A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A
QUALITY INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION EXPERIENCE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate

School of The Ohio State University

By

Karla C. Hairston-Pinson, B.S., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

2007

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor Janet Fink, Adviser
Professor Donna Pastore
Professor Brian Turner

Approved by

________________________________________

Advisor
College of Education and Human Ecology
Interscholastic athletics has an illustrious history in American society and is an integral part of American schools. The most recent results of the National Federation of State High School Association’s (NFHS) athletic participation survey revealed that over 7 million students participated in high school athletics during the 2005-2006 school year (NFHS, 2006). The purpose of this study was to examine the interscholastic athletic participation experience and identify factors of the experience that contribute to a quality experience.

A qualitative research design utilizing individual interviews and a demographic background questionnaire was employed to garner directly from the experiences of high school student athletes an understanding of the salient factors that contribute to a quality experience. An additional aim within the study was to examine whether quality perceptions varied depending on the type of school athletes attended, urban or suburban, and how athletes were socialized into sport. Therefore, high school athletes, specifically twelve, comprised the participants of the study. Six urban and six suburban athletes across a variety of sports with an equal representation of males and females served as the research participants of this study.
Quality, for the purposes of this study, was defined using Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry’s (1988) definition of service quality which is interpreted as a comparison of a customer’s desired and perceived services. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry’s definition in conjunction with Chelladurai’s (1987) contention that athletes be considered as prime beneficiaries of athletic programs, grounded the premise of this study. Many studies existed in the literature that focused on service quality, socialization, interscholastic athletics, and school type, individually, but none were discovered that focused on the intersection of all areas. This study was intended to fill such a void. Drawing from the theoretical bases of functionalism, socialization, motivation, and service quality, this dissertation aimed to broaden the depths of the literature base concerning interscholastic athletics.

Data analysis indicated that study participants’ quality perceptions did not vary across school type or socialization patterns resulting in participants’ quality perceptions situating around more similar than dissimilar themes. Five factors of the interscholastic experience were discovered as being most contributory to a quality participation experience and include, (1) cohesion, (2) two preferred coaching qualities -- competence/knowledgeable and being personable, (3) being recognized, (4) opportunities for the development of social connections, and (5) a time beneficial experience. Therefore, it was concluded that taken together the five findings break down into both intangible and tangible facets of the participation experience and culminate together to constitute the compelling components of a stimulating participation environment. Thus, a stimulating environment in turn was discovered to be a requisite element for a quality experience to prevail.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Russell and Macie Hairston, and my daughter Kaylee. Mom and Dad without your guidance, love, and support none of my life accomplishments thus far could be realized. You have been exemplary parents and role models and the greatest goal I could ever hope to accomplish is to be as great of parents as you both have been. Thanks and I love you both dearly.

To Kaylee, I know at six years old you may not comprehend the concept of a dissertation or Ph.D. but one day you will, and my only hope is that you discover your passion in life and always strive to reach for your goals. I hope you, like me, will develop a lifelong passion and belief in education and continually strive to stay informed. I am proud and honored to be called your mom. Now you can have the computer all to yourself and no more having to walk long distances with mommy on The Ohio State University’s campus. I love you.

I also want to dedicate this dissertation to the memories of special loved ones from my family who are no longer here in the flesh to witness this milestone but who I know in spirit are smiling down on me and are relishing in my accomplishment. Each of you has an internal special place in my heart. I love you, paternal grandparents, Thomas and Thelma Hairston, maternal grandparents, William and Lucinda Moore, and Aunts, Lovella Nolen and Shirley Martin.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I want to acknowledge my gratefulness to Jesus Christ for his covering and presence in my life. Maneuvering through this journey of obtaining a doctorate degree has strengthened my relationship with my Lord and savior and has broadened my understanding of His teachings, presence, power, and glory. I can truly witness, that with God All Things are possible. To my pastor and spiritual leader, Dr. C. Dexter Wise III, I acknowledge you for being my spiritual teacher and advisor and for being a catalyst of God’s teachings and a disseminator of His principles. As a young child, when you came into my life, I have always admired and respected you as a person, and my pastor. I am forever enamored with your style, intelligence, and impeccable ability to motivate and reach people. Being one of the first “Dr.’s” I’ve ever personally known you laid a strong foundation and example of being an advocate for education, Thanks.

I definitely must acknowledge my dissertation committee. First, to Dr. Janet Fink, my advisor, thanks for always being such an amenable and supportive advisor. You always made me feel valued and a priority in the midst of all your other duties. I thank you for your genuineness, openness, and support. I only hope to aspire to be as competent and well respected of a scholar as you are. I wish you continued luck and well wishes
with your future endeavors. Second, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Donna Pastore, originally my “co-advisor” but due to the calls of administration, just my committee member. No matter the official capacity you serve for me, I became impressed with you since the days of my master’s work. Your confidence and passion for scholarly work and the development of others has always impressed me. For me, it was important to have a positive female role model in the academic world of sport and right from the beginning you served in that capacity. You have and always will be a strong example of a well rounded, intelligent, and successful person. Thanks for the life lasting teachings and good luck in administration. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my third committee member, Dr. Brian Turner. Your positive attitude, work ethic, and passion for your job (especially for The Ohio State University) are inspiring and admirable. Continue to exude your positive energy and aura, its encouraging and motivating, especially to your students.

I acknowledge my plethora of family members and friends, past and present. There is no way a person can accomplish anything or succeed in reaching their goals alone. Therefore, I give thanks to my supporting cast of loving family members and friends. Throughout this entire process I have reaped the benefits of many people’s prayers and words of encouragement. I am cognizant of the power of prayer and I know without a doubt I am the beneficiary of many people’s prayers. Thanks.

There are a few specific family members and friends that I wish to acknowledge for being so special during this time in my life. Thanks to “the girls” from the girlfriend group, my seven sisters, Terri, Wanda, Patricia, Tammy, Sherrretta, Yvette, and Claudine, my one brother, Russell, Jr., special friends, Kanita, Shell, Darla, and Sandra (Yellie), and my 28 nieces and nephews, 17 great nieces and nephews, many cousins,
extended family members, neighbors, co-workers, past and present, and fellow graduate colleagues. To my special graduate colleagues, Danny, Heidi, Keith, and Megan, I will miss you and enjoyed experiencing this journey with you all. Lastly, I would like to say to Rob, thanks for coming into my life and I look forward to many years of your presence with me.

Finally, my acknowledgments could not be complete without expressing my deepest gratitude to twelve outstanding high school student athletes. I know each of you is destined for success. Each of you left an impression on me that will last a lifetime. I admire you for your forethought, courage, and genuineness. With youth like you being the leaders of the future I know we will be in good hands. Thanks for your participation and willingness to impart your expertise and insight on me. I am definitely a more informed and wiser person thanks to your enlightenment.
VITA

January 7, 1974................................. Born – Columbus, Ohio

1996............................................. B.S. Business Administration
West Virginia University

1997............................................. M.A. College Student Personnel
Ball State University

1998............................................. M.A. Sport Management
The Ohio State University

1997-1998................................. Graduate Teaching Associate,
The Ohio State University

1998-1999................................. Championships & Compliance
Intern Conference USA

1999............................................. Compliance Assistant
Northwestern University

1999-2004................................ Athletic Director
Columbus Public Schools

2004 – present............................ Graduate Teaching Associate,
The Ohio State University

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Education
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics’ Existence in American Secondary Schools</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Perspective of Athletics Role in Society</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Interscholastic Athletics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Philosophy of Interscholastic Athletics in Schools</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paradigm</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Lens to Assess “Quality” Experience</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of Service Quality for Evaluating Athletic Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization Theory</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorization of Schools: The Meaning of “Suburban” versus “Urban”</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Examine Suburban, Urban and Socialization within the Focus of Study</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship of Socialization, Motivation, and Quality</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Study</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Chapters</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gaining Access ................................................................................................. 53
Data Collection Procedures ........................................................................... 54
Demographic Background Questionnaire ..................................................... 55
Interviewing .................................................................................................... 55
Field Notes .................................................................................................... 56
Development of the Instrument ...................................................................... 57
Development of Interview Questions .............................................................. 57
Interview Questions ....................................................................................... 58
Panel of Experts ............................................................................................. 59
Data Management .......................................................................................... 59
Data Analysis ................................................................................................. 59
Establishing Trustworthiness of Data .............................................................. 62
Triangulation ................................................................................................. 63
Reflexive Journal ............................................................................................ 63
Member Checks ............................................................................................. 64
Peer Debriefing .............................................................................................. 65
Negative Case Analysis .................................................................................. 66
Transferability ............................................................................................... 66
Ethics ............................................................................................................. 67
Personal Statement ........................................................................................ 68

4. Findings ........................................................................................................ 71
Overview of the Research Process .................................................................. 72
Demographic Background Information of the Participants ......................... 73
Socialization Findings ..................................................................................... 75
Parental Influence .......................................................................................... 76
Media Influence ............................................................................................. 76
College Plans .................................................................................................. 76
Motives for Participation in High School Sports .......................................... 77
Longevity ........................................................................................................ 78
Affinity for Fun ............................................................................................... 79
Admiration for Sport ....................................................................................... 79
Desired Aspects of the Interscholastic Athletic Participation Experience ....... 80
Theme 1: Cohesion ......................................................................................... 80
Social Cohesion ............................................................................................. 81
Task Cohesion ............................................................................................... 82
Theme 2: Desired Coach Qualities ................................................................. 83
A Competent/Knowledgeable Coach ............................................................. 84
A Personable coach ....................................................................................... 84
Theme 3: Being Recognized .......................................................................... 86
Theme 4: Opportunities for the Development of Social Connections .......... 88
Theme 5: Time Beneficial Experience Theme 5: Time Beneficial Experience .. 89
Conclusion ..................................................................................................... 91
5. Discussion, Theoretical Implications and Recommendations ............................................ 92
   Interpretation of Findings .................................................................................................. 94
   Research Questions ........................................................................................................... 94
   Lack of Variance of Study Participants ............................................................................ 94
   Underlying Relationship of Studying Findings ............................................................... 96
   Conceptualization of the Interscholastic Athletic Experience, “A Stimulating Environment” .......................................................................................................................... 97
   Salient Intangible Facets of the Interscholastic Participation Environment
   Confirmed in the Literature: Fun Motive, Admiration of Sport Motive
   Development of Friendships, Social Connections with Other, and
   Cohesion .................................................................................................................................. 98
   Fun Motive .......................................................................................................................... 100
   Admiration of Sport Motive .............................................................................................. 102
   Salient Intangible Facets of the Interscholastic Participation Experience
   Emergent in this Study -- Being Recognized and A Time Beneficial
   Experience ........................................................................................................................... 103
   Being Recognized ................................................................................................................ 104
   A Time Beneficial Experience ........................................................................................... 104
   Salient Tangible Facet of the Interscholastic Environment: The Coach ......................... 105
   Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 108
   Implications ......................................................................................................................... 108
   Recommendations for Future Research ............................................................................. 113

Appendices
   A. Permission to Solicit Study Participants ................................................................. 115
   B. Parental Consent ........................................................................................................... 117
   C. Participant Assent ........................................................................................................ 122
   D. Informed Consent .......................................................................................................... 125
   E. Demographic Background Questionnaire ................................................................. 130
   F. Interview Guide .............................................................................................................. 134

List of References ................................................................................................................. 137
# LIST OF TABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Summary of Demographical Background Information</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Athletics’ Existence in American Secondary Schools

Jacobs and Chase (1989) purport that high school activities programs have been an integral part of American secondary education since the early 1900’s. Athletics, in particular according to Jable (1986), “has become the most prominent activity at most high schools” (p. 61). Such prominence is substantiated by the recent results of the 2005-2006 National Federation of State High School Association’s (NFHS) Athletics Participation Survey. The annual survey revealed that 7,159,904 students for the 2005-2006 school year participated in high school athletics in the United States (NFHS, 2006). Figures for the survey results were compiled from data collected by the fifty NFHS state high school athletic association members, plus the District of Columbia. It was determined from the 2005-2006 participation figure that 53.4 percent of students enrolled in high schools participate in athletics.
Theoretical Perspective of Athletics Role in Society

Functionalism is a sociological framework many researchers use to guide their analysis of sport in society (Coakley, 1998). According to Coakley (1998), the functionalist school of thought is based on the assumption that society is an organized system of interrelated parts held together by shared values and processes that create consensus among people. In the study of sport, functionalist theory is use to promote the idea that sports contribute to personal growth and development and the preservation of the social order at all levels of social organizations (Coakley, 1998).

This study was conceived utilizing a functionalist perspective of sport. It is the researcher’s contention that interscholastic athletics serves as a viable medium to contribute to the developmental growth of high school students.

History of Interscholastic Athletics

High school sports existence in American schools has an illustrious history even though the major works on the emergence of modern American schools tend to bypass high school developments in favor of college and professional athletics (Mirel, 1982). The roots of interscholastic athletics can be traced back to the nineteenth century where schools in Rhode Island and Michigan are recorded as fielding the first athletic teams during the 1870s and 1880s respectively (Jable, 1986). Initially, high school teams were traditionally run and maintained by students, however roughly between 1885 and 1905 high school sports became institutionalized and were placed under the direct control and supervision of faculty (Mirel, 1982). The first state high school athletic association to govern athletic competition and student eligibility was the Michigan High School Athletic Association formed in 1895 by Michigan school administrators.
Much of the growth of athletics in American schools occurred during the turn of the century, when unprecedented attendance in high schools occurred along with a need to find a solution to combat escalating societal ills and disorder, such as youth gangs and crime (Mirel, 1982). Much of the ills and disorder resulted as a by-product of integrating millions of immigrants and migrants from abroad and rurally to the urban landscapes of American cities. Many civic leaders, social workers, and educators felt that a solution laid in the philosophy that crime could be prevented or reduced, if adolescents’ lives were more structured and orderly (Jable, 1986). One method of implementing such structure and order was to organize the spare time of youth more intently. Consequently, school related extracurricular programs such as athletics served as the medium to organize youths’ spare time (Jable, 1986).

As a result of a concerted effort to organize youths’ spare time more consciously, athletic programs in high schools saw a dramatic increase, especially during the period from 1906 to 1939 (Jable, 1986). Also, due to the growth of athletics, physical education in secondary schools experienced a stimulated growth. As athletics became firmly established in schools throughout the U.S., a philosophy to justify their existence was sought by school administrators. Administrators began to hire athletic coaches as full-time physical education teachers who were qualified to coach. Therefore, with coaches serving as faculty members and sports and games being situated in the curriculum, administrators attached an educational philosophy to athletics, giving rise to the “athletics are educational” doctrine (Jable, 1986). Such a doctrine still exists today.
Educational Philosophy of Interscholastic Athletics in Schools

Concluding that interscholastic athletics (or any extracurricular activity) embody educational properties warrants a discussion of values and goals for schools. According to Holland and Andre (1987), “. . . the perspective one takes about extracurricular activities varies with the values and goals one has for schools” (p. 438). The two commonly held values for schools, contends Holland and Andre, are that schools have either an academic or developmental perspective. The academic values perspective focuses on intellectual competence and stresses that the purpose of schools is the pursuit of academic excellence and transmission of formal knowledge. From an academic values perspective, extracurricular activities provide a means of relaxation or fun, but are unequivocally unimportant to the primary purpose of schools. In contrast, the developmental values perspective stresses that school programs should provide experiences that enhance the total development of students. From this view, it is inherent that the holistic development of all individuals be considered in planning a school program. Nonacademic programs are considered as important as academic programs in facilitating the development of the individual. Clark and Astuto (1986) argued that before the 1980s societal rhetoric focused more on the developmental value perspective while since the 1980s the rhetoric has focused more on the academic value perspective.

The primary developmental task for adolescents is “self governance” (Berzonskly, 1981; Greenberger & Sorenson, 1974). Given the discussion of values above, the researcher concludes that in order for adolescents to develop into self-governing adults, schools must provide for more than the academic development of adolescents. Extracurricular activities, specifically interscholastic athletics, are viewed as one possible
medium for accomplishing the developmental goals of adolescents. The academic program of schools serves as the foundational component of the developmental tasks for students, but it should not be hailed as the sole developmental component for students. Most American secondary schools serve a diverse population of students. Therefore, they must provide a diverse offering of endeavors for their students to assist in promoting students’ holistic development.

Research Paradigm

The idea of qualitative research is grounded in the German idealist school of thought and grew out of concerns over the use of quantitative methods in social science research (James-Brown, 1995). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003) “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 5). In attempting to seek meaning, qualitative researchers employ a wide range of interpretive practices, always hoping to gain a more refined understanding of their subject matter at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Gaining a better understanding of the factors that contribute to a quality interscholastic athletic participation experience, from the student athlete’s perspective, is the goal of the study. To best meet this goal, qualitative research methods will be employed. It is believed that qualitative methods will allow for the reality of student athletes’ participation experiences to become more evident.

Specifically, data will be analyzed from an interpretive qualitative paradigmatic approach. Interpretive researchers are interested in understanding the social behaviors and nuances of individuals based on the contextual surroundings which individuals operate. Context is of extreme importance to interpretive researchers. According to
Bernstein (1976) and Carr and Kemmis (1986) to understand an expression, one must understand the context. Reality to the interpretive researcher is relative and society is only defined as real and objective insofar as how its members define it (Bernstein, 1976; Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Therefore, theory in interpretive research arises from the study of patterns of meaning and action of group members. Ultimately the researcher is intent on entering the world of the researched motivated by a genuine desire to understand and interpret the social constructions of the day to day realities and experiences of the group members within the researched group.

Statement of the Problem

Scholars maintain that students who participate in high school sports obtain a myriad of positive benefits. Studies have found that participation in high school athletics have a positive effect on the following: education, occupational status attainment, and economic earnings (Howell & Picou, 1983; Otto & Alwin, 1977); achievement (Broh, 2002; Eitle & Eitle, 2002); reduced risk of dropping out of school (Bell, 1967; McNeal, 1995); higher levels of educational ambition (Hartzell & Picou, 1979; Wells & Picou, 1980); development of a competitive attitude and value system (Hartzell & Picou, 1979); lower risk scores, and fewer mental and physical health issues (Steiner, McQuivey, Pavelski, Pitts, & Kraemer, 2000); an increase in pro-social behaviors (Melnick, Sabo, & Vanfossen, 1992; Segrave & Hastad, 1982; Shield, 1995,) decrease of violent occurrences in schools (Langbein & Bess, 2002); and lastly, an increased development of social ties with other students, parents, and school (Broh, 2002). Broh (2002) also
discovered that students who participated in interscholastic athletics versus non-
interscholastic athletic participants were more well-rounded students who were more
focused academically, graduated at higher rates, and had more defined future educational
and career goals.

Jacobs and Chase’s (1989) study about the impact of school activities netted a
profile of activities-oriented students. Students who participated in four or more activities
were considered higher achievers in school, with significantly higher grade-point
averages and class ranks. These students also were rated as having high educational
aspirations as they enrolled in college preparatory curriculums and had plans to pursue
college. Although Jacobs and Chase’s sole investigation was not about sports
participation, participating in athletics was entwined in the myriad of school activities
that the researchers examined that elicited positive results.

While the positive benefits of sports participation has been documented, the
studies’ major criticisms should be noted. Primarily the criticisms center around
methodological design issues employed in many of the studies. The studies have been
criticized as being limited by the following: (a) analyzing data based on small-scale
samples of convenience which poses threats to generalizability, (b) the use of cross-
sectional data, and (c) the inability to account for the selection-in process (students who
choose to participate in school-sponsored activities) (Coakley, 2004) characteristic of
many extracurricular activities such as athletics making it difficult to determine whether
the favorable outcomes of athletics participation are a consequence of participation or if
participation disproportionately draws capable youth (Broh, 2002; Eitle & Eitle, 2002;
poignantly the major issue concerning sports participation studies by acknowledging that while it has been determined that sport participation provides positive experiences, “research has not told us what it is about sport participation that causes these positive experiences (p. 485).

Longitudinal study designs are suggested as the optimal research designs to use in sport participation studies compared to that of cross-sectional designs (Broh, 2002; Coakley, 2004). Longitudinal studies are thought to provide a better case for trying to establish causal order relationship of athletics and its effects. While some of the longitudinal studies have netted disparate results, it does not occur as frequently as in cross-sectional studies (Broh, 2002).

In the end, despite the criticism surrounding some of the athletic participation studies, substantial quantities of research exist that supports sports’ value and positive effects on the lives of young people. Therefore, on the whole, it can still be concluded that athletics does elicit positive benefits, especially when examining athletics from a functionalist viewpoint.

Consequently, because athletics contributes to the developmental needs and growth of adolescents, a need exists to better understand the salient factors that contribute to high quality athletic experiences. Efforts to identify such features in the literature have been limited. Thus, this study seeks to broaden such efforts.

Purpose of the Study

The overarching purpose of this study is to identify the factors that contribute to a quality interscholastic athletic participation experience. It is the researcher’s intent to elicit the voices of high school student athletes and the opinions they represent. A related
The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast perceived quality factors across suburban and urban school district lines, as well as socialization lines. The study seeks to authenticate the similarities and differences of the perceptions student athletes have who have been socialized into sport differently and who are parts of school cultures that are often thought to be categorically different.

Theoretical Lens to Assess “Quality” Experience

According to Devlin, Gwynne, and Ennew (2002) it is generally recognized, although not universally accepted, that customer expectations have an important impact upon the assessment of service quality. Service quality has been described by Olshavsky (1985) as an attitude, related but not equivalent to customer satisfaction, which results from a comparison of expectations with performance. However, the meaning and/or definition of expectations have been conceived differently in customer satisfaction versus service quality literature. Understanding such difference is important in discerning the specifics of service quality.

In the customer satisfaction literature, expectations have been conceptualized as belief probabilities of what the consequences of an event will be (Devlin, Gwynne, & Ennew, 2002). While in the service quality literature, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) defined expectations in terms of what customers feel they should be offered. The “will” and “should” used to distinguish between customer satisfaction and service quality expectations, respectively, are also commonly referred to in the literature as “predicted” and “desired” beliefs as well as “would” and “should” beliefs, respectively. Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1993) suggest that the assessment of customer satisfaction are
the result of the comparison between predicted and perceived service, while service quality assessments are derived from the comparison of desired and perceived service.

*Application of Service Quality for Evaluating Athletic Participation Experience*

Chelladurai (1987) asserted that athletes be considered primary beneficiaries of athletic programs. A prime beneficiary according to Chelladurai (2001) is a group for whose benefit the organization exists. Therefore, according to Chelladurai (2001), the effective athletic organization is one that is meeting the needs of its athletes, the prime beneficiary. Utilizing the rationale of athletes as prime beneficiaries, it is conceivable to suggest that athletes be perceived as customers and/or consumers of athletic programs and as such receive a service; a service that situates them as consumers of the athletic participation experience. To this end, understanding how they evaluate the quality of their athletic participation “service” is aligned appropriately with the stated purpose of this study. Consequently, it is suggested that a service quality view be used as an appropriate means to assess the quality of the athletic participation experience that an interscholastic athlete endures.

In using Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry’s (1988) service quality definition of expectations, gaining an understanding of how athletes evaluate the quality of their athletic experience lies in what the athlete feels he or she should be offered as a consequence of their participation on an interscholastic team. More specifically, utilizing a service quality perspective, if an athlete feels that his/her desires for athletic participation are met, he/she has obtained a quality service. Thus, the service quality viewpoint becomes a helpful lens to examine the quality of an athlete’s participation experience. The core evaluation factor can be attached to what he or she desires to gain
from his/her experience. Thus, this makes the quality of an athlete’s experience personal and relative to what he or she is looking to gain from their experience. Therefore, how one athlete may evaluate the quality of his or her experience may differ from his or her teammate’s experience because the two may be seeking to gain different desired experiences from their participation. Certainly, socialization and motivation may play pivotal roles in the development of these expectations.

Socialization Theory

One of the most applicable theoretical bases which helps provide a comprehensive back drop of understanding to how someone is introduced and exposed to sports is the theory of socialization. Socialization theory is a common theory used to examine the influencers of sport participation. The theory is considered to be a valuable tool in understanding how sport and physical activity is adopted, maintained and discontinued (Wold & Anderssen, 1992). Wold and Anderssen (1992) discovered that in socialization theory, primary socializing agents exist which provide powerful models that can influence children and adolescents toward taking part in sports. The main socializing agents according to socialization literature are the family, peers, school, and mass media. While these agents serve as the primary socializing agents they are by no means the only agents. Socialization research has shed light on a multitude of variables that exist that have the ability to influence a student’s introduction to and ultimate decision to participate in sports. Often, these influencers cut across personal, social, and cultural lines. This study will attempt to assess how students become socialized into sport
participation and how this socialization influences expectations regarding that participation. Ultimately, depending on how an athlete is socialized into sport, it may affect his or her quality expectations.

Motivation

In addition to gaining an understanding of socialization’s impact on the perception of the athletic participation experience understanding one’s motives for participating in athletics serves to be just as meaningful in trying to understand the big picture of the quality assessment of sport participation. According to Hollembeak and Amorose (2005) understanding the motivations of athletes is important for both researchers and practitioners alike. As such, this researcher concurs with Hollembeak and Amorose and will seek to examine how student athletes’ motives for participation in interscholastic athletics play into the athletes’ quality assessment of their participation. In particular, an effort will be made to understand how intrinsic and extrinsic motives are integral in the sport participation decision process and quality assessment efforts. Deci and Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002) and Gould and Horn’s (1984) sport motive involvement model will be used in this study to contribute to the understanding of such motives.

Categorization of Schools: The Meaning of “Suburban” versus “Urban”

Schools in North America deemed suburban or urban have been commonly categorized as such based solely on geographical concerns such as the school’s proximity to a major metropolitan city (Waldron, 2005). Data from both The Ohio Department of Education (ODE, 2006) and Waldron (2005), provide examples of “suburban” and “urban’s” broader meanings which extend beyond that of geography. ODE’s
classification of school districts is called “typology of school districts”. Based on this
typology, school districts in Ohio are categorized based on an assessment of a myriad of
demographical facets that encompass more than just geographical concerns. According to
the ODE, the purpose of their typology of school districts “is to provide a rational basis
for making data-driven comparisons of groups of districts. Such groups include districts
that share certain demographic characteristics” (ODE, 2006).

The demographical characteristics ODE assesses to come up with their typology
of districts is based on, district size, poverty levels, socioeconomic status (family income,
education levels, professions), factors related to urban or rural location, minority
population, population density, and overall property wealth (ODE, 2006). Of the four
districts classified as urban/suburban, the two that are conceived polar opposites are
entitled “major urban – very high poverty” and “urban/suburban- very high median
income, very low poverty”. These two types of districts represent more of the
contemporary perspective of the meaning of suburban and urban schools. The
descriptions of the two districts are as follows:

**Major Urban – very high poverty** -This group of districts includes all of the six
largest core cities and other urban districts that encompass major cities.

Population densities are very high. The districts all have very high poverty rates
and typically have a very high percentage of minority students.

**Urban/Suburban – very high median income, very low poverty**

These districts also surround major urban centers. They are distinguished by very
high income levels and almost no poverty. A very high percentage of the adult
population has a college degree, and a similarly high percentage works in professional/administrative occupations (ODE, 2006).

In addition to ODE’s example of the contemporary understanding of the terms suburban and urban, the findings of Waldron’s (2005) study also sheds light on the terms’ depth. Waldron was inspired to conduct a qualitative study of the social construction meaning of urban and suburban schools based on her desire to expose the taken-for-granted understanding of the terms as they emerged in the mainstream media’s coverage of the Columbine High School shooting. The conclusions of Waldron’s study suggest that relations of race and social class are deeply embedded in how the media, as well as the participants in the study (students who attended suburban and urban classified schools) constructed the meaning of suburban and urban. The students discussed suburban and urban as oppositional dichotomies. Students, school officials, faculty and the mainstream media all used “urban” as code for poor and working class people of color, and “suburban” as code for white and middle class.

Why Examine Suburban, Urban and Socialization within the Focus of Study

Socialization literature teaches us that individuals are introduced and exposed to sport in a number of different ways by a myriad of influencers. These influencers are commonly referred to as socializing agents or significant others. Data concerning suburban and urban schools reveal that the traditionally held view of the terms is narrow and outdated and therefore misrepresents the deeper meaning of the terms. Suburban and urban schools are now understood to encompass a conglomeration of variables that particularly center around socioeconomic status, which contributes substantially to defining and understanding the meaning inherent in each term. Therefore, meshing
together socialization theory with the contemporary meaning of suburban and urban, an
array of factors prevalent in the athletic participation experience illuminate (e.g.,
significant others, socioeconomic considerations, etc.). These factors consequently serve
to impact the quality of participation experience a student athlete endures as well as the
expectations the student athlete anticipates. The factors also serve to situate as
characteristics ripe for comparing and contrasting experiences.

Accordingly, Coakley (2004) highlights why examining the sport participation
experience across socialization and suburban and urban lines makes sense and is
appropriate. Coakley contends that athletics cannot be understood apart from social
factors such as race and ethnicity, and social class. As these factors “have consequences
in people’s lives” (Coakley, 2004, p. 487). Race, ethnicity and social class are all
absorbed in the contemporary interpretation of what “suburban” and “urban” mean.

Relationship of Socialization, Motivation, and Quality

In seeking an understanding of factors that contribute to a quality interscholastic
athletic participation experience, the manner in which athletes have been socialized into
sport along with the motives for their participation, should be taken into consideration.
Both of these factors can play important roles in impacting what an athlete is looking to
gain out of their participation experience, thus ultimately impacting the overall quality of
the athlete’s experience.
Research Questions

The preceding literature review resulted in the following research questions. These questions served as the foundation of the study and guided the formation of the interview guide used in the study:

1. What aspects of the interscholastic athletic participation experience contribute to the student athlete’s perception of a quality participation experience?
   1a. Do these aspects vary across inner city and suburban interscholastic athletes?
   1b. Do these aspects relate to different patterns of socialization into sport participation?

Significance of Study

With over 53 percent of all high school students participating in interscholastic athletics nation-wide, interscholastic athletics is obviously pervasive within American society. Interscholastic sports’ appeal is broadly attractive and popular to a significant number of high school students. In addition to sports’ attractiveness and popularity among high school students, the favorable benefit it elicits has been documented in the literature. These benefits, in turn, can initiate a ricochet effect and therefore contribute favorably to both the overall culture and climate of schools as a whole, as well as society as a whole. With better educated, academically focused, motivated, and mentally healthy students (a few of sports’ participation documented benefits), sports’ ability to serve as a major factor in sustaining students’ interest in schools should not be taken lightly nor for granted.
Interscholastic athletics’ ability to contribute to the educational, personal, social, and emotional development of students is real; it has been documented. Therefore, in order to properly assure that student athletes’ interests and desires are met, a more conscious effort must be made to proactively create athletic experiences that are appealing and satisfying to the student athlete.

In order to create quality experiences pursuant to the satisfaction of student athletes, student athletes, themselves, must be consulted. As such, through the efforts of this study student athletes’ first-hand opinions and suggestions will be sought. It is believed that through the qualitative methods and analysis that will be utilized in this study, a wealth of rich and relevant data will be amassed that will contribute to better understanding the salient features of the athletic participation experience that are of the utmost significance in the eyes of its student athlete participants.

The results of the study could be shared with interscholastic athletic practitioners to assist them in their efforts of providing the most quality athletic experiences for their athletes. This, in turn, can contribute to retaining students through to graduation. Once an understanding can be gained of the salient factors that contribute to quality interscholastic athletic experiences, appropriate steps can be taken to proactively structure and organize athletic experiences in a manner that best positions student athletes to reap the documented benefits of sports participation.

Limitations

The limitations of this study centers around five primary areas. First, the study’s use of non-probability purposeful sampling to secure participants for the study serves as a limitation of the study as it limits the generalizability of the data. Second, the fact that all
participants in the study participated voluntarily may be seen as a limitation by some. It is possible that some opinions or perspectives of those who did not participate in the study may differ from those that did voluntarily participate. Third, the use of only one primary data collection technique, individual interviewing, may serve as a limitation of the current study. Formal ethnographic studies typically incorporate more than one method of collecting data. However, given the parameters of this study, it was not feasible to engage in other types of data collection. Fourth, some may view the pre-established rapport and trust the researcher has with some of the initial study participants as a limitation, although such rapport and trust is encouraged and welcomed in qualitative studies. Actually, in the qualitative world of research having good rapport and trust with participants is viewed as a strength and asset for researcher studies. Lastly, it was discovered subsequent to assembling the sample of study participants that a lack of variability of the study participants existed. With an inherent focus of this study being to compare and contrast the experiences of students from categorically different types of culture of schools, the participants assembled for the study aligned similarly on more demographical characteristics than dissimilar. Basically, regardless of the type of school participants attended the majority were members of the same church, athletes who had been participating in athletics since early childhood, and athletes who received a substantial amount of playing time in their chosen sports which seemed to contribute to the primary reasons of the lack of variability. Ultimately, this lack of variability of the participants in a study intent on comparing and contrasting differences may be viewed as a limitation.
Delimitations

The purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize results of studies to larger populations but rather it is to ensure that the interpretation of the results be transferable to other similar contextual cases. Therefore, the researcher did not attempt to discern what factors contribute to evaluating a quality interscholastic experience for all high school athletes, but was delimited by a specific number of high school athletes. The study was additionally delimited by the manner in which athletes were chosen to participate in the study. Convenience and snowball sampling were used to obtain participants for this study. Athletes were chosen based on accessibility and initially for the rapport established by this researcher with one of the participant’s parents.

Definition of Terms

This section contains a list of definitions of how primary terms were interpreted in this study. The definitions are provided to inform the reader as to what context the terms were used.

*Extracurricular Activities* – Extracurricular activities are activities that differ from standard courses in schools because they are optional, ungraded, and are usually conducted outside the school day in school facilities.

*Interscholastic Athletics* – Interscholastic athletic participation by definition is organized, competitive sport participation conducted at the secondary school level.

*Service Quality* - Service quality has been described by Olshavsky (1985) as an attitude, related but not equivalent to customer satisfaction, which results from a comparison of
expectations with performance. While in the service quality literature, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) defined expectations in terms of what customers feel they should be offered. Service quality assessments are derived from the comparison of desired and perceived service.

_Socialization_ – For the purposes of this study, socialization is the process of how sport is adopted, maintained and discontinued (Wold & Anderssen, 1992). “Socialization is an active process of learning and social development that occurs as people interact with each other and become acquainted with the social world in which they live, and as they form ideas about whom they are, and make decisions about their goals and behaviors. Human beings are not passive learners in the socialization process, instead they actively participate; they influence those who influence them, they make their own interpretations of what they see and hear, and they accept, revise, or reject the messages they receive about who they are, that the world is all about, and what they should do as they make their way in the world” (Coakley, 1998, p. 88). Wold and Anderssen (1992) discovered that the main socializing agents are the family, peers, school, and mass media.

_Student-Athlete_ – A student-athlete is an individual who is enrolled in a secondary high school, and participates on an athletic team sponsored by the high school they attend.

_Suburban School District_ – A school district typically located within the residential area on the outskirts of a large city or town, surrounded by major urban centers. Poverty levels range from low to above average. Generally characterized as communities with high median incomes and high percentages of college graduates and professional/administrative workforce.
Urban School District– A high population density district that encompasses small or medium sized towns and cities. Generally characterized by low median incomes and high poverty rates.

Overview of Chapters

The study of what contributes to a quality interscholastic athletic experience was composed on the following chapters:

Chapter 1 includes an introduction to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, the major research questions, limitations and delimitations, and definition of terms.

Chapter 2 provides a thorough and succinct review of the literature pertaining to functionalism, socialization into sport, motivation theory, and service quality theory.

Chapter 3 outlines an overview of the qualitative research design and methodology used for the study. The chapter outlines in detail the procedures used in the selection of participants, individual interviews, data collection, data analysis, and research issues related to triangulation, trustworthiness, and ethics.

Chapter 4 presents the results of data collection situated around the major themes and patterns that relate to the major research questions. Narratives are shared that were developed through individual interviews that share the stories of the participants.

Chapter 5 summarizes and discusses the findings of the study, the conclusions and implications of the study, implications for practitioners, and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter a review of the literature is provided that is associated with the major research question of this study. First, a review of functionalism is provided. Next, the sport socialization literature is examined. Third, a review of motivation theory and its relevance to the interscholastic athletic participation experience is provided. And lastly, a review of service quality literature along with a rationale of how it contributes to shedding light to the stated purpose of this study is provided.

Functionalism

One of the oldest theoretical traditions in sociology is functionalism. It has a long history and takes many forms. Some of the more common forms of functionalism are functional analysis, functional theory, and structural-functionalism (Loy & Booth, 2000). The functionalist paradigm once dominated general sociology. The roots of functionalism trace back to the nineteenth century and the work of Auguste Comete, the founding father of sociology. Jarvie and Maguire (1994) contend that functionalism played a key part in
the early development of the sociology of sport in North America. “There is a longstanding belief in sport sociology that functionalism was the initial, and dominant, paradigm” (Loy & Boot, 2000, p. 13-14).

According to Loy and Booth (2000) functionalism represents a holistic approach to the study of society in particular and social systems in general. From a functionalist perspective, “the key feature of society considered as a unified system is its orderliness and relative stability in the context of a changing environment” (Barnes, 1995, p. 37). Functionalism’s thought is credited with espousing the thesis that sport is a mirror of society thus positing sport as a significant institutional sphere of daily life.

The first North American textbook in sport sociology that reflected a functionalism emphasis and was entitled *Sociology of Sport* (1973) by Harry Edwards. Edwards is considered to be a direct academic descendant of the father of American functionalism, Talcott Parsons (Loy & Booth, 2000). Edward’s textbook devotes a chapter to describing the functions of sport as a social institution as well as offering a functional explanation for fan enthusiasm.

Other topics concerning sport typically covered in studies that posit a functionalist approach, are, subcultures, deviance, and sport groups. Two studies referred to often in literature as employing a functionalist perspective and credited with contributing to the functional analysis of sport in society are Stevenson and Nixon (1972) and Pooley (1976). Stevenson and Nixon’s study identified five basic functions of sport at the societal level which are: (a) socio-emotional function, (b) socialization, (c) integrative function, (d) political function, and (e) social mobility function.
Pooley’s study exemplifies one of the most in-depth functional analyses of sport as it examined structural assimilation among members of ethnic soccer clubs in Milwaukee.

While functionalist thought has been revered for contributing to understanding sport as a social institution and as a significant sphere of everyday life, it is not without its critics. Coakley (2004) sums up the primary critiques of the functionalist perspective. First, it is accused of overstating the positive effects and understating the negative effects of sport in society. Second, it assumes that the needs of all groups within a society are the same as the needs of the society as a whole. And third, it fails to recognize that sports are “social constructions” created and defined by human agents in a social system.

Socialization Theory

One of the most applicable theoretical bases in the literature which helps to provide a comprehensive backdrop of understanding why someone makes the decision to participate in sports is the sociological theory of socialization. Socialization theory is a common theory used that examines the influencers of sport participation. The theory is considered to be a valuable tool in understanding how sport and physical activity is adopted, maintained, and discontinued (Wold & Anderssen, 1992). According to Coakley and Dunning (2000) gaining an understanding of how one becomes involved in sport and the effect that sport has on them, has been an important area of research since the development of the academic field of sociology of sport.

Wold and Anderssen (1992) discovered that in socialization theory, the main socializing agents are the family, peers, school, and mass media. These agents according to Wold and Anderssen provide powerful models which can influence children and adolescents toward taking part in sports. A review of these socializing agents along with
other influencers discovered in the literature will be highlighted. Providing an overview of such socializing influencers helps to shed light on the multiplicity of variables in existence that have an impact in contributing to a student’s introduction to and ultimate decision to participate in sports. Often these influencers cut across personal, social, and cultural lines. Some influencers are indicative of impacting all persons and therefore will be categorized as universal influencers, while some only come into play based on demographical and societal facets. A discussion of the most pertinent influencers across the aforementioned categories will ensue followed by a review of motivation theory, and service quality literature. All discussions will incorporate an explanation of how such areas of focus contribute to providing a foundational understanding of the primary foci of the present question.

*Universal Socializing Agents*

*Family influence*

Snyder and Spreitzer (1974) assert that the family is the most potent of socialization institutions. More specifically, the researchers suggest that from a theoretical perspective one is socialized into sports in much of the same manner one assimilates into a religious or political orientation. For this reason, influences of family members many times are explored in the literature for their impact on sport participation.

Parents, in particular, have been discovered to be influential in a child’s decision to participate in sports. Wold and Anderssen (1992) surveyed a total of 23,086 students ages 11, 13, and 15 from ten countries and examined the influences of family and peers on sport participation. The countries the students were from were: (a) Austria, (b) Finland, (c) Hungary, (e) Norway, (f) Spain, (g) Sweden, (h) Wales, (i) Belgium,
(j) Israel, and (k) Scotland. Findings of one aspect of their study found that a sport active father seemed to be more important for boys, while the sport activity of mothers and older sisters predicted more of the variance in the sport participation for girls; this finding was consistent across all countries studied, except for Scotland. Overall, the sport participation of the same-sex family member seemed to be a stronger predictor of sport participation than that of the opposite-sex family member.

Harris (1994) mentions that many studies cite parents as being antecedents of sport participation. Snyder and Spreitzer’s (1974) study of Toledo, Ohio residents, found that the individuals in their sample showed a tendency that the same-sexed parent had more of an influence on their behavioral involvement in sports than did the opposite-sex parent. Snyder and Spreitzer studied the effects of family influence in the involvement of sports on three dimensions of sport involvement: (a) affective involvement, (b) behavioral involvement, and (c) cognitive involvement. Affective involvement measured a person’s attitudes and feelings about sports; behavioral involvement measured the extent that respondents were both active (participate in sports) and passive (watch and talk sports, read sports page, and subscribe to or read sports magazines) in sports; and cognitive involvement measured the capacity respondents had to identify popular sports personalities for their appropriate athletic affiliation (Snyder & Spreitzer, 1974). Overall, parents’ interest in sports showed a consistent positive relationship on all three dimensions of sport involvements. Snyder and Spreitzer concluded that sports involvement begins in childhood and is reinforced by parental encouragement in adolescences.
Peers

Dishman, Sallis, and Orenstein (1985) evaluated the literature for determinants of adoption and maintenance of physical activity and proposed that children’s participation in physical activity outside structured programs is influenced more by peers than by family members. Peer influence was discerned to be sex-linked through adolescence and strengthened with age, moving from neighborhood influences in childhood to co-workers and colleagues in adulthood. Wold and Anderssen (1992) found in another aspect of their study that the sport activity of best friends was the strongest predictor of adolescents’ participation in sport, among both boys and girls for all countries studied in their study. Their finding suggested that sport participation of best friends is a stronger predictor of adolescent sport activity than are sport participation levels of family members. Overall, looking at personal influential factors of sport participation, children whose parents, siblings, and best friends are involved in sports are much more likely to take part in some form of sport themselves than are children whose significant others are not involved in sports (Wold & Anderssen, 1992).

Mass Media

Although the mass media is proclaimed by Wold and Anderssen (1992) as one of the most salient socializing agents within the socialization theory, its direct impact on the sport participation decisions of youth was not discovered in the literature. Only Goldstein and Bredemeier’s (1977) journal article, to a small extent, focused on the media and participation in sport, although their article entailed no empirical study. Their argument concerning sport and the media contended that the increased coverage of sports by television networks has led to “an increase in the ritualization and professionalization of
amateur sports” (Goldstein & Bredemeier, 1977, p. 295) and as such intrinsic motivations for sport participation decreases. Other than Goldstein and Bredemeier, the predominance of studies concerning sport and the media center around the historical relationship of the two phenomenon, media’s economic impact of sport, media’s creation and promotion of sport heroes, and media’s influence in the homogenization of America (Eitzen, 1984; Greendorfer, 1983; Kennard & Hofstetter, 1983).

School Influence

Holland and Andre (1987) make a case that the environment and context of schools themselves can also be considered as socializing agents. According to the researchers, “. . . the opportunities and context provided by secondary schools also influence adolescent development” (Holland & Andre, 1987, p. 437), which for the purposes of this exam question, can thus feed into influencing adolescents’ decisions to participate in interscholastic sports. As adolescents’ personalities and self esteems are molded and refined in their school settings their attitudes and perceptions of athletic and extracurricular activity participation becomes explicitly and implicitly affected. Therefore, the climate and culture of the school become influential in perpetuating an environment that exudes messages surrounding sport participation.

Role models

Greendorfer (1977) researched the impact of role models as socializing agents for sport participation. Greendorfer discovered that the impact of role models differed across gender lines. For males, role models appeared to be significant influencers of sport participation for the initial stages of sport socialization. For females, female role models proved to be influential but not until after females had been initiated into sport for a
period of time. Harris (1994) discovered from the literature that early studies indicated that individuals serving as role models influenced people’s involvement in sport due to their reinforcement of athletic role behavior.

Demographical Influencers

Age, Socioeconomic Status (SES), Gender and Race Influences

Age, socioeconomic status (SES), and gender have all been referenced in the literature in some degree as being contributory to sport participation. It appears that mainly in earlier studies of sport participation, references to these four variables were prevalent. Snyder and Spretizer (1974) divulged in their review of the literature that the predominant variables used to explain sport participation was age, sex, and social status. However, in Eitle and Eitle’s (2002) study, over twenty-five years subsequent to Snyder and Spretizer, it was discovered that SES was not determined to be a consistent affect on sports participation in certain sports, particularly basketball and football, in the studies they reviewed.

Regarding, gender influences, Snyder and Spretizer (1974), suggested that sports involvement be evaluated from a multidimensional approach with a need to control for male-female differences. Based on influences by gender, Greendorfer and Lewko (1978) found for both sexes that parents seemed to be more significant socializing agents for sport participation than siblings. Greendorfer (1977) found that for females, peers were the main factor of sport participation during adolescents while teachers and coaches ranked second.
In a study that investigated race and sports participation, Harris (1994) examined the effects of the black community and other socializing agents (teachers, coaches, and friends) on African American athletes’ decision to participate in sports. Harris began his study by mentioning that several studies regarding his area of interest “suggested that the socialization of African American males into sport was more deliberate and intensive, which leads to different consequences of sports involvement for African American males than for other racial groups” (p. 40). A primary notion that Harris sought to investigate centered on the assumption that the heavy emphasis of athletic participation for African American males was due to there being “few visible black male role models of success outside of sports and other forms of entertainment, thus sports being an easily identifiable area of potential achievement for many African American males” (p. 41). Harris’s study found that compared to white males in his sample, African American males purported that they received encouragement to participate in sports more from nonparent significant others outside of the home versus any other variables. Harris’ study focused solely on participation in the sport of basketball. The nonparent significant others consisted of friends and teachers that encouraged African American males to play basketball.

Societal Influencers

Household Structure

Household structure serves as another socializing influencer that has been investigated for its influence on sport participation. Harrison and Narayan (2003) discovered that adolescents from single-parent homes were less likely to participate in sports. This finding was speculated to have occurred based on the probability that two-parent households are more likely equipped with the financial resources necessary to...
cover the expenses affiliated with participation in sports. It was also contended, that two-parent households may place fewer demands on adolescents in terms of chores and caring for younger siblings permitting adolescents from such households to have more time and opportunity for involvement in sports and other extracurricular activities.

Fathers, in Harrison and Narayan’s (2003) study were postulated to have a greater influence on children in fostering an interest in sports and providing support for participation. Therefore, with fathers often times being the absent parent in single-parent households, children in these homes may lack the exposure to sports and athletic participation that fathers provide.

Cultural Capital

The concept of cultural capital was introduced by Bourdieu (1977) and extended by DiMaggio (1982) and has been used to explain how social inequality is reproduced through such institutions as schools. Lamont and Lareau (1988) defined cultural capital as “high-status cultural signals, such as attitudes, behaviors, preferences, and credentials, that are commonly used for social and cultural inclusion and exclusion” (Eitle & Eitle, 2002, p. 126). An individual’s cultural capital can be assessed and is done so by one of two customary methods. Eitel and Eitel (2002) shared one method, in which they espoused that sociologist examine elite cultural practices like cultural trips (trips to museums and art galleries) and taking extracurricular classes in “high” culture areas like dance, art, and music. This assessment of elite activities can determine an individual’s level of cultural capital (Eitle & Eitle, 2002). A second method of examining an individual’s cultural capital competence consist of examining the level of household
educational resources available in a student’s home such as books, computers, magazines, and encyclopedias, as such resources have been argued to shape the academic orientation of a child (Lareau, 1989; Mercy & Steelman, 1982; Teachman, 1987).

Eitle and Eitle (2002) discovered that the variable of family educational resources had never been studied for its influence and effect on participation in sports. Therefore, Eitle and Eitle conducted a study to examine such an effect. An underlying assumption of their study was that the benefits between family educational resources, involvement in sports and academic achievement would vary across cultures, socioeconomic status (SES), and type of sports involved. Eitle and Eitle’s sample was comprised of black and white adolescent males from public schools. Their study found that cultural capital and household educational resources provided consistent support for the perception that culturally disadvantaged males are more likely to participate in football and basketball than other high school students. Overall, Eitel and Eitel discovered that the link between sports and academics differed depending on the cultural resources students brought to school, as well as the particular sports the student was involved in.

Abuse influence

A portion of Harrison and Narayan’s (2003) study was devoted to discussing the effects of abuse on sport participation. It was discovered that adolescents who were victims of physical and sexual abuse and who were from substance-abusing families, had lower rates of sports participation versus adolescents that did not fall into such categories. Harrison and Narayan reported that “traumatic effects of childhood abuse tend to include a sense of stigmatization on victims which can lead to social isolation” (p. 119). Sports were the main group activity that victims in the study specifically avoided versus other
group activities. Further research into understanding the reasons why victims’ avoid sport activities versus other extracurricular activities as well as further investigation into abuse and sport participation was suggested by Harrison and Narayan.

_Socialization Theory Conclusion_

As has been highlighted data within the socialization theory proves to provide a helpful basis for understanding the big picture of why and how students may be exposed to and chose to participate in interscholastic athletics. The theory provides a comprehensive view of a multitude of possible influencers instrumental in the decision making process to participate in sports. However, although informative and insightful, the socialization theory lens is not the only theoretical lens available to consider in gaining insight into understanding the sport participation decision process of high school students. In addition to the salient socializing agents discussed and identified via socialization aligned research, data in other non-socialization aligned literature exist that can be considered helpful in understanding an adolescent’s decision to participate in sport. Such data can be found in the motivation literature.

_Motivation Theory_

Most people’s initial sport participation engagement tends to occur on the playground within a social rather than a competitive setting (Baillie & Danish, 1992). Then, as one matures from childhood onto adolescence the decision to, either continue participating in sport or cease participation, is often times tied to the motives the individual holds in high esteem for participating. In particular, understanding one’s intrinsic and extrinsic motives for participation can assist in providing clarity in the individual’s ultimate decision to
participate or not in sport. Hollembeak and Amorose (2005) espouse that understanding the motivations of athletes is important for both researchers and practitioners alike. Thus, a review of motivation and its relation to the focus of this study is warranted.

*Self-Determination Theory*

Within the motivation literature one theory proves to be particularly useful in helping to understand the intersection of one’s motivations and his or her athletic participation decision; the theory is called the self-determination theory (SDT). Weiss and Ferrer Caja (2002) define motivation as the intensity and direction of effort. According to Deci and Ryan’s (1985) SDT, the reasons why individuals choose to participate, exert effort, and persist in an activity can be classified along a continuum of self-determined behavior. Along that continuum lies three types of motivation which once properly understood, provide valuable insight into understanding the sport participation decision process. Amotivation, the first form of motivation which sits on the low end of the continuum, is the most non-self determined form of motivation and reflects a lack of motivation (Hollembeak & Amorose, 2005). Hence, individuals who are amotivated have a lack of intensity or desire to engage in an activity such as sport and therefore would opt not to participate. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, the second and third types of motivation respectively, play more of a pivotal role in influencing one’s decision to participate in an activity. Extrinsic motivation, which is the next major classification of motivation, entails doing an activity for instrumental reason (e.g., receiving rewards, avoiding punishment). Intrinsic motivation, the final and most self-determined type of motivation, can be described as doing an activity for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from the activity itself (Hollembeak & Amorose, 2005). In the end,
multiple reasons culminate to be considered in the activity decision making process which ends up consisting of a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motives (Weiss & Ferrer Caja, 2002). However, according to SDT there are a number of benefits accrued by individuals who participate in activities primarily for more self-determined reasons, or stated otherwise, intrinsically motivated reasons.

Three needs are specified by SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002) as being fundamental to humans. These needs are the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The need for competence reflects the need for one to perceive his or her behavior as effective. The need for autonomy represents the need to perceive behaviors and thoughts as freely chosen. The need for relatedness reflects the need to perceive that individuals are connected to those around them. The SDT postulates that individuals will choose activities and experiences to fulfill the three fundamental needs previously specified. If, according to SDT, an activity fulfills all three of an individual’s fundamental needs, the activity will be inherently pleasurable or enjoyable, and will be freely chosen. Namely, the individual will be intrinsically motivated to participate in the activity. Conversely, if the activity does not fulfill the individual’s fundamental needs (as specified by SDT) participation in the activity will not be for intrinsic reasons. While an individual may not be intrinsically motivated to participate in an activity they still may choose to participate in the activity, but the motive would be for less self-determined reasons (e.g., participating to keep a scholarship or to please one’s parents) and would represent more extrinsically motivated reasons (Hollmbeak & Amorose, 2005). Therefore, SDT suggests that anything that impacts the needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness can ultimately impact intrinsic motivation.
Development of Motives for Sport

In continuing to develop an understanding of motivation and how certain motives impact individuals’ sport participation decisions, Gould and Horn (1984) have developed a model that helps to explain how a young athlete’s developing motives for continued participation in sports develops. Gould and Horn suggest that there are six particular motives that promote sports involvement in children ages 8 -19 years. They have suggested that children enjoy sports because of the potential for (a) improving skills, (b) having fun, (c) playing with friends, (d) experiencing certain thrills and pleasures, (e) achieving and maintaining a level of fitness, and (f) achieving success in a socially desirable realm. Gould (1987) further suggested that children continue their involvement in sports until such time as their motives are no longer met. Gould highlights that as children move into adolescence and the pressures for sports achievement become greater, there may be a shift from internal motives to external motives for participation. Internal motivation according to Csikszentimihalyi (1975) and Nicholls (1980) is more likely to be durable and positive.

Motivation Applicability

In addition to understanding the impact of socialization theory and its role and influence in the sport participation decision process of adolescents, understanding the role and influence of motives via SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2002) and Gould and Horn’s (1984) sport motive involvement model, a more holistic conceptualization of the sport participation decision process becomes clearer. Based on the insight revealed in the motivation literature, an adolescent’s decision to participate in interscholastic sports can be viewed as a result of the intermingling of socialization
influences added together with the adolescent’s desire to fulfill his or her three fundamental needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (which every human seeks to fulfill according to SDT). As a consequence of seeking to fulfill the three fundamental needs of SDT a varying degree of motives come into play when the final decision to partake in interscholastic sports is made. In seeking an understanding of factors that contribute to a quality interscholastic athletic participation experience, the manner in which athletes have been socialized into sport along with the motives for their participation, should not be overlooked. Both of these factors can play important roles in impacting what an athlete is looking to gain out of their participation experience, thus ultimately impacting the overall quality of the athlete’s experience.

Evaluation of the Quality of the Athletic Participation Experience: An Athlete’s Perspective

The primary purpose of providing the previous reviews of the socialization and motivation theories was to provide a theoretical and background basis for understanding the sport decision making process. It is now of essence to divulge into the literature and provide a theoretical review of research that assists to provide a basis for understanding the fundamental focus of this study which is to gain an understanding of how athletes, once they participate on an interscholastic team, evaluate the quality of their participation experience. In surveying the literature for applicable areas of research that could provide an appropriate theoretical base for understanding an athlete’s evaluative process of the quality of his or her athletic participation experience, the literature of service quality stood out. As such, a review of service quality research as it pertains to an athlete evaluating the quality of their athletic participation experience will be provided.
Service Quality

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) trace the effort of defining and measuring the construct of quality to research done in the goods sector. However, to understand service quality, knowledge about goods quality is insufficient to use (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Unlike goods quality, “service quality is an abstract and elusive construct . . .” (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988, p. 13) due to its three unique features of (a) intangibility, (b) heterogeneity, and (c) inseparability of production and consumption. Also, service quality unlike goods quality cannot be measured using objective measures such as durability and number of defects, but more appropriately can be assessed as a means of consumers’ perceptions of quality.

Most services are considered intangible because they are performances and not objects. Services often times cannot be counted, measured, inventoried, tested, and verified in advance of sale to assure quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Second, services are considered heterogeneous because their performance often varies from producer to producer, from customer to customer, and from day to day (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Lastly, the production and consumption of services are inseparable. As such, quality in services is not engineered at the manufacturing plant, and then delivered to the consumer. Service firms have less managerial control over quality in services where consumer participation is vital because the consumer affects the process (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985).

Based on Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry’s (1985, 1988) conceptualization of service quality they constructed the SERVQUAL, a service quality measurement scale. In addition to the SERVQUAL, one other notably variant of it which is frequently
referenced in the literature is the SERVPERF created by Cronin and Taylor (1992). The SERVPERF was created as a result of Cronin and Taylor’s criticism of the SERVQUAL (Jain & Gupta, 2004).

As previously stated in chapter one, according to Devlin, Gwynne, and Ennew (2002) it is generally recognized, although not universally accepted, that customer expectations have an important impact upon the assessment of service quality. Service quality has been described by Olshavsky (1985) as an attitude, related but not equivalent to customer satisfaction, which results from a comparison of expectations with performance. However, the meaning and/or definition of expectations, across customer satisfaction and service quality literature have been conceived of conceptually different, and understanding such difference is important in discerning the specifics of service quality. In the customer satisfaction literature expectations have been conceptualized as belief probabilities of what the consequences of an event will be (Devlin, Gwynne, & Ennew, 2002). While in the service quality literature, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1998) defined expectations in terms of what customers feel they should be offered. The “will” and “should” used to distinguish between customer satisfaction and service quality expectations, respectively, are also commonly referred to in the literature as “predicted” and “desired” beliefs as well as “would” and “should” beliefs, respectively. Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman (1993) suggest that the assessment of customer satisfaction are the result of the comparison between predicted and perceived services, while service quality assessments are derived from the comparison of desired and perceived service.
Application of Service Quality for Evaluating Athletic Participation Experience

Chelladurai (1987) asserted that athletes be considered as primary beneficiaries of athletic programs. A prime beneficiary according to Chelladurai (2001) is a group for whose benefit the organization exists. Therefore, according to Chelladurai (2001) from the prime beneficiary perspective of organizational effectiveness, the effective athletic organization is one that is meeting the needs of its athletes. Utilizing the rationale of athletes as prime beneficiaries and given the logic of the beneficiary perspective of organizational effectiveness it is conceivable to suggest that athletes be perceived as customers or consumers of athletic programs and as such receive a service; a service that situates them as consumers of the athletic participation experience. To this end, understanding how they evaluate the quality of their athletic participation “service” serves to be aligned with the focus inherent in this study. Consequently, it is suggested that a service quality view be used as an appropriate means to assess the quality of the athletic participation experience that an athlete endures, specifically an interscholastic athlete as is the stated focus in this study.

In using Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry’s (1988) service quality definition of expectations, gaining an understanding of how athletes evaluate the quality of their athletic experience lies in what the athlete feels he or she should be offered as a consequence of their participation on an interscholastic team. More specifically, in utilizing a service quality perspective, once an athlete feels that what they desire they should get out of their athletic participation experience is met; they have endured a quality service. Thus, the service quality viewpoint becomes a helpful lens to look through to determine the quality of an athlete’s participation experience. The core of the
evaluation of an athlete’s quality of experience can be attached to what he or she desires to gain from their experience. This thus makes the quality of an athlete’s experience personal and relative to what he or she is looking to gain from their experience. Therefore, how one athlete may evaluate the quality of his or her experience may differ from his or her teammate’s experience because the two may be seeking to gain different desired experiences from their participation. Keeping abreast of the contention of the socialization theory which postulates that many socializing agents are capable of influencing one’s decision to participate in sport, the reason and influence of why an athlete chooses to participate on a team may have an impact on what it is they are seeking to get out of being a member of a team.

Service Quality Applicability Conclusion

In conclusion, to discern whether or not an athlete’s participation has been a quality experience it becomes helpful from a practitioner’s standpoint to know what factors contributed to influencing the athlete to join the team as well as what the athlete desires to gain as a result of their membership on the team. Once all this information is learned, a benchmark can be set and an evaluation assessment of the participation experience can ensue.

Conclusion

Using the tenants of various literature bases a clearer understanding of the interscholastic athletic participation decision and quality of experience process has been attempted to be explained. The researcher contends that both the socialization and motivation literature helps to provide a theoretical understanding of how various salient factors prove to be instrumental in introducing and tweaking an athlete’s interest and
desire to participate in athletics. Lastly, to provide a theoretical means of discerning how to conceptualize how an athlete evaluates the quality of his or her interscholastic athletic participation experience, a review of the major tenets of service quality was provided as a viable means. After conceptualizing the idiosyncrasies of each literature base in relation to the overall focus of this question, it is anticipated that the interscholastic athletic participation decision and evaluation of the quality of the participation experience is better understood.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter a description of the research methodology employed in this study to investigate and answer the research questions inherent in this study will be provided. This description entails a series of explanations. First, an explanation of the appropriateness of qualitative measures to examine the stated problem at hand in the study is provided. Next, a thorough review of the research design of the study is provided. Third, details surrounding the selection of the study participants and research settings are detailed followed by an articulation of the data collection procedures implemented in the study. Next, the development of the research instrument is provided. The remainder of the chapter entails providing details of data management, data analysis, data trustworthiness methods, transferability considerations, ethics, and lastly, a personal statement of the researcher’s motives, desires, and biases inherent in carrying out this study are provided.

Why Qualitative Research?

“Becoming immersed in a study requires passion: passion for people, passion for communication, and passion for understanding people” (Janesick, 2003, p. 71).
“In the qualitative arena the individual is not only inserted into the study, the individual is the backbone of the study…we need to capture the lived experience of individuals and their stories, much like the choreographer who crafts a dance” (Janesick, 2003, p. 71).

“The qualitative researcher . . .prefers to capture the lived experience of participants in order to understand their meaning perspectives, case by case” (Janesick, 2003, p. 73).

As stated previously, the purpose of this study was to identify factors that contribute to a quality interscholastic athletic participation experience from the perspective of student athletes. It was also a goal of this study to examine the similarities and differences of perceived quality factors of high school student athletes who have been socialized into sport differently and who were part of school cultures often thought to be dichotomously different; suburban and urban schools. Therefore, given the nature, scope, and complexity of this research study, a qualitative research design was deemed necessary and appropriate and was employed.

Implementing a qualitative study, utilizing face-to-face interviews as the primary data collection method, allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the factors that contribute to a quality interscholastic athletic participation experience. The intent of qualitative research is to discover meaning and present the interpretations of those meanings by the researcher (Farrell, 2006). Qualitative studies explain why a person behaves in a certain way. The qualitative researcher studies a social setting to understand the meaning of participants’ lives in the participants’ own terms (Janesick, 2003).
Qualitative research is not constructed to prove something or control people (Janesick, 2003). The major rationale for employing qualitative methods in this study stemmed from the researcher’s desire to delve into the experiences of the participants in an effort to uncover the implicit and hidden meanings behind their experiences.

Research Design

Merely employing a qualitative technique here and there does not make a study qualitative...Painstaking, detailed descriptions and explanations of the design and conduct of studies are required not only for our own use but for future generations of qualitative researchers (Janesick, 2003, p.60).

“Qualitative research design is an act of interpretation from beginning to end” (Janesick, 2003, p. 73).

According to Berg (2001), the research design is the plan for how a study will be conducted. Design decisions of the qualitative research project must be made at all stages of the research project. To explain and articulate the design decisions of this study, Janesick’s (2003) logic and metaphor of the design process being like that of a choreography of a dance will be referred to throughout the remainder of this chapter. The metaphor helps to give an authentic understanding of the breadth and depth of the design process. Additionally, the metaphor conveys, explicitly, the primary considerations and components that must be adhered to in order to ensure an appropriate and thorough research design was implemented. The research design sets the foundation of the research and directs what to study, who to study, for whom to study, under what circumstances and for what duration of time.

According to Janesick (2003) like the choreographer relies on the spine of the dancer for the power and coherence of the dance, the qualitative researcher relies on the design of the study. “The qualitative researcher is centered by a series of design
decisions” (Janesick, 2003, p. 52). Janesick breaks down the design process of a qualitative study into three stages, that entail design decisions, which she corresponds to a dancer’s three stages of warm-up, exercises, and cool-down, or, a choreographer’s stages of preparation, exploration, and illumination/formulation. Consequently, the researcher is responsible for making a series of decisions at the beginning, middle, and end of the study. The three stages of the design process as determined by Janesick are entitled; (a) Stage 1 - Warming Up and Preparation, (b) Stage 2 – Exploration and Exercises, and (c) Stage 3 – Cool Down: Illumination and Formulation. The details of each stage will be explained below along with how decisions inherent in each stage were adhered to for this study.

Stage 1: Warming Up and Preparation

The decisions that must be adhered to for the first stage of the design process according to Janesick (2003) are listed below:

1. The questions that guide the study
2. Selection of a site and participants
3. Access and entry to the site and agreements with participants
4. Timeline for the study
5. Selection of appropriate research strategies
6. The place of theory in the study
7. Identification of researcher’s own beliefs and ideologies
8. Identification of appropriate informed consent procedures and willingness to deal with ethical issues as they present themselves.
This first stage of the research process entails the articulation of an idea that is expressed through a question that needs to be answered. “All dance, all choreography begins with an idea” (Janesick, 2003, p. 50). The question that needed to be answered for this study was what factors, from the student athlete’s perspective, contribute to a quality interscholastic athletic participation experience.

Stage 2: Exploration and Exercise

The second stage of the research design occurs within the period of data collection in the field (Janesick, 2003). This stage incorporates conducting a pilot study, a review of the literature, and the implementation of various methods to collect data. The pilot study or “stretching exercises” as Janesick refers to it, allows the researcher to practice the substantive skills needed to collect data, write up the findings, and interpret findings. Such skills as interviewing, observation, writing, and reflection are honed during this stage which assists the researcher in fine tuning the skills necessary to be positioned in the role as research instrument.

Pilot Study

For this study a pilot study was conducted which entailed interviewing, observation and analyzing data over the period of one academic quarter. One research subject served as the research participant for the study. A high school girls’ basketball student athlete served as the research participant. The data collection methods employed in the study consisted of a one hour long, tape recorded, interview as well as three observations of the participant (e.g., two at games and one in a practice). Conducting the pilot study proved to be beneficial to the researcher in many respects.
The researcher truly received hands on practice in fine tuning her skills necessary to position her in the role as the researcher instrument. Specifically, the researcher received experience in several aspects of the research process including; gaining access (e.g., an explanation letter of the study was created along with a parental informed consent form that was given to participant and her parent), sample selection (convenience sampling was used), data collection (interviewing, observing, and verbatim transcription of both were conducted), data analysis (e.g., coding, asserting, and warranting, and the use of the computer program of NUD*IST (Non numerical Unstructured Data Indexing searching and Theory-building) to condense and organize themes was used), and writing up findings (e.g., narratives and theorizing of the study results were written). This experience provided the researcher with an intimate understanding of the labor intensive nature of qualitative research. Further, interview questions were able to be revised and adjusted for relevancy and clarity based on the feedback of using them in the pilot study. Overall, the experience proved to be invaluable.

Review of Literature

The literature review incorporated in this second stage assists in identifying the historical antecedents of the question to be studied. It entails doing the background work for the study which allows the researcher to focus on particular areas in the literature that previously may have been unclear. Reviewing previous studies and records, helps to uncover insight into the shape and direction of research studies. For this study, the limited data available in the literature concerning quality factors of the interscholastic athletic participation experience prompted the researcher’s interest to investigate such a
phenomenon. Literature regarding motivation, socialization, service quality, and functionalism was reviewed and, subsequently, served as the backdrop to the inquiry.

Data Collection

The next consideration at the crux of the exploration and exercise stage entails deciding on which data collection method to employ. This decision is intimately connected to how the researcher views the purpose of the work. Therefore, the research question informs the data collection method. Most often qualitative researchers use a combination of participant observations, interviews, and document analysis (Janesick, 2003). The data collection strategy the researcher felt was best suited for the purpose and constraints of this study was interviewing. Specifically, semi-structured face-to-face interviewing was employed.

Stage 3: Cool Down: Illumination and Formulation

The final stage of the research design, according to Janesick (2003), encompasses deciding on decisions that need to be made at end of the study. These decisions deal with considerations that the researcher needs to make after “leaving the field”. Following the process of leaving the field, final data analysis can begin. The details of the analysis methods employed for this study will be provided in a subsequent section in this chapter entitled “Data Analysis”.

Summary of Research Design

In summary, it should be understood that the qualitative research design is elastic, adapted, changed, and redesigned as the study proceeds, due to the social realities of
doing research among and with the human beings (Janesick, 2003). The researcher focuses on description and explanation, and all design decisions ultimately relate to those acts (Janesick, 2003).

Selection of Participants and Setting

*Sampling Methods*

The project's qualitative research design required that non-probability sampling methods be utilized since the purpose of the results of the study is not intended to be generalized to a larger population. Sampling procedures reflect purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). The power of purposeful sampling lies in “selecting information-rich cases for study . . .” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Information-rich cases, according to Patton (1990) are those from which a great deal of information can be learned about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. Thus, selecting a limited, yet diverse, pool of high school student-athletes from both suburban and urban schools was believed to constitute an information-rich sample that would provide a great deal of insightful and pertinent information for the stated purpose of this study.

Several sampling strategies are available to researchers when using purposeful information-rich samples (Patton, 1990). The sampling strategies utilized in this study consisted of a combination of convenience sampling, typical case sampling, and snowball sampling. Having more than one sampling strategy is often necessary, according to Patton (1990), in order to appropriately meet the purposes of a study. The priority of sampling is not how many strategies will be employed in a study but that the selection of the sample includes information-rich cases.
Typical case, Convenience, and Snowball Sampling

The purpose of typical case sampling is to describe and illustrate what is typical (Patton, 1990). “The sample is selected specifically because it is not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual” (Patton, 1990, p.173). A study of a typical case illuminates key issues valued by the sample.

While assembling a “typical” sample was of primary concern for this study, due to the greater difficulty in obtaining permission to study minors, convenience sampling was also employed. This provided the greatest opportunity for the researcher to gain access to participants. Finally, snowball sampling was also utilized. This sampling technique is useful because it allows the researcher to utilize current participants in an effort to recruit other prospective participants from within a unique population (Vogt, 1999). Interviewing one participant can lead to access to another individual to participate in the study. Consequently, in this study participants and their parents and/or guardians were asked to volunteer the names of other student athletes they felt met the criteria of the research and would have an interest in participating in the study.

Sampling Strategies Conclusion

Regardless of the sampling methods used in research, “. . . there are no perfect sampling designs” (Patton, 1990, p.181). The primary justification researchers need to keep in mind when selecting sampling strategies (or a combination of strategies), is that the strategies must fit specifically to the purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked, and the constraints being faced (Patton, 1990). Thus typical, convenience, and snowball sampling techniques for this study, most appropriately met the stated purpose, available resources, and constraints of the study.
"Working in the field is unpredictable, a good deal of the time, the qualitative researchers must be ready to readjust schedules and interview times, add or subtract observations or interviews, . . .even rearrange terms of the original agreement” (Janesick, 2003, p. 59).

According to Patton (1990), “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 184). Sample sizes in qualitative studies are typically smaller than those utilized in quantitative studies. Patton (1990) contends that some qualitative studies exist that only focus in-depth on a single case (n = 1), selected purposefully. The trade-off, according to Patton, is between breadth and depth and is what researchers must consider when selecting sample sizes.

A qualitative research sample only seems small compared to the sample sizes needed for representativeness when the purpose is to generalize from a sample to the population of which it is a part. The utility and credibility of small purposeful samples are often judged on the basis of the logic, purpose, and recommended sample sizes of probability sampling (Patton, 1990). In addition, Patton contends that, “random probability samples cannot accomplish what in-depth, purposeful samples accomplish and vice versa” (p. 185).

For this study, the researcher assembled twelve participants to serve as the sample. Six high school student athletes from suburban schools and six from urban schools were selected. It was the researcher’s opinion that assembling twelve participants to constitute as the research sample served to be enough participants to appropriately
serve to represent the “typical” interscholastic athlete; the stated goal of the study.
Twelve participants allowed for the insights and experiences of student athletes from around a diversity of sports to be shared and captured in this study.

Subject Description

The population studied was varsity high school student athletes from both suburban and urban classified high schools in a large midwestern city. The sample consisted of six males and six females (three of each from both type of schools) from a variety of sports. The nature of the study's sole focus depended on the use of high school athletes.

Setting

The researcher’s church served as the initial setting for selecting participants for the study. The researcher attended and was an active member of a large non-denominational church. A substantial number of adolescents also attended the church. Included in the adolescent population at the church was a pool of high school students who were athletes. The student athletes attended a variety of high schools, both suburban and urban, across the local metropolitan area where the church is located. Therefore, due to the researcher’s active membership status in the church and established rapport with many of the parents and adolescents in the church, the researcher, due to convenience, used the church as the research setting to select participants to participate in her study. Actual interviews took place at locations at the participants' and their parents’ discretion.

Gaining Access

Access and entry are sensitive components in qualitative research, as the researcher must be able to establish trust, rapport, and authentic communication patterns
with participants (Janesick, 2003). Rapport and trust is important in ensuring that participants share openly their feelings and insight so that the researcher is better able to capture the nuances and meaning of the participants (Janesick, 2003). According to Janesick (2003) it is especially important to establish rapport and trust early on at the beginning of a study.

Permission to solicit participation in the study was requested and secured from the pastor of the researcher’s church (see Appendix A). Subsequent to permission from the pastor, participants were deemed eligible to be included in the study upon both parental consent (see Appendix B), participant assent (see Appendix C) and informed consent (if participants were 18 years or older) (see Appendix D). Due to the researcher’s membership status in the church, relationships with several members in the church who were parents and whose children were high school athletes had already been established. Therefore, the rapport and trust, which Janesick (2003) speaks of establishing with participants and the significance of establishing such rapport and trust in the research process already existed with several of the families that served as participants for the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Ragin, Nagel and White (2004) articulate that the researcher serves as the primary data collection instrument in qualitative research. Individual face-to-face interviews along with a demographic background questionnaire (see Appendix E) served as the primary methods of data collection in this study. Interviews were based on a pre-established, semi-structured individual interview guide (see Appendix F). Interviews lasted no longer than one hour. Each interview, with the permission of the participants’ and their parents
and/or guardians, was audio tape recorded. At the completion of each interview, the researcher transcribed the audio tape. Transcribing allows the spoken word of the interview to be transformed to text to discern a deeper meaning and analysis by the researcher (Kvale, 1996).

Demographic Background Questionnaire

The demographic background questionnaire was administered at the beginning of each interview session subsequent to the introduction and explanation of the study. It allowed the researcher to acquire basic demographic information of each participant which proved to be helpful in analyzing and contextualizing the data. Also, the demographical background data helped to serve as comparison and contrasting point of emphasis in the data analysis phase of the study and aligned appropriately with the corollary purpose inherent in the study. The corollary purpose of the study aimed to compare and contrast perceived quality factors of the interscholastic athletic participation experience across different socialization patterns into sport as well as experiences from athletes who attended schools categorized dichotomously different, as suburban and urban schools.

Interviewing

Interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways to try and understand human beings (Fontana & Frey, 1994). According to Singer (2002) interviewing is powerful because it allows for both the interviewer and interviewee to learn from the experience. Interviewing has a wide variety of forms, with individual, face-to-face verbal interchange constituting the most common type of interviewing (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Individual face-to-face interviewing served as the primary data
collection method employed in this study. The objective of interviewing according to Fontana and Frey (1994) is to gain knowledge and insight into the experiences of others.

Within the parameters of the interview, information is disclosed that allows the researcher to improvise, to find out more about critical events or moments in the lives of the participants. Interviewing allows researchers to capture a richer interpretation of participants’ perspectives (Janesick, 2003). Of the three types of interviewing according to Fontana and Frey (1994) (structured, semi-structured, or unstructured) semi-structured interviewing enables the researcher most in engaging participants in meaningful conversation and dialogue (Singer, 2002). As choreographers have to do, researchers must make adjustments where necessary as the research design unfolds. This is one of the strengths of the semi-structured interview; it allows for a certain level of flexibility and the collection of “unanticipated information” (Sabo, 1990, p.68). Semi-structured interviews allow for the same general information to be obtained from different participants. Pre-determined questions are created that guide conversation with participants in semi-structured interviewing. The researcher, using semi-structured interviews, is allowed the flexibility to seek clarification, explore thoughts thoroughly, and pursue deeper meaning from participants unlike the rigid format of structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Merriam, 1988).

Field Notes

In addition to collecting data via interviewing and demographic background questionnaire, field notes served as a secondary means of data collection. Field notes were taken directly after each interview. The notes focused on the interview environment, participant non-verbals, demeanor of participants, silences in the interview process, and
other factors that contributed to contextualizing the data. Kawulich (2005) described field notes as both data and analysis, as the notes according to her, provide an accurate description of what is observed and are a product of observing. Most importantly, Kawulich emphasized that “observations are not data unless they are recorded into field notes” (p. 2). Thus, recording the observations of participants and the interview environment proved to be an important means of recording data in this study.

Development of the Instrument

“Like the dancer and the choreographer, the qualitative researcher must be in tune with the body: The eyes must be taught to see, the ears must be taught to hear, and so on” (Janesick, 2003, p.57).

Qualitative research situates the researcher as the research instrument. This means the researcher must have the ability to observe behavior and must sharpen the skills necessary for observation and face-to-face interview. Therefore, the questions asked, topics sought and methods employed in a qualitative study will be an outgrowth of the researcher’s experience, interests and values, and review of the literature. Thus, the researcher of this present study, served as the research instrument.

Development of Interview Questions

The interviews conducted for this study was guided with the aid of an interview guide (Patton, 1990). The guide helps to ensure that the same information is being obtained from each participant. The interview questions developed for this study were based on information obtained from the researcher’s interests and the review of literature. Thus, a substantial quantity of the questions generated for this study are centered around data and themes situated in the literature.
Interview Questions

Questions on the interview guide were divided into three content areas, socialization, motivation, and quality of experience. Nine questions centered around socialization, thirteen motivation, and twelve quality of experience, for a total of thirty-four questions. The socialization questions centered mainly around findings in the literature pertaining to “socializing agents” of the sport participation. Wold and Anderssen (1992) discovered that in socialization theory, primary socializing agents exist which provide powerful models that can influence children and adolescents toward taking part in sports. The main socializing agents according to socialization literature are the family, peers, school, and mass media. Therefore, questions on the interview guide were based around such information. Motivation questions were centered primarily around data from Deci and Ryan (1985), Ryan and Deci, (2000), (2002) and Gould and Horn (1984), concerning intrinsic and extrinsic motives inherent in the sport participation process. And, lastly, quality of experience questions were based on a conglomeration of data from both socialization and motivation literatures while also being heavily influenced by data discovered revealed in Martin’s (1997) study which examined the reasons why high school athletes maintain or terminate their participation in interscholastic sport. Martin’s study was the only study discovered in the literature to substantively align with focus of this study.

Participants were asked open ended questions. By asking open-ended questions, the researcher was able to elicit quotations which comprised the raw data for the study. According to Patton (1990) “quotations reveal the respondents’ levels of emotion, the way in which they have organized the world, their thoughts about what is happening,
their experiences, and their basic perceptions” (p. 78). Also, open-ended questions allows for the researcher to ask probing questions which permits participants to elaborate further upon their answers or to provide examples to enhance the meaning of their responses (Kvale, 1996).

Panel of Experts

A panel of experts comprising three professors with knowledge and expertise in the areas of sport management was utilized. Each panel member reviewed and approved all questions contained on the demographic background questionnaire and interview guide ensuring that all questions asked were applicable to the study’s research questions.

Data Management

To assist in organizing data into a manageable system for analysis, the NUD*IST computer assisted qualitative data analysis program was used. The written transcript of each interview was entered into the NUD*IST program. Using NUD*IST assisted the researcher in organizing codes and themes in a systematic manner which helped in the process of discovering connections in the data. NUD*IST allowed the researcher to “make connections between codes, develop higher-order classifications and categories” (Weitzman & Miles, 1995, p. 3). These connections, classifications, and categories were more clearly developed and their relations to each other more easily seen through NUD*IST’s style of organization (Bruening, 2000).

Data Analysis

“Simply observing and interviewing do not ensure that the research is qualitative; the qualitative researcher must also interpret the beliefs and behaviors of participants” (Janesick, 2003, p. 59).
The purpose of conducting a qualitative study is to produce findings. The methods and strategies used in a study should not be considered as ends in themselves (Janesick, 2003). The danger of becoming too fixated on methods is that substantive findings may become obscured (Janesick, 2003).

Qualitative research demands time in the analysis component of data equal to that of time spent in the field collecting data (Janesick, 2003). Another important characteristic of qualitative research is that the analysis of data occurs continually throughout the design process and begins the moment data is first collected (Glesne, 1999). The end goal of the qualitative analysis process is the construction of an authentic and compelling narrative of what occurred in the study along with evidence of the behaviors and stories of the participants found in the data corpus (field notes, reflexive journal, and interview transcripts) (Janesick, 2003). This narrative should entail a theoretical discussion of the key findings of the study, which should be traceable in the data.

Qualitative researchers use inductive analysis, which means that categories, themes, and patterns come from the data (Janesick, 2003). The categories that emerge from field notes, documents, and interviews are not imposed prior to data collection. Early on the researcher must develop a system for coding and categorizing data and according to Janesick (2003) “there is no one best system for analysis” (p. 63). The role of the qualitative researcher, like that of the dancer or the choreographer, demands a presence, an attention to detail, and a powerful use of the researcher’s own mind and body in analysis and interpretation of the data (Janesick, 2003). No one can dance your dance, choreograph your dance, or interpret your dance but you. In selecting which
analysis technique to use Janesick recommends researchers follow guidelines established and described in the literature. The ultimate decision, in the end, concerning which analysis techniques to use resides with the researcher. “The researcher, like the choreographer, must find the most effective way to tell the story and to convince the audience of the meaning of the study. Staying close to the data is the most powerful means of telling the story” (Janesick, 2003, p.63).

The two methods established and described in the literature, per Janesick’s (2003) recommendation, that guided the analysis efforts of this study was a priori coding as described by Crabtree and Miller (1992) and assertions and warrants as described by Erickson (1986). These two methods aligned most appropriately with the stated purposes of the study as well as contributed to effectively reducing the large volumes of verbal text generated in the study. Data reduction is an important part of analysis because the researcher has to decide how the data will be mediated (Lather, 2000). Inclusion and exclusion decisions must always be made by the researcher (Singer, 2002).

Coding text is a common analysis method in dissecting qualitative text for meaning and conclusions. Coding according to Crabtree and Miller (1992) immerses the researcher into the often massive and confusing jungle of text and has three primary purposes: (a) “to identify “chunks” of text to facilitate future data retrieval and analysis, (b) to identify key data areas, and (c) to generate initial cultural hypotheses” (p. 96). For the current study, data analysis procedures commenced, like most qualitative data analyses, with coding the text for themes.

First, the researcher coded data based on a method similar to Crabtree and Miller’s (1992) description of using a basic set of codes based on a priori theoretical
understandings with the ability to expand upon such codes as the text is continually read and analyzed. The basic set of a priori codes used addressed primarily the socialization of sport focus inherent in the study. Such codes were garnered from a priori data discovered in the socialization of sport literature, with particular emphasis on socializing agents of sport participation.

To guide the remainder of the analysis conducted in the study, Erickson’s (1986) suggestion of nine main elements of a report of fieldwork research were used. The foundation of Erickson’s fieldwork elements center around his suggestion of articulating assertions and evidentiary confirming and disconfirming warrants. Doing such assertions and warrants is crucial in attempting to analyze data to the culminating point of theorizing. Having the skill to assert and warrant text can be the difference of being able to reach to the point of theorizing about data found in the data corpus or not. Ultimately, being able to theorize about the perceived quality factors of the interscholastic athletic participation experience constituted the true value of the researcher’s analysis efforts.

Establishing Trustworthiness of Data

A number of practices can be implemented into a qualitative study to help ensure the trustworthiness of data. The term “credibility” is also often used to describe the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Due to the qualitative researcher serving as the instrument of data collection, according to Patton (1990), the credibility of qualitative inquiry is especially dependent on the credibility of the researcher. Certain techniques have been determined in the literature to increase the probability of a highly credible research study. The techniques employed in this study to increase the likelihood of producing credible findings were triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing and
negative case analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) speak to these approaches as a way of bringing multiple perspectives into research and staying true to the voices that are part of the study.

*Triangulation*

Triangulation is recommended to increase the credibility of qualitative studies and involves the use of multiple data collection methods or sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data are then compared against each other, or triangulated, to check for “. . . corroborative, contrasting, and causally linked information” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p.235). Lincoln and Guba contend that triangulation is a process directed “at a judgment of the accuracy of specific data items” as opposed to one concerned with seeking a universal truth (p. 316).

In this study the primary source of information was obtained from a typical case sample of high school student athletes. The multiple sources of information triangulated against one another were derived from: a) interview transcripts, b) demographic questionnaires, c) field notes, and d) reflexive journaling.

Reflexive journal

“The researcher owns up to his or her perspective on the study and may even track its evolution by keeping a critical reflective journal on the entire research process and the particular role of the researcher” (Janesick, 2003, p.56).

According to Janesick (1998, 1999), the act of journal writing is a rigorous documentary tool. Journaling is part of the triangulation process as it allows the researcher to document the path of his or her feelings and reflection about the research process. A key component of the reflexive journal is the charting of the researcher’s record of his or her own role in the research process. “Like choreographers who
document their thinking and work in their notes and on videotape, the researcher may do the same to contribute to the historical record of the research” (Janesick, 2003, p.51). A reflexive journal was kept for the current study that charted the record of the researcher’s feelings about the research process and her role in the study.

**Member Checks**

Member checking is the process of presenting findings, interpretations and conclusions to participants and confirming the representativeness of the findings in their experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It involves going back to the participants with tentative results and refining them based on their reactions (Singer, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulates that member checks are the “most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). A key feature of member checks, according to Singer (2002) is that the research participant is posited in the role of “expert”.

Establishing a way for participants to review transcripts of their words and contribution to the research study should be a consideration adhered to by all qualitative researchers in the research design process. For this study, member checks were conducted subsequent to the transcription of each interview and creation of preliminary coding of emergent themes. The researcher provided each participant with copies of their transcripts and preliminary themes. Participants’ were allotted time to review and evaluate their transcripts for accuracy and clarification. The researcher wanted to ensure the accuracy of each transcript and the representation of the participants’ voices.

While formal member checks are a stated goal of the researcher process, it is also a goal to incorporate informal member checks into the interview process. Therefore, while interviews were being conducted the researcher constantly reiterated her
interpretation of participants’ responses back to them and had them clarify or disconfirm her interpretations. Member checks allowed the researcher to accurately analyze and represent the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of the participants in the study.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing entails the researcher presenting findings and interpretations to one or more peers in order for the peer to explore meanings, interpretations, bias and inconsistencies contained in the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Often the assistance of a peer debriefer who is familiar with the intricacies of qualitative research or the substantive topic of the focus of the study is solicited. The peer debriefer can serve as a checkpoint for the researcher as the researcher begins to formulate opinions and analysis of the data. Peer debriefers are important because they challenge researchers to look beyond their own, sometimes narrow, suppositions and viewpoints (Singer, 2002). They also help the researcher to identify and solidify emerging themes and patterns of the data (Singer, 2002). Providing constructive critiques of the analysis process or methodological issues can also serve as a responsibility of the peer debriefer.

Two peer debriefers were used for this study. Ultimately, peer debriefing provides the researcher with an opportunity to “. . . clear the mind of emotions and feelings that may be clouding good judgment or preventing emergences of sensible next steps” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Each debriefer was personally asked to participate in the study by the researcher and thus selected at the researcher discretion for the expertise and clarity they were able to provide to understanding the focus of the study. Both debriefers were female doctoral students in sport aligned fields of study. Also, both debriefers were former interscholastic and intercollegiate athletes.
Negative Case Analysis

Negative case analysis involves searching the data corpus for disconfirming or outlier data that is different from the rest of the data. Keeping a keen eye on such data is important as it can help shed light on taken for granted notions present in the data as well as expose atypical issues and phenomenon that may warrant further probing or investigation. Implementing negative case analysis, can help foster a sense of confidence in readers that researchers are thoroughly reviewing data from all angles present and are not desensitized to data that may not fit the norm or the biased perspectives the researcher brings with him or her into a study (Farrell, 2006). The search for falsification, is at the core of negative case analysis (Erickson, 1986). Searching the data corpus for disconfirming and outlier data was implemented in this study.

Transferability

The concept of transferability in qualitative studies serves as a suitable substitute for the concept of generalizability in quantitative studies (James-Brown, 1995). Generalization of findings to a larger population is not the goal of qualitative research like is the case of quantitative research. Instead, qualitative researchers implement small purposive samples in their research designs with the intent of studying a situation or phenomenon in great depth. Then, through the use of thick description of the time, place, context, and culture of the study and study participants, the goal of the qualitative researcher is to aid readers in making transferability assumptions about study.

Qualitative researchers do not dictate to readers the manner in which to interpret the findings of a study. Generalization responsibility is placed in the hands of the readers. The transferability of findings to other situations depends on the degree of similarity
between the situation described in a study and the situation to which it is to be transferred (Hoepfl, 1997). It is the responsibility of the qualitative researcher to provide enough detail of study parameters and data, to leave the reader with enough information to determine for him or herself the applicability of the study’s findings to his or her situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In keeping consistent with the typical nature of qualitative studies, this study was not intent on presenting data to be generalized to the larger high school student athlete population. Instead, the goal of this study was to enhance and deepen the understanding of the salient factors, from the perspective of the high school student athletes in the study that contribute to the athletes’ experiencing a quality interscholastic athletic participation experience. Thick description along with presenting data in narrative form will be presented in order to allow readers to decide if the information contained in the study is transferable (or applicable) to other situations. The intent of this study was to increase readers’ understanding of the meanings of the study that are transferable to individuals in similar situations (e.g., high school student athletes who attend suburban or urban schools).

Ethics

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the Office of Responsible Research Practices (ORRP) at the university where the researcher is completing her doctoral work was sought. Obtaining IRB approval ensured that the researcher followed all proper procedures and protocol deemed necessary by the university and that participants were not subjected to any undue risk or harm from participating in the study.
As Janesick (2003) highlighted, ethical issues arise regularly in the research field and as such qualitative researchers must be prepared to take appropriate precautions to minimize the exposure of participants to any inherent risk embedded in the study.

Participants were informed that interviews would be audio taped, and the tapes transcribed. Each participant was asked to select a pseudonym to be used in the transcripts and the final write-up of the study. This was to ensure that participants’ identities remain confidential. Finally, each participant and their parent and/or guardian was informed that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that at any time during the duration of the study they were free to withdraw from the study, stop the interview at any time, or make suggestions for changes to the transcripts without any disapproval from the researcher.

Personal Statement

“There is no value-free or bias-free design. Early on, the qualitative researcher, identifies his or her own biases and articulates the ideology or conceptual frame for their study” (Janesick, 2003, p.56)

By researchers revealing their own role and biases to readers throughout the research process, readers will be able to understand the relationship between the researcher and participants (Janesick, 2003). This relationship is not hidden in the qualitative research design. Actually, the qualitative researcher should be honest and open about his or her own biases at the onset of the study, during the study, and at the end of the study by clearly describing and explaining their precise role in the study. Attached to exposing such biases the researcher should also be committed to continuously probing
his or her beliefs as to not have tunnel vision about their views. By identifying one’s biases, one can easily see where the questions that guide the study are crafted (Janesick, 2003).

The description of the role of the researcher is a critical component of the written report of the study. Thus, I attempt to do just that, expose my personal biases on the topic at hand, the high school athletic participation experience. It is hoped that by making transparent my beliefs and relationship to the topic of this study, it will allow me to confront the major assertions to be discovered in the study with credibility while surveying the full range of the data for evidence (Janesick, 2003).

My interest in the topic of this research culminates with my experience of serving in the capacity as a high school athletic director. For five years, I served in the role as high school athletic director for an urban school district located in a large Midwestern city. During my five year tenure, I was athletic director at two of the eighteen high schools located in the district. I spent four years at one school and one year at the other. During my tenure as athletic director I was committed to engaging in professional development and broadening my skills as an athletic director and thus was actively involved in all the local, state, and national professional associations available for interscholastic athletic administrators.

As a result of what I witnessed in my role as high school athletic director, I developed firm and passionate beliefs about the interscholastic athletic participation experience. Specifically, what I witnessed was a disservice to student athletes in the schools I worked. The disservice centered mainly around the inclusion of a considerable number of unqualified and ill informed adults charged with supervising athletes via their
roles as coaches. Due to the hiring practices and state laws that governed the hiring of coaches in the district, individuals who were not comprehensively qualified to coach were unfortunately able to be hired as coaches. Consequently, I felt that many student athletes were subjected to the direct supervision and leadership of these adults, and as a result failed to have the opportunity to experience an educationally relevant athletic participation experience.

I personally believe interscholastic sports are educationally beneficial and as such I believe concerted efforts should be made to properly organize and manage interscholastic athletic experiences that are capable of promoting the emotional, mental, physical, academic, and social growth of its student athlete participants. I believe high school sports have the ability to transcend negative aspects of the high school experience and positively connect students to their schools. I feel that for many high school students participating in sports contributes to motivating them to stay in school, perform satisfactorily academically, and have pride in their school. This belief prompts my interest in the topic of this study. I feel that because sports have such a profound ability to influence a student’s emotional and academic development and enhance their ties to the school environment, efforts need to be taken to understand exactly what it is about the sport experience that student athletes enjoy and embrace. This information will serve to have far reaching implications but mainly it will help those charge with organizing high school sport participation experiences, namely coaches and administrators, to gain a keener sense of the clientele they service and how best to satisfactorily meet the expectations and needs of that clientele.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

This study examined the high school athletic participation experiences of twelve high school student athletes to determine which aspects of their experience contribute to their perception of a quality experience. Quality, for the purposes of this study, was defined using Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry’s (1988) definition of service quality which is interpreted as a comparison of a customer’s desired and perceived services. The data analysis process of this study culminated in identifying five desired aspects of the interscholastic athletic participation experience per the participants’ experiences across five themes. The findings of this study are presented as follows: an overview of the research analysis process, a summary of the demographic background information of the participants, socialization findings, participant motives for participating in high school sports, and an explanation of the themes of the participants’ desired aspects of the interscholastic sport participation experience.

The themes of the desired aspects of the interscholastic athletic participation experience include: (a) cohesion, (b) preferred coach qualities, (c) being recognized (d) exposure to the development of social connections, and (e) a time beneficial experience.
These themes were identified by the researcher and confirmed by two peer debriefers who read participant transcripts independent of each other. The initial analysis of the data corpus (e.g., questionnaire responses, transcripts, field notes, and reflexive journal) revealed forty-two codes of themes. However, with the assistance of NUD*IST, a qualitative computer program, the researcher was able to efficiently condense the large volumes of text and initial coding to five themes.

The primary concern and focus of this chapter is to present the narratives and thoughts of the study participants. Specifically, the results are presented for the reader to gain a greater understanding of quality perceptions of the interscholastic athletic participation experience from the perspective of twelve high school student athletes. The results of the data analysis are not a generalization of all high school student athletes’ quality perceptions.

Overview of the Research Process

Data was collected for this study through the use of a demographic background questionnaire and individual one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Informed consent, parental permission, and assent from the participants were obtained from each participant and his or her parent/guardian (when participants were under the age of eighteen) at the beginning of each interview session. Each participant gave of their time freely and willingly and was compensated, solely by the researcher, both informally (an oral, in-person thank you) and formally (a thank you card sent in the mail). Each interview took place in a location at the participant’s and his or her parent/guardian’s discretion.

Each interview session began with the researcher reading a script of the purpose and outlined procedures of the research. Next, participants completed the demographic
questionnaire, where they selected a pseudonym that would identify them throughout the write-up of the study. Following the completion of the questionnaire, participants participated in an interview. Interviews lasted no longer than one hour. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. All transcriptions were done solely by the researcher. No longer than two weeks after the interview, participants were provided with a copy of their transcript, permitting them to validate the wording and context of their interview.

Demographic Background Information of the Participants

To better understand the students interviewed for this study demographic and contextual data concerning the participants will be shared. Gaining an understanding of the background and context surrounding the participants will aid in providing a point of reference of the participants’ viewpoints and perceptions. Additionally, this information will serve as an appropriate reference for readers attempting to make transferable connections and conclusions regarding the findings of this study.

A summary of the demographic data for each participant is provided in Table 1. The twelve participants of this study consisted of six student athletes who attended suburban schools and six who attended urban schools per the Ohio Department of Education’s typology of schools (ODE, 2006). There were a total of six males and six female participants (three of each gender per type of school). All participants attended high schools located in the Central Ohio area and participated across a variety of sports including, football, basketball, track, softball, volleyball, and soccer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/*</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Year in School</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Siblings Play</th>
<th>Varsity Sport(s) Played / Captain</th>
<th>Other Activities In or Out of School</th>
<th>Age Began Sports</th>
<th>Play Time</th>
<th>Suburban/ Urban (S / U)</th>
<th>House- hold Structure</th>
<th>Parents Played Sports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L.D.*</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Football Basketball</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Only Child</td>
<td>Football Basketball</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Mom Only</td>
<td>Dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerom*</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Basketball Football Track</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dad Only</td>
<td>Dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akeyla*</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Basketball Volleyball</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Mom Only</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indy*</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Volleyball Basketball</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Mom Only</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin*</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Basketball Volleyball Tennis</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Guardian – Older Sister</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.C.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Both Parents</td>
<td>Dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante*</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Football Basketball Soccer</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Mom Only</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris*</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Basketball Track</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Both Parents</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporty*</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Basketball Softball</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Mom and Step Father</td>
<td>Dad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tubbie</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Softball Soccer Volleyball</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Both Parents</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Whole Game</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Shared Parenting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes captain on one of their teams

Table 1: Summary of Demographical Background Information
Socialization Findings

An inherent focus of this study was to look for similarities and differences across participants based upon the type of school participants attend (urban versus suburban). This focus was captured through the questionnaire section collected in tandem with interviews to answer the research questions of the study. The demographic background information of the participants revealed that the participants, despite attending differently categorized schools, seem more similar than dissimilar.

Primarily the socialization information revealed that the participants were socialized into sports around the same time period in their lives, early childhood, were introduced and influenced to play sports primarily by their parents (who had sports playing backgrounds themselves), were athletes who received substantial playing time in all the sports they participated in, had siblings who also played sports (only participant was the only child), and were majority African American (only one subject was Caucasian and indicated she was both Caucasian and African American). A special point of emphasis concerning the household structures of the participants was that of the six urban participants in the study only one resided in a two parent household while the majority of the suburban participants (all but one) resided in two parent households. Also, participants as a whole indicated the media as being a secondary influence in their desires to play sports. The majority of the participants revealed that they had plans to remain involved in sports beyond their high school years by playing sports at the college level. The participants began participating in sports by an average age of seven. Lastly, the first organized sport participation experience the participants experienced was play at the community recreational level. Below are sentiments from the participants which validate
the socialization findings previously articulated. Please note these sentiments come from students across a variety of school type, gender, and sport played. Regardless of those variables, students seemed to have very similar sport socialization experiences:

Parental Influence:
My dad (in response to who has influenced him the most to play sports) because he played high school sports he’s real, very good at basketball and I wanted to be good like he was (A.C.).

My father introduced me to basketball he used to play basketball in high school and was going to play in college but decided not to (Erica).

My dad and my mom (introduced me), my dad he was throwing footballs at me since I was like five, four years old. (Toledo).

My dad and mom they took me to the recreation center and signed me up for the little league (for basketball) (Indy).

Media Influence
Yeah, when I look at the sports magazines it shows me different stuff and makes me want to play . . . been watchin’ sports on TV since I started playin, it made me always look at TV and try and do what they do (L.D.).

Yeah, cause like when I see people playing sports on TV they look like they are having fun and that’s what I like to do is have fun so I just thought that if I would play a team sport or any kind of sport then I would have fun doing it (Sporty).

I watch how like Kobe Bryant and LeBron James and how they would play and I would try to mimic exactly what they did I tried to wear what they wore, the baggy clothes, I tried to wear their shoes and stuff like that so I would look at the media and idol myself after their game (Jerom).

It’s just something I’ve always liked to do, growing up I remember watching Emit Smith play and it was something I wanted to do it was a lot of fun (A.C.).

College Plans
I plan on going to college for basketball and hopefully I get a scholarship (Akeyla).

Yeah, I plan to play college basketball, I don’t know yet really where but that’s my goal so I’ve just been working hard on that trying to get that done (Chris).
Yes, ma’am. Like I’m trying to do the best I can do in both the sports that I play so I can get a scholarship and I plan to go wherever the scholarship takes me (Sporty).

Motives for Participation in High School Sports

In addition to gaining a sense of the demographic background characteristics of study participants, it is as equally beneficial and warranted, especially for transferability purposes, that the salient contextual facets that surround the lives of the participants be articulated. These facets emerged, like the study’s themes, from the data analysis of the background questionnaires and individual interviews. Articulating these contextual facets aid in enhancing the comprehension of exactly who the study participants are and what circumstances as a whole envelop them.

As a whole, several poignant motivational factors characterize the study participants. These factors center around the participants’ motives to play on their high school teams. Understanding these motives serve as a precursor to understanding the participants’ quality perceptions, and thus the findings of this study.

A preponderance of the study participants answered a resounding *no* to the question of whether or not they weighed the reputation of their coach in their pre-participation decisions. Comprehending such logic of the participants concerning their pre-participation decision lies at the heart of understanding their motives for wanting to participate on their high school teams. Quite frankly nothing about the *coach*, his or her reputation, his or her coaching style or what he or she stood for, was consciously taken into consideration by any of the participants; the coach basically was not assessed at all in the athlete’s train of thought. Erica accentuates this point best when she answers, “No, I didn’t consider anything, I just wanted to play basketball,” in regards to whether she
considered her coach’s reputation in her decision to play basketball. L.D. in response to the same question answered plainly, “I didn’t think about nothing when I first came on the team.” Chris rationalized that the reason why he did not consider anything about his coaches prior to joining his teams was because he figured he would, “just get on the team first and then see for myself (how the coach was).” For A.C., he proclaimed “I didn’t consider the reputation of my coach just because I wanted to play, I knew what I wanted to do . . .”

Actually, the data revealed three motives that capture best the reasons subjects participated in high school sports: (1) participants’ longevity participating in sports, (2) their affinity for fun and (3) their admiration for their sport. All three motives were consistently referenced by participants as being embedded in their pre-participation decision process. These points are emphasized best by the answers participants provided to the question, “why do you participate on the team(s) you participate on?”

**Longevity**

It’s just something I’ve always liked to do, . . . (A.C, & Akeyla).

Because that’s what I like doin’, that’s what I grew up doing, it just made me start likin to do it (L.D.).

I participate on the softball team because I just happen to be good at it since I’ve been playin’ it since I was like 5 or 6, (Sporty).

It just every since I was younger its just playing basketball playing football and running track is something that I wanted to do . . .”, (Jerom).

Just being use to playin’ basketball, its something I’ve been doing since like I was younger in elementary school and I just was like I am going out for the basketball team, nothing really so but just knowing that once I get to high school that’s what I wanted to do is play on the basketball team (Indy).
**Affinity for Fun**

References to sports being *fun* were interspersed throughout the data continually. Below are some of the quotes that summarize participants’ feelings about participation being fun.

I just go out there just to do it, for one for myself, and just to have fun I have fun (Jerom).

. . . it was something I wanted to do, it was a lot of fun, (A.C.).

Naw, I never wanted to quit, because I always have fun and stuff (L.D.)

. . . being able to have fun not just like so much work work work but fun, fun is a big part of sports. . . . I think sports should also be about having fun and not just so much driving and pushing . . ., (Indy).

**Admiration for Sport**

Participants’ motive of the admiration for their sport is stressed by several of the participants:

I’ve never really thought about this, this is a good question (regarding, why he participates on the teams he participates on), um, I don’t know I just like playin’ basketball . . . (Chris).

Um, I’m not sure (with hesitation), I’m not sure, I haven’t ever really thought about it. Just once I got to high school I wanted to play basketball (Indy).

I participate on basketball, because it’s my favorite sport . . . (Sporty).

The simple fact that I like playin’ football, so I just keep playing, I like football so I couldn’t quit (Toledo).

I just wanted to play football (laughing). I just wanted to play high school football, I just wanted the experience (Toledo).

Sporty’s reply to the question of whether or not the win/loss record mattered to her or had anything to do with her decision to play on her basketball team, also provides
support of the motive, admiration of sport when she professes, “it doesn’t matter, well it matters but if you love the sport like I do then you’ll play anyway just to get the benefits and joy out of it.”

Desired Aspects of the Interscholastic Athletic Participation Experience

Now that an understanding has been gained of who the study participants are and what their sport participation motives consist of, the focus of this chapter will shift to an explanation of the major themes found in the study. These themes center around desired aspects of the participation experience. Articulating these desired themes are the heart of this study. Once an understanding is reached of participants’ desires, then such desires can be attempted to be granted. Consequently, once desires are granted, based on the study’s definition of quality, quality high school athletic participation experiences can be created.

Theme 1: Cohesion

The first desired aspect of the interscholastic athletic participation experience centers around the concept of cohesion. Doherty and Carron (2003) explained that cohesion represents unity, togetherness, concordance or harmony of a group. Carron, Brawley and Widmeyer (1998) viewed cohesion as comprising aspects of both social and task cohesion. They wrote that cohesion is a “dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs” (p. 213). Social cohesion focuses primarily on the interpersonal appeal of a team, while task cohesion the achievement of goals. According to Cartwright (1968) social cohesion boils down to the “we-ness” of group members versus individualism. It can also be described as an
individual’s sense of belonging to a particular group and his or her feelings of moral associated with membership in a group (Bollen and Hoyle, 1990). Task cohesion refers to the shared commitment among members of a group towards achieving a goal that requires the collective efforts of the group. In a nutshell, social cohesion refers to whether or not group members like each other, while task cohesion refers to whether they share the same goals.

Participants repeatedly referenced the significance and desire of having elements of both task and social cohesion in their participation experiences.

Social Cohesion

Ten out of twelve participants affirmed that they considered their teammates as members of their close peer group. Such affection exemplifies the tenants of social cohesion. Akeyla’s admiration of her teammates and thus appeal of social cohesion is evidenced by her pronouncing, “All of them (her teammates), my team is my closest friends.” Additionally, A.C., Dante, and Sporty, with no hesitation answered a resounding “yes” to the question of whether or not their teammates are considered their friends.

Participants’ affinity of social cohesion became even more clear when participants were asked, what aspects of being on their teams they liked the most. Responses clearly alluded to strong feelings of a cohesive team. Chris describes this as the “family feel” instilled in his team. “It’s like a family,” according to Chris, “knowing that like the person next to you needs you just as much as you need him and just pulling together winning games and its like a family basically tryin’ to achieve one thing which is . . . to have fun really.” For Dante, his favorite aspect of the team, after a long pause of being in
deep thought about his answer was, “the relationships you build with like your friends, sometimes your coaches . . .” Jerom described his teammates as being like brothers.

“We’re all just like one big family, so the best part out of participating on sports teams is just having that communication with my other brothers.”

Jerom also felt that the brotherhood he experienced on his teams also contributes to his teams’ success, “one reason why we are successful on all my teams that I play on is because we are like a band of brothers.” Erin contended she is part of a successful team because of how close her and her teammates are. According to Erin, her and her teammates understand each other, “we know each other’s weaknesses and strengths and we try to capitalize on them and play as a team.”

Finally, for Chris, the aspect of participating that contributed most to him enduring a quality experience is in his words, was his “teammates”. He says, “I say teammates because the record I mean you can look at that on paper but you know being around people that you like I say makes you more happy and quality.”

Task Cohesion

How participants interpreted “success” most poignantly conveys their desires for task cohesion. Akeyla and Jerom’s explanation of why their teams are successful is filled with task cohesion overtones,

We worked as a team, and we worked hard all season. We was a great team, my best friend and I were the leaders on the team and we all, we all was the strength of the team but they helped so much and we did it, we got there (their league championship game), we didn’t finish but we got there and it was the first time since forever so we made history. So it was fun . . . When we all worked hard as a team it felt good, . . .them days that the whole team work hard we like now we know why we won, we really worked hard, I love them days when everybody’s on the same page (Akeyla).
We were part of a successful team (in football) because everyone knew their role, nobody came out and tried to do something that they weren’t capable of doing, everybody who came out there knew exactly what they had to do, knew how they could do it and knew when to do it and that’s why we were so successful at football . . . (Jerom).

Theme 2: Desired Coach Qualities

The next desired aspect of the interscholastic athletic participation experience found in the data centers around the coach. Although it was noted earlier that participants did not consider much about the coach in their pre-participation considerations to join a team, the relevance of the coach changes dramatically once they join the team. Actually, once athletes become members of teams the significance and influence of the coach is heightened. The coach’s heighten influence is evidenced most by the voices of the participants who said it is the coach who impacts the quality of their participation experience the most.

L.D.’s comments regarding the coach having the primary ability to influence the quality of his experience the most states, “basically my head coach and the people I am around, the head coach does it all, he sets up the rosters and stuff and tells who is playin’ and who’s not.” Indy’s take on the coach’s ability to influence the quality of her experience stated, “I think your coaches . . . if your coaches don’t, like I say, get you like into it it can be bad.” Jerom professed, “the coaches impact it the most (the quality of the experience) because the coaches control everything and they basically rule everything.”

For Tubbie, who impacts the quality of her experience is also the coach as she expressed, “like a coach that isn’t nice or isn’t like cooperative with us isn’t good (for the experience).”
After establishing the significance of the coach’s influence over athletes subsequent to the decision to join teams, the data revealed two coaching qualities/characteristics that participants consistently referenced as being desirable and indicative of a *good* coach. These qualities can situate to enhance athletes’ experience of being on a team. The qualities/characteristics consist of the coach being competent/knowledgeable and personable. The following two sections will highlight what competent/knowledgeable and personable means to participants.

**A Competent/Knowledgeable Coach**

According to Indy, “. . . like if you are going to be a coach you need to be able to know what you’re doing . . .” A good coach, according to Chris should be, “. . . a motivator to his players and basically know what he’s doing . . .” Lastly, A.C.’s and Jerom’s suggestion of a knowledgeable coach state,

A good coach should possess playing the best player, um, being knowledgeable about the game, and probably that’s about it and just being able to coach in general because some coaches are just out there yellin’ and screamin’, they can know a lot about the game but then its like well what are you doing, you are not teaching anything properly . . . (A.C.).

. . . another thing is just knowing the game, you know what I am sayin, when you know a coach knows a game and really understands the geometry of the game and stuff like that then you will definitely now that whatever that coach says is going to be right but when you have a coach that you don’t think knows the game that well or you feel like you know a little bit more than that coach then that doesn’t make a good coach . . . (Jerom).

**A Personable coach**

Chris emphasized the importance of a personable coach by saying,

I would just say that coaches should have a relationship with players, some coaches break away from that you know, all they care about is winning games and pleasing the fans, I say just have a good relationship with your players and don’t worry about that type of thing.
Many of the comments regarding a personable coach centered around the idea that coaches should build relationships with their players. Jerom, stated, “. . . a coach that cannot connect to you on a personal level or a coach that you can’t talk to, that doesn’t make a good coach.” Erin says,

A coach should be able to relate to their players . . . do things with their players and get involved in their life outside of their sport, . . . know each player for who they are and not for what they can do for them.

Erin also said if she could create a perfect team experience it would include providing, “personable people to coach . . . the people make the program.” Indy says she just thinks coaches, “should be good with kids . . . don’t come if you don’t really want to be there, . . . know that you want to be there to help somebody.”

Adjectives and phrases used by participants to describe a personable coach included, passionate, dedicated, helpful, patient, knowing athletes outside of their sport, relating to athletes, humorous, and good with kids. Jerom sums it up when he explains the reason why he liked his track coach so much,

I look to him like a God Dad because he did so much more for me off the track and out of the high jump pit than anybody has every done for me in this school. He stayed with me late until 10:00pm trying to talk and help me finish my homework, he always encourages me, he would call me on Sundays and ask me to come to his church, . . .

The participants’ previous interpretations of what a good coach is are insightful but the dynamism of the coach is thickened as the data also indicates that, the coach is cited as the primary reason for causing athletes to want to quit. Specifically, if coach qualities/characteristics are not favorable in the athlete’s eyes it serves as ground for the athlete to want to quit. Tubbie, like many of the participants, quit one of her teams based solely on the coach. “I played volleyball and considered quitting and did because I
disliked the coach . . .” A.C., also disclosed a time when he wanted to quit his team and transfer to another school to play his sport because of the coaches, “well there was a time when I thought about going to a different school to play on their team because I felt like I wasn’t really getting treated fairly as far as some of the coaches.” Akeyla’s account is also about quitting the team due to the coach,

Yes, I quit volleyball in the 10th grade because I didn’t get along with the coach at all. Like nobody did on the team, everybody didn’t like her but it just seemed like specifically me, I couldn’t play for her, it was like she was takin’ away my, my, I don’t know, my competitive edge, I didn’t want to play no more. It’s like if the coach is not going to have me and she don’t like me and I don’t like her, but I still tried to play for me and for my team but it seemed like she took it away from me and I didn’t want to play no more and I couldn’t do it I felt like I was wastin’ my time because I wasn’t playin like I knew I knew how, so I stopped playin. If I’m gonna hurt my team if I’m not going to play like I know how to play because of someone else or you know, I just thought it would be best if I left . . .”

In summary it was discovered that the coach’s influence in the athletes’ participation experience is strong and dynamic. On one hand the coach can serve as the key factor in contributing to athletes having a quality experience, if he or she possesses the appropriate qualities/characteristics, or on the other hand the coach can be the reason for athletes to quit, if he or she does not possess the appropriate qualities/characteristics in the athlete’s eyes.

Theme 3: Being Recognized

The theme of the third desired aspect speaks to the recognition embedded in and auxiliary to being involved in high school sports programs. Participants’ revealed that both formal and informal modes of recognition are desired and valued. Participants’ accounts of what attracted them to join their teams and what benefits they felt they received as a result of membership on their teams underscores the significance, in their
eyes, of being recognized. Also, resultant feelings, such as pride and honor, as an attachment of recognition were brought to light by participants. Such feelings of pride are exemplified as A.C. recalls how he felt after the first time he was recognized, publicly, by a game announcer at his football game, “. . . everyone comes out to the games, even like the beginning of the season games bring in at least 7,000, 7,500 people a game, and when playoffs come around its like 10,000 and just playin’ in front of that many people its like a lot fun, when you get your first tackle and they call your name over the loud speaker its like, good.”

Jerom talks about how witnessing older athletes when he was younger being informally recognized and in the limelight sparked his desire to want to play high school sports,

When I was in middle school we went to the high school games and seeing how live it was and the crowd going crazy and the student section jumping up and down, that just attracted me to it, just to go out there and perform in front of the people and then seeing how popular they were, . . . that’s what attracted me to play sports in high school.

L.D. admits frankly, that it is the recognition he receives for being on his teams that he likes most, “. . . I like being on the news and in the newspaper after a game the next day, having pictures of me in the newspaper and I just like people coming up to me and telling me good game and stuff.”

For Chris one of the most noted benefits of being on his team, is the formal and public recognition and awards he receives, “. . . you get a lot of recognition, like varsity letters and you are just well known around the school and town.” In Sporty’s subsequent comment a sense of the typical modes of recognition athletes receive as a consequence of their sport participation are highlighted, “they (my teachers) know I’m on the team
because of the announcements and the media like the community newspaper and stuff.”

For Dante the power of the recognition he receives is articulated, as he exclaims “. . . you get all this publicity from everywhere; you know others know who you are.”

Theme 4: Opportunities for the Development of Social Connections

The fourth aspect of the participation experience that participants contend is desirable is the opportunity to be exposed to developing social connections as result of being on the team. Participants talked about how being connected to other people and other experiences aided in enhancing their participation experience. For instance, Toledo explained what it is he liked most about his participation experience, “the people I get to play around, like other good people, other people from different schools.” Sporty talks about liking the opportunity to be connected to other people as the aspect she likes most about being on her teams, “like I said before you get to meet a lot of new people and you get to have chemistry and just vibe with other people, that’s what I like.” Likewise, Indy articulates that being connected to others through her participation experiences, is a benefit in her eyes, “. . . you meet a lot of new people, . . . you see so many different things.”

Jerom’s quote highlights what he feels impacts the quality of his participation experience the most which centers around his opportunity to connect to others which in the long run allows him to develop life long friendships,

Just having that friendship and having that life long friendship, I know that some of my basketball players are going to go different ways but I know that when I see them in the street thirty years from now they are not going to look at me like I am a stranger . . . we’re going to connect because we built up such strong relationships that we had in high school . . . that’s what makes it all worth it, is just the life long friendship that you gonna have with your teammates.
Tubbie, draws attention to the significance of being connected to other athletic department staff members by articulating the importance of the role of her athletic trainer in contributing to her sport participation experience being enjoyable.

One big important ingredient is our athletic trainer, we have a new trainer and our old one didn’t really connect with the athletes and our trainer now, is very fun she laughs at almost everything, she has conversations with us, she’s not just like what’s your problem, takes care of us and makes us leave, like we sit in her office after practice for like an half an hour and talk and have fun and I think that’s a big part is having someone else to connect to besides coaches.

Jerom, underscores how athletes are privy to a specialized “network” of sorts as he shares his reasons for participating on the teams he participates on, “. . . it introduces me to a lot of people and I have a lot of new friends and then I have a lot of new connects to people that I never really had connects to.” To convey the salience of being connected most plainly, A.C. admits, “I think if I didn’t play football there would be a lot of different things I wouldn’t be exposed to as I have been today.”

Theme 5: Time Beneficial Experience

Lastly, the data reveals that participants desire an experience that is worthy of their time. Specifically, participants want to be part of an experience that is worth the sacrifices they endure to take part in their athletic experiences. Participants as a whole acknowledged that participating in sports is time consuming, with most of their free time being absorbed by sports. Akeyla says,

Oh, God (laughing) all my time, all my free time is committed to my sports. That’s all I do, the only time I don’t use my free time on sports is probably Saturdays and Sundays and during the summer time . . . the majority of my time I spend on sports.
It was determined that participants’ spend a minimum of nine months out of the year dedicated to their sports. Eleven participants (all but Jerom) admitted that there are no other activities in their lives that they spend as much time on as they do their sports. As a consequence of the amount of time participants dedicate to their sport, they sacrifice a lot. Participants’ sacrifices are articulated by the following sentiments,

I sacrifice a lot of free time because I could be doing other stuff like hanging out with other friends and going out to the movies and stuff but I dedicate myself to my sports (Sporty).

Having as much of a social life as the so called “regulars” . . . (Erin).

I sacrifice hanging out on the weekends, going to parties and hanging out with friends and stuff when I want to go but I just go and workout or something (L.D.).

Free time and getting a part-time job. A lot of my friends now have part-time jobs and they have a lot of more spending money, they have a lot of more free time to do what they want to do and because when I get out of practice I have to come home and do my homework then that just leaves very very few time for me to actually have to myself and finding a part-time job that would be very very hard with me playing sports (Jerom).

Lastly, Akeyla and Sporty, in their comments about what they like least about participating on their teams sheds light on the issue of desiring a time worthy experience,

Sometimes the amount of time you have to put into it it kind of gets on my nerves because I have like other things that I would like to be doin’ but instead you have to go to your sports practices and stuff like that instead of doin what you want to do so you have to give up a lot of stuff (Sporty).

I don’t like that it takes up all my time sometimes, I don’t mind to a certain extent but sometimes I be wanted to go home and breath cause it wears you out and then when you have to come to school and work sometimes you don’t be feeling like it but you have to; I guess its all apart of being a student athlete, . . . (Akeyla).
Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the data suggest that a quality interscholastic participation experience entails five aspects of the participation experience. These aspects were extrapolated from participants’ discussions of their interscholastic participation experiences and what of their experiences they admire, enjoy, relish, appreciate, dislike, and desire. Taking all five findings into consideration broadens the understanding of the complexity and depth of the interscholastic experience.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that contribute to a quality interscholastic athletic participation experience. Quality perceptions of high school student athletes who attended both suburban and urban schools were obtained. Individual interviews were utilized to elicit student athlete’s perceptions. An inherent focus in the study was to examine whether quality perceptions varied depending on what type of school students attended and how they were socialized into sport. This study supports and broadens existing literature that examines high school sport participation, and explores quality factors of the participation experience common to high school student athletes.

The background of the study’s focus along with the study’s significance was presented in the first chapter. In the second chapter the review of literature addressed issues affecting participation, namely socialization and motivation. Also, the notion of student athletes being conceived as customers of interscholastic programs was highlighted along with an interpretation of quality. The information presented in both Chapter’s 1 and 2 serve as a basis for creating a general understanding of the existing literature, and sets parameters for discussion of the findings in this study.
Chapter 3 provided an outline of the process developed and used to collect the data for this study. Step-by-step procedures of the data gathering process was detailed. Specifically, details of the research design, including a pilot study, protocol, selection of participants, data collection, instrument development, data management, and analysis was spelled out. Chapter 4 presented the results and findings from collected data. That chapter identified and explained quality themes via desired aspects of the interscholastic athletic participation experience per the views of the study’s twelve participants.

The last step in this study is the interpretation of the results. It should be noted that more than one perspective or interpretation is possible. Caplan and Caplan (1999) state, “the researcher must take into account every detail of the study and come up with an interpretation related to what actually happened” (p. 28). The purpose of Chapter 5 is to authenticate such an interpretation.

The focus of Chapter 5 is to conceptualize and theorize about the findings identified in Chapter 4. Providing meaning to the themes and the underlying assumptions of the findings is priority in Chapter 5. Answering the “so what?” question of research guides the formation of the chapter. More specifically, bringing the findings of the study to life by connecting the relationships, both apparent and implied, of the overt themes found in the study is the main concern. These relationships will be exposed, discussed, and interpreted. Most importantly an explanation of how the themes answer the research questions in the study and relate to the literature are goals of the chapter. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the study’s implications along with recommendations for future research on this topic.
Interpretation of Findings

Research Questions

The study was conducted in an effort to answer the following research questions:

1. What aspects of the interscholastic athletic participation experience contribute to student athletes’ perception of a quality participation experience?
   1a. Do these aspects vary across urban and suburban interscholastic athletes?
   1b. Do these aspects relate to different patterns of socialization into sport participation?

Lack of variance of study participants

In Chapter 4 the researcher contended that study participants were socialized into sport in more similar than dissimilar ways. Also, participants’ quality perceptions were found not to vary much based on the type of school participants’ attended. Therefore, the two sub-questions of the study can be answered no; athletes’ quality perceptions did not vary across urban and suburban athletes and quality perceptions were not distinct based on socialization patterns into sport.

In attempting to explain the lack of variance across participants the researcher believes that the participants’ status of being athletes superseded any differences inherent across school type and socialization. Overall participants’ views and opinions about what contributes to a quality experience situated around similar themes and were not distinct to suburban versus urban students. In the end it appears that participants’ point of reference of being athletes anchored their views more dominantly than the type of school attended.

It is as if the twelve study participants could be viewed more appropriately as one cohort, as athletes, rather than as a dichotomous group of students based on school type.
Nowhere in the data did the views or opinions of suburban athletes situate to be categorically different than that of urban athletes. Contrary to the different school cultures that may traditionally characterize students who attend suburban and urban schools, due largely to socio-economic status, as is implied in the definition of urban and suburban schools (ODE, 2006), no distinctions, culturally, confined this study’s participants’ views.

Mickens’s (1999) also found a similar phenomenon in her study regarding the similarity of views of urban and suburban students. In comparing the attitudes and perceptions of suburban and urban honor students in her study about the effectiveness of their advanced placement programs, Mickens found that the students shared similar views. She did note the differences of the environments of the two types of students by highlighting that “urban AP students clearly exist in a different home and school environment than suburban students” (p. 137), but the differences of the environments did not alter the student’s perceptions.

To understand the lack of variance of study participants’ views from a theoretical basis, literature from motivation and identity development prove to be applicable. In particular, studies which have examined athletes’ motivation for participation in sport and athletes’ development of an athletic identity aid in providing support of the lack of variance finding discovered in this study (Ryska, 2002). For it seems to be an athletic identity that links study participants together so strongly, transcending differences among them socio-economically or culturally.

According to Ryska (2002) an athlete identity is the degree to which an adolescent identifies with their athletic role. For this study, it appears that participants
identified with their athletic role to a degree that it overshadowed any other roles relevant to the athletes (e.g., being a suburban or urban student). Individuals, to Ryska, are multidimensional by nature and, as such, tend to activate specific dimensions of their self-identity in order to facilitate the processing of self-referent information. Ryska contended that the development of self-perceptions is largely influenced by the particular dimension of self-identity, which is salient within a given situation. It is suggested that participants’ salient self-identity in this study was “athlete”.

Sport research has indicated that the athletic role constitutes a meaningful dimension of self-identity and influences various responses of athletes (Ryska, 2002). That certainly seems to be the case in this study. Individuals with a strong athletic identity are more likely to interpret sport-related events in terms of how the events impact their athletic functioning than would individuals who are less committed to the athletic role (Ryska, 2002). Once again, for this study, based on the findings, it can be interpreted that the participants’ strong athletic identities posited them to be committed to their athletic role and thus served to be the lens through which they answered the study questions and articulated their desires. Participants’ athletic roles seemed to be the dimension of their identity that grounded their opinions, views, and perceptions, thus potentially contributing to their views around similar themes and not being distinct across school type.

_Underlying Relationship of Study’s Findings_

At the crux of this study is answering what aspects of the interscholastic athletic participation experience contribute to a quality experience. This was discerned from participants based on their desires. The surface answer to this question, is found in the
findings revealed in Chapter 4, (a) cohesion, (b) desired coach qualities: a competent/knowledgeable coach and a personable coach, (c) being recognized, (d) being exposed to opportunities for social connections, and (e) enduring a time beneficial experience. However, beneath the surface of the findings, lies an interpretation of how the five findings relate to one another and contribute to further answering the research question. In seeking to interpret the relationship of the study’s findings, the literature was consulted to highlight previously held and emerging views concerning the focus of the study.

Conceptualization of the Interscholastic Athletic Experience, “A Stimulating Environment”

The researcher contends that the findings of the study culminate together to suggest that what ultimately contributes to a quality interscholastic athletic participation experience is, in a nutshell, a stimulating environment. The researcher conceptualizes that the interscholastic participation experience takes place within the realm of an environment. An environment that is broad, vast, and far reaching. This conceptualization is the researcher’s own and is not grounded in any specific strand of literature but mainly is influenced by the researcher’s personal involvement and understanding of interscholastic athletics. Consequently, the researcher feels strongly that together, the five findings of the study situate to constitute the compelling components of a stimulating athletic participation environment which in turn contributes to a quality experience. The researcher contends that a stimulating environment is one that meets the desires of its athletes, and as such contributes to athletes experiencing a quality experience.
The interscholastic participation environment due to its broad nature encompasses many facets. Metaphorically speaking, these facets can be conceived as being both intangible and tangible in nature. The intangible facets consist of things such as participation motives, emotions, and relationships established within the environment while tangible facets include individuals prevalent in the environment such as the athletes themselves, coaches, and a playing facility. A discussion of the facets that illuminated in this study as being most contributory to a quality experience will be discussed and juxtaposed against the literature.

Salient Intangible Facets of the Interscholastic Participation Environment

Confirmed in the Literature: Fun Motive, Admiration of Sport Motive, Development of Friendships, Social Connections with Others, and Cohesion

The intangible facet of the participation environment which emerged as being most salient to athletes’ quality desires was participation motives. Study participants were asked about their motives for participation in sport and on their teams in general and in attempting to search for connections and theorize about the findings of the study it became obvious that participation motives heavily influenced athletes’ desires. An attempt to explain why participant motives are an important ingredient in contributing to a quality experience will be provided. Literature from motivation and sport participation were consulted to ascertain such an understanding. Connection of findings from those literature bases against this study’s findings are articulated in order to aid in theoretically grounding the interpretation of this study.

Without debate, at the core of the findings of this study are participation motives. Based on the results of this study, the researcher believes it is near impossible to garner
an understanding of what contributes to a quality high school athletic experience without understanding the motives that prompt athletes to participate on interscholastic teams in the first place. Therefore, assessment of quality can be tied to participant motives. While this interpretation is poignant it is not the first of its kind.

Participation motives have been examined broadly in the literature. Studies of participation motivation have been conducted across a variety of sports including collision (football, ice hockey), contact (basketball, soccer), noncontact (swimming, gymnastics), and culture specific sports (e.g., netball, cricket, rugby) (Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989). Weiss and Petlichkoff (1989) also highlighted the prevalence of studying participation motives in the pediatric sport psychology literature. They asserted that “over the last decade one of the most popular topics in the pediatric sport psychology literature has been participation motivation” (p. 195). Weiss and Petlichkoff feel like the topic of participation motivation is important for sport scientists in all areas as well as for educators and parents. Ryska (2002) also studied participation motives. He revealed the influential nature of sport participation motives. From Ryska’s study it can be inferred that motivational orientations have the ability to impact quality perceptions, although quality perceptions were not the focus of Ryska’s study (global competence perceptions were) his findings support the notion that motivational orientations influence quality perceptions.

Mandell (1984) contends that an emphasis on competition and record setting is a notable feature of the American system of sport organizations both within the educational system and outside it. However, Mathes and Battista (1985) suggest that competition is not the only motivation for sport participation in America. According to Mathes and
Battista, “individuals are attracted to sport for various reasons . . .” (p. 721). For Curry and Weiss (1989) the reasons individuals give for being attracted to sport define sport motivation. Curry and Weiss assumed, based on Donnley & Young (1988), that reasons for participating in sport were typically learned as part of the modeling process of sport socialization. As it relates to this study, being cognizant of specific sport motives is important. The literature in tandem with this study is specific about certain sport motives and their influence on high school athletes. A discussion of these motives is now warranted along with an articulation of their significance in contributing to athletes’ quality perceptions.

Fun Motive

DeVoe and Carroll (1994) revealed a list of participation motives important to high school athletes. Their study highlighted the perceptions of high school coaches and student athletes regarding students’ motivation to participate in and withdrawal from high school athletics. A secondary purpose of their study was to determine the level of congruence between coaches’ and athletes’ perceptions. Overall their study revealed some major incongruencies between the perceptions of coaches and athletes except on one particular issue, the motive for fun. Coaches and athletes alike shared similar sentiments concerning participating in sport for fun. Both ranked having fun high on their list of motives for participation. Besides fun though, their views on which motives contributed to participation in and dropping out of sport proved to be vast.

DeVoe and Carroll’s (1994) study revealed that athletes’ top three motives for participation in high school sports was, (1) to have fun, (2) to improve skills, and (3) to stay in shape, respectively. Coaches’ perceptions of athletes’ top three motives consisted
of, (1) being with friends, (2) to have fun, and (3) to do something I am good at. Improving skills or staying in shape (athletes’ number two and three motives) did not make the coaches’ top ten list.

The three motives athletes thought contributed to dropping out of sports consisted of, (1) no longer being interested in the sport anymore, (2) not having fun, (3) and the sport requiring too much time. For coaches, not having fun, not getting enough playing time, and wanting to get a job were their perceptions of the top three motives for athletes’ dropping out.

Several of DeVoe and Carroll’s (1994) findings serve to be relevant in supporting the findings of this study. First of all, the discovery of fun being an important sport participation motive also emerged in this study. Athletes in this study, were motivated to participate in sport for their admiration of the sport and desire for fun. Research revealing fun as a major motive for participation in sport has not only been revealed by both DeVoe and Carroll and this study, but also documented by several other researchers (e.g., Ewing & Seefeldt, 1990; Gill, Gross, & Huddleson, Gould & Horn, 1984; Koivula, 1999; Sapp & Haubenstricker, 1978; Scanlon & Lewthwaite, 1986; Weiss & Petlichokoff, 1989). Consequently, DeVoe and Carroll’s practical advice to coaches for keeping fun a priority in their programs aligns well with this study. DeVoe and Carroll suggested that, “coaches must be reminded to promote fun during practices by incorporating a variety of activities and assigning athletes the responsibility to create some of their own drills. . .” (p. 68-69). In summary, fun appears to be a desired intangible facet of the interscholastic participation environment which affects the athletes’ perception of quality.
Admiration of Sport Motive

Another finding within DeVoe and Carroll’s (1994) study which proves to be complimentary for this study centers around athletes’ reasons for dropping out of sport. *No longer being interested in the sport one participates in* was ranked as the number one dropout reason by athletes in DeVoe and Carroll. Sustaining interest in their sport was important to these athletes; it could be the difference between them remaining on the team or quitting. Being interested in the sport also surfaced in this study. Participants’ strong admiration and love for their sport was discovered as an influential motive for participating on high school teams in addition to the motive for seeking fun. One student’s situation of considering quitting her team because of the deterioration of the passion and love for the sport serves as a good example of this. Indy contended, “yes, I have (thought about quitting her basketball team) because it was just like I just didn’t have the love for it no more . . . so I was just like I don’t want to play no more . . .”

Therefore, this research along with others supports the researcher’s interpretation that participation motives can affect a stimulating environment which can affect quality. Coaches and administrators of sport must be knowledgeable of athletes’ admiration for their sport and be committed to sustaining such admiration. If athletes’ love of their sport is not sustained, there is a possibility, according to the literature, that they may quit.

Development of Friendships, Social Connections with Others, and Cohesion

Weiss and Petlichkoff’s (1989) review of the sport participation motives literature concluded that the findings of a number of studies for youth organized sport participation fell into four major categories: competence (e.g., learn and improve skills), affiliation (e.g., make friends, be part of a team), fitness (e.g., be physically active, get in shape),
and fun. Many of the categories fall in line with the results and interpretations of this study. Besides fun which has already been discussed, Weiss and Petlichkoff’s category of affiliation is also supported by this study and other researchers (e.g., Gould & Horn, 1984). Athletes in Weiss and Petlichkoff’s study desired a team atmosphere in which friendships could be established and maintained. In Gould and Horn’s study, popular sport participation motives centered around playing with friends and achieving success in a socially desirable realm. This relates most to this study in the discussion of cohesion and the opportunity for social connections detailed in Chapter 4. So, taking into consideration findings of this study along with other similar findings in the literature, a participation environment which embraces the development of friendship, social connections with others, and cohesion can be conceived as being an important ingredient in heightening athletes’ chances of experiencing a quality experience.

**Salient Intangible Facets of the Interscholastic Participation Experience**

**Emergent in this Study -- Being Recognized and A Time Beneficial Experience**

The salient intangible facets of the interscholastic environment discussed previous as being contributory to a quality experience were able to be verified by the literature. However, it is contended, by this study, that additional intangible facets do exist but not so prevalent in the literature. Two intangible facets emerged specific to this study which is characteristic of qualitative inquiry as it is typical for qualitative research to elicit emergent findings. The two facets unique to this study are being recognized and a time beneficial experience. A discussion of the significance of each in contributing to a quality participation experience will proceed.
Being Recognized

For the participants in this study being recognized for their participation on their interscholastic teams proved to be important and desired. In the participants’ eyes being recognized by various means of recognition was perceived as a positive aspect of being on their teams and it contributed greatly to the overall enjoyment and excitement the athletes professed they experienced. Being recognized was discerned as important for this study as references of admiring being recognized over the school PA system, or by teachers or others in the community, or in community media outlets such as the local newspaper for athletic accomplishments kept surfacing in the study from the lips of the participants. Therefore, for this study it can be suggested that a participation experience that does not embrace recognizing athletes, both formally and informally, is not desired nor warranted and thus impedes a quality experience from occurring.

A Time Beneficial Experience

Similar to being recognized emerging as a salient factor of quality for this study, so too does a time beneficial experience. Participants’ sentiments concerning the amount of time they spend participating in interscholastic athletics at the sacrifice of being able to enjoy taking part in other non-sport directed leisure activities at the same or similar rate, suggest that the participants for this study desire an interscholastic experience that is worthy of their time. Characteristic of typical high school students, participants in this study revealed a plethora of leisure activities they enjoy doing besides sports. Spending time with friends, going to movies, bowling, going out to eat or parties all were referenced by participants, in volume, as desired ways of spending their time. However, due to participants’ commitment and admiration of their sport they acknowledged not
having much time to enjoy other pleasures and pastimes in their lives. Many suggested that if they were not on athletic teams they could be doing a lot of other things with their time. Therefore, it only seems reasonable that high school athletes desire to be apart of experiences that are respectful of their time and personal sacrifices to be on their teams. Consequently, athletic experiences should be structured and organized efficiently enough that they do not monopolize all of athletes’ time in a manner where they do not have opportunities to enjoy other socially desirable activities.

**Salient Tangible Facet of the Interscholastic Environment: The Coach**

DeVoe and Carroll’s (1994) study also serves as an appropriate example from the literature which supports another major finding in this study as it relates to quality -- the influence of the coach. Weiss and Petlichkoff (1989) suggest that coaching behaviors can have a dramatic effect on the future behavior of youth. While being knowledgeable of participant motives has been determined to be important, the person with the most influence in seeing to it that the motives are considered and sustained is the coach. Coaches, being the leaders and overseer of interscholastic teams, have an instrumental stake in orchestrating an atmosphere that is open to providing a stimulating environment for their athletes. According to Sarason, Sarason, and Pierce (1990) coaches have influence over all aspects of a team and the athletes they oversee.

DeVoe and Carroll (1994) speak to the powerful influence of the coach in contributing to an athlete’s quality of experience and the significance of the coach in athletes’ eyes. Athletes in DeVoe and Carroll’s study listed having a coach who is a poor
teacher as a major reason for athlete drop out. Athletes’ quality perceptions in this study were discovered to be closely tied to the type of coaches the athletes had, specifically the qualities that typified their coaches.

Two specific coaching qualities most desired by the participants of this study were: 1) competent/knowledgeable and 2) being personable. These findings are corroborated in the literature by several researchers. DeVoe and Carroll’s (1994) found that athletes wanted coaches who were good teachers. This finding supports the competent/knowledgeable type of coach athletes suggested in this study. A.C.’s comments regarding what qualities he feels a good coach should possess exemplifies participants’ sentiments regarding their desirability of a competent/knowledgeable coach. According to A.C., a good coach should, “just be able to coach in general because some coaches are just out there yellin’ and screamin’ they can know a lot about the game but then its like well what are you doing you are not teaching anything . . .” In the end, it can be suggested that coaches who are good teachers are an important aspect of the participation experience and contribute to it being perceived as quality.

The literature continues to support the findings of this study in terms of a coach being personable. Turman (2003) contends that much like the interaction that occurs between teachers and students, coaches communicate with their athletes to foster a learning environment to help ensure positive learning outcomes. The potential for positive learning outcomes arising from the coach-athlete interaction is mediated, according to Shelly and Sherman (1997), by the development of interpersonal relationship between the two parties. “An athletic coach can be one of the most
influential figures in a young person’s life, and coaches play an integral part in the
development of those who participate in sports, especially younger athletes” (p. 74).

Gallon (1980) defined the athletic coach as having the following roles: (a) teacher, (b) representative, (c) coach, and (d) leader. Leadership according to Laios, Theodorakis, and Gargalianos (2003) is the ability to influence people toward the attainment of goals. Effective coaching leadership is an issue focused on prevalently in the literature as well as amongst coaches, players, educators, parents, and the like and has relevancy for this study. Effective leadership according to Zhang and Jensen (1997) is the function of the interaction of the situation, personal characteristics, and the coaching behaviors employed. With this being the case, coaches’ beliefs and behaviors are of central importance. “A coach’s ability to show acceptance, provide empathy, and express warmth . . . may potentially influence the achievements and personal development of team members” (Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990, p. 125). Laios, Theodorakis, and Gargalianos (2003) recommended based on findings from their research that in order for coaches to be effective leaders they should, “develop social and interpersonal skills . . . be good listeners, be enthusiastic and impart their enthusiasm to athletes, . . . recognize other people’s efforts, reward positive attitudes and behaviors, . . . and be generous with praise” (p. 153-154). All these aforementioned sentiments extracted from the literature add together to support the contentions of the present study regarding the significance of the coach and the qualities he or she possesses in influencing athletes having quality experiences.
Conclusions

In summary several themes which emerged in this study as contributing to a quality interscholastic experience also pre-existed in the literature, while other findings such as being recognized, a time beneficial experience and the researcher’s interpretation of the five study findings culminating to equate a stimulating environment, all proved to be specific and emergent to this study. However, taken all together, both pre-existing and emergent findings combine together to provide a greater understanding of the interscholastic athletic participation experience and the particular aspects within the experience that contribute to a quality experience.

As a whole, the researcher contends that the findings of this study relate most relevantly to the literature bases of socialization, motivation, identity development, sport participation, and coaching leadership. It is across those literature bases that the interpretation of the study findings situates best. From how athletes are introduced and exposed to sport, to their identification with their athletic roles, to their motivations for participation, this study strengthens and adds to existing knowledge within each literature base.

In conclusion, if an athlete is part of a participation environment, especially one which the researcher coins as stimulating, the foundation of experiencing a quality experience is provided.

Implications

This section relates the results of this research to educational practice. The experiences and desires described by the athletes in this study have significant implications for athletic administrators, coaches, athletes, and parents. Based on the
findings and conclusions of this study, several suggestions are offered for practitioners in the field of interscholastic athletic management, namely administrators and coaches. If implemented, these recommendations have the ability to heighten the possibility of interscholastic athletic participation experiences being quality experiences for their most salient beneficiaries, high school athletes.

With the understanding of the factors that contribute to a quality interscholastic participation experience, an effort can be made to proactively construct experiences to cater to athletes’ desires, so athletes’ desires are met. School districts and athletic administrators have a responsibility to ensure that interscholastic athletic programs are structured and managed in a manner that fits within the educational mission of schools (Coakley, 2004). Within this responsibility are several important considerations. A relevant implication of this study points to hiring as one of the most important considerations. Specifically, the hiring criteria and practices schools implement in hiring individuals to lead student athletes should be structured in a way to elicit the most qualified and appropriate individuals are hired. This study would suggest that a coach must be personable as well as competent/knowledgeable. Competence may be more easily assessed, but the coach’s ability to communicate and connect with his/her athletes must also be evaluated. Standard interview procedures might not reveal this trait, thus administrators must think of new and different methods. For example, perhaps coaches could also be interviewed by a panel made up of student athletes, or the coach would have to engage in a mock coaching situation. Regardless of the methods employed,
hiring must be a serious consideration at the high end of the administrative hierarchy of running schools and athletic programs in seeing to it that quality athletic experiences exist.

Currently high school coaches are categorized across two categories of coaches; teacher certified coaches or non-certified teacher coaches (often referenced in the literature as *off-the-street* coaches) (Sisley, 1985). There is a longstanding continuous debate of which type of coach is most qualified and suited to coach to cater to the developmental needs of high school athletes. With increased shortages of qualified and “willing” certified teachers to coach coupled with building level needs to fill teaching positions that do not correspond to coaching needs, many districts, where state regulations permit, hire off-the-street coaches. Such decision according to the literature, is not bad as the research has netted mixed results concerning which type of coach is most suited for high school students. Some studies purport that teacher certified coaches are most capable of being effective coaches while others suggest off-the-street coaches are just as capable or more capable (Sisley, 1985). The concern with most skeptics of off-the-street coaches’ centers around what some would suggest is their limited academic preparation in understanding the relationship of athletics to the growth and development of young people (Sisley, 1985). In the end, while hiring is and should be a serious consideration of school districts, it is also a difficult and challenging decision. Based on this study it is suggested that in hiring coaches, candidates’ be evaluated on more than just their status of being a certified teacher. An important implication of this study is that regardless of certificated status, coaching candidates should be held to a standard of demonstrating that they are competent/knowledgeable and personable enough to coach.
Once appropriate individuals are hired to oversee athletes, coaches in particular must be imparted with the understanding of their significant role in influencing athletes’ quality perceptions. This study showed that coaches should be competent and personable. In order to develop and hone these skills, coaches may need to receive appropriate additional training and education that target those skills. Receiving such education can position coaches to be successful in ensuring that quality experiences prevail for athletes.

Next, once coaches are educated and trained properly, a need exists to establish evaluations to continually monitor coaches for their ability to be effective. Evaluation measures should be created and implemented by districts to assess and track coaches’ performance on a combination of coaching competencies besides just winning. This study and the literature suggest that being an effective and successful coach entails more than just winning (O’Dell & Tietjen, 1997). It is important to understand that winning is not synonymous with success; nor is losing synonymous with failure. O’Dell and Tietjen articulate this point best by stating that,

There is a misconception that a successful coach is a winning coach. Successful coaches do so much more than win; winning is short term. Long-term goals such as learning the fundamentals, striving for excellence, enjoying success, and responding to failure with renewed determination, and developing self esteem are more important (O’Dell & Tietjen, p. 31997)

Plus, according to O’Dell and Tietjen (1997), an overemphasis on winning is the principal problem in youth sports.

After mechanisms are in place to effectively monitor coaches on a myriad of coaching competencies, interscholastic experiences should be organized so that standard recognition mechanisms are embedded across all athletic programs. All available resources at the school, district, and community levels should be utilized to ensure that all
participants of athletic teams have the ability to be recognized for their participation and
collection to their teams. Examples of practical recognition mechanisms schools could
implement, include the following, (a) making regular announcements over the school PA
system to highlight performances and results of athletic teams, (b) forwarding news
worthy and game statistic information, in a timely manner, to local media outlets to be
included in their coverage of sports, (c) creating a centralized location at the building
level which serves as a clearinghouse house for all athletic news, memorabilia, awards,
and pictures, (d) making sure that someone is selected to serve in the capacity of game
announcer for all athletic contests to afford athletes the opportunity of being publicly
recognized and hearing their name over the PA system at contests, (e) creating
promotional materials such as sports programs and rosters to be distributed at contests, (f)
having pep rallies that serve as a means to introduce and recognize each team to the total
study body population, and (g) having formal recognition ceremonies that publicly
recognizes and honors each athlete for their participation on their teams and provides
them with tangible rewards or a combination of rewards such as athletic letters, sports
pin, trophies, plagues, and/or certificates.

In addition to ensuring that athletic experiences embrace recognition this study
also suggests that experiences be structured efficiently. This entails that practical
considerations such as the duration of practices, days of the week practices and games
take place, time of day of practices and games, distance to competitions or travel time,
ability to participate in congruent sports, and weight room and conditioning obligations,
both in and out of season, be taken into consideration and provisions made concerning
each which are in the best interest and well-being of each athlete. Experiences should be
structured with a priority to quality not quantity and therefore should not monopolize all of athletes’ time and energy to the point where they cannot enjoin in other activities and endeavors personally pleasurable to them.

Lastly, this study suggests that a conscious effort be made up front to consult with athletes to seek an understanding of the motives that cause them to participation in interscholastic athletics. The literature suggest that students have different motivations for participation in sports and understanding these motivational differences may significantly help increase participation in athletics (Ewing & Seefeldt, 1990 as cited in DeVoe & Carroll, 1994). “Understanding motivations for participation can help coaches develop a clearer perspective and spot potential dropouts. Coaches’ recognition of why student athletes participate in sports should not be ignored or left to chance” (DeVoe & Carroll, 1994, p. 64). Thus, formal assessment systems need to be in place to collect this information. Student athletes should be consulted about their participation motives. Likewise, when student athletes discontinue participation, exit interviews should be conducted to ascertain the reasons why. Making a conscious effort to be mindful of participant motives can help in the effort to sustain such motives which ultimately aides in creating quality experiences for athletes. Therefore, welcoming and seeking out participants’ motives serves a real implication for this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. While this study employed qualitative methods to explore the factors of the interscholastic athletic participation experience that contributes to a quality experience, future research could build upon these results to explore the same area of interest by employing quantitative methods. Using quantitative
methods could reach a broader and more representative sample of the high school student athlete population. The findings of this study could contribute to creating an instrument to be used in a quantitative study.

2. To discern precisely whether or not athletes’ desires are actually perceived of their participation experience, a pre and post test study could be implemented. Athletes’ pre-participation desires could be obtained prior to the start of their experience and then again subsequent to their experience. A determination of whether or not their pre desires were met could be examined.

3. The aspects of the interscholastic participation experience that contribute to a quality experience from the perspective of parents could also be explored and examined. Parents’ perceptions could be compared against their children’s. Seeking parents’ perceptions could shed insight into what they feel their children should experience as a result of participating on interscholastic teams. This information could serve to be useful in opening up the lines of communication with parents and better restructuring parent’s sense of reality of what interscholastic experiences realistically entails.

4. To understand the long-term effects of the aspects of the interscholastic participation experience that contribute to a quality experience, the study could be expanded to cover a longer period of time, for example a longitudinal study consisting of the total duration of the high school experience could be implemented.
APPENDIX A

PERMISSION TO SOLICIT PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH SITE
January 12, 2007

Dr. C. Dexter Wise III, Senior Pastor
Faith Ministries Church
2747 Agler Rd.
Columbus, OH 43224

Dear Dr. Wise,

I am writing to request your permission to use the church as a research site to recruit participants to participate in my dissertation research. I am currently pursuing my Ph.D. in the field of sport management from The Ohio State University. My study centers around examining the existence of high school athletics.

In particular, the goal of my study seeks to gain a better understanding of the factors that contribute to a quality high school athletic participation experience, specifically from the viewpoint of high school athletes. Therefore, securing the participation of high school athletes is a necessity for my study. In order to secure participants in my study I would like to be able to have an announcement made to the congregation as well as a notice put in the bulletin which details the specifics of my study and my need for participants. For your information, in order for participants to participate in my study both parental consent and participant assent will be secured.

My study requires that participants engage in one interview session with me, which will is slated to last no longer than ninety minutes. The location of each interview will be determined at the discretion of each participant in conjunction with their parents. Therefore, interviews will not necessarily be conducted at the church.

I feel the church situates as an ideal setting to secure participants because it is ripe with high school student athletes who fit the stated criteria of my study. With your approval, I will be able to inform potential participants of the objectives and goals of my study and secure their participation. This will assist me greatly in completing my dissertation.

In order for the church to be determined to be an approved research site according to Ohio State guidelines, I will need written approval of your agreement to allow me to use the church as a site to recruit participants for my study. So, at your earliest convenience, could you provide me, in writing, the details of your decision concerning my request. Thanks in advance for attention to this request. If you have any request please feel free to contact me at (614) 837-8836. I look forward to your decision.

Sincerely,

Karla Hairston-Pinson
APPENDIX B

PARENTAL CONSENT
The Ohio State University Parental Permission
For Child’s Participation in Research

Study Title: A Qualitative Analysis of the Factors that Contribute to a Quality Interscholastic Athletic Participation Experience

Researcher: Dr. Janet Fink, (PI) & Karla Pinson, (CI)

Sponsor: None

This is a parental permission form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you permit your child to participate.

Your child’s participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to discuss the study with your friends and family and to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to permit your child to participate. If you permit your child to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research study is to gain knowledge about the high school athletics participation experience from the viewpoint of high school athletes. Specifically, this study is concerned with gaining an understanding of which factors surrounding the high school athletics participation experience contributes to the experience being a quality experience for high school athletes. The participation experiences of both urban and suburban high school athletes is the focus of the study as experiences of both categories of athletes will be compared and contrasted against one another to determine what similarities and differences exist for the two populations. High school athletes serve as the cornerstone of this study because it is their opinions and insight that is of distinct interest for the researchers.

Procedures/Tasks:
Each participant will engage in one face to face semi-structured interview with Karla Hairston-Pinson (CI). Semi-structured interviews consist of interviews that ask participants pre-planned questions. As such every participant who participates in the study will be asked the same questions. However, the semi-structure format does allow for the inclusion of unplanned questions to be asked if it is necessary for the researcher to seek clarification of the participant’s answer. These questions are called follow-up questions.
The interview will begin with participants filling out a brief background questionnaire. This questionnaire centers around gathering information from participants’ about their past and present athletic participation experiences.

Each interview will also be audio recorded and typed (or transcribed) after the conclusion of the interview. Participant will be provided a copy of the transcription of the interview and asked to review it to make sure their answers and thoughts were captured correctly. After participants review and approve the transcription of their interview, their participation in the study is completed.

Participants’ real names and school names will not be used in any phase of the study. At the beginning of the interview participants will be asked to select a fictitious (or fake) name to identify them for all phases of the study.

**Duration:**
The interviews are proposed to last no longer than ninety minutes per participant, this includes time for participants to complete the personal background questionnaire that accompanies the interview. In addition, it is estimated that reviewing the typed transcripts of the participants’ answers this will take no longer than 15 minutes. Therefore, participants total time commitment for participating in the study will be approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Your child may leave the study at any time. If you or your child decides to stop participation in the study, there will be no penalty and neither you nor your child will lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

**Risks and Benefits:**
The benefits of the study far out weigh the risk especially since the main focus of this study does not concern a topic or issue sensitive in nature or harmful to the participants. The benefit of obtaining information on the high school athletic experience far outweighs any risks. Obtaining information directly from student-athletes on what a quality athletic experience should entail can, eventually, allow for those designing and implementing athletic experiences to better meet expectations, sustain student-athlete involvement, and better allow for the documented benefits of athletic participation.

**Confidentiality:**
All data for the study (including audio tapes, transcriptions, questionnaires, and notes) will be kept in a locked file drawer in Karla Hairston-Pinson's (CI) Cunz Hall office. Dr. Janet Fink (PI) and Karla Hairston-Pinson (CI) will be the only people with access to these materials. All data inputted into computer will use fictitious participant names. All data will be stored on Karla Hairston-Pinson's personal computer. This computer requires a user name and password. The audio tapes will be destroyed as soon as the transcription process has taken place.
Efforts will be made to keep your child’s study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your child’s participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your child’s records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

**Incentives:**
You will not be paid to participate in the study.

**Participant Rights:**
You or your child may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you or your child is a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you and your child choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights your child may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

**Contacts and Questions**
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Dr. Janet Fink at (614) 292-0867.

For questions about your child’s rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If your child is injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact Dr. Janet Fink at (614) 292-0867.
Signing the parental permission form
I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to provide permission for my child to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to permit my child to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject

Printed name of person authorized to provide permission for subject  Signature of person authorized to provide permission for subject  AM/PM

Relationship to the subject  Date and time

Investigator/Research Staff
I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Printed name of person obtaining consent  Signature of person obtaining consent  AM/PM

Date and time
APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT ASSENT
The Ohio State University Assent to Participate in Research

Study Title: A Qualitative Analysis of the Factors that Contribute to a Quality Interscholastic Athletic Participation Experience

Researcher: Dr. Janet Fink, (PI) & Karla Pinson, (CI)

Sponsor: None

- You are being asked to be in a research study. Studies are done to find better ways to treat people or to understand things better.
- This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to participate.
- You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind. You can think about it and discuss it with your family or friends before you decide.
- It is okay to say “No” if you don’t want to be in the study. If you say “Yes” you can change your mind and quit being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.
- If you decide you want to be in the study, an adult (usually a parent) will also need to give permission for you to be in the study.

1. What is this study about?
This study is about high school athletics programs. The study is interested in finding out how high school athletes think sports programs should be organized so that the programs are enjoyable and satisfying.

2. What will I need to do if I am in this study?
If you participate in this study you will need to participate in an interview. In the interview the researcher will ask you questions about your sports participation experiences. At the beginning of the interview you will have to fill out a questionnaire that ask you questions about your family life and past and current sports participation experiences. After completing the interview, you will be asked to review a typed version of your interview answers to make sure your answers were recorded correctly.

3. How long will I be in the study?
The study will last no longer than one hour and forty-five minutes. The interview will take no longer than ninety minutes, and reviewing your typed interview answers will take no longer than fifteen minutes.

4. Can I stop being in the study?
You may stop being in the study at any time.
5. **What bad things might happen to me if I am in the study?**
No bad things will happen to you if you are in the study.

6. **What good things might happen to me if I am in the study?**
From being in the study your self esteem may be boosted because in the study you are educating the adult researcher and being allowed to express your opinions and feelings openly, honestly, and freely. There are not a lot of times when teenagers are asked to give their opinions on issues and someone really listens. In the study your opinions are very welcomed and are very important.

7. **Will I be given anything for being in this study?**
No, you will not be given anything for being in the study.

8. **Who can I talk to about the study?**
For questions about the study you may contact Karla Hairston-Pinson at (614) 837-8836.

To discuss other study-related questions with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

**Signing the assent form**
I have read (or someone has read to me) this form. I have had a chance to ask questions before making up my mind. I want to be in this research study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature or printed name of subject</th>
<th>Date and time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Investigator/Research Staff**
I have explained the research to the participant before requesting the signature above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed name of person obtaining assent</th>
<th>Signature of person obtaining assent</th>
<th>AM/PM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Date and time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**This form must be accompanied by an IRB approved parental permission form signed by a parent/guardian.**
APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT
The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: A Qualitative Analysis of the Factors that Contribute to a Quality Interscholastic Athletic Participation Experience

Researcher: Dr. Janet Fink, (PI) & Karla Pinson, (CI)

Sponsor: None

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research study is to gain knowledge about the high school athletics participation experience from the viewpoint of high school athletes. Specifically, this study is concerned with gaining an understanding of which factors surrounding the high school athletics participation experience contribute to the experience being a quality experience for high school athletes. The participation experiences of both urban and suburban high school athletes is the focus of the study as experiences of both categories of athletes will be compared and contrasted against one another to determine what similarities and differences exist for the two populations. High school athletes serve as the cornerstone of this study because it is their opinions and insight that is of distinct interest for the researchers.

Procedures/Tasks:
Each participant will engage in one face to face semi-structured interview with Karla Hairston-Pinson (CI). Semi-structured interviews consist of interviews that ask participants pre-planned questions. As such every participant who participates in the study will be asked the same questions. However, the semi-structure format does allow for the inclusion of unplanned questions to be asked if it is necessary for the researcher to seek clarification of the participant’s answer. These questions are called follow-up questions.

The interview will begin with participants filling out a brief background questionnaire. This questionnaire centers around gathering information from participants’ about their past and present athletic participation experiences.

Each interview will also be audio recorded and typed (or transcribed) after the conclusion of the interview. Participant will be provided a copy of the transcription of the interview.
and asked to review it to make sure their answers and thoughts were captured correctly. After participants review and approve the transcription of their interview, their participation in the study is completed.

Participants’ real names and school names will not be used in any phase of the study. At the beginning of the interview participants will be asked to select a fictitious (or fake) name to identify them for all phases of the study.

**Duration:**
The interviews are proposed to last no longer than ninety minutes per participant, this includes time for participants to complete the personal background questionnaire that accompanies the interview. In addition, it is estimated that reviewing the typed transcripts of the participants’ answers this will take no longer than 15 minutes. Therefore, participants total time commitment for participating in the study will be approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

**Risks and Benefits:**
The benefits of the study far out weigh the risk especially since the main focus of this study does not concern a topic or issue sensitive in nature or harmful to the participants. The benefit of obtaining information on the high school athletic experience far outweighs any risks. Obtaining information directly from student-athletes on what a quality athletic experience should entail can, eventually, allow for those designing and implementing athletic experiences to better meet expectations, sustain student-athlete involvement, and better allow for the documented benefits of athletic participation.

**Confidentiality:**
Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

**Incentives:**
You will not be paid to participate in the study.
Participant Rights:
You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Dr. Janet Fink, at (614) 292-0867.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

If you are injured as a result of participating in this study or for questions about a study-related injury, you may contact Dr. Janet Fink at (614) 292-0867.

Signing the consent form
I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

Printed name of subject  Signature of subject  AM/PM
Date and time

Printed name of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable)  Signature of person authorized to consent for subject (when applicable)  AM/PM
Relationship to the subject  Date and time
**Investigator/Research Staff**

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed name of person obtaining consent</th>
<th>Signature of person obtaining consent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date and time

AM/PM
APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE
Demographic Background Questionnaire

1. Code Name you’d like to use for the study:__________________________

2. Gender:__________________

3.Age:_____________

4. Race/Ethnicity:
   a._____ Caucasian
   b._____ African American
   c._____ Hispanic
   d._____ Asian American
   e._____ Native American
   f._____ Other (Please specify____________)

5. Name of School You Attend_____________________      Location________________
   (Name of City)

6. What grade are you in___________ Length of time at current school__________
   (in years)

7. Other schools attended for high school and length of time attended:
   School(s) Name -   Length Attended:
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.

8. What is your grade point average____________

9.Household structure: Who do you reside with in your home? (i.e. both parents, just
   mom, siblings, etc.)
10. Indicate the number of siblings you have, whether they are a brother or sister, if they play or have played sports, if so, provide the name of the sport, and the level they play(ed) the sport (i.e. high school, college, professional):

# of Siblings:  
(indicate “brother” or “sister”)  
Play or Played Sports:  
(indicate “Yes” or “No”)  
Sport(s) Names:  
Indicate Level of Play:  

1.  

2.  

3.  

4.  

11. Parents/Guardians’ Professions:

   Mom________________________  Dad_____________________
   Guardians____________________ _______________________

12. Did your parents/guardians play sports? If so, what sport and at what level (i.e., high school, college, profession)

13. List the teams you participate on at your school, the length of time (number of years) you have participated on the teams, and how much playing time you think you get on each sports team.

   Team Name:  
   Length of Time on Team:  
   (in years)  
   How much playing time do you get?  
   (Circle)

   1.  
   Whole game / Half of game / Less than half  
   2.  
   Whole game / Half of game / Less than half  
   3.  
   Whole game / Half of game / Less than half  
   4.  
   Whole game / Half of game / Less than half
14. List any other non-sport extracurricular activities you participate in, both in and out of school, and the length of time (number of years) you have participated in the activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-school activities – Length of Time:</th>
<th>Out of school activities – Length of Time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>4.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. List any leadership positions you hold on any of the athletic teams you listed in Question 13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Name</th>
<th>Leadership Position on Team:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Socialization Questions:**

1. How old were you when you began participating in sports?

2. What was your first sport participation experience? (i.e. recreation sports, little league, middle school, etc.)

3. Are there particular people who introduced you to sports? How did they introduce you?

4. Who has influenced you the most to participate in sports? Why does this person stand out in your memory the most?

5. Has the media ever influenced your participation in sports? If so, explain how.

6. Who are your role models? Explain why you look up to people you identified.

7. Of the people in your close peer group, does anyone participate in interscholastic sports like you? If so, how many and what sports?

8. Do you consider your teammates as members of your close peer group/circle of friends?

9. Do you have any plans to remain involved in your sport after high school? If so, in what manner do you plan to stay involved?

**Motivation Questions**

1. Why do you participate on your team(s)?

2. What sorts of benefits or reward do you get from being on the team? Do you enjoy receiving these rewards? Why or why not?

3. How much time do you commit to participating in your sport? (length of playing season, weekly, monthly, out of season)

4. Are there any other activities in your life that you commit as much time to as you do in your sport? If so, what activities and how much time do you commit.

5. What do you sacrifice, if anything, to be on the team?

6. Do people in your school community look up to you because you play sports? How?

7. Do your teachers know you are on the team? How do they know? Does it matter to you if your teachers know if you are on the team or not?
8. Is being identified as an “athlete” important/popular in your school? Why

9. What do you do for fun?

10. Do you enjoy attending school? Why?

11. Would you enjoy school as much if you were not on your team?

12. Does win/loss record have anything to do with your participation on the team?

13. Do you play sports now for different reason than when you were younger? If so, what are the different reasons?

**Quality of Experience**

1. What attracted you to join your high school team?

2. What aspects of being on the team do you like most?

3. What aspects of being on the team do you like least?

4. Have you ever considered quitting the team? If so, for what reasons, and explain what kept you from quitting?

5. Are you part of a successful team? Why, why not?

6. *Who* impacts the quality of your team experience the most? How

7. What impacts the quality of your team experience the most? How?

8. Would you play for any type of coach?

9. What qualities do you feel a coach should possess? Did you look for these qualities in your coach?

10. What characteristics contribute to a coach being successful?

11. Did you weigh the reputation of your coach in your decision to participate?

12. How many coaches have you had since you have been here?
LIST OF REFERENCES


Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.) *Handbook of research on teaching (3rd Ed.*) New York: Macmillan.


