans.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although the current research extends our understanding of predictors of verbal and physical aggression among youth sport parents, a number of avenues for future research remain. First, both the current investigation and the work by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007, 2012) examined reactions of spectators attending youth baseball games. Research indicates that fans of different sports attend events for different reasons (Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, & Pease, 2008) and different sports elicit different levels of aggression among spectators (Russell, 2008; Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). Thus, additional work is needed on spectators at other youth events to

determine if the effects found here are generalizable to other sports. It may be particularly important to examine sports with a greater level of violent content (e.g., youth football and hockey), given that aggressive sports often result in higher levels of spectator aggression (Arms, Russell, & Sandilands, 1979; Goldstein & Arms, 1971). Indeed, the fact that a non-aggressive sport was targeted in the current investigation may have led to the lack of significance regarding physical aggression; more aggressive sports may have resulted in a different outcome.

Hennessy and Schwartz (2012) expanded on their original study in a second investigation by examining the impact of instrumental motivation (the belief that aggressive actions will assist a child's team) and amount of daily life hassles. They found that both level of instrumental motivation and amount of daily hassles were positive predictors of likelihood of aggression at youth baseball games. Combining the current work with the previous efforts by Hennessy and Schwartz (2007, 2012) results in an impressive list of important individual difference variables (e.g., team identification, daily hassles, vengeance). However, additional potentially important personal variables have yet to be examined. One such variable is the aforementioned level of fan dysfunction (Wakefield & Wann, 2006). As noted above, dysfunctional fans tend to be highly confrontational and they are more likely to view both physical and verbal aggression as

appropriate (Donahue & Wann, 2009). Furthermore, recent investigations have found that dysfunctional fans were likely to be bullies as children (Courtney & Wann, 2010) and often report a particularly high willingness to commit anonymous acts of aggression (Wann & Waddill, 2014). Given the mounting evidence that fan dysfunction is related to higher levels of aggression, future research should add this variable (along with factors such as identification and vengeance) in future examinations of the aggressive actions of youth sport spectators.

Third, as described above, a number of studies have targeted the willingness of sport fans to engage in anonymous acts of aggression directed at opposition players, coaches, and fans (Wann et al., 2005; Wann et al., 2003; Wann, Peterson, et al., 1999; Wann & Waddill, 2014). Taken as a whole, these studies indicate that a sizeable minority of fans readily admit a willingness to consider the aggressive acts and that persons with higher levels of identification and dysfunction are especially likely to do so. Future researchers may want to extend this line of work by examining the extent to which spectators at youth sporting events also express a willingness to act in an anonymously aggressive fashion.

Finally, although the current work shed light on the frequency of aggressive acts among youth sport spectators, the motives underlying the actions were not examined. The aggressive actions of sport consumers are often classified as either hostile (the goal

of the act is the pain and suffering of the victim) or instrumental (the goal is something other than the victim's suffering) (see Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). Previous work indicates that sport spectators report that both motives underlie their aggressive actions (Wann, Carlson, et al., 1999; Wann et al., 2000). Future research should attempt to determine if the aggressive actions of youth sport parents tend to be hostile or instrumental (or both) in nature. For instance, it would be informative to learn if the verbally abusive shouts of youth spectators are designed to assist the team in some manner (e.g., intimidate the opposition so their performance will decline) or simply to harm the target in some way.

Limitations

Several limitations of the current work warrant mention. First, as noted above, the current work focused on only one sport (baseball) and only one locale (the mid-south). Consequently, researchers need to replicate the work reported here to determine the extent to which the findings are applicable to other sports and other settings. In fact, a number of situational factors in addition to sport and locale could be valuable to examine, including competition level (see below), game context (e.g., regular season versus playoff), and perhaps even the gender of the player. In addition, although the current work was able to document the strong connection parents felt for their child's team (i.e., the

adults' high levels of team identification), we did not ascertain the factors underlying these high levels of identification. Thus, the exact causes are unknown at this time and additional research is needed in this regard.

It is also important to note that the current work focused on *willingness* to engage in the verbally and physically aggressive acts rather than actual aggressive responses. Thus, this study was more interested in attitudes about aggression than actual overt actions, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Although past work does show a correspondence between attitudes and behavior (Kraus, 1995) and methodologies such as those employed in the current research are valid (Russell & Baenninger, 1996), it remains possible that some participants may have misjudged their likelihood of exhibiting the aggressive acts. That is, perhaps some persons understated the likelihood of acting violently due to concerns with social desirability. Likewise, others may have underestimated the likelihood because they failed to consider the powerful situational forces occurring in "the heat of the moment". This latter line of thinking has empirical merit as the vast majority of sport spectators do not attend events expecting to act in an aggressive fashion (indeed, fandom and trait aggression are not significantly correlated, see Russell & Goldstein, 1995; Wann, Fahl, Erdmann, & Littleton, 1999). Rather, the situation pairs the game and their high level of team identification and results in a state in which they have less

control over their actions, something fans readily admit (Dimmock & Grove, 2005). Additionally, this may help explain the lack of relationship between identification and willingness to commit physical aggression (i.e., persons may be less likely to believe that they would physically harm someone, underestimating the power that situational and personal forces may have in such environments).

However, perhaps the greatest limitation of the current research is found in the small sample size ($n = 80$). First, it may be that the limited number of males played a role in the lack of gender differences found in the current work. Second, although we assessed the level of competition played by the target youth (i.e., travel versus recreational), our small sample size rendered comparisons among these groups inappropriate. Given that pressure may be greater for those involved with elite baseball (both on players and parents), future efforts should acquire larger samples enabling the researchers to test for level of competition as a potential moderator of parent aggression.

Conclusion

Aggression among parents and other spectators is a major concern for persons involved with youth sports (Shields et al., 2005; Wiersma & Sherman, 2005). Although past work had furthered our understanding of various personality and demographic factors related to aggression among youth sport viewers (Hennessy &

Schwartz, 2007, 2012), the current research extended past efforts by including team identification in the analyses, a subject variable often associated with higher levels of sport spectator aggression (Wann, Melnick, et al., 2001). As hypothesized, identification was a significant predictor of willingness to commit verbal aggression but, contrary to expectations, no such pattern was found for physical aggression. Although not without limitations (e.g., assessment of willingness to aggress rather than overt behavior, small sample size), the data reported above extend our understanding of the predictors of aggression among youth sport parents and, thus, have implications and value for youth sport administrators.

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Tables

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's Reliability Alphas for all Measures

<i>Measure</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>alpha</i>
Team Identification (SSIS)	38.18	7.38	.74
Vengeance (VS)	48.50	17.12	.88
Anger (AS)	15.46	6.28	.84
Hostility (HS)	17.00	7.17	.87
Verbal Aggression (VA)	5.06	10.44	.95
Physical Aggression (PA)	0.48	2.30	.94

Table 2

Mean Likelihood of Aggressive Actions Directed at the Seven Targets

<i>Target</i>	<i>Aggressive Action</i>				
	<i>Yell at</i>	<i>Swear at</i>	<i>Shove</i>	<i>Fight</i>	<i>Humiliate</i>
Another spectator	.39 (.74)	.11 (.42)	.05 (.22)	.06 (.29)	.13 (.46)
Umpire	1.15 (1.38)	.17 (.69)	.04 (.19)	.03 (.16)	.15 (.53)
Opposition coach	.47 (.98)	.12 (.64)	.05 (.27)	.03 (.16)	.13 (.46)
Child's coach	.44 (1.02)	.09 (.43)	.04 (.19)	.03 (.16)	.11 (.53)
Opposition player	.20 (.83)	.06 (.46)	.03 (.16)	.01 (.11)	.06 (.37)
Child's teammate	.15 (.64)	.05 (.35)	.01 (.11)	.01 (.11)	.05 (.35)
Own child	.86 (1.12)	.09 (.58)	.05 (.35)	.05 (.35)	.08 (.38)

Note: Standard deviations appear in parentheses following each mean.

Table 3

Percentage of Individuals Indicating at Least Some Likelihood of Engaging in the Aggressive Acts

<i>Target</i>	<i>Aggressive Action</i>				
	<i>Yell at</i>	<i>Swear at</i>	<i>Shove</i>	<i>Fight</i>	<i>Humiliate</i>
Another spectator	31	9	5	5	9
Umpire	59	8	4	3	10
Opposition coach	30	6	4	3	9
Child's coach	23	5	4	3	6
Opposition player	9	3	3	1	4
Child's teammate	9	3	1	1	3
Own child	50	4	3	3	5

Table 4

Pearson Correlations among Gender, Team Identification, Vengeance, Anger, Hostility, Verbal Aggression, and Physical Aggression

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gender (1) ¹	--						
Team Identification (2)	.04	--					
Vengeance (3)	.05	.12	--				
Anger (4)	-.02	.24*	.41**	--			
Hostility (5)	.20	.11	.40**	.65**	--		
Verbal Aggression (6)	-.03	.28*	.39**	.39**	.35**	--	
Physical Aggression (7)	.02	.15	.29**	.20	.15	.71**	--

Notes: ¹Gender coded as 1 = male, 2 = female. * = $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 5

Regression Equation with Gender, Team Identification, Vengeance, Anger, and Hostility as Predictors of Likelihood of Engaging in Verbal Aggression

<i>Predictor variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Gender	-1.748	2.330	-0.078	-0.75	.455
Team Identification	0.295	0.146	0.208	2.01	.048
Vengeance	0.150	0.068	0.246	2.20	.031
Anger	0.240	0.233	0.144	1.03	.308
Hostility	0.211	0.203	0.145	1.04	.301
Overall R	0.513				
Overall R ²	0.263				
Adjusted R ²	0.213				
Overall F (5, 74)	5.274*				

Note: * = $p < .001$.

Table 6

Regression Equation with Gender, Team Identification, Vengeance, Anger, and Hostility as Predictors of Likelihood of Engaging in Physical Aggression

<i>Predictor variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>sig.</i>
Gender	0.038	0.565	0.008	0.07	.947
Team Identification	0.031	0.036	0.099	0.86	.390
Vengeance	0.034	0.017	0.253	2.05	.044
Anger	0.027	0.057	0.073	0.47	.637
Hostility	-0.002	0.049	-0.008	-0.05	.961
Overall R	0.319				
Overall R ²	0.102				
Adjusted R ²	0.041				
Overall F (5, 74)	1.673				

Table 7

Mean Likelihood of Verbally and Physically Aggressive Actions Directed at the Seven Targets

<i>Target</i>	<i>Aggressive Action</i>	
	<i>Verbal Aggression</i>	<i>Physical Aggression</i>
Another spectator	0.63 ^c (1.47)	0.11 ^a (0.45)
Umpire	1.48 ^a (2.23)	0.06 ^a (0.33)
Opposition coach	0.73 ^{bc} (1.86)	0.08 ^a (0.38)
Child's coach	0.64 ^{bcd} (1.81)	0.06 ^a (0.33)
Opposition player	0.33 ^{bcd} (1.51)	0.04 ^a (0.25)
Child's teammate	0.25 ^d (1.30)	0.03 ^a (0.22)
Own child	1.03 ^{ab} (1.79)	0.10 ^a (0.70)

Note: Standard deviations appear in parentheses following each mean. For each column (i.e., aggression type), means with a common subscript do not significantly differ (alpha = .002).

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National Review of Interscholastic Competitive Balance Solutions Related to the Public-Private Debate

James E. Johnson¹
David A. Pierce²

Daniel R. Tracy¹

¹*Ball State University*

²*Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis*

The public-private debate in interscholastic athletics has vexed athletic administrators and policy-makers for more than a century. The ability of private schools to secure athletic talent beyond the defined geographic borders that restrain public schools has led to competitive imbalance in many states. Competitive imbalance is evidenced by a disproportionate amount of athletic success demonstrated by private schools, often in the form of state championships. To determine the current landscape of interscholastic competitive balance, commissioners and high-ranking officials at each state association listed within the directory of the National Federation of State High Schools (NFHS) were contacted to identify their policies. Current competitive balance solutions include enrollment classifications, separate playoffs, enrollment multipliers and subtractors, tournament success factors, and consideration of socioeconomic factors. The results of this analysis provide an overview of competitive balance solutions being implemented in the United States.

Interscholastic sport is extremely popular in the United States with nearly 7.8 million students participating during the 2013-14 academic year (NFHS, 2014). This number eclipses the participation numbers for college and professional sport combined, and demonstrates the

abundance of high school sport opportunities. Despite its popularity, however, high school sport has an ongoing issue that continually causes a quandary for state athletic associations. The issue, sometimes referred to as the public versus private debate (Monahan, 2012), highlights the differences in

athletic success between boundary and non-boundary high schools. This paper examines the public versus private debate within the context of competitive balance by answering the overarching research question: *What competitive balance solutions are being implemented by interscholastic state associations within the United States?*

Public and Private

Public high schools are generally referred to as boundary schools because their enrollment comes from a designated geographical area. These geographical areas dictate that students living within the boundaries attend a specific high school. Students within this boundary can attend the high school without being denied. Private schools are more broadly defined and can include religiously-affiliated parochial schools, preparatory schools, independent vocational-technical schools, charter schools, and other schools operating outside of public school restrictions (Cohen, 1997; Popke, 2012). According to the United States National Center of Education Statistics (2013a) there are 30,381 public schools and 11,941 private schools that offered secondary education for students in grades 9-12. This means that nearly 28.2% of high schools are considered private. However, only 13% of high schools that participate in athletic competitions are considered private (Cohen, 1997). Additionally, only 8% of total secondary enrollment (grades 9-12)

attend private high schools (National Center of Education Statistics, 2013b). These facts reinforce the notion that private schools, while somewhat abundant, tend to be smaller and more selective than their public counterparts.

The primary difference between public and private schools is that private school enrollments are not restricted by geographical boundaries. Private schools can therefore be more selective in the number and quality of students admitted (Cohen, 1997; Epstein, 2008; James, 2010; Popke, 2012). Critics suggest this difference grants private schools a distinct athletic advantage because private schools can secure athletic talent from a wider area. The larger the area from which to accept students, combined with the ability to admit only selected students, provides a more selective group of athletes than may be found in public schools (Popke, 2012). Beyond the geographical and admission differences, private schools are generally understood to have other socioeconomic advantages that would enhance the likelihood of attendance and athletic success. Cohen (1997) noted that private school students, "tend to come from wealthier backgrounds, families who can afford membership at the finest fitness facilities and extras like private lessons" (para.1). Epstein (2008) further noted that private schools generally have "better facilities, better coaching, greater access to facilities and staff out of season, greater parental

involvement, and that non-boundaried schools pick their students and maintain low attendance numbers to compete at lower division levels" (p. 3).

Recruiting

These advantages have led many critics to claim that private schools have the ability to recruit specific athletes from public school districts, thus engaging in a type of cherry-picking for the best athletes in a particular area (James, 2013). The recruiting allegation is central to the public versus private debate because it suggests the advantages of private schools can be used to lure public school students away from the natural geographic boundaries of their public school districts (Cohen, 1997; Epstein, 2008; James, 2013; Popke, 2012).

Epstein (2008) noted that while recruiting is prohibited in nearly all state athletic associations, "there are still those who use recruiting as an explanation for the disproportionate number of state championships won by private schools and evaluate seemingly benign actions on the part of private schools as deliberate efforts to recruit athletes" (p. 17). While recruiting violations have occurred, many accusations are difficult to prove because they are not blatant violations, especially when attempting to discern between the athletic and academic motives of parents, students, administrators, and coaches. For example, the director of the

Delaware Secondary School Athletic Association noted:

Coaches aren't trying to induce kids to attend a particular school for athletic reasons; those kinds of things aren't flagrant anymore... Most of it is by word of mouth among the players themselves. In a small state like Delaware, where say in basketball, the kids all play AAU basketball, go to summer camps and so on, those kids know who's going to have a good team. As of two years ago, we have a statewide school choice program in effect, so a kid can now apply to a school because it has four returning starters and all they need is a point guard. That's the kind of thing that happens now, and it's very difficult to control. (Cohen, 1997, para.29)

The widely held accusations about recruiting, however, are counter to the anti-recruiting legislation that exists in virtually every state high school athletic association. To preserve competitive balance, most state associations specifically restrict recruiting students for athletic purposes, and most have punishments for recruiting violations. State associations can place restrictions on recruiting based on the Supreme Court's decision in *Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association vs. Brentwood Academy* (2007). However, the viability of implementing even greater recruiting restrictions than are currently in place can

prove difficult. Monitoring behaviors of coaches, players, and parents throughout a given state is already a difficult process. Providing evidence of overt recruiting is often complicated, and evidence of covert recruiting is frequently nonexistent (Saul, 2012). Adding additional personnel to investigate and enforce increased recruiting restrictions would be financially and logistically challenging for most state associations.

Disproportionate Success

The boundary limitations for public schools, as well as the socioeconomic advantages and alleged recruiting behaviors by private schools, have been the cornerstone arguments for why private schools routinely win disproportionately more state championships relative to the number of public schools. It is clear this disproportionality exists in a large number of states and has gradually increased over the last few decades (Popke, 2012). The first study assessing national public versus private school athletic success was completed in 1997 (Cohen, 1997). The results revealed private schools won approximately 18.4% of state championships in all sports despite only accounting for 13.1% of all schools. The states with the most disproportionality demonstrated much wider gaps. For example, in Tennessee only 15% of schools were private, but won 54% of the state championships.

Ohio had 33% of championships won by private schools despite only 8.5% of the schools being private.

Since the initial study in 1997, "the championship chasm between public and non-public schools has widened significantly in some states" (Popke, 2012, para.6). For example, in Alabama in 2011-12, private schools won more than 36% of all state titles. Fifteen years earlier, in 1996-97, private schools won only 25.5% of state titles. The continually growing trend of private school success is also evident in states like California where 26% of schools are private, but win nearly 53% of all state titles, including all five classes of boys and girls basketball in 2012.

Furthermore, states that did not indicate a disproportionate amount of private school championships in 1997 (e.g., Minnesota and South Dakota) currently show double-digit increases between percentage of private schools and percentage of championships won (Popke, 2012). Additionally, private schools have enjoyed prominence in post-season national rankings with six of the Top 25 spots in boys' basketball (MaxPreps, 2013a) and seven in football (MaxPreps, 2013b).

Theoretical Foundations of Equity and Fairness

The power and authority to determine rules and regulations for high school sports lies within individual state

high school athletic associations (Wong, 1994). As the regulatory bodies responsible for the administration of state high school championships for each sanctioned sport, state high school athletic associations are charged with implementing and enforcing regulations that create fair and competitive competition (Hums & MacLean, 2013). State associations have pursued a variety of solutions over the years to eliminate disproportionate success. Most of the competitive balance solutions have come as the result of state associations approving recommendations by a committee tasked with determining the best approach within their state. In states without such committees, proposals generated by individuals, coaching associations, and other stakeholders are sent to the state athletic association for a vote. These efforts to ensure reasonable competition, often referred to as competitive balance solutions (Epstein, 2008), are rooted in the concepts of fairness and justice.

The National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association identifies fairness as an important concept in its code of ethics, which also includes honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, and individual dignity (Blackburn, Forsyth, Olson, & Whitehead, 2013). These concepts are important because critics of current competitive balance solutions suggest the system is fundamentally unfair (Popke, 2012). The ambiguity with

how these concepts apply to interscholastic competition is central to the difficulty of adequately changing the systems to meet the spirit of these concepts. For each state, these concepts may emerge in different ways and within different contexts. A mutually agreed upon definition of fair competition, and how it might be implemented, is a primary obstacle for policy-makers:

It seems every state and everybody wants what is perceived as a *level playing field*, but no one seems to have an agreed-upon definition of a *level playing field* or the best way to get there. I think one of the major concerns is a reluctance to change and the fear of the unknown.

(Brocato, 2013, para. 20)

If competitive balance is the ultimate goal, the theoretical concept most applicable is distributive justice (Beauchamp, 1991; Frankena, 1973; Rachels, 1989). This concept refers to the disbursement of benefits so that individuals and groups receive benefits or burdens based on their distinguishing characteristics. Within this theory, there are two components that ensure justice is met. A comparative component is utilized to assess whether a remuneration or burden is applied consistently for all people or groups. This component is key to the competitive balance solutions because it would directly compare the criteria by which schools are categorized and required to compete in post-season

tournaments. The second component of distributive justice is scarcity for any benefit that can be obtained by only one or a select few (Bowie & Simon, 1977). In high school athletics, winning post-season championships would fall under this scarcity component.

Within the theory of distributive justice, three different perspectives can help explain how fairness is not an easily agreed upon construct. First, the libertarian perspective posits "fair procedures, rules, and regulations be in place in society to ensure that people have the freedom to make social and economic choices they please" (DeSensi & Rosenberg, 2010, p. 100). Thus, individuals or groups that deserve to be rewarded the most are the ones that are most industrious and successful based on the rules. Adaptation to the rules is required because limited governing is desired. Changing the rules to accommodate the less industrious is not preferred. This perspective is capitalistic in nature and is a stance sometimes supported by private schools who argue that students have the right to attend these schools and compete in the same manner as public high schools. Thus, from a libertarian perspective, if private high schools are successful they should be rewarded due to their ability to be successful under a rule structure applied evenly to all.

The egalitarian perspective suggests that treatment should be equal as long as

the qualities of the individual or groups are relatively equal. If a group is not equal in terms of resources or skills, they should not be treated as such, and should be allotted additional resources to ensure equality (Raphael, 1981). This perspective would support governing bodies creating competitive balance solutions, especially in favor of public schools. For example, if a disproportionate amount of private schools win post-season competitions due to greater resources or lack of boundary restrictions, the egalitarian point of view would support legislation to counterbalance those advantages. Thus, policy from state athletic associations aimed at competitive balance solutions to specifically buffer disproportionate success would support distributive justice from the egalitarian perspective.

The utilitarian perspective emphasizes that the whole or community is a priority over any one individual. In general, policies that produce the greatest good for the greatest amount of people are preferred. This perspective is widely used in corporate and public policy. Thus, a cost/benefit analysis is often conducted in a way that is the most just for the most people. Applied to high school competitive balance, public schools might argue that policy should favor them because there are more public schools than private schools competing in athletics. However, private schools

could argue that the greatest good is for all students to be treated equally through an open competition without separate limitations to one group. Determining what maximizes the utility is the greatest challenge when creating policy based on the utilitarian perspective.

In light of the equity and fairness principles pursued by state athletic associations, as well as the perceived competitive imbalance between public and private schools, this issue has the potential to impact millions of interscholastic student-athletes, parents, coaches, administrators, and other stakeholders. Understanding what is being done to ensure competitive balance from a national perspective will allow individual state athletic associations to make informed decisions about what is fair and appropriate for their own states. Perhaps more importantly, benchmarking competitive balance solutions nationally will provide baseline data, which future researchers and administrators can build upon. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to examine the current landscape of interscholastic competitive balance solutions being implemented in the United States.

Method

Between January 30 and April 20, 2014, each member state association listed within the directory of the National Federation of State High Schools (NFHS) was contacted (NFHS, 2011).

The analysis did not include NFHS affiliate associations. In most cases, the commissioner (or equivalent position) was directly responsible for providing the data. When the commissioner was not available, a similar high-ranking administrator (e.g., executive director, director of membership) with access to the data provided information. For each of the 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, the number of members, public schools, private schools, single vs. multiple class systems, whether there were separate playoffs for public and private schools, whether there was a multiplier used (and the multiplier number), and any other competitive balance legislation (e.g., success factors, socioeconomic formulas) were collected via telephone and email. This comprehensive descriptive analysis was the first to capture all 51 NFHS member state athletic association competitive balance solutions.

Results

Table 1, accompanied by Appendix A (which explains the table subscripts), provides a summary of the national landscape for competitive balance solutions as they relate to the public vs. private debate. The number of athletically eligible high schools in a given state ranged from a low of 44 (District of Columbia) to a high of 1,540 (California). Texas had the most public schools at 1,398, while California had the most

private schools at 412. The state with the highest percentage of private schools was Delaware with 44.8% of the 58 schools designated as private. Eight states had multipliers (i.e., a number which is multiplied by actual enrollment to create an inflated artificial enrollment then used for classification) currently in use with a range from 1.30 (New Mexico) to 2.0 (California, Florida, and New Jersey). With respect to the use of classes based on enrollment figures, all states had multiple classes for at least one sport, and 17 states utilized multiple classes for every sport. Four states implemented some form of separate playoffs for private high schools. Finally, 17 states had some form of legislation (e.g., success factor, socioeconomic formula) in place. These legislative measures originated from a variety of sources including member schools and administrators (see Table 1). It is important to note that the results of this evaluation investigated membership numbers and athletic policies that are constantly in flux. Legislation proposed to state athletic associations could change the landscape of competitive balance literally overnight. However, even with the dynamic nature of competitive balance, the results of this study provide a solid foundation from which to understand the contemporary landscape of competitive balance throughout the United States.

Discussion

State associations have implemented a variety of competitive balance solutions with the hopes of achieving fairness. These solutions have included enrollment classifications, creating separate playoff systems, applying a private school multiplier, developing a tournament success factor, and taking into account the socioeconomic status of schools. Understanding how individual state associations are using competitive balance solutions will allow administrators the ability to compare their solutions with national baseline information. This comparison could have a variety of benefits that might include revised policy and creation of best practices. Ultimately, however, the stakes for student-athletes and their families are highest because competitive balance and equitable playing opportunities are critical to the missions of interscholastic sport associations. The following sections summarize the current usage of competitive balance strategies in the United States, and expand on the impact of their implementation.

Class Sports

Every state implements some form of enrollment classification system for at least one sport, and 17 states have multiple classes for all sports. This competitive balance solution is by far the most common and longstanding. From a theoretical perspective, class sports are

utilitarian in nature allowing public and private schools the ability to compete without restriction based on boundaries. However, in states with both single and multiple class sports there is a wide range of implementation, which can alter the perception of equity and fairness. In many states, the number of classes is determined by the number of high schools participating in a particular sport. In other states, classifications apply broadly to all team sports. No matter the system used to determine the classification structure, the concept of classifications is easily understood. Competition is thought fair when a comparable number of eligible athletic participants compete against schools with a similar number of participants. In other words, class sports eliminate large schools with deep athletic talent pools dominating much smaller schools with shallow talent pools.

Given the widespread use of class sports, this structure appears to be somewhat successful in mitigating athletic dominance based strictly on enrollment. However, this common solution to competitive balance does little to help the public vs. private issue, and could be argued to be one of the catalysts of private school success within smaller classifications. For example, Johnson, Pierce, Tracy, & Haworth (2014) noted that private schools in Indiana were disproportionately successful in the smallest classifications because private

schools were more abundant in those classes. Additionally, Johnson et al. noted that there is likely a threshold where the largest public schools have enough talent to neutralize some advantages held by private schools. In Florida, the public vs. private issue has been indirectly addressed by separating class sports into rural (1A) and urban classifications (1B; Ring, 2010). Because most private schools are in urban environments, the 1B class includes the traditionally powerful private schools. It is difficult to determine the long-term ramifications in Florida because the legislation has only been through one classification cycle. Thus, states that classify schools based strictly on enrollment appear to be rejecting some important differences in the nature of schools (e.g., public/private, rural/urban, socioeconomic profile), and the athletic talent available in those contexts.

There are enrollment-based solutions that have been proposed which could address private school success. An enrollment-based solution that was defeated based on accusations of discrimination occurred in Pennsylvania's attempt to adopt the Bohannon plan (Popke, 2012). This plan would have reclassified all schools based on enrollment *and* public/private designation whereby the top 25% of both public and private schools would be in the highest class. Thus, because there are fewer private schools, the highest enrolled

private schools would be competing against the highest enrolled public schools, even though enrollments could be drastically different (Drago, 2011). This failed plan demonstrates the difficulty of making an enrollment-centric competitive balance solution for both public and private schools. However, similar concepts have been successfully defended to create enrollment multipliers.

Multiplier

Building on enrollment classification solutions, this competitive balance approach requires enrollment at private high schools to be multiplied by a designated number (currently between 1.3 and 2.0) resulting in an artificial enrollment number higher than the actual enrollment. The multiplied enrollment number is then used to classify the school relative to a state's normal enrollment-based classification system (which is practiced in some form in every state). For example, if a multiplier of 1.3 was applied to a private school with enrollment of 1,300 students, the enrollment number used to classify the school would be 1,690 (1.3×1300). Epstein (2008) noted the "underlying motivation for the multiplier is to give an artificial advantage to boundaried schools to compensate for real or perceived illicit recruiting that is not adequately or effectively policed" (p. 3). In a slightly different approach, some states reclassify

private schools by moving them to a certain classification. For example, in Arkansas, a private school that enrolls more than 80 students is automatically moved up by one classification in all sports. In Texas, private schools are automatically placed in the largest classification in the state, which is a stark disincentive for private school inclusion. Multipliers also address distributive justice, but are much more egalitarian in nature due to the specific targeting of private schools. Thus, using a multiplier directly assumes private schools have advantages not available to public schools, and that those advantages should be corrected to ensure that distributive justice is met.

The results of this study indicated that eight states have adopted a multiplier ranging from 1.3 to 2.0. However, it is important to note that three states applied a multiplier to only single-sex schools. The impact of the multiplier on delivering competitive balance, however, indicates limited success. For example, in 2002, a multiplier of 1.35 was ratified in Missouri because 33.2% of state champions and 26.9% of semifinalists were private schools despite only 20.3% of all schools designated as private. Three years after the multiplier was enacted, private schools still won 32.3% of championships and 29% of all semifinals (Epstein, 2008). In this case, "the numbers became even more disproportioned" (Epstein, 2008, p.13).

In Tennessee, however, the multiplier has resulted in fewer private school championships (Epstein, 2008), but that might be due to the unique nature of the Tennessee classification system where there are only two divisions that are very different in size (e.g., six classes in Division 1 football vs. two classes in Division 2 football). Thus, the multiplier alone may not be the answer to competitive balance unless it is strategically intertwined with a classification system that allows for the most equitable impact on private schools. For states that believe in multipliers, it appears to be an ongoing battle to find the appropriate number that results in competitive balance. Or, as expressed by James (2013), is a multiplier a copout for good performance? James asks; "Is it possible that success begets success, and that the key challenge in athletics is to build a tradition of success rather than legislating success through a gerrymandered multiplier?" (p. 429).

In addition to the difficulty associated with pinpointing the correct number to ensure competitive balance, a multiplier appears to be a blunt instrument that impacts many private schools that are not athletically successful (James, 2013). This means that a private school with little athletic success would still be subjected to the multiplier, and perhaps be moved to a higher and more competitive class where it would be "legislated into David and Goliath

matches it never wanted to play" (Epstein, 2008, p. 8). These issues, in turn, open up state associations to legal action by private schools like the one seen in Illinois where a multiplier of 1.65 was used. Among the issues in the *De La Salle v. Illinois High School Association* (2005) case were private schools' right to participate in and host state tournaments, loss of students' educational and personal development associated with participation in interscholastic athletics, equal treatment in general, and loss of potential benefits that accrue from a successful showing in the state tournament. As a result of a settlement agreement, Illinois waived the multiplier for private schools who have not met certain success criteria. Epstein (2008) noted the legal challenges awaiting implementation of multipliers:

As more and more states consider multipliers, the chances of constitutional challenges to the multiplier down the road increase. It is not clear that the most frequently articulated goal of multiplier supporters, to create a system where state high school athletic wins and championships are in proportion to the percentage of students attending public and private schools, is even a legally laudable one. (p. 21)

Separate Playoffs

Like multipliers, separate playoffs have been an option for states specifically targeting the public versus private issue. Georgia, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Tennessee are currently the only states to administer a separate playoff for public and private schools. However, it is important to note that several states (e.g., Maryland, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia) have one or more separate governing bodies for private schools, which results in a separate playoff system due to the separate nature of multiple governing bodies.

Each state has its own philosophy regarding how and why to pursue separate playoff legislation (Popke, 2012), and utilize different models for executing the playoffs. For example, in 2013, Louisiana passed legislation that split the state's high school football playoffs into select and non-select brackets. The non-select (public) schools compete amongst five classes for five state championships while the select (faith-based, private, charter, magnet, laboratory and dual-curriculum) schools compete for four state championships in four classes. Tennessee draws the distinction between tournament playoff divisions on whether or not a school offers need-based financial aid to varsity athletes. Many private schools have opted to play in Division II, but private schools can compete in Division I against public schools by being subjected to the 1.80

enrollment multiplier for classification. In Georgia, the need for a separate playoff was precipitated by a group of small rural schools that threatened to secede from the state athletic association (Coleman, 2012). This threat led to a split in the smallest class (class A) for all sports.

In contrast, there are forces that prevent associations from pursuing a separate playoff system. Ohio has failed to pass separate playoff legislation in fear of private schools forming their own athletics governance structure that would compete with the public school athletic association (Monahan, 2012). If private schools were able to establish their own association, they could ostensibly establish recruiting bylaws, which would result in more aggressive recruiting tactics aimed at public school athletes (Popke, 2012). One member of the OHSAA explained the lack of support for separate playoffs this way:

Let me paint the worst-case scenario for you: If it passes and the non-public schools are kicked out of the normal tournament structure and are just playing other private schools, private schools could certainly withdraw from the association and form their own association. We are worried that would happen, because there have already been many private schools that said they would support a new association. If the private schools

form their own association, they will have their own bylaws, their own regulations, their own everything. So then we're competing for officials, we're competing for tournament sites, we're competing for all kinds of things. Perhaps the deepest repercussion would be if that potential association of non-public schools establishes bylaws that allow for recruiting. We could do nothing about it, because they would have their own association... So, essentially, public school kids could be aggressively recruited by private schools. (Popke, 2012, para.19)

Potential litigation also plays a role in the decision to not implement a separate playoff system. For example, Maryland eliminated the use of a separate playoff system in 2005 after litigation brought forth by a private school wrestling coach (who also happened to be an attorney) that requested 7.7 million dollars in financial damages based on the inability of private and home-schooled children to compete against public schools (Epstein, 2008).

The impact of separate playoffs on competitive balance can be further analyzed by examining Wisconsin, which held separate playoffs since 1902, but elected to merge public and private schools in 2000 (Christi, 2000). Since then, private schools have been particularly successful, especially in

basketball (Venci, 2009). Supporters of separate playoffs point to Wisconsin as a state where separate playoffs seemed to work and, when merged, showed a disproportionate amount of wins by private schools. Returning to the theoretical perspective, the difficulties with implementing separate playoff structure resemble the difficulties with implementing a multiplier. An egalitarian solution specifically targeting private schools is not easily accepted or enforced, and proving the first component of distributive justice (an unequal comparative component) could prove extremely difficult in a court of law. However, it is clear that this solution is the only competitive balance solution to eliminate the public vs. private issue by isolating private schools to separate playoffs. This strategy is obviously successful in addressing the disproportionate amount of success seen by private schools because those schools are now segregated to their own classification, but the ethical and legal implications of this solution appear to be more than most states are willing to endure.

Athletic Success

Connecticut, Indiana, and Rhode Island have led the way in recent years with respect to classifying schools based at least partially on athletic success. Indiana and Connecticut have adopted tournament success factors (TSF) to

address competitive balance, but with different approaches. Beginning with the 2013-14 academic year, Connecticut applied a TSF to private school sport programs that voluntarily participated, but public schools were not subject to the TSF. Each sport determined whether or not it wanted to participate in the TSF and examined success over a three-year period. However, each sport had flexibility in defining success (i.e. quarterfinal, semifinal, championship game appearances). In contrast, the Indiana TSF is more prescriptive. Sports do not have the ability to opt out of the initiative, both public and private schools are subject to the TSF, and success is defined in a systematized way over a two-year period. Teams earn point values for sectional, regional, semi-state, and state championships. Teams move up one class if they exceed a point threshold over a two-year period. After another two-year period, teams are again reclassified based on their performance where they could move up, down, or remain in the same class (IHSAA, n.d.).

Rhode Island began new realignment guidelines in 2014 with a formula that determines classifications for a two-year period. However, a combination of winning percentage and enrollment was used instead of tournament success. The formula consists of 70% winning percentage over the past eight years, 10% winning percentage over the previous three years, and 20% enrollment. The

winning percentages are weighted by division. For example, a win against a Division I team is weighted at 1.0, while a win against a Division IV team is weighted at .22 (RIIL, n.d.).

It is too early to determine whether these success factors are effective to ensure competitive balance, or if they adequately address the public vs. private issue. However, it is clear from the first round of reclassification in Indiana that the success factor does, at least circuitously, impact disproportionate private school success. Johnson et al. (2014) explained that:

Although the Indiana TSF was not specifically designed to address the public versus private debate, it appears to do so indirectly. The fact that 64.7% of reclassified programs were private when only 14% of the schools in the state are private is powerful. An equally powerful truth is that five of the 17 reclassified programs were from football, all of which were private schools. (p. 60)

Observing the continued results from Indiana, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, as well as other states that adopt similar success factors in the coming years, will be critical to determine if this competitive balance solution can minimize the public private debate. Even if this solution works, there will likely be issues with programs feeling as though their reclassifications are punishments for success (Johnson, et al., 2014).

Socioeconomic Factors

Oregon and Oklahoma have adopted legislation that takes socioeconomic factors into account when classifying schools. To date, the socioeconomic metric of choice is the number of students that qualify for free or reduced lunches. In Oregon, the number of students who receive free and reduced lunch is multiplied by .25. That number is subtracted from the total student enrollment. Oklahoma uses the number of students on free or reduced lunches amidst an array of other concepts discussed above. Rule 14 Section 1 of Oklahoma's "Rules Governing Interscholastic Activities in Senior High Schools" details the reclassification process for member schools (OSSAA, 2013). Schools are placed one classification above their enrollment-based classification if they meet any three of the following four criteria:

- i. has the ability to decline admission or enrollment to a student, even if the student and the student's parents (or custodial parent or court-appointed guardian with legal custody of the student) reside within that school's public school district or designated geographic area;
- ii. the school is located within a fifteen (15) mile radius of a school placed in the 5A or 6A classification according to ADM (i.e. enrollment);

- iii. fewer than twenty-five (25) percent of the children enrolled at the school in grades nine through twelve qualify for free or reduced lunches;
- iv. the school's ADM in grades nine through 12 has increased by fifty (50) percent or more over the previous three school years. (OSSAA, 2013, p. 27)

Finally, a tournament success factor is also taken into consideration. Teams moved up one classification based on the criteria above are moved back down in classification if they have not finished among the top eight teams in at least three of the previous five years.

Like success formulas, states that have implemented socioeconomic formulas have done so in the recent past. Oklahoma initiated their formula in 2011, while Oregon was initiated in 2013. Also like success formulas, it is too early to determine their impact on the public/private debate. However, with one of the principle arguments of competitive imbalance being financial resources (Epstein, 2008; James, 2013), the impact of wealth cannot be ignored. For example, in Oregon, it was noted "*wealthy* schools are typically successful schools" (Yost, 2012, para. 9). If wealth can be shown as a factor more important than public or private designation, using wealth as a primary factor could be an effective solution. However, like other solutions, using only this factor may

exclude many of the criteria that could most effectively ensure competitive balance.

Whether it is success factors or socioeconomic factors, the theoretical concept of distributive justice still applies. Unlike multipliers and separate playoffs specifically targeted towards private schools, these solutions are libertarian in nature because they focus on the relative industriousness of specific schools and their ability to adapt to the established rules. Schools are not targeted due to their nature (i.e., public or private), but rather how they perform in regard to a set of criteria (e.g., athletic success, financial constraints). These contemporary solutions are not without criticism, and time will tell if they can hold up legally, ethically, and politically.

Limitations

There are three primary limitations with this study. First, the study is descriptive in nature and cannot make determinations about the motives of state athletic associations relative to their policy. For this reason, the historical or social contexts of each state's information cannot be determined. Second, this study was conducted using only NFHS member associations, and did not include affiliate associations. Therefore, not all high schools in the nation were accounted for. This is an important point because a few states had separate associations that play a significant role in

their state's interscholastic landscape (see Appendix A). Third, the information provided in this study is likely to change regularly as high schools are created, or as state associations change policy.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, there are some important suggestions for future research. Examining the context from which many of the policy decisions are created will help scholars and administrators recognize the nuanced decisions of specific state associations. Understanding the historical, social, and political pressures from which these policies develop can provide each state's unique story regarding their attempts to achieve fair and balanced competition. Thus, each state is a case study in itself that could add to interscholastic body of knowledge. These investigations could be accomplished using a mixed method approach where qualitative interviews could shed light on the decision-making process. Finally, examining affiliate associations could provide a more comprehensive understanding of interscholastic competition in some states.

Conclusion

Competitive balance within American high school athletics has been a topic of conversation for more than a century. At the heart of that conversation has been the public vs. private debate, which has

spurred a variety of potential competitive balance solutions. Among those solutions are classifications based on enrollment, multipliers, recruiting restrictions, separate playoffs, tournament success factors, consideration of socioeconomic status, or some formula that includes one or more of these factors. These solutions have resulted in some success, but often bring about criticism from a variety of stakeholders. The current landscape of competitive balance in the United States suggests most states engage in some form of competitive balance solution that directly or indirectly impacts private school participation. As administrators contemplate the competitive balance in their own state associations, they can use this information as a cornerstone to build or modify future policy.

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Tables

Table 1

NFHS State Association Data

Additional notes and information pertaining to subscripts can be found in Appendix A.

State	Members	Public	Private	Class	Sep. Playoffs	Multiplier	Legislation
Alabama	414	363	51	All Multiple	No	Yes (1.35)	No
Alaska	200	188	12	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Arizona	269	241	28	Single and Multiple	No	No	Yes ¹
Arkansas	294	278	16	All Multiple	No	No	Yes ²
California	1,540	1,128	412	Single and Multiple	No	Yes (2.00) ⁴	Yes ³
Colorado	343	310	33	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Connecticut	189	⁵	⁵	All Multiple	No	No	Yes ⁶
Delaware	58	32	26	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
D.O.C.	44	34	10	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Florida	682	471	211	Single and Multiple	No	Yes (2.00) ⁴	No
Georgia	450	400	50	All Multiple	Yes	No	Yes ⁷
Hawaii	96	60	36	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Idaho	157	146	11	All Multiple	No	No	No
Illinois	815	640	175	Single and Multiple	No	Yes (1.65) ⁸	No
Indiana	412	364	48	Single and Multiple	No	No	Yes ⁹
Iowa (IAHSAA) ¹⁰	373	333	40	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Kansas	354	327	27	All Multiple	No	No	No
Kentucky	277	230	47	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Louisiana	389	299	90	All Multiple	Yes ¹¹	No	No
Maine	152	120	32	Single and Multiple	No	No	Yes ¹²
Maryland	198	198	0	Single and Multiple	No ²⁰	No	No
Massachusetts	372	319	53	Single and Multiple	No	No	Yes ¹³
Michigan	760	649	111	Single and Multiple	No	No	Yes ¹²
Minnesota	520	⁵	⁵	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Mississippi	259	246	13	All Multiple	No	No	No
Missouri	591	521	70	Single and Multiple	No	Yes (1.35)	No
Montana	179	170	9	All Multiple	No	No	No
Nebraska	309	276	33	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Nevada	106	90	16	All Multiple	No	No	No
New Hampshire	91	81	10	Single and Multiple	No	No	Yes ¹²
New Jersey	437	361	76	Single and Multiple	Yes	Yes (2.00) ⁴	Yes ¹²
New Mexico	160	137	23	Single and Multiple	No	Yes (1.30)	No
New York	783	723	60	Single and Multiple	No	No	Yes ¹⁴
North Carolina	399	395	4	All Multiple	No	No	No
North Dakota	171	161	10	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Ohio	825	702	123	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Oklahoma	481	455	26	All Multiple	No	No	Yes ¹⁵
Oregon	289	213	76	All Multiple	No	No	Yes ¹⁶
Pennsylvania	760	621	139	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Rhode Island	55	42	13	Single and Multiple	No	No	Yes ¹⁷
South Carolina	207	203	4	Single and Multiple	No ²⁰	No	No
South Dakota	181	168	13	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Tennessee	399	330	69	All Multiple	Yes	Yes (1.80)	Yes ¹⁸
Texas	1,400	1,398	2	All Multiple	No ²⁰	No	Yes ¹⁹
Utah	136	112	24	All Multiple	No	No	No
Vermont	80	65	15	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Virginia	313	313	0	All Multiple	No ²⁰	No	No
Washington	399	344	55	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
West Virginia	126	117	9	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Wisconsin	505	429	76	Single and Multiple	No	No	No
Wyoming	71	70	1	Single and Multiple	No	No	No

Appendix A

Additional Information Relating to Table 1.

Note : Numerous state associations distinguish public charter, magnet, university, American Indian reservation and town academy etc. schools differently regarding public or private status. The numbers reported in Table 1 are shown based on how each NFHS member state association classifies a school with selective enrollment.

Subscript Information:

- ¹ Arizona passed a motion in March 2013 that changed its Division and Section placement by implementing computer scheduling software that would move non-private schools down to make divisions equal.
- ² In Arkansas, a private school that enrolls more than 80 students is automatically moved up by one classification in all sports.
- ³ Following regular season competition in California, sections within the state association determine where each team moves on to play in state tournaments.
- ⁴ California, Florida, and New Jersey double the total enrollment of single-sex schools.
- ⁵ Connecticut and Minnesota chose to not indicate the number of public and private school members.
- ⁶ Connecticut has a state tournament success factor that impacts classifications of schools that draw from outside their district — charter, magnet, parochial, vocational technical, vocational agricultural and inter-district magnet schools -- or those which have project choice programs, for boys and girls soccer and boys and girls basketball.
- ⁷ Georgia has separate playoffs for public and private playoffs for all sports within their smallest classification, Class A.
- ⁸ In Illinois, a 1.65 enrollment multiplier is implemented, but there are waivers that can be granted to schools that meet specific criteria.
- ⁹ Indiana enacted a tournament success factor for all of its sanctioned team sports in 2012.
- ¹⁰ The Iowa High School Athletic Association (IAHSAA) only governs boy's athletics, the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union (IGHSAU) governs girl's athletics.
- ¹¹ In 2013, Louisiana passed legislation that split the state's high school football playoffs into select and non-select brackets. The non-select (public) schools compete amongst five classes for five state championships while the select (faith-based, private, charter, magnet, laboratory and dual-curriculum) schools compete for four state championships in four classes.
- ¹² In several states (e.g. Maine, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey) schools can opt to compete in a larger class but must go through an application and review process.
- ¹³ Massachusetts has individual sport committees made up of athletic directors, principals, and other administrators that can consider level of play and whether or not to move a team up or down a classification.

- ¹⁴ New York has 11 sections that each have a “Classification of Non-Public Schools Committee” that can determine a non-public school’s classification based on overall success.
- ¹⁵ Rule 14 Section 1 of Oklahoma’s “Rules Governing Interscholastic Activities in Senior High Schools” details the reclassification process for member schools. If a member school meets three of more of the following four stipulations, it will be moved to a higher classification.
- i.) has the ability to decline admission or enrollment to a student, even if the student and the student's parents (or custodial parent or court-appointed guardian with legal custody of the student) reside within that school's public school district or designated geographic area;
 - ii.) the school is located within a fifteen (15) mile radius of a school placed in the 5A or 6A classification according to ADM (i.e. enrollment);
 - iii) fewer than twenty-five (25) percent of the children enrolled at the school in grades nine through twelve qualify for free or reduced lunches;
 - iv) the school's ADM in grades nine through 12 has increased by fifty (50) percent or more over the previous three school years.
- Also, if a school finishes among the top eight within their class three or more times over a five-year period in a specific sport, that specific sport team will remain in that class regardless of enrollment.
- ¹⁶ Oregon implements an enrollment subtractor. The number of students who receive free and reduced lunch is multiplied by .25 and then that number is subtracted from the total enrollment of students.
- ¹⁷ Rhode Island began new realignment guidelines in 2014-2015 with a formula that takes into account win/loss percentage and enrollment when classifying schools in the sports of baseball, boys and girls basketball, fast pitch softball, field hockey, football, boys and girls lacrosse, boys and girls soccer, boys and girls tennis, boys and girls volleyball, and wrestling.
- ¹⁸ Tennessee classifies schools into Division I and Division II. Division II exists for schools that to give need-based financial aid to varsity athletes. Many private schools have opted to play in Division II, however, private schools can compete in Division I but must be subjected to a 1.80 enrollment multiplier for classification.
- ¹⁹ In Texas, private school members are automatically placed into the largest classification in the state, 6A.
- ²⁰ Maryland, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia noted that single or multiple athletic associations with high or solely private membership exist within their state. Only the member state associations identified by the National Federation of State High Schools were contacted for this study.

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The Progressive Involvement of Youth in Niche Sport: The Perspective of Youth Participants and Their Parents

Richard J. Buning¹
Shannon Kerwin³

Cassie Coble²

¹*The University of Memphis*

²*Indiana University*

³*Brock University*

The current study explores youth sport participation by examining the factors perceived to influence youth sampling and specialization in a niche sport. Further, the role of parental influence was examined as a contributing factor to youth sport progression. In-person semi-structured interviews were performed with 18 youth target archery participants and their parents (N = 28). Data analysis revealed target archery may provide a unique context that enhances previously agreed upon perceptions of sampling and specializing within youth sport development. The youth participants' experiences with target archery were found to both confirm and challenge previous conceptions of the deliberate play and practice framework, while parental influence was largely based on opinion and prior experience. Based on these findings, theoretical contributions, suggestions for future research, and practical implications are discussed.

Youth physical activity rates in America are on the decline as a result of cultural, social, economic, and familial issues (Browson, Boehmer, & Luke, 2005). This trend of decreasing physical activity rates mirrors the sport dropout rates that are highest during adolescent years (Dumith,

Gigante, Domingues, & Kohl, 2011). Overall, regular sport participation during adolescence has declined by 17 percent between 1992 and 2005 (Berger, O'Reilly, Parent, Seguin, & Hernandez, 2008). Such statistics are of concern, as adolescents who participate in sport report higher self-perceptions of health,

happiness, and belonging (Berger et al., 2008) and are more likely to be active later in life (Pate, Dowda, O'Neil, & Ward, 2007). Furthermore, youth sport provides a venue for youth to develop a sense of community, which has numerous benefits for both individuals and groups (Warner, Kerwin, & Walker, 2013).

As a result, it is important to understand the nature of sport participation in youth populations to develop appropriate interventions as well as recruitment and retention strategies. This may be particularly relevant in niche sport as sport managers are looking to increase participation rates through new channels (e.g., non-mainstream sport) and attract a larger population of individuals to their programs. Although the classification of a sport as niche has received some debate (Greenhalgh, Simmons, Hambrick, & Greenwell, 2011), the commonly agreed upon definition provided by Miloch and Lambrecht (2006) define niche sport as “grassroots sport”, that is not mainstream or conventional and does not appeal to a mass audience, while mainstream sport is characterized by broad appeal, an expansive fan base, and widespread media coverage (Greenhalgh et al., 2011). Niche sport is typically considered as fringe, emerging, or second-tier sport in comparison to mainstream counterparts (e.g., baseball, football, basketball; Greenhalgh &

Greenwell, 2013). The participants and supporters of niche sport are considered to represent a specialty demographic or a sub-segment of general sport consumers (Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006). Further, niche sport often attracts a smaller number of participants and limited media coverage compared to mainstream sport (Schwarzenberger & Hyde, 2013).

From a sport spectator perspective, niche sports are associated with different attributes for consumers compared to mainstream sports in that (1) niche sport spectators are able to more closely relate to professionals within their sport, and (2) niche sport spectators see their sport as an inexpensive alternative to mainstream sport (Greenhalgh et al., 2011). However, participation in niche sport is often expensive compared to mainstream sport, as many niche sports require specialized equipment to participate (e.g., cycling, triathlon, rowing, equestrian). Although recent research has been published on niche sport (e.g., Cohen, Brown, & Peachey, 2012; Warren & Brownlee, 2013), this work has focused on exploring the unique aspects of marketing and sponsorship in this context, not youth sport progression. However, alternate sporting clubs, such as those in which children can try a number of conventional and niche sports in one place provide unique factors that influence take up and maintenance of participation (Allender, Cowburn, & Foster, 2006).

For the purpose of this paper, target archery was deemed a niche sport and served as the research context for the current study. According to the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA, 2012) more than 8 million individuals in the United States above the age of 6 regularly participate in a conventional sport (e.g., baseball, soccer, football) and some sports such as basketball and golf are enjoyed by an excess of 16 million participants annually. However, only 558,000 individuals regularly participate in archery annually (SGMA, 2012), which positions the sport of target archery as a niche sport as it is not mainstream and does not appeal to a mass audience.

Given the unique conditions associated with the niche sport context, it is reasonable to assume that antecedent conditions influencing youth who choose to participate in niche sport would differ as well. According to Côté and Hay (2002), factors influencing entry into a sport may in turn impact future participation and progression through the sport development process. As such, it is important to explore the antecedent conditions to niche sport participation to determine if unique factors are present that alter the progression of youth sport participation. The purpose of this study is to explore youth sport participation in niche sport by examining the factors perceived to influence youth sampling and choice to specialize in the sport of

target archery. In particular, the role of parental influence was examined as a contributing factor in determining the level (e.g., continuing sampling [recreation] or specializing and investing [competitive]) of participation youth and adolescents will seek in a niche sport context.

Review of Related Literature

The Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP; Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007), reproduced in Figure 1, was developed from research with Canadian and Australian athletes and serves as the predominant foundation for understanding: (a) entry into (sampling), (b) participation (specializing), (c) advancement (investment), and (d) withdrawal from (dropout) sport. Accordingly, movement through the DMSP is determined by deliberate play, deliberate practice, and the amount of sport involvement. Côté and colleagues (Côté, 1999; Côté, Baker, & Abernathy, 2003; Côté & Hay, 2002) explained deliberate play as sporting activities that provided immediate gratification, were designed to maximize enjoyment, were intrinsically motivating, and provided instant enjoyment. Deliberate practice is described as sporting activities that were motivated by performance goals, required substantial effort, and did not provide an individual with immediate rewards. Deliberate practice also involved highly

structured activities that were designed explicitly to improve performance (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993). Further, Côté, Baker, and Abernathy (2007) outlined specific differences between deliberate play and deliberate practice (see Table 1).

Although a comprehensive model of youth sport progression, the description of involvement in each stage of the DMSP may not fully explore the complexities inherent at each development level for sport participants in niche sport (Côté & Hay, 2002). Specifically, the sampling years are a period in which parents introduce their child to sport, potentially building interest in such an activity. This period is one in which children are given the opportunity to sample a wide range of sports that aide in the development of fundamental motor skills (Côté & Hay, 2002). Since niche sport does not appeal to a mass audience and receives relatively less public exposure (Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006), it may not fit into the traditional definition of sampling as social influences (i.e., parents, peers) are typically the primary factors in determining entry into the sampling stage. Thus, parents and peer groups are less likely to be exposed to and aware of niche sports, so youth are less likely to discover and adopt these sports. Compounding this issue, niche sport (e.g., archery, biathlon, skeleton) may require youth to acquire specific technical

skills as well as specialized training (i.e., private coaching) and equipment immediately upon entry in order to participate in a safe manner. Moreover, given that target archery is not a staple within North American society, is typically not part of school curriculum, and is not inherently promoted in mainstream media, participants are often not exposed to target archery, which promotes entrance into the sampling phase of the DMSP.

Within the conventional or mainstream sport context, MacPhail, Gorley, and Kirk (2003) found key features of the sampling stage to be participant involvement in a range of sports, fun and enjoyment, place of competition, fitness and health, deliberate play, and friendships and peer relations. Similar to Bloom's (1985) first stage of learning, the sampling years are crucial to the development of interest in sport and playfulness is a key component to continued participation and success. In addition, fun has been identified as an essential component at this stage (Brustad, 1993; Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988; Petlichkoff, 1993) and can be generated through experimentation and play (Kleiber, 1981). Youth sport involvement in the sampling years is typically characterized by a high amount of deliberate play, a low amount of deliberate practice, and trying out several different sports (Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007).

Progressing from the sampling stage, youth often enter the specialization stage, which Baker, Côté, and Deakin (2005) propose occurs when an individual limits their physical activity to two or three sports. Hill and Hansen (1988) relate specialization to the reduction in athletic involvement, specifically indicating that specialization is limiting participation in physical activity to one sport in which the individual trains and competes throughout the year. Côté and colleagues (Abernethy, Côté, & Baker, 1999; Beamer, Côté, & Ericsson, 1999; Côté, 1999; Côté et al. 2007; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007) indicate that specialization is the reduction to one or two specific sports that the individual focuses on and is characterized by an even balance between deliberate play and deliberate practice. Thus, specialization occurs when an individual limits his or her sport involvement to two or three distinct sports, while increasing the amount of time spent performing deliberate practice to that of time spent performing deliberate play. Utilizing the framework proposed by Côté et al. (2007), deliberate play and deliberate practice are discernible through the comparisons depicted in Table 1. Participants and supporters of niche sport represent a specialty demographic or a sub-segment of sport consumers that possess unique characteristics and are thus influenced and motivated to participate for unique reasons (Miloch &

Lambrecht, 2006). As such, exploring factors associated with sampling and specialization within niche sport progression may help enhance the definitions of each stage within the DMSP.

RQ1: What are the characteristics (e.g., sport involvement, practice, play, coaching) associated with sampling and specialization of youth participants in a niche sport?

A variety of factors are known to influence the progression of youth sport development. The expectancy-value model of achievement-related choices (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004) addresses the antecedents of an individual's choices and behaviors.

Research related to this model originally examined behaviors in academics and was later extended to test achievement-related choices in the athletic domain (Eccles & Harold, 1991). Eccles' model addresses the achievement choices and behaviors an individual engages in and the antecedents associated with these choices, emphasizing the social-psychological influence on choices and persistence within a task. Specifically, antecedents including (1) the cultural milieu (e.g., cultural stereotypes about sport participation, cultural environment in which a person lives), (2) socialization experiences, (3) a child's aptitudes, and (4) previous experiences influence a child's perceptions and expectations that

consequently inform their self-beliefs (Eccles, 1993). These self-beliefs in turn influence expectancies and task values which subsequently impact performance and persistence with a task (Eccles et al., 1998), and future task choices (Jacobs & Eccles, 2000).

According to Eccles' model, an individual's choices are influenced by the relative value of the task and expectations of success for each option (Jacobs & Eccles, 2000). Individuals engage in a cost-benefit analysis when determining what choices to pursue, as one choice often eliminates other options (Eccles et al., 1998). If the individual perceives the subjective cost to outweigh the values of the activity, the person will discontinue participation in the activity. Conversely, if individuals perceive the activity to be of value or are confident in their abilities, their participation is likely to continue (Eccles & Harold, 1991). Eccles et al. (1998) expanded the original expectancy-value model (Eccles & Harold, 1991) to a more comprehensive model of parental influence, outlining the importance of socializers in the choices that individuals make. Socializers, acting as "providers of experience," "interpreters of experience," and "role models," are said to be the primary influences in an individual's achievement-related choices and behaviors (Eccles & Harold, 1991). Accordingly, parents, acting as socializing agents, have been shown to influence their child's attitudes (Brustad, 1996) and

activity levels in sport (Dempsey, Kimiciek, & Horn, 1993; Kimiciek & Horn, 1998).

Examining the role of parents within their child's youth sport development process has received substantial empirical attention in sport psychology research (Côté & Hay, 2002; MacPhail et al., 2003; MacPhail & Kirk, 2006). Interestingly, MacPhail and colleagues analyzed both sampling and specializing phases of the development process to determine what role parents may have in the decisions at each level. The findings of the aforementioned studies suggest that parental support and encouragement provide the catalyst for entry and continuance in sport. Further, Côté and Hay (2002) identified parental support as being correlated with a child's enjoyment and enthusiasm with sport participation (Power & Woolger, 1994) and a parent's willingness and enthusiasm to attend special practices will influence a child's commitment to sport (Monsaas, 1985; Sloboda & Howe, 1991).

Previous research has established the foundation for understanding the parental influence on youth sport progression. However, the nature of parental influence on youth sport progression may be informed by incorporating theory in relation to Eccles' choice model where an individual's choices are influenced by the relative value of the task and expectations of success for each option (Jacobs & Eccles,

2000). Specifically, parental actions as well as attitudes toward and experience with a sport may influence a child's sampling and specialization of a sport through the influence of these attitudes and experiences on the child's value of the task (i.e., niche sport participation) and expectations of success. This may be particularly salient in niche sport where parental opinions and experiences with the sport may be unfounded and limited, respectively, due to the lack of mass exposure depicted in the very definition of niche sport. The general dearth of research on youth niche sport necessitates the investigation of parental influence in this unique context as parents are likely not exposed to niche sports in the same manner as mainstream sport. Thus, as parents likely lack previous exposure and experience with niche sport, the influence they impart onto their child likely differs from mainstream sport.

RQ2: How does parental influence affect youth sport development through continued participation in a niche sport context?

Method

To understand the complex process of sport progression in a niche sport context, a qualitative case study method involving interviews with children as well as parents was utilized. As described by Yin (2009), a case study is an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary

phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 23). Further, the case study method allows for an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon (i.e., youth sport progression), while simultaneously allowing the unique nature of the setting to be considered (Stake, 2005). As such, the case study method was deemed most appropriate to serve the purpose of this study as contextual factors specifically impacting the progression through the youth sport development process have been identified in previous literature (Côté et al., 2003). Further, a single case study, rather than a collective case study, was chosen because this site was unique in that it offered this particular niche sport at all three levels of progression (i.e., beginner, intermediate, advanced). With the inclusion of recreational beginners through Olympic level sport in one setting, we believe this one site would provide the most comprehensive understanding of a niche sport context. However, the boundaries between the phenomenon (i.e., progression with sport development) and the context (i.e., different sport settings) may be blurred with niche sport and thus require empirical attention.

Importantly, the findings of case studies are ideal for theory development through falsification testing and the identification of new or deviant cases as they lead to enhanced understanding of

previously understood phenomenon (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Further, conceptual claims within case studies can be made and transferred to settings that have similar contextual features (Yin, 2009). Thus, an investigation into youth sport progression for a singular niche sport can aid in understanding the progression process for comparable sports. Although the benefits of an ideographic focus were considered, the purpose of this study was to understand the progression of participants within this niche sport to uncover themes that may be transferable to other contexts. As such, a nomothetic methodological approach was chosen and applied to this case study research.

Participants

As noted within the introduction, target archery was the context for this case study of niche sport participation. More specifically, the case study unit of analysis was a community based target archery program located at a recreation complex in the southeast United States that consisted of approximately 75 youth participants at the time of the study. The corporate sponsored indoor-outdoor archery facility was part of a shared-use community facility¹ located in a southeastern rural community of approximately 5,000 residents whose median income is slightly above the state

median income (US Census Bureau, 2011) and drew children from the local community as well as surrounding suburban and rural communities. Program participants were recruited through handouts at local schools, archery activities at community events, and through word-of-mouth in the local and surrounding communities. Enrolled participants were able to use equipment provided by the archery program or provide their own equipment. Participation cost approximately \$50 per 6-week course. The site for data collection was selected because the facility offered archery programming for a range of levels and, including beginners who focus on fun and learning to intermediate and advanced classes that were directly associated with the Junior Olympic Archery Development (JOAD) program. Coaches for the program were USA Archery certified Olympic level coaches chosen by the foundation associated with the facility. As such, it was determined that sampling and specialization levels would be present at the site.

The study participants included youth sport participants and their parents who were exclusively recruited from the target archery program. A single embedded case design was adopted as the target archery program represented a “critical” case in testing a well-formulated theory (i.e., DMSP) and the analysis included both youth participants and their parents as

¹ Information regarding the archery program and the facility were obtained from the website and from materials acquired during data collection; however the sources were not directly cited to maintain anonymity.

embedded units (Yin, 2009). In total, the final interview sample included 18 (6 females, 12 males) children ranging in age from 8 to 15 years ($M=11.72$, $SD=2.05$). Further, 10 of the parents of the children were interviewed to gain insight into their role or impact on target archery participation. Of the 10 parents, nine identified as mothers and one as a father. In some cases, the parents had more than one child in the target archery program. Two parents declined to partake in the study. Table 2 includes a complete list of the participants (with pseudonyms), their identified sport development level, and age. Five participants were excluded from the final sample as they were identified as participating at the investment level of the DMSP. To serve the purpose of this paper, participants were recruited by sampling or specialization levels.

Interview Guide

Semi-structured interview guides for both parents and youth participants were generated based on the DMSP to stimulate the collection of pertinent data related to the research questions and to assist in the interview process (Appendix A). The interview guide was deemed most appropriate as a means to collect data as the guide ensured the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each interview participant, and allowed the interviewers freedom to probe for specific details regarding the phenomenon that may be particularly

relevant to each participant (Patton, 2002). Each interview began with opening comments and warm up questions in order to build rapport with each participant. Next, questions pertaining to each youth participant's perception of his/her archery involvement and the parents' perceptions of their child's archery involvement. Specifically, the interview guide provided several areas of inquiry, including: current sport involvement, previous sport involvement, style of practice, the sport selection process, family support/involvement, coaching, future intentions, and anticipated outcomes. The ordering of questions varied depending on the individual responses from study participants. Supplementary, probing and follow-up questions were asked to gain a thorough understanding of the intricacies of youth sport progression.

Procedure

Following the consent process outlined through institutional review board (IRB) approval, interviews were scheduled with the youth participants and their parents by a team of two researchers. To ensure rapport was established with each participant as recommended by Irwin and Johnson (2005), the interviews were conducted face-to-face at a private location of the participant's choosing. At the discretion of the parents, youth participants were

interviewed independently in order to remove any potential parental influence on their child's responses. However, in two cases, the parents opted to be present during their child's interview. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes in duration and was audio recorded. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed verbatim, which resulted in 392 typed pages.

Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, the researchers carefully read and reread the interview transcripts to ensure familiarity with the data and participant responses. The data analysis strategy was based on the technique described by Yin (2009) as relying on theoretical propositions. The propositions for the analysis were drawn from the DMSP. The coding process was deductive in nature and entailed relying on an a priori framework provided by the DMSP where open coded text were grouped based on (1) differences between sampling and specialization as described by Côté et al. (2007) and represented in Table 1, and (2) whether a child intended to continue target archery at the recreational or competitive level. It is important to note that none of the youth participants indicated they would discontinue participation in the sport of target archery. This first round of coding was completed by one researcher and an independent research auditor.

Furthermore, for interview data relating to the parents of target archery participants, a similar coding process was used, followed by a slightly modified a priori coding framework. This modified framework was adopted to focus on categorizing codes into themes that resulted in (1) previous experience in archery, (2) involvement in their child's archery, and (3) overall perception of archery. Within this modified framework, the initial read through of the transcripts uncovered common trends with regard to each of these three areas of context. As such, coding categories were created, and specific lines of text were highlighted and pulled into one of these three categorical themes. For example, overall perception of archery was coded with text relating to "it is a safe sport", "family friendly", and words that described the parents' view of the sport.

Following the initial round of coding, two additional researchers (the co-authors who subsequently conducted the interviews) reviewed the coding categories to ensure they concurred with the final coded categories. Further, to ensure trustworthiness and credibility within the collection and interpretation of the data, a number of strategies were adopted (see Shenton, 2004). In terms of trustworthiness between the reader and the researcher, the data was *dependable* in that the details of collection (including transparency within the interview guide) were clearly outlined for scrutiny

regarding connection to research questions and findings. Further, *confirmability* has been established through the use of multiple coders within the coding process. Specifically, the analysis was agreed upon between the primary researchers and a fourth independent researcher who was not included in the data collection or initial analysis. This individual has been trained in qualitative methods and analysis, and has experience working with special populations (e.g., youth). An audit trail was created through the use of NVivo 9.0 computer software to code the data. This process allows any observer to assess the connection between meaning units of text and codes. Finally, in terms of *credibility*, negative cases were included in the open coding process where outliers were not eliminated from the discussion of findings analysis as portions of the data differed from the previous theoretical assumptions (Brodsky, 2008). In addition, trustworthiness was enhanced between the researched and the researcher in that the final write up of the findings was presented to the management team of the sport complex in the form of a report. The report was shared with the participants who chose to view the document. However, specific feedback was not solicited directly from the participants.

In order to explore the levels of the DMSP in the target archery context, each participant's progression was determined

through the number of sports played and the amount of deliberate play compared to deliberate practice observed, based on delineation of the two terms provided by Côté et al. (2007) as shown in Table 1 and the researchers observations of the programs. It is important to note that the original classification of participants into sampling and specializing during the recruitment stage of data collection was based on definitions of these levels of participation developed from mainstream sport by Côté and colleagues (Côté, 1999; Côté et al. 2007; Côté & Frasier-Thomas, 2007). However, some study participants discussed characteristics of more than one developmental stage within their respective interview. For example, a participant classified as a sampler for the purpose of data collection may have discussed elements of deliberate practice within their interview. Thus, aspects of these categorizations are discussed in the Findings section.

Findings

The findings address the factors perceived to influence youth entry into and specialization in a niche sport (i.e., target archery). Specifically, the role of parental influence was found to be a contributing factor in determining the level (i.e., continuing sampling [recreation] or moving on to specialization [competitive]) of participation youth sought in the sport of target archery. Both the sampling and

specialization phases described by the participants and the role of the parents in influencing youth sport involvement will be discussed in relation to the Expectancy-Value Model of Achievement-Related Choices (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Eccles et al., 1998; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004).

Characteristics of Sampling and Specialization in Niche Sport (RQ1)

Sampling. For the youth participants, the first stage of the DMSP, the sampling years occurred between the ages of 8 and 15 years. The majority of youth sport study participants indicated they were involved in a range of other sports, where fun was a primary motivator for their sports involvement. This was exemplified by Tim, a 12 year old sampler. Specifically, when asked about his entrance into target archery he discussed his involvement in baseball, horseback riding, and football:

My brother's kindergarten, they had their carnival at the very end of the year and [the archery program] had their thing and they set up targets out there and I decided to try it and I really, really liked it... when I was like 7 and 8, I think I played football. But that was, that was only for two seasons and, that, and I was actually playing baseball then too. So that was, it was, I remember one time when we were at the stables, like the one day we had to go to the stables, I

had to ride, and then had to go to a football game and then the next day I had to um, ride and then go to the baseball game.

April, a 13 year old participant, also noted that in addition to archery she was involved in several sports. She explained, "right now, I am juggling gymnastics, soccer and archery...my soccer games are on Saturdays and gymnastics is on Thursdays and then archery is on Tuesdays." Archery participants in the sampling phase also indicated fitness, health, and peer relations as important components to their sport involvement. Regarding peer relations, Amy, the mother of Tim, simply puts, "I like being with these people."

Interestingly, using the a priori codes associated with the definition of the sampling phase, the role of deliberate play versus deliberate practice seemed to be blurred by the accounts of the participants. Specifically, the importance of fun within a deliberate, organized setting was noted by several participants, who explained how their coaches structured activities to be enjoyable. Tim explained how practice included aspects of both deliberate practice and deliberate play, noting that they would:

Stretch and everything and then we practice close up to the targets and then we keep getting further and further back and then we usually play a game or two or we will have like a

competition...[practice is] two hours and it is a lot of fun.

Kimberly, a 10-year-old sampler, also noted the integration of styles, indicating that “all the coaches really are fun to be around because, at the time, they can be very serious and at other times they can have fun.”

Additionally, (from Table 1), the idea that sport is “done for its own sake,” “adult involvement not required,” and “flexibility” seemed to be mixed in participant discussion and thus challenged the definition of deliberate play at this stage. Tim explained his desire to continue in the sport for fun, stating he would “probably do it for fun. I don’t think I would really want to become a professional at it.” Conversely, five individuals indicated a desire to achieve specific goals, as they indicated a desire to pursue Olympic, professional or scholastic careers in their sport as they progressed through sampling. As Martin, a 10-year-old sampler, noted, he had a desire to be a professional archer as he described here:

Do a lot of practice and have a lot of experience in tournaments and stuff cause when [a professional archer] get[s] sponsored they look at the archery stuff and see how many tournaments [the person has] done and how well [they] do.

Moreover, based on the description of coach involvement and the technique requirements of the sport of target

archery, individuals in the sampling stage eluded to the requirement of adult supervision and coaching regardless of where participation took place. As Kimberly explained, “my dad, he helps me a lot because if my sight is not like perfectly right, he would like change it or Coach Rob, he would, like help me with my stance, my posture, and everything” indicating the importance of having someone to aid in participation.

Finally, four individuals commented on aspects of deliberate practice motivated by performance outcomes through learning the proper form and rules, and how important this was to participation in their sport. Kyle, an 11-year-old sampler, described:

Coach Steve gives me a lot of tips about my form and what I can do to improve it. Coach Eric does the same. He also helps me if I have any troubles with my bow and so does coach David.

This quotation demonstrates the need for coaches to explain specific rules, form, and equipment needs for youth participants in the sampling phase of this study. As noted in Table 1, deliberate play associated with the sampling phase should not require adult involvement or supervision; this requirement of coach supervision appears to be the norm within the sampling level of this niche sport context.

Specialization. As noted in the Method section, the original classification

of participants into sampling and specializing during the recruitment stage of data collection was based on definitions of levels of participation developed by Côté and colleagues (Côté, 1999; Côté et al. 2007; Côté & Frasier-Thomas, 2007). Specifically, those identified as specializers were involved in an intermediate or advanced level target archery class, which was observed to have a mix of deliberate practice and play. Consequently, participants clearly discussed a balance of deliberate practice and deliberate play with discussion of fun, participating in archery in various settings, carrying out archery in a serious manner, and following explicit rules. To demonstrate the combination of deliberate practice and play, Eric (11 year old, specializer) highlighted, "It is pretty fun... games and stuff. But, I seem to be learning new things. We learn about recurve and shooting targets. We go over a lot of stuff in practice." Further, participants in the specialization level defined increased competition, decreased need for fun during practice, the use of advanced equipment, and the need for advanced knowledge in sport specific skills as key characteristics of their sport experience. As described by Leslie (a 14 year old specializer), the need for advanced equipment occurred very quickly in the specialization of this niche sport:

For the longest time, I didn't have a sight. They said I really needed one,

and then we started shooting distance, and I had to get a sight. I like to [shoot] without a sight, but I still have the sight to help [with accuracy]. I have a clicker too ... those things are frustrating.

Interestingly, the findings suggest half of the participants identified as being in the specialization phase during data collection were involved in more than two other sports; with one participant identifying six other sports for which he was participating. When asked which sports she participates in regularly, Leslie indicated, "I've done gymnastics. I really liked that. I did ballet...I run. I'm a runner." Justin (15 year old, specializer) further highlighted this point when he stated, "I do tennis at school and I do soccer with friends and, I used to do basketball but, now it is BMX racing." Moreover, indication of a progression toward limiting other sport participation and focusing sport participation on target archery was detailed by only two participants at the specialization level. Thus, it may be concluded that in this niche sport context, specialization is directly linked to specific program factors (e.g., increased competition, decreased fun during practice, advanced equipment, and advanced knowledge in sport specific skills) rather than focusing on the number of sports for which an individual participates.

Parental Influence on Youth Participation (RQ2)

Influence on continued recreational participation. Themes related to influence on individuals indicating continued recreational participation in target archery were related to (1) parental experience in archery and (2) parental opinion of archery. In particular, each parent (but for one exception) of a youth participant who had indicated a preference for continued recreational participation had not been involved in the sport of target archery. Thus, entry into and continuance with the sport of target archery was not directly connected to learned behavior based on following parental involvement or socialization through familial involvement in this context.

With regard to parental opinion of archery, parents described archery as a niche sport that got their child off the couch and was safe. The following quotation demonstrates the opinion of Michelle, the mother of Mark an 11-year-old sampler:

Football scares me. You know, my baby getting hurt. But he sure looks like a football player. If he asks for it, I will say yes but I am not about to suggest it... or encourage it. So I feel like archery is safe.

This implicit promotion of archery for reasons of a means to physical activity in a safe environment may have heightened the youth participants' value for the sport

of target archery as a leisure pursuit, which may in turn have influenced their child's decision to continue with the sport of target archery at the recreational level. Further, parents here promoted both recreational and competitive pursuits of their child. However, the youth participants did not indicate a desire to move beyond the recreational level of participation.

Influence on participation at the competitive level. Of the 7 participants that indicated a desire to pursue target archery at the competitive level, all but two were already at the intermediate or advanced level of their archery program. The competitive level was labelled by participants as the desire to compete at the Olympics, as a professional, and/or at the college level. In the case of acknowledging a desire to continue to a competitive level of target archery, there was a mix of whether or not participants had a parent with previous experience in the sport of target archery.

Approximately half of the participants had a mother or father who had participated in archery and the other half did not have a parent or guardian to emulate. In terms of non-participation by parents in the sport of target archery, this was coupled with a lack of previous knowledge of the sport. For instance, Ellen stated,

... it's been a nice environment for him to meet other kids to make some relationships and to learn something

different, because our family knew nothing about archery when he first began. So for us it's kind of one of those sports where we've had to really learn a lot of the rules and procedures and so on.

In this case, Ellen seemed quite proud of her son for learning a new activity and the family seemed to embrace the notion of learning together.

Remarkably, the parents of those interested in pursuing a competitive level of target archery had mixed opinions of the sport. Specifically, some individuals indicated that target archery was gentlemanly, active, safe and good for confidence, whether others indicated it was "redneck" and boring. Kristin, the mother of Ben and Andy, 12 and 11-year-old specializers, described:

I think a lot of people don't understand it, and I think a lot of people probably think it's boring. It's a lot of standing on a line, shooting arrows at targets.

Despite the mixed parental opinion of archery, all but one youth archery participant who indicated a desire to pursue target archery at the competitive level also discussed the potential of continuing a life-long career in the sport of target archery.

Discussion

Although youth sport development has received considerable scholarly attention through both empirical and

theoretical approaches, this research has typically focused on sporting contexts that appeal to a mass audience and are considered mainstream (Côté, 1999; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté et al., 2003). However, as youth become increasingly less physically active and are more engaged in sedentary activities rather than sport (Berger et al., 2008; Dumith et al., 2011), the traditional understanding of youth sport progression needs to be explored in alternative sport development environments. Thus, the main aim of this study was to examine youth sport progression in a niche sport context (i.e., target archery).

Similar to previous research (MacPhail et al., 2003), the findings depicted the sampling level of the DMSP to be characterized by involvement in several sports and primarily motivated by enjoyment, fitness, health, and social connections. However, the depiction of deliberate play and deliberate practice at the sampling level differed from previous research (cf., Côté et al. 2007).

Specifically, the importance of fun within a deliberate and organized setting was highlighted, and the requirement of adult supervision was detailed as a specific characteristic of sampling within target archery. This is in direct contrast to Côté et al. (2007), who suggested that adult supervision is not required within deliberate play. As such, the findings indicate that deliberate play may have an alternate definition at the sampling level

of development within the sport of target archery. Further, elements of deliberate practice (i.e., required adult supervision; Côté et al., 2007) may occur earlier in the DMSP and may be more prevalent in the sampling phase of certain sport contexts. Thus, the lines of deliberate practice and play may be blurred due to the use of specialized equipment, the role of parental supervision, and the importance of fun. This blurred line suggests practitioners need to consider the characteristics of the deliberate play and practice framework specific to the sport being managed. Therefore youth sport programs should be organized to allow for practices that focus on the flexible inclusion of parental supervision and elicit excitement and engagement from beginning athletes to assure retention in the sport

The findings also suggest specialization may be directly linked to specific program factors (e.g., increased competition, decreased fun during practice, advanced equipment, advanced knowledge in sport specific skills) rather than focusing on the number of sports for which an individual participates in this niche sport context. In contrast to Côté and colleagues (Abernethy, Côté, & Baker, 1999; Beamer et al., 1999; Côté, 1999; Côté et al. 2007; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007) who specifically indicate the reduction to one or two specific sports as a key characteristic of the definition of specialization, the findings

associated with these archery participants suggest that an alternate definition with a greater focus on programmatic factors (e.g., increased competition, decreased fun during practice, advanced equipment, and advanced knowledge in sport specific skills) be considered for non-mainstream (i.e., niche) sports. Advanced equipment and sport specific skills appeared to be quite prevalent for these specializer archery participants; two factors that may be specific to target archery and not necessarily other niche sport contexts. For example, target archery requires the use of specialized equipment at both the beginning and advanced stages. In particular, even samplers require equipment that is tailored to each participant to ensure accuracy and safety (e.g., hand grips, sights, stabilizers, draw length/weight).

The role of parental involvement on youth participants who indicated a preference for continued recreational archery participation involved lack of previous experience in archery and a somewhat moderate opinion of archery as a safe form of physical activity. This extends previous literature (Côté, 1999; Côté & Hay, 2002; Monsaas, 1985; Sloboda & Howe, 1991) that suggests parental involvement in their child's participation is a factor influencing adolescent entry into the sampling stage of development. Specifically, it would appear that the parents of these archery participants might not act as role models

or interpreters of experiences for these youth participants as outlined in Eccles and colleagues (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Eccles et al., 1998; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004) model of parental influences. Interestingly, similar findings were uncovered for youth participants who described a preference to continue on (or remain) in a competitive level of target archery participation in which parental experience in archery was inconsistent. As such, the influence of cultural milieu, specifically the expectations regarding participation in sport, (Eccles et al., 1998) may impact progression to competitive levels of a niche sport to a greater degree than the presence of parental role models defined by previous sport (archery) experience. Specifically, factors associated with school sport programs, sport related supports, social media influences and social networks may be of interest when exploring influence on sport progression in niche sport contexts (MacPhail et al., 2003). Youth who gravitate to niche sport may attach expectations of value success (as described in Eccles et al., 1998) to social agents outside their familial unit. If niche sport participants are considered unique in and of themselves (Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006), youth who participate in this context may thrive on being different from those around them. A niche sport may provide a context for which these youth can explore their differences with similar 'others'.

Finally, parental opinion regarding archery for all youth participants (i.e., preference for continued recreational or competitive participation) was fairly neutral in that archery was viewed as a safe form of recreation that was gentlemanly and good for confidence. Given this neutral perception of archery as a sport, the findings support Eccles' theory (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Eccles et al., 1998; Fredricks & Eccles, 2004) in that the participants may engage in a cost-benefit analysis when pursuing activity options. Neutral parental opinions in this case support an avenue for physical activity that is a relatively safe and unthreatening environment. The benefits for youth participants in this context are that parents seem to be in support of a sporting activity that provides an option for safe and relatively gentle recreational and competitive pursuits, potentially limiting the parental pressure that often leads to dropout (Gould, Udry, Tuffey, & Loehr, 1996).

Overall, the findings advance a more thorough understanding of youth sport development by critically analyzing the DMSP in a niche sport context. Despite the contribution to new knowledge discussed, there are limitations to the study that require acknowledgement. First, previous research investigating youth sport progression has typically employed the use of retrospective interviews in order to understand the lifelong outcomes of youth sport

participation (Côté, 1999; Côté et al., 2003; Côté & Hay, 2002; Baker, Côté, Abernathy, 2003). Côté et al. (2005) advanced this approach further by proposing a detailed retrospective interview procedure specifically designed to acquire knowledge about the progression process of expert level athletes after they have reached the outcomes identified in the DMSP. However, retrospective approaches using a deliberate practice framework may not be capable of distinguishing expert and non-expert athletes during early stages of development (Baker et al., 2005). Thus, the current study utilized a concurrent interview procedure buttressed by parental interviews in order to better understand an athlete's progression from the sampling stage to the specializing stage. Nonetheless, caution should be taken in assessing intent of participants regarding recreational and competitive pursuits from a concurrent study.

Second, the sampling procedure associated with defining participants at the sampling or specialization level of participation was determined based on the characteristics of these two levels, which were primarily associated with delineations between practice and play (see Côté et al., 2007). It is important to note that our findings suggest this delineation may be skewed within sampling and specialization. Thus, alternative methods of dividing a sample by levels in future studies should be

considered. Third, the technical aspects and equipment requirements of target archery may affect progression through the DMSP and the demarcation of deliberate play and deliberate practice. As target archery requires a high level of technical knowledge and instruction during early sport involvement to maintain a safe environment, youth are less likely to partake in unstructured deliberate play associated with target archery. Thus, the findings may be transferred to other contexts with similar features; however, the findings cannot be generalized to all niche sport contexts. Finally, two youth participant interviews were conducted while their parents were present, which may have influenced response bias. Due to IRB protocol, this situation could not be avoided; however, the responses of these two participants were consistent with the other participants in the study. Nevertheless, the limitations discussed here present directions for future research on youth participation in niche sport.

Future research should further investigate youth sport progression in a range of sporting contexts. One such approach could operationalize the concepts in the DMSP in order to gain a broader understanding of the DMSP for a range of sports and participation contexts through quantitative methods. If this approach were undertaken, different sports could be compared and contrasted in an attempt to organize sport

development programs that more efficiently attract and retain individuals that best fit the intricacies of a particular sport. Further, research could examine the concepts of deliberate practice at all developmental stages of the DMSP to understand the differences by degree or intensity in order to move towards a more thorough understanding of these concepts. Additionally, as youth sport is an avenue to engage parents in the familial relationship and influence socialization into sport for the parents (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009), the impact of youth participation in a niche sport such as target archery on the entire family is important and should be examined more fully. Lastly, continued focus on parents, peers, and social influences in niche sport is needed to understand youth sport development for all.

Youth entry to and decision to specialize in a specific sport may differ based on the sporting context. Thus, practitioners and participants should seek to understand the specific process of sport progression for different sports in their respective setting to more efficiently attract and retain participants. In the target archery context, safety and well-roundedness were praised by parents as sought after features of a sport program. As such, organizing sport programs to emphasize safety and well-roundedness will aid practitioners in attracting and retaining youth who appear to be

influenced by these parental opinions. Further, as deliberate practice is infused in the sampling phase of target archery, it is important that coaches and administrators make a distinction between fun and play at the sampling level, and adherence to rules and skill development at the specialization level. If the lines between sampling and specialization become too blurred through the infusion of deliberate practice over deliberate play, youth participants may burnout and remove themselves from archery in the pursuit of alternative activities. This may be particularly relevant to youth who participate in niche sport and who pursue nontraditional activities because they do not feel they fit into conventional or mainstream sport contexts. Here, the characteristics influencing entrance into and continuance in sport must be clearly understood and managed to ensure an individual does not withdraw from sport participation based on a negative cost-benefit analysis.

In conclusion, the current study provided an exploratory look into the progressive involvement of youth into niche sport. As a result the study contributes to the established research on youth sport progression by suggesting this process might differ for niche sports as compared to traditional sports as the findings challenged previous delineations of the sampling and specialization stages. Further, the classic understanding of

deliberate practice and play was challenged in the unique context of target archery. Thus, sport managers working in the youth niche sport should understand the unique aspects of youth sport development in niche sport in order to maximize the effectiveness of their programs.

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Tables

Table 1

Comparisons between deliberate play and deliberate practice

Deliberate Play	Deliberate Practice
Done for its own sake	Done to achieve a future goal
Enjoyable	Not the most enjoyable
Pretend quality	Carried out seriously
Interest on the behavior	Interest on outcome of the behavior
Flexibility	Explicit rules
Adult involvement not required	Adult involvement often required
Occurs in various settings	Occurs in specialized facilities

Note. Adapted from Côté et al. (2007).

Table 2

Participant & Parent Pseudonyms and Identified Development Level

Name	Age	Parent Name	Development Level
Mark	11	Michelle	Sampling
Chris	9	<i>Declined Study</i>	Sampling
Kyle	11	<i>Declined Study</i>	Sampling
Tim	12	Amy	Sampling
Martin	10	James	Sampling
April	13	<i>Declined Study</i>	Sampling
Ann	11	<i>Declined Study</i>	Sampling
Kimberly	10	Denise	Sampling
Daniel	8	Denise	Sampling
Steven	10	Lisa	Sampling
Rachel	15	Lisa	Sampling
Eric	11	Heather	Specializing
Jason	14	Susan	Specializing
Leslie	14	Pauline	Specializing
Stacey	14	Pauline	Specializing
Ben	12	Kristin	Specializing
Andy	11	Kristin	Specializing
Justin	15	Ellen	Specializing

Figures

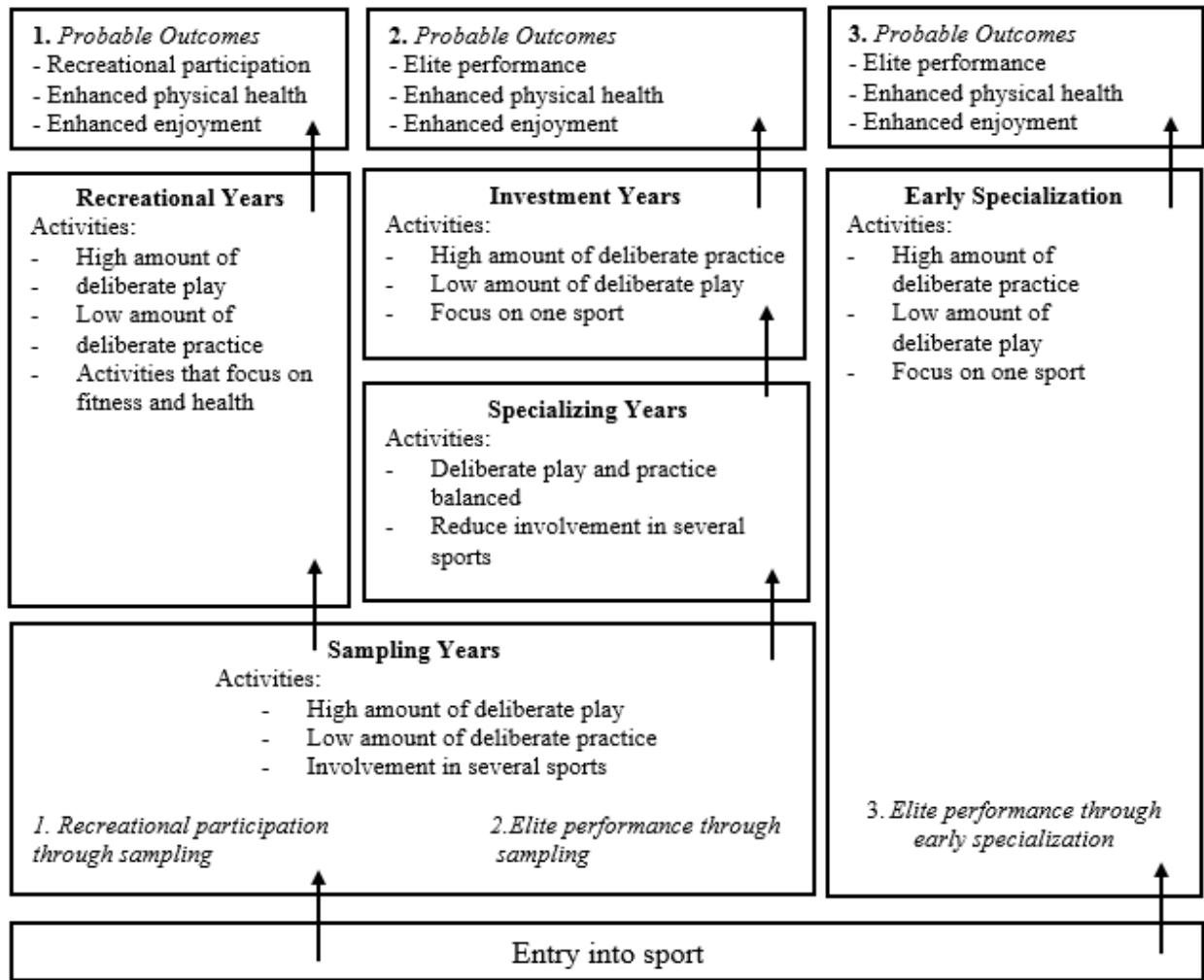


Figure 1. Developmental Model of Sport Participation. Adapted from Côté et al. (2007).

Appendix A

Interview Guides

Participant Interview Guide

1. How old are you? How long have you participated in this archery class at the sport complex? How long have you participated in archery?
2. Tell me what you like to do at school? Tell me what you like to do for fun?
3. Can you tell me about all the sports you play, on a team or just for fun? Are there any other sports you play, on a team or just for fun? Can you tell me more about _____? How often do you play each sport?
4. What other sports would you like to play? How come you don't play _____? How did you choose these sports?
5. How does your family support/help you playing _____? Do your parents want you to play _____? Did your parents help you decide which sports to play? Come to games? Practice? Do you parents play sports? Did they in the past?
6. How does school affect you playing _____? Do you think playing sports affects your school?
7. Do you have a coach? Tell me more about your coach. What do you like about your coach?
8. Do you practice for any sports? Can you tell me about a typical practice? On your own? With a team? Do you like practicing?
9. Have you ever stopped playing any sports? How did you decide to stop? Did you want to stop? Are you glad you stopped?
10. How long do you think you will play each sport? How far do you want to go? Do you want to become a professional athlete or do you just want to play for fun? Olympics?

Parent Interview Guide

1. How many children do you have in the sport of archery? How many children are in your home? Can tell me about yourself?
2. Tell me about your son or daughter/family?
3. Can you tell me about the sports you currently play or have in the past? Archery?
4. Can you tell me about the things your son or daughter does for physical activity/fun?
5. Can you tell me about the sports your son or daughter plays? How did he/she choose these sports? Practice? How? Compete? How?
6. How long has your son or daughter been playing _____? How long do you think he/she will play _____? Do you think he/she will can make a career out of _____ or gain a scholarship?
7. Tell me about your involvement in your son or daughter's sports? Did you help them choose a particular sport? Did you help them quit a sport?
8. Can you tell me your thoughts about archery? Perception? Involvement?

ESSAYS

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Educated Ignorance: What Faculty Don't Know and Why Faculty Can't Lead Intercollegiate Athletics Reform

Travis Feezell

University of the Ozarks

Contemporary writings on the tension of athletics and academics in American higher education have often focused on the incompatibility of sporting endeavors and institutional missions. In particular, scholarship has stressed the ills of a financially directed collegiate sports machine at odds with the general educational aims of colleges and universities. However, this essay attempts to examine the historical and structural traditions of higher education, particularly those surrounding faculty, as a means of evaluating the tension. Moreover, the essay suggests a radical re-evaluation of those structures as a means to ameliorate the ongoing scandal in our institutions.

In a recent piece from the Charlotte Observer (DeCock, 2013), the columnist expressed dismay at the silence of faculty in regards to the recent academic scandal at the University of North Carolina. As one might expect, he emphasized the intentional fraudulent actions of one faculty member as the locus for scandal, yet his comments in large part were directed at an alarming lack of reaction by faculty to this

situation that had attacked the upstanding reputation of a flagship public institution. Faculty – as he seemed to be implying – are indeed responsible for the integrity of the university and must give voice and action when the institution is assailed by unethical and unseemly actions, particularly those actions that spring from intercollegiate athletics. Why shouldn't faculty stand up at this crucial moment? Why wouldn't they?

As the scandal continued to unfold with particular claims of “no-show” classes and the institutional enrollment of athletes with severe academic deficiencies, faculty again seemed unusually inactive. A new chancellor of the university – the former chancellor had left in the wake of these problems – acknowledged the institution’s responsibility in the scandal but also questioned the data and conclusions of one advisor’s research into the reading abilities of many student-athletes. Faculty responded with positive commentary to the chancellor’s words, yet the language of faculty seemed to suggest an abdication of leadership in any response to the scandal to institutional administration (Stancil, 2014). Why this abdication? Why wouldn’t faculty lead the way in any reform, particularly if faculty are at the heart of an institution?

This paper attempts to answer these questions in a most direct and comprehensive way.¹ The aforementioned columnist’s lament is an oft heard public “cry in the wilderness” for faculty action in reforming college

¹ Throughout this paper I will provide commentary on a number of issues including faculty participation, faculty governance, and athletics reform in American higher education. The nature of this paper is to articulate a synthesis of preceding writings in these areas and provide both a taxonomy of faculty attitudes as well as a concluding statement on the ineffectiveness of faculty reform efforts. Thus at times I will note specific references where necessary and attempt to identify particularly effective commentary. I also would direct the reader to the list of references at the conclusion of the paper, which have informed the writer’s conclusions and opinions.

athletics; many have expressed that leadership in these reform efforts must come not from the wolves guarding the hen house, but must instead emanate from the ethical and moral center of an institution- its professoriate. Yet I want to suggest that these calls for faculty leadership are misdirected; faculty are influenced in their opinions and actions toward intercollegiate athletics by a number of elements including historical and systemic traditions in higher education. This “educated ignorance” – an education of faculty into certain norms and traditions of American higher education – prevents faculty from providing meaningful and sustainable reform efforts in regards to athletics. The question then is not whether faculty *should* lead during times of scandal but why faculty *cannot* and *will not* provide leadership in intercollegiate athletics issues in the future.

Faculty, many experts aver, are indeed the heart, the soul, and particularly the mind of higher education. Former Harvard University president Derek Bok (2003) looked to faculty as the gatekeepers on campus noting the imperative of faculty to defend academic standards and institutional values; this, he argued, protects the quality and integrity of all academic work. Such a characterization calls on faculty to actively participate in the life and direction of the campus. And though many would argue that the mission of an

institution is multi-faceted, faculty members do indeed have central roles in the governance of the university, particularly in two forms.

Faculty most obviously participate in university-wide governance in the form of academic senates or other groups that lend opinion to the administration on prominent university issues. It would seem that faculty do indeed have influence in the general administrative affairs of institutions, though this may be limited only to an advisory capacity heard through a singular faculty “voice.” Furthermore, this voice is best heard on topics of general university administration when faculty members have more knowledge than trustees, administrators, or others in traditional decision-making roles. Yet faculty also act *within* the academic units of the institution (i.e., departments, divisions, schools, colleges) to manage the curricular business of the institution, controlling in some sense the very heart of the academic activity of any college or university. Without doubt, a departmental curricular decision or some other similar choice can have far reaching effects upon the overall direction of an institution.

However, faculty engagement with intercollegiate athletics, and in particular faculty governance and oversight of athletics, seems a much more vexing problem. One need only witness the most recent scandals at Penn State University and the University of North

Carolina where faculty seemed to be notably absent. In the UNC case, a rogue faculty member was seemingly one of the primary causes of the problem. James Duderstadt (2000), the former president of the University of Michigan, expressed that faculty take an interest in athletics because of the perceived educational benefit of the activity, yet shy away from “true control” because of time constraints, lack of formal knowledge and an unwillingness to accept responsibility. Consequently, faculty are left to lament the problems of intercollegiate athletics, sometimes in a most vocal way, but rarely do they engage in a meaningful way so as to govern athletics in concert with the institutional mission. Such was the recent outcry of faculty at the University of Maryland when university leaders failed to consult faculty on the impending move to a new athletics conference.

But perhaps this outcry should not be a surprise. While faculty may have some influence on the direction of an institution, it is with increasing frequency that leaders of institutions – perhaps guided most by the lure of increased revenue and visibility – marginalize faculty when decisions concerning athletics are made. Leaders argue in some cases that athletics is outside the scope of academic scrutiny. By athletics not being “curricular” in nature, it does not fall within the concerns of faculty governance. Faculty are rarely consulted

on matters of residence hall living or parking or dining hall food. Why should athletics be any different?

Moreover, in recent research, it has been suggested that faculty members at the largest research institutions, particularly those with highly successful and visible athletics programs, have significantly less positive attitudes towards intercollegiate athletics than small-school faculty members (Feezell, 2005; Feezell, 2013). In this negative assessment, faculty members view athletics as an extracurricular activity largely disconnected from the central academic and research mission of the institution. At the most basic level, athletics are not integrated into the educational fabric of the institution and faculty members do not engage with athletics in meaningful and consistent ways. More specifically, faculty governance as a means of engagement is sporadic and reactive to perceived ills in athletics as opposed to a more general faculty directive of athletics integration found at smaller schools.

I argue that faculty must have an invested interest in athletics. The very nature of the enterprise – its overflowing stadia, marginalized student-athletes, and enormous resource requirements – require more faculty engagement with athletics. How can we not be called to action when the athletics enterprise may dictate our relationships with other institutions through conference

affiliation? How can we not be invested when at some schools leaders have called for the cancellation of evening classes because of a midweek football game? Wasn't football once just a Saturday affair? How can we not want our voice to be heard when athletics is more often the "front porch" in admissions recruitment efforts and academic programs are pushed into the background?

The voice of faculty is often found in the form of limited faculty governance associated with athletics. More specifically, faculty members generally have two means of engagement. First, most institutions have formed a faculty oversight group for athletics, yet the purpose of these groups is often inconsistent. Some may set policy, others may be more advisory in nature, while a few may even be quite powerless and are formed as a mollifying action by the president of the institution on behalf of a vocal faculty. Second, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has mandated that all institutions name a Faculty Athletics Representative (FAR) that will be active in institutional athletics affairs. But similar to the oversight group, the FAR's role is ill defined.

Furthermore, there are some who view this position with a suspicious eye. As opposed to serving as the "watchdog" of the faculty, this FAR instead panders to the corporate ethos of big-time athletics, accepting de facto bribes in the form of free tickets to games, parking passes,

lavish meals and logoed athletics apparel. Other faculty are not immune to similar criticism. On the rare occasion that faculty members do engage with athletics through the classroom or some other educational setting, the criticism of such engagement is that these professors are acquiescent to an overly indulged and disconnected athletics department that has no specific connection to the academic purpose of the institution.

But the undertone here is not that faculty are critiquing colleagues but instead finding extreme fault with the entire intercollegiate athletics enterprise.² Such criticism of athletics generally falls into four categories, often somewhat intertwined in their expression. Most criticism begins with a base founded in the aberrant direction of athletics, that these mere games have nothing to do with the central mission of the institution. Faculty lament that athletics has little in common with the life of the mind and that in most cases physical activity of this magnitude and emphasis distracts students, both fans AND participants, from the core of academic rigor at the heart of an institution. Many note the isolation of student-athletes with

special services in counseling, nutrition, academic tutoring, and the like that seem to have more to do with athletic success than academic growth.

A second source of criticism is the seeming disparity in financial and personnel resources between the athletic and academic realms. Exorbitant salaries of superstar coaches, budget expenditures for recruiting, and monolithic athletic structures for the sole use of “gladiatorial” games are at odds with the meager pay of an English professor or the limited research resources of a life scientist. The sharpness of the criticism and the vitriol of faculty grows further when athletics spending draws from other areas of the institution; in times of tightly controlled resources, faculty cannot stomach misuse of funds, particularly in an area disconnected from the academic side of things and one which has little payback to the overall institutional good.

A third source of criticism from faculty directs its focus at the overall student composition of the institution. That is, there is often criticism about the possible notion that athletics attracts and enrolls students who do not “fit” the institution in any way other than with their desired physical gifts. A place in the student body given to a behemoth that can play on the offensive line or dunk a basketball but with poor writing skills is a place not given to someone with better

² There are a number of studies and commentary included in the reference section that can provide a comprehensive analysis of these issues. I would particularly point out the work of Sperber (1990; 2000), Gerdy (2006), Beyer and Hannah (2000), and Sack (2009) among the many. In addition, James Frey’s discussion of organizational deviance and college athletics (1994) provides an excellent theoretical framework for understanding the disconnect between the academy and athletics.

academic tools that would enhance the classroom or the research lab.

Finally, faculty criticism laments the overall magnitude of the athletics enterprise. Stadiums that seat 100,000 screaming fans, television contracts that pay hundreds of thousands of dollars with games in far-flung places on weekday nights no less, coaching and support staffs that have ratios of student oversight at the 1:1 level ... these things and more lead faculty to wonder what the priorities of an institution may be. Or perhaps better yet, lead faculty to wonder why others would prioritize the athletic over the academic.

It seems that in this state of affairs faculty are left in an awkward role, that of a lapdog or uninterested observer; regardless, faculty for the most part are disengaged from intercollegiate athletics. This divide from athletics has most often been observed from the vantage point of faculty members with the microscope upon the athletics department. Athletics proponents have responded in a variety of ways but have most often defended the place of intercollegiate athletics as contributing to a more holistic notion of education of students, that is, an education beyond books and specific knowledge that includes something more about “life lessons” and “character building.” Moreover, athletics has defended its position as contributing to the branding and identity of the institution and, in the best cases, as

contributing to the overall financial health of the university. With such marked positions, how are we to view the athletic-academic divide? The athletics culture wants nothing to do with the academic and the academic group thinks it should stay that way. The tenets of the debate are oft repeated and the arguments seem to lend little towards exploration of the continuing conflict. Scandals (re)appear at a consistent rate, faculty complain with the same language, and time moves on.

However, let me suggest that circumstance rather than choice is at the root of the divide, and by extension suggest an approach to the problem, one a historical examination of forces and the other an assessment of contributing faculty attitudes inherent in higher education, that might illuminate faculty disengagement and the athletic-academic divide. Let me further suggest that the investigation of the divide thus far has been to turn the microscope on athletics and in doing so define the problems in those activities vis-à-vis the faculty position. More distinctly, examinations of the issues in athletics most often have been tinged with the frustrations of faculty members; in essence, the examination has become both a description of the ills of athletics AND a definitional exercise about what faculty value most about their position as gatekeepers of the institutional mission. However, I might suggest that in light of

recent scandals, faculty must turn the investigation inwards. That is, perhaps it is time to examine the state of faculty and both the personal and structural impediments to meaningful engagement with intercollegiate athletics.

Higher Education and the Athletic-Academic Divide: Systemic Impediment

I would first argue that the contemporary place of faculty in relation to athletics is not accidental in any way. Rather, it is an outgrowth of historical movements in higher education that has contributed to our current state of affairs.³ First, the influence of the British, German, and colonial models of higher education contribute to the athletic-academic divide from an early state. Presidential control of institutional identity during the 1800's and the desire to attract students, particularly through the development and promotion of athletics teams, certainly influences contemporary intercollegiate athletics programs. Furthermore, the development of the research university and the quest for specific knowledge took faculty members further away from student interests and promoted a faculty-centered, rather than student-centered, approach to education. This movement

³ Ronald Smith's work on the development of intercollegiate athletics (1988; 2011) provides a brilliant overview of the ongoing tensions between the academy and athletics. See especially pages 187-97 (2011) which discusses faculty reform efforts.

toward the fractionalization of the twentieth-century university led to a distancing of faculty from athletics; academic specialization diminished the connection between faculty and athletics and pushed athletics to the fringes of the academic enterprise, an isolation and independence which in fact contributed to the growth of athletics over the last few decades.

Moreover, an athletics department left to its own development over the past decades by faculty has created independent mechanisms of protection. In the early years of the 20th century, athletics departments were housed within physical education programs and coaches had teaching duties that integrated them within the overall faculty activity of the institution. Yet as interest grew in athletics, as demands increased, and as happened with faculty in general, specialization required that coaches become singularly attached to the sports they managed, and by extension distanced themselves far from the academic enterprise. Clearly, access to newly found financial resources contributed as well to this distance. What had been institutional subsidy for modest athletics activities mutated into a grandiose self-funded athletic spectacle over the course of time.

I then would suggest the following five contemporary features of higher education and faculty as inhibiting factors in faculty engagement with athletics.

Feature #1 – The Fragmentation of the Contemporary University

Contemporary universities are highly complex organizations with loose associations between the varied departments. It would seem that faculty view departments and academic divisions/colleges as personal turf highly deserving of limited institutional resources and thus requiring enormous amounts of attention. Moreover, the fragmentation of the contemporary university often disassociates faculty members from each other and from the overall faculty governance of the institution. As President Duderstadt (2000) noted further in his critique of contemporary higher education, faculty are more interested in personal goals and only become connected to university-wide goals when the two intersect. And in the worst form, faculty members are separated from students as well. The urban myth of the professor wanting nothing to do with undergraduate education and everything to do with research is indeed disheartening. Faculty should have a role to play in the governance of athletics just as they have a role in institutional governance, but too often deny that responsibility in the name of research or some other personal, research, or departmental endeavor.

Feature #2 – Graduate School Indoctrination

Many faculty members are products of an “academic subculture” and continue to inhabit and perpetuate this subculture through research, teaching, and graduate mentoring activities.⁴ In this last area, notions of loyalty to the academic discipline rather than the institution are prioritized and the importance of research is inculcated as professors train the “next generation.” And what are graduate students learning? Among other things they are learning to distance themselves from the undergraduate affairs, from institutional demands, and ultimately from athletics engagement.

Feature #3 – Tenure

Tenure and its relation to faculty governance may be at odds with the very “public purpose” and “public accountability” of universities and colleges; faculty have an autonomy that may skew decision-making in the direction of personal interests rather than those that involve the public good. Moreover, this conflict of the personal versus the public is self-imposed. The heightened personal and professional importance of research in the tenure-track job has inclined many to lessen their roles in all faculty governance areas. One faculty member describes it like this: Further, the emphasis on research as a main demand for all full-time

⁴ Sperber (2000) has an excellent discussion of these subcultures; see especially pages 3-11.

faculty – overtaking all service activities – forced us into a separation of service elements from faculty work and an outsourcing of them to a growing middle management sector in the university. Thus faculty administrative jobs – like advising, teaching freshmen, running the elementary or basic skills programs, attending to pedagogy – have become the province of non-faculty, and faculty (growing a little lazy as well as over specialized?) have been willing to acquiesce in such outsourcing (Burgan, 1998, p. 20).

Another faculty member notes:

Faculty themselves have played a role in developing a reward system in a narrowly defined discipline but not loyalty and commitment to the institution and to higher education in general. . . . shared governance cannot succeed if faculty are not willing to be actively involved in efforts to identify and advance the best interests of the entire institution, and not just their own discipline (Gerber, 1997, p. 16).

This last observation – that of faculty interested only in personal advancement and matters of academic discipline – may well be the starting point for a disengaged faculty. The allegiance from the beginning of an academic career is to self-preservation and to scholarly passions. Why would faculty – rather,

why should faculty? – care to partake in the governance of something as frivolous as ballgames on a field?

Feature #4 – “Instructors” Without a Home

The growing ranks of part-time and adjunct faculty members certainly pose a threat to the efficacy of faculty governance in general and the willing engagement of faculty in curricular and institutional affairs. In regards to engagement with athletics, part-time and adjunct instructors may see student-athletes in the classroom, but would have little interest in connecting their extracurricular activities to a greater institutional good. Moreover, having an interest in the governance of athletics suggests a connection to the institution beyond the meager adjunct paycheck. Simply put, as the number of itinerant instructors grows – and I would suggest that it is likely to do so given the current economic state of higher education – so grows the deepening disconnect between instructor and the “community” of an institution.

Feature #5 – The Marketing of Higher Education

Higher education once proclaimed a proud purpose to create great citizens that would contribute to the public good. Though the proclamation is sometimes heard today, many would argue that for a variety of reasons the public benefit has shifted to the private and the personal. Higher education is now narrowly

directed at the individual not as some civic-minded training exercise, but as a means to a better job and a way to service personal desires. To its external clients, higher education is now “sold” to the highest bidder in some marketed and packaged form.⁵ The result is a bureaucratic and unwieldy institution whose governance tends towards a more corporate and hierarchical model that excludes the faculty voice. Intercollegiate athletics serves as one of many marketing strategies for the institution; moreover, athletics has served this purpose for some time. Yet such a lucrative marketing tactic with literally millions of dollars at stake seems to demand the attention of a CFO rather than a Dean or Provost or lowly faculty member.

Additionally, I would argue that some schools – primarily smaller and private schools outside of the NCAA Division I ranks – finance themselves through enrollments rather than endowments and thus utilize athletics as a primary institutional funding strategy. In this, baseball teams exceed seventy players while football teams can reach above one hundred or more. When budgets and institutional health are tantamount, clearly athletics needs may trump faculty governance.

The Contemporary Reaction: Who Are We?

⁵ See especially Derek Bok’s (2003) work in this area among many.

How shall faculty overcome these features, this history, and this culture? Are faculty really willing and able to engage with athletics? Are faculty members actually interested in pursuing a more powerful voice in the governance of athletics? Certainly there are visible groups of faculty, notably the Drake Group and the Coalition On Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), working at the governance of intercollegiate athletics. I might argue that COIA as a coalition of university faculty senates from around the country may indeed have impact upon the current state of things. In both mindful and strategic ways, COIA has chosen to work with the NCAA on a variety of issues hoping to have some influence on the macro-picture of rules and policies that would affect individual universities.

Yet I am concerned that in the end COIA and other similar groups now and in the future may be ineffective, not because of a commendable *raison d’être* and members’ valiant efforts, but instead because of the nature of NCAA governance. NCAA policy at all levels is guided by those with the most vested interest in athletics programs. While publicly the NCAA will often describe athletics governance as being engineered by institutional CEO’s, the real governance of athletics is formed and directed by athletics directors and conference commissioners. Before policy will reach the ears of any kind of

presidential oversight, it has been carefully considered and crafted by athletics personnel to most often meet the needs of athletics constituents.

I also believe that faculty are not yet equipped to engage successfully with athletics, most often because of the systemic issues mentioned previously, but also because of a general lack of foundational preparation to meaningfully do so. Even when called to act, faculty may be indoctrinated to do otherwise or in some cases paralyzed to inaction by seeming powerlessness in the face of the contemporary athletic monolith.

In the late summer of 2010 as the academic scandal surrounding ghost classes at the University of North Carolina was unfolding, John Drescher, editor of the Raleigh News and Observer, wrote an intriguing op-ed piece which suggested that faculty needed to serve as the “conscience” to a university with big-time athletics. Mr. Drescher’s comments, particularly the questions he suggested faculty ask of the university chancellor, were spot-on and delightfully comprehensive in terms of faculty getting to the heart of Division I athletics. However, I found his finger pointing to be more an exercise in scapegoating. His suggestion that faculty could and should have prevented these scandals was woefully inadequate. Indeed, perhaps he should have been asking what prevented faculty from serving in the capacity he expected of them.

Faculty, I believe, generally fall into four categories in relation to their attitudes towards athletics ... “I Don’t Care”, “I Don’t Know”, “I Don’t Know How”, and “Why Bother”. A brief description of each state follows:

"I Do Not Care": The contemporary university is indeed a "multiversity" with a great diversity of departments and aims. Many faculty frankly don't care about athletics and instead their focus is upon their research and their discipline. The sphere of engagement for most faculty only extends to the bounds of their own department. Issues of institutional import only reach them when it directly affects that sphere. Should they care about an athletics department that has broader institutional influence? Of course! Do they? Of course not. The pursuit of tenure and the general business of departmental or divisional affairs consume energy and attention. Perhaps here the notion of the institutional good must be inculcated into what is valued and what is rewarded.

"I Do Not Know": Lawrence, Ott, and Hendricks from the University of Michigan in association with the Knight Commission undertook a study of faculty in 2007 which suggested many faculty “don't know about and are disconnected from issues around college sports.” Anecdotally, I recall a specific exchange with a faculty member at a large research university in the Southeastern Conference who insisted that all Division

I athletics programs make money. I had to point him to research, which suggested that only a handful of athletics programs make money, 10-20 at most by most accounts. In this and other conversations I continue to have with faculty colleagues, I am struck by the stock (mis)understanding of contemporary college athletics that only sees various stadia full of inspired students cheering on the home team. And who can argue with that as long as it doesn't really interfere with what the faculty member is doing in her own department?

Knowledge must be the pillar of meaningful engagement with athletics and in this faculty are woefully unprepared. Of course there are faculty who study the place of sport in society and there has been a proliferation of sport-themed majors and programs in the last two decades within our colleges and universities. But the dreadful fact is that a strong majority of faculty are "educated" about college sport through a veil of ignorance. The atmosphere of ESPN-ification that envelops our understanding of college sports somehow suggests that money is just around the corner and all things good come of these college games. Scandal in college sports is really just the product of miscreants and outliers at least three standard deviations from the norm that can be fired from employment or dismissed. It's really just that simple, isn't it? For faculty to meaningfully engage they must know more. And in some

cases, they must demand access to that information.

"I Do Not Know How": Of course there are faculty "in the know" and who do care deeply about this. As mentioned previously, there are a number of faculty groups and individual scholars that address some of these issues. But in addition to the historical tradition of faculty losing oversight of student athletic endeavors, particularly as those endeavors became more about institutional identity and enhanced financial leveraging, there seem to be few legitimate avenues for faculty to pursue substantive engagement with college athletics. One recent research study (Nichols et al, 2011) examined faculty governance bodies at a variety of institutions and found them lacking. In essence, the study suggested that only a "minority" of these bodies "exercised direct oversight in important academic matters, related to student-athletes, such as admissions, scholarships, advising, and integrity of majors and courses." (p. 119). Moreover, the actions listed previously were often left to either the FAR – a single individual representing the entire will of the faculty? – or some subcommittee of the campus governance structure. And still more curious, the research indicates that this subcommittee does not always include a faculty member. On the one hand, perhaps the faculty just don't care (see above), but perhaps it is more the case that faculty

have not yet figured out an effective way to engage with athletics.

“Why Bother?”: This new category of faculty attitude has been developed only lately and it may be more useful to see it as a more nuanced version of “I don’t know how.” In this, faculty are indeed acutely aware of the problems and issues surrounding athletics. In fact, these faculty may continually rail against the problems and author white papers and call attention to the many issues that arise. Clearly they educate colleagues on the problems. But in the end, there is little substantive change they engender. Perhaps it is because – as the Knight Commission Report suggested in 2007 – presidents and chancellors feel unable to affect athletics. Perhaps it is a product of seeing powerful politicians and deep-pocketed alumni rule the roost of athletics at the expense of other parts of the institution. Perhaps it is seeing ineffective governance structures fail in the face of enormous institutional and cultural pressures that favor games on the field instead of rigor in the classroom. Whatever the cause, these faculty see the entire exercise of opposition as a dilemma of opportunity cost: why bother to waste time when it gets nowhere. Time is better spent on those things where directed efforts actually count.

Where Do We Go Now? Moving Outside the System

The call by many has been for faculty to act not as individuals, but as a collective voice wholly engaged in athletics reform and athletics management. John MacAloon (1991) noted that the problem of intercollegiate athletics “. . . begins and ends with the tenured faculty. If we do not stand up and insist on this instead of shrugging our shoulders or blaming others, then it is we who are fundamentally dishonest and exploitative” (p. 236). The 2002 AAUP statement, “The Faculty Role in the Reform of Intercollegiate Athletics: Principles and Recommended Practices” lays out specifics for the governance of athletics by the faculty including oversight in the areas of admissions and financial aid, academic standards and support services, and finances. Yet its greatest strength is in its exhortation to the faculty to act with rigor and decisiveness. It proclaims that “faculty must take responsibility at their own institutions for the proper functioning of athletics programs and the appropriate treatment of college athletes as students.”

Instead, one might argue that the first step of athletics reform is not in organizing but in engaging. But as I have suggested, it is unclear at this point if faculty members are willing or *are able* because of historical events and contemporary features. Indeed, more specifically what I have suggested is an inherent systemic problem so deeply

embedded as to negate any meaningful engagement. What are we to do?

As with others, I offer two possibilities for solution. On the one hand it makes sense to move the athletics enterprise wholly away from anything remotely academic. Just as institutions sometimes provide a wide variety of services – consulting, entertainment, research – that work outside of the traditional channels of academia and in so doing provide a healthy revenue stream to the institution, so too might you finally wash away the disingenuous proclamation of amateurism in college athletics and give to it a proper name: professional and revenue-producing sport. I am not unique in this solution; clearly others have suggested the professional nature of sport and the need to disassociate big-time athletics from the academic soul of a university. Here we might see “players” and “athletes” rather than the misleading “student-athlete” moniker invented so many years ago to keep workman’s compensation issues at bay.⁶ Rather, we could perhaps enjoy the success of a university-sponsored team – one which still grants revenue and marketing opportunities to the university – without the need for academic interest or faculty engagement. Should faculty still be interested in this endeavor? Perhaps

⁶ Here one should investigate both the work of Walter Byers (1995) and Staurowsky’s and Sack’s (2005) more recent “consideration” of *student-athlete* as an appropriate moniker for participants in intercollegiate athletics.

... but only insofar as the resources required or distributed from the endeavor affect the academic program. But clearly the athletics enterprise then would fall to the management of a Chief Financial Officer or some such administrator; we could dispense with the student-development issues and focus attention on employee management and revenue production.

I would argue that we are lurching towards that very possibility in the next few decades. Conference realignment in Division I athletics seems to be leading us down a path of five or six “superconferences” that will detach themselves from NCAA regulations. That is, these new conference groupings will devise their own rules that focus upon revenue generation and may perhaps address some of the most compelling issues of inequity involving athlete compensation and market value. Let me also suggest that were this to occur, whatever institutions are left standing outside that circle revert back to days of yore and abolish athletics scholarships. The very nature of an athletic scholarship has created a situation where the student is not so much attending the university for educational purposes, but instead is engaged in some kind of indentured servitude where labor creates revenue for those in power. Instead, perhaps we can see students as engaging in pastimes – still serious pastimes no doubt as

meaningful competition should have that characteristic – integrated into the entire developmental experience of students. Without a scholarship there will not exist the symbolic yoke where athletic pursuits must be prioritized above educational aims.

Let me also suggest a second more radical solution, one that certainly could be combined with the first and applied to those schools without scholarships. Others have inclined institutions to allow students to “major” in athletics; the rationale here is that we allow students to study and major in all sorts of performative and professional tracks – art, sculpture, dance, welding, and others – and so should we also allow someone to study the performative aspect of sport, particularly through the exercise and practice of that performance. Some might suggest that we have these majors already in place with various sport management and exercise sciences programs. Yet what I am suggesting here is indeed a focus on the performance of the student. Thus one might major in “college athletics” just as one might major in dance or sculpture; certainly a student would need ancillary courses like nutrition and athletic training yet the prime aim of the major would be the creation of outstanding public performance.

Let me extend this argument – and add in the oft-quoted cliché of sport and an “educational experience in itself” – and suggest here that entire athletics

departments be subsumed under the academic umbrella. Just as there is a department of English or physics that reports to the Provost or Dean of the institution, so, too, might athletics department fall under the watch of the same academic administrator. In this we might see head coaches on the tenure track and assistant coaches as lecturers or instructors. There might still be an athletics director, but this person would act more as the chairperson of a department than the CFO of a fiefdom. Departments would be subject to the standard policies and procedures any other academic department might encounter. Moreover, the highest paid person on campus would not be the head football coach and the second highest his offensive or defensive coordinator. Instead, there might be a salary situation that has logic and sanity dictated by the marketplace of higher education, not the outlandish marketplace of college athletics salaries.

Perhaps most importantly athletics and academics would be forced to engage with one another. We might instead dream there would be no divide because the two camps because they would no longer be in systemic opposition. We do not suggest there is a divide between art and academics or physics and academics because one is in fact a part and representation of the other. Yes, each discipline has its own character and tradition, yet we accept that tradition as

part of the educational experience of students; there is certainly a “culture” of each discipline but it becomes delightfully encased in an overall academic culture of an institution.

Wishful thinking? Quite so. But the notion of historic and systemic opposition is too deeply enmeshed to provoke meaningful engagement of faculty with contemporary athletics. On the one hand we as faculty could give in and just throw it all out, giving way to the almighty dollar. On the other hand perhaps it is time to truly believe that sport has prosperous educational merit and thus should be taken under our wing. If faculty want to engage and perhaps change the obvious excess in college sports, then it is time to do so on our own turf and in our own actions as the educational heart of an institution; more directly, faculty have an obligation to do so if they are indeed the heart of an institution. Instead of ignoring or complaining, let’s open the door and truly have a conversation.

Dr. Travis Feezell currently serves as the Provost and Chief Academic Officer at the University of the Ozarks. In this position Dr. Feezell oversees all aspects of academic and student life at the college. Previously he served as an associate professor and Chair of Sport and Motorsports Management at Belmont Abbey College in Belmont, North Carolina as well as the Special Assistant to the President for Strategic Planning. In addition, he has served previously as an

athletics administrator at the Division I level and worked more recently as the athletics director at three different NCAA institutions.

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Our Boys and The Last Shot: Examples of the Power of Community Involvement in Underprivileged America

Claire C. Schaeperkoetter
University of Kansas

The central focus of this essay was to examine different socio-cultural structures that affect high school aged athletes in seemingly different impoverished areas in the United States. Specifically, narratives in the popular press books *The Last Shot* and *Our Boys* were explored in order to highlight similarities and differences between the high school athletes in these two different urban and rural environments. In all, four factors that showcase the power of community involvement in underprivileged America emerged: the values promoted by the high school coach, the socio-economic status of the community, the public education system, and the battle between the desire to escape the community and fear of the unknown. The implications of community involvement are discussed and avenues for future research are presented.

Metta World Peace of the New York Knicks, formerly and henceforth referred to as Ron Artest, and Ron Baker of the Wichita State Shockers initially seem to share little more than a passion for basketball and the same first name. Looking at the backgrounds of each of the two

illustrates many of the juxtapositions conveyed in two recently published popular press accounts about the high school sports realm: *The Last Shot* by Darcy Frey and *Our Boys* by Joe Drape. Although it initially seems that there could be little in common between a high school basketball player from the projects

of Coney Island in New York City (the scene depicted in *The Last Shot*) and a high school football player from rural western Kansas (as seen in *Our Boys*), a deeper look at the backgrounds reveals that similarities do indeed exist.

The individual stories of Ron Artest and Ron Baker parallel the two seemingly disparate worlds that are also articulated in *The Last Shot* and *Our Boys*. That is, Artest and Baker, like the two aforementioned books, demonstrate the powerful role sport can play in both rural and urban areas. The purpose of this essay is to further detail the specific roles sport play in both the lives of Ron Baker and Ron Artest and also in the lives of those involved in *The Last Shot* and *Our Boys*. An in-depth discussion of the role of the high school coach, socio-economic status and the public education system, and the battle between the desire to escape the community and the fear of the unknown illustrate the reality that sport can serve as a common language for those living in starkly different environments. Possible generalizations to other rural and urban communities are posited and directions for future research are suggested.

During his post-game interview with Doris Burke after his Lakers team won the 2010 NBA Championship, Ron Artest gleefully thanked his psychiatrist for helping him in the deciding Game 7 against the Boston Celtics (Reilly, 2010). Universally lambasted for his role in the

“Malice at the Palace” in 2004, few thought Artest’s reputation would ever recover (Weir, 2011). His charitable efforts since that infamous brawl between the Pistons and Pacers, namely his advocacy for mental health programs, led to what he would consider one of his career’s crowning achievements: winning the 2010-2011 Walter Kennedy Citizenship Award, given to the player in the NBA who “has displayed outstanding service and dedication to the community” (Weir, 2011, para. 2). A native of Queensboro, New York, Artest returned to his roots to celebrate the NBA championship he won with the skills he developed on the city courts in Queensboro (Reid, 2010). In the aftermath of the Malice at the Palace, critics blamed his upbringing in one of the roughest areas of New York for his foray into the stands at Auburn Palace: “Queensbridge life had hardened Artest. It had made him an angry, impossible-to-coach, misguided young man who, at heart, was his own toughest critic” (Conway, 2010, para. 17). Artest even witnessed a murder during a local YMCA basketball game in 1991 (Conway, 2010).

As conveyed in Darcy Frey’s book, *The Last Shot*, the allure of a college scholarship and the riches of the NBA can occupy the minds of Black youths throughout the projects of New York City (Frey, 2004). It is the stories of triumph over poverty portrayed in the likes of Ron Artest and LeBron James

that lead many media-consumers to believe the narrative that the NBA is saturated with players from the projects. However, for every Ron Artest and LeBron James, there is a Stephen Curry, Kobe Bryant, or Chris Paul - African-Americans who grew up in middle or upper class, steady households. It has been suggested that “growing up in a wealthier neighborhood is a major, positive predictor of reaching the NBA for both black and white men” (Stephens-Davidowitz, 2013, para. 4). However, the statistics do not reveal how many of those African-Americans in the projects *think* they are going to make it out of their environment. This notion of defying the odds but then not doing so leads to the heartbreaking stories of people like Russell Thomas from *The Last Shot*. Such stories illustrate what happens when they do not break the cycle of poverty, particularly when all of their hopes and dreams are based on earning that elusive Division I college scholarship that many think is an express ticket to the NBA.

Ron Baker also sought that elusive Division I scholarship, but not necessarily for the same reasons. Hailing from Scott City, Kansas, a town of about 4,000 people in the sparsely populated region that is western Kansas, Baker played basketball, football, and baseball in high school. The town is passionate enough that the Mayor named March 28, 2013 “Ron Baker Day” because the son

of Scott City was in the midst of leading the underdog Wichita State Shockers to the NCAA Final Four. Yet, the town is small enough that there wasn’t even a sports bar to celebrate the occasion (Mann, 2013). Weakly recruited out of high school, Baker took up the offer from Wichita State to come as a recruited walk-on. His parents paid Ron’s way for his first year, and he was awarded an athletic scholarship at the conclusion of his redshirt freshman season (Mann, 2013). In an interview during the NCAA Tournament with national radio host Jim Rome, Baker said, “I love those guys back home. It’s just remarkable where I came from and where I’m at right now. I wouldn’t probably be here without the friends and community I grew up in” (Mann, 2013, para. 41).

Explorations of the impact of sport in the rural and urban communities is not solely limited to the anecdotal cases of Artest and Baker or to the in-depth texts of *The Last Shot* and *Our Boys*. Other popular press articles and academic articles discuss the role of sport in rural and/or urban communities. The run of Chicago’s Little League baseball team to the 2015 Little League Championship – and the ensuing vacation of the title because of player eligibility issues – sparked a national conversation about youth sport opportunities in an urban setting (Longman, 2014). Lauren Hill, the Division III women’s basketball player who was diagnosed with a terminal form

of cancer, captured the hearts of Americans with her valiant efforts to raise money for cancer research (Feinberg, 2014). Hill played for Mount St. Joseph – a small college in Ohio – and her story initially gained support in her local community. Ensuing conversations at the national level about her efforts note the role of the community in both supporting Lauren and also in bringing national awareness to raising money for juvenile cancer research (Feinberg, 2014). Academic research has been conducted exploring the impact of youth sport participation in the urban and rural setting on issues such as self-esteem, school involvement, and substance use with African-American youth (Taylor & Turek, 2010). While these specific examples are certainly not an exhaustive account of the existence of articles on the role of sport in the rural and urban community, they do indicate that there is interest in exploring the dynamic between sport participation and the community at large.

Ron Artest's and Ron Baker's stories mimic the narratives in *The Last Shot* and *Our Boys*. In all, four basic socio-cultural structures can explain the primary similarities and differences between people like hardwood stalwart Russell Thomas from *The Last Shot* and gridiron giant Justin Nixon from *Our Boys*: (1) the values promoted by the high school coach, (2) the socio-economic status of the community, (3) the public education

system, (4) and the battle between the desire to escape the community and fear of the unknown.

These two texts were chosen specifically because of the in-depth approach the author took when gleaning information to use in the book. Both Drape and Frey spent more than a school year in the midst of the specific population they wrote about. As such, they were able to use an in-depth approach to really immerse themselves in the fabric of the specific population they were exploring. Furthermore, their rich description and powerful anecdotes add credence to the analysis they delineate throughout their individual texts. Lastly, while both of these books provide such valuable discussions about high school sport in an urban setting (*The Last Shot*) and a rural setting (*Our Boys*), their inherent difference of setting explored (urban versus rural) provides a fertile opportunity to explore the salient roles sport can play in youth and high school sport arenas no matter the physical setting. In the following pages, I detail the major themes present in each book and how, while the locations are quite different, many of the narratives are strikingly familiar.

Values Promoted By the High School Coach

In Joe Drape's narrative depicting the Redmen football team in Smith Center, Kansas, he makes it very clear that for

Coach Roger Barta, football is a vessel with which to teach lifelong messages of love and respect. Drape leads off the book by quoting Barta as saying, “None of this is really about football... What I hope we’re doing is sending kids into life who know that every day means something” (Drape, 2010, p. 1). Barta continues a similar mantra later on when he says,

Fulfilling lives come with doing these things with passion, working constantly on the details that no one but you really sees. It’s what we try to pass on to each group of guys we have, that, and the ability to live in harmony with others... Hopefully, in ten or fifteen years, when it matters, these guys will think about something they learned here and make the right decision and have a little success (Drape, 2010, p. 101).

Barta’s entire football program is founded on the notion that relationships with your peers, community, and family members are what matter most. Sure, the Kansas state high school record for consecutive victories was at the forefront of the coaches, players, and Smith Center community members, but Coach Barta believed that the wins were a byproduct of a focus on developing relationships and developing a strong work ethic. As such, team chemistry and being a role model in the community were the ultimate goals, and if and when the

victories piled up, that would just be icing on the cake.

Now, compare that with this speech from Coach Harstein, the high school coach at Lincoln High School in Coney Island New York that he gave to his players toward the end of the school year:

Now listen up. The next few months may be the most important of your life. If you have any pride, you oughtta (sic) bust your ass for the next few weeks in class. Work hard there and on your game, and you can turn a decent college into a good one, a good one into a great one. Tchaka, Russell, Correy – you should all go to Division One school. I promise you: all the hard work you do this summer will pay off. That’s what separates the guys who make it from the ones who don’t. This is not fun and games. If you just run up and down all summer in the parks, then two years from now, you’ll still be in the playground. And it doesn’t matter to me.

Honestly, I really don’t care. You won’t be the first to blow it; you won’t be the last (Frey, 2004, p. 128).

On the one hand, Coach Barta believes in the power of camaraderie and hard work and that wins and college scholarships are an added bonus. On the other hand, Coach Harstein understands the cycle of poverty and the violence and drug problems that come along with it. While it may seem that he is encouraging his players to only look out for

themselves, he is only doing what he believes is best for the future of his players. Furthermore, Coach Barta is in the fortunate situation of serving the role as coach and life mentor. While Smith Center, like Coney Island, is rife with poverty, there is a community system and fathers in most households that support the upbringing of the youth in the community. Coach Harstein has to serve the role of coach and life mentor in addition to recruiting coordinator and father figure. At Smith Center, the parents of the players had the luxury of seeking out Coach Barta for help when their kids were not behaving at home and were being disrespectful to the parents.

At the request of a parent, Coach Barta spoke to the team about the importance of loving your parents. In a lively speech in the locker room before a practice, Barta said, “You don’t want to spend time with your mommas and dads because you don’t think they’re very smart... Now I’m telling you this because I think you people need to be reminded that their moms and dads are the people who love them the most... So you guys, listen to your parents. Spend time with them. Tell them you love them (Drape, 2010, p. 89). Coaches everywhere in the projects around the country wish they could give similar speeches. The rub is that the speech and the message would not be applicable.

Players like Russell Thomas in the projects of Coney Island don’t have both

“mommas and dads” to spend time with because two-parent households are not commonplace. Thus, although it sounds like it would be a good idea in Coney Island to also promote Barta’s message of love and the importance of relationships with family and community members, it simply is not realistic to do so. The issue is not simply one of money. There is not a strong support system, academically or socially, to consistently raise kids in a manner that breaks the cycle of living in poverty in the projects. As such, promoting a culture where working your hardest on your basketball skills for the small chance to break that cycle is realistically a good culture to promote. Because, statistically speaking, the player will not make it and they will be right back where most people thought they would be: in the poverty cycle that runs rampant on Coney Island. Trying and failing is accepted because failing to escape Coney Island is the norm.

Socio-Economic Status and the Public Education System

Smith Center is the definition of the “middle of nowhere,” hours away from a city that even boasts a population of more than 30,000 people (Drape, 2010). Coney Island is within the metropolitan area of the largest city in the United States, but for many of its inhabitants, it might as well be in the middle of nowhere as insinuated by Frey when he says, “The streets offer none of the

bustling commerce and pedestrian life that are great compensations for city living... Despite the concentration of tenants in each building, the project courtyards and walkways often look emptied-out, as if all but the drug dealers have been put under curfew or quarantine” (Frey, 2004, p. 104). It is a community that might as well be in the isolated lands of western Kansas. No one comes and no one goes. College coaches used to come, until it became so dangerous to attend games where riots are commonplace or to do in-home visits with prospects in the tenant buildings that coaches instead choose to focus more of their New York City recruiting in the safer parochial high schools (Frey, 2004).

In Coney Island, the high schools do not provide an oasis from the violence that runs rampant on the streets. Lockers provide hiding places for handguns, security guards and police officers man the entrances and exits to the buildings, and scholastic learning runs a distant second to staying safe while in the building of Lincoln High School (Frey, 2004). Russell Thomas, one of the main characters in the narrative, struggles throughout the timeframe of the book to achieve the minimum SAT score of 700 to qualify academically to play at a Division I NCAA institution. As dedicated as he is with carrying around SAT vocabulary notecards and working on his reading comprehension, a school

system in which he never really learned basic math or finished a book made it most improbable that Russell or any other student at Lincoln High would achieve a SAT score that would impress institutions of higher education.

In Smith Center, like in Coney Island, poverty is the norm and not the exception. With an annual per capital income of \$14,983, Smith Center is in Kansas’ fifth poorest county (Drape, 2010). At the same time, however, the community continues to support its public education system and the salary structure in place for teachers makes it so quality educators are committed to stay in Smith Center. Teachers earn an average salary of \$40,000 and they are regarded within the community as noble leaders for the youth in the area (Drape, 2010). The high school principal has not found any drugs on the premises in his four years at the school. Additionally, the high school is arguably the community’s greatest sense of pride. The football team is the pride and joy of Smith Center. Morse Boucher, a Smith Center resident for decades, conveys his loyalties during an interview when he said, “It’s more than just winning; they come out of here with a work ethic and sense of caring for each other. I know that’s what I’m proudest of. They are the town’s ambassadors” (Drape, 58).

The Battle Between the Desire to Escape the Community and Fear of the Unknown

Although I have certainly painted the portrait of each of these communities as being places that one would like to leave, both Coney Island and Smith Center do provide the one thing many 18 year-olds are terrified of leaving – familiarity. Coney Island is extremely poor. Smith Center is extremely poor. One has a community proud of raising its kids together and knowing they are loved. The other has one of the most concentrated living areas in the country, but neighbors interact with violence and via drug deals. Both communities have been that way for decades and the continuity and familiarity can provide solace for its members. There are particular athletes in both *Our Boys* and *The Last Shot* that exemplify this very notion that familiarity can be tempting even if there are opportunities to escape the isolation of the community and to move on to bigger and better things.

In Smith Center, Justin Nixon was known as a beast of a lineman. A sculpted 350 pounds, his size and strength were appealing to college football coaches. His family had lived and farmed in the area for generations. None had received any education beyond high school and it was unknown whether any had ventured more than thirty miles away from Smith Center ever. About Nixon, Coach Barta said, “I think he’s got a

whole lot on him, and a whole lot he doesn’t understand. He doesn’t have any aspirations, and that is not his fault. Right now, I think he is afraid of succeeding” (Drape, 2010, p. 41).

Halfway across the country, native Coney Islander Russell Thomas similarly struggled with the idea of leaving home even though he hated nearly everything about Coney Island. His home life was in shambles, brought on by the fact that his father had been absent since he was an infant (Frey, 2004). Taylor had dreams; big ones, but practical ones. He knew the millionaire riches of the NBA were a bit of a long shot. He wanted that college education. Taylor said, “What I really want is to graduate from college, start me a nice little family, and get me a nice little job as a registered nurse” (Frey, 2004, p. 68).

Taylor’s dreams seemed practical, but even an impeccable work ethic could not make up for the cards that were stacked up against him. He had never lived anywhere other than Coney Island. And he could not overcome his poor standardized test scores that were a result of years of a failed public education system on Coney Island. The pressure he put on himself and the pressure put on by his family and later his wife ultimately led to the trouble that author Darcy Frey predicted when initially penning the book. Writing the book in the early 1990s and later providing an update ten years later, Frey wrote about Taylor in the ‘90s

that, “As much as he hates Coney Island, Russell has never lived anywhere else, and I know that he fears his dark complexion will get him into trouble outside his home turf” (Frey, 2004, p. 199). Russell died in an apparent suicide in 1999 (Frey, 2004).

Concluding Remarks and Continuing Research

The stories depicted in *Our Boys* and *The Last Shot* provide salient examples of the contrast that can exist when looking at athletes from different realms of our country. At the same time, there is a magical thread that weaves through all athletes in our country – a desire to belong. For differing reasons, the community involvement, the economy, the levels of violence in the area, and the public education system contributed to the ceiling of Ron Artest and Ron Baker and create the narrative for basketball players in Coney Island and football players in Smith Center. Poverty does not have to be the overarching contributing factor to a continual cycle of poverty for youths raised in the poorest parts of our country. Smith Center models a system in which community support and a sound public schooling system give kids every opportunity to move on to bigger and better things. And in the case of many of the older generations in Smith Center, happiness is possible even when money is not abundant. However, happiness is more likely when the community is unified. In poverty-stricken areas like

Coney Island, New York, it appears there is less of an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty because of the social and educational infrastructure in place. As such, many kids look to basketball as their only lifeline to a happier life. The odds are strongly stacked against them, and when they do not have the work ethic or the natural abilities to succeed on the court and qualify academically, there is no community support to fall back on.

Although the stories of Artest and Baker and those in Smith Center and Coney Island are particularly salient because of the rich anecdotal evidence they provide, their stories should not be solely confined to their specific setting. Smith Center could arguably be considered to be representative of “Small Town America”. Coney Island is not the only impoverished urban area in the United States. The discussions about the intersection of race, social class, and sport that take place *Our Boys* and *The Last Shot* represent case study examples of what arguably exists in more generalized settings across the United States. National media coverage about the Chicago Little League baseball team and Lauren Hill at Mount St. Joseph University demonstrate the intersection of race, social class, and community with sport. Such examples in the popular press harken back to the generalizability of the issues conveyed in *Our Boys* and *The Last Shot*.

The Last Shot and *Our Boys* were chosen for the aforementioned reasons, yet other popular texts and documentary movies exist should the reader have interest in looking at other examples of a text involving a long-term, in-depth immersion of an author into a sport specific setting. *Season on the Brink* by John Feinstein explores the unique coaching style of Bobby Knight. Feinstein spent the 1985-1986 basketball team immersed in the life and culture of Bobby Knight's Indiana University basketball team (Feinstein, 2012). By having such unique access to one of the most storied programs in the country with one of the most bombastic coaches of his era, Feinstein is able to truly give an expert, insider perspective on the coaching style of Bobby Knight (Feinstein, 2012). Similarly, *Hoop Dreams*, an acclaimed 1994 documentary that details the high school athletic trajectory of two inner-city Chicago kids, juxtaposes the role of athletic talent and socioeconomic status with the academic and athletic opportunities of the two high school basketball players from Chicago (James & Marx, 1994).

Future research could help address some of the connections between basketball success at the high school level and issues later in life if a college scholarship is never attained. Looking at the numbers of players that play in showcase summer basketball tournaments meshed with the race, zip

code, socio-economic status, and quality of education could be insightful. Essentially, both Frey and Drape provided a interesting set of case studies, but some further academic research could further validate or refute the claims and possibly provide further impetus for looking at ways to enhance the public educational systems in even the most poverty-stricken areas.

Claire C. Schaeperkoetter, M.S.E. is a doctoral research fellow at the University of Kansas. She is currently researching organizational structures and socio-cultural dynamics of amateur sport. A former Division III student-athlete and National Champion at Washington University in St. Louis, Claire has been both a Division III athlete and also an employee in a major NCAA Division I athletic department. Claire was also the recipient of the 2015 Dr. Robert E. Frederick Scholarship at the University of Kansas.

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