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Who's Got What It Takes? The Training Background of NCAA Division I Baseball Players

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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by LeQuez Tymarkee Spearman entitled "Who's Got What It Takes? The Training Background of NCAA Division I Baseball Players." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Kinesiology and Sport Studies.

Joy T. DeSensi, Major Professor

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

**Who's Got What It Takes? The Training Background of NCAA Division I Baseball
Players**

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

LeQuez Tymarkee Spearman
May 2013

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother. What is understood does not have to be said. I love you!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to show my gratitude to all of the people who have given me an incalculable amount of support throughout this process. I am very thankful for my committee members: Dr. DeSensi, Dr. Waller, Dr. Dzikus and Dr. Thayer-Bacon. I would also like to thank my mother and close friends, Cherome Owens and Kendrick Taylor.

Abstract

Baseball is widely regarded as America's pastime, in large part because of narratives about it being an egalitarian sport, in which every man can participate. At our current time a chorus of scholars has noted how the sport has become more exclusive to the middle class. For example, Ogden and Rose's (2005) research cited access and rising costs as barriers to participation for some baseball players. In order to understand what is required to compete at the developmental level in baseball, the current study adopted a qualitative approach which allowed the exploration of the training background of 10 NCAA Division I baseball players at Beaston University (this is a pseudonym used throughout this research). The following research questions guided this study: (a) What is the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players, (b) How do developmental baseball players reflect on exclusivity, privilege, the unequal distribution of resources and meritocracy in baseball, and (c) How do the participants think their training has helped them become players at the intercollegiate level? A semi-structured interview protocol was used to have the participants reflect on their training background at the developmental level in baseball. A thematic analysis of the interview transcripts produced the following themes: (a) baseball is work, but it is still a game, (b) foundation, (c) diverse experiences, and (d) social location. The major finding is that developmental baseball is rife with politics, the unequal distribution of resources and class privilege, but the participants believe that hard work is enough to vault any player to the NCAA Division I level. This study adds knowledge to the fields of sport sociology, sport management and recreation and leisure studies. For sport sociology and sport management, the recommendations from this study can be implemented to make

developmental baseball more inclusive. With respect to recreation and leisure studies, the findings from this dissertation demonstrate the salience of constraints and facilitators reported by the participants.

Keywords/terms: baseball, meritocracy, cultural reproduction

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Chapter I

Introduction

Every year the American public is reminded of the waning popularity of baseball in the inner cities, as well as the declining participation of African Americans in the sport (Nightingale, 2012). Some major league players have voiced their disgust at Major League Baseball (MLB) for investing in Latin America at the expense of inner city communities (Nightingale, 2010). In any sport, talent and access do not guarantee elite performance (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003). Glover and Bates (2006) agree that there are opportunities for inner city youth to play baseball, but a grass-roots league does not offer the same competitive experience as a Little League or travel team (Glover, 2007; Sharpe, 2006). Inner city kids are given various opportunities to play baseball at the recreational level, but there are limitations with respect to the frequency and intensity of participation that is needed to compete at the developmental stage (Ogden & Rose, 2005).

At the developmental level in sport, participants train extensively for skill acquisition and seek “further advantages such as placement on high caliber teams, more and better competition” (Thompson, Barnsley & Stebelsky, 1991, p. 147). Research shows that while more people may have access to organized sport, everyone does not have the same opportunity to compete at the elite level (Brown & Macdonald, 2008; Collins & Buller, 2003; Sherry, 2010). To compete at the developmental level in baseball, it not only takes access to basic facilities but also extensive training, coaching and social support (Hyman, 2008). Players seek individualized instruction from experienced coaches and hitting instructors (Ogden & Warneke, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Baseball, oftentimes referred to as the national game, is regarded by some as one of America's most democratic sports (Wiseman, 2010). For Wiseman (2010), baseball was one of the country's most egalitarian institutions, because its rival football was hampered by the elitist amateur system, in which "only the rich college boys had the time and energy to play" (p. 35). Jackie Robinson captured the hearts of many African Americans when he suited up for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, becoming the first person to break the color barrier in MLB (Rubinstein, 2003). For White Americans, the breaking of the color line reaffirmed the belief in the American Dream, which stipulates that everyone has an opportunity to succeed in society, regardless of social origin (Dorinson & Warmund, 1999).

While baseball is believed to be ideal for social mobility, research suggests that the sport was never as egalitarian as believed (Riess, 1980a; Trembanis, 2010). Riess's (1980a) seminal research demonstrated that the majority of the players in the major leagues during the Progressive Era were middle-class Whites. Elsewhere, Riess (1980b) noted that working-class males were underrepresented in the sport because of a "lack of sufficient skill, which stemmed from a lack of available playing space, inadequate coaching and the need to work full-time at an early age" (p. 297). Baseball is still a sport in which it takes not only talent and access to succeed but also training, coaching and adequate facilities (Hill, 1993; Ogden & Warneke, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Pierre Bourdieu's popularity is reflected in how his work is not only cited in sport sociology but traditional sociology as well (Tomlinson, 2004). The French theorist went beyond structural determinism, refusing to accept Marxism with guarantees (Bairner, 2007). Bourdieu's

work on capital proves that inequality is part of the capitalist system, but he refused to accept that a person's social class determines everything (Singer & May, 2010). With cultural reproduction, Bourdieu (1977) demonstrated that a person's class origins do impact his or her prospects in the labor market. Individuals, however, can make decisions that impact their performance in the labor market (Polite, 1994; Singer & May, 2010). The capitalist system reproduces privilege so that the progeny of the dominant class can succeed in the labor market (Singer & May, 2010).

Many sport studies researchers have adopted the work of Bourdieu (1986), yielding some important findings (Andrews, 2007; Bairner, 2007). Bourdieu's findings can be generalized to sport because they demonstrate how sport is class-based (Booth & Loy, 1999). As Bourdieu (1978) noted, a person's tastes for sports are predicated on his or her class habitus, which are the dispositions and behaviors of a certain class location. For example, working-class sports such as boxing and football are far more taxing than their middle-class counterparts, which include tennis and golf (Bourdieu, 1978). Of particular interest to sport sociologists is the notion that sport participation can be exclusive to those in a certain socio-economic status. Historically, golf has served as a status symbol for the rich, denying the opportunity for the working class to partake in the sport (Varner & Knotterus, 2002). More recently, Anaya (2010) demonstrated that individuals who play golf can expect to benefit from social and cultural capital. More important, Bourdieu's (1977) research with respect to cultural reproduction, demonstrated that sport is not meritocratic because not everyone is in the right social location to benefit from his or her sports participation (Shilling, 1991; 1992; 2004). With respect to baseball, every player does not have the opportunity to play on a select team or train at a premiere training facility (Gaines, 2011).

Bourdieu and Baseball

Bourdieu (1977; 1978; 1984; 1986; 1989; 1990) can be applied to the current landscape of developmental baseball. As Ogden and Warneke (2010) noted, the competitiveness of the sport has led to the precipitous decline of Little League teams, which are more inclusive than their select and travel counterparts. Select baseball has made high-school baseball irrelevant (Edgerton, 2009). The ascension of select and travel teams reflects the market economy where more sports are becoming privatized, making the publicly funded high-school team obsolete (Andrews, 1999; Coakley, 2009; Swanson, 2009a).

Becoming an elite player in most sports not only takes talent but also access to training facilities, private coaches and a significant amount of time to practice (Starkes & Ericsson, 2003). Roger Bannister, who ran the first 4-minute mile, exploited cultural, symbolic, and social capital before breaking the world record. Because of his privileged background, as in the case of his Oxford University connections and economic security, the four-minute mile was possible for Bannister because he had the free time to train and was associated with dignified alumni of the university, who would also coordinate the record breaking event (Bale, 2006). Bale's (2006) research demonstrated that to compete at the elite level, one must not only have raw talent but other forms of capital. With respect to baseball, it not only takes raw talent to make it to the elite level, but access to resources such as advanced training, private coaches and family support (Hill, 1993). Because of increasing costs and the importance of social-location, every player does not have the opportunity to play the sport at the developmental level or even capitalize off their participation. For example, to be noticed by scouts and college coaches, the player must attend summer tournaments, amateur showcases and instructional camps (Gaines, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the training background of National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I baseball players. In the process of exploration, the research examined whether players had access to forms of social, cultural, physical and symbolic capital at the developmental level.

Research Questions

Through this qualitative, interview-based study, the following research questions were addressed:

- 1) What is the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players?
- 2) How do developmental baseball players reflect on (a) exclusivity, (b) privilege, (c) the unequal distribution of resources, and (d) meritocracy in baseball?
- 3) How do the participants think their training has helped them become players at the intercollegiate level?

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were relevant to this research:

- All of the participants have played baseball at the developmental level
- The majority of the participants have extensive training or have specialized in the sport
- A semi-structured interview was an efficient means to allow the participants to speak to their experiences as players at the developmental level as well as address the research questions
- Participants responded to the interview with a good degree of honesty

Limitations and Delimitations

The findings cannot be generalized to all former developmental players. For example, I did not speak to former developmental baseball players who are now only playing the sport recreationally. The researcher could not control for dishonesty or errors reported by participants. However, as Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) noted, instead of being concerned with generalizability, qualitative researchers have turned their attention to transferability. With transferability, the researcher “can expect, the more abstract patterns they describe to be found in different subcultures” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 87). For example, Auerbach and Silverstein found that their research on Haitian fathers could be applied to research on the Promise Keepers. In this sense, with transferability, the abstract findings could be found in other settings (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Goodman, 2008). The fact that 90% of the participants were White is another limitation. Only one participant was Latin American. Also, the participants only had a chance to check the interview transcripts, not the findings and discussion section. A final draft of this study will be made available to the participants.

Delimitations included the confines of this study that limited it to interviewing a select number of players on a baseball team. Additionally, it was delimited to players on an NCAA Division I baseball team, excluding players from lower-division and high-school teams. Also, I did not speak to high-school baseball coaches, select and travel baseball coaches and parents. As a social support network, these persons are instrumental in the career trajectories of the participants (Hill, 1993). Another delimitation was that the researcher chose an interview-bounded study that did not include other qualitative methods such as participant observation, ethnography and field observation.

Significance

As was previously mentioned, baseball at the developmental level has become more exclusive (Edgerton, 2009). This research explored the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players who have played at the developmental level. The findings will demonstrate whether they have competed on select teams, appeared at amateur showcases and obtained private instruction from experienced coaches. The point is that select teams, amateur showcases and individualized training are not accessible to all players at the developmental level. This is also significant because MLB has instituted the Reviving Baseball in the Inner Cities (RBI) program to offset the declining presence of African Americans in the sport (Ogden & Hilt, 2003; Ogden & Rose, 2005). The RBI program has had ample success, with certain alumni including Torii Hunter, C.C. Sabathia and Ryan Howard earning all-star honors (Nightengale, 2010). However, at the start of the 2012 MLB season, African American representation was only 8.8 %, the lowest percentage since 2007 (Lapchick, Costa, Nickerson & Rodriguez, 2012).

From these findings, recreation providers will be able to identify more developmental baseball programs. Already, government agencies are funding more programs to expand recreational and developmental programs to underserved youth (Flett, Gould, & Laurer, 2012). For example, in 1991, the founders of Harlem's RBI program "transformed an abandoned garbage-strewn lot into two baseball diamonds for the youth of East Harlem" (Berlin et al. 2007, p. 86). While the RBI teams are not as competitive as their select counterparts (Ogden, 2004), the point is that volunteers and civic leaders can still work to expand the access of competitive developmental programs to baseball players in underserved communities. Gaines (2011) noted that the MLB's Urban Youth Academy in Compton, California has been a success, with more than 100 players being drafted by professional teams. Similar to the amateur showcase, in which

coaches scout hundreds of elite prospects, the academy's Break Through Series gives participants exposure. According to Gaines, MLB hopes to build an academy in each city that is home to a professional team. Other cities have utilized the fusion of public and private monies to expand developmental baseball opportunities to players in underserved communities (Labella, 2012).

But more than making the national pastime more inclusive, this research added to the growing literature on capital, exclusivity and privilege through the lens of developmental baseball players. Capital in and of itself is representative of an unequal distribution of resources (Spaij, 2009; 2011). This research demonstrated how developmental players convert capital. For example, a player might use his access to personal contacts (social capital) to earn a college scholarship (economic capital). This research will also help sociology of sport scholars tease out the nuances of capital, exclusivity and privilege in sport. For example, privilege, exclusivity and capital are not consistent across all sports, because certain sports are naturally more exclusive than others (Spaij, 2011). The incarnation of exclusivity, privilege and capital may be sport-specific, leading other scholars to use the findings to frame their research questions around different sports.

Definition of Terms

American Dream: The American Dream is a creed that suggests "success is made by the individual's hardwork" (Smith & Beal, 2007, p. 108).

Capital conversion: Capital conversion is a case in which a person can convert one form of capital into another (Bourdieu, 1986). In the context of sport, an athlete may parlay his or her personal contacts (social capital) into a job opportunity (economic capital).

Cultural capital: Cultural capital includes “high status cultural signs, such as attitudes, behaviors, preferences, and credentials that are commonly used for cultural inclusion and exclusion” (Eitle & Eitle, 2002, p. 126). These can include tastes for varying kinds of music.

Developmental baseball: Developmental baseball is a process by which athletes extensively train for skill acquisition (Thompson, Barnsley, & Stebelsky, 1991). Players at the developmental level seek “further advantages such as placement on high caliber teams, more and better competition... and more rewards and recognition by being accorded a higher status in the local sport hierarchy” (Thompson, Barnsley & Stebelsky, 1991, p. 147).

Economic capital: Economic capital is any possession that represents wealth (Anaya, 2010). Economic capital can include stocks, investments, cash and property rights.

Habitus: Habitus is “a way of being, a habitual state and in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity of inclination” (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 66). More specifically, habitus refers to the way in which people in a certain social location think and behave in class-dependent ways.

Meritocracy: Meritocracy is a system in which jobs and opportunities are given to those with the best skills and talents (Cole & Andrews, 2001). Neo-liberals believe that post-racial “America no longer needs race-conscious affirmative action programs” (Cole & Andrews, 2001, p. 70).

Physical capital: Physical capital “refers to the social formation of bodies by individuals through sporting, leisure and other activities in ways which express a social location and which are accorded symbolic value” (Shilling, 1992, p. 3). Forms of physical capital include proper body deportment, speed and stamina.

Middle class: A person who in the middle class performs mental and post-industrial labor (Lee, Macdonald & Wright, 2009). An engineer or professor is considered someone with a middle-class occupation.

Social capital: Social capital is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources structured around durable social relations, or reciprocal acquaintance and identification” (Anaya, 2010, p. 341). This would include friends or colleagues in a person’s social location who will help him or her acquire other forms of capital.

Social exclusion: Social exclusion is a process by which an individual has a “lack of access to four basic social systems: democracy, welfare, the labour market and family and community” (Collins, 2004, p. 727).

Social mobility: Social mobility “generally refers to the movement of individuals or groups between different positions within the system(s) of social stratification” (Spaaij, 2009, p. 249).

Sporting capital: Sporting capital is the desired characteristics that one derives from sports participation, including discipline, conformity and individualism (Curtis et al. 2003).

Sport for development: Sport for development is a way in which to promote positive societal outcomes, including, “health, community cohesion, urban regeneration and crime prevention” (Spaaij, 2009, p. 247).

Symbolic capital: Symbolic capital “permits social groups and agents to perceive and legitimate multiple levels of hierarchies, either in the form of notions—for instance

developed/underdeveloped—or social positions—upper/lower class” (Anaya, 2010, p. 341).

Forms of symbolic capital include certificates, educational degrees and titles (Bourdieu, 1986).

Working class: A person who is working class performs manual labor (Lee, Macdonald, & Wright, 2009). For example, someone who is a factory hand is considered working class.

Organization

To help the reader understand the layout of the study, the following is a roadmap for how the dissertation is organized. Chapter one includes an introduction of the topic, statement of the problem, purpose statement, significance of the study and a list of terms and definitions. Included in chapter two is a literature review covering baseball and capitalism, power and performance in sport, cultural reproduction and leisure constraints research. Chapter three outlines the methodological approach and procedures for data collection and analysis, as well as a description of the participants. Chapter four includes both the findings and analysis. Lastly, chapter five offers final commentary as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize literature that examines the current landscape of developmental baseball. Prior to going in depth with the theoretical framework, which is cultural reproduction, I will lay out what sociology of sport scholars have said about sport in general and baseball in particular with respect to capitalism. The goal is to explicate how baseball can be considered a paragon of capitalism, where competition breeds inequality. Then I explain how transnational labor migration has led to the increase of specialization here in America. This chapter will use the work of Bourdieu (1977; 1978; 1984; 1986; 1989; 1990) to interrogate the current landscape of developmental baseball. I will highlight some of the findings of scholars who have used the concept of cultural reproduction in the context of sport. I will then situate those findings in the context of developmental baseball. Lastly, I explain how leisure constraints theory also helps in interpreting the findings.

Baseball and Capitalism

Before attempting to discuss how baseball reflects the market economy, it is important that I discuss how sociology of sport scholars have explained how sport reproduces the capitalist economy. Thompson (1978) noted that sport does not exist in a vacuum and is ensnared with the material relations “that are ideologically compatible” (p. 82) with society. Moreover, Thompson suggested that the dominant value in American society is the belief in meritocracy and success, which invariably works to “maintain the capitalist mode of production” (p. 82). Thomson argued that the dominated class is coerced into believing in the very system that exploits them, and sport is one of the ways in which meritocracy is seen as the natural order of things. This coercion is a socializing agent that leads to the bodies of the working class being docile to the capitalist mode

of production, in part because they will be less inclined to dissent and more inclined to conform to mainstream ideology. Nomai and Dionisopoulos (2002) noted that sport also perpetuates the ideology of the American Dream, which suggests that America is a classless society where success is conferred upon those who work hard. While Thompson explored the way in which sport serves as a socializing agent on behalf of the dominant class, Cudd (2007) argued that the ideas in sport, including teamwork, individualism and responsibility, are not only metaphors for capitalism but transferable to the business world. Cudd argued that with respect to sport, there is an “implicit understanding that while teammates work together, players are not only altruistically motivated to maximize the performance of the team, but are also interested in their individual standing on the team” (p. 64) Sport, in effect, is ideologically coded to reproduce the capitalist system.

Baseball appealed to American males because it was congruent to their lives as workers (Gelber, 1983). Proponents of the congruence thesis argue that individuals replicate their work during leisure. Gelber (1983) noted that the rise of large-scale factories was concomitant with the ascension of baseball. The main attraction of the sport rested in its ability to reproduce the “environment of the urban work place” (Gelber, 1983, p. 8). Baseball was akin to business because similar to the factory, it was efficient, had its own division of labor and implored individual responsibility (Gelber, 1983). Elsewhere, Gelber (1984) noted that the skills that an individual learns at his or her job could be replicated in baseball; for example, in the mid 1850s, primarily white-collar males who had jobs as bankers, clerks and brokers played the sport. Gelber (1984) concluded that baseball was a sport for white-collar workers, and it “would provide both moderate exercise and leisure time replication of the structure and values necessary for a successful business career” (p. 13). With baseball, the importance of numbers was

significant to the men in these middle-class jobs, and the aspect of cooperation was congruent with the factory experiences of the working class (Gelber, 1984).

Organized sport and physical play are adaptations to capitalism, modernization and industrialization (Rowe, 2004). Coakley (2009) noted that leaders believed organized sport would turn children into “hardworking, productive adults in rapidly expanding capitalist economies” (p. 124). Organized sport was primarily used to inculcate young boys with masculine values in hopes they would not only be productive citizens, but strong soldiers who would defend the British empire (Miracle & Rees, 1994). Muscular Christianity, which was predicated on the myth that sport built character, would later be transplanted to the northeastern region of the United States in the late 19th century (Miracle & Rees, 1994). Kimmell (1992) noted that baseball was used to teach young boys the importance of subscribing to traditional American values but also hierarchical leadership, one of the most important tenets of organized sports. For instance, while Kimmel (1992) acknowledged that schoolmasters thought the sport instilled in boys the values of independence, autonomy and aggressiveness, he also noted that the sport “reinforced obedience, self-sacrifice, discipline, and a rigid hierarchy” (p. 61). Baseball was the ideal sport to integrate youth into the capitalist system.

According to Guttmann (1978), modern sport emanates from Western society’s preponderance with enlightenment and the ascension of science. The popularity of science eventually led to modern society’s “obsession with quantification”(Guttmann, 1978, p. 85) in the context of sport. While Guttmann (2004) rejected Marxist sport historians who are quick to suggest that modern sport was a way in which to maintain the dominant class relations because workers were purportedly exposed to routinized work, he did note that aspects of capitalism are central to modernized sport. These concepts include (a) secularization, or an emphasis on

material and social success, (b) specialization, which is an emphasis on role differentiation, and (c) quantification, which is the pursuit of record breaking (Leonard, 1993).

Baseball, which has elements of quantification, specialization and rationalization, is the quintessential modern sport (Guttman, 1978). First, the national pastime has highly differentiated roles, as there are nine separate yet interdependent positions on the diamond. Of course, one of the particularities of baseball is that it has been called the game of numbers because fans can judge players across eras. Purist and casual fans, according to Guttman (1988), can evaluate a batter's worth, in part because of his batting average and slugging and on-base percentage. With respect to rationalization, Guttman (1988) noted that the stewards in baseball were constantly revising the rules to increase performance. Cricket, which is not as democratic as baseball, rarely changed its arcane rules (Gelber, 1984).

Just as Karl Marx argued that the worker loses autonomy with his or her work (Berger, 1995), in sport in general and baseball in particular, players are less autonomous because of conventional management practices, most of which stem from Taylorism and Fordism (Stewart, 1989). While Fordism is contributed to "large-scale production of standardized goods" (Barker, 2008, p. 143), Taylorism was more concerned with efficiency and management science. F.W. Taylor, who was an engineer, believed that workers in the factory were not as productive as they could be, and he proposed the "engineering of people" (Stewart, 1989, p. 47), which helped the worker operate at maximum capacity. In commenting on the link between capitalism and modern sport, Stewart (1989) noted that both Fordism and Taylorism have "weakened the authority of the workers" (p. 48). In documenting the history of baseball, Lewis (2010) noted that the birth of the National League in 1876 spelled the end of player-control of the national pastime. Lewis

concluded that owners would later cede their field managing responsibilities to professional general managers in the 20th century.

Baseball is a highly complex game that has rational rules that seek to increase efficiency and performance. F. W. Taylor was a sport enthusiast who made “technical improvements” (Gelber, 1984, p. 7) to tennis rackets and golf clubs. With respect to baseball, Gelber (1984) noted that F.W. Taylor had a tremendous impact on the game in the matter of efficiency, as the management sage invented overhand pitching while at Tufts University in the 1870s. While this particular motion was illegal, Gelber noted that it sped up the pace of the game and improved performance. In the 1970s the New York Yankees introduced Ron Bloomberg as the designated hitter (DH), a position that has transformed the game, resulting in a classist system amongst the players (Will, 1990). The DH allows for field managers to substitute prolific hitters for pitchers, forcing managers of the opposing team to deal with nine experienced batters. Will (1990) noted that the DH rule is the paragon of the division of labor because pitchers are further removed from the game. The DH rule demonstrates how athletes can be alienated from their labor “whenever their superiors feel it is necessary” (Berger, 1995, p. 50). The decentralizing of the game and it being wrested from the control of the players has resulted in baseball becoming a paragon of capitalism (Lewis, 2010).

Baseball is perhaps the consummate sport that requires the player to develop human capital before entering the labor market. The route to the major leagues takes markedly longer than the other two popular sports, basketball and football. Ogden and Rose (2005) noted that African American indifference toward the sport emanates from the fact that baseball players spend countless years in the minor leagues before they are called up to their professional team. With respect to the labor market at large, Hawkins and Tolzin (2002) noted that the level of skill

required in baseball “keep[s] supply low and demand high” (p. 102). Obrecht (2007) noted that the salary system works to the benefit of players who attend college instead of opting for the minor leagues, because while their minor league counterparts enter the market quicker, college players earn more money in the long run. Staudohar, Lowenthal, and Lima (2006) noted that MLB actually privileges players who attend college, because a player who skips college but is not drafted out of high school, has to wait three years before he can re-enter the draft. Like Obrecht (2007), Staudohar et al. contended that the system rewards players who enter the market later, in part because of their educational experience. The college route may be unattractive to some players because the NCAA only allocates 11.7 scholarships for baseball, whereas a football team is entitled to 85 scholarships (Nightingale, 2012). For some players, baseball is hard to continue in because of the likelihood that they will have to be on a partial scholarship or pay their full tuition (Nightingale, 2012).

Power and Performance Model

Social exclusion can be attributed to the power and performance model, in large part because sport has become so competitive that mostly elite athletes compete, leading to cases in which most people watch while only a few play (Coakley, 2009; Curry, Arriagada, & Cornwell, 2002). More importantly, the power and performance model leads to athletes competing for resources to acquire an advantage over their counterparts (Coakley, 2009). In baseball, a player may pay for access to an elite training facility that is not available to all other players. Coakley (2009) noted that sports in post-industrialized nations revolve around the power and performance model, which emphasizes winning through strength and speed. Stotlar and Wonders (2006) noted that elite athletes tend to have access to the most experienced coaches and instructors. In the next section, I will touch on one of the effects of the power and performance model: specialization.

Specialization

Sport at the developmental level has become more competitive, requiring athletes to specialize at an earlier age (Baker, 2003; Baker, Cobley, & Fraser-Thomas, 2009; Coakley, 2009; Haugaasen & Jordt, 2012, Starkes, & Ericsson, 2003), and baseball is one of the sports where specialization is required for elite performance (Ogden and Warneke, 2010). The participants in Hill's (1993) research, who were professional baseball players, recommended aspiring prospects practice the entire year. While the players in Hill's study played several sports in high school, such as basketball, football and tennis, they did acknowledge "that in order for younger players to develop elite-level baseball skills they must continually find time to practice baseball throughout the off-season" (p. 112). Pugh, Wolff, DeFrancesco, Gilley, and Heitman (2000) found that the majority of elite baseball players felt that the focus on winning took the fun out of the game. Pugh et al. advised coaches and parents to change the emphasis from winning games to providing fun experiences. More recently, Sharpe (2006) noted that while players enjoy when sport participation is about the overall experience and not the end result, the recreational or grassroots league is no match for the private league. Private leagues are more efficient and can better facilitate skill acquisition for their constituents (Glover & Bates, 2006; Sharpe, 2006).

One of the preferred routes for specialization is select baseball, which is independent from high school baseball. More recently, Ogden and Warneke (2010) found that the majority of college baseball players played on travel teams, indicating the pervasiveness of year-round training. Ogden and Warneke noted that travel baseball has made high school baseball irrelevant because of the quality and quantity hypothesis. With respect to quality and quantity, travel teams play in twice as many games as their high-school counterparts and compete against better

competition. The obsolescence of high-school sports leads to social exclusion because some parents move their young athletes from the public to the private sphere (Andrews, 1999).

To play at the elite level baseball players must seek instruction at various camps, training facilities and amateur showcases (Ogden, 2001; Ogden & Rose, 2005). Ogden and Warneke (2010) noted that former minor league player Billy Horton gave individual instruction lessons to children as young as four-years old. Edgerton (2009) documented the importance of the amateur showcase in his work on Perfect Game USA, a company that serves as the pipeline for talent to amateur and professional teams. Perfect Game USA has a solid track record in producing elite-level talent, as more than 70% of its participants were drafted in the 2007 amateur draft (Edgerton, 2009). The ascension of travel baseball, amateur showcases and private trainers has led to young baseball players “focusing on one sport to the exclusion of all others” (Ogden & Warneke, 2010, p. 261). With America’s pastime becoming more competitive, players have no choice but to seek outside instruction in order to make it to the next level.

Negative Consequences of Specialization and Select Ball

Ogden and Warneke (2010) noted that the rise of select baseball has led to young athletes foregoing Little League and publicly funded recreational teams. While Strachan, Cote, and Deakin (2009) found that children who sample sports feel more connected with their community, athletes who specialize suffer from isolation. Flett, Gould, and Lauer (2012) noted that baseball players who compete in environments where mastery is the focus tend to drop out of the sport at a higher rate than those who play in an environment where winning does not take on extreme importance. The current trend of specializing in the national pastime will not end anytime soon because of the appeal of power and performance (Coakley, 2009), and the competition with foreign players for roster spots (Edgerton, 2009).

American Players and the Transnational Labor Process

One cannot fully understand the landscape of developmental baseball without situating it in the context of globalization. The globalization of baseball and its international division of labor pose a significant threat to it remaining the national pastime because of the increased competition for positions on the baseball diamond. Globalization has indeed made the world smaller, making it easier for teams to recruit foreign talent (Sage, 2011). Sage (2011) noted that one of the criticisms of globalization in sport is that natives believe teams are not giving them a chance to gain employment. Some people exude nativist attitudes by decrying that “foreign athletes are taking over our sports and our athletes are being deprived of opportunities to play at the highest level on our teams” (Sage, 2011, p. 93). This was reflected when Torii Hunter, an outfielder for the Detroit Tigers, lambasted MLB for portraying Dominican players as Black when the league actively divests from minority communities (Nightengale, 2010). Hunter labeled Black Dominicans as impostors because their presence depicts baseball as diverse (Nightengale, 2010). Despite the vitriol aimed at foreign players who are taking the jobs of the American players, Sage noted that multinational sporting leagues, such as MLB, NBA and the National Hockey League, will continue to scour the globe for migrant labor in order to “become successful enterprises” (p. 94), reflecting a no-holds barred free-market economy. I will now give a detailed description of baseball’s new international division of labor, starting with the increasing presence of Latin Americans.

Major league teams have turned to Latin America for cheap labor (Klein, 1989; 2007; 2011). Klein (2007) noted that since Little League baseball has lost .25 million players from its rosters, MLB has had no choice but to expand its labor pool. Also, Klein (2007) noted that the declining representation of African Americans in baseball, which was less than 9% in 2012, can

be attributed to MLB's investment in Latin America. Klein (2007) noted that Latin Americans are poised to become a sizeable majority in the coming years, as the minor leagues, which have long served as a pipeline to the professional arm of the sport, are inching up toward 50% Latin American representation. The transnational labor coming from abroad has forced baseball administrators to restructure their developmental baseball programs in America to reflect the competition in the labor market (Klein, 2009). While there has been a 15% decrease of amateur players in the United States between 1987 and 2004 (Klein, 2007), the labor market here has become highly specialized, as Ogden and Warneke (2010) noted that the waning popularity of Little League teams has led to the rise of travel teams.

In baseball there is a new international division of labor, in which certain countries are targeted for their promise in producing certain positions on the diamond (Osborne, 2006). For example, Osborne (2006) noted that over a 60-year period, Canada has specialized in producing pitchers. An interesting note is that while MLB has had an increasing presence in the Dominican Republic, as the country produces more major league players than any other foreign nation, pitching in the Caribbean nation has "under produced" (Osborne, 2006, p. 155). One reason why Canada produces more pitchers than its Dominican Republic counterpart is the salience of the position as well as the amount of capital it takes to become a pitcher. Whereas infielders can be used interchangeably, Osborne contended that players play exclusively at the catcher and pitcher position. Klein (2011) noted that the league's peculiar relationship with the Dominican Republic leads to the devaluing of the country's players. While teams take financial risks in signing 16-year old prospects, these same players will be devalued if they do not become successful on the field of play. If the prospect from the Dominican Republic does not make progress to the team's liking, he will be discarded (Klein, 2011). The league has more patience with North American

players, because they will have likely gone to high-school and college and are more apt to develop culturally (Klein, 2011). This explains why Osbourne found that Canadians produce the most pitchers. Whereas in the early 20th century, 90% of the players came from the continental United States (Lewis, 2010), currently baseball has a flexible labor force that produces players in line with an international division of labor. The new international division of labor forces players to specialize to compete at the next level (Edgerton, 2009).

Social and Cultural Reproduction

Social reproduction theorists argue that America's educational system breeds inequality among the classes because the wealthy are complemented with "curriculums, resources, and programs that prepare students for career success and leadership positions in capitalist America" (Singer & May, 2010, pp. 301-302). More specifically, Singer and May (2010) noted that with social reproduction, middle-class students are better prepared because they are provided with the skills and credentials that are required to succeed in a competitive job market. Reproduction theorists argue that schools in urban and rural areas are devoid of the resources needed to prepare their constituents for jobs in the highly competitive labor market. The upper class exudes knowledge, skills, and etiquette that are valued by the educational system (Bourdieu, 1977). Consequently, the dispositions and behaviors of the working class are devalued by the same system purporting to be meritocratic and rife with equal opportunity. Singer and May noted that the educational system in the U.S. maintains "social inequality by requiring certain academic credentials and experiences that ultimately lead to superior jobs and economic opportunity for those who possess the cultural capital of the economically privileged social classes, the majority of which are White" (p. 302).

Social reproduction theory is highly deterministic and does not account for the complexities of resistance and cultural heterogeneity, leading Singer and May (2010) to draw from cultural reproduction as advanced by Bourdieu (1977), who argued that teachers, administrators, and principals reproduce inequality because of class-based knowledge. For example, this class-based knowledge is reflected in the skills, dispositions and behaviors that are exuded by the middle class. One behavior that may be valued is style of dress (Singer & May, 2010). Despite the inequality that is maintained in the capitalist system because of both social and cultural reproduction, sociologists have found that individuals are not helpless as they do exhibit agency, being both proactive and reactive to the capitalist system. Working-class people can make choices that can mitigate the consequences of the classist system, but according to Bourdieu (1977; 1986; 1989), their decisions have limitations due to the disparity in capital between them and their upper-class counterparts.

Singer and May (2010) cited Willis's (1981) classic book *Learning to Labor*, which explained how working class youth who rejected the educational standards in Great Britain ultimately landed menial jobs, thereby reproducing the classist system. With respect to the marginal position of African Americans, Singer and May cited Polite (1994) who found that non-conforming Black youth who dropped out of high school or were truant ended up working class. On the other hand, the youth who subscribed to traditional values of hard work and conformity had more success in graduating from high school or acquiring vocational training. The works of Willis and Polite illustrate the agency that individuals have in the capitalist system, but the rejection of mainstream values makes one more likely to become a manual laborer.

The basketball player in Singer and May's (2010) study reproduced his class position, in part because of his individual choices and the capitalist system. For instance, Cerico dedicated

most of his time to basketball his junior year in high school, forsaking class work for the chance to earn a college scholarship. The public school that Cerico attended had a poor record of preparing students for the labor market, as only 60% of the remaining students who did not drop out went on to a four year-college. Singer and May concluded, “at this time it appears that Cerico has made decisions that only support the reproduction of his social status” (p. 309). Cerico’s time for education was compromised by his desire to work a part-time job as well as play basketball. During his junior year, Cerico “decided to focus all of his energy on playing basketball” (Singer & May, 2010, p. 308). Further, this adds to the agency/structure debate that Bourdieu tried to reconcile. Cerico, for example, chose to focus on basketball and not education to move up in socio-economic status. The youth in Willis’s study made conscious efforts to reject mainstream values, which unfortunately reproduced their social status.

The case of Cerico represents the complexity of social and cultural reproduction, because one can make decisions that improve his or her socio-economic status. A person can choose to spend more time on education rather than the pursuit of athletic success. For some racial minorities and members of the working class, the concentration of all their time on athletics leads to the “detriment of intellectual development” (Singer & May, 2010, p. 308). The participants in McGillivray and McIntosh’s (2006) study are similar to Cerico because they reported that soccer training adversely affected their education. After retiring from soccer, they would have very few educational qualifications to help them compete in the labor market. Singer and May warned social class does play a role in individual decisions and behaviors, because “for young men like Cerico, basketball is both the way out and one of the only reasons for going to school” (p. 309). Because of privilege, students in the middle-class do not have to rely on sport as the only means for social mobility, as they have other routes to success in the labor market (Singer & May,

2010). The work of Singer and May proved that the prospects of advancement are limited for working-class youth who view sport as a means for social mobility. A person's career trajectory is not independent of his or her class background.

The issue of cultural reproduction is a key concern of my research, because I intend to interrogate the narrative of meritocracy in America within the context of baseball. Sport, for example, has long been seen as the great "equalizer" (Carrington, 1986, p. 4) for oppressed groups; however, Donnelly (2003) noted that sport reproduces inequalities that are prevalent in the labor market. For instance, women and racial minorities have had their access to sport restricted because of racism and sexism, which are both prevalent in the labor market. Donnelly noted that sport sociologists have moved past reproduction conjectures by focusing on the nuances of resistance and hegemony. Donnelly noted that with resistance, individuals have an opportunity to be "active, self-reflexive agents who might consciously value sports as meaningful and beneficial aspects of their lives" (p. 27). It would be too deterministic to suggest that everyone is powerless in the proverbial top-down system. For example, Cerico chose to spend most of his time playing basketball, because according to him, the sport was his only means of escaping poverty (Singer & May, 2010).

A key concern of cultural reproduction is how parents transmit capital to their children to reproduce privilege (Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012). Swanson (2009a) examined how suburban mothers transmitted capital to their sons in the context of soccer. By interrogating the soccer mom tag, which is synonymous with middle-class White women, Swanson demonstrated how these women reproduced their privilege, thereby maintaining unequal class relations. The women in the study steered their children toward sports that propagated traditional middle-class values such as individualism and achievement (Swanson, 2009a). In particular, Swanson focused her

analysis on how middle-class women appropriate the corporeal aesthetic with respect to its appropriateness for their sons. For instance, while soccer is taxing, which is associated with the working class's preferences for sport, the mothers believe that it fits within the body schema of the middle class because of the "errant belief that it lacks any harsh, physical contact between opponents" (Swanson, 2009a, p. 408).

From her 8-month ethnographic study, Swanson (2009a; 2009b) discovered more about the reasons why soccer is so appealing to middle-class women in suburban America. First, soccer is appealing because of its distinctiveness and exclusivity; for instance, games were held in diverse locations, which were as far as three hours away. Secondly, according to the women, soccer instills commitment and individualism in their sons. Soccer was also appealing to the parents because it fit within the confines of middle-class habitus, which integrates individualistic achievement with group cooperation (Swanson, 2009a). With respect to the body-schema, the mothers acknowledged that their sons liked American football, but they discouraged them from playing the sport because of the pervasiveness of injuries and its working-class connotations. The mothers revealed that only "the right upper-middle-class-appropriate activities were usually allowed" (Swanson, 2009a, pp. 413-414). Also, Swanson (2009a) pointed out that football was shunned because of the way athletes use their bodies in the sport. That the women steered their sons to soccer because it propagates certain values is an example of Bourdieu's "logic of practice" (Smith, 2011, p. 272). In any field, one of which can include sport, agents commit to certain practices to cement their survival (Bourdieu, 1990). For the women in Swanson's study, encouraging their sons to play soccer is necessary for the transmission of capital.

The Swanson (2009a) study makes a significant contribution to my research. Through the women, Swanson demonstrated how sport participation is made meaningful because of class

tastes and preferences. According to the women in the study, soccer is more appropriate for their sons because of its proper use of the body and the likelihood that the boys will not experience a significant injury. The findings from the study proved what Bourdieu (1978) had earlier warned about sports participation being class-related. The cultural reproduction that is evident in this study has significant implications in American society, one of which is the exclusivity of sports. Research suggests that baseball has become more privatized and specialized, with more of the elite leagues being moved to the suburban areas (Glover & Bates, 2006; Ogden, 2001).

Class-based participation is also important because some sports end up reproducing inequality in the labor market. Shilling (1992) noted that working-class athletes play sports that adversely affect their “acquisition of academic qualifications at school” (p. 9), in large part due to the time requirements. Eitle and Eitle (2002) built on the work of other scholars who have tried to understand how sports participation adds to or detracts from academic achievement in high school. Edwards (1986) noted that African Americans’ overemphasis on sports detracts from their commitment to education. Eitle and Eitle added to the literature by factoring in cultural capital, educational resources, family structure and race.

Eitle and Eitle (2002) drew from a national longitudinal survey that collected data from eight-grade students in 1988. This was a secondary analysis of an existing government survey. The second wave of the study took place in 1990 when the students were in the 10th grade. The analyses were delimited to males who were either Black or White. Among other things, the researchers gauged family resources, income, parental education and occupation, reported levels of academic achievement and the sports in which the participants were involved. After the secondary analysis, the authors constructed their own scale of cultural capital that was representative of the students’ access to books, certain kinds of classes and the ability to take

trips. With respect to sports participation, Eitle and Eitle observed three levels of sport, including, basketball, football and other sports.

The results were consistent with other literature about Black participation in sports (Edwards, 1986). For example, Blacks were more likely to participate in football and basketball than their White counterparts (Eitle & Eitle, 2002). While Blacks concentrated on basketball and football, Whites competed in other sports, which included baseball, soccer, and swimming. The findings also show that social class is not a predictor of sports participation, but cultural capital is a predictor for Black males. The indicators of cultural capital were cultural trips to museums and plays and high-culture classes (Eitle & Eitle, 2002). The results indicated that the more access to cultural capital a Black male had, the less likely he would play basketball. With respect to social mobility and career advancement, the findings supported the assertion that Black males who have poor composite scores in key subject areas are likely to turn to sports. Basketball and football are considered to be a drain on academic achievement (Eitle & Eitle, 2002).

This study signifies the importance of cultural capital and how it impacts sport preferences. Swanson (2009a) noted that the parents did not want their kids to partake in football because of the looming threat of injury and the adverse effects on education. The findings show that baseball is not as much of a drain on academics as basketball and football, which may explain its popularity with the middle class. More importantly, if working-class athletes are given the opportunity to play sports that do not detract from their education, then, according to the findings, they will perform better in school. Carrington (1986) noted that working-class sports traditionally consume more time. Singer & May (2010) concluded that Cericos's time commitments to basketball negatively impacted his grades. The working class may actively choose football and basketball as a matter of "self-selection, coach selection, and eligibility"

(Coakley, 2009, p. 475). At the interscholastic level, student-athletes are filtered out of sports because of grades and bad behaviors (Coakley, 2009). Although Cerico's grades were marginal—relative to the entire student population—he still remained eligible to play varsity basketball (Singer & May, 2010).

Sport and social mobility. Because of the inequality that is in the capitalist system, the American Dream appears out of the reach for millions of people who are working class (Berger, 1995). Winn (2003) noted that the American Dream is built on a falsehood because the system is rigged to benefit the upper class. Giroux (1994) attributed youth helplessness to the failing economy that has endured contraction in the manufacturing sector. For example, Newman and Giardina (2010) noted that under the economic policies of President George W. Bush's first term, "corporations and their capitalist elites grew their wealth more than 400%, during the same period, American workers saw their real wages reduced by more than 14%" (p. 1516). Cultural critics continue to point out the economic failures of Western capitalism and its deleterious effects on the working and middle class (Giroux, 1994; 2005; Newman & Giardina, 2010).

With respect to the sociology of sport, scholars have noted how people uncritically accept the belief that sport is the easiest means for obtaining the American Dream (Smith & Beal, 2007). Mullins (2003) noted that so many Americans believe that baseball is a sport where opportunities for success abound. Dubrow and Adams (2010) interrogated the commonly held belief that the NBA is one of the few leagues populated by players who came from humble origins. Their results belied the myth that the NBA represents the best opportunity for the poor to rise "from the ghetto to international fame and fortune" (Dubrow & Adams, 2010, p. 43). They used occupational attainment research as their major framework because it demonstrates that people from a disadvantaged background fare poorly in the job market. This study examined

how the vectors of race, class and family structure factor into the probability of making it to the NBA.

To obtain the racial, class, and family structure background of the NBA players, Dubrow and Adams (2010) examined 245 articles published in local, regional and national papers between 1994 and 2005 in Lexis Nexis. They excluded articles that revealed no new information on the social origins of the players. Approximately 86% of the players in the sample were Black, whereas 21% were White. The researchers coded for class and family background by looking at parental occupation, neighborhood description and the absence of either parent. The family structure categories were (a) raised by single father, (b) raised by single mother (c) raised by grandmother, and (d) raised in non-grandparent two-parent family.

The results indicated that the majority of NBA players came from stable middle-class households, with 66% of the Black players coming from an advantaged background. To understand the intersection of race, class and family background, Dubrow and Adams (2010) tested whether a low socio-economic status and disadvantaged family background complicates one's prospects of making it to the league. Dubrow and Adams found the likelihood for players making it to the NBA is "relatively low" (p. 52) if they came from a compounded disadvantaged background, meaning a single-parent household. When compared with the labor market at large, Dubrow and Adams asserted, "NBA players as a whole are less likely to come from compounded disadvantaged backgrounds than their counterparts from the general population" (p. 53). The results give merit to the assertion that sport, and the NBA in particular, is not the easiest means for social mobility for those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Although the findings from Dubrow and Adams (2010) are important for my study because they debunk the myth that sport is an ideal means of social mobility, the only failing is

that they lack the specificity of qualitative methodology. This study is quantitative and de-contextualizes the experiences and life histories of the NBA players. For example, the news stories do not account for the possibility that some players may have moved up in the social stratification system. Some of the players' missing parents may have re-entered their lives at some point. Dubrow and Adams could have coordinated individual and focus group interviews with a select number of participants to provide more context. With respect to baseball, the findings demonstrate that once a person even overcomes the barrier of access, family background plays a major role in their prospects of making it to the professional level. As previously mentioned, most baseball players at the developmental level live in middle-class households, complicating the belief that hard work and individualism are the only ingredients to success.

Sport for development is another line of research that has been examined in the context of inequality in sport (Sherry, 2010). According to Sherry (2010), sport for development is defined as “a form of intervention in sport and recreation that in some way addresses inequalities inherent in mainstream sports provision” (p. 60). The problem is that gross generalizations alleging sport improves a person's situations are romanticized. In other words, the assertions that sport and sport for development erase inequalities need to be examined critically. Spaaij (2009) problematized these beliefs about sport through interrogating a sport for development program in the Netherlands.

Spaaij (2009) used a mixed methods approach to better understand the effectiveness of the Sport Steward Program (SSP) in the Netherlands. The program sought to improve the situations of disadvantaged youth in the Netherlands by providing them with employment and personal development opportunities. The quantitative data included pre- and post-program situations of participants, including their “previous and current employment, education, financial

and housing situations as well as their behavior” (Spaaij, 2009, p. 254). Because the quantitative data was not the complete picture of a person’s life as it only provides a cross-section, the study was complemented by qualitative methodology. That former participants have a job at one point in time is misleading because of the flexibility of their de-skilled labor, thus making the qualitative method a better means of assessing the program’s effectiveness. Temporary workers may report they are employed at the time of solicitation; however, they may be out of a job because they are not guaranteed employment for the long term. The qualitative methods included participant observation and in-depth interviews with current and former participants, coaches, teachers and tutors from August to December 2008.

Spaaij (2009) concluded that the program was only moderately successful in improving the situation of the participants. For instance, the program was able to connect its constituents with social networks that provided a means for social mobility and social capital. The participants were awarded with some form of qualification by participating in the program. This qualification was in the form of acquired skills in trades such as security operations, first aid and traffic control (Spaaij, 2009). According to Bourdieu (1986), the dominant classes use educational credentials and accreditation to differentiate themselves from the dominated classes. The program’s work with the youth is only a short-term relief. Some of the participants obtained a temporary job, but others “were on the streets again” (Spaaij, 2009, p. 257) after a few months. Spaaij noted that a person’s origins, family income, education are more important than any temporary sport for development program. The participants continue to face hurdles because of their lack of educational qualifications. The significance of this study is that it shows that sport can provide capital, but it cannot simply eradicate and negate other inequalities in a person’s life.

The dominated classes are not absolved from their oppression once they compete in sport or engage in a sport for development program.

The body and physical capital. The body has been theorized by sociology of sport scholars because of the fact that it is not an objective entity and has been socially constructed in discourse (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Lee, Macdonald, and Wright (2009) noted the disparities in privilege between working class and upper-class males and how the youth viewed their body. The study conducted in Australia, focused on physical capital, which is “involved with maintaining, representing and regulating the body” (p. 60). Whereas Swanson (2009a; 2009b) spoke to mothers, Lee et al. talked to the young men about their uses of capital and perceptions of the body.

Lee et al. (2009) employed a life history method in understanding how young men from two distinct class positions—working and middle class—appropriated their bodies for physical activity. The life history approach provides the scholar with a lens to understand how the subjects view themselves in relation to others, thus honoring the poststructuralist tradition of difference, which is instrumental in examining inequality. For example, poststructuralists note that oppositions are constitutive of representation, meaning that a binary bifurcation is important for understanding the difference between two objects (Storey, 2006). Lee et al. also examined other forms of capital that were available to the young men and how their perceptions of capital meshed with masculinity. The young men lived in the semi-rural and suburban sections of Queensland, Australia. While the working-class young men went to a public school, their middle-class counterparts went to a private school.

Lee et al. (2009) found that middle-class males had access to more cultural and social capital than their working-class counterparts. Thanh, the son of Vietnamese immigrants, acquired

benefits from going to Marcos College. Thanh competed in sports such as karate, cricket and soccer. David, who also went to Marcos College, enjoyed sports such as golf, rowing and club basketball. Both of the young men were able to parlay their experiences and capital into a successful transition at college. For example, David and Thanh were able to secure part-time jobs to subsidize their social life. Neither Brett nor Adam, the working-class counterparts to David and Thanh, went to a four-year university after their public high-school education.

With respect to physical capital, Lee et al. (2009) noted the differences in how the two sets of young men viewed their bodies. Whereas the two working-class youth viewed their body as a means to an end, their upper-class counterparts viewed their body as an end in and of itself. Adam and Brett, for instance, mentioned that their perceptions of health were the opportunity to do everyday tasks, while David and Thanh viewed health as a way in which to flaunt their physical appearance. The young men's perceptions of health were consistent with the literature on the bodies of the middle and working class. Working class youth are predisposed to gravitate toward strength and conditioning because they are more likely to acquire jobs that require manual labor, and the upper class on the other hand, aspire to work in a white-collar profession (Booth & Loy; 1999; Bourdieu, 1978).

Several scholars have found that high school sports participation has a positive relationship with adult-earning power (Curtis, McTeer, & White, 2003; Howell, Miracle, & Rees, 1984). For example, Curtis, McTeer and White (2003) applied Bourdieu's work to demonstrate how sport participation a form of capital that can be converted to economic capital later in life. The problem with Curtis et al. was that they did not comment on the complexity of converting sporting capital to adult economic capital. Sporting capital are the desired characteristics that one derives from sports participation, including discipline, confidence and individualism (Curtis et al.

2003). According to Curtis et al. employers actively recruit people who possess these characteristics. They made a rather gross generalization by noting that there was a causal relationship with adolescent sporting capital and adult economic capital. Stempel (2006) tested the reliability of Curtis et al. Stempel added to this line of research by demonstrating that one should tease out the nuances of sport participation, because the process of converting sporting capital into economic capital depends on race, class and current sports participation.

Stempel (2006) found that men who played varsity sports made significantly more than their non-playing counterparts. The income disparity between female athletes and non-female athletes was not significant. As hypothesized, adult participation mediated more of the VS-AI relationship for men more than it did women, leading Stempel to believe women do not have as many opportunities as their male counterparts to convert physical capital into economic capital. With respect to the class-dependent sports, golf, which is dominated by the upper class, strongly mediated the (VS-AI) relationship for males, indicating that upper-class sports are stronger mediators of capital conversion. This is consistent with Anaya (2010) who noted that golf acts as a gateway to the business world. According to Stempel, ball games did not mediate much of the VS-AI relationship, because they are not typically associated with the upper-class habitus.

The results are important because they show that not everyone has the same opportunity to benefit from their sporting capital. In other words, individual agents “are not accorded equal value when it comes to converting that capital into other resources” (Shilling, 1992, p. 4). For example, the sports that benefited people the most were those dominated by the upper class, including tennis, golf and swimming. Capital is exchanged and converted when a person plays the right kinds of sports and is in the preferred social location. The research on physical capital demonstrates that the benefits derived from playing sports are not distributed equally. For my

research, it will be important to examine whether baseball players from any material location can convert their sporting capital into a college scholarship. Hill (1993) found that the majority of professional players supplemented their varsity participation with other kinds of baseball training, including summer camps, tournaments and travel leagues. Edgerton (2009) noted that players who attend amateur showcases will likely garner attention from coaches and scouts. Every developmental player does not have the opportunity to attend amateur showcases because of the cost.

Parental involvement. An important line of inquiry in the sociology of sport scholarship is how parents from different social classes view sport as a means for social development. Watson (1977) found differences in how middle and working-class parents appropriated the outcomes of baseball for their children; for example, the middle-class parents were less intense in their involvement in the game of baseball than their working-class counterparts. These two behaviors demonstrate the prevalence of class relations because according to Booth and Loy (1999), “the dominant classes engage in leisure pursuits that stress manners, deportment, disinterestedness, refinement, self-control, and social distance” (p. 10). Whereas the middle class pursues sports that have a modicum of disinterestedness, the working class chooses sports “requiring a considerable investment of effort, sometimes of pain and suffering and sometimes a gambling with the body itself” (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 838). Hallinan and Burke (2007) explored the migration patterns of elite basketball players in Australia. In Australia, basketball is one of the most popular sports for women, with some parents paying expensive fees to send their daughters to elite coaches and training facilities.

Hallinan and Burke (2007) employed the interview-bounded case study to learn how the parents interpreted their situated contexts. There were a total of 10 interviewees, with four

fathers and six mothers taking part in the study. Although the researchers did not conduct formal observations that would have provided more context, the interview method did yield salient information; for example, because this was an emic study, themes emerged from “each respondent” (Hallinan & Burke, 2007, p. 62).

One of the more cogent themes in the study was the east/west tension, as each side of town represents a certain standard of living; the residents of the east could be considered upper class while their western counterparts lived more working-class lifestyles. Despite the fact that the middle class dominates elite sport in Australia, Hallinan and Burke (2007) observed that the majority of the team members came from the western part of town. However, interview data was mostly collected from eastern parents, who marked their status in opposition to their western counterparts. When it came to define the signifiers of the West, some of the Eastern parents spewed phrases like “narrow-minded,” “inexperienced” and “aggressive.” The term aggressive takes on particular importance, because according to Bourdieu (1978), working-class people are impatient as they live for the here and now. What separates the working class from the middle class is that the latter have an “absence of necessity” (Andrews, 1999, p. 46), meaning it is not imperative that they benefit from sport.

The results from Hallinan and Burke (2007) are significant. It is important to interrogate markers of difference from the perspective of both the dominant and dominated classes. Both classes use symbolic violence to gain social supremacy (Bourdieu, 1978). It was clear that the parents battled for which behavior was most appropriate at basketball games. For example, the parents mentioned that they tried not to be too aggressive at basketball games (Hallinan & Burke, 2007). The middle-class parents wanted to demonstrate that their children were not relying on sport for social mobility (Hallinan & Burke, 2007). This symbolic struggle leads to social

exclusion and elitism as some middle-class parents refuse to associate with their working-class counterparts. In interscholastic sport, Andrews (1999) noted that middle-class parents prefer to send their children to privatized leagues because of better competition and exclusivity of the experiences.

Class distinction and privilege. Class distinction, which is a way the upper and middle class distinguish themselves from the working class (Bourdieu, 1984), has implications for inequality in sport. Oftentimes people distinguish themselves from others through styles of dress and body maintenance (Frew & McGillivray, 2005). White and Wilson (1999) noted that socio-economic conditions dictate tastes and preferences, resulting in the middle class benefiting the most from their sporting pursuits. Cushion and Jones (2006) noted that in youth soccer, players attempt to differentiate themselves from their counterparts through competitive ability and domination. Fletcher (2008) found that risk sports such as mountain climbing and whitewater rafting serve as a status symbol, in part because they demonstrate that a person has the financial security to partake in them. The appeal of risk sports is lost on the working class because in the words of Fletcher, “only people with considerable discretionary income can participate” (p. 315). What attracted Fletcher to this risk-sport population is that most risk-sports personnel rely on very little income; however, their attraction to the sport is reflected through their other forms of capital.

Fletcher (2008) conducted an 18-month ethnography for this study. The research took place at multiple sites, revealing the complexity of experiences from the perspectives of the participants. Fletcher employed participant observation, informal interactions and semi-structured interviews with more than 53 whitewater rafting paddlers. While the research took

place in an American context, Fletcher concluded that he could generalize because risk sports are popular in several highly industrialized nations, most of which are in the West.

The findings from Fletcher's (2008) study were in line with most of the literature on risk sports. For example, several of the study's participants spoke to experiencing individualism, which is thought to be in risk sports. Also, the traits and behaviors of the participants reflected the literature on middle-class values; for example, the literature fleshes out the importance of the "distance of necessity" (Fletcher, 2008, p. 20), which rejects material rewards and is mainly concerned with experiences. The working class are rather myopic in their focus on the here and now, however, the professional middle class have security and can experiment with sports. For example, this can be seen in the amateur/professional dichotomy, where the amateurs were the males who could play for fun and remain separated from the working classes (Varner & Knotternus, 2002). The appeal of risk sports also has implications for physical capital, as the participants spoke to the maintenance and discipline of their body.

That risk sports are not available to the working class is relevant to my study on the importance of capital in baseball. The important thing for my research is the fact that certain sports and the capital that can be derived from them are only exclusive to a person in the middle class. Also, everyone does not have the finances and freedom to partake in certain sports. With respect to baseball, this research sheds light on experiences gained in travel ball. Because of the costs associated with travel ball, every baseball player does not have an opportunity to travel across the continental United States, playing against superior competition.

Bale (2006) problematized the narrative of amateurism by interrogating how Roger Bannister, the Englishman who ran the first 4-minute mile in 1954, was able to exploit social, cultural and physical capital. Bannister, who came from a privileged background, was heralded

as an amateur by the British, because he was “an exception to the de facto professionalism of the 1950s” (Bale, 2006, p. 485). But, as Bale demonstrated, the forms of capital to which Bannister had access were parlayed into economic capital that was available to him throughout his career as an author, journalist and broadcast commentator.

Bale (2006) demonstrated that Bannister’s forms of capital emanated from the runner’s privileged position in British society. First, Bannister had a form of cultural capital because his father was a world-class runner who filled the household with a number of books. Second, after the younger Bannister won his high-school cross country championship, he gained distinction and was under surveillance by the local press that published the records and accomplishments of his various racing exploits. Bannister acquired symbolic capital because of his shrewd decision to take part in the intervarsity-mile race that “meant something to the British sporting public” (Bale, 2006, p. 489). Bannister was also able to access symbolic capital, in part due to his scholarships to Exeter College and Oxford University, from which he earned bachelors and masters degrees. With respect to social capital, Bannister was provided with significant social networks at Oxford University. For example, the twins Norris and Ross McWhirter, whom he met at the prestigious university and were publishers of the Guinness Book of Records, organized the event at which he broke the record. The accumulation of symbolic capital and cultural capital translated into bodily capital because his social status and contacts provided him with a “considerable amount of spare time” (Bale, 2006, p. 492) for training.

Bale (2006) demonstrated how important other forms of capital are to success. The capital accessible to Bannister was not available to everyone, thus indicating the significance of privilege. One should not discount the hard work and sacrifice of Bannister, but it is also important to note that symbolic, cultural and social capital provided him with the time to

compete at the highest level. In baseball, players who do not have to worry about working jobs can play year-round, which is the standard in interscholastic sport. Training year round also gives players “hands-on” (Christensen, 2009, p. 368) knowledge. Christensen (2009) noted that because elite soccer players compete in so many games, they gain advantages over rival players. Ogden and Warneke (2010) noted that travel baseball is an environment where developmental baseball players improve their skills because of the quantity of games and the quality of competition. More athletes are specializing for the purpose of skill acquisition (Baker, 2003; Baker, Cobley, & Fraser, 2009; Mallet & Hanrahan, 2004). In the next section, I explain leisure constraints theory, and how it is useful in interpreting the findings of this study.

Leisure Constraints

The leisure constraints model emanates from leisure and public service agencies concerns’ with barriers to participation that intervene in the individual’s ability to partake in any leisurely pursuit (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). The model as conceptualized by Iso-Ahola (1981) was too “individually oriented” (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 120), because it did not make explicit the iterations of barriers beyond the person, meaning his or her social and physical environment. Crawford & Godbey (1987) redressed this shortcoming by proposing that intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural barriers must be taken into consideration when assessing preferences and participation. Among other things, intrapersonal barriers include stress, depression and anxiety (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). An interpersonal barrier is a case in which a person cannot find a suitable partner. Lastly, structural barriers include family economics, access to facilities and time availability (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). The Crawford and Godbey model was later modified by Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991) who highlighted that the hierarchical model of leisure constraints is sequential.

Criticisms of Leisure Constraints

Traditional leisure constraints research has had a narrow view of constraints, in that many of the scholars had an “overemphasis on constraints as obstacles” (Jackson, 2000, p. 65). Through the lens of a Foucauldian analysis, Shogan (2002) demonstrated how gender norms are enabling; for example, men may be more competent at leisurely pursuits that “require forceful, space occupying movements” (p. 35). Golob and Giles (2011) also employed a Foucauldian analysis in their explanation of how constraints can be both inhibiting and enabling, proving that constraints reproduce social practices, which are productive. Raymore (2002) contended that the narrow view of what qualifies as a constraint is rather limiting, in that scholars assume, “the basic human condition involves a desire or need to participate” (p. 38). Mannell and Atkinson (2005) warned that some people might not feel constrained because they have not “sought the particular activities or experiences” (p. 238). Some activities on a questionnaire or survey may be irrelevant to the participant.

Culture not Part of the Model

The absence of culture was another shortcoming of the model. Chick and Dong (2005) decried that the model was individually oriented, in that “our social groups have systems of laws, rules, norms... that guide both intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships” (p. 170). Chick and Dong concluded that culture is a discrete construct that precedes the classic leisure constraints model. Not only did Chick and Dong implore leisure studies’ scholars to examine the cultural implications of the classic model, they also called on researchers to look across cultures.

Several scholars have applied the model to various cultures. In a cross-cultural context, Tsai (2000) found that for Chinese Australian immigrants’ acculturation is an indicator of several types of constraints, including intrapersonal, interpersonal and socio-cultural. The more culture

someone purportedly possessed, the less likely they would encounter certain constraints. Thapa (2012) found significant cross-cultural disparities in the reasons for visiting Kafue National Park in Zambia. Moreover, international visitors perceived personal safety as a reason for not visiting the park, whereas native Zambians cited financial constraints (Thapa, 2012).

Gender

Another shortcoming of the leisure constraint model has been the absence of research that speaks to women's issues (Shaw & Henderson, 2005). Shaw and Henderson (2005) argued that the two constraints, intrapersonal and structural, can be overlaid with empirical women's leisure research. Women's economic dependency colors their structural constraints; for example, Brown, Brown, Miller, and Hansen (2001) found that a lack of time, money, and energy explained the women in their study being physically inactive. At the intrapersonal level, Irving and Giles (2011) noted how the ethic of care could explain why some mothers feel guilty partaking in leisure without their young children. It is important to note that discourse on gender does not make women significantly at risk for non-participation, because at the interpersonal level they "have relatively easy access to social leisure" (Shaw & Henderson, 2005, p. 26). What counts as leisure can be socially constructed, because some women may deem domestic labor as a leisurely activity (Brown, Brown, Miller, & Hansen, 2001). It is important to tease out the enabling and restrictive consequences of power relations, because it is misleading to measure quality of life "by the amount of unconstrained leisure time a person has available" (Freeman, Palmer, & Baker, 2006, p. 218).

Race and Ethnicity

Another criticism of the leisure constraints model has been its neglect for scholarship on race and ethnicity and the nuances within the two constructs (Phillip, 1995). While Phillip (1995)

noted disparate recreational preferences between African Americans and Whites, Floyd and Shinew (1999) noted that such differences for Blacks and Whites with high-interracial contact are obsolete. Notwithstanding the relatively small concerns with leisure constraints, research on within group differences remains scarce (Crespo, 2000; Gobster, 2002, Mowen, Payne, & Scott, 2005). Bustam, Thapa, and Buta (2011) found that across income levels, African Americans revealed significant differences with respect to intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints; for example, African Americans who had lower incomes reported higher intrapersonal and structural constraints. The issue of socio-economic status within racial groups merits importance because more research has shown that inequalities are built in the environments of poor racial minorities (Floyd, Taylor, & Whitt-Glover, 2009; Gordon-Larsen, Nelson, Page, & Popkin, 2008). Because of the heterogeneity of race and ethnicity, for some African Americans structural constraints may be more salient than interpersonal constraints.

Religion

As the case with culture, the classic leisure constraints model was devoid of any reference to religion. Chick and Dong (2006) cited that religion is a form of expressive culture, but warranted “a separate chapter, if not a book” (p. 172). The American media has spent much time touching on the constraints and lack of individuality that emanate from Muslim women wearing the hijab (Khalid, 2011). For example, the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) banned Iranian women from the FIFA World Cup because of the country’s mandate that women must wear religious garb that purportedly obstructs play (Erdbrink, 2011). Saad (2007) noted that Muslim women in Egypt perceived religion as a leisurely pursuit in and of itself; for example, some of the participants reported that reading the Quran was a form of leisure. The Egyptian mothers’ belief that religious expression was a form of leisure belies the

once-held myth that activity was the most important form of leisure (Samdahl & Jebukovich, 1997, p. 445). Religious identification can also restrict and or modify participation. In Northern Ireland, according to Bairner and Shilow (2003), religious and sectarian conflicts impact the use of leisure facilities for those residents who identify as either Protestant or Roman Catholic. Bairner and Shirlow suggested leisure studies' scholars provide more context because nothing exists in a vacuum. Individuals and their behaviors and preferences are not independent of culture or religion, as both constructs enable and constrain action.

Little Focus on Qualitative Research

An overemphasis on quantitative research has been another criticism of the classic leisure constraints model, because surveys and questionnaires obscure the nuances and dynamics of individuals in the context of their social and psychological environments (Jackson, 2000). According to Jackson (2005), qualitative research has “done much to redress these problems, weaving a far richer tapestry of how constraints fit into the context of people’s lives” (p. 10).

Leisure constraints scholars have made significant inroads with respect to producing constraints research that is qualitative. Samdahl and Jekubovich (1997), for example, used grounded theory to understand how leisure meshes with both the social and psychological environments of their participants. In a more recent study, Palen et al. (2010) explored the constraints and negotiation strategies of underprivileged adolescents in South Africa. An achievement of the Palen et al. (2010) study was that their bottom-up approach uncovered other constraints that were most relevant to their participants. These constraints were not initially part of their proposed constraint model, which included intrapersonal, interpersonal, structural, and socio-cultural constraints. Qualitative methods can uncover constraints and negotiation strategies that are most salient to participants.

Constraints Negotiation

A significant amendment to the leisure constraints model has been the conception of constraints negotiation. One of the major criticisms of the classic model was the belief among scholars that constraints were impossible barriers to overcome. Constraints negotiation emanates from two studies, the first of which was done by Scott (1991). Scott found 10 constraints that individuals encountered when playing in four-person card games. Scott's participants reported three strategies that were successful in mediating the constraints. Kay and Jackson (1991) found that time and finances were two of the most salient constraints; however, their participants adapted and alleviated the constraints by reducing the frequency of their participation in the activity and scaling back their time in leisure and non-leisure tasks. Constraints are not insurmountable barriers.

Complexities of Negotiation

In the context of leisure, some constraints encourage participation, depending on the person's loyalty, motivations, and perceived identity. In fact, Scott (1991) called on scholars to produce more research that examines how constraints encourage participation in a leisurely activity. Hubbard and Mannell (2001) tested four models of constraints negotiation, including independence, buffer, mitigation and reduction to gauge the intricacies of the negotiation process. The independence model, suggests that no links exist among constraints, motivation and negotiations (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001). In the buffer model, negotiation acts as a moderator to the negative consequences of a constraint (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001). Proponents of the constraint-effects mitigation model suggest that constraints and negotiation influence participation either positively or negatively (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001). The perceived

constraint-reduction model suggests that people with significant negotiation sources will report lower levels of constraints.

Hubbard and Mannell (2001) found that their participants' actions were more in line with the constraint-effects mitigation model. For example, the employees reported that some constraints made them inhibit or facilitate participation in recreation services at their places of employment. In direct contrast to Hubbard and Mannell, Jun and Kyle (2011) argued that some strategies thought to be acts of negotiation are actually facilitators. Similarly, Dimmock and Wilson (2011) noted that in-water constraints motivated their participants to continue with scuba diving. Jun and Kyle employed identity theory to test whether self-verification motivates golfers to cope with constraints that are congruent with their skill level. Jun and Kyle observed that a person who embellished their identity as a golfer reported lower levels of perceived constraints. As a golfer encounters a constraint, the salience of the perceived identity may invoke him or her to negotiate the constraint. Jun and Kyle warned that their participants' strategies to deal with the constraints are facilitators and not negotiators, making the relationship between constraints and negotiation not as significant as Hubbard and Mannell believed. Serious golfers may already have strategies in place to combat constraints because of years invested in the sport. Nicholls (2005; 2007) research suggests that athletes employ several coping strategies to deal with certain constraints that have the potential to stymie performance. The golfer in Nicholls' (2007) study was taught to focus on things that he could control. For example, the golfer was told to focus on the aspects of his game that have been proven to work (Nicholls, 2007). Jun and Kyle's research supports the independence model because certain strategies that facilitate participation are independent of constraints.

Leisure Constraints and Developmental Baseball

The model can be applied to developmental baseball. With respect to the intrapersonal level, the prospect must develop a motivation to play the sport. He must also have a facilitator who spurs participation in the sport (Raymore, 2002). Once the athlete moves past this level, he may encounter an interpersonal constraint due to the lack of a partner with whom to play (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991). In addition to not having someone to play the sport with, the baseball player may not have access to a social contact who helps him become a better developmental player; for example, a coach who is a former shortstop in the major leagues could help the player improve his defensive skills in the infield. At the structural level, the player may not have access to a reputable travel team that prepares him for the competition at the next level. When using tennis as an example, Crawford et al. (1991) noted that structural constraints are salient because of “money for equipment, access to tennis courts, and so on” (p. 317). Similarly, a developmental player may need access to an indoor facility to work out during the winters.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to couch the climate of developmental baseball within the literature on cultural reproduction, social mobility and meritocracy. The historical analysis explained how the sport went from a more democratic enterprise, in which players were managers, to a system of alienation and role differentiation. The focus on power and performance and hierarchical leadership propagates a competitive system in which baseball has become more exclusive. I then explained how MLB’s efforts in Latin America have undermined the prospects of American players. Because of the competition at home and abroad, players must train extensively to land roster spots on college teams. Lastly, I explained leisure constraints

theory and how it can be helpful in interpreting the results of this study, particularly with respect to constraints at the intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural levels.

Chapter III

Methodology

As discussed in chapter one, the purpose of this dissertation is to understand the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players at a university in the southeast. The study seeks, through a qualitative research approach and a thematic analysis of the data, to address the research questions stated in chapter one.

Positionality

Scholarship is not values-free, and it is important for the researcher to flesh out his or her position relative to the participants (Lather, 1986). Qualitative researchers have pointed out that claims suggesting research is neutral function to “legitimate privilege based on class, race, and gender” (Lather, 1986, p. 64). In other words, scientific research has long represented the views of White middle-class men (Lather, 1986). For Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), it is important for sociologists to interrogate their own privilege because subjective knowledge masking as something objective comes from a position of power. When discussing reflexive sociology, Bourdieu and Wacquant noted that knowledge produced from research not only comes from a position of power, but it also reflects the interests and history of the scholar. For example, my interest in a project of this kind emanates from my experience playing baseball as well as the belief that sport should be inclusive.

Watt (2007) argued that reflexivity should occur throughout the research process. In doing so, I, as the principle researcher, should start by “scrutinizing” (Burck, 2005, p. 242) my own assumptions. Pillow (2003) noted that the subjectivity of the researcher has an impact on the data collection, and it would be unbecoming of a social scientist to argue that his or her interest in the study is irrespective of personal history. Further, the turn to reflexivity has made it an

imperative for scholars to understand how their “self-location, position and interests influence all stages of the research process” (Pillow, 2003, p.178). For example, it would be naive for me to think that my history as a former baseball player has no role in my interest in a study of this kind.

I am a male in a patriarchal society. I was exposed to sports that were touted as the most popular sports. Because I am a male, the sports that I played and watched reaffirmed my male privilege. In other words, my privilege was reflected in the fact I had a male-dominated worldview. Male sports were supported and female sports were not supported. Also, in American society, despite the growing popularity of women’s sports, three male-only professional sporting leagues, the NFL, MLB and NBA, constitute the lion’s share of sport’s programming on television (Messner, 2002). My background as a male in American society has had an impact on the sports to which I was exposed and played. I was socialized to believe that male activities were the only sports of consequence because they reflect traditionally masculine characteristics such as aggression, speed and strength. I do not subscribe to that logic now, but that line of thinking attracted me to certain sports.

That I am able-bodied also matters. As an able-bodied person, I had and still have more opportunities to play organized sports than someone with a disability. Although the United States is allocating more amenities to people with disabilities, currently it is still easier for me to play sports at a local gym or an on-campus facility. I also see sports that are played by able-bodied participants on television, reflecting the privilege of my able-bodiedness.

Privilege is not exclusive to one category of analysis, rather, it reveals itself at intersections (Birrell & McDonald, 1999). For example, as a male I was exposed to sports that reflected traditional masculine characteristics that are rewarded in American society. I also cannot discount the fact that I came from humble origins. I was raised in a single-parent

household and was not afforded the same privileges of my middle-class friends. For example, I could not continue playing baseball because of the financial bearing it had on my mother in terms of travel, cost for uniforms and demands for fundraising. With respect to travel, my mother had to transport me to games well outside of the reach of the urban area, where we resided. Because of the high costs of uniforms and equipment and fees, I had to spend several weekends fundraising with my mom to subsidize my participation in the sport. Because of my social location, I pursue research that is more in line with social justice. I would like to address the unequal distribution of resources in America.

Race certainly colored my sporting experiences and the reason why I am conducting a study of this kind. I am an African American male who is a former Little League baseball player. When I played the sport in my hometown, rarely did I play with other African Americans or neighborhood friends. All of my Little League teammates were White. While I enjoyed playing the sport at the Little League level, I still wished my Black friends had played pick up games with me. The majority of the people in my neighborhood were Black, and I was hard-pressed to find peers who liked the sport as much as I did. The majority of the children in my neighborhood played the stereotypical Black sports such as football and basketball. My only option for a competitive baseball experience was to play the sport with Whites in the suburban areas. I could not get the repetitions that I needed because there were only basketball courts at my neighborhood park. Had there been a baseball diamond at the neighborhood park I still would not have had anyone to play with because of my neighborhood friends' apathy toward the sport.

My interest in studying developmental baseball began when I was an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. In the summer of 2006, I was accepted into the McNair Post Baccalaureate Program. During that summer, I conducted research on the decline of African

Americans in baseball. What I found was that there were a host of intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints that hindered Black participation in the sport. At the intrapersonal level, Ogden and Rose (2005) noted that for African Americans, baseball is not as popular as football and basketball. African Americans can find more role models in the NBA and NFL than MLB. At the interpersonal level, once a Black person acquires an interest in baseball, he or she may not have enough peers with whom to play. On my Little League team, I was the only person of color. On the other teams in the North Central League, the presence of Blacks was rather sparse. At the structural level, Ogden and Rose noted that there are more basketball courts than baseball diamonds in Black neighborhoods.

As was previously mentioned, participating in baseball has become more expensive, in large part because of the ascension of travel teams and other developmental programs. I stopped playing the sport because of the financial bearing it had on my mother. To become competitive in baseball, it not only takes access to equipment and adequate facilities, but other developmental programs are also important. These programs include amateur showcases, scouting teams and invitational tournaments. Traveling to these tournaments and games is expensive. It was expensive and time consuming for my mother to transport me to games and practices in my hometown. I could only practice twice a week.

My mother's gender certainly had an impact on my tenure playing baseball. While my teammates' fathers were either coaches or volunteers on the team, my mother had no such role. For example, she only transported me to games and practices. She never stuck around for team functions. Because my mother never played organized sport in her youth, she did not understand the importance of continuous training. While other kids played pickup ball outside of team games and practices, I only played the sport during organized team activities. She was just

excited for me to get adequate exercise and escape the dangers of the inner city. While my teammates' fathers aided in their developmental training, my mother and I only played catch. Because my mother never played or watched the sport, she did not have the inside knowledge of what it took for me to become a competitive baseball player.

As a doctoral student who has taken a considerable amount of coursework in cultural studies, I have learned to critique the capitalist society because of my education in a sport studies program. I have taken classes pertaining to feminism, critical race theory and Marxist theory. Because of my education in cultural studies, I have learned that inequality pervades society along the lines of race, class and gender. The fact that I have a critical background leads me to examine inequality along these axes of power.

Epistemic Foundation

I am a constructivist because I believe that there is no objective reality. The material reality is not independent of human consciousness. Even our objective facts and laws are partial. According to Hatch (2002), constructivists subscribe to the belief that “multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points” (p. 15). In contrast, positivists are proponents of the belief that researchers can find facts through rigorous research methodologies and methods (Crotty, 1998). With thematic analysis, I was not only able to understand developmental baseball from multiple perspectives, but I could also focus on the commonalities among the participants. For example, as will be later discussed, all of the participants believe that there is a level playing field in developmental baseball. My participants provided rich information about their experiences playing the sport at the developmental level. Lather (1986) noted that a consequence of the postmodern condition is the understanding that neutrality can never be part of the research

design, leaving feminist, neo-Marxist, and critical scholars with the latitude to explore “valued-based” research (p. 64).

According to Hatch (2002), the ability to better understand the world from the perspectives of participants is one of the major tenets of qualitative research. I think the experiences of college players who have played at the developmental level are important because they have played the sport for several years. Another qualitative researcher may want to understand the climate of developmental baseball from the perspective of players in the minor and rookie leagues. In this sense, the findings from my study cannot be generalized to the entire landscape of developmental baseball because of the spectrum of experiences from intramural players, intercollegiate players and minor league players. The findings from this study will not represent a “grand theory” (Lather, 1986, p. 64) about the climate of developmental baseball, nor can anyone be certain there is an objective reality that is to be discovered through rigorous research.

Emic Research

My exploration of the experiences of college baseball players will be guided by the emic perspective, which aims to upset “the researcher’s traditionally privileged perspective as the knower in the research setting” (Manning, 1997, p. 106). The emic perspective leads to “co-constructed findings” (p. 106), which reaffirms my commitment to speak with my participants and not for them. Emic research is amenable to both the researcher and respondent because of its emphasis on “using the respondents voice(s)” (p. 106), while also giving the researcher the flexibility to appropriate the data. In this sense, while I may have pre-conceived notions about a particular phenomenon, with emic research, the views of my participants were revealed in the findings.

Participants

A total of 10 baseball players at an NCAA Division I university in the southeastern region of the United States were interviewed. The participants in this region of the country compete in a conference that has produced several national champions in NCAA Division I baseball. The players were between the ages of 18 and 23 (See Table 1). The rationale for choosing these players is the fact that their spot on an NCAA Division I college baseball team indicates that they are elite players. All of the participants competed on travel teams.

Table 1

List of Participants

Name	Age Range	Position
Cooke	20's	Catcher
Womack	Teens	Outfielder
Mayfield	Teens	Shortstop
Pickett	20's	Pitcher
Ruffin	Teens	Shortstop
Hutch	Teens	Shortstop
Williams	20's	Catcher
Milton	Teens	Pitcher
Taylor	Teens	Third Base (Utility)
Bland	20's	Pitcher

Institutional review board, confidentiality, risks and benefits. Prior to collecting data, I submitted Form B to the Department of Kinesiology, Recreation and Sport Studies for review and approval. Once approved, it was then forwarded to the Internal Review Board for approval. A letter of support from the Associate Athletic Director was attached to the IRB application. After obtaining IRB approval at the university level, individual interviews were arranged to take place at a location convenient to the participants. Digital recordings and transcripts were stored on computer. I excluded anything that one could use to identify the participants.

There were no physical risks to the participants. The only risk may arise from a participant being probed about an uncomfortable experience in their developmental training. If a player had broached a topic that was uncomfortable, he was referred to a sport psychologist or counselor at the university. Pseudonyms were used throughout the transcripts so as not to identify the participants. No identifying factors were added in the final document. Each participant signed an Informed Consent Form (Appendix B) that indicated his freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Data collection. A purposive sample was used for this research. To recruit participants, I first approached the Associate Athletic Director for baseball at the university. After meeting with this university official, I spoke to the director of baseball operations about this study. After receiving approval from this university official, I emailed the players to gauge their interest in participating in the study (Appendix C). After approval, I interviewed the participants using a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A). I stopped interviewing once saturation was reached. According to Mason (2010), saturation is reached once the researcher is not able to access new information from the participants. The eighth interview did not produce any new information; I stopped collecting data after the 10th interview.

Instrumentation. The interview method was used because of its utility in obtaining rich information, as Glesne (2011) noted that recording devices provide scholars with a “near-complete” (p.115) record of the interview. The average interview lasted 45 minutes. In sport studies, a host of scholars has used the interview as a method to examine the lived experiences of their subjects (Atkinson & Herro, 2010; Eastman & Land, 1997; Robbins, 2004). Amis (2005) noted that interview-based studies are popular with qualitative researchers because they allow for the exploration of that which is not possible with other forms of data collection. In other words, it is difficult to access what is in “people’s minds” (Amis, 2005, p. 105) with participant observation or ethnography. I used the semi-structured interview because it allows for the researcher to follow a certain protocol, while also enabling me to be flexible with the trajectory of the conversation (Glesne, 2011). The interviews were recorded on an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder.

The questions in the interview protocol emanated from the literature on exclusivity, privilege and capital. The questions also spoke to what other scholars like Ogden and Warneke (2010) and Glover (2007) have documented about the climate of developmental baseball. For example, in one question I asked the participants if they had access to contacts who were instrumental in their development as players. With respect to symbolic capital, I probed the participants about the profile of their high school. Some high-school teams have more scouts in attendance if the program is perennially ranked. In another question, I asked the participants about the demographic profile of their family. In other questions, I asked the participants about the frequency of their participation on travel teams, amateur showcases and state-wide tournaments. The interview protocol is grounded in the literature.

Analysis. After transcribing the interviews verbatim, in ATLAS.ti, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, I employed invivo coding (Saldana, 2009) for first cycle coding. Invivo codes were used because they are the words of the participants and are preferred for research that is bottom-up (Saldana, 2009). After the first pass of invivo coding, I employed descriptive coding, which, according to Saldana (2009), “summarizes in a word or phrase—most often as a noun—the basic topic or passage of qualitative data” (p. 71). After immersing myself in the data with invivo and descriptive coding, I used pattern coding, which helped me generate preliminary patterns based on my inferences from the transcripts (Saldana, 2009). Pattern coding allowed me to reduce the first two rounds of codes to constructs, which later became sub-themes. For example, the participants stressed the importance of playing summer ball, and this would become a subtheme. All of the codes were retrieved and reorganized, with some being merged based on their similarities with other codes.

After three rounds of coding, I employed thematic analysis (Grbich, 2007). Thematic analysis was used because it aids the researcher in finding patterns that are consistent across data and can also yield answers to the research questions (Grbich, 2007). I focused on repeated words or phrases because such terms were “from the views of those being observed or interviewed” (Grbich, 2007, p. 32). One common approach to thematic analysis is the conceptual mapping approach, in which the researcher focuses on repeated words or phrases that emerge from the data that can be part of a common concept (Grbich, 2007). Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) noted that one way to distinguish between two concepts is to “direct your attention to the first repeating idea that was not included in the first theme” (p. 63). This new idea can become part of the master list of repeating ideas that constitute the new theme (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). This is how the researcher can move from theme to theme. Grbich (2007) is also a proponent of

the block and file approach, which helps the researcher “keep fairly large chunks of data intact” (p. 32). One disadvantage of the block and file approach is the possibility for the researcher to “end up with huge columns of data which can become unwieldy” (p. 32). On the other hand, with conceptual mapping, simply placing repeated ideas in a master list or phrase can lead to decontextualization (Grbich, 2007). For example, that the researcher has to go back to each repeated phrase for a fuller understanding indicates this form of analysis suffers from a loss of context (Grbich, 2007). Because of the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches, Grbich noted that the researcher could use both conceptual mapping and block and file.

Validity. As the principal researcher, it was my responsibility to ensure that the findings are trustworthy (Maxwell, 2005). As Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) noted, just because qualitative researchers disagree with their quantitative counterparts about objectivity does not mean, “anything goes” (p. 75). Further, qualitative researchers follow certain standards that make their evaluation methods believable (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Maxwell, 2005).

Throughout the entire process of data collection and data analysis, I engaged in researcher reflexivity, constantly querying the decisions I made. Watt (2007) noted that reflexivity helps scholars become better researchers as they capture “the dynamic nature of the process” (p. 82).

One way to be more reflexive in the research process is memo-writing (Watt, 2007). When writing a memo, for example, I was able to ascertain and evaluate my thoughts and behaviors that undoubtedly impacted the research process. Maxwell (2005) noted that memo writing could aid a person in dealing with methodological issues, because “design is something that goes on during the study, not just at the beginning” (p. 13). With respect to this research, I documented my thought process with the various cycles of coding and thematic analysis. This process helped with consistency, as I was able to be thorough in how I coded and analyzed the

transcripts. And, the memo function in ATLAS.ti: allows the qualitative researcher to keep diaries that document the research process. With my research, for example, I made note of ideas that appear to ensure the analysis is both extensive and substantive. I commented on my coding scheme throughout the analysis. To conclude, memo writing helped with validity because as a digital tool, it aided in reflecting on the entire research process as well as staying close to the data.

Member Checking. To ensure that my transcripts show what the participants actually said, I did member checking. According to Hatch (2002), member checking facilitates the “verification or extension of information developed by the researcher” (p. 92). In that sense, I consulted with the participants to make certain the transcripts are reconstructions of their past experiences. I emailed the transcripts to the participants; however, only five replied with their approval and there was not a participant who made changes. Because I want to understand the lived experiences of the participants, it is essential that I “present sufficient evidence to the reader that the researcher’s interpretation of the data is both sound and credible” (Amis, 2005, p. 125). The participants did not comment on the findings and discussion section. The final draft of this dissertation will be made available to the participants.

Bracketing interview. During data collection, I did a bracketing interview with a fellow doctoral student who is trained in qualitative research. Bracketing interviews can occur before and during data collection, as Rolls and Relf (2006) had multiple bracketing interviews during their ethnographic fieldwork. Another benefit of conducting the bracketing interview during the data collection was the fact that I “uncovered forgotten experiences” (p. 301). Further, during my bracketing interview, I was able to hearken back to an experience that was similar to one of my participants. Simply, the probing by the interviewer invoked this particular memory. My

colleague asked many of the same questions that were in the interview protocol, revealing how I am both similar and different from the participants. Had the bracketing interview not occurred during data collection, I would not have been able to check my training background against the training programs verified by the participants. In the Rolls and Relf bereavement study, the principal researcher utilized the bracket interviewer to help her cross boundaries between researcher and counselor. Similarly, I was able to cross boundaries, as I am someone who is native to sports studies concepts, but I am also a former baseball player. Although I played baseball several years ago, I could identify with the participants with respect to training.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology for this dissertation. Ten in-person interviews with NCAA Division I baseball players were conducted. Once interviews were completed, they were transcribed by myself and then sent to the participants to ensure accuracy. The next step in the research process was the coding of the interview transcripts. At the completion of the coding process, the codes were organized into themes. A thematic analysis of the interviews allowed me to better understand the training background of the participants.

Chapter IV

Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents findings and provides discussion for the research questions of this study. It begins with a profile of each participant, including his position, abbreviated biography and age. After each participant is introduced to the reader, the major themes and sub-themes that were produced from the data will be introduced and analyzed. The research questions are answered throughout the discussion and analysis.

Participant Profiles

Cooke. Cooke is in his mid-twenties and is in his senior year at Beaston University. He is White and was first introduced to baseball by his grandparents, also his legal guardians. He described his socio-economic status as middle class as his grandfather is an engineer and his grandmother rents out property. Cooke likes being active and making friends by playing several sports, including basketball, baseball and volleyball. He started playing wiffle ball, then progressed to baseball as he could play the sport with his twin brother in their backyard. Cooke did not play college baseball directly out of high school, choosing instead to attend a small university in his hometown. He is a catcher and looks forward to coaching baseball by first becoming a graduate assistant next year. Cooke played on a travel team that was coached by his high school baseball coach.

Womack. Womack is Latin American. Womack is in his late teens and is entering his first year at Beaston University. Womack's father, who played in the minor leagues for several years before becoming a scout, introduced him to the sport. He described his socio-economic status as middle class. Womack also likes being active, having played soccer, baseball and basketball when he was younger. Womack played summer ball for two different organizations in

his home state. He was groomed at shortstop in high school but will likely become a converted outfielder at Beaston University. A major league team drafted Womack out of high school.

Mayfield. Mayfield is a White player in his late teens. He likes being outside, going to the beach and connecting with friends and family. Mayfield often tries to surf when he cannot play baseball. He described his socio-economic status as middle class as his father makes pretty good money and his mother is a stay-at-home mom. Mayfield played travel ball and played varsity for all four years in high school. He committed to Seats University, which was coached by Coach Caprio, who now heads the team at Beaston University. Mayfield had a huge backyard with a batting cage when he was younger, and whenever he wanted to he could go and play catch with his two younger brothers.

Pickett. Pickett is a White player in his early twenties, and likes playing most sports as he played basketball, football and baseball all four years in high school. Pickett described his socio-economic status as middle class as his father is retired and his mother will retire within the next two years. He is a pitcher at Beaston University. He played quarterback in high school and was a relatively good basketball player. He also played travel ball but did not attend many showcases because they conflicted with his football training. Pickett is on both academic and athletic scholarship.

Ruffin. Ruffin is a White player in his late teens. He credited his mother with introducing him to baseball as her father played for a major league team. Before he started playing travel ball, he played on a Little League team that was coached by his father. Ruffin likes both baseball and soccer as he played the latter for three years in high school before deciding to focus on baseball. Ruffin admitted that his mother thinks that he is better at soccer than at baseball. He played shortstop for a perennially ranked high school baseball team. His conference produced

several NCAA Division I college baseball players and MLB draft picks. Ruffin played on a travel team that was coached by his high school baseball coach. The summer before his senior year, he played for a team headed by a different coach.

Hutch. Hutch is a White player in his late teens. His father, who played in the major leagues and then coached at Beaston University for 17 years, introduced him to baseball. Hutch played basketball recreationally but chose not to play the sport in high school. Hutch described his socio-economic status as middle class as his father recently started a business after losing the job at Beaston University. His father is also a close friend of Coach Caprio. Hutch's father also coached his summer team. Hutch, who was drafted by a major league team, played on a high school team that won four consecutive state championships.

Williams. Williams, who is a White player in his early twenties, credited his father with introducing him to baseball. Williams described his socio-economic status as middle class. Williams played football all four years in high school and suffered an injury every year while playing the sport. He likes football because it made him bigger as a catcher. He played on a summer team and attended a few showcases in high school, one of which was at East Cobb in Georgia. Williams's high school team won the state championship his junior year.

Milton. Milton, who is a White player in his late teens, credited both of his parents with introducing him to baseball as they played co-ed softball together. Milton described his socio-economic status as middle class. He enjoyed basketball when he was younger but only played baseball when he was in high school. He is a pitcher and was grateful for playing on a summer team that took him out of his hometown because the talent was not very good. Milton was the first player in his hometown to earn a spot on an NCAA Division I baseball team.

Taylor. Taylor, who is a White player in his late teens, described his socio-economic status as upper middle class as his father is a physician. He played basketball when he was younger but decided to focus on baseball in high school. Taylor's travel ball coach is really good friends with Coach Caprio. He can play several positions on the baseball diamond, but will likely compete for the third base position.

Bland. Bland, who is a White player in his early twenties, described his family socio-economic status as middle class because his grandfather owns and rents property. He said he grew up in a baseball family, as his grandfather has season tickets to a major league team. Bland was raised by his mother, who maintains the properties of his grandfather. Bland, who is a pitcher, only played baseball in high school.

Findings and Discussion

Through analysis of the interview transcripts, four major themes were produced that address the three research questions. Although each participant's remarks were specific to him, the themes helped me better understand the shared experiences of all the participants; for example, all of the participants played travel ball. Further, the themes do not superimpose a monolithic experience on the participants; rather, I explain in detail the varied experiences of the participants. The four main themes of this study are: (a) baseball is work, but it is still a game, (b) foundation, (c) diverse experiences, and (d) social location. The first theme baseball is work, but it is still a game is broken into three sub-themes: *The American Dream*, *hard work always yields dividends*, and *fundamentals*. The three subthemes in foundation are *I've been playing ever since*, *I am a competitor* and *I had good coaching*. The three subthemes in diverse experiences are *you gotta play travel ball*, *playing to be seen vs. playing to win* and *just play sports*. Finally, the four themes in social location are *right place at the right time*, *social*

connections, convenience and access and *pay for play*. Each of these themes and their subthemes are discussed in greater detail in the following section.

Theme 1: Baseball is Work, But It is Still a Game

The first theme is that of baseball being both work and a game. In this theme, the participants reported how work and the realization that baseball is a game helped them become NCAA Division I baseball players. The participants noted that for one to become an intercollegiate baseball player in a major conference, he has to have a strong work ethic. More importantly, the players made note of challenges they had to face in becoming an NCAA Division I baseball player. The participants also spoke of how baseball is a sport that can be mastered with the right fundamentals and mindset. For example, it was important for one of the participants to know that if he threw a certain number of strikes, the odds of getting the batter out would be in his favor; for another participant, a scout told him to play his game and his performance would take care of itself.

The American dream. The first sub-theme under baseball is work, but it is still a game is “*The American Dream*.” In this subtheme, the participants expressed the belief that hard work is enough to overcome any barrier. All of the players mentioned that hard work is what vaulted them to the NCAA Division I level, although in different iterations. Some participants had to outwork their rivals while others had to be resourceful in dealing with adversity. Similarly, Nomai and Dionisopoulos (2002) noted that the ideology of the American Dream perpetuates the narrative that “America is a land of boundless freedom and economic opportunity” (p. 98). Proponents of the American Dream believe in a classless and open society where people can succeed and move up in socio-economic status, so long as they have a strong work ethic (Winn, 2003). For example, Taylor noted, “if you are a good high school player, you can play college

baseball, anybody can play college baseball, it just depends on the level of how good you are.” For Taylor and the other participants, playing college baseball is incumbent upon a person’s individual capabilities, some of which include work ethic, physical skills and mental aptitude. The narrative of the American Dream individualizes success and ignores the trappings of the capitalist system, one of which is the unequal distribution of resources.

I will first start with the participants who mentioned that they had to deal with certain struggles, including lack of playing time, injuries and growth spurts. One of the more poignant personal stories came from Cooke who noted how he had to work his way up in the lineup, ultimately becoming the starting catcher in the county championship game. Cooke shared this story:

Of course I wasn’t playing or anything and ahh, a guy named Joshua Frank, he plays football for Yates University now, athlete three-sport star. He said shut up Cooke, you’re in eight grade and you’re playing on JV and from that time, that time forward, I would be after practice working my tail off.

Although Cooke admitted that he was and still is limited offensively, his coach was impressed with his defensive skills and leadership. Hutch, who is a better player than Cooke because he was drafted, said he struggled during his transitional stage, because he grew eight inches in one year. He credited hard work and extra batting practices as factors that helped him adjust during his growth spurt. Whereas he was once the worst player on his travel team, in 2012 he was drafted in the 32nd round of the MLB draft while also leading his high school team in hitting en route to a fourth-straight state championship. Taylor’s experiences were similar to those of Hutch in the sense that his father told him that because his growth spurt started earlier, hard work would offset the fact that he would no longer grow from a 6’1 eleven-year old. Simply, Taylor’s peers

would catch up to him in height at some point. He came to the realization that he would have to be a utility player because his height would no longer differentiate him from other prospects when they grew as tall as him. Taylor commented, “I was a freak, and I haven’t grown since... so the versatility aspect came into play.” Taylor went on to express the difficulty in learning how to play eight of the nine positions on the baseball diamond:

It’s when I kind of developed a utility guy, which is what I am here. I played ahh, every single position on the field except catcher, my junior year. And then my senior year, they put me just at shortstop, and it was tough cuz playing all the positions, you have to learn a bunch of different positions. You kind of forget where your main position is, and when I had one main position, I had to really kind of relearn the position. It was very exhausting trying to figure it back out.

While Taylor does not master one position, coaches like the fact that he can play six of the nine positions on the baseball diamond, and that is what separates him from his peers. Ruffin, who admitted he was a far better soccer player, faced an obstacle the summer of 2011 when he struggled to adjust to a new traveling schedule. When playing for his normal team, rarely did Ruffin have to travel because his “coach was actually really good at bringing in guys just to see our summer team play.” Ruffin also had to adjust to playing on regular dirt, as the home field for his high school was turf, which makes the ball bounce differently. He overcame the malaise with the help of his mother who accompanied him on most games in the summer. He noted:

I’d just keep working hard, you know what I mean... If we had a three o’clock game on the road, on a travel game in summer, I’d wake up at ten. I’d find the closest [laughing] field in Georgia like maybe like a little kid’s field at a park, and I’d just have my mom hit me groundballs ahh, and I’d work on moving my feet.

Womack, who suffered a serious knee injury in middle school that hampered his straight-line speed, went through a “grueling” summer with a former football player who helped train him. He explained how the work with the football player made him not only a faster, but stronger player:

Working with him got me back in the proper running form, so I got a lot of my speed back. I went from running an eight flat, an eight-second sixty-yard dash my freshman year in high school to a six seven my senior year. So I shaved almost two whole seconds off, and he helped out a lot. He got me stronger, got me, used to what I was doing here, because what I did with him was grueling because I had never experienced anything like that. So it was a good experience to break in before I got here.

Pickett, who was the consummate three-sport athlete, playing football, basketball and baseball all four years in high school, noticed that basketball was cutting into his baseball season.

Fortunately, his coaches allowed him to take batting practice before basketball games because they knew that baseball was his “best opportunity to go somewhere.” Although playing football in the fall and basketball in the winter cut into his training regimen, Pickett made sure that he was well conditioned by the time of baseball season.

While it is true that Ruffin and Womack worked hard during their respective summers, the fact remains that their parents helped both of them. Womack’s father paid a former college football player to help with his speed, and Ruffin’s mother was secure enough in her position as a tenured teacher to travel with him during the summer. Taylor’s father gave him invaluable advice about what was required of him to stand out amongst his peers, reflecting the class-based knowledge of which Dagkas and Quarmby (2012) spoke. Bourdieu (1986) noted that upper-class parents not only transmit material resources to their progeny, but they also pass on accumulated

knowledge. For example, as a former basketball player, Taylor's father knew enough about sport to implore his son to work on being a versatile player. Further, Dagkas and Quarmby discussed how the parents' dispositions toward physical activity reproduced privilege in their participants. Dagkas and Quarmby concluded "families employ specific rules related to the development of the child in relation to physical culture" (p. 22). Womack's father exploited his "network of connections" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249) to help him improve his running style and speed. Parents exploit their economic security, social contacts and accumulated knowledge to help their children excel in sport as the case with Ruffin, Taylor and Womack.

The participants' belief in the American Dream can also be tethered to narratives about baseball, which reiterates the fact that anyone can be part of the game (Mullins, 2003). This belief in the assertion that anyone can play the game is reflected in the comment made by Taylor. He noted:

I like the fact that unlike basketball, it doesn't matter how big you are, I like ahh, with baseball, you can have guys say like me; for instance six one, one fifty, or you can have guys like Milton who's five eight. You have can have guys who are six four, all of them can play the game and it doesn't matter how big you are, that anybody can play it, and its been proven that many major leaguers have done it. That's what I love about it.

For Taylor, baseball represents a level playing field, in which height and weight aside, everyone can play the game. Pickett offers another example of how baseball is a level playing field. He noted:

I mean we had good facilities, where I played other than that. I mean you just go work, that's one thing, basketball like it's an even playing field, cuz you know football, hey our school's poor we don't have a weight room. Well that seriously affects

football or something but baseball, strength does play a role but, if you're playing the game, baseball is baseball, the best person is going to perform all that time.

While Pickett believes that baseball is a level playing field with respect to performance, Mayfield expressed the belief that a player who is still inferior has the opportunity to play at the NCAA Division I level. He noted:

There's like guys that are like above and beyond like some people on the baseball field. It's like, if you work hard, you compete on a daily basis, yeah, they'd probably be a little bit better, but you know you could probably still keep up with them, but maybe not as high, but you probably like there was a kid on our team that was getting looked at by a bunch of like professional coaches, and there was another kid on our team that maybe wasn't in the eyes of professional scouts to get drafted that year, but they came out to watch that one certain guy and saw this other guy too, so they picked him up too cuz they saw potential in him.

Speaking in the context of education, Bourdieu (1977) noted, "by doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give" (p. 494). Bourdieu's reasoning can be applied to sport because it is perceived as a level playing field in which opportunities abound. Further, the logic is that if someone works hard, an opportunity will be conferred upon him or her. Nomai and Dionisopoulos (2002) noted that narratives of inequality and a lack of opportunities are excluded to keep the ideology of an open system unchallenged. In sport, it is believed that even a person from humble origins can succeed if he or she works hard (Nomai & Dionisopoulos, 2002). However, Dubrow and Adams (2010) refuted such claims by noting that the majority of the players in the NBA came from middle-class households. Dubrow and Adams'

findings are significant because the NBA is considered a league where most of the players came from working-class households.

Hard work always yields dividends. The second subtheme under baseball is work but it is still a game is “*hard work always yields dividends.*” The participants reported that what made them better than their peers was their unrivaled work ethic. One of the reasons why sport is projected onto young adults is the belief that it teaches children the importance of hard work, which is valued in the business world (Curtis, McTeer, & White, 2003). As Curtis et al. (2003) mentioned, business leaders recruit coaches who can show how the values learned from sport can be transferred to business. All of the players in this study believe their work ethic has factored into them becoming NCAA Division I baseball players.

Seven of the participants shared personal stories of how they pushed themselves to take on more work, which ultimately helped them with skill acquisition, mental competence and physical strength. When asked what advice he would give a rising freshman who wants to become an NCAA Division I baseball player, Bland mentioned that he would tell the prospect to always do more on the bench press, for example. He commented, “You’re like I should do forty-fives or should I do fifties?... I’d say do the extra mile every time, it’ll make you so much better.” Bland speculated that if I were to ask all of his teammates how they ended up at Beaston University, no one would say “they floated by.”

Mayfield, who was a one-sport athlete in high school and an occasional surfer, noted that what separated him from his counterparts was the fact that he always tried to be around the game. He noted, “I took extra hits, I threw, watch professional, broke down like how they played the game, how they fielded ground balls, how they turn a double play, how they lay down the bunt.” Williams, who played football in the fall and broke a bone in his body every year playing

the sport, commented that what attracted him to the gridiron was the work ethic, which could be adapted to baseball. He said, “Definitely work ethic was a huge deal, with football, my football coach, was huge on the work ethic thing, and learning how to work, learning how to work out, was a big deal.” Williams noted that the grind of football training allowed him to become a bigger catcher. Cooke, who is also a catcher, added, “you wanna start doing your pushups and eating your peanut butter.” Cooke noted that one of the reasons why he did not get noticed was because he was 20 pounds underweight as a catcher. Milton believes that while some players are better than others, there are still opportunities to play baseball at the NCAA Division I level. He commented:

Well I look at it this way, you work hard, and your perform well, you’re going to get a job, as long as you have a good attitude about things, you stick with your work ethic, stick with your routine, and perform well, then I feel like you’ll get a job.

Although Pickett towers over most of his teammates, he does not believe that his height has given him a significant advantage over other players. He noted:

And they’re like oh you now your life is perfect, oh I’m like no, you have to work hard to get where you are going to go, like you guys don’t know what I’ve had to do to be here. Like they just say you’re lucky, you were born and you were six five, you are given this. Well yeah I was gifted with a great body and stuff like that, but, don’t let that fool you I’ve had to bust my [expletive] to get here.

The participants believe that a person’s work ethic will vault him or her to the elite level.

This unapologetic subscription to the belief that hard work correlates with success depoliticizes inequality. Bourdieu (1977) noted the educational system is left unchecked because achievement “appear[s] to be based upon the hierarchy of gifts, merits or skills” (p. 496). As elite

athletes, the participants believe that talent and hard work are required for success in their sport. While one can point out that because 90% of the participants are White, it would be difficult for them to interrogate their privilege, it is possible that the belief in meritocracy transcends race. For example, the participants are similar to the Black participant in Singer and May's (2010) study, who felt that "success as an athlete is based on one's hard work" (p. 307). Smith (2012) noted that when individuals have an unabashed faith in their field, "they can become blinded to other ways of viewing and engaging in the fields of sport, physical activity, and physical education" (p. 252). For example, while Pickett understands that the resources at other high schools pale in comparison to those at his, he still believes that anyone can make it in baseball, so long as they work hard.

Fundamentals. The third subtheme under baseball is work, but it is still a game is "*fundamentals*." The participants mentioned that what helped them handle stressful situations was the belief that "its just baseball." This belief, in effect acted as a coping strategy, which helped them deal with the more stressful aspects of their sport. Playing on travel teams can produce added pressure as developmental players face better competition while also being watched by professional scouts and college coaches. The participants mentioned that what aided them in such pressure situations was the control they had to slow the game down and stay focused. Stress and anxiety are an example of an intrapersonal constraint because they exist within the person. Despite such constraints, the participants were able to negotiate them with a coping strategy that emphasizes the importance of sticking with the fundamentals and having a certain mindset. Elite athletes are successful when they sense that they are in control of the game and can isolate it using coping strategies (Nicholls, 2005).

The participants reported they had to learn to perform under pressure. Milton, who is from a small rural town and is the first person out of his area to play for an NCAA Division I baseball team, noted that travel baseball can be tough to deal with because “you have all those college coaches having the radar gun, writing notes the whole time.” What helped Milton adapt to tense situations was what he picked up from another player who liked to stretch. Stretching, according to Milton, allowed him to reduce the game to a simple exercise. Milton just had to tell himself to control what he could control and his performance would impress scouts. Pickett mentioned that the advice from a pitching coach helped him reduce baseball to a game of numbers. He commented,

Seventy percent of the time, the batter’s going to get out, no matter what you throw.

So you have to know that I have the odds in my favor here. Go throw my game, pound it inside, pound it inside you know, hit your spots and the game's in your hands, which I liked a lot.

Pickett realized that if he threw solid strikes, the umpire would give him—the pitcher—the benefit of the doubt, resulting in the batter striking out at the plate. Similarly, Taylor, who had individualized instruction from a former minor league pitcher, also learned to reduce baseball to a game of numbers. Taylor commented, “He made me realize that I mean if you fail seven out of ten times, you’re in the Hall of Fame, and that was huge.” In baseball, conventional wisdom suggests that if a player hits .300, failing to hit seven out of ten times at the plate, he will earn a spot in the Hall of Fame. Bland, who had to deal with the pressure of his high school coach scheduling scouting visits around his pitching dates, said his overall love of the game helped him adapt to a stressful environment. He noted:

I knew that there were scouts up there, I don't have to look and see where they're from or anything, see if they're looking at me, like I wouldn't, I just didn't let it bother me. I was just playing the game, playing the game that I love to play, and that made it a lot easier.

Hutch had a similar perspective on taking control of a game when he sought the advice of scouts at an amateur showcase. Scouts told Hutch to “just relax, go out there and just play your game, you're here for a reason, we've noticed you, we've noticed you're a top player, just go out there and show your ability.” For Hutch, it was “big” to know that all he had to do was play his game, which is contact hitting, and the rest would take care of itself. When Ruffin was struggling playing in front of scouts and on turf, he had his mother take him “back to the fundamentals,” which was moving his feet when fielding ground balls. Womack mentioned the things he picked up from other scouts did not overwhelm him “because at that level you should know how to play the game.” The scouts would just give him advice on dropping his shoulder, moving around the base paths and guarding the corner in the infield.

The pressure the participants had to endure was an example of what Dimmock and Wilson (2011) termed as an “insitu” (p. 286) constraint because it happened in the context of live recreation. The scuba divers in Dimmock and Wilson's study negotiated insitu constraints by exuding autonomy and isolating their challenges. Similarly, Pickett and Taylor negotiated their in situ constraint by realizing that the game can be managed with certain strategies. As was previously mentioned, Pickett was told to focus on throwing strikes, and on the other hand, Taylor was told that failure is part of baseball. Similar to the participants in Dimmock and Wilson's study, Hutch negotiated an in situ constraint by being autonomous and focusing on what he could control, which is contact hitting. The negotiation strategy that Hutch learned was

similar to those given to the participant in Nicholls's (2007) study who was told to "focus on his own game...by thinking about what he wanted to do" (p. 496). As the participants have been playing baseball for several years, they relied certain skills that have helped them in negotiating constraints.

Theme 2: Foundation

The next theme that developed from the interviews is the concept of foundation. Each participant reported that he still uses some of the skills that he learned as a developmental player. They also spoke in detail about the people who were instrumental in their development, most of whom were parents and coaches. Within this theme, the participants demonstrated that they have been playing baseball for most of their lives, thereby committing a considerable amount of time to the sport. Also, when there came a point in time when they had to choose between baseball and another sport, the decision to pick the former was easy because of the fact that the participants had been playing the sport for most of their lives. The three sub-themes under foundation are: (a) I've been playing ever since (b) I am a competitor, and (c) I had good coaching. These three subthemes will be discussed in full detail in the following section.

I've been playing ever since. The first sub-theme under foundation is "*I've been playing ever since.*" Each participant discussed how he started some form of the game as early as the age of three and no later than six. This was important because it shows how much of a commitment baseball is to the participants. There were also intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural facilitators who were instrumental in the participants' development in baseball. The significance of this subtheme is that all of the players started relatively young, going from Little League baseball to travel ball. All of the participants sampled other sports before deciding to focus on baseball. None of the participants engaged in early specialization (Baker, 2003), in which they

only played baseball early on in their careers. Baker (2003) noted that the trend in elite sports such as baseball and tennis is for athletes to play only one sport so that “late beginners would be unable to catch up to them” (p. 86). While the participants did play baseball at an earlier age, they did engage in early “diversification” (Baker, Cobley, & Fraser-Thomas, 2009), in which they sampled other sports such as basketball, football and volleyball.

I will start with the participants who mentioned they grew up in a baseball family, meaning someone in their family played either college or professional baseball. Womack, whose father is a scout for a major league team and a former minor league player, always encouraged him and his sister to play baseball and softball. Hutch had a similar experience in that his father played baseball at the professional level and coached at Beaton University for all of 17 years before a coaching change was made. He commented, “Honestly, I was just kind of around it because my dad coached at Beaton University since I was born, so, I’ve just always been around baseball, and I’ve grown to love it.” Although his father was part of the coaching staff that was terminated, he wanted to be part of the rebuilding phase at Beaton University. Although no one in Ruffin’s nuclear family played baseball at the professional level, his maternal grandfather played for a major league team. His mother, who was his hitting coach for most of his life, “knew a lot about” the game. What also factored into Ruffin’s interest in baseball was the fact that he watched his older brother play the game, and he had a “good knowledge of the game” compared to his friends. While Taylor’s grandfather did not play professional baseball, he did play college baseball and helped him with the pitching aspects of the game.

While the other participants did not grow up in a baseball family, they did credit their parents and guardians with helping spur their interest in the game. Cooke, who was raised by his grandparents, attributes the love of baseball to his grandfather, who was a “natural athlete” and

hit fly balls to him and his twin brother in their backyard. Cooke commented that his grandmother had an additive impact because not only did she pay for and give him hitting lessons, but she also doubted him. He commented:

It's funny because in high school ahh, my grandma gave me hitting lessons and stuff because I was never a good hitter...I remember in high school my senior year, she's like why are you taking these lessons? You're never going to play college baseball or anything, that's funny because I ended up playing college baseball. But, yeah my grandma she paid for hitting lessons. She never missed a game ever, but at the same time she just thought it was something for fun at the time. She never thought I'd go farther.

Cooke played baseball because of his grandfather, and he was motivated in large part due to his grandmother doubting his potential as an elite player. Pickett also played football and basketball and was attracted to baseball because his father loved the game and his older sisters played softball. Pickett commented, "Then after playing, then baseball was just always a sport that I found first in my mind, when I thought of things that I wanted to do."

The participants' attraction to baseball because of a family member, their physical capabilities and material resources is an example of intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural facilitators. Raymore (2002) noted that facilitators are important in forming a person's leisure preferences. Hutch played baseball because he "came from good genes," in large part because of his father, who is a former major league player. Ruffin continued to play the sport because he was better at it, relative to his peers. The case of Ruffin and Hutch represents an intrapersonal facilitator, because of the participant's "individual characteristics" (Raymore, 2002, p. 45). Raymore noted that people tend to participate in activities in which they excel. The participants

had an interpersonal constraint because of their parents, who “enable[d] or promote[d] the formation of leisure preferences and encourage[d] or enhance[d] participation” (Raymore, 2002, p. 46). At the structural level, the participants could continue playing the sport because of their physical resources, including batting cages, expansive back yards and proximity to a baseball diamond.

The role of the parents not only represents an interpersonal constraint but an example of “transmission” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 493), in which agents employ their resources, including labor, capital and accumulated knowledge to benefit the next generation. For example, Womack’s father used mileage points so that he could travel at cheaper rates. All of the participants credited their parents and guardians with transporting them to different states to compete in tournaments, further enhancing their prospects in the sport. The parents acted as “chauffeurs, financiers and guardians” (Hallinan & Burke, 2007, p. 61) so that the participants could compete at a high level in baseball. The mothers in Swanson’s (2009a) study also transmitted their labor and capital to their sons; for example, the mothers steered their sons toward soccer because of the fact that it is not a drain on academics, and they were also willing to travel farther than usual for tournaments.

I am a competitor. The next sub-theme under foundation is “*I am a competitor.*” The participants spoke to the fact that being competitive is central to their continuing development as NCAA Division I baseball players. The participants will do whatever is required to compete for a roster spot. A player could be the only one in his high school to take batting practice on the weekends to stand out amongst his teammates. Having a competitive nature and wanting to play on superior teams also enables the player to compare himself to his peers. Bland credited a coach with making him understand that winning is central to the game, but it is also

fun. Before going to travel ball, he played Little League baseball where it was all about having fun and the overall experience. Bland commented,

He was like the first one that really liked to win, like he had the drive.

Everyone else, was like oh let's do this, and let's have fun, and he like, finally was the one like, let's win, like. I remember one of his lines was, I know I'm going to tell you to go out there and have fun, but ahh winning is fun.

This coach's approach to winning represents the power and performance model, proffered by Coakley (2009). Proponents of the power and performance model believe that "competitive success, intense dedication, hard work, sacrifice, risk and pain are necessary for excellence" (Curry, Arriagada, & Cornwell, 2002, p. 399). Curry, Arriagada and Cornwell (2002) found that sport-related images in their sample reflected competition, achievement and domination of opponents. Bland later mentioned that this was the first coach who stressed the importance of staying after practice to improve performance.

Taylor's father was instrumental in him striving to be a competitor. On two occasions, his father advised him to choose a higher level of competition with respect to baseball; his father advised him to make the jump from Little League to travel ball and from a mediocre private school to a baseball powerhouse. Had his father not encouraged him to transfer to the public high school, Taylor would have gone to "Beaston University as a student." Taylor's father is similar to the parents in the Hallinan and Burke (2007) study who transferred their children to higher-level clubs "because of the prestige it offered" (p. 61). Taylor knows that even though he is unlikely to start this upcoming season, he still plans to compete despite of the fact that he is third string. He commented:

Don't give up, no matter what, cuz I mean yeah the guy in front of, I mean I'm right now I'm the utility guy and they have me at third but there's two guys in front of me, and one's a senior, and one of them a was a freshman all-BEB[Beaston University's conference] last year, I mean he's very very good, unbelievable actually. I mean its just my job this year is too push guys, like that's what I have to do. I have to push George to be a better third baseman, to be all that. That doesn't mean I'm just going to not show up because I know I'm not going to start. I mean, that's not how I am.

Womack knows that the level of competitive spirit in players at his high school pales in comparison to that at Beaston University because "it wasn't like baseball was life for everyone." In high school Womack was the only player on his team who took the extra effort to compete, but at Beaston University he knows that his teammates are as competitive as him when it comes to jockeying for starting positions. He explained:

When I got here, I was the only one in my high school that would go out on every weekend and take batting practice, now I'm one of thirty five guys, that does it, so just keep, just work hard, outwork anyone you think could possibly be competitive with you, and just go out and have fun and play hard everyday.

Milton had a coach who scheduled games against much better teams because he was from a small rural town where the talent "wasn't that good." The difficult scheduling was beneficial because in several of his high school games he competed against teams during the regular season and playoffs, making his team realize that they could compete against anyone in the state. In a different vein, Hutch noted that some of the things he picked up from his high school team were being a competitor and striving to always play to your potential. He noted:

Well for one, my sophomore year in the state championship game, Dill Spicer was pitching, and he was pitching on two days rest. I think he already pitched two other games at state. And ahh, there was just rain delay in the middle of the state championship game, and he'd already thrown like four or five innings that game and then he came back out, and it just shows determination.

Pickett skipped Little League baseball because he wanted to compete against better talent in travel ball. He explained his story:

Because like we were using big boy bats when I was ten years old... You definitely feel a sense of power, like cuz you're like man, I've got this big bat, you know I'm ready to go out. I'm legitimate now, and stuff like that, and you can definitely tell the difference. I would play in tournaments with like younger teams because I played up until I was like twelve with older age groups... It definitely made you realize that there's always bigger fish in the pond, you know, cuz like, I'm like oh well I'm good, I'm playing with older people, but they are better than me. So, I would think it was good because it made me strive to be competitive in like everything I do.

At some high schools that are perennially ranked, underclassmen who are eligible to earn a spot on the varsity team choose not to play at that level because they know they will not earn any significant playing time. Ruffin identified a case in which he found himself to be one of the weaker links on his high school team. Ruffin noted:

I mean when we played fall intersquads at my high school. I mean I'm playing against the best you know what I mean, I'm playing against like the best kids, and I was a sophomore playing varsity intersquads, I mean. I never been that

disproportionately playing against kids that are that much better than, probably even until I'm about to play this spring.

The participants' stories reveal the significance of playing in organized environments where the goal is to be competitive and weed out the less talented players. But more importantly, the focus on competition and trying to improve enables the participants to "cut their coats according to their cloth" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 65). As Bourdieu (1990) noted, the practices required in a field enable agents to increase their chances at desired outcomes. With respect to this study, the participants choose to use "big boy" bats, decide to compete against better players and stay after games and organized team activities for batting practice. Such actions, according to the participants, were largely responsible for them becoming NCAA Division I baseball players. The participants exuded similar behaviors to those in Cushion and Jones's (2006) study. The soccer players in Cushion and Jones's study did what was required to "improve their position" (p. 157). Cushion and Jones concluded that competitive behavior stabilized the status quo, which differentiates the superior players from their inferior counterparts. In contrast, the grassroots league that was under investigation in Sharpe's (2006) study was in place to promote fair play and sportsmanship and was not necessarily concerned with skill acquisition and mastery. The coaches, volunteers and other stakeholders tried to stymie acts of power and performance that are pervasive in developmental baseball. Stotlar and Wonders (2006) noted that competition is important in not only preparing athletes for the next level in their sport, but it also helps talent evaluators identify the inferior athletes. The participants did things to sustain their field, which is developmental baseball.

I had good coaching. The third sub-theme under foundation is "*I had good coaching.*" The participants credited a coach or instructor who knew about the game and

imparted those skills onto them. The participants credited a position coach who was instrumental in them learning the fundamentals at their position. For example, a participant who is a shortstop had a high school coach who was also an infielder at the interscholastic, intercollegiate and professional level. In examining the athletic development of Olympic athletes, Stotlar and Wonders (2006) found that coaching plays an important role in athletes becoming elite. Coaches must be able to communicate effectively with players as well as be “strict technicians, and must understand the effort that must be put forward by the athlete to reach the elite status” (Stotlar & Wonders, 2006, p. 125). Coaches must not only know what they are doing with respect to practice and in-game management, but they should also be able to relay information to their players in a way that nurtures development.

I will begin with the two players whose fathers played professionally. Hutch credited his father with teaching him most of what he knows about baseball. Hutch said of his father: “He was a big hitting coach guy, and an infield coach, and I’m an infielder so he’s pretty much taught me everything I know so far.” When asked if he had learned new things playing under the auspices of scouts, Hutch said “I’m sure other guys, on the team hadn’t and they learned a lot of stuff like that but for me personally, I hadn’t really, just because I had it my whole life.” Womack, whose father as previously mentioned played in the minor leagues and is currently a scout, taught him all the fundamentals too. Womack’s father taught him his swing as well as his throwing motions. When Womack grew, his father asked a friend from Cuba to help him with fielding. He commented,

It was just all, when I came, I had played outfield for a long time, but when I came back into the infield, ahh, I had never, everything, was, he just taught me pretty much the fundamentals of infielding, getting around the ball, just follow your throws,

stuff like that, it was the fundamentals but I never really experienced it before, it was really good for me, just for the fact that, once he taught it to me, and I took reps with him. I would get it basically down, and then it would just improve as the more reps I took.

Both Hutch and Womack's fathers were instrumental in passing on their baseball knowledge to them.

While the other participants did not have fathers who played professional baseball, they still credited coaches and instructors who were good teachers of the game. Taylor learned all the aspects of hitting from a gentleman who is the director of minor league operations for a western MLB team. Williams learned about catching from one of the managers on his summer travel team who was also a catcher. Similar to Hutch who said that there was nothing in travel ball overwhelmed him, when asked if he learned anything that was revolutionary from summer ball, Mayfield said:

My coach was a really good high school coach, and he knew alot he was ah, like ahh the assistant head coach at Kirkwood State for baseball. So he had a lot of knowledge. He worked behind Donald Ginn so he was taught alot, he transferred it over to us.

His high school coach worked behind Donald Ginn, a first ballot Hall of Fame player. While Milton's childhood coach is not a first ballot Hall of Fame player, nor did he play college baseball, he knew how to coach the game as well as manage parents. Milton commented:

He just knew so much about the game, he knew what to say at the right time. He knew how to coach, and he handled parents really well too, which is always a plus. And he just knew what he was doing. It helped out a lot.

Until high school, Ruffin's mother gave him hitting lessons and after she let go of the reins, his high school coach gave him individualized hitting and fielding instruction. Ruffin noted, "I mean, everything I know about infielding, I owe to him." When Ruffin asked his mother if he could take additional hitting instruction, she told him "you have a coach that's teaching you two to three times a week, if you can't hit with him, then what do you think is gonna help?" Cooke noted that while his coach during his first three years in high school was decent, the head coach who was hired his senior year had a greater impact on his development as a player. He juxtaposed the two coaches:

His name is Coach Michelin. Coach Stevens got hired my senior year. Coach Michelin was more of a manager, not really a coach. He coached but he wasn't as much of a coach as Coach Stevens was. He just more managed the game, and knew what he was doing, as far as calling plays and stuff. Ahh, Coach Stevens, he was more, he was a small town guy, fundamentals, coaching camps, worked his way up, too.

Coach Parker was not only a good coach, but he also showed Cooke the value of hard work as he too worked his way up through camps. For example, as will be explained later, Cooke did not play college baseball a year out of high school; rather, he stayed in his hometown to help his high school baseball team. Williams credited a high school coach who was able to strike a balance between work and play. He noted:

Coach Dill Johnson made it so much fun cuz he's just like a big kid. And I mean, we just had a ton of fun. Practices were easy, but I mean we worked hard but it was just so like, it was just kind of just like we were playing all the time, kind of thing.

While Coach Johnson may not have been a strict technician like some of his counterparts, Williams' team won the state championship his junior year in high school. Cooke identified with the "small town" Stevens, who just like him worked his way up through camps and volunteerism.

The participants' descriptions of their coaches demonstrate how capital is distributed unequally in not only education, but also sport. Bourdieu (1977) noted that resources are not only scarce but are monopolized to keep the social hierarchy intact. In the Hallinan and Burke (2007) study, the parents not only moved their daughters to certain clubs because of prestige, but also because of superior coaches who "worked to advertise their special ability as something that should be trusted" (p. 62). Hallinan and Burke noted that parents aligned their daughters with winning clubs and superior coaches in order to keep the hierarchy intact. This hierarchy differentiated the superior basketball players from their inferior counterparts. Sharpe (2006) noted that one of the reasons why grassroots leagues do not rival Little League and summer leagues is because they do not have the "talents, knowledge, know-how and experience" (p. 389). The coaches of these participants had the knowledge and experience to coach high school, summer and Little League teams because, among other reasons, they played the sport professionally or worked their way up in the system.

Theme 3: Diverse Experiences

The next theme to be discussed is diverse experiences. The participants gave numerous examples of how their skills have been affected by different training regimens, one of which was travel ball. The players spoke of how important it was to attend amateur showcases, in which they played to gain the attention of scouts. Surprisingly, several of the players were multi-sport athletes, with one participant playing three sports all four years of high school;

another participant played football along with baseball all four years of high school. For some participants, playing different sports made them better baseball players, but also gave them a break from the sport. The participants also emphasized the tension between playing in a team environment and showing off their individual skills to impress scouts and college coaches. The three subthemes within this theme are: (a) you gotta play travel ball, (b) playing to win vs. playing to be seen, and (c), just play sports.

You gotta play travel ball. The first sub-theme under diverse experiences is “*you gotta play travel ball.*” Within this sub-theme, the participants spoke of how they made tremendous strides during travel baseball, where they learned new things and were oftentimes recruited. For example, during travel ball, some players mentioned they learned new defensive skills they would not have otherwise learned in high school baseball. Other participants spoke of how important it was for a summer team to take them out of their home state so they could see how much better the talent is in California, Florida and Georgia. They also spoke of how summer baseball was prime for recruiting as some of their travel coaches had connections to professional scouts and college coaches.

I will first begin with how the participants made significant improvements in travel baseball. Womack said, “High school couldn’t hold a candle to summer ball.” When Womack was asked what did he mean by that, he explained,

Ball coming off the bat was usually squared up every time, there weren’t people getting jammed with slow rollers, coming to third base. If it was hit to third base, it traveled like, high school ball third base wasn’t really the hot corner, it was either a routine, slow roller, or a little, just chopper. In summer ball it became, the hot corner

where people, would turn on the ball and squared it up right at you, and you'd just have to do what you can to stop it.

With respect to doing what was required to stop the ball, Womack said that he just had to “wear it,” meaning he had to let the ball strike his body to stop its momentum. Williams, who is a catcher, noted that in summer ball he learned how to catch different pitches and his “reaction time was getting tested every day.” Pickett, who pitched and played third base, acknowledged that in “high school, you’ll have two or three people that hit the ball extremely hard on the team like that. In travel ball, seven, eight, nine of the people are just going to rip it.” Because of what Pickett described, Taylor learned how to throw guys out quicker who were running up the line at faster speeds. Taylor explained how he had to adjust to the faster pace in travel ball:

Some things that I picked up before, for instance, playing third and playing short you know. I’ve always known, when I’m catching the ground ball, you know catch a ground ball, step on third throw first, you’re going to turn two [get two runners out]. In travel ball, guys are fast, really fast, and so what I was taught, and what I picked up is I if catch the ball, and go over, set my feet and step as I’m throwing, it’s going to be quicker, more efficient. I mean just little things its kind of like when I learned also: you’ve got to have an internal clock, when you’re playing high school, you pretty much know that most of the guys are not going to be unbelievable...When you’re playing travel ball, its just super fast draft picks, you field the ball, you know how much time you've got. You have, to get everything you can. You’ve got to get the ball. You’ve got to catch a short hop. You’ve got to be quicker. You’ve got to take better angles. You know, you’ve got to dive. You got to get up quick. You got to

throw it, you throw it a lot harder than you think you should. It's just one of those things. It really hones your clock, for sure internal clock.

On the offensive side of the ball, players learn how to become better hitters because of the better pitching and the constant use of the wood bat. Williams noted that he learned how to square the ball up better because most of the summer tournaments were in wooden bat leagues. Hitting with a wooden bat provides more feedback because players learn where their weak spot is, meaning if they strike the ball at the wrong part of the bat, the ball will not travel very far. Taylor noted,

It's a great exposing tool, like you know isolation, like we do it when we're training, we do muscle isolation and it picks out your weaknesses. It's the same thing, metal bat, you can get jammed and get a hit, wood, bat you get jammed, you splinter yourself, your hands hurt like hell, and the short stop gets to you, and it really exposes what you need to work on.

Some players discover how to hit effectively with a wooden bat, one of whom is Cooke. He commented:

So what you're going to do with that, you're going to learn to stay inside the ball better, keep your hands inside, and you really learn to barrel up the ball, and you're going to learn not to go around the ball so much, you know. It really teaches to use the whole field and not just be a dead pull hitter and get around the ball.

Because players can get away with hitting the ball with the wrong part of the aluminum bat, the wood bat allowed Cooke to improve his mechanics at the plate. With respect to better pitching in the summer, Taylor hit against pitchers who had elevated speeds and better movement, meaning by the time the regular high school season came around, he had the mentality that, "I've seen a hundred even, you don't have anything that's going to impress me, I'm going to be able to hit

you, or going to be able to play with you.” Not only did the players learn how to become better contact hitters because of the wood bat, they also learned to hit different kinds of pitches.

The strategies that Williams, Taylor and Womack picked up from travel ball can be understood as things they do when they are “caught up in the game” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 81). Bourdieu (1990) cited the sport of basketball when he demonstrated how agents employ certain practices in their field. For example, according to Bourdieu, the basketball ball player passes the ball, “not to the spot where his teammate is but to the spot he will reach” (p. 81). Similarly, Smith (2011) noted a hockey player’s habitus enables him or her “to act skillfully without the need for conscious control” (p. 272). While Womack had to learn to “wear the ball” to stop its momentum, Taylor developed an internal clock in the infield to throw faster players out. Other participants learned to adjust to the use of a wooden bat in travel games. During summer ball, players learn new defensive positions that were not required in the regular high school baseball season. The players’ perceptions of travel ball reflect the findings by Ogden and Warneke (2010) who found that the majority of college baseball players played travel ball because it prepared them for intercollegiate competition.

Playing to win vs. playing to be seen. The next sub-theme under diverse experiences is “*playing to win vs. playing to be seen.*” The players experienced this dichotomy during the high school baseball season where the focus was on winning the state championship and the summer season where they had to find ways to impress scouts and college coaches. Playing to win also occurred at amateur showcases, where in no more than four innings players had to demonstrate their hitting skills, speed running up the baseline and defensive prowess. In essence, high school ball was more of a team game while summer ball was more individually oriented.

I will demonstrate how playing to win is different from playing to be seen. During the high school season, players had to work within a system that was more tactical and not based on hitting home runs. Mayfield, who said he attended about two showcases a month before committing to a college, noted that in travel ball, “each player is more about themselves.” Further, Mayfield noted that the high school baseball season was more team-oriented because players were playing for championships and trying their best to represent their areas. However, although at a showcase participants played in a team format, the object of the game was not to win as a team. Mayfield explained how the showcase worked:

I mean the showcases that I went to, you kind it wasn't like team oriented. It was like go showcase yourself on how well you can field a ground ball. If you're pitching, how hard can you throw it, and ahh, like all the scouts come out and they play a game at the end, and just see what you have, like how much power can you hit it over the fence. Basically, you go out there and show like, ahh, how far you can hit the ball, and just go all out.

Taylor explained that it is difficult to play as a team because players are often invited to play for other teams in order to be seen:

I hate losing, but there are times when say you go and you're playing and you're a guest player on somebody's team. You know you're not playing for them, you don't really know who they are, you don't know the team, you don't know the guys, you're just playing to get out there, its not to say that you don't care about the game, the outcome, but its just one of those things that, I'm gong to play well, if I play well then I'm ok with it.

According to Hutch, playing on intersquads adversely affects team chemistry because he “didn’t know all the kids.” Playing to be seen required a lot of intersquads, in which a scout would corral around 50 of the best players in an area and have them play several games against each other.

Playing for exposure altered how coaches managed the game, with respect to in-game tactics. Bland explained the difference in how the high school and travel seasons were played:

They get you on first base, they're going to bunt him to second base, you know you go, then you gotta worry about runner on second, one, out. Where in travel ball, a guy gets on first, base, everyone is swinging. They wanna show their stuff, you know what I mean, no one’s going to bunt in a summer league game.

Bland later noted that summer coaches were more lax and did not yell at him, while during the high school season, “If my team didn't win, my moms is not talking to me that night. I’m staying in my room.” Further, Williams acknowledged that when playing to be seen, players tried to do “something special.” He explained how players attempted to stand out amongst their teammates and peers in travel baseball:

I don’t want to make it sound wrong, because anytime were playing, you’re playing to win, but ah, in the summer it was more playing to get noticed, because everyone wants to land a school that they can play at, so when its kind of like when you go out in the summer and you’re playing, you’re making sure that everything you do, like you’re making sure that your throws are on line, so your just kind of like making sure that you self is in line, so that the scouts, so make sure that you’re doing something special, just about every time, so that the scouts will know you.

Playing to be seen was not for every participant, because some had no outstanding skills that could grab the attention of scouts. Taylor, for example, noted that what vaulted him to

the next level was that both the coaches at Beaston University and his high school emphasized the importance of bunting and players being good base runners. He explained his offensive limitations with respect to hitting and running around the bases:

I was a versatility guy, so I didn't really have one unbelievable quality. I didn't hit balls out in bp[batting practice]. I hit line drives. I didn't run particularly well. I was just smart on the base paths, so showcases really weren't my deal.

Ruffin mentioned that he stayed after a showcase to take batting practice because "when you got a big lefty throwing 92[miles per hour], they're not looking at the short stop[him], who gets one hit and lays down a couple bunts you know." Cooke did not receive any offers from NCAA Division I schools because he did not have the skills to impress scouts. He explained, "I didn't really get noticed because I wasn't a hitter. I won games on the field with my voice, being a leader, blocking balls, just things that scouts really aren't going to notice unless they watch several games."

Playing to be seen can also come with certain constraints, one of which is playing time. For example, while a player might have the opportunity to compete on a varsity team or an A-team for summer ball, he might have to sacrifice playing time. Ruffin spoke on how he could have been a varsity player on his perennially-ranked high school team but chose not to play:

I had a shot at being varsity my sophomore year ahh, but if I had I wouldn't have played an inning. So ahh I'm actually glad I got to stay down on jv, and all my friends were down on jv, ahh. And our conference is ridiculous, I mean like I think there we'll have like five or six get drafted every year, out of our nine-team conference ahh, and we just pump out really good players out of our conference, so ahh, you know its hard to play when you're young.

While playing on a junior varsity team is not as highly regarded as playing on a varsity team, experience gained on a lower ranked team is beneficial for a player because he learns how to win in the process. Hutch explained the importance of striking the balance between playing to be seen and also trying to improve as a player:

Because I mean, you can get better, but there's nothing like game experience. And if you're going on the best travel team to get seen but if you're not going to play very much, then when you actually do get to play, you're not going to perform at your top game, cuz you haven't been playing, ahh. And don't know I would say... There's so many games going on down there in those tournaments that you're going to have an opportunity to get noticed, you just have to worry about winning, and it'll take care of itself, cuz if you worry about winning, and you play your hardest, all game, and ahh, every game then, if the coach is there, you're going to get noticed. They'll notice that.

It is clear from Hutch and Ruffin that while playing on a subpar travel or high school team does not come with the cache of playing on a varsity or A team in travel ball, there is no substitute for gaining valuable experience by playing on any team, nonetheless. Ruffin exerted his agency to redraw the boundaries of his field by playing on a lower level team because he knows that the symbolic cache that comes with playing on a varsity team does not rival earning playing time for the junior varsity team, learning how to win in the process.

While some players may not have the talent to stand out amongst their peers, their presence in travel ball and at amateur showcases only increased their chances at being noticed by scouts and college coaches. Playing to win and playing to be seen represents what Bourdieu (1989) considered “double structuring” (p. 20). Bourdieu noted the resources and cultural goods

conferred upon agents are unlikely to be available to all people. Bourdieu simplified this by saying, “just as feathered animals are more likely to have wings than furry animals, so the possessors of a sophisticated mastery are more likely to be found in a museum than those who do not have this mastery” (p. 20). Simply, although a baseball player cannot stand out because of his large frame and can only play to win, he is still in position to be seen because he competes in travel ball and at amateur showcases. Christensen (2009) noted that coaches and scouts have eyes for hard work and dedication. Applying the work of Bourdieu to talent evaluation in top-level soccer, Christensen noted that talent evaluation is entirely arbitrary and based on the coaches’ tastes and preferences for particular skills. While Ruffin admitted that his skills did not stand out on the baseball diamond or at the showcase, he knew that he would grab the attention of scouts if he displayed hard work and dedication by staying after camps and showcases. While at the surface level, Taylor and Ruffin could not exchange their limited offensive skills for attention from scouts, they still had enough capital to gain the attention of coaches who were responsible for identifying talent. Ruffin, for example, knew enough about the recruitment process to stay behind after camps to take extra hits in batting practice, and Taylor on the other hand, played on a summer team that was coached by Coach Caprio’s friend. For example, Taylor’s summer coach told Coach Caprio that he was a winner and Ruffin continued to attend camps and fortunately for him, Coach Oregano, an assistant coach at Beaston University, took notice. The participants displayed skills that only increased their chances of earning a roster spot on an NCAA Division I baseball team.

Just play sports. The last sub-theme under diverse experiences is “*just play sports.*” Most of the participants mentioned that what helped them improve in baseball was playing other sports for transferable skills or just getting a break from the game. Some baseball players build

shoulder strength by swimming; others play tennis for hand-eye coordination (Baker, Cobley, & Fraser-Thomas, 2009). Through these interviews, players noted the importance of how playing other sports helped them with baseball. For example, Hutch played recreational basketball because it helped develop his fast-twitch muscles, which improved his multi-directional speed along the base paths. Taylor discussed how skills learned on the basketball hardwood helped him become a better baseball player:

Everybody loves to score. I love shooting, but one of my favorite things to do would be going on a fast break and make a pass that would frustrate a defender so much cuz its right there its right at the tip, and he just can't get to it, its right out of his reach, cant catch it or that perfect pass, you know threading the needle, laying it up. It's like trained my eyes to good court vision, always have my head on a swivel, same thing with baseball, when you're hitting, when you're in the field, you're constantly have to be looking around.

Pickett, who was a quarterback, credited football with “strengthening” his shoulder. Mayfield surfed whenever he could not play baseball because in the water he learned to have balance or else he would “fall off.” Further, on the baseball diamond the balance and conditioning acquired from surfing allowed him to “plant and throw and not fall over and be able to, like not be out of breath, like running from first to second.”

Playing other sports not only develops athleticism but competence, too. Womack noted that playing both basketball and football not only helps players develop more skills but demonstrate competence because, “everybody loves watching a guy, hit a homerun and then just go the next day and just dunk on somebody.” Cooke acknowledged that while he is vertically

challenged, he is still competent at the sports he plays, which are basketball and baseball. He noted:

I played freshman basketball, and of course, I'm really not athletic at all, I am decent in all sports, because I know what I'm doing, ahh, I'm good with my hands, not good with my feet, ahh. People like to say me and my twin brother have two left feet cuz well like I'm one of the smallest guys on the baseball team, and I was also by far the slowest, like small skinny that's slow. Ahh my vertical inch my vertical leap like second, second, a guy that was second lowest was 27 inches. I was 22, five inches below like not athletic, whatsoever.

Although Cooke enjoyed playing basketball, he stopped playing the sport after freshman year.

Haugassen and Jordet (2012) noted that certain physical skills gained from other sports are important in “reducing the disadvantage of those players who are less physically developed than others” (p. 190). Similarly, Baker (2003) is a proponent of early diversification because certain movements learned in one sport are transferable to a host of other sports. Baker stated,

For example, throwing a baseball overhand and an overhand serve in tennis share movement elements. Perceptual elements refer to environmental information that individuals interpret to make performance-related decisions. For instance, field hockey and soccer both require participants to accurately interpret the actions of their opponents in order to be successful; therefore, these sports share this perceptual element (p. 89).

While Cooke acknowledged that he is vertically challenged, he has gained competence in both basketball and baseball by learning to use his hands. The case of Cooke reveals that some skills

are useful across various sports. With respect to what Baker termed as perceptual elements, the court vision that Taylor learned on the hardwood was transferable to the infield. As was previously mentioned, because his head was always “on a swivel,” Taylor could monitor the infield to enhance his team’s defense.

Playing other sports also helped the participants not experience burnout, which often happens when athletes play their sport throughout the entire year (Baker, Cobley, & Fraser-Thomas, 2009). Hutch even turned down the opportunity to play at the Jupiter tournament, which is based in Florida and rivals East Cobb as a place to gain exposure. Hutch never went to the Jupiter tournament because he would not have had the time for his body to recover from baseball. Williams explained how football made him love baseball even more:

That was a huge thing I feel like in the offseason. I was able to get a baseball break, and just get away from it a little bit by playing football, and when baseball season rolled around again, I was ready for it, because I was like super. I was so ready to get back on the field, which made me want to go out and work harder.

Ruffin said soccer not only improved his footwork around the base paths, but the time on the soccer pitch made him “fall in love with baseball” his freshman year. Ruffin still played soccer until his junior year, but he decided to quit the sport to focus on the recruiting aspects of baseball. While most of the multi-sport participants mentioned they enjoyed playing other sports besides baseball, they did acknowledge that there came a point in time when they had to focus on baseball. Williams and Pickett, however, played football all four years in high school. Pickett, who played football, baseball and basketball all four years, mentioned that he was a multi-sport athlete because he liked to be around his teammates and could make connections. He noted:

I love basketball, I love football, why would I stop playing them you know just to focus on baseball? Even though baseball is what I'm going to college for, and a lot of people didn't understand like they didn't understand. You don't know how much joy I get from being with these guys, playing that sport.

Pickett later noted that his football coach is an extremely important resource. He said of his football coach: "We've had people come back like five years later, after they played football, like need a car payment, and he's like I got you, don't worry about it, he takes care of his own."

Sampling a diverse array of sports not only helped with developing transferable skills, but it also helped the participants have time away from baseball, as well as forge bonds with people outside of their primary sport. Pickett and Williams, for example, skipped showcases to focus on football workouts. Pickett developed connections with his teammates in both basketball and football. The samplers in Strachan, Cote and Deakin's (2009) study reported they played other sports to expand their social networks. That Hutch and Williams needed time away from the sport is congruent with the postulation that "specializers scored significantly higher on the exhaustion dimension" (Strachan, Cote, & Deakin, 2009, p. 88). Although Taylor and Hutch did not play high school baseball, their early experiences playing the sport helped them develop their perceptual skills and fast-twitch muscles, respectively. While Baker, Cobley, & Fraser-Thomas (2009) speculated that elite athletes are specializing at an earlier age to gain advantages in their sport, the participants sampled several sports when they were younger. Pickett and Williams diversified all four years in high school.

Theme 4: Social Location

The final theme that developed across interviews is social location. This included how the participants' parents' income allowed them attend a renowned private school that was

frequented by scouts. Or, the participants' socio-economic status could position them to be in contact with a person who provided them with access to a college coach or scout. Also, the frequent participation at tournaments played a major role in them being recruited, as most of the participants mentioned they were recruited during travel ball. Lastly, some players in developmental baseball receive significant playing time because their parents are long-time supporters of a high school or travel team. The four themes to be discussed in this section are: (a) right place at the right time, (b) social connections, (c) convenience and access, and (d) pay for play.

Right place at the right time. The first sub-theme under social location is "*right place at the right time*." For several of the participants, earning a roster spot at Beaston University required them to be at the right place at the right time. For example, one participant played at a perennially-ranked high school, which gave him access to scouts who were always in attendance. Several participants mentioned they played summer ball because they gained exposure playing in tournaments on college fields. A player who plays summer ball is more likely to be seen because he is in spaces that are frequented by talent evaluators. When a scout comes to watch one of his teammates, invariably, the player would receive attention.

I will begin with the participants who earned roster spots, in large part because they were scouted while their teammates and opponents were being recruited. Womack played on a summer team known for having players drafted in the first few rounds of the MLB draft. His public high school baseball team consisted of talent that was the "best you could find." Because of the fact that he was unlikely to be challenged in high school, Womack played travel ball to improve as a player, but also gain exposure. He commented,

The way I ended up here, which was kind of funny. I was with the Canes my second summer, ahh, before my senior year of high school. And, ahh, I was playing at East Cobb, and then they were there to see one of our outfielders, and I just ended up having a good game while they were there to see someone else.

Hutch, who played at a high school that won four straight championships, was scouted because “college coaches were always around our school watching everything.” Hutch explained how his high school receives the lion’s share of attention in the area:

I think if you look back at the past, how many kids have come out of Duke[his high school]. ahh, I think it’s definitely been something to do with the program. Ahh, I don’t think, I think some, there’s been players at schools that were just as good as some of the kids at Duke, but didn’t get the opportunity, just because they didn’t go to duke. And I mean, I don’t know. I don’t know why that is, but I guess it’s just the way it is.

He was going to play at another school in the conference but committed to Beaston University. Mayfield was playing in a tournament in his high school and was looked at because “a big lefty that threw about ninety-five, and he was like 6’8, and every scout in America was there.” He mentioned that he received several offers that day, one of which was from Seats University, where Coach Caprio was before taking the job at Beaston University. Mayfield later changed his commitment from Seats University to Beaston University once the new coaching staff offered him a roster spot. Pickett was also at the right place at the right time because scouts saw him at a game where the 74th overall pick in the 2011 MLB draft was pitching. He noted,

I feel like cuz that’s how cuz I played Jim Caesar who’s in double A right now.

He throws like 92[miles per hour], he went to Stinton Hill[a school in his hometown].

I pitched against him my junior year and that really got like, that's how Coach Caprio and Coach Dialo[assistant coach at Beaston University] knew about me because a scout that was watching him saw me pitching there and was like hey you might want to get on this kid. It was like that.

Some players were fortunate to attend a showcase or tournament where a scout or coach took notice of their skills. Milton had a similar experience with respect to being at the right place at the right time. He played well in a tournament against Hutch's team. Hutch's father called the head coach at Beaston University about Milton's impressive pitching performance. Milton received a call from Coach Caprio, ultimately earning a roster spot at Beaston University. Ruffin was not committed until late in his senior year, but he attended a winter camp at his high school, which happened to be attended by one of the assistant coaches at Beaston University. He told the story:

Oregano's [associate head coach at Beaston University] like I guess he saw me play and he's been going there for three or four years and he's seen me develop and he goes like I got there and he's like what are you doing, here? And I said I haven't committed yet. Oh really, and I was like yeah.

Ruffin was later offered a roster spot after the coach was impressed with him at the winter camp. Being at the right place at the right time can also backfire as some players may underperform in front of scouts. Bland noted:

I mean if a scout comes to see you play, and you play like garbage, that sucks for you. You know I mean you could do really well in the next game, and he's not there to see you. So I guess its luck and trying to be noticed.

Bland makes a valid point in that a player still has to perform well when he is being watched by scouts, but it should be noted that a player who attends several showcases and plays in several summer games will be placed on more radars even though he might have underperformed on a couple of occasions. Ruffin kept attending his high school camp and then the last year of his high school career, he was offered a roster spot at Beaston University. Simply, the frequency with which someone plays or trains in their sport also factors into being at the right place at the right time. According to Bourdieu (1989), symbolic capital is “granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition” (p. 23) The players are good enough to be in a position to be scouted, as they have been invited to play in an amateur showcase or have been picked up by travel teams. Because of their talent and the fact that talent evaluators accord value to their abilities and social spaces, they are likely to be in the same space as other developmental players, some of which happen to be MLB draft picks. In commenting on the decline of recreational soccer as an outlet for skill acquisition, Andrews (1999) noted that upper and middle-class parents send their children to the private sphere, which is a travel club, to gain an advantage. Travel teams are not open to all developmental players because of the costs and the emphasis on performance and not participation (Ogden, 2002).

Social connections. The next sub-theme under social location is “*social connections.*” Within this subtheme, the participants discussed ways in which people they know had an instrumental role in them earning a roster spot at Beaston University. This is an example of “capital conversion” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 240) because their social capital was converted into a roster spot at Beaston University. Another instance of social connections is when a player is invited to play on a state team because of someone he knows or the popularity of his coach.

Some of their travel ball coaches were friends with an assistant coach or know several scouts in both the collegiate and professional ranks.

I will begin with Cooke because his story is emblematic of the importance of having social connections. Cooke, who only had offers from NCAA Division III schools, did not even play baseball his first year out of high school. He attended college as a student in his hometown, while also coaching for his high school baseball team. As was previously mentioned, Cooke's high school coach matriculated through the coaching ranks and had established friendships with several people, one of whom was Coach James Triad, the former coach at Beaston University. Cooke noted how his high school coach helped him land at Beaston University:

So he [his high school coach] called up Coach Triad and he said ahh, I have this guy, he wants to be a manager there next year, and he has really good work ethic, pretty good catcher, and ahh. I actually went in James Triad's office, ahh, and I said, I'm here to be a manager, ahh, Coach Stevens talked to you, he's like and I think he got confused, I really do think he got confused, which is so funny like, I got so lucky. I think Coach Triad got confused, he's like oh, I'll just put you on the roster, so I came to the Beaston University supposed to be a manager, and he put me on the roster.

Bland was not on the radar of college coaches and scouts until his junior year when his high school coach became more aggressive in telling scouts about him. His coach would call scouts to have them come see him pitch in games. Once scouts committed to attend the games in which Bland was to pitch, his coach said "you need to perform." Once he did perform well in front of scouts, he finally received an offer to play at Beaston University his senior year in high school. Taylor's story was similar to Bland's in that his summer coach was proactive in telling Coach

Caprio about him. Taylor explained how his offer to play at Beaston University came to fruition because of a conversation between his travel coach and Coach Caprio:

I don't actually know what he said but one of the things that my dad told me he said was that you can win with guys like me, and ahh. And I got a text from actually Hutch, and he said hey my dad, called Caprio for you, you should be getting a call, soon, he couldn't have sent a text to me quicker, because right then Coach Caprio called me, and I talked to him, and he said I really like you, you know I heard alot of good things about you, ahh, I want to get you down for a visit, came on my visit he offered me a roster spot.

These examples demonstrate how the participants' coaches' social connections played a role in their getting offers to play at Beaston University. Players also exploit their social connections to earn spots on teams that are prestigious. Womack noted that he gained exposure as a teenager because of his father's employment with a major league team. He noted:

I was the youngest guy there, I was sixteen, I think everyone was seventeen or eighteen, and everyone's full beards, I haven't even hit puberty. I'm just sitting there like you could tell I was the smallest guy there, but I did well, I held my own, against everybody. And then I went out the second year, and did great, just tore it up, and but, as far as like, as far as just having an advantage over everyone, that was the only time, when I was fifteen that I thought, I got an opportunity that I hadn't really earned.

Here Cooke rationalized the inequality in developmental baseball:

Coach Stevens got me here. I had an advantage of course. Everybody's going to have an advantage over other people. I definitely feel like other people had a huge

advantage over me, so its not like I'm going to say yeah I had an advantage, but yeah I mean, it's hard to get like noticed and coached and stuff, in smaller towns of course. So yeah, I'd definitely say I'm in about the middle. People had advantages over me, but I had advantages over other people, cuz my grandma actually bought me hitting lessons. I never thought that would happen, because I just never thought it would happen. She would normally just say, I'll teach you how to hit like, ok grandma, whatever.

Similar to Womack, Hutch also received an invitation to play for a state team because of his father who is also his summer coach. He noted, "I know, I'm sure my coach had told them, that I needed to play on it." Cooke mentioned that the opportunity to play on a state or nationally recognized team hinges upon not only who you know but the popularity of a high school coach. He noted:

I mean I don't really know specifics, but I do know that there were guys that were absolutely deserving that probably just did not get the credibility, that they deserved. Like absolutely their numbers were off the charts and whatever reason, maybe their coach wasn't as popular, as other coaches so, he didn't get on the team.

It is clear from the participants that social connections are important in baseball. More importantly, the participants rationalize the unequal distribution of resources, including social, cultural and symbolic capital. As Bourdieu (1977) noted, in capitalist societies there is a scarcity of resources and the dominant classes monopolize resources to keep the social hierarchy intact. It is clear in sport that everyone cannot capitalize off of his or her participation. Stempel's (2006) study demonstrated that former athletes had to compete in the right kinds of sports to convert their sporting capital into economic capital. Womack's story is interesting as he did not make the

A-team because of politics, but he also recognizes that he had another opportunity that he did not earn. During the interview, Womack indicated his move from the Dirtbags to the Canes was a blessing in disguise, “because they [the Canes] were extremely good about treating everybody fair.” Bourdieu noted the social hierarchy is so entrenched that people believe that things are inevitable, making them culpable in their own oppression. Womack is complicit in his own domination because as McGillivray and McIntosh (2006) mentioned, “agents are subjected to forms of violence, but they do not perceive it that way, rather their situation seems to them to be the natural order of things” (p. 375). For example, Womack understood that although it was clearly unfair for him to play on the B team, in large part because other parents had been supporting the team longer than his father, he accepts the politics in baseball. The football players in McGillivray and McIntosh’s study were aware of their oppression as flexible workers, but they accepted “their position as mere embodied assets, as pawns in a game that cares little about their long-term future once the rich pickings have been exhausted” (p. 375). Womack did not challenge the injustice but accepted it as part of the landscape of developmental baseball. He simply migrated to another travel team. The participants willingly compete in a field where there is a scarcity of resources and advantages are required to gain an edge.

Convenience and access. The next sub-theme under social location is “*convenience and access.*” Within this sub-theme the participants explained how resources and knowledge were convenient to them at various junctures in their training. For example, a participant was at a showcase and asked a future first-round draft pick for advice. In another case, a participant discussed how having an indoor batting cage enabled him to become a better hitter because he could take batting practice during the winter.

I will begin with the players who mentioned they learned invaluable information by being in the vicinity of NCAA Division I talent. Williams noted that when he was at a showcase he came in contact with Hyman Armstrong, the 26th overall pick in the 2012 draft. Williams said of Armstrong:

Well he's a really good, receiver, which is something that I've been trying to work on, really, alot, and ahh, he would, I mean he was just a huge guy, he's like six four, I mean two thirty, so he was a really big target, and he just has really soft hands, and he doesn't ever get handcuffed or anything with the ball.

Williams not only watched Armstrong, but he observed how other catchers stepped out of the box when they went to the plate. Womack also used the showcase to observe players and learn how they took pitches at the plate. Womack mentioned, "They don't go to swing it out for the park, they just go to hit, make solid contact, every time and try to put the ball in play." Womack commented that watching the other players at the plate made him learn, "not to over swing, just do what you need to do, and when you get the right pitch, you'll hit homeruns on your own."

Taylor was more aggressive in how he sought out information on batting. He noted:

Every time, I'd find a guy at a showcase, like that I'd always go up to him and I'd just ask him what he does...one of the guys told me, when he goes up to bat, he zones, like he has his zones on plate, he zones middle in, middle away, he zones just straight middle, and he said at showcases, I'm looking for something middle, and I'm looking for something up, because if it's up then middle I'm hitting it out.

While the showcase or tournament at East Cobb did not transform their game, the participants acknowledged that the knowledge was instrumental in complementing their offensive and defensive skill sets. The showcase is accorded a certain value because developmental players

have “unequal opportunities” (Shilling, 1992, p. 4) to learn what the participants believe to be invaluable information. In the latter part of the interview, Cooke noted that camps and showcases are expensive as the camp at Beaston University costs \$250. Mayfield, who went to two showcases a month, said that spending so much on a showcase is sacrifice money. His reasoning is that it will pay off in the end in the form of a scholarship or roster spot.

The participants also spoke of how resources available to them were important in their development. One of the most poignant things the participants’ spoke of was how having new equipment helped them on the baseball diamond. Some participants had indoor batting cages that could be used all year. Williams expressed how having an indoor batting cage was helpful in his high school team winning the state championship:

We were in there [batting cage] every day, which is something that we hadn’t done in years past. Usually, we were just running and lifting and we wouldn’t even touch a bat really and then that junior winter offseason, we were hitting a ton and the pitchers were throwing in there, which was huge, because it’s so cold pitchers really wouldn’t want to go outside and warm their arms up.

Mayfield mentioned that his private school had its very own Nike sponsor. He commented on how having the newest equipment helped his high school team compete at a high level: “They gave us like the newest and improved cleats that are like super light, so, it could improve your speed, like running down the bases.” When Mayfield’s teammates could not practice due to inclement weather they could use the indoor facility of their coach’s friend. He acknowledged how important it was to have access to an indoor batting cage by saying, “If we didn’t have that, I didn’t know what we would do that day, probably take a day off which is not good.”

Taylor noted how playing in his home state comes with its own set of constraints with respect to the weather. He noted that in Florida, “They don’t have to worry about any of that stuff because its seventy and sunny every freakin day really. Even if it rains its gonna stop in ten minutes, you know they get to do that year round.” When weather did not permit the playing of baseball, Taylor’s team went to an indoor facility behind a car dealership near his school. Ruffin, who is from the northeastern region of the United States, where the dirt gets cold, had a turf field, which drains faster in the case of rain. While Taylor had to go to an indoor facility to work out, Ruffin had everything at his high school in addition to a renowned strength and conditioning coach. He explained:

We ahh played on a turf field, ah, so the field was always ready to go, ahh, and its nice its like a big, kind a stadium, kind of ahh area. It looks like a stadium, so a big hill behind it, we have we have a clubhouse that’s probably about as big as the clubhouse here...One I didn’t need to, we lift three times a week, we run I mean we run the days we lift too. Our trainer at our school is as good as Gordy[athletic trainer at Beaston University] is here. Ahh, he trains with the Atlanta Falcons, I mean the guy and plenty of other track and pro track teams and stuff like that, but ahh, did I need any outside help, no, I know alot of guys, alot of my friends did because they went to public high schools where they were the best player at their school. I was never the best player at my high school, umm just by the way.

Bland went to a private school that was only in its sixth year of operation. That his school was relatively new and equipped with impressive facilities enabled him and his teammates to train after organized activities. He commented:

So all of the equipment was really nice. They have a beautiful, two fields, on campus, which were very nice, like top of the line, an outdoor batting cage, an indoor batting cage, and like a great weight room that was always open to us... Then other places don't have that, you just have to buy, I'll have to buy something so I can go to this batting cage every day and that wasn't something that I wasn't totally interested in like I wasn't the one to buy batting cage time, I didn't have to at my school, I could just go whenever I wanted to, find players to throw with whenever I could get that extra work and it definitely helped me be a better player that wouldn't been available I guess somewhere else.

The participants' descriptions of access to certain kinds of training regimens and facilities are an example of the opportunity to develop physical capital, which is what Bourdieu (1986) referred to as an embodied state. For Bourdieu, the embodied state is "work on oneself, an effort that presupposes a personal cost, an investment" (p. 244), which accumulates over time. Bale (2006) utilized Bourdieu's concept of an embodied state to explain how Roger Bannister set the world record in track and field. Bannister had the spare time to train and prepare for the record-breaking event, and he had access to a host of facilities at which he could train. Some of the participants' high schools were similar to those in Lee et al. (2009), in that they had "the best facilities in the city" (p. 69). The high school is also a place of cultural reproduction because some players have access to top-of-the-line facilities.

Pay for play. The last sub-theme under social location is "*pay for play.*" The participants spoke of how politics was manifest in the sport, because some of their peers received preferential treatment. For example, a player who is the son of a former major league player receives preferential treatment, in large part because of the wealth and social status of his father.

In other cases, some parents pay for publicity by sending their children to several showcases. Other parents promote their children by paying for feature stories in magazines. In travel ball, parents who have been long-time supporters of the organization are more likely to see their children receive significant playing time.

I will begin with the stories of how some players and their parents pay for play. Cooke regretted the fact that he did not attend many showcases because he saw players with mediocre talent vault him to get an NCAA Division I roster spot. He explains how pay for play plays a role in earning a roster spot:

There's those type of guys on your high school team you'd think would never play but they go to so many showcases, I mean your bound to get noticed with somebody that at least thinks you have potential, so yeah it is absolutely, about getting noticed, there's so many guys in junior college, who have D-1[NCAA Division I] talent but just didn't get noticed, really.

Ruffin explained how some of his peers' parents spent thousands of dollars to have their sons gain traction in the recruiting aspects of the game. He noted:

I know there were guys like their parents, that kid who was a year younger than me ahh, I mean there we've had guys play on like the Bluebirds scout team down in Florida. I know there's some dads that want a big leap the program, and promote their son won't play on our summer team, won't play on diamond skills in the summer, which is the stupidest thing cuz we were the best team in the area and were going to play with like the Richmond Braves or a southern summer team and just blow all their money and try to get their son like shown off.

Womack noted that in travel ball, which is a private business, money plays a role in who gets to play on the A-team. He explained how pay for play works in travel ball:

When it comes to travel ball, I think it's extremely common just because, they, I mean, they're running an organization. They need to make money and if someone's been paying you for three years, and someone else better comes along, and I mean they get the job done, but they can't afford to pay all the time, they can't they might not get as much playing time just because the other person has been with that company for so long. And I mean you'll have guys, that just can't even afford to play with em, so they'll come out to a tryout, trying to negotiate a price with somebody and then the other people just won't cooperate.

Womack later mentioned that he was denied an opportunity to play on the A-team because although his talent was comparable to other players, "some people on the A-team had been paying the organization for three or four years." Bland commented on how wealthy parents pay for their sons to get starting jobs on high school teams:

I can give you a perfect example, Dinny Thompson, agent for even Skippy Hancock, his son went to my school, his son was not the best third baseman. He started every single game. He started every single game, and they could do it because the president of the school would always come in there and be like, this Dinny Thompson, I mean, super agent tons of money, is giving money to this school, we can't not start his kid, I mean giving mad amounts of, I mean he had to be. He was good enough to get the job done, but he was by far not the best.

Williams offered two stories of players getting preferential treatment because of the social standing of their parents. According to Williams, two brothers, one of whom now plays at a rival

school in Beaston University's conference, received "first pickings on everything." Williams also explained how a father essentially paid for his son to receive a starting position:

There's also a kid that was on my high school team, that his dad, had donated a lot of money to get that indoor facility, and I feel like sometimes he shouldn't have been. He didn't play my position, but I feel like sometimes he shouldn't have been in the spot that he was but because his dad was like on the forefront on the whole indoor facility, which was a huge deal at our school.

The participants' stories show how having money aids in getting noticed by college coaches and scouts because of the sheer number of showcases. Also, with respect to travel ball, players who have been paying the organization for a long time invariably receive preferential treatment by playing on the A-team.

The parents who donate to schools and spend money on showcasing their child's talents are an index to the current landscape of competitive sport, in which players compete to monopolize resources to gain advantages. Bourdieu (1986) noted that the family is a site for reproduction, "depending on the type of capital to be transmitted" (p. 496). Within the pay for play sub-theme, the singular form of capital that was transmitted is economic capital. The transmission of the economic capital is then converted to symbolic capital as some players are strategically placed in starting roles at high schools and travel teams. For example, as Bland mentioned, parents donate money to schools to have their children become starters at their high school. Simply, some parents have "front-stage syndrome" (Hallinan & Burke, 2007, p. 67), in which they act as player agents by trying to showcase the talents of their children. The parents in Hallinan and Burke's (2007) study had the financial security to help their children migrate to the

more prestigious basketball clubs. Similarly, in developmental baseball, according to the participants, parents do whatever is necessary to promote their children.

Research Questions Revisited

In relation to the research questions set forth at the beginning of this study, the following is how I see the three research questions being answered by my participants. The first research question focused on the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players. All of the participants noted that they have played baseball for most of their lives. The participants also spoke on the importance of playing baseball in the summer as some of them discussed how they improved both their defensive and offensive skills. The participants who were multisport athletes spoke on how skills learned in their secondary sports complemented their baseball skills.

The second research question focused on how the participants reflected on (a) exclusivity, (b) privilege, (c) the unequal distribution of resources and (d) meritocracy. The participants acknowledged that politics plays a role in who gets a starting position on the team because some of their peers are sons of wealthy parents. Players whose parents have been long-time supporters of the travel team receive preferential treatment. The participants spoke of how playing at a certain high school or on a travel team came with certain privileges, one of which was the fact that they were always surrounded by scouts and college coaches. Resources that were available to the players also came up in the discussion. Having access to a Nike representative who provided the team with the newest equipment is an example of exclusivity as such affordance is not available to all high-school players.

The third research question focused on how the participants' perceptions of their training have helped them become players at the intercollegiate level. The players emphasized that, among other things, a strong work ethic is required to play at the intercollegiate level.

Playing in the summer was also important as some of the participants came from rural towns where the talent was not very good. On a travel team, the talent distribution is dense and this leads to players having to adapt to new defensive situations; for example, the hot corner at third base becomes a place where players have to react quickly.

Summary

This chapter discussed the four main themes and sub-themes that I produced from the interviews with 10 NCAA Division I baseball players. The four main themes were: (a) baseball is work, but it is still a game, (b) foundation, (c) diverse experiences, and (d) social location. Each of these themes was discussed and related to extant literature, as well as how they addressed the research questions for this dissertation. The first theme baseball is work, but it is still a game was broken into three sub-themes: *The American Dream*, *hard work always yields dividends* and *fundamentals*. The three subthemes in foundation were *I've been playing ever since*, *I am a competitor* and *I had good coaching*. The three subthemes in diverse experiences were *you gotta play travel ball*, *playing to win vs. playing to be seen* and *just play sports*. Finally, the four themes in social location were *right place at the right time*, *social connections*, *convenience and access* and *pay for play*.

Specialization and diversification were discussed in the interviews and themes in this study. The participants played other sports to complement their baseball skills, as well as provide them with a break from the game; however, there came a point in time when most of the multi-sport participants had to train year round. Similar to the call of Baker (2003), they sampled sports before it was time to specialize. Three of the 10 participants played baseball all year round for four years but still played other sports recreationally.

Cultural reproduction focuses on how privilege is reproduced in various social spaces in society. In this case it is the reproduction of privilege that was reflected in the participants' stories, as all of them were either middle class or upper class. Because of their social class location, their parents and guardians could afford to fund their travel ball tournaments and amateur-showcase appearances. The participants who were sons of former professional baseball players learned valuable information from their fathers that they still use. As one participant mentioned, he was not overwhelmed with what he learned at a showcase because he had been learning it for most of his life.

Leisure constraints theory focuses on the barriers that inhibit participation in sport or recreation. The players in this study had a host of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural facilitators. With respect to the intrapersonal facilitator, the participants were encouraged to play baseball by their parents or grandparents, some of whom were former baseball players. At the interpersonal level, the participants played catch with their fathers and brothers in their backyard. Lastly, at the structural level, the players were situated in social locations that were conducive to their improving in the sport.

Chapter V

Conclusions, Implications, & Recommendations

This chapter presents conclusions, implications and recommendations for future research based on the analysis of the data in this dissertation. The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players at a university in the southeast. It further examined the participants' perceptions of their training background, and finally explored meritocracy, privilege, exclusivity, and the unequal distribution of resources in developmental baseball. This was done through semi-structured interviews. I analyzed the data employing three levels of coding and thematic analysis.

Conclusions

Through a qualitative approach and a thematic analysis, the training background of 10 NCAA Division I baseball players was analyzed. Through analysis of the interview transcripts, the following research questions were answered:

- 1) What is the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players?
- 2) How do developmental baseball players reflect on (a) exclusivity, (b) privilege, (c) the unequal distribution of resources, and (d) meritocracy in baseball?
- 3) How do the participants think their training has helped them become players at the intercollegiate level?

As discussed in chapter one, understanding the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players can help understand how resources are unequally distributed in developmental baseball. The findings can also demonstrate what is needed to compete at the NCAA Division I level, as all of the participants played travel ball.

The participants' interview transcripts were analyzed through three levels of coding, *in vivo* coding, descriptive coding and pattern coding. It was through these three levels of coding that four major themes were produced: The four major themes were: a) baseball is work, but it is still a game, b) foundation, c) diverse experiences, and d) social location. The players spoke to how they had to work hard in the sport, but treating baseball as a game that can be mastered was a coping mechanism. Under the theme foundation, the players spoke to how they have been playing baseball since they were children and how the sport is part of their identity. The theme of diverse experiences spoke to the importance of summer baseball and how other training experiences factored into their current status as NCAA Division I baseball players. The final theme was social location. In this theme, the players spoke of how social space played a role in their current standing as elite baseball players. Because the participants chose to attend summer tournaments and amateur showcases, they were in a position to be recruited by college coaches and scouts. This theme also revealed how inequality is pervasive in the sport, because some spaces are rife with the inequality as some players receive preferential treatment because of the social standing of their parents.

Cultural reproduction and leisure constraints theory were used to analyze the interview transcripts of the players participating in the study. It was evident through the stories of the players that in developmental baseball resources are not distributed equally, and some players cannot afford to be in a social space that is frequented by a college coach or scout. The players spoke to how they benefited from playing summer baseball. The participants also benefited from parents who either played baseball or knew enough about competitive athletics to relay invaluable knowledge to them. Although the participants are not representative of all NCAA Division I baseball players, their views are nonetheless important, as they are part of the

landscape of developmental baseball. It is also clear from the data that the participants had both constraints and facilitators that impacted their participation in developmental baseball; for example, players had to use coping mechanisms to negotiate in-game constraints. They used the fundamentals of baseball to help them handle stressful situations. The participants' parents acted as interpersonal facilitators because they introduced them to the sport. The intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural facilitators helped the participants matriculate through the different levels of baseball, including Little League, travel and high school baseball.

Implications

As will be demonstrated, the findings from this study have implications for the fields of leisure and recreation, sport sociology and sport management. In the following section, the implications of this study are discussed in relation to these three academic silos.

First, I will overlay the findings within the field of sport sociology. Thus far, no one has employed qualitative research to examine the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players. Ogden and Warneke's (2010) and Hill's (1993) research used questionnaires to examine the training of elite baseball players. An athlete's preferences for sport do not exist in a vacuum, as relatives play a role in the prospect's development in his or her respective sport. For future research, sport sociology scholars should interview parents of elite athletes across several sports. Scholars should gauge parents' involvement in their child's sport career. Did the parent serve as a player agent? Was the parent financially supportive but emotionally withdrawn? Interviewing the parents can add more layers to this line of research.

Another interesting finding was the participants' unfettered belief in The American Dream, as two of the sub-themes dealt with the aspect of hard work. As mentioned in the introduction, baseball to some Americans is one of the country's most egalitarian sports, in

which a level playing field accords every participant an equal opportunity to achieve success. Future research should examine whether elite athletes believe hard work is the singular most important prescription to success. This is relevant because as McGillivray and McIntosh (2006) noted, the belief in an open society leads people to be complicit in their own oppression. Players may believe that hard work is the only requirement for success, failing to understand other variables at play including social, cultural and physical capital. The findings also inform the structure/agency debate (Lakomski, 1984), because while the participants acknowledge that there is a scarcity of resources in developmental baseball, they still believe that success is predicated on individual characteristics, including hard work, self-determination and physical talent. Developmental players can be proactive rather than reactive to the field, countering the “radical defeatism” (Lakomski, 1984, p. 157) of Bourdieu. Simply, individuals are not hapless beings in their field; rather, they make conscious decisions, which they perceive to be salient to their welfare.

An iteration of politics was another finding from this research. The players acknowledged that politics played a role in who starts for a travel team, who gets playing time on a high school baseball team and who starts for a state team. Some of the players called this iteration of politics “daddy ball.” With “daddy ball” a player can earn a starting position because his father coaches the team, donates money for team functions, and has been a long-time supporter of the travel club. These iterations of “daddy ball” are clearly a problem for sport managers concerned with fairness and equality in sport. Sport managers should attempt to ensure that coaches are accredited and have completed several certifications to fulfill certain requirements.

The importance of social space was another finding from this research. One of the themes was social location, and not all social locations are accorded equal value, as some are more

important than others. For example, the players mentioned that they were largely recruited in the summer season. The players who are in a social space that has a high value are more likely to benefit because of the number of scouts and coaches in attendance to watch hundreds of other players. These social spaces are not available to every player because of the costs associated with attending a showcase, summer tournament and college camp. Spaaij (2011) noted that in a capitalist society resources are not distributed equally, and from this dissertation, one can conclude that not all social spaces are given equal value. Sport managers should expand developmental programs to players in the inner cities, some of whom cannot afford to attend showcases and tournaments laced with scouts.

In the field of recreation and leisure, this study can help scholars understand the diverse iterations of leisure constraints and how athletes negotiate through such constraints at various levels. I will first start with leisure constraints and affordances. All of the participants had facilitators who helped spur their interest in the sport. These facilitators included parents, relatives and coaches. At the interpersonal level, the participants had an organized team to play on, whether it was Little League or summer baseball. Several of the participants mentioned that they could play with their parents and siblings in their backyard. At the structural level, the participants had access to facilities, including batting cages, turf fields and indoor facilities. Although several intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural facilitators were reported, there were constraints evident in the findings as well as ways to negotiate through them. According to Norwood (2010), there is an underutilization of leisure constraints theory in sport sociology research, and the findings from this study demonstrate that there is a space for a marriage between sport sociology and recreation and leisure.

The training background of the players reveals the importance of resources and facilities. For example, having a turf field, especially in the northeastern part of the United States where the winters are rather cruel, can ensure that athletes can continue playing the sport during inclement weather. Facilities and equipment extend beyond the purview of the high school as some of the participants mentioned that they had access to an indoor facility that was close to their high school. Kaczynski and Crompton (2006) noted that funding for parks and recreation has been relatively stable in urban areas. Kaczynski and Crompton recommended that practitioners find better ways to provide novel recreation programs with their current yearly expenditures. For example, funds can be appropriated to build indoor facilities and batting cages for the local teams.

From the findings it is also clear that all of the participants have been playing baseball for more than 10 years and most of them decided to specialize in the sport at one point in time; only two of the participants were multi-sport athletes for all four years in high school. Developmental baseball has become more competitive, with more players trying to seek advantages by playing during the high school baseball and summer seasons (Ogden & Warneke, 2010). The focus on power and performance will only lead to more baseball players choosing to specialize in the sport at some point in their career. Some of the participants mentioned that they sampled sports, but to get ahead in the recruiting aspect of the game they had focus exclusively on baseball. Playing summer ball not only helps with skill acquisition, but it also increases the chances of a player being noticed by a scout or college coach. More scholars should produce research that empirically examines whether specialization is needed, because some of the participants mentioned that other sports helped them with baseball.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, there are a few recommendations for future research that I will document. For this dissertation, I was principally concerned with the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players at a university in the southeast. I also sought to understand how they reflected on their training regimens as well as how they perceive meritocracy, privilege, exclusivity and the unequal distribution of resources in developmental baseball. In a future study, I would like to apply the same framework to players at schools in the other divisions of the NCAA as well as those who attend community colleges. As Cooke mentioned, there are so many players who have NCAA Division I talent, but they were unable to be seen in certain summer showcases because of the rising costs. It would be interesting to see how the training background of players at these community colleges rival that of NCAA Division I baseball players.

Another recommendation would be to focus on interscholastic athletes who have aspirations of becoming NCAA Division I players. I could choose different sites; for example, players at a high school in an urban area and another high school that is renowned for its baseball program. When focusing on players at these two high schools, I would look for similarities and differences with respect to their training; at the high school level, some players cannot play summer ball because of the costs for equipment, fees and extensive travel. The players' training background could vary by socio-economic status and age. Clearly, players from wealthier families can afford to play baseball all year round. As far as age is concerned, freshman players who have aspirations of playing at the NCAA Division I level may not be on the varsity team because of the fact that there are better players in front of them. Some freshman players may

have earned a spot on the varsity team, but may choose not to play for fear of a lack of playing time.

I could also ask coaches and scouts what they are looking for in the recruitment process. How much do they rely on word of mouth? What else are they looking for besides talent and potential? It would also be interesting to see what advice a scout or college coach would give a rising freshman who wants to make an NCAA Division I baseball team. Would he or she tell the player to diversify to develop athleticism? Would he or she tell the player to play all year round so that he would be in a position to gain more skills? The findings from the study could be passed onto other interscholastic players who want to compete at the next level in baseball.

The final recommendation I have for future research would be to examine the roles of the parents of NCAA Division I baseball players as well as their perceptions of their involvement. The findings from this dissertation demonstrate the importance of parents' emotional and financial support. In a future study, I would ask the parents about their previous sporting experiences, if any. Parents who are former athletes might provide invaluable advice to their children about ways to improve as a developmental player. I would also ask the parents about the best practices in nurturing the careers of NCAA Division I baseball players, because the findings could prove to be invaluable to other parents who have sons with similar trajectories.

Closing Thoughts

It was my goal to understand the training background of NCAA Division I baseball players at a university in the southeast. I believe I ensured that the views of the participants were manifest in the findings through several levels of coding. It is evident through the views of the participants that it takes more than physical talent and ability to earn a roster spot on an NCAA Division I level baseball team. By sharing the experiences of these participants, I hope that more

can be done to make developmental baseball more inclusive for rising prospects who do not have access to the training regimens reported in these findings.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your background, including where you are from and your personal interests.

Tell me about the time you first started playing baseball

Tell me about what you like and don't like about playing your current position

2. Describe the impact that your parents/guardians have had on your career

How would you describe your family income situation?

3. Describe some of the things you did to improve as a baseball player

4. If so, talk about people who were instrumental person in your career

Please explain why this person was so instrumental

5. Please describe some of your experiences playing high school baseball

Please talk about some of the resources that were available to you at your high school

6. Tell me about select and or travel ball.

Please talk about the difference high-school baseball with select baseball

7. How did you try to set yourself apart from other players?

8. Can you talk about some of the training facilities to which you had access?

Please describe some of the things you learned at these facilities

9. Some say that developmental baseball represents a level playing field in which every player has a chance to compete so long as they are qualified. Can you describe your feelings about that?

Do you believe that you may have received certain advantages during your time so far as a baseball player?

10. Did you have any personal batting or fielding coaches?

Please explain any particular elements of the game that they helped you with?

11. Have you played on any major league scout teams?

Please describe that experience

12. Please talk about some of the things you may have learned attending amateur showcases

13. Tell me about your recruitment process.

14. Tell me about playing at summer tournaments

What about area code games?

15. How do you think your training has impacted your current skills as a player?

Please elaborate on off-season strength and conditioning programs?

16. Please talk about any other training programs that you feel were important in your career

17. Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to say?

Do you have any questions for me about this interview process?

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Who's Got What It Takes? The Training Background of NCAA Division I Baseball Players

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines the training background of NCAA Division I Baseball players.

PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be participating in an interview that will explore your training background in developmental baseball. The interview will last no longer than 60 minutes, and will be digitally recorded to ensure accuracy in your responses. Once I have transcribed the interviews, you will have an opportunity to review the transcript to ensure accuracy of the transcription.

RISKS

There are no known physical risks to participating in this research study. Through self-reflection during the interview you may begin discussing memories and previous events that have been emotionally hurtful to you in the past. If needed, you will be provided with information on counseling.

BENEFITS TO THE PARTICIPANT

The information you provide will also add to the growing literature on developmental baseball. Through retrospection, you can reflect on your training experiences.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information from your interview will be kept confidential. Data will be stored in a secure campus location. The data will be kept for three years. No reference will be made in oral or written reports, which could link you to the study. You will be asked to select a pseudonym of your choice, which will be used to refer to you throughout the study. After the data from the interview has been recorded and transcribed, it will be deleted from the audio recorder.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact:

Principal Investigator:

LeQuez Spearman

Department of Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

1914 Andy Holt Ave.

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If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Greetings,

My name is LeQuez Spearman, a doctoral student in the Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies Department at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. My research interests lie in developmental baseball. Specifically, I would like to know the training background of NCAA Division I Baseball players.

I would like the opportunity to interview you regarding your training background. You will not incur any physical risks from being interviewed. However, we may broach topics that may be uncomfortable for you such as injuries and overtraining. In that case, I will refer you to a sport psychologist or a counselor. The information you provide will expand the knowledge on developmental baseball. You will also be able to reflect on your previous experiences playing the sport at the developmental level.

The interview, which will last for no more than one hour, will be audio-recorded and semi-structured in nature. Before the interview can commence, I will ask that you read and sign an informed consent statement, which will explain your rights as a participant. I will also answer any questions that you may have at the time. As part of this process, you will be able to drop out at anytime without penalty. If you choose to be a participant in the study, I will then send you the transcript so that you can check for accuracy. You will also be able to choose a pseudonym that will refer to you. The information from your interview will be kept confidential.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact through email at lspearm2@utk.edu or phone at 414-840-1972. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

LeQuez T. Spearman
Graduate Teaching Associate
Kinesiology, Recreation, and Sport Studies
1914 Andy Holt Ave.
233 HPER Bldg.
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VITA

LeQuez Spearman is from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he graduated from high school. He received his B.A. in Public Relations from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and his M.A. in Health and Sport Studies from the University of Iowa. After graduating from the University of Iowa in 2010, he came to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where he served as a Graduate Teaching Associate. In 2013, LeQuez earned a Ph.D. in Kinesiology and Sport Studies. Currently his research interests lie in social inclusion in developmental baseball as well as environmental sustainability in sport management.