



University Library

Author/Filing Title STEWART, K.E.

Class Mark T

Please note that fines are charged on ALL
overdue items.

--	--	--

Expert Performers' Socialisation into Sport

By

Karen E Stewart

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy

Loughborough University

October 2007



Loughborough
University
Faculty of Science

Date 22/12/08

Class T

Acc No. 0408604324

Abstract

This thesis investigates the developmental socialisation process of the expert performer into sport, and considers the influence of significant others such as the family, coaches and peers within this process. The study complements existing research in the field of youth sport such as Côté and colleagues' Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP) by using life story interviews to explore retrospectively the experiences of senior expert sport performers (defined in this study as international level performers age 18 years and over) in both team and individual sports. The participants were 36 expert performers (male (n = 16) and female (n = 20)) in rugby union, field hockey, track and field athletics, swimming and taekwondo. Qualitative research forms the basis of the study and life story interviews were employed as the primary tool to generate data. The four main analysis chapters present the key themes generated from the data, which include: 'The developmental socialisation process of expert performers'; 'The family'; 'Coaches'; and 'Peers'. In broad terms the data reported in this study support the concept of developmental socialisation proposed by Côté and colleagues' DMSP model, as well as raising some further questions around, for example, the nature of transition through the three phases of sampling, specialising and investing, early specialisation, the role of deliberate play and deliberate practice, and the so-called '10 year rule'. The findings also provide clear evidence of the complexity of the process with no two individuals sharing identical experiences of socialisation. Additionally, evidence from this study showed that most experts sampled a range of sports before specialising, suggesting that delaying specialisation to a later age can be beneficial to the young performer. The family, coaches and peers all play a key part in the expert performers' socialisation into sport, although their influence varied at different phases of the developmental socialisation process. The thesis concludes that a developmental socialisation perspective on youth sport provides a robust means of conceptualising the pathways many young people follow to become experts in specific sports and provides a basis for policy development in youth sport.

Conference Presentations

Kirk, D., & Stewart, K.E. (2006). Thinking outside the pyramid: Rethinking the physical education/sports performance relationship from a developmental socialisation perspective. *Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Conference, Warwick University, UK. September, 2006.*

Stewart, K.E., & Kirk, D. (2006). The developmental socialisation process of the elite performer: An analysis of the '10-Year rule. *Paper presented at the AIESEP World Congress, Jyväskylä, Finland. July, 2006*

Acknowledgements

If I were to thank everyone in this acknowledgement who has helped me succeed in completing this thesis, the size of the book would be three fold. Therefore, I can only name a few special people who have been particularly helpful and supportive throughout this undulating journey. First of all, I must thank the participants who took part in this study and also the 'gate-keepers' who assisted me in gaining access to them. Suffice to say, without them there would be no thesis.

A particular debt of gratitude is owed to my supervisor Prof. David Kirk who has encouraged, guided and supported me to the completion of this project. I would like to thank Prof. John Evans for his help and advice in the later stages and in particular I must thank Prof. Kathy Armour for helping me over the final hurdle. Thanks also to the Limerick posse and especially Eileen, for keeping my feet well and truly on the ground and making conferences all the more enjoyable. I would like to thank Rebecca (for millions of things) and more recently Laura for their 'humour' and putting up with all my moans in the office and also helping me out with my technical difficulties. I am especially grateful to Toni and Anna for the time and effort they took to proof read my work and their subsequent valued words of advice.

A special thanks to my dad for his unwavering love and support not only during this journey but throughout my life. I especially thank my mum for being such an inspirational role model and instilling in me the importance of perseverance. I would also like to thank Stuart (bro 3) for reading my work, even if it meant reading it through the night and to Caroline for putting up with it. A huge thanks to my in-laws, Ann and Connell, for regularly taking great care of our children to allow me to work; knowing that my boys were happy and in safe hands was of great comfort.

Finally, I would like to thank my boys. Firstly, to Stephen, for 'encouraging' me to start this project and for his love and total support in everything that I do (For Keeps). Secondly, to Rory and Calum for putting up with an often absent or stressed mum and for always knowing when I needed that special cuddle or smile. This thesis is therefore dedicated to 'My Boys', I love and thank you with all my heart.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Conference Presentations	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter One	1
Expert Performers' Socialisation into Sport	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT	3
1.2.1 Olympic Games in London	4
1.2.2 Rethinking Talent Development	6
1.2.3 Balyi's Long Term Athlete Development Plan	7
1.2.4 An Introduction to Côté and Hay's Developmental Model of Sport Participation	10
1.2.5 Similarities and Differences between Balyi's and Côté and Hay's Sport Developmental Models	11
1.3 THE DECISION TO BUILD ON CÔTÉ AND HAY'S MODEL	13
1.3.1 Introducing the Aims of the Research	13
1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	15
Chapter Two	17
An Introduction to the Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of the Study	17
2.1 INTRODUCTION	17
2.2 DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIALISATION INTO SPORT	17
2.3 SPORT CULTURE IN CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM: COMPARISON AND CONTEXT	20
2.3.1 Australia	22
2.3.2 Canada	24
2.3.3 United Kingdom	26
2.4 THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESSION OF THE EXPERT PERFORMER	30
2.4.1 The Sampling Years	31
2.4.2 The Specialising Years	33
2.4.3 The Investment Years	34
2.5 'TEN-YEAR RULE'	35
2.6 EARLY SPECIALISATION	39
2.7 SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON THE TALENT DEVELOPMENT OF EXPERT PERFORMERS	42
2.7.1 Talent Development	42
2.7.2 Significant Others	44

2.8 THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT IN SPORT	45
2.8.1 Parental Expectations, Involvement and Encouragement	46
2.8.2 Parental Modeling	49
2.8.3 Practical and Tangible Support	49
2.8.4 Time Commitments and Social Consequences	50
2.8.5 The Transition of the Parental Role throughout the Developmental Phases of the Expert Performer	51.
2.8.6 Sibling Relationships	52
2.9 THE INFLUENCE OF COACHES ON THE DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE INTO ELITE SPORT	54
2.9.1 Deliberate Practice	55
2.9.2 Coaching Models of Practice and Training	56
2.9.3 The Role of the Coach throughout the Developmental Phases	58
2.10 PEER INFLUENCE ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT IN SPORT	61
2.10.1 Peers and Friendships	62
2.10.2 Peers: The Reason Children Participate in Sport?	63
2.10.3 'The Looking-Glass Self': Peer Acceptance and Status	64
2.10.4 Gender and Peers	68
2.11 COMBINING ELITE SPORT AND HIGHER EDUCATION	71
2.12 CONCLUSION	74
Chapter Three	77
Methodological Issues and Considerations	77
3.1 INTRODUCTION	77
3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	78
3.3 THE PARTICIPATING SPORTS	80
3.4 THE QUESTIONNAIRE	82
3.5 LIFE STORY APPROACH	85
3.5.1 Why 'Life Story' Rather than 'Life History' Interviews	85
3.5.2 Life Story Interviews	88
3.5.3 Interviewing Expert Performers	93
3.5.4 Sample Size	95
3.6 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA	97
3.6.1 Organising and Analysing Unstructured Data	99
3.6.2 The Use of Themes, Codes and Memos	102
3.7 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND THE RESEARCHER	106
3.7.1 The Participants	107
3.7.2 The Reflexive Researcher	108
3.7.3 A Brief Biography of the Researcher	111
3.8 CONCLUSION	115
Chapter Four	117
The Developmental Socialisation Process of the Expert Performer	117
4.1 INTRODUCTION	117
4.2 SPORTING PATHWAY	118

4.2.1 The Early Years: 'Sports Crazy'	122
4.2.2 Opportunities to Play Sport in the Early Years	125
4.2.3. Nature versus Nurture	127
4.2.4 Progressing in Sport: Transition through the Phases	129
4.2.5 Investment Years: The time to 'Specialise' in One Specific Sport	133
4.2.6 Success and Enjoyment:	136
4.3 DOES THE '10-YEAR RULE' APPLY TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY?	142
4.4 EARLY SPECIALISATION	149
4.4.1 The Physiological, Psychological and Social Benefits of Specialising at a Later Age	150
4.4.2 'Early Specialisers'	154
4.4.3 When to 'Specialise'?	155
4.5 HIGHER EDUCATION: 'MAKE OR BREAK TIME'	160
4.5.1 University: Academia and Elite Sport	163
4.5.2 The Challenges of Combining Higher Education with Elite Sport: "zombified", "massive culture shock"	169
4.6 CONCLUSION	174
Chapter Five	176
The Influence of the Family on Expert Performers' Developmental Socialisation into Sport	
5.1 INTRODUCTION	176
5.1.2 Introduction to Sport	176
5.1.3 Parental Encouragement in Sport Participation: "My mum encouraged me to try everything"	177
5.2 PARENTAL SUPPORT	179
5.2.1 A Supportive Balance between Parents: "...he [dad] was great at supporting me when I felt my coaches couldn't. ...and my mum was a very passive creature"	180
5.2.2 Supportive, but not 'pushy!'	182
5.2.3 Parents Watching: A Source of Support or Pressure?	184
5.2.4 Tangible Support: "Finance was never an issue, although my parents may say otherwise!"	188
5.2.5 Supportive Parents: Time, Effort and 'Taxiing'	192
5.2.6 Keeping-Up with School Work	194
5.3 PARENTAL ROLE MODELS	196
5.4 SIBLINGS: Friend or Foe?	200
5.4.1 Sibling Rivalry	202
5.4.2 Sibling Support is Special	205
5.5 CONCLUSION	207
Chapter Six	210
The Role of the Coach from the Participants' Perspective	210
6.1 INTRODUCTION	210
6.2 THE SAMPLING PHASE	211
6.2.1 The Fun Coach	212
6.2.2 Fun and Enthusiasm More Important than Coaching Qualifications	213

6.2.3 Choice of Coach: "A bit of a lottery really"	215
6.2.4 Physical Education, School Sport and Clubs	217
6.3 THE SPECIALISING PHASE	219
6.3.1 Potential Talent 'Spotted' by the Participants' Coaches	220
6.3.2 Authoritarian Coaches in the Middle Years	221
6.3.3 Transition between the Specialising and the Investment Phases	223
6.4 THE INVESTMENT PHASE	223
6.4.1 Mutual Respect between Athlete and Coach	224
6.4.2 The Aspiration for a Coach with a Successful Reputation	226
6.4.3 Coaches Listening and Learning from other Expert Coaches and Performers	227
6.4.4 Athlete Empowerment in the Investment Phase	229
6.4.5 Coach-Athlete Relationships in the Investment Phase	230
6.4.6 Important to be Treated as an Individual: "I like a bit of personal attention"	233
6.5 CONCLUSION	235
Chapter Seven	238
The Influence of Peers from the Perspective of the Expert Performer	238
7.1 INTRODUCTION	238
7.2 THE INFLUENCE OF PEERS ON SPORT PARTICIPATION	239
7.2.1 "I don't think my friends had a massive influence on me playing sport"	239
7.2.2 "A really good social experience"	243
7.3 POPULARITY AND STATUS WITHIN PEER GROUPS AND WITH TEACHERS	245
7.3.1 "All of a sudden quite a few people at the club noticed me, and they thought: 'Crikey that was a good run'"	245
7.3.2 "... You get more respect from the teachers..."	247
7.3.3 "...I was always wary of showing off..."	248
7.4 THE COMPLEXITIES OF PEER STATUS AND ACCEPTANCE FOR MALE AND FEMALE PERFORMERS	251
7.4.1 One Side of the Coin: "being a good runner got me a lot of kudos at school"	252
7.4.2 The Other Side of the Coin: "they just kind of took the piss"	252
7.4.3 The Participants' Perspectives of Gendered Characteristics: "She plays like a man, but she's a woman"	254
7.5 PEER RELATIONSHIPS IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL	258
7.5.1 "My friends at school were the sporty people"	258
7.5.2 Different Aspirations from their Peers: "I'd no interest in hanging around street corners"	259
7.6 IMPORTANCE OF TEAM MATES	261
7.6.1 "The friendships you make with team mates are very special"	261
7.6.2 An Individual Sport, but in a Team Environment: "They must be lonely; who do they share their laughs with?"	264
7.7 UNIVERSITY, PEERS AND THE INVESTMENT PHASE	267
7.7.1 To be With, or Not to be With, 'Normal' People	268
7.8 CONCLUSION	271

Chapter Eight	273
Thesis Conclusion: Summarising the Key Findings; Limitations of the Study; and Suggestions for Future Research	273
8.1 INTRODUCTION	273
8.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE KEY FINDINGS	274
8.2.1 The Developmental Socialisation Process	274
8.2.2 Family	277
8.2.3 Coaches	278
8.2.4 Peers	279
8.3 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY: FOR PERFORMERS; FAMILIES; YOUTH SPORT COACHES; PEERS; AND SPORT PROGRAMMES	281
8.3.1 Early Specialisation	281
8.3.2 The Non-Linearity of the Developmental Socialisation Process	281
8.3.3 Moments of Transition	282
8.3.4 The '10-Year Rule'	283
8.3.5 The Role of Higher Education	284
8.3.6 The Role of the Family	285
8.3.7 The Role of Coaches and Peers	287
8.3.8 Implications For Sport Programmes	290
8.4 LOOKING AHEAD: FUTURE RESEARCH	292
8.5 A CONCLUDING REMARK	293
References	294
Appendices	331
Appendix A: Questionnaire	331
Appendix B: Outcome of the Questionnaires	334
Appendix C: The Participants	347

Chapter One

Expert Performers' Socialisation into Sport

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the socialisation process of expert performers into sport and considers the influence of significant others such as the family, coaches and peers within this process. Given the increasing concerns from Government for the development of elite sports performers over the last two decades (for example, Sport: Raising the Game, 1995; Game Plan, 2002) fuelled by events such as the 2012 London Olympic Games, and the interest from researchers such as Bloom (1985), Gagné (2000; 2003) and others in the identification and development of talent in young people, this study seeks to understand how young people become expert performers in sport. More specifically, the study focuses on the sporting life stories of 36 expert performers in a range of team and individual sports including, rugby union field hockey, track and field athletics, swimming and taekwondo, who have represented either Great Britain and/or England in their sport.

Youth sport draws on literature from a number of fields, including for example sociology and coaching: however, this is not the focus of this study. The primary orientation of this study is to investigate youth sport and the notion of developmental socialisation as described by social psychologist Jean Côté and cohorts.

Côté and colleagues' Developmental Model of Sport Participation (Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté, Baker & Abernethy, 2003; Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2006) and the application of the model to youth athletics (Kirk & MacPhail, 2003; MacPhail, Kirk & Eley, 2003; MacPhail, Gorely & Kirk, 2003; MacPhail & Kirk, 2006) and youth cricket (Toms, 2004) provides the theoretical underpinning for my research. This model is a more sport-specific extension of Bloom's (1985) research on the development of talent in young people in a range of activities and suggests that from a

developmental perspective, young people's socialisation into sport follows a general pattern of the 'sampling years', 'specialising years' and the 'investment years'. Building on this line of research, I will investigate to what extent Côté and colleagues' model was applicable to this study by conducting life story interviews with a group of 36 experts or 'investors'. Moreover, I will examine issues surrounding the investors' initial involvement in sport, how they progressed, and more explicitly, when, why and where they decided to focus on one specific sport in which they have become 'experts', defined here as achieving Great Britain or England representative honours at senior level. I seek to discover whether Côté's (1999) claim that investors are likely to have had active childhoods and that they enjoyed playing many different sports and activities applies in the case of the 36 participants in this study. I am interested, too, in the reasons they might give for deciding to focus on one specific sport and whether these are consistent or variable across sports. Furthermore, there has been much discussion about the need for athletes to have a minimum of 10-years specific deliberate practice prior to achieving expert status (Bloom, 1985; Ericsson et al., 1993; Hodges & Starkes, 1996; Starkes et al., 1996; Helsen, Starkes & Hodges, 1998; Hodge & Deakin, 1998; Baker et al., 2003). This idea has frequently led to the argument that it may be preferable for young athletes to specialise and concentrate on one sport from an early age (Helsen et al., 2000). In contrast, according to Côté it is likely that most sports performers who research the investment phase benefit from taking part in a range of sporting activities throughout their childhood and often into their mid to late teens; in other words, they tend not to specialise early in the sport in which they become experts. The literature suggests, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, that the family is likely to be very influential in the socialisation process of the expert performer into sport.

A key purpose of this thesis is to describe how individuals are socialised into, and continue to participate in, sport to expert level as defined here. Socialisation is a complex concept and is open to differing interpretations. In this study, I utilise Coakley's interactionist approach. He defines socialisation as an "active process of learning and social development, which occurs as we interact with one another and become acquainted with the social world in which we live" (pp. 82). Côté (1999) and Côté and Hay (2002) expand on this definition and develop the concept of developmental socialisation. They understand that individuals progress through

different phases during their sporting careers, which they name the 'sampling' (or early), 'specialising' (middle) and 'investment' (late) phases. They identify differing characteristics for each developmental phase and outline how the socialisation process affects young people's skill development and enjoyment of their sport which can ultimately influence their continued participation (Côté & Hay, 2002). I will expand on these factors in Chapter Two. Consistent with Côté and Hay's notion of developmental socialisation, I anticipate that the sporting careers of the expert performers who took part in this study are likely to be fluid, to have some different characteristics, and to not always be predictable.

This study seeks to extend previous studies that have focused on the nature of the sport socialisation process using mainly ethnographic methods. For example, Kirk and MacPhail's (2003) year-long study in one youth athletics club examined the experiences of young athletes in their early years (sampling and specialising) and Toms' (2005) ethnography explored the specialising years in a youth cricket club. This study complements these previous investigations by focusing retrospectively on the experiences of current elite level performers by using both questionnaires and life story interviews.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is primarily three-fold: Firstly to emphasise the relevance of this study, particularly, in relation to the impending 2012 Olympic Games; secondly, to discuss two of the leading theories of young people's socialisation into sport currently vying for Government attention; namely the Long Term Athlete Development Plan (Balyi, 2001, 2004) and Côté and colleagues' Developmental Model of Sport Participation (Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté, Baker & Abernethy, 2003; Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2006); and the reasons behind my decision to build on from Côté's model; thirdly, this chapter presents an overview of the content, focus and structure of the subsequent chapters.

1.2 THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Côté and Fraser-Thomas (2007) have recently argued that youth sport has the potential to accomplish three important objectives. First, sport can provide young

people with opportunities to be physically active, which in turn can lead to improved health in both childhood and adulthood. With obesity and associated diseases arguably on the rise among today's young people in developed countries (Fergal et al., 2002 - United States; Tremblay et al., 2002 - Canada; Rennie & Jebb, 2005 - Great Britain), the importance of physical activity as a means of fostering positive youth development has gained considerable attention among researchers. Second, sport and physical activity have long been considered important to young people's psychosocial development (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2006). Concern about the growth in adolescent problem behaviours (for example, delinquency and drug use) has led to increased interest in positive youth development, and a surge in after school activity programmes (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). Third, youth sport programmes are critical for learning motor skills: these skills can serve as a foundation for future elite sports performers (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2006). As this study explores the life stories of expert performers, it is my intention to focus primarily on the third objective. This is not necessarily at the cost of the other two areas. Consistent with Côté and Fraser-Thomas (2007), I will suggest that if the quality of youth sport programmes is crucial for the emergence of elite sports performers, then they must also be important for the continuing active participation of non-elite (recreational) performers. Côté & Fraser-Thomas (2007) claim that youth sports that focus on fun, skill development, and maximum participation encourage people to stay involved and achieve success at all developmental stages of life, and at all levels of sport. At the same time, it should also be acknowledged at this stage that not all youth sport experiences are positive. Indeed Martens (1993) describes sport as a "double-edge sword, swung in the right direction the sword can have tremendously positive effects, but swung in the wrong direction can be devastating" (pp.17).

1.2.1 Olympic Games in London

6th July 2005 was a significant date for sport in the United Kingdom, because of the International Olympic Committee's decision to site the 2012 Olympic Games in London. According to the British Olympic Association (BOA) (2006), it aims to assist the Olympic Governing Bodies achieve their best result in modern times, moving Team Great Britain from 10th in the medal table in Athens 2004, to 4th at

London 2012. The BOA also aspires to top the table at the Paralympics. This will involve increasing the GB athlete contingent from 271 (Athens) to a possible maximum of 791 athletes (Clegg, 2006). The ambitions of the BOA are matched by those of the Government, which has committed £600 million to increase the funding available to elite athletes for the Olympic summer sports over the next 6 years. The then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the press and the general public have high expectations for personal bests and medals at the 2012 Games and Simon Clegg, the chief executive of the BOA, is equally enthusiastic about the increase of sport participation when discussing the prospect of 2012:

“If we are to achieve our target for 2012 we cannot rely on the sports currently delivering medal success. From now on we (BOA) must focus on all Olympic sports, encouraging them initially to develop a much wider base of participation which is crucial to the ultimate delivery of podium success. Such a policy will ensure that even if some sports fail to qualify for Vancouver 2010 (winter Olympics) or London 2012, they will be left with a valuable legacy of improved participation and higher standards of competition” (Clegg, 2006; pp. 2).

Clegg's assumptions are based on the widespread and much used conceptions of sport development continuum built on the 'so-called' pyramid model (Kirk and Gorely, 2000). The basic assumption of this model is that the broader the base of support the higher the pinnacle, or the more children participating at the base, the higher the levels of performance at the peak. However, according to Kirk, Brettschneider and Auld (2005), whatever the benefits of the pyramid model (and similar models), the conflation of sport development and junior sport participation in this traditional model is not helpful, in so far as it delimits and obfuscates both processes. Indeed, to emphasise this point, the UK Sport's "no compromise" strategy categorically states that resources will not be allocated to any athlete or any sport that cannot be competitive at the Games, even though, the business case for additional funding supports a multi-tier strategy.

The Government have identified that many of Britain's potential Olympic 2012 medal winners are currently at school and subsequently schools have been asked to play a central role in promoting sport among the young, primarily through the PESSCL (Physical Education School Sport and Club Links) strategy. Bailey (2006) suggests

that the Olympics might be best understood as offering a special focus to a programme of initiatives through which the United Kingdom Government seeks to bring about a remarkable change in attitudes to and successes in sport. This therefore would suggest that the process of young people's socialisation into sport and subsequent development as sports performers is a matter of considerable interest here and now. According to Gould, Dieffenbach & Moffett (2002), in order to achieve competitive excellence in the Olympic Games it is necessary to have a greater understanding of talent development and, therefore, the following section will discuss this critical area.

1.2.2 Rethinking Talent Development

Helsen et al., (2000) postulate that: "Talent is both an appealing and common-sense explanation of what underlies skill in sport. By and large, coaches take for granted that differences in talent determine who will succeed" (pp. 727). However, Tranckle and Cushion (2006) acknowledge that 'talent' is a far more complex concept and that within the sporting domain it would be helpful to have a working definition of talent that can contribute meaningfully to both research and practice.

Recently, the area of talent development has received a considerable amount of interest, leading several researchers to suggest that there has been a shift of emphasis from certain areas of sport science, including talent detection and identification, to talent guidance and development (Williams & Reilly, 2000). Although Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) suggest that, despite significant empirical findings that have been generated across a variety of domains, there is still a need to expand the knowledge base regarding the development of expertise. Talent development implies that athletes are provided with a suitable learning environment so that they have the opportunity to realise their potential (Williams & Reilly, 2000). Bailey (2003) further suggests that individual talent development is the result of an interaction between inherited abilities and social and cultural learning. Moreover, just because an individual possesses promising attributes, this does not guarantee their future as talented performers. As Tranckle and Cushion (2006) argue, to facilitate the

development of talent, a myriad of favourable intrapersonal qualities and environmental factors must manifest at the right time.

UK Sport (2006) argues that through the implementation of a 'performance pipeline' they will be able to provide a positive development programme which will aim to nurture, guide, develop, support and coach athletes identified as being 2012 hopefuls. This programme will be delivered by UK Sport, in conjunction with the Department for Culture Media and Sport, National Governing Bodies, Sports Councils, Universities and the ultimate 'owners' of Team GB, the BOA (UK Sport, 2006). It has been anticipated that these key agencies will work together to create a performance pathway from primary, secondary and tertiary education to support the needs of all young athletes. It is interesting to note however that there is no mention of support for the family of these young performers in these organisations' agendas.

According to Duffy (2005), the performance pathway may be defined as the stages that the athletes pass through in pursuit of their goals, whilst recognising the stages of life passed through. In order to gain a clearer understanding of this pathway, the Government and national sporting agencies are investing time and money in researching the area of talent development. Two of the key developmental models that could be useful as means of identifying the components and dynamics of the performance pathway are Balyi's Long Term Athlete Development plan and Côté and colleagues' Developmental Model of Sport Participation. Although Balyi's model has, to date, been the most accepted by many of the National Governing Bodies for Sport (NGBs), the popularity of Côté's model is evident by its prevalence in academic literature. I will now briefly describe both models, prior to explaining why Côté's model could arguably contribute more positively and holistically to understanding the process of socialisation into sport.

1.2.3 Balyi's Long Term Athlete Development Plan (LTAD)

The Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) plan was developed by Balyi (2001) and further revised by Balyi and Hamilton (2004). Although this model has recently been criticised, it still remains a key component of the Government and NGBs

strategies. According to Balyi, this model evolved from scientific research and reported that it takes between eight to twelve years of specific training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels (Ericsson et al., 1993; Ericsson & Charness, 1994). This is commonly referred to as the '10-year' or '10,000-hours' rule. Furthermore, Balyi (2001) classified sports as either 'early specialisation' (e.g. gymnastics, figure skating and diving) or 'late specialisation' sports (e.g. athletics, cycling, rowing and all team sports). Balyi asserts that early specialisation sports need sport-specific specialisation in training from a younger age, which calls for a four-stage model, whereas late specialisation sports entail a generalised approach to early training and require a six-phase model (Balyi & Hamilton, 2004):

Early Specialisation Model

1. Training to Train
2. Training to Compete
3. Training to Win
4. Retirement/Retainment

Late Specialisation Model

1. FUNdamental
2. Learning to Train
3. Training to Train
4. Training to Compete
5. Training to Win
6. Retirement/Retainment

This developmental model has been described as the 'Golden Thread' that permeates Sport England's National Framework for Sport (2004). It was also the preferred model in the Government's national sports policy document, 'Game Plan' (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002). Furthermore, sports coach UK has been working in conjunction with agencies across the United Kingdom (UK) to develop resources that are being planned to help the providers of sport with the implementation of LTAD. Sport England has also reported that most NGBs of sport, local Government and strategic partnerships have used it to provide an integrated and coherent approach to sport (Sport England, 2004). They further state that the 'principles' of LTAD have been part of the driving force behind the recently popular 'multi-sport' hub developments and multi-skill clubs funded by the Big Lottery. It is therefore perhaps prudent that Balyi has the copyright on the terms used in the model.

However, although the LTAD model is the 'in vogue' sports development plan underpinning recent Government policies, there have been some recent criticisms and

concerns regarding the theory; for example, the scientific validity of the model has been questioned given the lack of supporting empirical evidence or research data. The model is based on a double quadrennial periodisation model and the principles behind the model are based on the experiences of the Canadian men's alpine ski team. Even though Balyi (1990) argues that there is no reason why the principles of the model can not be "applied to a wider segment of the population" (pp. 1), there appears to be no evidence or rationale which justifies broadening their deductions to other sports. Furthermore, Cushion (2006) reported that the model has not been subject to peer review and that its construct validity was questionable. Given this suggested lack of research and empirical testing of the model, or indeed the 1990 work from which it was developed, one should perhaps question the validity and reliability of the principles surrounding the LTAD model. Brackenridge (2006a) further criticises the model as being a dehumanising one in which the youth athlete-as-machine is privileged over the youth athlete-as-person.

There has also been some debate about to whom the model is directed; for example, Balyi suggests that the LTAD model has been developed as an elitist model. In contrast, Earle (2005) argues that it is an athlete retention model and that it provides the basis for life-long participation in physical activity as well as training and competing in performance sports. Indeed, Earle went as far as to rename the model, Long Term Athlete Participation (LTAP). Sitting somewhere between Balyi's and Earle's positions, Kirk, Brettschneider and Auld (2005) suggest that, although the key emphasis is for elite development rather than sport participation more broadly, Balyi's model provides conceptualisation (long term development), representation (various stages) and a prescription of the process (pp. 14). What is clear is that Balyi's model is prescriptive, detailed and specific and states what young performers *ought* to be doing at each specific stage as opposed to what they *may* be doing around that age.

Although Balyi's model has gained a lot of credence in the world of performance sport, I would contend that Côté and Hay's (2002) developmental model of sport participation is worthy of equal consideration. I will explain why I came to this conclusion later in this chapter.

1.2.4 An Introduction to Côté and Hay's Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP)

Côté and Hay (2002) undertook an extensive review of the research literature and described how the socialisation process affects children's skill development and enjoyment of sport. Building on Bloom's (1985) notions of early, middle and later years in the development of talent in young people, they suggested that young people's socialisation into sport follows a similar pattern during the period from childhood to late adolescence. Côté (1999) and Côté and Hay (2002) identified the early experiences in organised sport as the *sampling phase*, which typically involves children in the 7-12 years age group, though precise ages can vary according to the individual sport and child. The key features of the sampling phase are that young people participate in a range of sports, and that their main motivation is fun and enjoyment, with the emphasis on playing rather than training. Côté and colleagues do not specify a precise number of sports as they are less interested in *prescribing* the number of sports, and are more interested in *describing* how many sports young people who become elite performers actually tend to 'sample'. Furthermore, a characteristic of this phase is 'deliberate play', which involves young people in structured activities that require the development of particular techniques and tactical understanding. Young people may continue in this sampling phase for as long as opportunities are available to them, or they may either drop out of sport or move into a second middle phase, which Côté and Hay call the specialising phase.

The *specialising phase* generally involves children around the ages of 13-15 years, the range of sports the young performer participates in reduces to perhaps two or three and motivation begins to shift from the enjoyment of participation to the enjoyment of winning. This motivation is reflected in a shift in emphasis from 'deliberate play' to 'deliberate practice'. Deliberate practice (Ericsson et al., 1993) is focussed on improving current levels of performance and is evident in an increase in the frequency and intensity of training. From the specialising phase Côté and Hay suggest young people have three options. The first is to drop out of sport; the second is to enter into the *recreational phase*, where sport is played relatively informally and for fun; and the third is to move into the investment phase.

Entry into the *investment phase* usually signals that the young athlete is prepared to commit and focus on one specific sporting activity. This phase is distinguishable from the other phases mainly by the extreme intensity of the athlete's commitment to their sport and the tremendous amount of specific practice that they are prepared to put in. In other words, deliberate practice dominates these years and there is very little deliberate play.

1.2.5 Similarities and Differences between Balyi's and Côté and Hay's Sport Developmental Models

Regarding the principles for junior sport participation, Balyi's model and Côté and Hay's perspective on youth sport socialisation share a number of common features, but also show some important differences. For example, according to Kirk et al., (2005) both models include various stages of participation from novice to expert performers. They both include a broad preliminary phase that involves children participating in a variety of sports and discourage early specialisation and competition. Both models also recognize the shift of emphasis from play to practice in the development of expertise. However, in contrast to Balyi's prescriptive model, which Kirk et al. (2005) claim appears to ignore the socialisation process, Côté and Hay's (2002) model attempts to describe how the process actually works rather than to prescribe what it should be. Furthermore, Kirk et al argue that Côté and colleagues model is more flexible and reflexive since it takes into consideration the diversity of individual performers. Perhaps more importantly, as discussed above, Côté's model is based on evidence taken from studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals.

According to Kirk et al. (2005), Côté and Hay's approach is much broader, more inclusive, and possibly more grounded than Balyi's in so far as it attempts to provide an account of the various patterns of young people's socialisation into and out of sport based on empirical investigations. Furthermore, Côté and colleagues (Côté, 1999; Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2003) also describe the importance of the social influences of significant others, whereas Balyi omits this key area. It must

however be acknowledged that neither Balyi nor Côté take into consideration social constructions such as class and gender or individuals' perceptions of ability.

Although the genesis of Côté's (1999) model was originally based on three elite rowers and an elite tennis player, the model was influenced by the pioneering work of Bloom (1985) and colleagues. Their studies on the developmental activities of experts included twenty-one Olympic swimmers (Kalinowski, 1985) and eighteen tennis players (ranked in the top ten in the world between the years 1968-1979) (Monsaas, 1985). These studies also suggested that there were three distinct developmental phases that an athlete moves through as expertise emerges, namely, the 'early', 'middle' and 'later' years. Moreover, research subsequent to Côté's study (1999) has suggested that their findings are in accordance with Bloom's (1985) and Côté and colleagues studies. For example, Wall and Côté (2007) contend that a number of projects (Abernethy et al., 2002; Baker et al., 2003; Soberlak & Côté, 2003; Baker et al., 2005) using Côté and colleagues' Developmental Model of Sport Participation as a framework have found that experts in rowing, tennis, basketball, netball, triathlon and ice hockey follow a similar path as outlined by Côté's model. It should be noted however that these studies were conducted in Canada and Australia and that there have been only a few similar studies based within the United Kingdom (e.g. Kirk & MacPhail, 2003; MacPhail, Kirk & Eley, 2003; MacPhail, Gorely & Kirk, 2003; MacPhail & Kirk, 2006; Toms, 2004; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). It is therefore anticipated that this present study will contribute to this area of knowledge from a UK perspective and will complement these predominantly ethnographic studies with the life story approach used here.

A number of factors are perceived as being critical in the development of expert performance (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002). These include, for example, the role of maturation, genetics and biological development (Tranckle and Cushion, 2006), as well as, psychological, socio-cultural and contextual factors (Baker & Horton, 2004) must also be considered to be able to fully understand the differences between individuals with similar training.

1.3 THE DECISION TO BUILD ON CÔTÉ AND HAY'S MODEL

As described earlier in this chapter, the decision to award London the 2012 Olympic Games has raised the profile of performance sport in NGBs and Government policies, higher than it has featured in recent times. The performance pathway to elite levels in sport is considered in detail in this study. This will help to provide some further understanding of the developmental socialisation process of expert performers who participated in this study, and will consider the extent to which Côté's model can be useful in understanding this process outside of its country of origin and in relation to somewhat different sports than those studied by Côté and colleagues. Although this study acknowledges the significance of Balyi's LTAD model, I will argue that using Côté and Hay's (2002) more ecologically informed model as a theoretical framework will provide a more rounded understanding of young people's developmental socialisation into sport. This thesis will explore the social processes and past experiences that have influenced when, and at what stage, young athletes have become involved in sport, and when and how they realised their potential to achieve at elite level sport. This study will also take into consideration the important role of influential significant others.

1.3.1 Introducing the Aims of the Research

This study aims to investigate the process of developmental socialisation of 36 elite level sports women and men in six sports through the use of life story interviews. I am interested, in particular, in the extent to which these individuals' careers both reflect and conflict with a pattern of sampling, specialising and investing in sports as described by Côté and others and outlined briefly earlier in this chapter.

Côté and colleagues emphasise the social and psychological dimensions of the sport socialisation process and thus permit the investigation of how the 'individual' and 'social' interact over time, and how the dimensions of the socialisation process may change over the course of a performer's career. They acknowledge the continuous influence other people have on the feelings, decisions and actions of individual athletes, which can impact on whether the young performer will commit to a

particular sport. Indeed, including these elements in this present study will confirm and expand on how individual motives act on, and are acted upon, by, significant others and social situations as part of the developmental socialisation process and how these complex interactions often influence the continued participation of young people in sport and physical activity through to elite levels. More specifically, this study will examine the importance and influence of the family, coaches, teachers and peers within the developmental socialisation process and if the influences of each of these groups' and individuals change over the course of a sports person's career. Therefore, although it is acknowledged that the number of participants involved in this study is too small to generalise more broadly, this study will discuss the participants' life stories in the context of their socialisation into sport and illustrate aspects of Côté's model. More importantly, it is anticipated that this study will add to the previous literature surrounding this model and contribute further understanding to this topical area of research.

The sports people selected for inclusion in this study were reasonably accessible to the researcher (both in terms of geographical location and availability – this issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three). As a consequence of this many (29, 80.6%) of the participants had attended or were still attending Higher Education Institutions (HEI). In their interviews, these participants described higher education as a critical stage in their sporting life because, for some, higher education coincided with making the transition into the investment phase of their sport. On the other hand, higher education was also the time some individuals had their first opportunity to take up a particular sport (e.g. women's rugby) in which they then became investors. While I did not set out initially to study student-athletes, the relatively large numbers in the study of current and former university students presented a serendipitous opportunity to consider the role of HEIs in the sport developmental socialisation process.

With these broad intentions in mind, the main aims of this study are:

- To determine whether, and to what extent, the 36 expert performers' socialisation into six sports followed a developmental pattern of sampling, specialising and investing (as suggested by Côté, 1999) noting any similarities

and differences between the sports women and men, and within and between sports;

- To establish the influence and role of significant others (family, coaches, peers) throughout the sport socialisation process of the 36 investors, and examine how these influences and roles change over time;
- To investigate the part played by significant others in the developmental socialisation of individual sports performers;
- To establish how the interaction of individual and social factors may have influenced the transitions from the early to middle and later years (from the 'sampling phase', to 'specialising' and 'investment phases');
- To investigate the part played by HEIs in the sports socialisation process, in particular their role in assisting some adult performers to enter late into the investment phase of a sport;
- To illustrate the extent to which Côté's (1999) and Côté and Hay's (2002) Developmental Model of Sport Participation was reflected in the lives of the participants as told in retrospective life story interviews.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This introductory chapter has established the context for this study, the research aims and the significance and timeliness of the research. Chapter Two moves on to present an in-depth analysis of the existing literature on the developmental socialisation process into sport and in particular the interactions between the performers, the family, coaches and peers. The field of study in which this literature is located is primarily youth sport, with a specific concern for developmental socialisation into sport. The literature review considers a range of issues associated with youth sport, including Côté and colleagues studies of the socialisation process in a number of contexts and with different sports, the '10-year rule', early specialisation, talent identification, the roles and influence of families, coaches and peers, and elite sport in higher education. Chapter Three provides information on methodology. This includes a critical analysis of the life story approach, and an explanation of how the data were interpreted in relation to the research questions and the literature. This

chapter also introduces the participants and researcher to the reader and acknowledges the reflexive role of the researcher in conducting the research act. The next four chapters (Chapters Four to Seven) report and analyse the data generated in relation to each of the key themes highlighted in this study. Chapter Four broadly discusses the 'sporting pathways' that the participants followed in order to reach the status of 'expert performer'. Consequently, this chapter highlights important issues surrounding the participants' socialisation, progression and development into and through their sport. Chapters Five, Six and Seven explore the data relating to the influence and role of the family, coaches and peers respectively. These chapters are not arranged in order of influence or importance, and should not be read as depicting a linear progression but rather as a collection of interrelated discussions. Chapter Eight concludes this thesis by drawing together the discussions from the previous seven chapters and highlights the main findings of the four data-based chapters. Finally, this last chapter will discuss the implications of these findings and suggest some directions for future research, whilst also recognising the limitations of the study.

Chapter Two

An Introduction to the Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of the Study

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a review of the literature in the field of youth sport, with a specific focus on the process of socialisation of young people into sport. The work of Côté and colleagues (Côté, 1999; Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2003) and its development by Kirk & MacPhail (2003) MacPhail, Kirk & Eley (2003), MacPhail, Gorely & Kirk (2003), Toms (2004) and MacPhail & Kirk (2006) provide my starting point for a developmental approach to sport socialisation. The chapter begins with a critical examination of this work on developmental socialisation noting, in particular, the different contexts in which this concept has been applied both in terms of sports and countries, each with their own traditions and cultures. The chapter then outlines the Developmental Model of Sport Participation in detail, considering at the same time its origins in the work of Bloom (1985) and others on talent identification and development. I also discuss two currently controversial matters, namely the '10-year rule' and early specialisation, in light of Côté and colleagues' developmental socialisation model, before reviewing the literature on the roles and influence of 'significant others' such as the family, coaches and peers within this process. The chapter concludes with a brief review of the literature on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their increasing importance as a site for the socialisation of elite sports performers.

2.2 DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIALISATION INTO SPORT

Socialisation is a complex developmental learning process that teaches the knowledge, values and norms essential to participation in all facets of social life. It is

through socialisation that individuals learn all types of social roles, including those related to sport participation (McPherson et al., 1989). It is also a theoretically contested concept and Toms (2005) argues that socialisation and the socialisation process mean different things to different people. Coakley (1998), likewise, understands that functionalist and conflict theorists would have different definitions of socialisation to those underpinning his work. In recent years, as sport sociology and psychology have developed and become open to a greater variety of theoretical perspectives, Côté and Hay (2002) have identified with Coakley's (1998) critical and interactionist approach to socialisation. Coakley (1998) suggests that interactionists who research sport generally focus on how people develop meanings and identities associated with sport participation and how these meanings and identities influence their behaviour and relationship with others. Coakley also points out that socialisation is a dynamic process that evolves over an individual's life and the lessons learned often vary according to gender, age, ethnicity, race and social class, which can sometimes make it a difficult concept to study and measure. In spite of this, Stevenson (2002) argues that socialisation from an interactionist approach has been useful in his research as well as the work of a number of other researchers who have been trying to explicate the processes facilitating the careers of elite athletes.

According to Thomas et al. (2005) Côté's Developmental Model of Sport Participation acknowledges the necessity of designing sport programmes that take into account youths' physical, psychological, social, and intellectual development and are thus conscientiously designed to foster developmentally appropriate training patterns and social influences (pp. 31). Brackenridge (2006b) argues that Wylleman's (2004) 'alternative LTAD (Long Term Athlete Development) model' addresses each of the areas highlighted by Côté, but is focused more on athlete transitions than performance. Nevertheless, Brackenridge is critical of the recent prominence of stage models surrounding child development based on Piaget's (1932) and Kohlberg's (1963) models of moral development and highlights research that questions whether young athletes' social, psychological and skill development are necessarily always in synchronisation (cited in Brackenridge, 2006b).

In Carlson's (1988) analysis of the process of developmental socialisation of elite tennis players in Sweden, he argues that there is a need for an optimal and continual

interactive process between the individual and the surrounding environment. This perspective of human development is fundamental in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) developmental theory: In describing the developmental process, Bronfenbrenner considers the individual as a "growing dynamic identity, affecting and being affected by the immediate environment" (cited in Carlson, 1988; pp. 243).

Côté and Hay (2002) further suggest that socialisation is a lifelong process through which individuals develop their self-concept, identity, attitudes, dispositions and behaviours, and as mentioned above, there are a number of contextual factors that also influence this process. Therefore, socialisation is not static, and individuals continually make decisions and form identities, which can impact on their continued participation in sport. As social conditions change, so do people's decisions (Coakley, 1998). The interaction between the individual and significant others is also influential in this process, however, who and to what extent they are influential often changes over time. In a sporting context, the family, coaches and peers have been commonly identified as key socialising agents. The nuclear family has been consistently cited as the primary socialising agent for most young people into sport whereas coaches and peers have been recognised as becoming more influential in the middle to later years (Greendorfer, 1983; McPherson et al., 1989; Côté, 1999; Kay, 2000; Côté & Hay, 2002). Greendorfer argues that although other social institutions such as the school and peer group shape individual development, these institutions merely reinforce what has been initiated within the family.

It is therefore important to acknowledge that the socialisation process is a dynamic, ongoing two-way process, since people do not stop developing, extending and modifying their perceptions of who they are and how they relate to others (Coakley, 1998). This notion of developmental socialisation emphasises that the relationship between individuals and significant others and other social processes changes over time. There may indeed be patterns to these changes that mark out those individuals who become elite sports performers, such as phases in their sporting careers, whereby different characteristics or configurations of relationships with their families, peers and coaches would be evident. Côté and colleagues have linked this developmental theory of socialisation with their model of sport participation and suggest that there are three phases of sport participation from early childhood to late adolescence.

This study, therefore, adopts a developmental perspective and endeavours to build on the Developmental Model of Sport Participation (Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2003; Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2006). Furthermore, in particular relation to Côté and colleagues' studies, an activity as pervasive as sport in Canadian and Australian societies is bound to impinge to some extent upon most children. As such, questions about the social sources of the promotion of sports involvement are important for understanding how young people become involved in organised sports and the consequences of this involvement for their future lives (Eaten & Sage, 1993). As previously suggested, many of the studies based on Côté and colleagues' model have been carried out predominantly in North America, Canada and Australia, and the sports cultures in these countries are not necessarily the same as the UK. It is fitting then to understand how these cultures may differ so that a developmental socialisation approach can be applied appropriately in this study. For this reason, the following section explores the sporting cultures in Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom and highlights some of the significant differences and similarities in their Governments' sporting policies.

2.3 SPORT CULTURE IN CANADA, AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM: COMPARISON AND CONTEXT

Phillips & Magdalinski (2003) discuss sport in terms of 'cultures' to highlight that sport may be interpreted in contrasting ways in different countries and cultures. Holt (2002) argues that culture in its truest sense cannot be fully grasped because of its enormity, immense scope and breadth. Australian analyst McGregor (1983) sees culture as a "way of life," and suggests that:

"Culture is what we are all about. It is a crystallization of what we feel, what we want, what we fear, what we live for. We shape it, it shapes us, it both reflects and determines our being, it is the way we try to understand and give meaning to our lives. Our culture is us" (pp. 99).

Although Whannel (2000) argues that there has been a general lack of cross-cultural research, it is evident that for at least the last 40 years there has been an increasing awareness among Governments of different nations of the value of elite sporting

success. More often than not, elite sporting success has been seen as a resource significant for its malleability and its capacity to help achieve a wide range of non sporting objectives (Green & Houlihan, 2005). International sporting success has also been valued for the national 'good feel' factor that it generates and for its capacity to deliver economic benefits through the hosting of major events and for its general diplomatic utility (Green & Houlihan, 2005).

As previously discussed, Côté and colleagues' Developmental Model of Sport Participation (DMSP) is the central theoretical concept that underpins this study. Côté's (1999) initial study involved four Canadian families, the families of three elite rowers and the family of an elite tennis player. Subsequent studies conducted by Côté and colleagues and other researchers using DMSP as a framework has also mainly involved Canadian elite performers. For example: Stevenson's (2002) ethnographic project involved 29 Canadian master swimmers; Baker, Côté & Deakin's (2005) research was drawn from 28 elite Canadian male ultra-endurance tri-athletes; and the studies by Soberlak and Côté (2003) and Wall and Côté (2007) analysed the development of senior and junior Canadian ice hockey players. However, Côté and his colleagues were also funded by the Australian Sports Council to conduct studies in Australia involving 15 Australian elite athletes participating in sports including netball, field hockey and basketball (Baker, Côté & Abernethy, 2003; Côté, Baker & Abernethy, 2003). In Europe, and in particular in England, there have only been a limited number of studies that have used Côté's DMSP as a model for their studies. These studies have included Kirk and MacPhail's (2003) and MacPhail and Kirk's (2006) year-long ethnography of an athletics club; Tom's (2005) ethnographic study on the socialisation of young people into a junior cricket club; and Wolfenden and Holt's (2005) study involving English junior tennis players and their families and coaches.

This present study seeks to expand on these previous studies and the following sections will start this off by providing a critical analysis of the sport cultures and policies of the countries which have provided the contexts for the development of Côté and colleagues' model. The context may influence the developmental socialisation process of the young performer; therefore outlining the context in which

previous studies took place allows the reader to understand why the athletes in this study may have different sporting experiences.

2.3.1 Australia

It has been claimed that Australia is a nation 'obsessed' by sport and that in recent years sport in Australia has become a commodity (Phillips & Magdalinski, 2003). The main sports that are commonly associated with Australia include Australian Rules football, rugby league and cricket. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005-06) confirm that Australian Rules football is by far the most popular spectator sport within Australia (16.8% of the adult population had attended at least one game in the previous 12 months), and the annual turnover in 2003 for the Australian Football league (AFL) was AUS\$300 million (Stewart et al., 2004). The popularity of rugby league and cricket is not far behind with 10.1% and 6.3%, respectively, of the adult population being spectators at these sports between the years 2005 -06. The annual turnover in 2003 for the Australian Rugby League (ARL) and Cricket Australia (CA) amounted to between AUS\$100 and AUS\$2000 million (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). It is evident that, similar to England (Maguire, 1993), sport in Australia has become strongly influenced by American sports. Additionally, with Australia's semi peripheral status in the global market and the inflow of migrants from other industrial nations, such as Britain and other European countries, this has also impacted on their sporting culture (McKay, 1993; Stewart et al., 2004). In relation to the sports that have been involved in this present study, rugby union and swimming, and, to a lesser extent track and field athletics and field hockey, sustain solid organisational structures with some well paid athletes (Stewart et al., 2004).

Between 1996 and 1999, Australia produced the world champions in men's rugby union and its men's hockey team was ranked in the world's top ten; World championship medals were won in track and field athletics and at least four swimmers were arguably the best in the world in their particular discipline (Grant Hackett, Michael Klim, Ian Thorpe and Susie O'Neil) (Stewart et al., 2004). Politicians and state functionaries have attempted to use sporting achievements as evidence of Australia's ability to compete successfully on the international level (McKay, 1993),

and this is especially the case with rugby union and swimming. Taekwondo in Australia, similar to the UK, is an up and coming sport and is not yet considered as a High Performance sport and is consequently still struggling to gain substantial funding and media attention.

The establishment of the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in 1981 and the creation of the federal Government agency – the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) in 1985 - have demonstrated the seriousness with which successive Australian Governments approached the development of the country's elite athletes (Green & Houlihan, 2005). Green and Oakley (2001) identified two factors that were political and financial catalysts for developing their elite sport system; first, a poor Australian team performance at the 1976 Olympic Games (no medals were won) and, second the bidding for and hosting of the Olympic Games in Sydney 2000. So serious were the Australians about enhancing their elite sport development, that they followed sporting policies normally associated with former Eastern Bloc countries. Houlihan (2000) argues that Australia has:

“Adopted policies of elite squad development which are very close to the Soviet model in a number of key respects including the systematic sifting of school-age children as a means of identifying the potential elite, the development of specialist training academies, the subordination of domestic governing bodies to government policy and the use of public money to support elite athletes” (pp 6).

The ASC, in conjunction with the AIS, have adopted what they term a ‘top-down’ approach to the stated twin objectives of excellence in elite sport performances and increased participation in sport activities for all. According to Hogan and Norton (2000) this top-down approach directs funding towards producing excellence in sport by those already identified as being talented. The argument runs that by providing the optimum training facilities, coaching, science expertise and international competition through targeted grants and scholarships “there is more probability that world-class Australian performers will follow” (Hogan & Norton, 2000; pp.205). It would appear that the support of elite sport in Australia is justified on the grounds that sporting success promotes the country internationally; inculcates national pride and identity; provides economic benefits; and increases sporting interest and mass participation in sport and physical activity (Houlihan, 2000; Phillips & Magdalinski, 2003; Green &

Houlihan, 2005). However, Booth and Tatz (2000; pp. 210) argue that politicians do not recognise that factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, race, income and wealth are far more significant than elite sport models in encouraging the public to be physically active (cited in Phillips & Magdalinski, 2003). Questions have also been raised about the inequalities of funding models which privilege Olympic over non-Olympic sports, Olympic over Paralympic sports, and Olympic medal-winning sports over less successful sports (Cashman & Hughes, 1998).

2.3.2 Canada

In Canada professional team sports generally dominate the sports culture, and in particular ice hockey, baseball, soccer, basketball and volleyball engage very large numbers of adults (e.g. participants, volunteers and spectators). With the exception of volleyball, the best teams in the sports mentioned above play in professional leagues and are broadcast widely and predominantly in Canada (Sport Canada, 2004). This survey also states that ice hockey is part of Canada's traditional identity and stands in a class of its own as the country's most popular sport. In 2004, ice hockey in Canada attracted over 1.66 million adult active participants, over one million volunteers and more than 5 million spectators. In other words, in that year ice hockey attracted over one-fifth of the entire population of Canada (Sport Canada, 2004). Indeed Gruneau and Whitson (1993) acknowledge the important role that ice hockey plays in Canadian culture and argue that "the game [ice hockey] has become one of the country's most significant collective representations – a story that Canadians tell themselves about what it means to be Canadian" (pp. 13). Canada is also considered to be one of the superpowers of other winter sports, placed third in the medal tally at the Turin winter Olympics in 2006, behind Germany and the United States. They are now aiming to top the medal table at the forthcoming winter Olympics in Vancouver in 2010. According to Hall, Slack, Smith and Whitson (1992) some of the most distinctively Canadian cultural forms are winter sports. These are Canada's counterparts to the rituals of spring and summer that surround baseball in the United States and cricket in the West Indies (pp. 40). Hall and her colleagues further add that because the Canadian summer occupies a shorter part of the year, summers sports are less influential elements in the Canadian way of life.

In Canada, from the 1970's, federal government has been responsible for the construction of a policy framework that underpins the establishment of a core of elite athletes capable of achieving medal-winning success at major international sporting events (Green & Houlihan, 2004). Sport Canada was created with a mandate and a budget to drive high performance sport and the IOC's decision to host the 1976 Olympics in Montreal supplied the adrenalin (Kidd, 2006). The structural framework within which Canadian sport policy has developed can be characterised by an 'ideology of excellence' (Kidd, 1995). In agreement, Slack (2003) argues that coaches and athletic directors in the US and Canada model their programmes on professional or high-level elite performance. As a result there is often an overemphasis on winning and on the higher profile sports, which often cater to male participants (Slack, 2003). Slack concedes that the Government has in the past directed some funds towards promoting mass participation in sport but argues that this pales in comparison to the money it has put into elite sports programmes.

However, the unintended consequences of this drive for sporting excellence in Canada were brought into sharp relief with the Ben Johnson drugs affair at the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games (Green & Houlihan, 2005). Johnson's disqualification compromised the state programme, forcing the Government to appoint a royal commission of inquiry headed by Charles Dubin. Interestingly, Kidd (2006) acknowledges that it was not Johnson who was placed in the 'dock of public opinion', but rather Sport Canada and the entire Canadian sport system (pp. 708). The subsequent debate over the values and belief systems underpinning the emphasis of Canadian sport resulted in a significant shift in policy direction and emphasis at federal level. (Green & Houlihan, 2005). Green and Houlihan (2004) suggest that while performance objectives/beliefs have dominated Canadian sport policy for the last 20 to 30 years, there have been recent shifts towards a reduced emphasis on the 'ideology of excellence' (Kidd, 1995).

In recent years the federal government has been reviving its support for sport, including its support in the area of sport participation giving the impression of a renewal of interest in helping promote mass participation after many years of explicitly prioritising elite sport (Bergsgard et al., 2007). However, Bergsgard and acknowledges that the renewed modest enthusiasm for participation programmes is

driven as much by the emerging health concerns with the consequences of an increasingly sedentary lifestyle as by a commitment to any intrinsic attributes of sport. The Canadian experience is in marked contrast to that in the UK over the same period (Green & Houlihan, 2004), as will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.3 United Kingdom

The sports culture in the UK is dominated by football (soccer) with the sport attracting an enormous amount of media coverage all year round. There are over 50,000 football clubs in the UK and it is played competitively in most schools. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that football is described as being the UK's national sport. In contrast to Canada the UK, similar to Australia, has active participants in a great number of sports. 105 sports or activities are currently recognised by Sport England (Sport England, 2007). According to UK Sport, in 2001 the UK ranked third in the world of international sporting success behind the USA and Australia. However, on the whole the UK does not perform as well in sports that are of most interest to the general public (Game Plan, 2002). Apart from England winning the Rugby Union World Cup in 2003, in the last 20 years the UK has not won the Football World Cup, the Football European Championships, the Cricket World Cup, or had a Wimbledon or a grand slam tennis tournament winner. According to a survey carried out by UK Sport (2001) these are the sorts of tournaments by which success is often judged (Game Plan, 2002). At the 2004 Olympics in Athens Great Britain won 30 medals and participated in 22 different disciplines. However, the sports minister at the time, Tessa Jowell argued that it is not only the medal tally (elite success) that counts in a nation's sporting success but also increased quality school sport and increased mass sport participation (www.culture.gov.uk). Therefore, the UK has a twin approach to sport and physical activity, through social policy and international success, as opposed to Australia's national identity of 'winning is all' (Game Plan, 2002).

Nevertheless, Green and Houlihan (2004) argue that in the UK, policy priorities towards developing a framework of support systems for elite level athletes have been ambiguous. In previous years, promoting mass participation has been a core element

of British sport policy and although the focus and rationale for government support for sport has changed over the years, the rhetoric of mass participation has remained a relatively constant aspect of sport policy disclosure (Bergsgard et al., 2007). In contrast to Canada, from the mid 1990's onwards in the UK there has been a noticeable shift towards supporting elite sport objectives from both Conservative and Labour governments (Green & Houlihan, 2004). During this era, sport policy moved further up the central government agenda, and sport was subsequently moved to the new Department of Heritage which was created in 1992. This gave sport a higher profile within Government (Bergsgard et al., 2007). Additionally, two factors in particular are commonly cited as being characteristic of the changing direction and emphasis of elite sport policy in the UK since the mid 1990's. First, the establishment of the National Lottery, in 1994; and second, in 1995, the publication by the Conservative government of 'Sport: Raising the Game' (Department of National Heritage, 1995), the first national sport government policy in 20 years (Green & Houlihan, 2004). This policy indicated the withdrawal of central government and the Sports Councils from the provision of opportunities for mass participation and focused on: (1) the development of elite performers and an elite sports academy/institute; (2) developing the role of Higher Education institutions in the fostering of elite athletes and (3) funding allocations to governing bodies, which would now be conditional on explicit support for Government objectives. (Green & Houlihan, 2005). Arguably, for the first time in its relatively short history, 'sport' was considered a discrete domain for Government intervention, with an emerging organisational, administrative and funding framework at the elite level (Green & Houlihan, 2005). Green and Houlihan (2004) further add that the significance of the Lottery monies for the emergence of a more systematic approach to developing the country's elite athletes cannot be underestimated. The introduction of the National Lottery was significant not simply because it added approximately £200 million per year to overall public investment in sport, but also because the money was new in the sense that it was not encumbered by prior spending commitments and could therefore be used strategically by distributing bodies to enable progress towards particular governmental goals (Bergsgard et al., 2007). Moreover, funding received through the National Lottery was cited by many of the successful athletes at the Sydney 2000 Olympics as a key contributory factor in their success (UK Sport, 2001).

In 1997, the newly elected Labour Government transferred the responsibility for sport from the Department of Heritage to the more recently created Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and published its own strategy for sport: 'A Sporting Future For All' (DCMS, 2000). Although coming from an opposing political perspective, the Labour strategy also emphasised school (youth) sport and elite development. However, Green and Houlihan argue that it should be acknowledged that the Labour Government also introduced a new social policy agenda that had significant implications for the promotion and development of sporting provision and opportunities. In short, professionalism and modernisation of sport policies were seen as key vehicles for achieving welfare goals such as social inclusion and widening access for all. (Green & Houlihan, 2005). Nevertheless, some of the most prominent sport policy commitments in the late 1990's were elite related - the development of an elite sports institute network (Theodoraki, 1999 cited in Green & Houlihan, 2005) and the establishment of a three tier (formerly known as Performance, Potential and Start) World Class Lottery Fund to support elite athletes at different levels of development.

Talent identification and development of young people is a further important element of the UK's recent support for elite level sport. Hoey (2000) reported that UK Sport requires NGBs to have a talent identification and development strategy, part of which involves the construction of 'pathways' to higher levels of competition especially between school and clubs. In addition, the Government is funding the establishment of over 400 Specialist Sports Colleges which have among their various functions the responsibility to act as the first rung on the talent development ladder (Green & Houlihan, 2005).

In England, there are three major national agencies involved in the delivery of sport: Youth Sport Trust (YST); Sport England (SE); and UK Sport. The YST is primarily responsible for improving the quality and quantity of school sport, including curriculum physical education. SE is responsible for sustaining and increasing participation in formal and informal community sport, and UK Sport is chiefly responsible for elite sport and world class events. According to SE (2007), these three agencies do not work in isolation but link and interact with each other, in order to ensure "smooth and seamless pathways which release the sporting potential (including, volunteering, coaching, effective leadership and officiating) of as many

people as possible” (pp. 8). This pathway is a relatively recent concept and it is anticipated that it will address the gap between grassroots and high-performance sport as identified in Game Plan (2002). What has remained consistent is that schools are primarily responsible for laying the foundations for each individual’s sport participation by developing basic skills and knowledge in a wide variety of sports (Kirk et al., 2005) and the YST manages the Gifted and Talented (G&T) strand of the Government’s Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy. The main aim of the G&T programme is to establish pathways which co-ordinate the development and the demands on talented, and potentially talented, young sports people, thereby enabling them to maximise their academic and sporting potential (www.talent.ladder.org, 2007). Within the G&T in PE and sport programme there are also a number of sub-strands which aim to provide varying types of support to young people who are considered or identified as G&T. These include Multi-Skill clubs, Junior Athlete Education, Multi-Skill Academies and Performance Camps. The YST also work with schools in developing School Sports Partnerships and County School Partnerships as well as playing a central role in the development and support of Specialist Sports Colleges. In 2006 UK Sport took over from Sport England the responsibility for all Olympic and Paralympic performance-related support in England, from the identification of talent right the way through to performing at the highest level. They redefined the terms under which funding and support was to be provided and put into place a World Class Performance Pathway that works on three key levels. At the first level is ‘World Class Podium’. This programme will support sports with realistic medal capabilities at the next Olympic/Paralympic Games. The second level is ‘World Class Development’; a programme designed to support sports that have demonstrated they have realistic medal winning chances for 2012. The third level is ‘World Class Talent’; a programme designed to support the identification and confirmation of athletes who have the potential to progress through the World Class pathway with the help of targeted investment. This programme also seeks to raise the level of sophistication by which sports approach the identification of new athletes, and examines ways in which talent can be transferred across sports (UK Sport, 2007).

The previous sections have therefore highlighted that Australia, Canada and the UK share a number of similar characteristics, for example:

- Sport is a significant cultural element
- A concentration on elite sport is evident or emerging
- Democracy is well-established and stable
- Interest group activity is a major feature of democratic politics
- Their economies are mature.

Although each country also has distinctive characteristics, it can be argued that they also share a degree of overall similarity that makes comparisons viable (Green & Houlihan, 2005). Therefore, with the forthcoming Olympic Games in London 2012 it might be expected that the UK will follow a similar 'ideology of excellence' that surfaced in Canada and Australia prior to the Montreal and Sydney Olympic Games.

This review of literature highlights that the sporting cultures of Canada and Australia, have many similarities to that of the UK. Consequently, it can be argued that Côté's approach to developmental socialisation is appropriate to use in this study. Now that the context of this study has been set, the following section will explore the developmental sporting pathway of the expert performer.

2.4 THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESSION OF THE EXPERT PERFORMER

Bloom and colleagues (1985) understood from their pioneering studies that the careers of expert individuals in disparate performance and knowledge fields follow remarkably similar pathways and that the study of these careers produces powerful conceptual tools for the analysis of talent development and its transitions. In their study of 120 individuals expert in their respective professions in art, science and sport they concluded that, although each knowledge field had its own specific timetable, the means of achieving excellence were comparable. In other words, a great deal of consistency was found across domains in terms of the investments of tangible and intangible resources found to be essential in nurturing promising individuals with talent (Gould, Dieffenbach & Moffett, 2002). Furthermore, Bloom (1985) claimed that there were three distinct career phases that these expert performers progressed

through: 1) the 'initial phase' (early years); 2) the 'developmental phase' (middle years); and 3) the 'mastery phase' (later years).

More recently, Côté and colleagues (Abernethy, Côté, & Baker, 1999; Beamer, Côté, & Ericsson, 1999; Côté, 1999) have further developed and expanded Bloom's (1985) research. They investigated the career development of expert Canadian and Australian athletes in rowing, gymnastics, basketball, netball and field hockey. Similarly to Bloom, these studies identified three phases of development from childhood to late adolescence which were more specific to sport. They termed these phases 'the sampling years' (ages 7-12), 'the specialising years' (ages 13-15), and 'the investment years' (age 16+). They also suggested that at any stage the young people have the potential to move to another level, drop out of the sport, or enter what they called 'the recreational years'. Primary factors that distinguished each phase of development were the number of activities the young athlete participated in, and the structure and design of their practices and training (Thomas et al., 2005). According to Tranckle and Cushion (2006) a specific feature of Côté's (1999) phases was the recognition that the development of expertise or talent in sports usually occurs prior to the age of 18. This, Tranckle and Cushion argue, has led to Côté's phases all but superseding Bloom's stages within the understanding of talent and development in sport. The next sections of the chapter describe each of the phases in detail.

2.4.1 The Sampling Years

According to Côté and Hay (2002), the sampling years involve children playing a range of sports essentially for enjoyment with the learning of fundamental motor skills such as running, jumping and throwing being an important part of the activity. The main purpose of this phase is to experience enjoyment and excitement through sport (Ericsson, 2003). Deci and Ryan (1985) posit that enjoyment is derived from achievement behaviour which is intrinsically motivating and provides perceptions of competence and self-determination. Scanlan and Simmons (1992) argue that sport enjoyment is a broad and inclusive construct that is derived from internal and external origins. Scanlan et al. (1993) in their Sport Commitment Model define sport

enjoyment as “a positive affective response to the sport experience that reflects generalized feelings such as pleasure, liking and fun” (pp. 6).

A key characteristic of the sampling phase is what Côté and Hay (2002) term ‘deliberate play’, which involves young people participating in structured activities that require the development of particular techniques and knowledge. This is a concept that emerged from the work of sociologist Norman Denzin (1975) who distinguished three forms of play:

- Playing at play – describes the ‘free-floating’ activities of very young children.
- Playing at a game – children being involved in games without knowing the specific rules or strategies of the game.
- Playing a game – activities with specific rules in which matters of skill and chance are more controlled, for example, participation in organised sport.

‘Deliberate play’ is distinguished from ‘playing at play’ or ‘playing at a game’ because deliberate play, like ‘playing a game’, involves an implicit or explicit set of rules. Children can make up the rules to suit themselves with the main emphasis on having fun and developing an affinity with the sport (Côté & Hay, 2002). Teitel (2000) claims that children would benefit more if they engaged in truly ‘free play’, a concept he borrows from Dutch historian Johan Huizinga’s notion of play. According to Huizinga supervised, organised play is “play to order, lesser play at best; and at worst not, really play at all” (Teitel, 2000; pp. 97). Kalinowski’s (1985) study of Olympic swimmers and the study by Monsaas (1985) on world-class tennis players agreed that although there were differences in chronological ages when tennis players and swimmers reached the middle and later years of their development, most athletes started their involvement in sport by ‘trying out’ different sports in a playful and fun environment.

According to Côté and colleagues (Côté, 1999; Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté et al., 2003) a key feature of the sampling years are that children participate in a wide variety of activities without specialising in one sport. The main emphasis is placed on having fun and experiencing excitement through organised play and games rather than through specific training. They further argue that play-like involvement in a number

of sports is beneficial to the development of the intrinsic motivation required during later phases of development when training becomes more structured and effortful. Consistent with this view, Kirk (2005) strongly argues that positive, high quality early learning experiences are crucial to continuing involvement in physical activity.

2.4.2 The Specialising Years

Côté and Hay (2002) contend that, following the sampling phase, young people may either drop out of sport, move into the recreational phase or progress to the specialising phase. During the specialising years, children reduce their range of activities and focus on a few preferred sports and motivation begins to shift from fun and enjoyment to competitive success and enjoyment of winning (Kirk, 2005). More specific skills are learnt, and a similar amount of time is spent on 'deliberate play' and 'deliberate practice'. In contrast to 'deliberate play', 'deliberate practice' requires effort; it is not inherently enjoyable; and is specifically designed to improve the current level of performance (Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Römer, 1993). Consequently, from sampling to specialising there is a shift from activities that are play-like in nature to more structured and effortful training activities. It should also be noted that, whilst the notion of deliberate practice was developed through research with musicians, Ericsson and his colleagues believed that the concept of deliberate practice is applicable to all areas of human endeavour, including sport (Ericsson, 1996; Ericsson et al., 1993).

In the specialising years, enjoyment is still of primary importance. However, according to Côté and Hay (2002), young people who achieve elite status tend to engage in deliberate practice rather than deliberate play during these years. At the same time, Gallagher et al. (1996) warn that young people in this phase 'need to perceive sport as challenging yet fun' (pp.354). This suggests a balance of both deliberate practice and deliberate play is appropriate in the specialising stage (Côté, 1999). Consistent with this view, Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde and Whalen (1993) also suggest that the overall quality of the experience in the specialising years should be positive to ensure that teenagers stay involved in sport. Moreover, unless

individuals are motivated to learn, deliberate practice may not be effective in terms of improving learning.

2.4.3 The Investment Years

Beyond the specialising phase, Côté and Hay (2002) suggest there are at least three possibilities, to either drop out of sport, or enter the recreational years, or move into the investment years, the latter involving a commitment to achieving an elite level of performance in a single activity. According to Côté (1999) the investment phase is distinguishable from the other phases mainly by the increased intensity of the young athlete's commitment to the sport and the high levels of deliberate practice. In other words, deliberate practice dominates the investment phase with very little deliberate play (Kirk, 2005). This description of the investment phase is supported in studies by Bloom (1985), Côté et al. (2003), and Soberlak & Côté (2003). Although Ericsson et al. (1993) argue that deliberate practice is not inherently enjoyable, Côté and Hay (2002) suggest that often young people in the specialising and investment phases obtain enjoyment from some later pay-off such as successful performances or, ultimately, winning. MacPhail and Kirk (2006) further contend in their study of young athletes that the enjoyment in the specialising phase was also related to the success and ability with which athletes were performing. MacPhail and Kirk further add that this was noticeably different from the same athletes' involvement in the sampling phase where the social element and 'playing' were perceived by the young people to be the most enjoyable aspects.

According to Côté and Hay (2002) the age at which young people progress into the investment years is usually around 16, but they concede that this is greatly dependent on the sport or activity. In gymnastics (Beamer, 2001) and figure skating (Starkes et al., 1996), young people move into the investment years at an earlier age than 16. On the other hand, data from a study of ultra-endurance triathletes indicated that those individuals who became elite triathletes did not become involved in the sport until they were around 25 years of age (Baker, Côté & Deakin, 2005). Many figure skaters' and gymnasts' careers would have ended before the age at which the ultra-endurance athletes' careers began. Nonetheless, although the age at which children

typically enter the investment phase is variable, the characteristics of this phase of development are very similar across the sporting domain; principally because the number of hours of intense training increases dramatically, while the number of hours spent in play activities decreases (Bloom, 1985; Carlson, 1988; Côté, 1999).

Although Côté and colleagues give the impression that the young performers themselves have made the decision to progress through each of the phases, it is important to acknowledge that choices are often constrained and circumscribed. Factors such as their family, coaches and peers as well as their social class, ethnicity and gender can strongly influence these decisions; these matters are explored later in this thesis.

It is evident that the three phases of the development of sport careers as described by Côté and colleagues are specific to sport and are anchored in the theoretical concepts of deliberate play and deliberate practice. Furthermore, these concepts assist us to describe transitions between the sampling, specialising and investment years. That is to say: the sampling years are dominated by a high frequency of deliberate play, enjoyment and immediate rewards; the specialising years are marked by more equal amounts of deliberate play and deliberate practice in fewer sports; and lastly the investment years are characterised by a high amount of deliberate practice where the athlete demonstrates commitment to the pursuit of excellence in a single sport (Beamer, Côté, & Ericsson, 1999; Côté, 1999; Côté & Hay, 2002). Sport researchers have provided strong support for the basic premise of the theory of deliberate practice (e.g. Starkes et al., 1996; Hodge & Deakin, 1998; Baker, Côté & Abernethy, 2003; Baker, Côté & Deakin, 2005) that is, the positive relationship between training and expertise. Ericsson et al. (1993) further contend that the achievement of expertise takes at least 10 years or 10,000 hours of deliberate practice.

2.5 'TEN-YEAR RULE'

A significant body of evidence suggests that individuals who become elite performers require more than 10 years or 10,000 hours of practice to acquire the necessary skills and experience to perform at expert level (Helsen, Starkes & Hodges, 1998). This

'10-year rule' has been supported by the findings from a range of performance studies including studies of chess (Simon and Chase, 1973); music (Ericsson et al., 1993; Hayes, 1981; Sosnaik, 1985); and mathematics (Gustin, 1985). Of more specific relevance to this study, much research into elite sports has also endorsed the 10-year rule, for example, in middle distance running (Wallingford, 1975; Young & Salmela, 2002); swimming (Kalinowski, 1985); tennis (Monsaas, 1985); soccer and field hockey (Helsen et al., 1998; Helsen et al., 2000); and field hockey, netball and basketball (Baker, Côté & Abernethy, 2003). The theory of deliberate practice (Ericsson et al., 1993) extends Simon and Chase's (1973) work by suggesting that it was not simply training of any type but engagement in 'deliberate practice' that was necessary for the attainment of expertise. Ericsson and colleagues claim that many human characteristics such as size and efficiency of the heart, number of capillaries supplying blood to muscles, and metabolic properties of fast and slow twitch muscles are changeable with intense practice.

Baker et al. (2003) claim that participants in their study took on average nearly 13 years of sport-specific deliberate practice before reaching national open-age team selection in team ball sports. However, Baker and colleagues also contend that the number of hours of deliberate practice required was far short of the 10,000 hours reported by expert musicians in the study by Ericsson et al. (1993). Similarly, a study of expert soccer and field hockey players claimed that on average the number of hours spent engaged in deliberate practice was 4,000 (Helsen, Starkes, & Hodges, 1998; Helsen, Hodges, Van Winckel, & Starkes, 2000). Supporting this claim, Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2006) report that expert performance in sports where peak performance generally occurs after the age of 20 has been achieved with 3,000 to 4,000 hours of sport specific training. However, Baker et al. (2003) suggest that the difference in the numbers of hours these studies have reported is perhaps a methodological issue, with some studies focusing on the development of expertise as opposed to Ericsson and colleagues' work (1993, 1994, 1996), which focused on the maintenance of expertise.

Helsen et al. (2000) suggest that soccer is such a physically demanding sport that there must be an optimal trade-off between the hours spent in physical practice and those spent in rest, if only to avoid injury and over training. Gould, Dieffenbach and

Moffett (2002) argue that participation in deliberate practice in most sports is physically and mentally demanding and adequate periods of recovery are required to prevent physical exhaustion as well as mental staleness, burnout or motivation issues. Although it might be claimed that the amount of training may be a predictor of performance, proper scheduling of training intensities is crucial to laying the groundwork for progressive increases in training loads without the occurrence of injury or other setbacks (Kellmann, 2002). In a similar vein, Balyi (2001) argued that a specific and well-planned training, competition and recovery regime is required to ensure optimum development throughout an athlete's career.

The study by Helsen, Starkes and Hodges (1998), which examines Ericssons' et al. (1993) theory of deliberate practice within team sports, once again supports the '10-year rule'. The findings of this study are also consistent with the Sport Commitment Model (Scanlan et al., 1993), in that 10 years appears to be a watershed after which significantly more personal investment of time and effort must be devoted if an individual is to reach international or national standard (Helsen et al., 2000). According to Helsen et al (1998) the theory of deliberate practice (Ericsson et al., 1993) is an environmentalist theory which contends that nature plays no role in the development of expertise. The relationship between practice and performance is so strong that some researchers (e.g. Ericsson et al., 1993) support the notion that an adequate amount of high quality training is the only necessary ingredient for elite-level achievement. This somewhat extreme argument has been supported by Howe, Davidson and Sloboda (1998) who also found little evidence for innate talents in the development of musical expertise.

Nevertheless, although several other studies recognise and acknowledge the value of practice, many continue to argue that genetic predispositions, biological limitations/advantages and access to facilities together and in interaction contribute to individual success (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 1995; Singer & Janelle, 1999; Starkes et al., 1996).

Consistent with Ericsson et al. (1993), the study by Helsen et al. (1998) argues that there was a 'monotonic relationship' between the amount of deliberate practice in both team and individual sports and the eventual performance level attained. It should

be noted that the word 'monotonic' is often referred to in discussions on the theory of deliberate practice and in this context means that there is a positive linear relationship between practice and performance. Indeed, Baker et al. (2003) further explain that central to the theory of deliberate practice is the monotonic assumption. According to this assumption, and in accordance with the power law of practice (Newell & Rosenbloom, 1981), a monotonic relationship exists between the number of hours of deliberate practice performed and the performance level achieved.

Beyond the monotonic relationship between practice and performance, Ericsson et al. (1993) suggest that deliberate practice is an effortful activity motivated by the goal of improving performance and is not inherently enjoyable. This supposed lack of enjoyment is contested by Helsen et al. (1998) whose study suggests that in the sporting domain, relevant practice activities are often highly enjoyable. This was also the case in individual sports such as wrestling and figure skating (Hodges & Starkes, 1996). Data from other sport studies also indicate that those practice activities that require the greatest physical effort and mental concentration are generally the most enjoyable (Starkes, Helsen & Jack, 2001).

Most researchers agree that regardless of the age at which an activity is begun, the monotonic relationship with skill development and performance is quite consistent. Even across different domains, the absolute amount of practice accumulated over time is surprisingly similar at different career phases (Helsen, Starkes & Hodges, 1998). It is not clear if Helsen and colleagues support the theory of expertise based solely on deliberate practice since they suggest that the most critical part of producing skilled athletes is to find individuals who are highly motivated and likely to persist in their sporting endeavours over the long duration required to produce an expert. Similarly, Baker and Côte (2003) also state that regardless of the level of wisdom, intelligence and/or creativity a person has they will not achieve 'greatness' if they are not properly committed to perform the thousands of hours of training required to refine their skills. Furthermore, and perhaps equally as important, Starkes et al. (2001) argue what is practised, how it is practised, and from a developmental perspective when it is practised, is of greater importance than simply focusing on the amounts of practice.

Starkes, Helsen and Jack (2001) further argue that the model of deliberate practice is not likely to be disproved because it is basically untestable. They argue that to disprove its assertions one would need to find instances of complex strategic domains where individuals have attained expert performance with little practice or, alternatively, one would need evidence of great amounts of specific deliberate practice with no resultant change in performance. In both of these circumstances it could be argued either that the task was too easy or that the practice was demotivating. Nevertheless, according to Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2006) the theory essentially assumes that elite athletes must specialise in their main sport and engage in deliberate practice from a very young age.

2.6 EARLY SPECIALISATION

As discussed previously, the Ericsson et al. (1993) research supports the notion that level of performance is related to time spent in practice. They further argue that it was not simply the accumulation of deliberate practice hours over a period of 10 years that led to superior levels of performance; but aligning these training hours with crucial periods of biological and cognitive development. This claim suggests early specialisation became an important element in predisposing the child athlete to future success (Baker, 2003). Based on these findings, Ericsson and colleagues concluded that the earlier the young performer began specific training the greater chance they had of achieving exceptional performances in their chosen domain.

Conversely, there is a great deal of evidence that refutes the need to specialise early in a specific sport for physical, psychological and sociological reasons. Carlson (1988) was one of the first researchers to report that extensive training and early life specialisation did not favour the development of elite tennis players. Furthermore, Carlson indicated the importance of emphasising an all-round sport engagement, as well as less professional-like training, especially during early adolescence. More recently, other researchers who have investigated the early phases of development in elite athletes (e.g. Hill, 1993; Côté, 1999; Baker, Côté & Deakin, 2005) have reported that early specialisation as a child does not appear to be an essential ingredient for exceptional sport performance as an adult. Similarly, Wiersma (2000) speculated that

the limited range of skills performed during early sport specialisation had the potential to limit overall motor skill development. In a recent study of expert decision makers in basketball, netball and field hockey, Baker et al. (2003) proposed that participation in other relevant sporting activities (for example, sports where dynamic decision making is also necessary) during early phases of development augmented the physical and cognitive skills required in their primary sport. Stevenson's (1990) study of elite field hockey, rugby and water polo players also advocated that those who have diversified their early involvement in sports were not disadvantaged in terms of their eventual level of performance.

Wiersma (2000) also stipulates that sport is an excellent means of developing social skill such as cooperation and socially acceptable behaviour. Spending too much time training might not provide enough time for social growth and can lead to social isolation. Consistent with this argument, Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2006) contend that young athletes should not focus too heavily on early specialisation as they are often not physically, psychologically, socially, or cognitively ready for all that early sport specialisation entails. Indeed, involvement in a diversity of activities and play during childhood appears to lead to physical competence and enjoyment (Côté & Hay, 2002; Kirk, 2005). Baker (2003) also recognises that there are negative physiological consequences of early specialisation. In a study of overuse injuries in sport during adolescence, Dalton (1992) argued that in crucial periods of biological development, excessive forms of training could have detrimental effects. Dalton reported that cases of Osgood-Schlatters' disease and osteochondrosis and other associated conditions were not uncommon in adolescent athletes.

A substantial number of studies have reported that the strongest argument against the early specialisation approach concerns sport dropout (Gould, Feltz, Horn & Weiss, 1982; Gould, 1987; Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989; Ewing & Seefeldt, 1996; Butcher, Lindner, & Johns, 2002; Baker, 2003). These investigations have consistently indicated that lack of enjoyment and fun are principal motives for young people dropping out of sport or transferring to another sport or activity. Furthermore, Barynina and Vaitsekhovskii's (1992) study of elite swimmers indicated that athletes who specialised early spent less time on the national team and ended their sport careers earlier than those athletes who specialised at a later age.

It would seem then, as suggested by Ericsson et al. (1993), that the nature of deliberate practice activities associated with the early specialisation approach may be at odds with the level of enjoyment necessary to encourage a long-term commitment to physical activity (Baker, 2003). Just as developmental psychologist Piaget (1962) suggested continuity between children's play and work, Côté, Baker and Abernethy (2003) suggest continuity between playing sport and participating in deliberate sport-specific practice. Baker et al. (2005) in their study of ultra-endurance athletes further conclude that coaches and athletes should consider not only the quantity of training but also how training is structured. They further add that attention to these key issues may result in superior performance and decrease the risk of over-training. Indeed, some research has shown that early specialisation can be effective in producing expert performers (for example, Ward et al., 2004; Law, Côté, & Ericsson, 2007), however, there is also evidence that 'early specialisers' are at greater risk of overuse injuries. Additionally, Côté and colleagues advocate that reducing the acquisition of sport skills to a single dimension (i.e. deliberate practice) fails to acknowledge critical developmental, motivational and psychosocial aspects of human abilities (Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté et al., 2003; Baker & Côté, 2006; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007). In a similar vein, Rowe (1998) warns that early specialisation can result in young people becoming "locked into a sport" in which they may have talent but "locked out of a sport" where their talents and chances of success may be greater (pp. 10). It is important to note that many children who have been identified as having signs of talent during their early childhood do not necessarily achieve high levels of performance in adulthood in a related area (Tannenbaum, 1983; Tranckle & Cushion, 2006). Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2006) argue there has been little evidence to suggest that talent identification is the 'key' to talent development. It would appear that a significant number of children never fulfil their early promise due to developmental and maturational factors (Malina & Bouchard, 1991; Abbott et al., 2002). Bloom (1985) found strong evidence that no matter what the initial developmental and maturational characteristics of the individual were, unless there is a long intensive process of encouragement, nurturance, education and training, the individual will not attain high levels of achievement in particular fields. This chapter now moves on to explore such social environmental factors as family, coaches, teachers and peers.

2.7 SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON THE TALENT DEVELOPMENT OF EXPERT PERFORMERS

2.7.1 *Talent Development*

Talent has been described as both an appealing and common-sense explanation of what fundamentally underlies skill in sport (Helsen et al., 2000). Tranckle and Cushion (2006) suggest that talent is a rare and valuable resource for society but that a great deal of potentially valuable human talent is wasted in every generation (pp. 265). According to Abbott and Collins (2004) much of this waste stems from funding agencies failing to recognise the multidimensional, complex and dynamic nature of sporting talent and so failing to promote a number of factors that can enable children to develop into successful mature performers. As a consequence of these failures, many talented children are excluded from support programmes, while 'rare resources' are 'mis-invested' in others (pp.395). It is argued that talent development is a long-term process that involves more than just the individual, but also a strong support system (e.g. Durand-Bush, & Salmela, 2002; Bailey & Morley, 2006). This argument is not new. Carlson (1988) asserted almost twenty years ago that it was not possible to predict fully who would develop into an elite tennis player based on talent alone because both social environmental factors and interactive processes played a major part in future development. More recently Abbott and Collins (2004; pp. 400) suggested that talent identification and developmental processes need to consider the interplay between determinants of performance (physical, anthropometric and psychological), the environment (opportunities, familial support) and determinants that underpin the capacities to exploit the opportunities available and to develop within the sport (self-regulatory learning strategies/psycho-behaviours). Although Howe and colleagues' (1998) review of the role of talent was concerned with musical performance, several studies involving talent development in sport have found their explanation of talent as both insightful and useful (Helsen et al., 2000; Williams & Reilly, 2000; Tranckle & Cushion, 2006). Howe et al. (1998) emphasise a number of properties that highlight the complex nature of talent:

1. Talent may be characterised by properties that are genetically transmitted and so are in part innate.

2. Talent may not be evident at an early age, but there will be some indicators that enable trained people to identify its presence.
3. These early indicators of talent may provide a basis for predicting which individuals are more or less likely to succeed at some later stage.
4. Very few individuals are talented in any single domain; if all children were talented there would be no way to discriminate or explain differential success.
5. Talent is specific to that particular domain.

While there has been some debate as to whether Howe's list of properties can be utilised as an operational working *definition* or *description* of talent (Tranckle & Cushion, 2006), these characteristics of talent have been argued to capture the concept of talent for both theory and practice (Helsen et al., 2000). However, Helsen and colleagues also contest that two of Howe's properties, namely that talent provides a basis for predicting excellence and is domain specific, were not supported by their study. They further argue that this finding is particularly important in relation to sport, because those characteristics are the ones used to justify early specialisation (Helsen, Hodges, Van Winckel, & Starkes, 2000). Nevertheless, both they and Williams and Reilly (2000) argue that, in their cases (i.e. football), most coaches and scouts will swear that they can 'see a good player'. It would seem then that attempts to determine the origins of talent are problematic, and this is why the question of identifying ability in sport often descends into debates about the relative contributions of nature and nurture (Miah & Rich, 2007).

On the nature/nurture issue, Baker and Horton (2004) claim dedicated environmentalists support a position that people begin as 'clean slates' and everything that occurs after conception is the result of experience and learning. Conversely, people supporting genetic determinism argue that a person's personality, their strengths and weaknesses and indeed their ultimate potential, is decided by biological factors. Although these dichotomous positions are still maintained by some, it is more commonly accepted that human performance is the result of a combination and interaction among elements from both sides of the argument (Baker & Horton, 2004). Bailey and Morley (2003; 2006) further acknowledge that current performance can be a poor indicator of ability, since it is mediated through a host of other influences such

as training, support, parental investment and societal values. It is important to recognise that these factors seldom remain static and are likely to change over time.

As previously suggested, the influence of significant others has been consistently argued to play a critical role in the talent development of expert performers. The following section will discuss some of the key people involved in the development of expertise. According to Kay (2003), the family has a significant influence on the extent to which the skills that form the basis of sporting expertise are acquired. It has however also been acknowledged that with increased age and maturity, coaches and peers may play a more influential role.

2.7.2 Significant Others

Côté and colleagues (1999, 2002) discuss the importance of social influences during the careers of expert athletes from significant others such as families, coaches and peers. However, the socialising agent that is the most influential significant other often appears to be complex and sometimes sport-specific. In track and field athletics, peers and coaches were reported to be the agents who were most responsible for arousing the athlete's initial interest (Kenyon & McPherson, 1973). On the other hand, McPherson (1982) suggested that parents were the more influential in traditional team sports such as baseball, basketball and gridiron football. Kenyon and McPherson (1973) also found that the family, mainly the father, created the initial interest in both college tennis and ice hockey. Additionally in gymnastics, fathers and coaches were reported to be the most influential significant others (Roethlisberger, 1970). More recently, Greendorfer (2002) reported that males tend to be more influenced by peers and coaches, particularly from adolescence onwards. There appear to be some differences in the process of sport developmental socialisation, and the influence of significant others sometimes differs between activities and over time (Raymore, Barber, Eccles, & Godbey, 1999). It must also be acknowledged that most of these studies were conducted over 20 or 30 years ago and were based in the United States of America, indeed, where much of the earliest sport socialisation research was completed.

Kay (2000) argues that sociologists and social psychologists have emphasised the role of the family as a key socialising agent and source of emotional support for young sports performers (e.g. Howard and Madrigal, 1999; Vogler and Schwaitz, 1993). In the following section I will explore the role of the family in shaping and supporting young people's development through sport and how this role evolves throughout their sporting development.

2.8 THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT IN SPORT

The family is traditionally considered the bedrock of western society (Kay, 2000); a relative constant within the dynamic shifts in social structure. Others have suggested that the influence and importance of the family within the lives of young people has decreased in the modern era (Postman, 2004; Kay, 2000). Despite these latter claims, Côté (1999) noted that a large number of studies reported the importance of the roles of parents in supporting their children's involvement and achievement in sport. Power & Woolger (1994) showed that parental support was positively correlated with children's enjoyment and enthusiasm in swimming. Brustad (1993) also demonstrated that higher parental encouragement was associated with greater perceived physical competence for children. Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993) argued that for talented children to realise their potential the support of the family in both material and psychological terms is essential. Similarly, Kirk et al. (1997) suggested that parental attitudes and behaviours are widely acknowledged to play a significant part in children's participation in sports. Van Yperen (1995) reported that parents acted as a buffer to alleviate performance stress. Parents are also thought to be the most important socialising agents in shaping children's psychological development through sport during early childhood (Brustad, 1996; Brustad, Babkes, & Smith, 2001). Brustad and colleagues contend that young peoples' self-competence and self-esteem are influenced by the encouragement received from their parents, and as a consequence can affect their sports participation. From this perspective, if parents respond with positive encouragement they convey the idea that the child has a natural capacity in sport and reinforce the child's motivation to become competent in a sport or sports (Brustad, Babkes, & Smith,

2001). Earlier research by Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1984) also revealed that young wrestlers who perceived greater parental (and coach) satisfaction with their performance had higher personal expectations for their future performance. This suggestion is in agreement with Harter's (1988) research which indicated that children with high self-esteem could be distinguished from those with low self-esteem on the basis of support they receive from significant others.

2.8.1 Parental Expectations, Involvement and Encouragement

According to Côté (1999), there have been several studies that have focused on parental expectations and children's success and enjoyment of sport. However, it is evident that the relationship between parental expectations and children's attitudes and behaviours is a complex issue. Several studies found this relationship to be positive in the sense, for example, that parental encouragement was a major factor that keeps children playing sport (Green & Chaplip, 1997; McElroy & Kirkendall, 1980; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1985). On the other hand, however, others showed that parental expectations can become a source of pressure and stress, and can interfere with children's participation in sport (for example, Brustad, 1988; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991; Weiss, Weise, & Klint, 1989). The investigation of elite gymnastics by Tofler et al. (1996), reported an extreme view of this, whereby, they described parental over-engagement as "achievement by proxy". Tofler and colleagues further suggested that parents' own sense of self often becomes defined by their children's achievements with, in the worse case, parents exploiting their children's talent, placing them at some physical and mental risk. Hellstedt (1987) argued that if the parent's involvement increases as the child's interest in one sport grows, then the child's commitment to sport and physical activity may be enhanced. However, Wuerth, Lee, and Alfermann (2004) claimed that this may be only partly the case. Hellstedt (1987) conceptualised parents' involvement in their children's participation in sport on a continuum ranging from 'underinvolved', thorough 'moderate', to 'overinvolved'. Whereas moderate involvement appears to facilitate a sport career, both underinvolved, disinterested parents and, at the opposite extreme, overly engaged parents may play a disruptive role. Since athletes with disinterested parents may lack the necessary instrumental and emotional support to enable them to develop

into elite performers, they are more likely to drop out of sport, or require more support from other socialising agents, such as teachers or coaches (Hellstedt, 1987). Hellstedt asserts that parents who are moderately involved are characterised “by firm parental direction, but with having enough flexibility so that the young athlete is allowed significant involvement in decision-making” (pp. 153). Similarly, according to Côté and Hay (2002), a moderate level of parental involvement is characterised by parents who promote the best interests of their children, even if this means sacrificing personal interests.

Woolger and Power (1993) understand that most parents want to be involved but some may become too involved out of concern for their child’s success. In a later developmental model of athletes’ families, Hellstedt (1995) recommended that families with young children must emphasise fun and skill development and minimise competitive stress if they want to avoid delays or barriers in their child’s sporting development.

Similar to Hellstedt’s (1987) argument regarding the benefits of being a moderately involved parent, Power and Woolger (1994) found a curvilinear relationship between parental expectations and their children’s enthusiasm for swimming. High and low parental expectations were linked with less enthusiasm from children, while an intermediate level of expectation was associated with children’s highest level of enthusiasm for swimming. Yang et al. (1996) and Wood and Abernethy (1989) also reported that moderate levels of expectation were beneficial for increasing a child’s motivation to participate in sport. It could be argued, though, that the child’s perception and interpretation of their parents’ encouragement and expectations might affect how the child reacts (Woolger & Power, 1993). Interestingly, Kirk et al. (1997) further reported that it is mainly affluent parents with prior positive experiences in sport who have highest expectations of their children’s success and who place greater pressure on children and adolescents to participate in the training regimes necessary for success in competition. Consistent with this view, Hemery (1986), in a study conducted over 20 years ago, reported that prosperous parents who had also been active athletes themselves were often highly committed to their children’s sporting success. They were willing to invest money, time and emotional support in order to help them succeed in sport.

Côté (1999) reported that parents, who confined their expectations to a limited number of domains, in particular school and sport, and at the same time reduced the importance of other social demands put on children during their adolescent years, assisted in the learning process most. None of the parents involved in Côté's study of talented young athletes expected their children to have part-time work during the specialising years. Coakley (1992) suggested that burnout was most frequently experienced by highly accomplished young athletes whose parents typically made great commitments of time and resources. Furthermore, if the family's level of investment in sport increases, the child may feel trapped in the athlete role, and thus be more prone to burnout (Brustad, 1996).

Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1986), in their study of young male wrestlers, found the wrestlers' levels of enjoyment correlated high parental satisfaction with performance, favourable adult interactional patterns and a low frequency of negative maternal interactions. Similarly, Brustad (1998) found that low perceived parental pressure was predictive of high perceived enjoyment among young male and female basketball players. Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza's (1989) study on former elite figure skaters, reported that bringing pleasure or pride to their family was an important dimension of the skaters' sport enjoyment. In their research involving adolescent Norwegian soccer players, Ommundsen and Vaglum (1991) found that positive emotional involvement of parents (and coaches) was significantly related to enjoyment for these young athletes. It may appear that the effects of parental involvement in a child's sporting development depend primarily upon the degree of attention paid to it by parents, however, Wuerth et al. (2004), emphasised that it was the quality of the parent-child interaction that was important. This observation was previously noted by Lee and MacLean (1997) in their study of competitive age-group swimmers where their data supported the proposition that the quality of parental behaviour rather than simply its intensity was a critical factor in the parent-athlete relationship.

In summary, parent behaviours and parenting styles can have both positive and negative influences on children's sport experiences (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Côté & Fraser-Thomas, 2007). Several studies have shown that those athletes who have had a positive sporting experience are likely to have parents who display realistic expectations, who provide support and encouragement for their efforts, and who

rarely respond with negative evaluations of their performance (e.g. Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Brustad, 1996).

2.8.2 Parental Modeling

Several studies have focused on the importance of parental modeling on children's acquisition of positive values, attitudes and behaviours toward sport and physical activity (Côté, 1999). Kenyon and McPherson (1973) examined the psychosocial factors that influenced college tennis and ice hockey players' decision to become involved in sport. They found that interest in sport was initially aroused within the family and mainly influenced by the father. Moreover, in many cases the parents were still actively involved in sport as participants and thus served as role models. Colley et al. (1992) found that parents served as role models for the sport participation of females but not males. Power & Woolger (1994) found that maternal modeling was related to both boys' and girls' enthusiasm for swimming. On the other hand, paternal modeling was negatively associated with boys' enthusiasm for swimming. The findings of research on parental modeling are inconsistent. It can be concluded that modeling probably has a role in the sporting context, though additional research is required before this role can be clarified (Woolger & Power, 1993). However, there is evidence to suggest that parents of young people who have achieved expertise in various domains, tend to support values related to the importance of achievement, hard work, success, and being active and persistent (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Monsaas, 1985; Slobodo & Howe, 1991; Sloan, 1985; Sosnaik, 1985).

2.8.3 Practical and Tangible Support

The importance of the family in children's sport development is not only significant in transmitting values, providing role models, and encouraging and approving children's participation in sport, it is also valuable because of the practical support the family provides (Kay, 2003). Coakley (2001) has highlighted the extent to which young people's sport participation at all levels is dependent on the family's ability to invest the necessary resources of time and money. Côté and Hay (2002) describe

these resources as tangible support, which include “providing financial assistance, time for lessons, equipment and travel costs associated with sports participation” (pp. 509). Côté and Hay further report that the financial cost of this support could run into thousands of dollars a year for many youth sports, particularly at elite level. In Australia, Kirk et al. (1997) highlighted the importance of parental financial support and the effect of socio-economic class on the extent of a young person’s access to and participation in a range of sports. Kay (2000) reported similar findings in Great Britain. In the Training of Young Athletes (TOYA) study, Rowley (1992) argued that the financial cost to the family can rise disproportionately as higher levels of performance are reached. For example, the costs of supporting a 12-year old swimmer more than doubled by the time the child had reached the age of 14. Despite this Côté and Hay (2002) argue, perhaps controversially, that families who are committed to their child’s involvement in sport will somehow find the financial resources necessary. Côté and Hay concede that lack of tangible support can certainly become a constraint to a child’s participation and development in many sports. Indeed, Rowley (1992) suggests that single-parent and lower socio-economic families are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to sustaining participation in youth sport at representative levels (see also Kirk et al., 1997). Kay (2000) adds that it is perhaps not surprising that many parents report experiencing moderate or severe financial hardship as a result of supporting a talented child.

2.8.4 Time Commitments and Social Consequences

Supporting children’s sport participation at high performance levels also requires the commitment of time as well as having a major impact on the pattern and scheduling of family activities (Yang et al., 1996). Kirk et al. (1997) reported that the time demands of training for and competing in sport had considerable influence on the nature of the relationships between family members. According to Kirk and colleagues, one of the most striking features of interviews with parents of youth sports participants was the ‘busyness’ of their everyday lives, which involved a ‘balancing act’ to accommodate the complex logistics of managing the weekly routine. In the United Kingdom findings from a number of recent studies (e.g. Greaves, 1999; Kay & Lowrey, 2003) have revealed that even at a relatively young age a child’s

participation in competitive sport can often become a commitment that gradually absorbs the whole family unit until it determines family activities to such an extent that sports participation becomes a defining characteristic of family life. Kay posits that families in this situation refer to sport as 'a way of life' and to themselves as 'sporting families' (2003; pp.5). She suggests that a family's capacity to provide the necessary resources to support their children's participation in sport is likely to vary according to their circumstances. Kay further argues that there is an increasing divide between 'work-rich' families (two parents in employment) and 'work-poor' families (both parents unemployed). This leads to a 'Catch-22' scenario where the 'work-rich' families can financially support their child's sports involvement but have limited time available. At the other end of the spectrum the 'work-poor' families have the time but do not have the money (Kay, 2000; pp.164).

2.8.5 The Transition of the Parental Role throughout the Developmental Phases of the Expert Performer

When children initially become involved in sport their parents are not only their main supporters who often share their pleasure and excitement, but they can also initiate the sport activity of their children. Thus, they direct their children and may have a fundamental influence on how children perceive their sporting activity (Wuerth et al., 2004). According to Côté et al. (2003), parents generally have a direct involvement in their child's sporting activities during the sampling years, whether it be coaching or playing/training with their child. Woolger and Power (1993) describe how in both academic and sporting contexts parents often initially assume an instructional role that is gradually taken over by peers and/or adult experts as the child progresses. Côté (1999) also suggests that parents at this early stage play a leadership role and facilitate their children's interest in sport, enabling them to sample a wide range of sporting activities. Interestingly, Côté further reported that parents were not overly concerned about what sport their child was playing; they placed more importance on them having fun.

During the specialising years, parents often become committed supporters of their child-athlete's decision to be involved in a limited number of sports (Côté, 1999).

However, there is also a substantial amount of evidence that suggests that as children get older, the importance of parental support decreases as they often turn to close friends for listening support, emotional support and emotional challenge (Rosenfeld, Richman, & Hardy, 1989). Despite this trend, it is evident that the family remains extremely influential within the lives of young people (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999; Güneri et al. 1999). In sporting contexts, Côté et al. (2003) suggest that the parents' involvement becomes increasingly more indirect as the child progresses through the specialising years and into the investment years. Young people become more independent of parents and more reliant upon specialist coaching (Wuerth, et al., 2004). Nevertheless, the family (generally the parents) remain important figures who provide both financial and social support for their children.

As the young athlete progresses into the investment years Salmela (1994) suggests that the parents play a lesser role as the young persons themselves take greater responsibility for progress. Côté et al. (2003) reported that the role of parents during the investment years consists mainly of being a spectator at games and providing opportunities for their child to be involved in deliberate practice activities. The parents responded to the many demands and expectations put on their child-athlete by fostering an optimal learning environment rather than creating new demands or pressures (Côté, 1999). Although they now take a step into the background as far as giving sport specific instruction or coaching is concerned, parents may still have an impact in other supportive roles (Kirk et al., 1997; Côté, 1999). The studies by Kirk et al. and Côté have highlighted the importance of financial support and the high time commitment required for a child-athlete to continue to participate in sport at representative levels. As noted previously, these demands can have serious implications particularly for single parent and lower socio-economic families (Kirk et al., 1997; Kay, 2000), and other family members.

2.8.6 Sibling Relationships

It is reasonable to assume that the effect of siblings on a child's participation in sport and, conversely, the effects that a child's sport participation may have on other siblings, are important issues within the family. As Côté and Hay (2002) suggest,

sibling relationships constitute a major subsystem that can affect the entire climate of a family. Recent analyses point to birth order as an influential factor in the sibling relationship (Santrock, 2001). For example, although older siblings often assume the role of teacher and helper they are also often more aggressive toward their younger sibling; this is especially true of same-sex siblings (Minnett, Vandell, & Santrock, 1983). But research on sibling relationships in a sporting context is limited; according to Côté and Hay (2002) this is often because they are assumed to be inherently conflictual. However, in an earlier study Côté (1999) reported that some older siblings had a positive influence on the child-athlete during the sampling and specialising years. Azmita and Hesser (1993) observed that siblings occupy complementary roles in that older siblings often help younger ones with play and other tasks. Buhrmester (1992) reported that younger siblings often greatly admire their older siblings. That admiration for older siblings often increases the younger ones' desire to emulate the older, thereby encouraging participation in the same activities as the older siblings. In a sporting context older siblings can play an important role in many of the decisions of the younger siblings in sport or other aspects of their life (Van Volkom, 2003).

According to Côté and Hay (2002), it is not until the 'investment' years, when the gradual shift of family attention and resources toward the child-athlete becomes obvious, that bitterness and jealousy from younger siblings occasionally becomes apparent. But Klein and White (1996) suggested there is also evidence of cooperation between siblings; for example, if they attend the same club they might help each other to improve. Within the limited number of studies available, siblings were found to be both competitive and cooperative (Côté & Hay, 2002).

In addition to the influence of the family, arguably one of the most crucial significant others is the coach (Tranckle and Cushion, 2006). The following section addresses the role of the coach throughout the development of the expert performer.

2.9 THE INFLUENCE OF COACHES ON THE DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIALISATION OF CHILDREN INTO ELITE SPORT

As previously reported, many studies have shown that it is the interaction of a complex range of genetic and environmental factors that nurture and facilitate sporting excellence. However, one factor that is consistently associated with youths' positive and negative experiences through sport is the role that adults play in young performers' sporting experiences (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). Whilst it is recognised in the previous section that the family plays an important role in shaping children's development, according to Côté, Baker, and Abernethy (2003) parents and coaches can work together to assist the development of young athletes. They further contend that parents and coaches fulfil different roles that appear to evolve during the course of an athlete's career. As mentioned previously, it would be difficult for a talented child to fulfil her or his potential without a strong family support network during the earlier years of sport participation. On the other hand, coaches tend to play a more prominent role as the child progresses and develops, providing support in the form of physical and psychological training (Côté, 1999).

According to Gilbert et al. (2006): "perhaps the most consistent theme found across the literature is the critical role of the coach in developing sport talent" (pp. 70). Simplistically, an obvious task of the coach is to facilitate athletes to perform to their full potential (Côté et al., 1995; Côté, 2002). However, in order to achieve this goal, the coach requires knowledge of the specific multidimensional nature of his or her sporting environment, and needs to be aware that the level of this knowledge and its application has a direct effect on the coaching process (Irwin et al., 2004). Psychologically, according to Pensgaard and Roberts (2002), the coach has the power to make the athlete much stronger, and they contend even Olympic athletes emphasise the role of the coach as being incredibly important, in particular in being supportive and having the ability to increase confidence. Furthermore, the interpersonal relationship between the athlete and the coach is fundamental in the process of coaching because its nature is likely to determine the athlete's satisfaction, self-esteem and performance accomplishments (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003).

According to Côté (2002), organised sport programmes in industrial societies exist mainly because of the support and involvement of volunteer coaches. Although all forms of coaching should be equally valued and respected, it is recognised that the role and focus of the performance coach differs from that of participation coaches (Mallet & Côté, 2006). Lyle (2002) characterised participation coaching as involving loose membership, transient participation and a focus on positive affective outcomes such as perceptions of enjoyment and competence. In contrast, elite performance coaching is characterised by higher levels of commitment, more stable coach-athlete relationships and greater focus on medium-to-long term planning, monitoring, decision-making and management skills to facilitate control of performance variables. In other words the coach is required to assume a different role depending on the stage of development of the particular individual (Bloom, 2002). In order to make it to elite level, emerging research suggests that there are distinct advantages in having access to an expert coach (Baker et al., 2003). Bartmus et al. (1987) contend that the coach's judgement remains the best solution for detecting or identifying potential talent in an athlete. Bloom (2002) adds that without a competent coach it would be difficult for most expert performers to realise their potential. Bloom argues that talent development can only occur through deliberate practice and that an elite coach understands how best to stimulate athletes to participate in the necessary hours of specific practice.

2.9.1 Deliberate Practice

As discussed previously, Ericsson and associates took the understanding of expertise to new heights in the mid-1990s by discounting the popular notion that outstanding achievement is innate or genetically in-born. According to Bloom (2002), Ericsson's research has major implications for the role of expert coaches and, most notably, how expert athletes use coaches to oversee their long hours of training. Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2006) argue that coaches play a vital role in implementing the structure and design of sport programmes. They further contend that coaches should reinforce reasonable practice schedules to allow for other activity involvement, create fun and motivating climates and delay specialisation until athletes are physically, psychosocially and cognitively ready.

Deliberate practice places great emphasis on the quality of training; this is in accord with a study of coaching expertise in volleyball (Cobley, 2001) which concluded that the expert volleyball coach played a critical role in structuring an optimal practice environment that exemplified the tenets of deliberate practice. Baker, Horton, Robertson-Wilson, and Wall (2003) also reported that the availability of essential resources such as coaching and parental support can significantly influence the ability to engage in the required amounts of high quality training. Meticulous planning of practice is a hallmark of coaching expertise (Baker et al., 2003). Côté (2002) suggests that coaches who maximize their athletes' functional time will see a greater development in athletes' physical skills. He further claims that expert coaches spend more time planning practices and are more precise in their goals and objectives for the practice session than their non-expert counterparts.

Young athletes interact both within a restricted setting and over an extended period of time with an adult coach who is often an important figure in their lives (Smoll & Smith, 1989). A large sample of child-athletes rated positive evaluations from their coach as being more important incentives for performance than similar evaluations from their parents (Smith, Smoll, & Smith, 1989). However, it should be noted that the requirements of the expert performer, the characteristics of the practice environment, and the role of the coach vary greatly (Deakin & Cobley, 2003): Helsen, Starkes and Hodges (1998) reported that in team sports, the coaches control the content and duration of all practice activities. Allard, Starkes and Deakin (1998) suggested that in wrestling the coach is always present to assign practice activities and ensure they are carried out properly. This is similar to judo where, according to a d'Arripe-Longueville, Fournier and Dubois's (1998) study of expert French judo coaches and athletes, the coach is always present on the mat during training and competition. They further add that coach-athlete interactions are prominent and are deemed a relevant component of a very productive French system.

2.9.2 Coaching Models of Practice and Training

Based on an in-depth study of high performance gymnastic coaches, Côté and colleagues (Côté, Trudel, & Salmella, 1993; Côté, Salmela, Trudel, Baria, & Russell,

1995) proposed the 'Coaching Model' as a theoretical framework for outlining the variables that are central to the coaching process. They reported that the coach's knowledge which most impacts an athlete's development is implemented within organisational, competition, and training settings. This was consistently the case whether the coach's initial goal was winning an Olympic gold medal, developing high level athletes or creating a discovery and learning environment in youth sport (Salmela & Moraes, 2003). In contrast, Lyle (2000) argues that in order to appreciate coaches' practice and the expertise or skill required to coach individuals, it is important to distinguish between 'participation coaching' and 'performance coaching' (pp. 11).

Côté et al. (1995) explain that the components of the Coaching Model have been defined to describe a coach's work from the coach's perspective and state that the coaching process is influenced by three main variables: first, the coach's personal characteristics; secondly, the athlete's personal characteristics and level of development; and thirdly some contextual factors. Côté and colleagues acknowledge that these peripheral components are similar to other existing models but they suggest that the Coaching Model used by expert coaches to develop athletes was an important basis for formalising and rationalising coaching knowledge. They argue that the Coaching Model renders explicit the variables that need to be observed and assessed by coaches in order to develop and implement a plan of action for developing athletes (Côté et al., 1995).

Lyle (2000) acknowledges that Côté and colleagues' model of coaching practice recognises the complexity of the coaching process and the need for constant monitoring and adjustment. However, Lyle and others (Cushion, Armour & Jones, 2006) have criticised the Coaching Model for not referring to this 'complexity' in sufficient detail in their findings. Saury & Durand (1998) argue that the model does not adequately deal with, or conceptualise, the operational dimensions and dynamic aspects of the coaching process. Jones and Wallace (2005) contend that recent work has begun to acknowledge the nature of sport performance as an inexact science, and that of coaching as something that is not merely delivered (e.g. Abraham & Collins, 1998; Lyle, 1999), but as a dynamic social activity that intensely engages athletes and coach (Cushion et al., 2006).

For almost the past thirty years Smith, Smoll, and colleagues' (1978-2002) foundational studies concluded that coaching behaviour has a significant influence on characteristics of athletes such as, self-esteem, satisfaction and enjoyment. For example, they reported that the three coaching behaviours which are most likely to positively influence children's psychological growth are: 1) appropriate reinforcement and praise; 2) encouragement after mistakes; and 3) instruction. In a more recent review of the literature on coach training, Conroy and Coatsworth (2006) expand on Smith and Smoll's work to develop 'The Penn State Coach Training Program'. The primary goals of this research programme were twofold: firstly, to improve the experiences of sport participation for youth by improving coaches' knowledge of youth development and training them to behave in ways that will enhance athlete's personal development; and secondly, to extend on the understanding of the intrapersonal and interpersonal mechanisms by which coach-training produces these effects (pp. 133-4) In conjunction with Smith, Smoll and colleagues' earlier studies, Conroy and Coatsworth identified a number of desirable and undesirable coaching behaviours for best practice. They concluded that desirable behaviours are affirming, supportive, instructional, and autonomy-supportive; and that undesirable behaviours are punitive or hostile and controlling.

2.9.3 The Role of the Coach throughout the Developmental Process

G. Bloom (2002) uses the study by B.S. Bloom (1985) to explain the vital role played by the coach in the progress of the expert performer through the developmental process:

Early years - Bloom's (1985) study showed that in the early years it was important that the coach was caring, thoughtful, well respected in the community and, most importantly, situated close to where the child lived. The coach provided the performer with considerable amounts of positive feedback and approval and allowed the child to play and explore all aspects of the sport. Effort was rewarded rather than achievement and rarely was the coach critical. The role of the coach also involved monitoring the child's practice activities by helping them set and achieve reasonable goals. According to the young athletes, many of their coaches in their earlier years

recognised them as quick learners with a special talent and in turn gave them extra attention. This form of motivation may have encouraged the children to work and train harder.

Côté and Hay (2002) support these findings and suggest that coaches working with children in the early part of their developmental socialisation process into sport need enthusiasm and facilitation skills far more than advanced coaching qualities and technical expertise. Bloom et al. (1998) reported that coaches of beginners and intermediates should focus more on the fundamentals of the sport, although according to Deakin and Cobley (2003), evidence from pedagogical literature suggested that coaches will spend more time in instruction with novice-level players and that instruction will be technical or skill-based in nature. Nevertheless, in a study of coaching elite athletes, Pensgaard and Roberts (2002) recommend that coaches who train younger children should focus on having fun and variety in their training sessions and not use harsh competition in an effort to toughen children at a young age. Having engendered within these talents and fundamental skills the love of the activity, Salmela (1994) argued that this is often the end of the process for coaches in the early years of the young athlete's sporting development, and that either the coach or their parents suggested that for continued success it would be necessary for the athlete to change mentors.

Middle years – According to Wolfenden & Holt (2005), the middle years of sporting development are perhaps the most complex for a talented child because the roles played by significant adults begin to change. Bloom (1985) suggested that in the middle years, technically knowledgeable coaches become more involved, expecting competitive results through hard work, while parents were expected to provide financial and moral support. Bloom also stated that in many sporting activities it was often the parents and/or athletes who began to feel that a new and more advanced type of coaching was needed and that they generally sought out a talented coach, i.e. one with a proven record of training outstanding athletes (Bloom, 1985). In Côté's (1999) model the specialising years represented the transition from engaging in enjoyable deliberate play to deliberate practice intended to improve performance; therefore in this context, the coach's role became more prominent in this phase. Baker et al. (2003) suggested that expert coaches possess domain-specific knowledge that is

essential to fostering improvement, particularly during the middle years as the athlete becomes more skilful. During this part of the process coaches begin to demand more hard work, commitment, and discipline from their athletes (Bloom, 2002). In a study of middle distance runners Young & Salmela (1998) reported that the fundamental importance of establishing an athlete-coach relationship is that the developing athlete benefits from an optimal training environment which, in turn, increases the efficiency of skill acquisition. Young & Salmela further add that this coach-athlete interaction is vital during these initial years of 'serious' training as this is when the athlete's skill acquisition and the symbiotic relationship between amounts of practice and performance gains are greatest. In addition, Salmela (1994) contends that it is necessary at this stage to let the athlete believe or at least have the perception of being in control, especially when the athletes are going through the stage of seeking personal identity during the adolescent period.

Later years – According to Bloom (1985), athletes who have committed to focus on one specific sport and have achieved high levels of success often move on to work with yet another coach, and these coaches are often widely recognised experts in the domain. Rowley (1992) suggests that this decision to begin intensive training for a particular sport was more often prompted by the coach or the athlete themselves than by parents. Partington's (1985) study of expert principal players in symphony orchestras suggested that mentors such as highly qualified teachers were often the reason that musicians developed from very good to expert performers. Côté and Hay (2002) suggest the shift in focus to one sport and performance at a high level may require the athlete to relocate to have closer access to his/her new coach. Côté and Hay further suggest that the relationship between the athlete and coach evolved into one of mutual respect and collegiality, with both parties focusing less on instructional methods and more on tactical refinement and the development of the individual's style. Furthermore, Deakin and Cobley (2003) suggest that at this phase in the development process, more time was spent giving tactical instruction when observing the athletes, and the ability to maximise the athlete's effort in practice was a vital quality of coaching expertise. In an investigation of swimming coaches, Rutt-Leas and Chi (1993) report that differences between expert and non-expert coaches extended to the quality of instruction communicated to the swimmers. When presented with a number of different swimming strokes to analyse, novice coaches

offered a rather superficial analysis using vague descriptions. Expert coaches, in contrast, were very precise in their assessment and very specific in their recommendations for improvement. According to Baker and Horton (2004) access to high quality coaching would appear to be a key component in maximising athlete development.

Within the youth sport context, the previous sections and earlier research have reported that coaches, family and peers form a multifaceted and complex social network, which influences the experiences young athletes gain from participating in sport (Brustad & Partridge, 2002; Wiess & Smith, 2002; Côté, 1999). This chapter has explored the role of the family and the coach in the development of the expert performer; in the following section I will discuss the influence of peers.

2.10 PEER INFLUENCE ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT IN SPORT

The amount of research on peer relationships in youth sport is small in comparison to that conducted on the role of significant adults such as coaches and parents. Weiss and Ferrer-Caja (2002) argue that despite the centrality of peers in one's socio-emotional development, peer interactions and relationships in the physical domain have been studied much less frequently than the influence of parents, teachers and coaches. Indeed, despite the recognised importance of peers in children's sport socialisation few studies have been conducted to examine the influence that peers have on an athlete's performance in sport (Côté et al., 2003). Brustad et al. (2001) also reported that research on peer influence in youth sport has lagged considerably behind research on the influence of parents and coaches. This lack of knowledge is surprising, considering, as mentioned above, that peers often become especially influential socialising agents particularly throughout adolescence when young people look to their peers for validation of worth and for other forms of social and emotional support (Harter, 1998). Lewko and Greendorfer (1982) also agree that there is very little information available regarding peers' contribution to sport-role development. However, in recent years there has been an increased interest in and more research specifically directed toward young people's peer relationships in sport (Smith, Ullrich-French, Walker, & Hurley, 2006).

2.10.1 Peers and Friendships

Peers can be defined as those who are of similar age and/or developmental level but who do not share kinship or reside within the same family: friendship is the experience of having a close, mutual, dyadic relationship (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989). Sullivan (1953) proposed over 50 years ago that friendship and peer acceptance have distinct developmental functions, especially in circumstances where one of the relationship systems is functioning in suboptimal fashion (cited in Smith et al., 2006). In other words, a close friendship can offset the negative effects of rejection by the larger peer group by providing validation of worth. For this reason authors have urged the conduct of peer relationships research that incorporates both friendship and popularity/peer acceptance variables (Parker & Asher, 1993; Smith, 2003). According to Côté (2002), the influence of peers on children's participation and performance in sport can take different forms: Peers can provide encouragement and discouragement both verbally and nonverbally and can also act as role models of involvement or non-involvement in sport (Côté, 2002).

As discussed previously, the family is often the primary socializing field for young people in the early stages of life, providing for their needs and guiding them through growth to maturity (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999; Güneri et al., 1999). It has been suggested, however, that during adolescence the central role of the family lessens and peers play an increasingly important part in young people's lives (Harris, 1995; Jenkins, 1996; Adler & Adler, 1998). But, contrary to popular belief, this increase of significance of the peer group is not usually to the detriment of the relationship with, or influence of, the parents (Beam et al., 2002; Sartor & Younnis, 2002). However, Sartor and Younnis argue that these changing relationships and the consequent reshaping of the influences of these 'significant others' may cause disequilibria and raise certain identity related issues. Horn and Harris (2002) suggest that children's perceptions of competence in later childhood (ages 8-12) are largely the result of comparisons with their peers. It is only at about the age of 12 or 13 that children are able to understand fully the differing effects that effort, practice and ability have on their performances.

Through conformity to the dominant norms and ideals of the peer group, young people are able to affirm their group membership and gain some degree of peer acceptance, both of which are important to an individual's understanding of self (Adler & Adler, 1998; Güneri et al., 1999; Walker & Kushner, 1999). However, unlike the family field, the peer group is more dynamic and changeable (Holroyd, 2003). In support of this notion, Weiss and Duncan (1992) report that the quality and quantity of peer relationships in the social and psychological growth of youngsters change with age, with peer-group membership and influence being particularly salient in later childhood and adolescence.

The importance of peers in the children-sport socialisation process has been highlighted in a number of studies, for example, Brustad (1988), Greendorfer (1992) and McPherson (1982). Weiss and Duncan (1992) strongly contend that sport is an achievement domain in which the powerful role and influence of peers are evident. Furthermore, according to Greendorfer (1977), peers are the major influential socialising agents throughout each life-cycle stage, especially affecting female sport socialisation. As Williams & White (1983) contend, being popular and accepted by peers is very important, especially during adolescence.

2.10.2 Peers: The Reason Children Participate in Sport?

Reviews of youth sport motivation literature have shown that affiliation with others, including peers, has been listed frequently as one of the main reasons that children participate in sport (Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992; Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989). Weiss et al. (1996) add that being with and making new friends are salient to youths' sport involvement. Bigelow, Lewko, and Salhani (1989) studied children's expectations of their friendships within the sport context. Their results revealed that playing on a sport team contributes to making and developing new friendships and more specifically in nurturing specific friendship expectations such as intimacy, ego reinforcement, acceptance, loyalty, altruism, stimulation value, and sense of humour. These findings are similar to Holroyd's (2003) unwritten rules on 'etiquette of friendship'; that is, trust, loyalty, and reliability.

Côté et al. (2002) also reported that expert performers were mainly influenced by peers who were involved in sport during childhood and adolescence. They explained that this type of relationship allowed them to spend more of their free-time playing sport; however, they also stated that when sport became more serious at around the age of 16 it was also beneficial to have friends outside of sport. In their study of 15 Australian elite team sport athletes, Abernethy et al. (2002) revealed that in the early stage of the expert athletes' career they all mentioned that they had had a group of friends who were involved in sport. Côté et al. (2003) suggested that during the sampling years, the origin of interaction with peers is driven by the young athlete's need for stimulation through deliberate play. As athletes progress to the investment years, peer relationships grow more intense and fulfil motivational and emotional needs that may facilitate involvement in deliberate practice.

2.10.3 'The Looking-Glass Self': Peer Acceptance and Status

According to Weiss et al. (1996), most theories of motivation highlight 'perceived social regard' as a central antecedent of self-perceptions, affect, activity, choice, effort and persistence (e.g. Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992; Weiss & Ebbeck, 1996). This idea of social regard emanates from Cooley's (1902/1956) work and his coining of the phrase "looking-glass self". This phrase implies that significant others serve as mirrors by which we judge ourselves: our self-worth, competence, and liking of ourselves as a person (cited in Weiss et al., 1996). The reflected appraisals of parents were particularly important during early and middle childhood. The mirror of self provided by peers takes on increasing clarity during later childhood and through adolescence (Brustad, 1996). Brustad attributes this transfer of loyalty to the peer group to the fact that as they grow older children spend relatively more time in the company of their peers. He also attributes this transfer to cognitive developmental changes in youngsters' preferences for peer-based informational sources in assessing personal competencies.

Several researchers have found a developmental pattern in children's preferences for various forms of evaluative feedback (e.g. Horn & Hasbrook, 1986, 1987; Horn & Weiss, 1991). Horn and colleagues reveal that from about the age of 8 children

generally depend heavily on adult sources of information to assess their physical competence. Between the ages of 10 and 14 years, children demonstrate increasing reliance on peer-based sources of information including peer evaluation and direct comparison of abilities with peers.

Children's acceptance by peers is an important dimension of children's affective development (Brustad, 1996) and, according to Holroyd (2002), school sport is an opportunity to achieve status among peers. In order to achieve success among peers in relation to sport and physical education, it is not only important to possess relevant physical capital (Bourdieu, 1978) but also to retain the respect of the group. Donnelly and Young (1988) pointed to this issue in their study of sport sub-cultures in which they noted that an individual's acceptance among their sporting peers relied both on the construction and confirmation of an appropriate identity. Research conducted within organised sport and physical education has shown that children and teenagers identify 'being good at sports' as an important quality for being popular with one's peers, especially among boys (Chase & Dummer, 1992).

In general, peer acceptance refers to two attributes: peer status and popularity (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989). Status refers to one's social standing or worthiness within one's peer group, whereas popularity reflects the degree to which one is liked or gets along with peers (Brustad, 1996). Peer acceptance and popularity are most likely to be gained by excelling in those areas highly valued by one's peers (Chase & Drummer, 1992; Weiss & Duncan, 1992). Evans and Roberts (1987) found a consistent relationship between sport ability and peer status in playground settings. They further reported that the more skilful boys were the more likely they were to attain higher peer status. Evans and Roberts understood that this status enhanced boys' abilities even further and they had more opportunities to develop and strengthen friendships (i.e. maintain their status). Stevenson (1990) adds that their peers valued an athlete's success, which was an important factor in encouraging them to commit further to their sport. Stevenson simply concludes that success brought popularity which often brought further success. However, Coakley (1990) argues that it is not only children, but the broader American society that values this skill (athletic ability) and attaches great importance to it. Consequently, the significant relationship

between physical competence and social status should not be surprising (Weiss & Duncan, 1992).

A study conducted by Weiss, Smith and Theeboom (1996) focused on the nature of participants' peer relationship within the social context of sport. Through in-depth-interviews, an inductive content analysis revealed the existence of 12 positive friendship dimensions, which were:

1. **Companionship** - This dimension was cited by the largest percentage of participants (95%) and was defined as "hanging out together", spending time together and doing things together.
2. **Pleasant/Play Association** - This dimension was distinguished from the companionship dimension in terms of a positive valence attached to being together or spending time together, as well as enjoying an association with one's best friend.
3. **Self-Esteem Enhancement** - This was characterised as saying or doing things to boost one's feelings of self-worth. According to Weiss et al. (1996), these results suggest that the social context of sport may provide opportunities for developing and strengthening friendship bonds via the important vehicle of self-esteem enhancing behaviours and attitudes.
4. **Help and Guidance** - Providing instrumental assistance and tangible support. Sport provides unique opportunities for children to help each other in areas such as learning a new strategy or executing a new skill (Côté, 2002).
5. **Prosocial Behaviour** - This was defined as saying or doing things that conform to social convention. Interestingly, in contrast to the help and guidance dimension this dimension mostly revolved around non-sport contexts, for example, "he/she is thoughtful" or "he/she doesn't get me into trouble".
6. **Intimacy** - The intimacy dimension was defined as interactions or mutual feelings of a close personal nature. Sport can be a medium by which children develop and maintain intimate friendships (Côté, 2002).
7. **Loyalty** - This was defined as a sense of commitment to one another or "being there" for each other. In accordance with intimacy, this theme characterises a deep emotional bond, one of depending on one another and the understanding that "I'll be there for you".

8. Things in Common – This was defined as similarity of interests, activities and values. Côté (2002) understands that having things in common will assure a balanced relationship among friends.
9. Attractive Personal Qualities – Positive personal characteristics or descriptors were discussed by 58% of the study sample. These qualities included both physical and psychological characteristics. Physical qualities included raw data quotations such as, liking a friend's hair or facial features. Personal attributes included things such as "he/she is an energetic person" or "she/he is adventurous".
10. Emotional Support – This was defined as feelings or expressions of concern for one another. There are many situations in sport that offer opportunities for young athletes to demonstrate emotional support toward someone else (Côté, 2002).
11. Absence of Conflict – Refraining from fights, arguments, or judgemental attitudes defined the absence of conflicts dimension. In the sport context, a lack of conflict will greatly enhance friendship between individuals.
12. Conflict Resolution – This dimension was defined as getting over fights and arguments. Côté (2002) suggest that children must learn at a young age that conflict and friendship are not incompatible.

Along with the 12 positive friendship dimensions, the inductive analysis identified 4 negative dimensions (Weiss, Smith & Theeboom, 1996). However, Weiss et al. (1996) stress that 34% of the participants did not identify negative features about their friendship and that those who did, did so in a qualified manner, stating that negative events occurred sometimes or infrequently. These negative features should be viewed in this light. The 4 negative friendship dimensions are as follows:

1. Conflict – This dimension was defined as negative behaviours that cause disagreement, disrespect, or dissension between friends. This includes verbal insults, arguing, negative competitiveness and physical aggression.
2. Unattractive personal qualities – This dimension was defined as undesirable personality or behavioural characteristics. For example, being, self centred, immature, indecisive, and egotistical.

3. Betrayal – This was defined as actions of disloyalty or insensitivity towards others. Examples of this are, paying more attention to certain friends, or ignoring others. Côté (2002) suggests that this type of behaviour can take place in the context of youth sport..
4. Inaccessible – This dimension is defined as infrequent opportunities to interact together. Côté (2002) explains that friendship can be reduced if a child is frequently away from training or games or has more interest in other activities than sport.

According to Côté (2002), these dimensions of positive and negative peer relationships in sport add to our understanding of social influences and children's motivation to participate in sport. Furthermore, the quantity and diversity of responses suggests that the sport domain is closely linked to the development, maintenance, and enhancement of peer relationships (Weiss, Smith, & Theeboom, 1996). It may be helpful to utilize these dimensions to design studies and develop educational strategies that will ultimately enhance youth sport participation.

Weiss and colleagues also reported that there were few gender differences on friendship dimensions. They assume that this may be because they 'included activity homogenous to boys and girls who were prompted for their perceptions of peer relations in the sport domain' (1996; pp. 375). However, gender is an everyday aspect of children's social relationships (Hasbrook, 1999), and has consistently been discussed in relation to sport and physical ability in conjunction with popularity and status. I will discuss this area in greater detail in the following section.

2.10.4 Gender and Peers

It would appear that gender is also an issue that should be considered when discussing peer relationships in the sporting context. Historically, popularity for boys has been linked to athletic ability, toughness, resistance to authority and in general any trait that endorses the dominant view of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995). Linsdorm and Lease (2005) claim similar research into peer status over the past 40 years has repeatedly identified athletic ability as one of the most significant criterion for

achieving high peer status for males. For females, research has consistently indicated influential roles of socioeconomic status (Bloom, 1985; Ericsson et al., 1993; Ericsson & Charness, 1994) and grooming and physical appearance (e.g. Goldberg & Chandler, 1989; Adler & Adler, 1998). These differences between females and males were exemplified by Holroyd's (2003) study where the boys engaged in activities such as army cadets, rugby, boxing and football. On the other hand, for girls, popularity was associated with factors such as physical appearance, social status and academic performance. A similar finding was previously reported in a study by Chase and Dummer (1992), whereby sport was reported not to be an important determinant of social status for girls, nor was sport an activity in which they wanted to participate. Chase and Dummer further pointed out that the popularity of participants in individual sports in the male domain might also vary significantly. For example, the popularity of football players compared to cross country runners or that of cheerleaders compared to softball players may also differ.

Given that sport competence has been reported to be a more highly valued characteristic for boys than for girls in our society, it seems reasonable to believe that the nature of peer acceptance and support in the sport domain may be qualitatively different for each gender (Weiss and Duncan, 1992). Kane (1988) discovered differences in ratings of social status depending on the type of sport being played: girls who were identified as participants in 'sex-appropriate' sports such as golf, tennis, and volleyball were assigned significantly greater status than girls identified with 'sex-inappropriate' sports such as softball and basketball.

An early study by Buchanan, Blankenbaker, and Cotten (1976) which was replicated and extended by Chase and Dummer (1992), showed that boys considered being good at sport the most important quality to be popular with their peers. On the other hand, girls cited getting good grades (Buchanan et al., 1976) or being 'pretty' (Chase & Dummer, 1992) as being most important. According to Weiss et al. (1996), gender differences are not usually developed until early adolescence and these differences have traditionally been in the friendship support dimensions of intimacy, emotional support, affection, and esteem enhancement (e.g. Belle, 1989; Berndt & Perry, 1986; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985), with girls assigning higher importance to these dimensions than boys. Brustad (1996), in agreement, adds that research has found that

during later childhood (ages 10-12), boys overwhelmingly identify athletic ability as the primary determinant of social status within their peer group, whereas physical appearance is viewed by girls as more strongly linked to peer acceptance (Adler et al., 1992; Chase & Dummer, 1992; Eder & Parker, 1987).

More recently, Lindstrom and Lease (2005) conducted an extensive review of literature to determine if athletic variables have become more significant predictors of peer-status for school age and adolescent females in the United States over the last 30 years pre-title IX¹ to 2000 and beyond. They reported that the majority of findings suggested that adolescent participants still did not perceive athletic variables to be significant predictors of female peer status when compared to traditional factors. Lindstrom and Lease did however propose that athletic variables might be indirectly associated with peer status. As discussed previously, research has indicated that family background, physical appearance, social development and academic performance (Adler & Adler, 1998) are all strong predictors of peer status for females. However, according to Lindstrom and Lease, family background could be related to league access and financial resources for participation fees; physical appearance could be related to physical activity; and social development could be related to the additional social opportunities provided by team sport involvement. Consequently, athletic variables might not cause peer status but they might be associated and provide access to the factors that do.

It would appear that there are a considerable number of complex and dynamic social issues that have an effect on peer relationships, which may change over time. It also may be concluded that encouragement and support from peers can have a positive influence on young people's participation in sport and that peers can be extremely influential in the developmental socialisation process of young athletes, especially during adolescence. According to the previously mentioned literature, it is evident that being an athlete, and in particular a good athlete, may enhance one's standing among peers. However, the extent of this influence fluctuates according to both sport and gender.

¹ Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972 is a landmark piece of legislation that prohibits any education programme or activity receiving federal assistance from discrimination on the basis of sex (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005).

Youth sport clearly represents an important contributor to the development of valuable peer bonds (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003) hence this study will explore this relationship in greater detail in the analysis chapters.

2.11 COMBINING ELITE SPORT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Combining top-level sport and education has turned out to be one way of keeping competitive sports at the international level in several countries (Metsä-Tokila, 2002). The number of student athletes in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in the United Kingdom is increasing and according to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2001) has become the focus of recent Government attention. Higher Education is an important source of support for elite athletes pursuing Olympic or World Championship medals (McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004). McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis contend that supporting future national sporting successes whilst maintaining the academic credibility of their host institution has certain implications. On the one hand, there is the “good press” of having elite athletes in a HEI, but on the other there is a concern about giving the impression that the HEI lacks “seriousness” for its own academic mission by encouraging the diverse sporting interests of students (pp. 194).

Even though athletes consider their post-sport career important they often tend not to plan for it because they are so intensely involved with and isolated by their sport (Hays, 2002). Athletic identity has been defined as “the degree to which an individual identifies with the athletic role” (Brewer, Raalte, & Linder, 1993: pp. 237) and because student-athletes enjoy a privileged status on campus they often have no inclination to expand their identity through academic or career development. Hinkle (1994) concludes that many student-athletes simply perceive their life-role as an athlete and academia and career planning are neglected. According to Metsä-Tokila (2002) young athletes need education to prepare them for a wider role in society, although there is potential conflict in the differing demands made of student-athletes (Wylleman & De Knop, 1996, 1997). Issues that can arise from the duality of the student-athlete situation may include conflict between the coach and the academic institution. For example, coaches and lecturers are unlikely to attach similar priorities

to sport and academic work (Wylleman, De Knop, Ewing, & Cumming, 2000). Several studies have also raised concern about the health implications for student-athletes trying to succeed in both domains and stipulate that persistent conflict can lead to burnout and associated emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, reduced sense of personal accomplishment and lowered psychological well-being (Lanning, 1982; Rabin et al., 1999; McKenna & Dunstan, 2004). Wylleman et al., (2000) also warn that student athletes may be faced with time-management problems, restricted development of relationships, accruing pressure and demotivation to perform in both academic and athletic spheres.

Universities UK (1998-2006) stated that HEIs are increasingly undertaking roles and activities beyond what was once seen as their core functions of teaching and research through engagement with their communities, with business and industry, and internationally. As part of this development, and largely funded by the Sport England Lottery Fund (SELF), HEIs are both providing sports facilities for their communities and support for elite sports performers. At the elite level many performers come through higher education and continue to use the range of support services offered by the HEIs. The British Universities Sports Association (BUSA) operates the largest student sports championships in Europe, with 96,000 students taking part in BUSA competitions. 46,000 students participate in inter-university team sports and 50,000 in individual national championships (Universities UK, 1998-2006).

The United Kingdom Sports Institute (UKSI), and its home nation service suppliers, such as the English Institute of Sport (EIS), are largely university based. According to a recent report by Universities UK (2004), the advent in the 1990's of university awarded sports scholarships was reinforced by the Government's decision to locate these regional hubs in all four parts of the UK at higher education campuses and £150 million has been subsequently invested in these sites. There has been recognition from both UK Sport and the Government that universities can operate these facilities for both the elite and student athlete, as well as providing a sporting benefit for local communities, with a former Minister for Sport claiming that these universities "provide top-class facilities to enable elite athletes to develop and perform at the highest levels" (Universities UK, 2004; pp.1). There are a number of performance sport organisations (whole or part thereof) currently based at HEIs and these include:

English Institute of Sport	Scottish Institute of Sport
Sports Institute Northern Ireland	UK Athletics
British Swimming	Scottish Swimming
Commonwealth Games Council of Scotland	England Hockey
British Triathlon Association	England Volleyball
British Cycling	

In addition to the above there are many other related organisations based on university campuses such as the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management and many County Sport Partnerships.

According to the Director of Sport (Earle, 2007) at a leading sporting university in the UK, universities are increasingly offering more attractive packages to help recruit and retain elite sports performers and that the majority of these athletes will be university students, although this is not a necessity. He cited the following five examples as actual efforts made to attract elite athletes:

1. Flexible Study – This can be offered in a number of ways. Degree programmes can be ‘stretched’ allowing the athlete to take one semester a year rather than the normal two and dependant on the athlete’s competition cycle, it is also possible to defer entry or to take a year out in order to train and compete in a major championship. Since many athletes face additional non flexible demands on their time such as travelling to competitions and attendance at squad sessions, it is also possible to negotiate course work extensions. There is the also the additional provision to take examinations, often supervised by coaches, at different times and venues to accommodate these circumstances.
2. Reduced Offer Entry – It can be the case that HEIs make a reduced points offer in order to attract a particularly talented athlete. However, in relation to the point made above by McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis (2004), Earle (2007) recognises that this is a careful balancing act, as he realises that an athlete struggling academically may not focus well in terms of athletic performance.
3. ‘Tailored’ Courses – There are a number of courses at HEIs which have been developed to allow the expert performer to train and compete, whilst still

- achieve some academic qualification, whether it be vocational or non-vocational.
4. Accommodation – Many HEIs will now offer specific accommodation packages to the expert performer, often in a quieter part of campus. This can involve the use of especially adopted rooms, providing more comfort and space for specialist kit and can include various lengths of lets, allowing for all year training. This accommodation can also include athlete centred food packages appropriate to the particular individual's needs. At some HEIs it is also possible to negotiate discounted rents often as part of an athlete scholarship scheme.
 5. Professional Coaching and Interaction with National Governing Body (NGB) Coaches – There are increasing numbers of full-time and part-time professional coaches being employed across the higher education sector. Although this may be partially due to the increasing research output pressures put on academic staff who may have otherwise coached, HEIs now recognise the value of performance sport. This more professional approach helps in attracting and retaining expert performers, which in turn helps to forge and create links with NGBs who may be looking for suitable HEIs in which to place their athletes.

Universities are becoming increasingly important institutions for nurturing the expert sports performer. Indeed, in 1996, Sir Roger Bannister predicted that by 2010 a third of the UK's world class athletes would come from HEIs. This has already happened (Universities UK, 2004). It is perhaps not surprising that over 80% of the participants in this study attended a HEI.

2.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented an extensive overview of the theoretical framework that forms the basis of the present study. The sport cultures of the countries which have provided the contexts for the development of Côté and colleagues' model were explored, and the similarities and differences of each country were consequently highlighted. The relevant literature pertaining to the developmental approach to sport

socialisation has been examined, as have the different contexts in which this concept has been applied. This chapter also includes the influence of significant others, in particular the family, coaches and peers and how their roles evolve throughout the young person's sports career. In light of this review of the literature of youth sport it is evident that there is a developmental dimension to the sport socialisation process which involves shifting relationships with significant others over time as a young person progresses through the various phases of their sporting development. The literature suggests that the family is a key socialising agent particularly in the initial years (sampling) but also the family's support, both emotionally and practically is often an important factor throughout a young person's pursuit of excellence. There is evidence to suggest that the role of the coach is also critical if young performers are to reach their full potential. Similar to that of the family, the role of the coach shifts and changes throughout the young performer's career. In comparison to the family and coaches there is a limited amount of research relating to peer relationships in youth sport. Nevertheless, this chapter has examined several studies that have highlighted the importance of peers in the children-sport socialisation process and again discusses how this is often a developmental relationship. Finally, this chapter finished with an introduction to the complexities surrounding the student-athlete life and acknowledges the increasing numbers of expert performers attending HEIs.

This study seeks to add to this existing literature in a number of ways. Firstly, most of the research using Côté and colleagues' model has been carried out in Canada and Australia. Whilst acknowledging the similarities between these sporting cultures and that of the UK, this study seeks to explore the extent to which this model may be able to illuminate the sporting careers of expert performers in the UK. In so doing, key issues that underpin this model are also explored, including the nature of the various phases of sports socialisation, the 'ten-year' rule, and early specialisation. Secondly, this study investigates the sporting careers of performers in a range of sports, including team and individual sports, and notes similarities and differences across these sports in relation to the shape or pattern of the performers' careers. By including both female and male performers, it also notes any gender differences in the developmental socialisation process. Thirdly, this study seeks to understand how significant others such as the family, coaches and peers contribute to the development of sporting expertise and how their contribution shifts and changes during the course

of the sports performer's career. While exploring these shifting roles and influences, the study will seek out the combinations of factors that may explain progression through the developmental phases of sampling, specialising and investing.

Before moving on to report the findings of the study in relation to these issues, the next chapter outlines the design of the study and the methods used to generate data that might illuminate these matters.

Chapter Three

Methodological Issues and Considerations

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical model adopted in this study, and in doing so highlighted the complexities surrounding the developmental socialisation process of the expert performer. In this chapter I will discuss some key issues relating to the methodology and the specific methods employed in this study whilst also introducing the research participants and myself to the reader. According to Greenbank (2003) it is important to recognise the researcher, as their personal values can lead not only to the adoption of certain research methods, but also to a level of bias in their interpretation of the data. Greenbank does not view this as a criticism of the researcher, but emphasises the importance of acknowledging these factors within a study, thus allowing the reader to judge the research in this light. Russell and Kelly (2002) further acknowledge that, “through reflection researchers may become aware of what allows them to see, as well as what may inhibit their seeing” (cited in Watt, 2007; pp. 82).

Methodology is how the inquirer finds out what s/he believes to be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1998); a theory about how research should (or does) proceed and how knowledge is generated (Brannen, 2007). Methods can be seen as the practice of research in terms of strategies and techniques used to generate and analyse ‘empirical materials’ (Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) preferred term for what has been traditionally described as ‘data’). Nelson et al. (1992) explain that the choice of research methods depends on the questions asked, and the questions depend on the context. In broad terms, the choice of research design and method is in practice likely to depend upon the nature of the research question, with a clear focus on the purpose(s) of the study (Brannen, 2007); in LeCompte and Preissle’s words, “what information most appropriately will answer specific questions, and which strategies

are most effective for obtaining it” (1993; pp. 30). This study explores the social processes of how athletes initially became involved in sport and, ultimately, became experts in their particular sports, and seeks to gain a deep and holistic understanding of their development, including the complexities surrounding their interaction with others. Consequently, a key aspect of this study was the importance placed on generating data relating to the participants’ subjective perceptions, beliefs and experiences in relation to their sporting experiences through life story interviews. I also used a questionnaire as an initial introduction to the participants and also to gain some background and socio-demographic information on a larger number of expert performers than participated in the life story interviews.

In this chapter I will first of all introduce the methodology and methods of data generation and describe how participants were recruited; secondly, I will provide detail on my analysis of the data; and thirdly I will introduce the participants and myself to the reader. Since the researcher is the primary ‘instrument’ of data generation and analysis, reflexivity is deemed essential, and so this chapter will conclude with a reflexive section and will include a rationale for writing in the first person. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) contest, qualitative research is an interactive approach shaped by the researcher’s own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and the context within which the research act is set.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is difficult to define because it is an approach surrounded by tensions, contradictions, hesitations, and diverse methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Flick, 2002). As Gilgun points out, “it is not for the faint of heart” (1992; pp.22). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) further propose that any definition of qualitative research must take into consideration the complex historical field that it operates in, and can therefore mean different things at different historical ‘moments’. Nevertheless, they offer the following generic definition as being representative of the present moment:

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a

series of representations, including field notes, interviews conversations, photographs, memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; pp. 3)

In other words, qualitative research deploys a wide range of interconnected methods to create, ideally, a better understanding of the subject being studied. Moreover, it offers richly descriptive reports of individuals' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, views and feelings, the meanings and the interpretations given to events and things, as well as their behaviour (Hakim, 2000). Semin and Manstead (1983) argue that a person's own definition of the situation is an important element of any social process, even if it does not provide a complete account or explanation and may include self-justificatory reports. Indeed, qualitative research has been criticised for its lack of scientific credibility, however, it has also been acknowledged for offering a method which can uncover multiple truths from multiple realities (Sparkes, 1992). Consistent with this notion, Crotty (1998) argues that:

"Truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without mind. Meaning is not discovered but constructed. Different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon" (pp. 8-9).

Thus, the social construction of what people perceive as reality and the interactive role of the researcher within the research process are vital. Total objectivity is neither achievable nor necessarily desirable in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005); although Williams (2000) suggests that limited careful generalisations are possible. However, most qualitative researchers approach reality as something that can never be entirely captured or understood in every detail; they also understand that generalisations cannot be made, with any confidence, to a wider context than the one studied (Burns, 2000). This point is particularly relevant to this study as it explores the complexities surrounding the sporting life biographies of a group of individuals from differing social environments. Furthermore, the qualitative researcher is conscious that their life-histories and identities, as well as those of the participants, can influence and shape the research findings. Consistent with this view Dupuis (1999) states that qualitative research is a mutual journey taken by both the researcher

and the researched. Throughout this journey both the researcher and the participants influence and are changed by the research process and together co-construct meaning through their interactions.

A particular strength of qualitative research is its sensitivity to the complexities of individual lives within particular social contexts (Smith, 1989; Guba, 1990; Sparkes, 1992; Flick; 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This is why I felt qualitative research should form the basis of this study and would best address, in the necessary detail, the issues associated with expert performers and their developmental socialisation into sport.

Although the majority of the data generated was via qualitative means, it should be noted that qualitative and quantitative research are not incompatible opposites (Flick, 1998; Bryman, 2001). Many authors now use multiple research techniques to gain comprehensive information on a subject (O'Kane, 2000; Punch, 2002). For this reason I administered questionnaires to a greater number of participants than would be possible to research by qualitative means in the scope of a Ph.D. thesis. As Burns (2000) contends, the advantage of questionnaires is that they generate in a few minutes information that covers a long period of time, and, by comparing information from a number of participants, can provide patterns in data and not just description. However, Burns also warns that the attempt to produce comparable information through the use of standard questions can obscure subtle differences (pp. 567). On this basis, I would argue that a combination of both approaches will, ideally, enrich the research process and in doing so, enhance the knowledge gained from the findings.

Prior to discussing the research methods used, I will give a brief introduction to the sports that (eventually) became an integral part of the study.

3.3 THE PARTICIPATING SPORTS

The definition of the 'expert performer' in this study was current members of the England and/or Great Britain female and male senior squads (over 18 years old) in a

number of selected sports. Ideally, I wanted a selection of individual and team sports, sports that commonly involved early and late specialisation and sports that included people from different social class backgrounds. Disappointingly, gaining access to the sporting bodies let alone the athletes was somewhat problematic and to a certain extent this limited my choice. For example, as football is considered to be our (UK) national sport I would have been particularly interested to examine the developmental socialisation process of footballers. However, after many attempts, I failed to find a 'gate-keeper' who could give me access to the English international football squad. This is not an uncommon problem when initially trying to find potential participants, as Rapley (2007) advises that researchers have to follow many trails and that finding suitable and willing 'recruits' often happens on an ad-hoc and chance basis.

Payne and Payne (2004) suggest that participants are often selected because they are interesting or suitable, rather than because they are representative. This "purposive sampling" picks its subset for a particular, non-statistical purpose, for example, key informants are selected because they are *not* typical: they know more about the community or organisation than other people (Payne & Payne: pp.210). Fontana and Frey (1994) stress the importance of the researcher locating an informant ('gate-keeper') to save much time and break down barriers in gaining access to elite performers. Initially, I tried to engage the assistance of the sports' National Governing Bodies (NGBs) which had their national performance centres based at the university at which I was located. This strategy met with a mixed response that was dependent on whom I was allowed to speak with; some NGBs showed interest but others did not want to be involved. Their unwillingness to participate in this study was primarily due to the fact that they were based at a university with a good reputation for sporting achievements and were therefore inundated with requests from both undergraduate and postgraduate students to take part in studies. I then wrote to several NGB performance directors and coaches located elsewhere requesting access to their athletes. This strategy again met with a mixed response; some performance directors and coaches were extremely helpful, others were not. Finally, I changed tack and used personal contacts who had a 'friend who had a friend'. This was by far the most productive participant recruitment strategy and eventually I had the backing of enough sports with the characteristics I was looking for. As a result, the five sports that are involved in this study are:

- Men and women's track and field athletics
- Men and women's swimming
- Men and women's field hockey
- Men and women's rugby union
- Men and women's taekwondo

I agreed with the gate-keepers that I would initially distribute a short questionnaire to all squad members (Appendix A), which would furnish me with some relevant background information. The concluding question in the questionnaire asked if the participants would be willing to participate further in a follow-up interview at a later date, to discuss their sporting life experiences.

3.4 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

As discussed above, the majority of data were generated via qualitative means, namely through life story interviews. However, the quantitative aspect (albeit limited) of the methodology played a critical role to my initial introduction to and understanding of a greater number of participants involved in the study. I will discuss the practical implications of the questionnaire in detail later in this section.

Marshall and Rossman (1991) have noted that researchers often "administer questionnaires to some sample of a population to learn about the distribution of a characteristic or set of characteristics or a set of attitudes and beliefs" (pp. 83). Furthermore, many researchers are concerned that studies solely involving in-depth interviews with a relatively small number of participants lack representativeness (Bell, 1993). According to Wellington (2000), one way of allaying such concerns has been to use a questionnaire to provide a 'wider picture' or an overview. Thomas and O'Kane (2000) contend that a questionnaire may be employed to map out the terrain of a topic and identify salient features, which can be explored further in ways that incorporate the meaning of phenomena to participants. Consequently, with the 'gate-keepers' approval and direction I distributed a questionnaire (Appendix A), along with an accompanying letter explaining the objectives of my research, to each of the squad members. The questionnaire evolved from my review of the relevant literature.

The questionnaires helped to establish certain factors relating to the participants' personal, sporting, family and educational background. The questionnaires were delivered to and collected from participants using various means: through the gatekeeper, by post or personal issue. They took less than ten minutes to complete and comprised mainly of closed questions that required short responses. The number of questionnaires distributed to each sport was dependent on the size of the national squad and the number of members to which I was granted access. As can be seen from Table 1, the numbers involved from each sport varied greatly, disallowing any confident statistical analysis.

Table 1

Sport	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Completed
Athletics	30	10
Swimming	20	10
Women's Hockey	25	24
Men's Hockey	30	21
Women's Rugby	40	17
Men's Rugby	80	69
Taekwondo	15	10
Total	240	161

The questionnaire was in four sections: first, the 'Personal' section of the questionnaire was mainly for contact details and to determine age. Although most participants gave their name and age, several declined to give any direct contact details, which is understandable given the high profile status of many of the participants. Secondly, the 'Education' section was used to identify the type of school the participants attended, for example, Grammar or Comprehensive and if they attended a Higher Education institution. The third section on 'Sport' gave details on the sport the participants were experts in and the other sports they had played and to what standard. This section also determined who or what the participant thought was the most influential factor in their involvement in sport(s). The final section on the 'Family' not only revealed the participants' specific familial situation but social class was also determined by their parents' occupations. According to Rose (2003),

classifying the social class of a population according to their occupation has a long history in the UK. The information generated by the questionnaires was entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The outcomes of these results can be seen in greater detail in Appendix B.

Although I used the outcomes of the questionnaires to a certain extent, the numbers of participants in some sports were lower than expected and therefore too small to make any confident statistical analysis. However, the results did provide a source of triangulation by supporting the information generated from the subsequent interviews. The questionnaire also gave an initial introduction to the participants and brought to light several issues that would be developed at a later stage. For example, it was evident from the findings of the questionnaires that most of the participants played a diversity of sports prior to focusing on their primary sport. The questionnaires also highlighted that parents and (ex)coaches were frequently cited as being influential in the participants taking up their sport. Additionally, consistent with other studies of youth sport, the outcomes of the questionnaires did suggest that, with the exception of many of the taekwondo players, the expert performers in this study mostly came from relatively privileged backgrounds (e.g. Kay, 2003; Kirk et al, 1997). Furthermore, some of the gate keepers were more interested in the 'numbers' distilled from the questionnaires than the qualitative data generated. For example, the gate keepers to men's rugby and women's hockey were interested in finding out how many of their international players came through the school or club system. To date, I have had an informal meeting with my 'rugby contact' where I discussed my findings and I have agreed to write a report for my 'hockey contact' on the completion of this study. As previously mentioned the concluding question in the questionnaire asked if the participant would be willing to take part further in the study by engaging in an interview.

3.5 LIFE STORY APPROACH

3.5.1 *Why 'Life Story' Rather than 'Life History' Interviews*

In my quest for an appropriate research method, I considered it important to employ an approach that would best cover the biographies of the expert performers. For this reason I initially thought that a life history method would be most suitable. According to Chase (2005) life history is the more specific term that researchers use to describe an extensive autobiographical narrative, in either oral or written form that covers all or most of an individual's life whereby the retrospective information is prompted or elicited by another person (Watson & Watson-Franke, 1985). However, Sparkes and Templin (1992) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest that the term 'life history' can take on different meanings depending upon the discipline of the individual and their particular perspective within that discipline. Denzin (1989; pp. 48) considers that life history is "an account of a life based on interviews and observations", or as Bertaux (1981; pp.8) concludes, "life history is perhaps best defined as a 'sociologically read biography.'" Thus it can be seen that the common theme running through all these suggestions is that life history is related to biography, it is a retrospective account, and it involves some sort of narrative statement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As I would be asking the athletes to discuss their life experiences, commonsense would suggest that the life history approach should have formed part of my research approach.

After reading in greater depth the literature pertaining to this method I did not think I could confidently implement a life history approach, in its truest sense, with expert performers in the scope of a Ph.D. study. I would still argue that the use of life history interviews is one of the most effective ways to gain a holistic understanding of an individual and I used many of the strategies engaged in the life history approach. Nevertheless, I consider it more appropriate to use the 'life story interviews' terminology to describe the research method used within this study. To conduct a 'true' life history interview, it is first necessary to develop a 'relationship' with the interviewee over several meetings. As Woods (1996; pp.63) comments, "there would have to be a relationship between us that transcended the research, that produced a bond of friendship, a feeling of togetherness and joint pursuit of a common mission

rising above personal egos". This I believe to be both unnecessary and somewhat problematic, especially considering the time constraints of modern day elite athletes and the duration permitted for a Ph.D. study. I also thought it would be unethical to mislead the athletes themselves and the 'gate-keepers' that had helped me gain access through the 'steel fences' that many of these athletes are placed within, and ask for more of their time at a later date.

The main concern with the life histories' approach was time. According to Goodson and Sikes (2001) life history interviews can take up many hours and involve a considerable amount of commitment from participants. Similarly, Measor and Sikes (1992) contend that the chief feature of the life history is the 'prolonged interview' (pp. 213), which consists of a series of interviews in which the subject and the interviewer interact to probe and reflect on the subject's statements. Hall and Hall (1996) go further and suggest that the life history document is typically a full-length book, giving the account of one person's life in his or her own words. Usually the data will be gathered over a number of years. These data may be further backed up with observation of the respondent's life, interviews with friends, photographs and extracts from letters and diaries for example. Bertaux (1981) explains that in the nineteenth century, anthropologists doing field work started to collect life stories, that is, accounts of a person's life as delivered orally by the person. But as they were supplementing the person's own story with biographical information drawn from conversations with other people, they needed another term to refer to the whole bulk of data thus obtained; they called it life history.

It is evident that there is some confusion in the terminology used to describe how someone's life has developed and some researchers treat the terms 'life history' and 'life story' as interchangeable, defining both as birth-to-present narratives (Atkinson, 2002; Chase, 2005). However, according to Measor and Sikes (1992) the distinction between life stories and life histories is an important one. The life story is a personal reconstruction of personal experience. 'Life story givers' provide data for the researcher often in loosely structured interviews. The researcher seeks to elicit the participant's perceptions and stories but is generally passive rather than actively interrogative. Measor and Sikes explain that the life history begins with the life story that the participant tells but seeks to build on the information provided. Hence other

people's accounts might be elicited, with documentary evidence and a wide range of historical data amassed. The concern is to develop a wide intertextual and intercontextual mode of analysis. This provision of a wider range of data allows a contextual background to be constructed. In a similar vein, Goodson (1992) also argues that the distinction between the life story and the life history is quite simple: the life story is the story we tell about our life, the life history is a collaborative venture, reviewing a wider range of evidence. The life story teller and others collaborate in developing this wider account by interviews and discussions and by scrutiny of texts and contexts. The life history is the life story located within its historical context. However, Hatch and Wisniewski (1995; pp.125) suggest that "an analysis of the social, historical, political and economic contexts of a life story by the researcher is what turns a life story into a life history".

Sparkes and Templin (1992) argue that in sociology, the term 'life stories' refers to the results of a research approach that involved collecting an individual's oral account of his or her life or of special aspects of it. The narrative is initiated by a specific request from the researcher and the ensuing dialogue is directed by the latter towards his or her field of inquiry. A life story thus involves a dialogical interactive situation in which the course of an individual's life is given shape. Denzin (1995) suggests that originally 'life story' referred to the account given by an individual about his or her life and when this personal account was then backed up by additional external sources such as newspaper reports, official records, photographs letters or diaries and so on, the validated life story was called a 'life history'. However, Miller (2000) more recently contends that this "concern with triangulation, that is, the validation of narrated life stories through information from additional, preferably quantified, sources has not remained central to most current biographical practice" (pp. 19). Miller further suggests that the life story approach still refers to the account given by an individual, only with the emphasis upon the ordering into themes or topics that the individual chooses to adopt or admit as s/he tells the story.

Taking into account all the above discussions surrounding the use of 'life history' or 'life story' approaches, it is evident that I used a combination of both; however, I prefer to use the term life story interviews for two reasons. First, I knew I would only

have the opportunity to interview the participants once and although I tried to develop a good rapport with them, I could not say that we built a close relationship. Secondly, I would interview only the participant and not, for example, the significant others that played an influential role in their sporting development. I therefore decided that a well prepared, in-depth retrospective life story interview would generate the necessary informative and interesting data.

Interviewing is an integral part of qualitative research with the key purpose of “generating data which give an authentic insight into people’s experiences” (Silverman, 1993; pp. 91). Fontana and Frey (2005) further suggest that interviewing is one of the most common and powerful methods researchers can use to try to understand fellow humans. Fontana and Frey also contend that interviewing is a paramount part of sociology because interviewing is interaction and sociology is the study of interaction. According to Kvale (1996), an interview is literally an interview, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest. In other words, it is a conversation that has structure and a purpose. This is not to simplify the method as Scheurich (1995) argues that the “conventional, positivist view of interviewing vastly underestimates the complexity, uniqueness, and indeterminateness of each one-to-one human interaction (pp. 241; cited in Fontana & Frey, 2005). Kvale (1996) argues strongly that the qualitative interview is a uniquely sensitive and powerful method for capturing the experiences and lived meanings of the subjects’ everyday world. Interviews allow the subjects to convey to others their situation when viewed from their perspective using their own words. Patton (2002) states that qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit.

3.5.2 Life Story Interviews

There are a wide variety of forms of interviewing (Fontana & Frey, 2005), however, the major distinctions between them are ‘structured’ and ‘unstructured’ (or ‘in-depth’) interviews (Côté et al., 1995). In structured or standardised interviews, the interviewer asks all participants the same series of pre-established questions with a set of limited response categories (Fontana and Frey, 2005). At the other end of the

continuum is the unstructured (in-depth) interview and, as the name implies, this type of interview does not employ a rigid predetermined structure and has an essentially open ended format. The methodological underpinnings of the life story method are closely interlinked with those of the in-depth interview. As according to Côté et al. (1995) the in-depth interview is often concerned with unique and individual viewpoints. Particularly importantly for this study, Marshall and Rossman (1989) also contend that in-depth interviewing is ideal for eliciting expertise from elite performers (cited in Côté et al., 1995). In light of this knowledge, I considered that an unstructured interview evolving around the life stories of the participants would be the most appropriate. I would argue that this approach allowed flexibility and latitude to explore the responses of the participants. I did on occasion refer to a general interview guide, which is a check list of questions or issues to be investigated in the course of an interview (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). However, this guide was very loosely followed and was used more as an *aide mémoire* (Payne & Payne, 2005), allowing the participant a relatively free rein to raise topics that were perhaps unique to them. I also used the guide if it at anytime the conversation lost momentum; this often helped the interview get back on track.

The interview questions need to be broad enough to cover a wide range of experiences but also specific enough to capture the participants' individual experiences (Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006). Consequently, the aim of the unstructured interview is to elicit specific information from each respondent, but no predetermined and standardised questions are set beforehand in order to achieve this (Patton, 2002). Fontana and Frey (2000) describe the unstructured interview as a "negotiated text" where the interviewers are active participants and define the unstructured interview as the one most likely to lead to "understanding a negotiated way of life" (pp.668). According to Cohen and Manion (1994) the unstructured interview is an open situation, having greater flexibility and freedom. The research governs the questions asked but their content, sequence and wording are entirely in the hands of the interviewer. Hakim (2000: pp. 35) suggests that although the interviewer guides the discussion enough to focus on the topic of interest, the in-depth interview provides enough freedom for participants to steer the conversation to raise all sorts of tangential matters that for them have a relevance to the main subject. Hence, many of the interviews in this study took unexpected directions and both novel and sensitive issues were regularly

raised. This may give the impression that the unstructured interview is a casual affair, but as Patton (2002) acknowledges being unstructured does not necessarily mean being unfocused. Kvale (1996) adds further that the absence of a prescribed set of rules creates an open-ended field of opportunity for the interviewer's skills, knowledge, and intuition. This raises new challenges for the interviewer, whereby patience and sensitivity is required for open-endedness and possible complexity and ambiguity.

The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer (Patton, 2002). It is therefore imperative that the interviewer develops good interviewing skills and techniques to obtain rich and informative data. These skills and techniques can be varied to address various situations, and varying one's techniques is referred to as using tactics (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Furthermore, given the focus on the subjective (re)construction of the interviewee (Gillham, 2000), a priority for the dynamics of the interview was that the participants felt free to describe their 'true' life story without some compelling need to give the 'correct storyline'. Whilst it is understood that this problem can never be completely eliminated, I made a great effort to try to minimise its effect. For example, I reiterated to the participants that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was simply interested in their particular life story. Indeed a central rationale of qualitative interviewing is "that it enables you to gather contrasting and complementary talk on the same theme or issue" (Rapley, 2007; pp. 18).

I also told the participants that any information divulged would be, to the best of my ability, in complete confidence and they would always be referred to by a pseudonym; I even gave them the opportunity to choose this name. Some laughed at this suggestion and others deliberated over their 'new' name for some time. I informed them that if I asked any questions that they did not want to answer or felt uncomfortable with, that I would immediately change track. Although all the participants had agreed to the interview being tape-recorded prior to the day of the interview, I asked again for their permission at the beginning of the interview and also offered to turn the tape-recorder off at any time and informed them that they were under no obligation to continue with the study. I hoped that giving the participants some sense of control would encourage them to talk more freely and openly about

their life stories. Thus the interpersonal skills of the interviewer are very important, as May (1995) argues “essentially skilful interviewing is characterised by the extent to which the investigator can establish rapport, elicit information without excessively controlling the nature of the flow of that information, and record it accurately” (pp. 195). Patton (2002) contends that asking understandable questions facilitates establishing a rapport with the participant and that asking unclear questions can make the participant feel uncomfortable, ignorant, confused and even hostile.

Procter and Padfield (1998) explain that the interview is a distinct social situation that allows the interviewee to be the focus of attention in the company of the interviewer who is there to take an interest in the person’s life. Similarly, Fontana and Frey (2005) suggest that interviewers must be able to put themselves in the position of the participants and attempt to see the situation from their perspective, rather than impose the world of academia and its preoccupations upon them. Indeed, it is paramount that the researcher establishes a rapport with the interviewee as Toma (2000) argues that data becomes more interesting as the relationship with the participant deepens. In other words, if the participant feels comfortable, they will find it easier to talk with the researcher (Rapley, 2007). Thus the researcher must maintain a tone of ‘friendly’ chat while trying to remain close to the guidelines of the topics of inquiry (Fontana & Frey, 2005). For this reason I felt it both important and helpful to do some background research on the participant and their sport prior to meeting them. This is in accordance with the advice of Odendahl and Shaw (2002) who contend that the savvy interviewer can use such background information during the meeting to demonstrate familiarity with the person or the sport. I found this particularly useful, when I found out some information or a picture of the participant that could create some ‘banter’. For example, I came across a rather unflattering picture (on a website) of one of the long distance runners just after she had finished a race, dripping in sweat and mud, much to her amusement. On another occasion, a male rugby player had been ‘sin binned’ prior to the interview, where he claimed innocence and mockingly I simply tutted and stated the laws of the game. My favourite occasion was interviewing an English hockey player shortly after Scotland (my home country) had ‘surprisingly’ beaten them; however, I must concede that the result of that fixture is usually the other way round! I would argue that creating a relaxed atmosphere and having a good rapport with participants opens doors to more informed research.

Some researchers argue that it is important to approach the interview with 'neutrality' in fear they will 'unduly bias' the interviewee's story and thus 'contaminate' the data (Weiss, 1994). Although Patton (2002) suggests that neutrality can actually facilitate rapport, Rapley (2007) argues that 'being neutral' is a mythological (and methodological) interviewer stance. In agreement with Rapley, I would suggest that just as the interviewee is not passive in this interaction, neither is the interviewer. Indeed a co-operative, engaged relationship centred on mutual self-disclosure can encourage 'deep disclosure' (Rapley, 2007; pp. 19). Furthermore, different groups of people being interviewed require different interview approaches (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Interviews with 'elites' require that the researcher has a good grasp of the interview topic in order to conduct an informed conversation (Kvale, 1996; Odendhal and Shaw (2002).

The location of the interview is important because it helps create a relaxed atmosphere and can influence the social interaction and rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. Unfortunately I did not have complete control over this factor. To encourage the participants to take part in an interview I was willing to travel to wherever suited them and at whatever time (within reason). As Stephens' (2007) contests, one facet of interviewing 'elites' is that they are rarely willing to travel to you. On occasions, I was able to book some office space which was convenient for both parties, but more often I conducted the interviews in a variety of places including: coffee shops; bars; massage rooms; their homes; hotel rooms and lobbies. These places, although not always ideal, were adequate and all the interviews were recorded verbatim using a mini disc player. Only one interview that was conducted in a pub proved to be a difficult setting, not only at the time but also afterwards during the transcribing due to the background noise of other people speaking, music and tannoy announcements. I had to listen to the tape of this interview many times to decipher what the participant had said, but even then some parts were impossible to hear. I had anticipated that this may be a problem at the time of the interview and took more written notes than usual. This picked up much of the missing contextual information but interrupted the flow of the conversation, which I think had a negative effect on the outcome of the interview. Patton (1990) suggests that the interactive nature of in-depth interviews can be seriously affected by the attempt to take verbatim notes during the interview.

Berg (1995) proposed 'Ten Commandments' for a good interview. These include: establish a rapport with the participant; remember your purpose; present a natural front; demonstrate active listening; think about your appearance; interview in a comfortable place; don't be satisfied with monosyllabic answers; be respectful; practice; be cordial and appreciative. I tried to bear these rules in mind when interviewing and I also took into consideration Fontana and Frey's (2005) advice that nonverbal modes of communication are also important and should be noted and recorded. I believe that, on the whole, the interviews were successful and produced interesting and valuable data. Dilley (2000; pp.36) concludes that:

"Good interviewing eludes easy definition or instruction, but we know it when we see it, for it opens new voices, new vistas, new visions to our own...Great interviews show the seams of connection between ourselves, others, and those in between".

3.5.3 Interviewing Expert Performers

Although books and manuals dedicated to interview techniques seldom differentiate elite from non-elite subjects, Odendhal and Shaw (2002) cite several issues that a novice interviewer should be aware of. Since the participants involved in this study are 'elite', I thought it prudent to attend to their advice. According to Gillham (2000) the elite interview is characterised by the participant possessing a great deal more knowledge than the interviewer about their area, the topic and its setting. Odendahl and Shaw (2002) add that interviewing elites raises issues of control, power and accessibility and the dynamics in play during the interaction are strong and prescient, often constrained by the demands of time and place. It was evident from early in the study that I would have to be flexible and patient in my approach if I was to get the interviews with the elite athletes that I wanted. As mentioned previously, the participant decided the timing and location of the interview and although several of the interviews took place nearby, for most I had to travel long distances. All of the interviews took place during the day, generally pre or post a training session; this meant many of the participants were eating whilst talking, and I felt a certain amount of guilt for taking up some of their limited relaxation time. Several of the participants

also took personal phone calls during the interview, although they generally cut them short and apologised for the interruption. Odendahl and Shaw argue that these disruptions are often subtle reminders of the demands of the participants' time and also that they have a life outside of sport.

There is a perception that in interviews, authority and control often reside with the interviewer (Cohen et al., 2000). However, in writing about interviewing corporate elites, Thomas (1995) suggests that the 'power' was with the interviewee:

“...like a supplicant granted audience with a dignitary. I must admit to feeling 'honoured' to be granted time with a well known executive and to be tempted to be less assertive than I might have been with someone less newsworthy” (pp.7).

I can relate to this feeling as I felt very privileged to have the opportunity to interview many of the participants and on occasions admit to feeling somewhat awestruck. I had the greatest respect for all of the expert performers that I interviewed and was both envious and impressed by what they had achieved during their sporting careers. This is perhaps because I would love to have been a professional sports person, an issue I will come back to at a later stage.

Once the interview was under way and we had begun to relax, the conversation began to flow and many topics were covered. Not all were relevant to this study, but all were very interesting. On occasion I was reduced to tears of laughter after being told some amusing anecdote. On other occasions I was almost moved to tears. For example, one participant described to me how devastated he was when his father died just prior to his first Olympic qualification. Another participant was also visibly upset when relating the effect of her parents' divorce. Also, in one particular interview, a participant confessed to me that an uncle (who was also a coach at his club) had been jailed for a number of years for sexually abusing other children in the club. After these revelations I felt both concern and guilt, concern, because I felt that I had 'opened the door' to these emotions but wasn't sure how to deal with them; and guilt, because I wanted to 'close the door' so that I could move on with the interview. Although I did not use these data, I was flattered that the participants felt comfortable enough to bring these personal issues up and it made me realise that I was discussing

peoples' lives, and not just data. At the end of each interview, I asked the participants for some feedback on how they felt the interview had gone and if there was anything they wanted to add or to delete from the transcript. All of the participants appeared happy with the interviews, and many found them a useful opportunity to reflect on their experiences throughout their sporting development.

3.5.4 Sample Size

According to Goodson and Sikes (2001), life story studies very rarely, if ever, involve the sorts of numbers that give any meaning to statistical analysis. They suggest that there are two main reasons for this: first, for practical reasons, interviewing and transcription are both time-consuming and expensive; secondly, life story researchers usually take a particular epistemological position which values the subjective and idiographic. As a result, it could be argued that large samples are unnecessary and even inappropriate because objective and nomothetic (the rule/law) generalisations are not the ultimate aim (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). Furthermore, Bertaux (1981; pp. 187) argues that:

“...a single life story stands alone, and it would be hazardous to generalise on the ground of that one alone, as a second life story could immediately contradict those premature generalisations. But several life stories taken from the same set of sociostructural relations support each other and make up, all together, a strong body of evidence”.

However, the interaction between ‘quantity’ and ‘quality’ continues throughout the research process (Thomas & O’Kane, 2000). Qualitative research involving numbers of participants tend to be littered, as the analysis chapters in this thesis are, with phrases like ‘many participants said’ or ‘some participants argued’ or ‘it was often said’ etc. Therefore, ‘quantity’ was called into service to add veracity or authenticity to my ‘qualitative’ discoveries (Thomas & O’Kane, 2000). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) many qualitative researchers use statistical measures, methods, and documents as a way of locating a group of subjects within a larger population, however, they seldom report their findings in terms of the complex statistical measures or methods to which quantitative researchers are drawn. The overall aim of this study was to find out about the developmental socialisation process of expert

performers, and therefore I was not explicitly interested in quantitative measures. Consistent with Thomas and O'Kane's argument, the possibility that 70% of participants may have done 'this' and 30% of might have done 'that' is less interesting to me than the mere fact that some had done this and some had done that. However, Hardy and Bryman (2004) recommend that qualitative researchers should use limited quantification in their analyses rather than rely excessively on vague adjectival terms. Therefore, in order to gain a clearer understanding of the numbers of participants that I am referring to in the analysis chapters I have included a quantitative figure beside the particular indefinite pronoun (e.g. most (n = 30); some (n = 18)) where appropriate.

According to Morse (1994), if the aim of the research is to reveal shared patterns of experience or interpretation within a group of people who have some characteristic, attribute or experience in common, then the sample size will be adequate when sufficient data have been collected, saturation occurs and variation is both accounted for and understood. Furthermore, in qualitative research, the investigator samples until repetition from multiple sources is obtained (Morse, 1994: pp. 230). The attainment of 'saturation' means that new data would not add significantly to what had already been found (Miller, 2000). It is often said to be difficult to determine how many participants will be required to reach this saturation point prior to conducting the interviews, as much of it will depend on the quality of the information generated. Gaining access to elite athletes is also problematic, especially when the study is a retrospective study so they themselves will not necessarily gain any benefits from it, apart from being able to tell 'their story'. As discussed in the previous section in this chapter, the concluding question in the questionnaire asked if the participant would be willing to take part in an interview. Initially, 49 said yes, however, due to a variety of reasons such as: injury/illness; the participants living and playing abroad; a disagreement with the coach; loss of form; or simply not being able to find a date that suited both diaries, I interviewed 36 expert performers. Although I was initially concerned that this number may not be enough, I knew if necessary I could interview some more participants at a later date. However, the data generated from the 36 participants was of such quality that the saturation point was reached, as the

participants were no longer giving me any relevant new information. The participants that I interviewed included:

- **7 Track and Field Athletes:** 4 females (2 long distance runners, 1 pole-vaulter and 1 javelin thrower). 3 males (2 long distance runners and 1 pole-vaulter).
- **6 Swimmers:** 2 females and 4 males.
- **7 Field Hockey Players:** 5 females and 2 males.
- **11 Rugby Union Players:** 6 females and 5 males.
- **5 Taekwondo Players:** 3 females and 2 males.

3.6 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This section deals with the methods employed to explore, describe and conceptualise the data generated through the life story interviews. The end results of this analytic process are displayed in the subsequent analysis chapters. A life story interview is highly personal and analysis of this type of interview is highly subjective (Atkinson, 2002). However, a key purpose of analysis is to bring meaning, structure and order to data and the interpretation requires acute awareness of the data, concentration, and openness to subtle undercurrents of social life (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Anfara et al., 2002). It is commonly recognised that the analysis of life story data is demanding, not least because this approach produces a mass of data. Indeed, this study produced over 500 pages of interview transcripts as well as the data produced by the 161 questionnaires. Furthermore, Patton (2002) contests that data obtained from in-depth interviews can be difficult to pull together and analyse, because different questions will generate different responses. Consequently, the researcher has to spend a great deal of time sifting through responses to find patterns that have emerged at different points in different interviews with different people (Patton, 2002). Since analysis takes place throughout the entire research process, a study is shaped and reshaped as it progresses and the data steadily transform into findings (Watt, 2007). It is important to note that there was no discernible point at which research finished and analysis began. Some questions were adapted, added or even taken out of later interviews

depending on the analysis of earlier interviews, so this was an ongoing process. After each interview I reflected on the information that the participant gave me and not only did this influence future interviews and the questions I asked, but also I could not help but relate their 'stories' to my experiences, either as an athlete or as a parent. For example, when some of the participants talked about the "special" times that they had with their parent(s) travelling to and from training sessions or competitions, I could relate to this both as a competitor and as a parent who often 'taxi' their children to sporting events. Although I did not always mention this to the participants, (consciously or unconsciously) I am sure my nonverbal language would have portrayed this, perhaps with a knowing smile or nod of the head.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) warn that "letting data accumulate without preliminary analysis along the way is a recipe for unhappiness, if not total disaster" (pp. 2). This need for progressive data generation and analysis can be argued to underpin Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach to qualitative data in which their three central analytic processes of data reduction, display and verification are all interwoven so that the analytic procedure "is a continuous iterative enterprise" (pp. 23).

In relation to this study, I also found that keeping a research diary was a valuable means of facilitating analysis whilst collecting data. In this diary I would note down issues that I thought were pertinent to each of the participants, or any nuances that I thought may be worthwhile pursuing in future interviews. I also produced memos throughout the interview process to record my thoughts and feelings about each of the interviews, addressing areas that may or may not be relevant to the study. This not only reiterated that my influence in the research process is inevitable, but also gave an immediate 'face' to the participant and their story. This instant memory jolt I found particularly fruitful in the analysis process. Furthermore, by writing an account of my perceptions of each interview I also took note of any information that would help to address the loss of important contextual information that is associated with the transcription process (Cohen et al., 2000). I included in this details of where and when the interview took place and if there were any practical issues that had interrupted the flow of the conversation. Additionally, in order to remain reflexive throughout the interview process it had been my intention to listen to and transcribe each audio recording as soon as possible after each interview. I thought by

transcribing the interviews as I went along I would be able to highlight the salient issues that were particularly pertinent to each of the participants and reflect on how these issues could be developed in future interviews. However, this was not always practically feasible, therefore the use of the research diary was invaluable in keeping note of the key issues being raised, which enabled me to become familiar with the information that was being generated and facilitated my growing understanding of the themes emerging from the conversations. Again, by writing down ideas as they came to me made me think more deeply about them and how I thought that these themes could be developed. The following diary entry is a practical example of this:

So far most of the participants avidly say that they absolutely loved sport as a child, but as they have got older and progressed in their sport, they give the impression that being successful is more of a pull to their sport – perhaps more ‘job like’? – Does the love of sport diminish as they increase the amount of deliberate practice?? (Diary, 16.03.05)

Thus the data collection and data analysis in this study overlapped and were not discrete stages of the research. This provided the flexibility to adapt the research design, and in agreement with Ely et al. (1997), the contents of later interviews were influenced by the analysis of earlier ones, and each new interview tended to shed light on, and enrich, the others.

3.6.1 Organising and Analysing Unstructured Data

I now faced the daunting challenge of uncovering and communicating what had been learned or as Denzin (2000) calls this task, “the practices and policies of interpretation” (pp. 897). The purpose of this process is to present the reader with the stories identified throughout the analytical process, the salient themes, recurring language, and patterns of belief linking people and settings together (Anfara, Brown & Mangione, 2002). The process of data analysis is diverse; in other words, there is no ‘right way’ (Tesch, 1990; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Hardy & Bryman, 2004). Indeed, Creswell (2002) argues that there is not one single way to analyse qualitative data – “it is an eclectic process in which you try to make sense of the information. Thus, the approaches to data analysis espoused by qualitative writers will vary considerably” (pp. 297). Consistent with Creswell the key challenge of qualitative

analysis lies in making sense of vast amounts of information in an analytical way that provides a novel perspective on the phenomena that the study is concerned with (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). According to Patton (2002) this involves: reducing the volume of raw data; sifting trivia from the data; identifying significant patterns; and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal (pp. 434). However, I did not find this process as straight forward as perhaps much of the literature would suggest. Indeed, I felt that I had so much interesting data that I had difficulty in distinguishing what could be described as 'trivia'. Basit (2003) acknowledges that unstructured data can be very interesting, but also argues that in order to help the reader understand the social world under scrutiny, and the way the participants view it, then it is necessary that the data is systematically analysed. According to Hardy and Bryman (2004), the growing use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software is arguably a means of making this process easier. However, these packages do not do the analysis for the researcher, and it is still necessary, whether done electronically or manually, to create codes and categories and to decide what to retrieve and collate (Basit, 2003). Charmaz (2000) also warns that using computer analysis programmes can hinder the interpretive process by focussing the researcher on parts of data at the expense of grasping the broader picture.

Tesch (1990) used the terms 'data condensation' and 'data distillation' as descriptions of the eventual outcome of a qualitative analysis, implying that the body of data did not merely become smaller and manageable in the analysis process because there was less to deal with, but was the result of interpretation and organisation. That is to say she viewed the establishment of categories as an organisation tool and an important part of the outcome. In relation to this view, Ely et al. (1991) contend that at its most useful, the process of establishing categories is a very close, intense 'conversation' between a researcher and the data that has implications for ongoing method, descriptive reporting and theory building. Miles and Huberman (1994) identify three types of code; descriptive, interpretive and explanatory, and the principles underpinning these classifications. Increasing the depth of conceptualisation and complexity of information represents broadly the approach that I took in analysing the transcripts. The analysis of the conversations was a continual and evolving process, in which the coding became more focussed and detailed through repetitive and

comparative examinations of the interviews. This was not a linear process, but involved a number of false starts and diversions that required me to rethink and reword my coding categories. According to Basit (2003) a category cannot be created in isolation from the other categories. When a category is devised, the decision has to be made on how best to organise the data in ways which are useful for the analysis and have to take some account of how this category will 'fit' into the wider analytic context (Dey, 1993).

A popular means of approaching this arduous analytical task, particularly for novice researchers, has been through the use of grounded theory. Grounded theory was created by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Thomas and James (2006) claim that this mode of analysis has been a major contributor to the acceptance of the legitimacy of qualitative methods in social research, arguably because grounded theory offers a vision of how to do theoretically innovative research from project design right through to writing up (Dey, 2007). Charmaz (2005) contends that for many researchers grounded theory provided a template for doing qualitative research "stamped with positivist approval" (pp. 509). On the other hand, Thomas and James (2006) and Dey (2007) are critical of grounded theory and consider it as a product of its time and make the argument that qualitative research can now stand in its own right and be considered absolutely valid. Although Charmaz has attempted to develop new forms of grounded theory suitable for the 21st Century, this has been met with some criticism, including from one of the original creators of the method (e.g. Barney Glaser, 2002). Thomas and James (2006) criticise Charmaz's developments and refute the need to continually reinvent grounded theory. Thomas and James argue that:

"Continued allegiance to grounded theory procedures – or, strangely, loyalty simply to the term 'grounded theory,' unstitched from its procedures or putative ends – stunts and distorts the growth of qualitative inquiry" (pp. 790).

A key feature of grounded theory is that through inductive analysis theories are constructed from the data rather than the data confirming or extending existing theories. This was not always the case in this study. The thematic analysis was more deductive, in that many categories had been identified beforehand from both my own personal experience and that of related literature. According to Hardy and Bryman

(2004) an important aspect of any data analysis is to relate the issues that drive and emerge from it to the research literature. In this study, much of the data were analysed in relation to an existing model, namely, Côte and colleagues' Developmental Model of Sport Participation. For these reasons I shall not claim to base my analysis specifically on grounded theory or its adopted forms, but suggest that several tenets of this method informed, in part, the analysis process of this study. For example, I looked for themes; I constantly compared and coded data, and wrote theoretical memos as part of my thematic analysis.

3.6.2 The Use of Themes, Codes and Memos

Although the analysis began whilst in the data generation phase, I embarked on a more in-depth analysis on the completion of this phase. The primary aspect of data analysis involves a thorough reading and re-reading of the transcripts. This was an iterative process that involved 'living with' one's data, trying to get a 'sense' of what the narratives were about. According to Patton (2002) one way of reducing and making sense of voluminous amounts of qualitative data is through content or thematic analysis. This type of analysis often refers to searching transcripts for recurring themes, phrases, concepts and words, which then involves identifying, coding, categorising, classifying, and, labelling the primary patterns in the data. As mentioned above, existing literature can act as a background to the analysis in that coding of transcripts is often informed by the literature and existing categories may be employed as codes. As such, many of the categories in this study had been hypothesised prior to this stage and the transcripts either confirmed or disconfirmed many of these preconceived ideas (Watt, 2007). Thus at this stage of the thematic analysis I identified data that related to the following categories:

- The Sampling Phase (early years)
- The Specialising Phase (middle years)
- Investment years (later years)
- The family
- Coaches
- Teachers

- Peers

Several other themes were generated from the data that I had not necessarily anticipated, including for example: school; university; work; gender issues; aspirations; motivation; training; competing; and facilities. Although most of the themes had obvious links with other themes, some connections were rather more tentative and required more thought. Initially I put hand written notes in the margins of the transcripts to highlight the themes that I believed to be potentially important. I then 'cut and pasted' the significant quotations relating to each of the themes into a separate word document. Only then did I begin to feel that the data were in manageable chunks (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Once this process was complete I printed off a hard copy, and then went through the process again by writing sub-categories of themes in the margins. These subcategories included:

'Sampling phase'

Initial sporting memories

Activity levels

Important factors

'Investment phase'

Why this sport?

Reasons

Important factors

Training

Progression

Steady/Fast

Like/Dislike

10-Year rule

Parents

Mum/Dad

Tangible support – Finance/Time

Emotional support – watching/encouragement

Involvement through the 3 stages

Role models?

Coaches

Involvement through the 3 phases

Support

Choice

Relationship – Friend/Coach-Athlete

'Specialising phase'

Early/Late

Activity levels

Important factors

Motivation

Success

Enjoyment

Competition

Competing

Important factors

Siblings

Follow/Avoid

Older brother 'syndrome'?

Peers and Friends

Initial involvement

Within/Out with sport

Throughout the phases

Identity

Friendship groups

School/University/Work

Lifestyle
 Sport as a 'job'
 PE/Teachers
 Priority? Work v Sporting commitments
 Support

Aspirations

Pride in playing for your country
 Fame and Fortune

Life style

Missing out on 'normal' lifestyle
 Acceptance
 School/work and Sport
 Holidays

Facilities

Proximity
 Standard

Life after Sport**'Made it!'**

Athlete' perceptions
 Natural v Hard work

The following excerpt from Francesca highlights how a number of these categories were covered when she was reminiscing about her early experiences of sport and how I made note of these in the margin:

<p>Sampling - played a number. of sports Sibling – older brother - important Gender - playing with boys- does that mean you are good? Naturally sporty?</p>	<p><i>Well I had an older brother and that helped and he made me play a wide variety of sports in the garden, like football and French cricket and things like that. I think I was playing football with the boys when I was at primary school, just because I was able to, I think I was probably better than most other people because I had an older brother. I was just into all types of ball games or any sport really, but I'm not much of a swimmer.</i> Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04)</p>
--	---

The use of memos was a valuable aid in the analytic process. As mentioned earlier, they represented a means by which I could note down thoughts concerning specific elements of the data, highlight associations between particular themes or categories, and incorporate new data into themes as they were constructed (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2000). Moreover, using memos provided a space in which I could begin to identify connections between the data, the model proposed in this study (i.e. Côté's Developmental Model of Sport Participation) and wider literature. As

Charmaz (2000) has suggested, the memo writing process allows the researcher to remain focussed on the analysis:

“Memo writing is the intermediate step between coding and the first draft of the completed analysis. This step helps to spark our thinking and encourages us to look and codes in new ways. ...Through memo writing, we elaborate processes, assumptions, and actions that are subsumed under our codes. Memo writing leads us to explore our codes; we expand upon the processes they identify or suggest. Thus our codes take on substance as well as a structure for sorting data” (pp. 517).

The memo writing was also a developmental process and as I moved backwards and forwards between the memos and the literature I was able to reflect upon initial thoughts and create more detailed comments that outlined explanations for particular themes or patterns within the data. As mentioned, the thematic analysis begun by broadly categorising key themes, the next level of analysis provided more detail to the initial concepts as well as formulating new ones. This process meant that the initial categories were often divided into various subcategories. This is how I split up ‘The Family’ category:

The Family

- Mum’s Influence Mum’s Role
- Dad’s influence Dad’s Role
- Tangible Support – Finance/Time
- Emotional Support – watching/encouragement
- Family Involvement at Different Stages of Development (Early, middle and later years)
- Role Models
- Sibling’s Influence Sibling’s Role: Brother/ Sister Younger/Older

I then went back to the transcripts and examined these concepts in greater detail. As Bogdan and Biklin (1982) explain, ‘certain words, phases and patterns of behaviour, subject’s ways of thinking, and events repeat and stand out’ (pp. 166). In this study, the words and phrases generated from the formulated patterns served as coding categories and as I became more engrossed in the analysis I was able to use ‘*in vivo* coding’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). *In vivo* coding identifies categories and terms used

by the participants themselves, which has been recognized as a valuable means of acknowledging the role of the participants in the generation of the data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Oliver & Lalik, 2000). Examples of this type of coding in this thesis are: 'sports crazy', 'naturally sporty', 'fear of injury', 'make or break time'. Furthermore, I felt using the participants own language brought the analysis 'alive'.

Finally, as the analytic process continued and I became more familiar with the data, I was able to progress to another level of analysis, in which I could begin to explain the categories in greater detail and depth. I was able to draw the categories and memos together and embed them in the literature and vice versa. I then framed the themes under the heading 'Big Ideas' and wrote a short summary about each 'idea', relating what I had discovered with the relevant literature. This analytic process then allowed me to gradually build up a theoretical understanding of the data, and provide a degree of structure that would enable me to write up my analysis chapters.

3.7 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND THE RESEARCHER

The interviews took place between November 2004 and May 2005 at a venue convenient to the participant. The length of each interview varied between 45 minutes and two hours. In addition to this, I had several informal discussions with the participants, coaches, managers and other gate-keepers pre or post interview over lunch or coffee. This not only helped to build a rapport with the participants, but also gave me an insight into the views of some of the 'significant others'.

Prior to the analysis chapters, I thought it would be helpful to provide a brief introduction to each of the expert performers involved in the qualitative part of this study. There is a more detailed description of the participants and their sporting experiences in Appendix C. As explained earlier in this chapter, for ethical reasons each of the participants have been assigned a pseudonym.

3.7.1 The Participants

Name	Sex (M/F)	Age	Sport	Position/Event
Tracey	F	22	Athletics	800m
Francesca	F	22	Athletics	Javelin
Samantha	F	31	Athletics	Long distance runner
Olivia	F	21	Athletics	Pole-vaulter
Rory	M	28	Athletics	Long distance runner
Cameron	M	23	Athletics	Long distance runner
Nick	M	24	Athletics	Pole-vaulter
Louise	F	24	Swimming	Free style
William	M	22	Swimming	Free style
Kate	F	22	Swimming	Butterfly
Lewis	M	20	Swimming	Backstroke
Bob	M	24	Swimming	Backstroke
Mike	M	24	Swimming	Free style
Alicia	F	19	Field Hockey	Full back
Carol	F	24	Field Hockey	Forward
Stacey	F	26	Field Hockey	Midfield
Gemma	F	28	Field Hockey	Inside forward
Susan	F	25	Field Hockey	Centre half
Graeme	M	23	Field Hockey	Centre half
Stuart	M	33	Field Hockey	Midfield
Ruth	F	26	Rugby Union	2 nd Row
Michelle	F	18	Rugby Union	Centre
Caroline	F	25	Rugby Union	Centre
Julie	F	20	Rugby Union	2 nd Row
Claire	F	23	Rugby Union	Centre/Wing
Shona	F	25	Rugby Union	Back row
Calum	M	35	Rugby Union	Hooker
Stephen	M	20	Rugby Union	Prop
James	M	25	Rugby Union	Back row

Frank	M	20	Rugby Union	2 nd Row
Patrick	M	20	Rugby Union	Scrum half
Neil	M	21	Taekwondo	Over 80kg
Colin	M	24	Taekwondo	Under 80kg
Alison	F	29	Taekwondo	Over 67kg
Sonya	F	22	Taekwondo	Over 67kg
Katrina	F	21	Taekwondo	Under 52kg

3.7.2 *The Reflexive Researcher*

Throughout both my academic and working career I have been given conflicting advice on whether or not it was appropriate to write in the first or third person. I accepted both conventions, but I always felt uncomfortable, almost like an impostor, when I was discouraged from revealing my 'self' or 'voice'. On the other hand, I was socialised into believing it to be more scholarly to take a more objective stance and remain anonymous in my views. Similar to Dupuis (1999) I understood that in order to do "good" work, researchers should remain detached and must always separate subject from object. Patton recalls philosopher and theologian Martin Buber's (1923) influential distinction between "I-It" and "I-Thou" to highlight the contrast between the traditional academic voice and the personal voice of qualitative analysis:

"An I-It relationship regards other human beings from a distance, from a superior vantage point of authority, as objects or subjects, things in the environment to be examined and placed in abstract cause-effect chains. An I-Thou perspective, in contrast, acknowledges the humanity of both self and others and implies relationship, mutuality, and genuine dialogue" (Patton, 2002; pp.64).

I was surprised, but also pleased, to be actively encouraged to openly locate myself in this present study and therefore could be said to come from an "I-Thou" perspective. According to Patton (2002) writing in the first person active voice communicates the inquirer's self-aware (or reflexive) role in the inquiry. Likewise, Kleinsasser (2000) acknowledges that using the first person voice indicates that the researcher views herself/himself as integral to the research. In other words, a reflexive research approach means writing in a way that allows us to take ownership of "second-order

stories” (Dupuis, 1999; pp.60) and by claiming interpretations as our own through the use of phrases such as “I understood this to mean....” (e.g. in the data analysis chapters) or “I then made a list of themes (e.g. in the methodology chapter). Since it has been frequently suggested that the researcher is the primary ‘instrument’ of data collection and analysis, reflexivity is deemed essential (Watt, 2007). Hence, this is how I have positioned myself throughout this study. Stanley and Wise (1993) contend that locating yourself in the research process allows you to examine your own position and role.

Almost twenty years ago Peshkin (1988) argued that the choice of our research topics is rarely random but rather very much influenced by our human selves. Peshkin further added that researchers bring two selves to the research endeavour – “the human self that we generally are in everyday situations, and the research self that we fashion our particular research situation” (pp. 270; cited in Dupuis, 1999). This is certainly the case in my situation. To date I have undertaken two research projects, one as an undergraduate for my final year dissertation and now as a postgraduate in this present study. My dissertation was a sociological study of female bodybuilders and, as a former national bodybuilding champion, I had a particular interest in this area and was keenly aware of the many contradictions and complexities that surround this particular sport. I received over 70% for this piece of work. This gave me the confidence to progress in my academic study and apply for a Ph.D. studentship. It also highlighted how important it was for me to have a real interest in the subject area so that I could submerge myself to the depths that are required to obtain the rich and credible data needed to complete this type of study. I feel very fortunate to be given the opportunity to research youth sport, an area that I am both extremely interested in and have deep familiarity with from a number of perspectives – (former) athlete, a mother and a coach. I will discuss this area in greater detail in the following section.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) suggest that:

“Our research interests and the research questions we pose, as well as the questions we discard, reveal something about who we are. Our choice of research design, the research methodology and the theoretical framework that informs our research are governed by our values and reciprocally, help to shape these values” (pp. 262).

Thus reflexivity in research is an active on-going process that influences every stage of research. Pink (2007) argues that although reflexivity has become a bit of a buzzword in recent qualitative research methodology literature, it should still be taken seriously and not be engaged in simply as a token measure. The knowledge produced through any qualitative research should be understood as the product of a specific interaction between the researcher and the informants (Pink, 2007). Indeed the goal of being reflexive involves improving the quality and validity of the research and recognising the limitations of the knowledge that is produced and therefore leading to a more rigorous research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). According to Payne and Payne (2004) even at its most basic level, reflexivity is about maintaining high professional standards of investigation and that good research depends primarily on "...the selection and proper, systematic application of the right methods for the task in hand. The researcher is the *only* person who can ensure this happens" (pp. 191).

Being reflexive involves self-questioning and self-understanding (Patton, 2002). Hertz (1997; pp. viii) notes that the reflexive researcher does not merely report the "facts" of the research but also actively constructs interpretations ("What do I know?"), while at the same time questioning how these interpretations came about (How do I know what I know?). In many instances these answers are not clear and so the researcher uses her or his informed judgement to interpret and explain the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Consequently, the reflexive researcher should constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their data. As Patton (2002) explains:

"Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports" (pp.65)

As discussed previously, the life story method respects the uniqueness of the individual through allowing them a greater voice than is the case in any other research genre (Sparkes, 1993; Jones, 1997). On the other hand, I also acknowledge that the process of selecting excerpts from interview transcripts and then converting them into researcher-written stories is loaded with opportunities for the voice of the researcher to dominate (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2003). Denscombe (2002) recognises that

“researchers have a personal history and a personal identity” (pp.34) that cannot be segregated from the research process. Indeed, as I was talking to the participants about their sporting life stories I too found myself reflecting on my own sporting experiences and those of my children. Consequently, it is perhaps inevitable that my personal knowledge and social values are going to influence the research process. Whilst there are obvious criticisms and dangers associated with such a subjective approach as this reflexive process, these are argued to be outweighed by the benefits:

“Rather than decrying the fact that the instrument used to gather the data affects this process, we say that the human can be marvellously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situations with skill” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; pp. 76).

More recently Kleinsasser (2000; pp. 155) noted that

“Researcher reflexivity represents a methodological process of learning about self as a researcher, which, in turn, illuminates deeper, richer meanings about personal, theoretical, ethical, and epistemological aspects of the research question. Qualitative researchers engage in reflexivity because they have reason to believe that good data result”.

Nevertheless, Greenbank (2003) argues that by acknowledging the influence of their values on the research process, then researchers are also recognising the need to accommodate values in their research. Greenbank suggests that one approach that may reduce the effect of the researcher’s influence is to enlighten the reader with some biographical details and then they can take account of the values that are influencing the work. For this reason, I will now disclose some relevant background information about myself and my multiple roles (Davies, 2000).

3.7.3 A Brief Biography of the Researcher

I was brought up, along with my three older brothers, in a relatively middle social class household, by two heterosexual parents. Like many of the participants in this study, my first memories of sport would be playing games in the back garden with my brothers. I have always felt that this experience has been influential in my enjoyment of sports perhaps more traditionally associated with males (e.g. rugby, football,

boxing). However, ballet and horse riding were the first two activities that my parents encouraged me to take up when I was around the age of 6. I particularly enjoyed horse riding and took to it very quickly, I was not, however, as keen on ballet, or did I perceive myself to be as 'naturally gifted'. My mother 'blackmailed' me for a number of years to continue with ballet by saying that she would allow me an extra hour riding at the weekend if I went to my ballet class and continued to pass my dance grades. I was eventually allowed to give up ballet around the age of 11, when I moved to secondary school. It was at this time that I also started to compete in national riding events.

Between the ages of 10 and 16 I was extremely fortunate in that I was given the opportunity to ride many ponies of a high standard in many different types of events. I initially rode for one stable, but this subsequently snowballed and I ended up riding for a number of different people. Although I thoroughly enjoyed this time and think it was a fantastic experience for a young person, it also meant that all my spare time was spent at the stables or competing. The competitions were held all over Great Britain and Ireland so getting there often involved travelling long distances most weekends and sometimes through the week. My parents were self-employed at this stage, which meant my mum's working hours were flexible and she was often able to come and support me, but my dad had to work 7 days a week and very rarely (if ever) watched me compete. This did not bother me, but in my dad's speech when I got married he referred to this fact as being one of his biggest regrets in life. My brothers rarely took an active interest in my sport either, but I don't ever remember them being jealous or annoyed about the amount of time our mum spent 'running after' me.

Even though I was a keen and active participant in PE classes, because of my commitments to riding I was unable to take part in much sport out of school hours, which often frustrated my PE teachers, as well as me. Thus, it could be said that I was an 'early specialiser', since I focused on one sport from a young age. The stables I rode for were only interested in the junior section and specifically ponies, therefore, when I reached 16 I was too old to compete for them. By this stage my parents had helped me to buy my own horse, but I had to sell her when I was 17 when I decided to move to college in England to study a course on Horse Management and Business Studies, with the view of some day opening my own livery stables. Unfortunately, for

a number of personal reasons this dream did not come to fruition and I have only ridden recreationally since.

After finishing college I joined the family business and also started training at a local gym. This helped to fill the void that had developed since I was no longer riding. A couple of years later, I qualified as a fitness and aerobics instructor, but I still missed the exhilaration of competing and subsequently took up bodybuilding, much to the disappointment and upset of my family. However, they were pleased for me (although I can't say proud, nor did they come and watch me) when I won the UK bodybuilding championships at the age of 25. As much as I loved training and having a strong body, as well as the feeling of empowerment that lifting heavy weights gave me, there were many things I was not so positive about. Firstly, the whole narcissism of the sport, secondly, the extreme dieting and the mental effects of this and thirdly and most importantly the need and emphasis placed on taking anabolic steroids in order to be competitive at international level. I cannot deny that I was not tempted to go down this route, I was almost brainwashed into thinking that by taking this 'magic' injection I could compete at World level. At that stage, my mum was diagnosed with terminal cancer, which completely transformed my priorities. I turned my back on bodybuilding and all it entailed, and did what I could to get the closeness back that I formerly had with my mum. Unfortunately, my mum died about a year later. I'm not a religious person, but through all the misery, I believe this awful time was a turning point in my life and saved me from taking an unsavoury route.

Shortly after this time, I met and married my husband and almost ten years later after moving to England, I not only enrolled as an undergraduate on a sports science degree, but I also took up rugby union. Similar to many of the women rugby players involved in this study, I never really had the opportunity to play the sport prior to coming to university and, much to my surprise (and others), have been hooked on the sport ever since. Although I took up rugby at a lot later stage than most people, I still came across the same prejudices as some of the female participants did in this study. Even though I am now married and have two children, my sexuality is constantly questioned and I am frequently told that "rugby is not a 'girls' game". I was used to these types of comments from my bodybuilding days, but I still get frustrated by

people imposing their views on me as to what is deemed to be masculine and feminine appropriate.

My husband was an age group international rugby player but prematurely retired from competitive rugby following an injury (although still plays recreationally) and coaches a youth team at a local rugby club. Both of our sons' play a different sport practically every night, for the school team or at an after school sports club, and also play football, rugby and cricket for a local club at the weekend. Both boys show a good aptitude for sport and I hope that this continues to be the case and I will encourage and support them in every way I can. My older son's ambition is to be a professional rugby player and the younger one a professional footballer. Although I'd be delighted if this were to be the case, it is perhaps unlikely, but I am sure that just as sport has played a prominent part in my life and their fathers, it will also in theirs.

Listening to the respondents' life stories made me reflect on my own experiences as a past and present sports participant; as a mother of two 'sporty' children; as a wife (and helper) of a 'mini's' rugby team coach; and now as a researcher. I could, for example, certainly relate to the 'busyness' of the participants' lives, and also the enjoyment that is often related to playing sport. Conversely I also understood the negative and low points that can be associated with involvement in sport. In particular, I could not help but be personally interested in the vital role the family played in the development of an aspiring sports performer. Indeed as suggested above, my own experiences of the complicated logistics of having two children 'sampling' a number of different sports allowed certain empathy for the participants' families. At the moment, for example, both our boys play football on a Saturday morning, and my husband 'captains/manages' the 3rd XV rugby team on a Saturday afternoon. On a Sunday morning both boys play rugby and my husband coaches our older son's age group, on a Sunday afternoon I play rugby and on a Sunday evening both boys train for cricket. This obviously changes with the season, but in the summer they also take part in cricket, athletics and more recently golf. In between these activities, the boys need to do their homework and I need to catch up with my work, which leaves very little time for any social interaction that perhaps 'normal' families have. For this reason, I am thinking of retiring from rugby at the end of this season, so that we can spend more time as a family and so that I can play a more supportive role to my

children from the sidelines. This decision has been partially influenced from what I have learnt from this study.

Therefore, listening to each and every one of the participant's life stories involved in this study was fascinating for me, both in a personal and academic level and this fascination has greatly enhanced my interest and commitment to this research area.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the research techniques that were used to generate the data and the strategies employed to make sense of the great wealth of information gathered. I critiqued both life story and life history approaches and highlighted some of the similarities, but also the differences which led to my decision to use in-depth retrospective life story interviews as the method to best illicit the rich data I was looking for. This chapter also discussed some of the problems that arise when analysing the great realms of data that are commonly associated with qualitative research. I acknowledged that many of the themes had been constructed prior to analysis and therefore did not emerge from the data as is critical to the original use of grounded theory. However, grounded theory did inform in part the analysis of the data and that thematic analysis took place throughout this process.

I briefly introduced the participants interviewed in this study and gave guidance to the appendix where the reader could read more in-depth about their sporting details. I hoped this would personalise the participants to the reader and give them some insight into their sporting background to help in their understanding of the subsequent analysis chapters. I also felt it important to introduce myself at this stage, because this thesis is ultimately a story constructed by me, the researcher. Being reflexive is not only a justification for using the first person in writing, but also acknowledges the influence that the researchers' experiences and values can have on a study. Hence, I finished the chapter off with a brief biography of my 'life story'. However, when writing this chapter, Mason's (2002) warning frequently came into my head, particularly when deciding which parts of my life story were relevant to this study:

“It is important, however, that you focus your reflexive efforts meaningfully and strategically on the research itself, and that you resist the temptation to use your research to showcase ego-centric or confessional tales about yourself, which may do little to illuminate your research practice or problem, or to help you make sound research decisions” (pp. 5).

The following chapters now deal with the exploration of the themes, issues and theory that has emanated from this analytic process.

Chapter Four

The Developmental Socialisation Process of the Expert Performer

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the first of four chapters wherein I present the data generated from expert performers in a number of different sports. As outlined in Chapter One, the data are drawn from retrospective life-story interviews of 36 male and female athletes participating in sports, which include rugby union, field hockey, track and field athletics, swimming and taekwondo. Initially this chapter examines the data which were generated concerning the sporting pathways that many of the participants took in order to reach the pinnacle of their particular sport. As reported in Chapter Two, I have used Côté and colleagues' developmental model as a basis to this study. Consequently, this chapter investigates the extent to which this model provided a means of understanding the developmental socialisation into sport of the 36 participants in this project.

I will then move on to discuss the important features of each of the phases (sampling, specialising and investment), and also the motivational factors that were key to the participants' decisions to commit to their sports. In this chapter, I will also examine a variety of issues in relation to the timing and intensity of specialised training that the participants had prior to becoming an expert performer in their field. It has been claimed that the achievement of expertise takes at least ten years of specialised training (Ericsson et al., 1993) and this study will seek to examine this argument.

This chapter will address the research questions relating to whether the expert performers participated in a range of sports in the early years of their sport participation and will establish the main factors that led to the transitions between each of the phases. Additionally, this chapter will discuss factors that make it

possible for expert adult performers to enter late into the 'investment' phase of a sport, and the nature of their experiences in the 'sampling' and 'specialising' phases. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Two, there are an increasing number of student athletes attending Higher Education Institutes (HEIs); this phenomenon was reflected in this study, with 29 out of the 36 participants being past or present students. For many of these student athletes, HE had an impact on their sporting experiences.

4.2 SPORTING PATHWAY

A critical part of this study was to explore expert performers' socialisation into sport (as defined by Côté and Hay, 2002), thereby investigating the participants' sporting pathways to the top of their sport, and to determine commonalities and differences in their routes and practices. The first thing to strike me when I began to analyse the data was the enormous diversity in these participants' sporting careers. Some began playing competitive sport from a young age; others did not take up their sport until they were in their late teens. Some participants played to a high level in more than one sport and then had to decide upon which sport to focus; others knew that there was only ever going to be one sport that they would take to elite level. Thus, all the participants had unique and interesting life stories to tell.

At the same time, it did appear that most of the expert performers progressed through similar phases of socialisation as identified by Côté and Hay (2002); namely sampling, specialising and investment phases. Most of the participants played a range sports as young children (sampling), then reduced the range to two or three sports (specialising), prior to focussing on one specific sport (investment). However the transition and distinction between each of the phases was not clear cut nor straightforward, but rather more complex than perhaps Côté and Hay's model would appear. With respect to the first transition (between the sampling and specialising phases), although the participants in this study often reduced the number of sports they were playing this did not necessarily mean that they were moving from one phase into another (according to the concepts outlined by Côté and Hay in Chapter Two) but were instead 'sampling' fewer sports, often because of time constraints. In other words, although they participated in a smaller number of sports, their

participation continued to be characterised by deliberate play rather than deliberate practice, and their motivation to participate was fun and enjoyment rather than enjoyment of competitive success. According to Côté and Hay the investment years are an extension of the specialising years and indeed the distinction between these phases was often quite nebulous in this study. Similar to Kirk and MacPhail's (2003) study where they describe young people in the specialising phase as either "beginning specialisers" or "full specialisers" (pp. 32) it would appear from this study that this continuum stretches to include 'beginning investors' and 'full investors' in so far as beginning investors were starting to show some evidence of committing to achieve an elite level of performance in one sport, whereas full investors had already committed 100% to their sport.

Arguably, the most consistent evidence from this study was that all the participants described their childhoods as being active, with most of them taking part in a wide variety of sports. 'Fun' and 'enjoyment' were by far the most common adjectives used to describe their early sporting memories. This finding is consistent with Green (2004) who argues that it is the richness of young people's early sports socialisation that is important in their persistence in sport. American social psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1993) conducted a series of investigations to examine what people meant when they claimed something was enjoyable. From these studies Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) propose that enjoyment depends on the balance between the challenge that a situation or task poses and an individual's skill in the relevant area. When an individual perceives a challenge to be higher than their skill level, Csikszentmihalyi argues that anxiety will be experienced. If their skills are such that a challenge can be met almost effortlessly, he argues that individuals will soon become bored and lack attention. When both an individual's skills and the challenge are modest, he suggests individuals become "apathetic". Peak enjoyment arises from challenges where individuals are highly skilled, and when their capabilities are stretched to the utmost. Csikszentmihalyi argues that in this situation, individuals will become wholly absorbed and 'lost' in the activity. In sport, this experience could be described as 'being in the zone' although Csikszentmihalyi uses the term 'flow' to describe this state. Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) also comment that the words often used to describe the flow state are similar to those that describe fun.

As mentioned previously, as the participants progressed to higher levels in their sport, they often felt that it was necessary to cut down on the number of activities they were undertaking. The reasons they commonly gave for this reduction were constraints on their time and clashes with other activities. Although some participants competed in more than one sport at county level, the majority argued that it was impossible to compete in more than one sport at international level because of the amount of hours of specific training (deliberate practice) they were required to play at the top level of their sport. If the participant had to make the decision to focus on one sport, they often chose the sport at which they believed they would be most successful and not necessarily the sport from which they derived most pleasure.

Côté and Hay (2002) acknowledge that their model demonstrates a systematic pattern in the process of developing sport motivation and abilities in children. However, they are also aware that the same pattern of phases is not always applicable to all young people or all sporting situations. Indeed this was the case for a number of participants involved in this study. Evidence from this study would suggest that many of the participants passed through what would be better described as 'transitional moments' as opposed to definite 'phases'. In other words there was more fluidity and transition between and, also, in and out of each of the phases. Consequently, many of the participants did not necessarily make distinct moves from one phase to the next in a sequential order, as perhaps Côté's model would suggest. Julie is a prime example of this: she 'invested' in swimming from an early age but she then dropped out of that sport and moved back into the sampling phase, playing a variety of sports, prior to moving back into the investment phase in another sport (rugby). The following comment illustrates the commitment that Julie put into swimming from a young age:

Julie (rugby, 19.02.05): I was a competitive swimmer from the age of 5 until about 14, so that was my main sport when I was younger. ...When I was about 7, I started doing three mornings a week as well as every evening with only a Sunday off. So I was pretty much training every day from the age of 7, sometimes twice a day.

Julie then went on to a 'sporty' secondary school where she enjoyed competing in; hockey, netball, football and athletics. It was also at this school in Year 8 (age 14) that she took up rugby and, in her words, became 'totally obsessed with it'. By the

age of 16, she enrolled full-time in a Premiership rugby academy where she focused solely on rugby. It is evident that Julie did progress through Côté's three key phases but did not pass through them in a clearly defined linear order. This example is not an isolated case and several other participants from various sporting backgrounds, described a certain amount of fluidity in and out of the phases in their progression to elite level, for example:

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *I first started playing rugby when I was 5, then I stopped it for a bit when I was 9 and then I took it back up when I was nearly 16. The reason I gave it [rugby] up was because I wanted to play football. ...I just played football for my local team for about 2 years then I got scouted for a Premiership football team and I went to play in their Academy for 3 years. That meant my dad having to take me, and it took us an hour and a quarter to get there, three times a week for training and once for a match, so there wasn't any time for anything else.*

For a number of reasons, Patrick became disillusioned with football, gave it up completely and decided to give rugby a 'go'. The following season he was selected for his county rugby squad and Patrick has progressed steadily through the ranks to reach the senior England team. In a similar vein, some of the participants described how they 'specialised' in a number of different sports at differing times in their sporting career. Nick, for example, played many different sports in his youth, including football, but outside of primary school he focussed on gymnastics, training up to 5 times a week after school. However, at the age of 12 he was 'forced' to choose between football and gymnastics; he chose football and soon afterwards was asked to join a professional football club academy. Nick still enjoyed playing all the sports available at secondary school, but out of school he concentrated on football and athletics. To his disappointment, at the age of 16 the Premiership football team did not renew his contract, but this allowed him to focus on pole-vaulting (he was by then a successful junior national pole-vaulter), although he continued to play football for his local football team. Interestingly, even when Nick was an international junior pole-vaulter, his club coach encouraged him to continue playing football as well as playing volleyball at college twice a week. Nick explains when and why he decided to focus solely on pole-vaulting:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): *I played football and volleyball for my college up to the age of 18, but I just did that as a fun social activity, because pole-vaulting*

was now my first sport. ...Then I got worried about getting injured because I broke my ankle when I was 18, playing football, and I haven't played since. And by that time my pole-vaulting was starting to get more serious; I was getting more funding from the NGB's [National Governing Bodies] and they were like 'I don't think it's a good idea if you play football again' and the national coaches were also saying not to play, so... That was also the time when I went to university and that was a kind of turning point, when I concentrated specifically on pole-vault only.

It would appear again that Nick's sporting pathway did not follow Côté and Hay's systematic pattern of sport socialisation, as it could be argued that Nick 'invested' in gymnastics, football and pole-vaulting at different phases of his life whilst also continuing to play other sports simply for fun.

As reported above, broadly speaking, the participants involved in this study did move through the three phases (sampling, specialising and investment) of developmental socialisation as described by Côté and colleagues, but the movement between the phases was often more complex. In other words, not all expert performers necessarily follow the same pattern of socialisation into sport. However, the notion of developmental socialisation and the accompanying phases remains useful to work with because, as I argued in Chapter Two, they mark out a general pattern of socialisation with distinct characteristics and points of emphasis on the pathway to becoming an expert performer.

4.2.1 The Early Years: 'Sports Crazy'

As mentioned previously, all the participants in this study described their childhood as being very active and many of them participated in a wide variety of sports and physical activities. In their earliest memories they were always 'doing something' and were 'sports crazy' and were generally keen to participate in any sport that was made available to them. This was not necessarily always about organised sport but sometimes simply involved 'messing about with a ball with their mates' or 'running about their garden or farm'. The following quotes are typical of the participants' views on how they spent their formative years:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *I have always been really active, and at school I did all the sports that were available, I played football, rugby, cricket, not to a very high level, but I tried to do everything, I also did basketball. I played as much sport as I could, I was sports crazy really.*

Michelle (rugby, 24.03.05): *I have always been quite a sporty person and would give anything a go, sports wise.*

Caroline (04.03.05): *...basically I would do all sports that I could have a go at, it's been the same all my life.*

Claire (rugby 16.02.05): *Just at break time I did a lot of sport with the boys, even volleyball and things. I don't think at that age I ever played any sport out of school. I just messed around in the garden with friends and I was quite close to a farm so I would do quite a lot of work up at the farm.*

It is evident that having fun playing sports was an important part of the participants' upbringing. Although most ($n = 34$) of the participants suggested that their parents had encouraged and facilitated their participation in sport, there was no indication that they had been in anyway coerced into it. Instead, it was simply something that they were intrinsically motivated to do. The following comment from Rory exemplifies this notion of innate inspiration:

Rory (athletics, 08.11.04): *They [parents] have always, always been very supportive, but a lot of it has been down to me really, like I haven't gone to play football or gone training week in and week out because my mum and dad have been standing there. ...I just got on with it; it's not something that I have ever consciously had to think about. Obviously if I didn't want to go [training] I wouldn't have, so I just think the motivation came within.*

As previously suggested, it was clear that the participants gained a lot of pleasure from simply participating in physical activity. It is difficult to overstate the sense of excitement and sheer love that was evident when participants were reminiscing about their numerous sporting childhood experiences, with words like 'fun' and 'enjoyment' being liberally sprinkled throughout their reminiscences. This is consistent with several other studies which found that the most common reason respondents gave for participating in sports was "fun" (Brustad, 1993; Gill Gross, & Huddleston, 1983; Gould & Petlichkoff, 1988; Petlichkoff, 1993; Côté & Hay, 2002) especially in the early years. At the same time, the emphasis on "fun and enjoyment" being an important element of sport, is not a new concept. Over 30 years ago Orlick and Botterill (1975) reported that a focus on the fun aspect of sport during the formative

years was critical in keeping children participating in physical activity. The following comments encapsulate the participants' 'love' of sport and the consistent use of the word 'just' gives the impression that these feelings are perhaps inherent:

Lewis (swimming, 29.11.04): *when I was at primary and secondary school I did all the sports that were provided by the school, like football, rugby or any of the other games like rounders and cricket. I was pretty good at them at that level, I wasn't amazing but I was alright and I just really enjoyed it. Yeah definitely, enjoyment was the main reason for playing.*

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): *I would play football in the winter, I would do football training once a week and play on a Sunday and I played cricket in the summer. I also use to swim three times a week and if there was school football I would do that as well. I've always preferred doing sport and stuff, because I just loved playing all sports.*

Colin (taekwondo, 06.04.05): *When I was younger I used to play a lot of sports. I played football, basketball, badminton... I did a lot when I was younger. This was at school and I played football out of school as well, but the other sports I just played for fun. I was quite good at them all. At PE I used to do all sorts of things like gymnastics. I was an all rounded sports player, but I really liked football.*

It was apparent that the participants liked to spend their free time playing a lot of sport in and out of school. In a similar vein, Côté and Hay (2002) noted that an important motivating feature of the sampling years is having fun and excitement, with the emphasis on playing rather than training. As discussed previously, Côté (1999) describes this 'playing' as deliberate play, which involves young people participating in structured activities that require the development of particular techniques and knowledge (Kirk & MacPhail, 2003). The following quotations involving participants from this study illustrate the concept of deliberate play:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): *I think when you are younger it's got to be purely about enjoyment, and that's what I remember it [training] like. ... We use to have competitions like in silly little games, and then she [coach] would give you some tips on how you could do it better. But it would always be about competition, and that type of thing. It wouldn't be boring stuff, like dribbling around cones all the time.*

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *I have always really enjoyed training, even as a youngster, just running about learning how to kick and throw a ball around and learning the game [rugby] through playing games.*

The evidence from this study supports the notion that training sessions in the early years should fundamentally be about enjoyment and would benefit from being developed around the concept of 'deliberate play'. Consequently, it is maybe not surprising that the most often cited reason given in this study for the child athlete dropping out of a sport at any stage, but especially in the early years, was because they were 'no longer having fun', as Tracey and Nick allude to in their following comments:

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *...it was when I was about 13 that I gave up ballet, I wasn't enjoying the ballet as much and at that time I was still playing a lot of other sports. So I decided to totally knock it [ballet] on the head.*

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04) *...it was really very strict in the gymnastics environment, like it was "do as we say or you're out" and we were small, little kids that were kind of scared of the coaches, so when they said that to me, I didn't want to give up all of this [other activities] just for gymnastics, I didn't want to put everything into that, I still wanted to have fun and be a kid basically.*

It is clear that because they were taking part in a wide variety of activities, all vying for their time, if they did not enjoy one particular sport for whatever reason, they had plenty other activities from which to choose. In relation to this argument, Green (2004) points out that it is important to appreciate that it is not necessarily the sheer *amount* of activity that is undertaken by young people that appears to influence continued adherence to sport and physical activity, so much as the range or number of different, activities engaged in.

4.2.2 Opportunities to Play Sport in the Early Years

In order to take part in, let alone enjoy, a sporting activity, it is obviously necessary to have the opportunity. Scanlan et al. (1993), discuss the importance of 'involvement opportunities' and 'involvement alternatives' in their 'sport commitment model'. They argue that these constructs as well as 'personal investments' and 'social constraints' can have a positive or negative effect in motivating children to participate in sport. These issues were also prevalent in this study. Having the opportunity to 'sample' a variety of sports in the participants' younger years was regularly

mentioned by the respondents as being an important part of their sporting development. Furthermore, physical education (PE) was regularly cited as the catalyst to the introduction of a variety of sports. The following comments highlight the importance many ($n = 20$) of the participants placed on the facilities and teaching in their schools:

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): *I am probably different because I went to a school where there were so many different sports on offer at quite a good standard so if you were good at sport you didn't find it annoying because nobody else was, because there were always other people who were really into sport.*

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *When I started running in year 5 our whole team was actually very good, because we had a dedicated teacher who took us for training at lunchtimes and stuff like that.*

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): *At primary school I used to do every sport, we used to have PE lessons, probably 2-3 times a week. I remember that we were quite lucky that one of our primary school teachers was very much into sport and every lesson would involve some sort of physical activity, whether it was for science or maths it would involve going outside and doing some sort of physical activity so it would be fun to learn as well.*

However, in contrast to these positive school sport experiences, some ($n = 9$) participants commented that they were not given the opportunity to play a variety of sports at primary school and had to seek out and join a club if they wanted to play a particular sport. This is consistent with Kirk (2005) who argues that primary schools, by themselves, are unable to deliver quality early experiences. For example:

Claire (rugby, 16.02.05): *I was always told at primary school that I was really good at sport and I really did enjoy it and I wanted to do more of it but there weren't the opportunities because it wasn't a particularly sporty school.*

Rory (athletics, 08.11.04): *I can't remember doing any structured athletics at primary school; there was never any after school clubs or that kind of stuff. It was just a case of being really active, and participating in quite a lot of football, and just being out and about really.*

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): *At my school we didn't play football, it was all rugby, so there wasn't a choice.*

Calum (rugby, 01.12.04): *I played football until I went to comprehensive school when I was 11, but it was just a school that played rugby, so it was a choice of either rugby or cross country. In a round about way they said "you*

can play rugby, you're short and fat so you play in the front row!" And that is how I started my rugby career, at 11 or 12. .

Although all the participants in this study continued to participate in sport, it could be that they chose to focus on sports that were more easily accessible to them; or as some suggested they were simply 'lucky' that they had the necessary facilities near by. Other young people may not be as fortunate and may lose out on the opportunity to play certain sports; moreover, these sports may have lost out on the potential of expert performers and, importantly, could have led to children not participating in sport at all.

Gagné (2003) recognises that the development process is the transformation of 'gifts' into talent. However, over the past century researchers have debated the respective importance of environmental and genetic contributions to this process (Baker & Horton, 2004). Baker and Horton further contend that although these dichotomous positions are still maintained by a few, it is generally believed that the development of expertise is the result of the interaction among elements from both areas. As has been discussed above and elsewhere (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Tranckle & Cushion, 2006) the developmental socialisation process does not take place within a vacuum and environmental factors cannot be ignored. The evidence from this study would support the suggestion that for a young performer to become expert in their sport, a combination of 'nature and nurture' is required. This said, many ($n = 18$) of the participants in this study suggested that being 'naturally' talented played a critical role in their sporting development.

4.2.3 Nature versus Nurture

From the previous discussions it is evident that enjoyment is one of the fundamental reasons why the participants engaged in sporting activities in their younger years. It is therefore interesting to find out *why* they enjoyed playing sport so much. Many of the participants gave the impression that as children they were naturally gifted sports people, not only in their current primary sport, but also in various other sports.

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *I have always been pretty good at sport. Generally, I've always enjoyed it and picked them up quite quickly and fairly easily, swimming is the only sport I've taken to international level, but everything else that I have played at school I have always been one of the better players at any chosen sport, so yes, sport has always come relatively easy to me. I am reasonably athletic so I can turn my hand to most sports.*

Shona (rugby, 14.03.05): *I just think generally that I was quite a naturally sporty person. I think some people are like that. But like, some people you throw them a ball and they just can't catch it. I think that you can work on it to a certain extent but part of it I think you have to have the genes to start with and I think I had those genes.*

Kate (swimming, 14.11.04): *Every sport I do I seem to pick it up quite easily, just because I am sporty I suppose, and strong. That was always the case, because if I compare myself to friends or people at school, I seemed to pick up sports better than they did.*

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): *I've always really enjoyed every sport that I have done, and I would say that I was pretty good at most sports and picked them up quite quickly.*

As noted earlier, it is clear that the participants thought they were naturally gifted sports people because from a young age they picked up sport 'fairly easily' and 'quite quickly'. Furthermore, Mike contends that he had more chance of being a successful swimmer because he realised that he did not have to train so hard at swimming to get the desired results. On the other hand, with rugby he perceived that his team mates were of a better 'natural ability' than he was:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *... because I played with guys who played for the county [rugby] and I knew I didn't have their ability really, and the swimming came to me so easily. Like when I was I young I didn't do a huge amount of training [swimming] and I was still beating people who were doing a lot more.*

Many of the participants believed that a key reason for them becoming expert performers was their natural talent in one or a number of sports, and this they argued gave them an advantage over others. This is in accordance with Bloom's (1985) study, where he argues that expert performers interviewed in both tennis and swimming were afforded appropriate prior and current conditions of learning. This enabled these performers to move through the skill progressions in a relatively accelerated period of time compared to their peers. However, this natural talent

perception would appear to contradict a substantial amount of evidence that has suggested that elite performance is the result of intense practice as opposed to some form of natural ability (Ericsson et al., 1993; Helsen, Starkes, & Hodges, 1998; Hodge & Deakin, 1998). This debate is not new, and according to Gnida (1995) the 'nature versus nurture' debate is one of the most frequently discussed topics in the realms of psychology and sociology. I would argue that the inter-relationship between nature and nurture is best described by Kimble (1993) who suggests that "asking whether individual differences in behaviour are determined by heredity or environment is like asking whether the areas of rectangles are determined by their height or width" (pp: 13-14).

Although many of the participants professed to be naturally talented and enjoyed playing a number of sports in their younger years, they found it impossible to commit to all of them in their later years. Stevenson (1999) also argues that just because someone is introduced to a sport, it does not mean that they will necessarily or inevitably be committed to it. The following section goes on to examine the reasons behind the participants' decisions to focus on particular sports.

4.2.4 Progressing in Sport: Transition through the Phases

The great majority ($n = 35$) of the participants in this research did 'sample' several different sports during their childhood but, for a number of different reasons, certain sports became more important to them as they grew older. I will now consider this issue in greater detail to gain a better understanding of their progression and development into becoming an elite performer.

As discussed previously and similar to earlier studies (for example: Bloom, 1985; Carlson, 1988, Côté, 1999; Côté & Hay, 2002; Kirk and MacPhail, 2003) subsequent to the sampling years, many of the participants in this study began to reduce the number of sporting activities that they were involved in to generally two or three. Again, consistent with Côté and colleagues, it was also clear that the further they progressed in their sport the more they increased their engagement in deliberate

practice whilst decreasing their involvement in deliberate play. Ericsson and colleagues (1993) contend that “deliberate practice is a highly structured activity, the explicit goal of which is to improve performance” (p. 368). They further add that deliberate practice activities require effort, are not inherently enjoyable, and are specifically designed to improve the current level of performance. Although it appeared that most of the participants did increase the amount of training they were doing in the specialising phase, they often commented that they still enjoyed this aspect of their sport:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): ...my introduction to water per se was pretty early on and I always swam for fun, and my elder brother loved to swim as well, so we would go and mess around in the pool since we were tiny because my mum always thought it was important that we learn to swim when we were very little. ...So training after that just seemed, well it didn't seem like training it was just like going swimming. Like swim up and down for one and a half hours and have a laugh, I just really enjoyed it. I enjoyed exercise anyway and that kind of thing. So although people called it training, back then it wasn't really training to me, I was just going swimming and looking forward to it.

Like Mike, Susan also acknowledged that training as a youngster revolved around having fun but now that she has become more committed to her sport and skill improvement is becoming more of an issue, she now appreciates the benefits of deliberate practice:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): ... as I have got older I realise the benefits of doing some monotonous types of sessions where you do things constantly, over and over, to get things right. And I am quite happy doing sessions like that now; I could spend an hour, doing the same thing just to make sure that I am doing the correct thing to get the correct technique.

The latter point in Susan's comment above agrees with all three conditions of Ericsson and colleagues' (1993) definition of deliberate practice. Susan understands that she has to do specific training in order to improve the skill and understands that she will enjoy the long term benefits of the practice. I reported previously that many of the participants found it relatively easy to 'pick up' sports in their younger years, but, once they started to focus on specific sports they were willing to sacrifice some of the enjoyment to improve on their skills.

Louise, an international swimmer, is a typical example of a sports person who has progressed through a similar pathway as that suggested by Côté (1999). She explained that when she was a young child she 'was always really into sports' and played badminton, hockey, tennis, as well as doing athletics and swimming. However, between the ages of 15 and 17 she reduced her sporting activities to mainly hockey and swimming prior to channelling all her time and energy into swimming:

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): I still played hockey until I was about 16/17, then I qualified for the Commonwealth Games [in swimming] when I was 17/18, that was just 4 years after I had started training so then at that point when I knew what was happening, I started to cut other things down because I didn't want to risk injury and things like that.

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04) tells a similar story:

I use to do everything, especially when I moved to secondary school because it was a sports college, so every sport was available and I played most of them. I played volleyball, cricket, tennis, badminton, a little bit of basketball, football obviously, track and field in the summer, just every night after school I would be doing something.

However, by the age of 15, Nick had restricted his involvement in sport to football and athletics; he acknowledges that lack of time was the main reason for coming to that decision:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): I was still playing football, so I had to train twice a week for that, and play once a week. Then go over to Horsham [specifically for pole-vaulting] once a week and training with the athletics club once a week, so the only day off I got was Saturday, where I could do stuff with my parents or at home.

Although Nick had cut down on the number of sports he was participating in, he had not reduced the number of hours he was participating in sport.

Stacey's sporting life story followed a similar pattern. From the age of 15 she spent most of her spare time playing hockey and running at an athletics club. Similar to Nick she had reduced the number of different sports she was participating in but had increased the training intensity and hours spent on these two sports. The following

comment from Stacey highlights how busy her sporting life was, even though she had cut down on the number of sports in which she was participating:

(hockey, 15.04.05) ...I played netball on a Monday night, on a Tuesday night was athletics, on a Wednesday night I would train (hockey), Thurs night I would probably do athletics and I would do a bit of hockey as well, Friday I would probably rest, Saturday I would play hockey and Sunday would be athletics. So I would be doing something every day practically.

Stacey, like many of the other participants, continued playing more than one sport until she went to university at the age of 18, where her hockey and her education took priority.

Interestingly, even at the point when many of the participants started to take their sport more seriously and began to increase the intensity and duration of their training, they maintained that enjoyment was the fundamental reason for them being involved in their sport. Though Siedentop (2002) believes it is important to note that the concept of fun is frequently misunderstood and misrepresented in the sporting field, he further adds that when fun is discussed in sport, it is often considered in the context of children having fun, suggesting images of gaiety and frivolity. However, Caillois (1961) argues that for adults 'fun' often means being completely absorbed in an activity in which they are trying to improve, a kind of fun that is found in training, and a taste for rules and imposed difficulty. This argument is similar to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990, 1993) 'flow' concept which was discussed earlier in this chapter. I would argue then that it is worth bearing this definition in mind when the participants argue that they still enjoy their training even at the point where it is physically and mentally demanding. This is in accordance with the views of many involved in this study, who suggested that much of the enjoyment derived from improving their skills and techniques and as a result experiencing and enjoying competitive success. As Mike explains, it was not until he got older that he thought about the consequences of training and that it was no longer all about 'having a laugh':

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): I used to view training as a time for racing other people, that sort of thing, rather than focusing on where it was actually going to get me. I used to think 'I'm going to go to this training session and I am

going to beat you', that sort of thing. Then as I got older I realised that the harder that I pushed myself at training that the better I would swim at the end of it. I think it is a maturity thing as you get older you realise the benefits.

Several (n = 10) of the participants also suggested that there was a particular time in their life when they started to believe that they had the ability to progress to the highest level in their sport. From this stage onwards they were prepared to fully commit to being an expert in their particular sport, for example:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): The first feedback form I got from that [Summer Sport's Camp] said 'Potential International' and that was all it said. So once I read that I thought 'well ok maybe you know something...perhaps there is something here'. Before that I probably dreamt that I would play international, but I think that was the first time I thought it could be a reality.

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): When I was nearly 17[years old] I competed for Great Britain in the World Cross Country Championships and that's the biggest race there is, cross country wise... I didn't really get anywhere, I came 46th, which was respectable but it was more a token of 'Hi, I'm here' kind of thing. It was a big thing to get on a trip to go to a big race, and I knew from then on that I really, really wanted to do well in the sport.

The participants suggested that it was not only they who realised that they were becoming more competent in their sport. Significant others, for example, parents, coaches, teachers, peers etc, were starting to notice that they had the potential to develop into an expert performer. However, due to the increase in the number and intensity of their training sessions in the later phases of their development, all the participants agreed that it would have been impossible to compete and train 'seriously' in more than one sport. Some of the participants could not remember having any doubts about their choice of sport, but for others there was uncertainty, conflict and in some cases a radical rethink in their choice of sport upon which to focus.

4.2.5 Investment Years: The Time to 'Specialise' in One Specific sport.

According to Côté and Hay (2002) the investment years are an extension of the specialising years, with the main difference being the dramatic increase in the number and intensity of sport-specific training hours (deliberate practice) and the

concentration on a single sport. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, although some of the participants in this study competed in more than one sport at county level, the majority argued that it was impossible to compete in more than one sport at international level. Again, they argued that this was generally because of the number of training hours (deliberate practice) that they were required to do to play at the top level of their sport. All the participants in this study are now only competing in one sport. The following comments exemplify why increasing demands of time and energy were factors in these participants reducing the number of sporting activities:

Patrick(rugby, 09.03.05): *I really enjoyed playing other sports, it is only really now that I only play one sport, because of the commitment I have to put into playing rugby at elite level, playing for England and stuff. There isn't time to play other sports and there is always the worry of getting injured and I don't want to get injured doing something else, and the coaches wouldn't be happy with you either.*

Alison (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *There is no way I could play any other sports now, there just isn't the time. If we are not away at training camps, we're away competing.*

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): *...at that point [age 14] I was still doing my athletics, but of course there comes a time when you have to make a decision what you are going to do on competition days. ... I played England U16, U17 and U18, so hockey was getting to be that bit more serious. ...so my hockey demands were being more placed on me really, so I just naturally progressed away from other sports.*

Furthermore, several of the participants commented that the reason they had to forego playing a particular sport was because another sport that they were involved in trained and/or played on the same evening/day. The comments from Ruth and Alicia highlight this issue:

Ruth (rugby, 04.03.05): *When I came to university I had the choice of playing netball or rugby, because they both played on the same day and trained on the same day.*

Alicia (hockey, 22.04.05): *The only reason I had to make a choice [between hockey and athletics] was because the training was on the same day and the trials were also on the same day, so I said I didn't want to do the athletics.*

However, lack of time was not the only reason the participants gave for not continuing to play other sports; fear of injury was also commonly cited as a reason, even at a recreational level:

Lewis (swimming, 29.11.04): *I got told by my swimming coach that he didn't like me playing rugby, in case I got injured, especially before a competition. So he wasn't too keen on it [rugby], but he didn't think it was a problem until later on. ...*

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *I did both [swimming and rugby] until I was 15, then I broke my ankle when I was 15, playing rugby. Therefore I couldn't swim and it was a sort of realisation then that you can't really put those two sports together. ...the year after when I was 16, I was National Junior champion so I thought I may as well start to give this [swimming] more of a go and I stopped playing rugby, because the two don't really combine very well. But I still played other games, like basketball, just for fun. Although because of the nature of swimming it eventually became all consuming.*

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): *If I want to stay at the top in rugby it is not worth taking the chance of getting injured in just a run around [hockey]. ...I love my extreme sports, but I won't do them now, because I would kick myself if I injure myself doing another sport. You can't do everything and I want to be the best centre in the world.*

At points in their sporting careers, the participants were faced with challenges and opportunities that required them to make choices about which sport to focus on. Facing these challenges and taking these opportunities was not always a straightforward matter, as we can see from Caroline's, Mike's and Lewis' comments on the fear of injury. Although we are referring here predominantly to when the participants moved into the investment years; I thought it was particularly revealing that Patrick was only 9 when he first had to face a dilemma about which sports to play:

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *When I started off, football was my main sport; I was playing rugby on a Sunday morning and football on a Sunday afternoon and me and my brother were doing the same. Then it got to the stage where we had to pick one, when it got to a higher level and we would have been too tired to do both or have the time to do both. I think this was when I was 9 and I chose to play football. ...I chose football because I enjoyed it a bit more than rugby.*

As already discussed, in the participants' earlier years (sampling), having fun was the predominant reason given for taking part in sporting activities, however, once the participants in this study were at the other end of the spectrum (investment), being successful at their sport began to become a matter of greater importance.

4.2.6 *Success and Enjoyment*

Consistent with previous studies (for example, Monsas, 1985; Stevenson, 1990; Stevenson, 1999), and as mentioned previously a significant factor influencing the direction and shape of an individual's developmental socialisation into sport derived from their evaluation of the potential success they may have in a particular sport. As referred to earlier, Caroline was playing both hockey and rugby in her 1st and 2nd year at university, but she increasingly found it difficult to combine playing both sports, if she were to make it to top level in either of them. Caroline acknowledged that it would be easier for her to 'make it' in rugby as opposed to hockey.

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): ... because rugby is a growing sport I knew that I had more of a chance and the capability to get into it, whereas with my hockey (well I could have got better), but I wasn't training enough to get better.

In a similar vein Mike, as already noted, played both rugby and swam to county level up until the age of 16. However, after breaking his ankle playing rugby, he thought that it was not feasible or sensible for him to continue to play both sports. Although Mike was more 'passionate' about rugby, he felt he had more 'potential for success' in swimming:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): I enjoyed both, but I was probably more passionate about watching rugby and playing rugby, but I knew I was never going to progress really [in rugby], and with swimming I was progressing all the time and I really loved it as well.

Mike's desire to be successful at a sport was evidently stronger than simply playing a sport for pure enjoyment. However, Lewis, who coincidentally also played rugby and swam competitively, chose to concentrate on swimming when it came to the point that

he felt he needed to focus on only one sport. Lewis's justification for his choice is a combination of chances of success and enjoyment, as he explains further:

Lewis (swimming, 29.11.04): *I did enjoy playing rugby but I knew there were risks playing it and I really enjoyed swimming. I would say that I enjoyed swimming more and I think I was better at it. If I didn't enjoy swimming now I wouldn't be doing it, but I suppose you get enjoyment out of success so it's hard to split the two, but I think enjoyment was more important to me than success at that age.*

Bob was in a similar position to both Lewis and Mike, and it was at the age of 14 that his rugby coach told him he had to choose between swimming and rugby, mainly because he kept missing games or training sessions. This was the reason Bob gave for choosing swimming:

(swimming, 15.11.04) ... *my rugby coach said that I would probably have quite a good career at this [rugby], even from such a very young age but I suppose I was more into swimming and I enjoyed it more and I was starting to get quite good at it and noticeably good at it, so the achievement I suppose is when you start winning medals, it really attracts you to it and you think 'this is where I really want to be' because I think you start to focus on your strengths.*

It would appear from this sample of participants that the combination of enjoyment and success influenced the direction of their sport careers. Moreover, it was not only ex-male rugby players turned swimmers who discussed this issue. Many (n = 16) others did, and agreed that there came a point when they realised that they would be forced to focus on only one sport if they were to realise their sporting aspirations to compete at the highest level of which they were capable. The following comments highlight the importance that these participants placed on achieving this level of success:

Alicia (hockey, 22.04.05): *...because hockey was the one that I excelled in the most, like I was playing England U16's by the age of 15, I was captaining all the squads so I obviously realised that I might have a bit of a talent for that sport, so that was my criteria more than just because I preferred it more so than the other sports.*

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): *I knew myself that I was considerably better at hockey, because through the age groups of hockey, like in the U11's we got to the National finals. Also, at 11 I was playing county level for the U16's, so it was obvious from early on that I was pretty good at hockey, whereas, with*

netball I was very much of a muchness with my peers from school. ...Also, my enjoyment for playing hockey was far greater than it was for playing netball and I think my confidence was a big factor, because I was far more confident in my ability at playing hockey and I knew that I could succeed in whatever I was doing with it, but in netball I wasn't so confident in my own ability.

The enjoyment and success issue appears to be a 'chicken and the egg' scenario, whereby it is difficult to say which comes first. Frank is perhaps an extreme case of a sportsperson who categorically claims to prefer playing another sport more than the one in which he invests most of his time, including representing his country. Frank's 'first love' is football, but he realised in his late teens that he had more chance of succeeding as a rugby player than as a footballer. As his ultimate ambition was to make his career in sport, he felt forced to focus solely on rugby. The following comment from Frank illustrates just how passionate he is about football, even though he is now an international rugby player:

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): I definitely preferred football when I was at school; I still do if I am honest! My first love is football, I do like rugby, but you get to the point where you realise that you might do better in the other one (rugby). But it was when I was about 16; I thought I would have more of a chance of making it as a professional rugby player than a footballer. I still played football for my school now and again, but I stopped playing football on a Sunday [club], but if there was a rugby game then I would have played rugby over football, because I chose to concentrate on rugby. But if there was a football match on telly, I would much prefer to watch that, than rugby. And I still go and watch my local football team, I just love everything about football, I do like rugby but.... I would much prefer to be a professional footballer than a professional rugby player...and it's nothing to do with the money.

Furthermore, because Frank is so committed to being a professional sportsman of some sort, not only would he prefer to be playing another sport, but within rugby he would also rather be playing in a different position:

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): I play mainly 2nd row and sometimes I play in the back row, because I have always been pretty tall and I am quite happy about that. But if I was honest I would probably play somewhere else, but obviously with your build and that, I suit that position, so I just get on with it.

It is perhaps because both Frank's father and many of his childhood friends were involved in football that Frank feels a closer affinity to football than rugby. However, Frank is honest enough with himself to realise that he is more likely to make a better

living out of playing rugby than he is elsewhere, in or out of sport. Nevertheless, the preceding comments exemplify how, ultimately, success is a key motivator for the majority of the participants in this study.

Although the majority of the participants contend that enjoyment is still an important motivation to play their sport, some of them commented that there had been times, particularly later in their sporting careers, when they had lost this feeling. This was generally because of their demanding training regimes and/or the sacrifices that they felt they had to make to stay at the elite level in their sport. But the enticement of future success and accreditation featured strongly in getting them back on 'track'. Louise, an international swimmer, has always enjoyed competing, but for a while she struggled to cope with the increased training demands placed on her. However, Louise explains why the lure of the upcoming Olympics motivated her to keep going:

(swimming, 18.11.04): I went through a phase about 2 years ago, where I absolutely hated it. I was getting here [swimming pool] and I was getting in but I really hated it. I really thought seriously about quitting, but the motivating factor for me was that it was only a year and a half 'til the Athens Olympics in 2004, so I kept telling myself to keep going because if I didn't, I knew I would regret it. It was only for about 3 or 4 months that I felt that way and then I came through the other side.

Claire also went through a phase when she was not enjoying playing rugby and did not think all the sacrifices she was making to be an elite rugby player were worth it:

(rugby, 16.02.05): I did want to be successful but I had got to the point that I disliked rugby so much that I wanted to get my love back for the game to begin with and then move on from there, because I don't think you can be successful if you hate what you are doing, because I think that enjoyment is a big part for me, if I don't enjoy something I won't do it, that's the sort of mindset that I have got.

With the extreme pressures placed on most elite performers it is perhaps understandable that on occasions they have some motivational lows.

With success at this later point now being acknowledged as being fundamental to the participants' involvement in sport, both the amateurs and professionals involved in this study commonly referred to their sport as being their current occupation.

Moreover, they often described their specialised training (deliberate practice) as ‘a means to an end’ in order for them to be better at their ‘job.’ The following quotes are typical and illustrate how the participants viewed their sport now that successful outcomes and improvement had become key to their participation:

Francesca (athlete, 11.11.04): *...even now in javelin I place success very highly because I think I am not going to train this hard, not to do well or just for the enjoyment of competing. I think it is now more ‘job like’ because I know there is a possibility of a career if I get to a certain level and consistently stay at that level.*

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): *I haven’t played football for years now, just because I don’t get a chance and if I got injured I wouldn’t be able to play rugby and that’s kind of my job now. At the level of rugby I am playing now I can’t really mess around playing football.*

Colin (taekwondo, 06.04.05): *...yeah but it is more of a job now than a hobby, because you get paid to do it or you get funding for it. And before, I trained for enjoyment but now if I don’t train then I know I am going to lose fitness and lose my sharpness. So it is more of a job now and it has taken a while to settle into that. I use to do it for enjoyment, now it’s like; ‘this is what I do’.*

The above comments would support the evidence from previous studies (Bloom, 1985; Côté, (1999); Côté et al., 2003; Soberlak and Côté, 2003) which suggest that the investment years are a phase when elite athletes devote a great deal of their time to specialised training. As highlighted previously, this training is not necessarily enjoyable at the time, but the elite sports person understands that they will reap the benefits physically, psychologically, and competitively. I think Kate and Katrina’s comments sum up this sentiment fittingly:

Kate (swimmer, 15.11.04): *I love competitions, even now, it’s competing that I absolutely adore, and training is like a means to an end. I mean, I wouldn’t do it if I didn’t enjoy it but I sometimes view it like going to school, its like something that you don’t always want to do, and you wake up in the mornings and you think ‘oh, do I have to go’. But you know if you want to get what you want then you have to go and go through the motions and do whatever you have to do that day to get the end product.*

Katrina (taekwondo, 05.04.06): *...being a World Class Performer is like being on a roller coaster, some times you are up here and some times you are down there. You always have to question yourself if you want to keep doing it, because it is really hard on the individual, but I think that’s what makes you good because you can push yourself. You have to be a really strong person to do well in this sport and keep on doing it. Sometimes you love it and*

sometimes you hate it and you think 'Why am I doing this?' But you know why you are doing it, well, most of the time you do!

On the other hand, several ($n = 7$) of the participants argued that they did enjoy training at the time, no matter how demanding the session was. Furthermore, they gave the strong impression that the enjoyment obtained from training was a major motivation for them continuing to participate in their sport. A typical comment would be: 'If I didn't like it, I wouldn't do it'. This statement contradicts Ericsson et al.'s (1993) argument that deliberate practice was 'not inherently enjoyable'; particularly if one thinks of Csikszentmihalyi's explanation of enjoyment:

"Enjoyment is when people have a purpose and are actively involved in trying to reach a goal. ...It is the joy we get from stretching physical and mental potentialities in new directions that motivates human creativity and results in the accomplishments that make us different from any other forms of life" (Jackson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; pp. 35)

Some participants also alluded to enjoying certain conditions surrounding their training sessions as well as the physical aspect. These conditions include 'being able to beat people', improving skills, 'sense of achievement' or 'simply being with their friends'. The following comments powerfully suggest that they enjoyed their training in itself, but when examined at a deeper level, there is also an assumption of delayed gratification:

Bob (swimming, 15.11.04): *I just love going training, I love being in the water and I love being able to beat people off the wall with the underwater fly kick. That is probably the biggest thing that I have taken out of swimming, that and the discipline aspect of it and the skills; the personal skills and the motivational skills. Like as I said racing wasn't always the biggest thing for me, I love going on the training camps, I really love being there and working hard, I really do love working hard and knowing that I've worked hard and the sense of achievement you get after a good set or when I got out of the pool and I feel tired. I love the feeling of being sore after training because you know that you are getting somewhere, if you are not sore then there's something wrong.*

Similarly, Lewis explained that because he enjoyed training so much he was delighted when his coach suggested that he should increase his training regime to include early morning sessions:

(swimming, 29.11.04): *I've always loved getting up in the morning because the pool is always quieter, and I like going to lectures, when other people have just got up and I've already been up for four hours. I feel some sort of achievement from that, I just love it. I have always enjoyed my training sessions and I still enjoy them now. ...There's a good group of swimmers there and I feel like it [training] gets the best out of me and that it's good for me.*

Although there could be physiological reasons for why these participants feel so good when training, it could be argued that if their effort was not being rewarded with success or they did not have a close friendship group at training, for example, they would not claim to enjoy their 'deliberate practice' quite so much.

To conclude this section, it was evident from this study that most of the participants followed a similar sporting pathway to that suggested by Côté and colleagues. The sampling years were especially significant with all the participants suggesting that they had an active early childhood, which was based around fun and enjoyment. Many participants suggested that this was a crucial foundation for their subsequent sporting career. Lack of enjoyment, time constraints and lack of opportunity to continue in certain sports were often the reason participants gave for refining their sporting activities. At some stage, all the participants realised that they had the potential to compete at the highest level in sport. This sometimes involved facing challenging situations about the sports they enjoyed playing and the sports they felt they could be more successful at, which were not always the same. As they are all now competing at senior international level, they appear to have satisfied at least some of their ambitions. This chapter will now move on to discuss how long this sporting pathway took the participants to reach the level of expert performer.

4.3 DOES THE '10-YEAR' RULE APPLY TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY?

The '10-year rule' specifies that a 10-year commitment to high levels of specific training is the minimum requirement to reach expert level (Simon & Chase, 1973) and according to Ericsson (1996) to be considered an 'expert', a performer must reliably exhibit exceptional levels of skill. Whilst all the participants in this study met the

criteria of being 'expert', several ($n = 13$) of the participants could be argued not to have this prerequisite of 10 years' deliberate practice in one particular sport, prior to reaching expert level. As previously acknowledged, the theory of deliberate practice (Ericsson et al., 1993) extends Simon and Chase's work by suggesting that it was not training of any type but engagement in 'deliberate practice' (i.e. training that requires effort, is not inherently enjoyable and is specifically designed to improve the current level of performance) that was necessary for the attainment of expertise. Although this study agrees that many of the participants had fully committed to deliberate practice in one sport for over 10 years prior to reaching elite level, there were several ($n = 13$) others who had not. What did appear to be significant was that many of the participants had taken up their sport at a younger age ($n = 29$), but they did not specialise solely on that activity until they were older.

Rory is one participant who had at least 10 years of specific training experience prior to making it to the top of his sport; the following quotation explains why he thinks a long and steady development is imperative for long distance running:

Rory (athletics, 08.11.04): *You've got to serve your apprenticeship in long distance running, its not something you can say "I'm going to run a marathon next week" because (a) you are not going to do very well in it, (b) it will kill you and (c) you won't be able to do the training. So it is something you have to work towards doing, you just have to plod away and up the distances as you get older and up the mileage and up the intensity until you get to the point where you can actually do it. It probably took me until I was about 25 or 26, that I was able to do the training for it. That's pretty typical of westernised distance runners. Some people try to push it and do it earlier and they can get a relatively good career at it, but it's often a shorter career.*

Stephen's sporting pathway to senior international rugby took him over 10 years also, and his route was typical of other participants:

Stephen (rugby, 10.03.05): *I joined my local rugby club when I was 8 and played there all the way through to U16's. ...I played county U13's to U16's and then I got into the England set up. I also swam competitively between the ages of 13 and 15 but that was mainly for the conditioning side of my rugby. It was also then that I got into the [Premiership club] academy and that's when I started proper all round conditioning sessions.*

On the other hand, several ($n = 13$) of the participants claimed that they became experts in their sport with far less than 10 years of deliberate practice. Indeed, they also suggested that becoming successful athletes after a relatively short time of specific training was motivational, as swimmer Louise explains:

Louise (swimming, 18.11.05): I qualified for the Commonwealth Games when I was 17/18, 4 years after I started training and that was the point when I knew things were happening. ...Because for me, to qualify for the Commonwealth Games after such a short period of training, I was so wary and I didn't want to mess it up in any way.

Likewise, Olympic taekwondo player Colin took up taekwondo around the age of 12, while playing a variety of other sports. For a number of personal reasons he gave up taekwondo at the age of 14 and concentrated on playing football. However, when he was 17 years old Olympic taekwondo was inaugurated into the 2000 Olympic Games and he watched a previous training partner compete at the Games on television. This strongly motivated him to take up the sport again and the following comment explains in his own words how and why he went about it:

(taekwondo, 06.04.05): It was when I was about 17 I started taking taekwondo a bit more seriously I just wanted to come back and compete and enjoy it again and it was real quick from then. I started back in May 2000 after watching the Olympics, I saw Sandra competing and she used to be a team mate at the gym I used to go to, and that kind of inspired me. ...Then by the December [2000] I was in my first ever GB selection.

It was evident that Colin's progression to the elite level in his sport was very quick, with nowhere near 10 years of deliberate practice. As Colin (excitedly) added:

The last Olympics I wasn't competing at any level, I was watching it at home on TV, then the next ones, I was in it [Sydney, 2004]!

Similarly, Francesca progressed to elite status in a short period of time once she made the commitment to focus solely on javelin:

(Athletics, 11.11.04) When I finished my A-levels I said I just wanted to concentrate on javelin, just because I enjoyed it most. It sounds a bit strange but it was fairly easy to progress, like my first international came quite quickly, like after a year or so after making that decision.

Several of the other participants also suggested that it took less than 10 years of specific training to make it to the expert level. However, it must also be pointed out that a few ($n = 4$) of the participants were of the opinion that they were encouraged to progress too quickly into competing at elite level. In retrospect, they commented that they thought this could have had a negative effect and had the potential of being detrimental to their progression in sport. Although the participants in this study are still competing at elite level, they suggested that some former elite athletes dropped out of the sport or had to retire prematurely due to injury simply because they were 'pushed' too quickly. Stacey, for example, is aware of some young hockey players who were presented with opportunities to play at the top level of their sport before they were able to cope with the pressures that are typical of competing at elite level sport, and have subsequently dropped out. Gemma, an international team mate of Stacey agrees, and puts much of the blame for this happening on the coaches. The following quote illustrates how strongly she feels about this issue:

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): I think it was good that I didn't take my hockey too seriously until I was older, because I see some girls now who are only 16 and they are preparing to play in the team that I play in now and I think it can be quite stressful for a 16 year old to be in that environment. ... So I am glad that I wasn't pushed too early, like you see kids who made it [internationalists] as 16/17 year olds and then drop out by the time they are 21 year olds. I just think that the coaches sometimes push them forward just a little bit too soon. Although they may be physically and naturally talented as a hockey player they don't necessarily have it mentally. You only get mental strength by going through different experiences and learning to handle yourself. I think sometimes 'Yes you're good, but what's going to happen when the shit hits the fan?' Sometimes I think coaches just look short term, to see what they can get out of that player, because sometimes coaches are just there for 2 years so in that time they might try and get their best team together, but that might not be the best for the actual player.

Similarly, Claire only started playing competitive rugby when she went to university but by the time she was in her final year, she had been selected for the senior national England squad. Claire explains why she does not think this rapid advance in her sporting career was good for her, either mentally or physically:

(rugby, 16.02.05) ...because I went to a Premiership club and had a good Super 4's [trials for England section] I got moved into the senior squad and that put a lot of pressure on me, because I really wasn't ready for that then. Because I had only played a full year at university, then got moved into the

Academy and then I got put into the top squad. I just didn't feel ready for it and I think it really affected me, mentally. I didn't really know the game, I wasn't prepared to give everything just for success, I had all these rugby specific sessions but they hadn't been working on things that I needed to work on, such as, the contact aspect, the rules and regulations, I hadn't had any weights training or anything like that. So moving into that top squad I ended up getting a lot of knee injuries and just physically not being able to keep up with the girls. I just wasn't ready for it.

This story was typical of many of the women rugby players involved in this study, although not all suggested that they thought their progress into elite level was a harmful experience. Indeed, most argued that they thought they were very fortunate to be given this astonishing opportunity in such a short space of time. Shona had 'flirted' with rugby as a youngster but it was not until she came to university that she started to play 'seriously'; but even then having a 'normal' student life was equally important to her, so much so that after graduating from university she decided to take a year out to go travelling. The week she returned from her travels her ex-coach invited her to go for Professional Development Academy (PDA) trials. She was successful and this led to her spending one year training with the England Academy squad. Shona continues the story:

(rugby, 14.03.05) After the Super 4's I was confident enough that I would keep my place in the Academy, but then a few weeks later I got a letter saying that I was selected for the Elite squad and I was just like, 'This is stupid!!' I just couldn't believe it, it was amazing and for me it was just happening so quickly. 'This is really weird!'

There were others who related similar stories; however, it could be argued that there are several underpinning reasons. Baker & Horton (2004) contend that a sport's maturity will influence the amount of training required to become an expert. In other words, in sports that are relatively new or less developed, expertise will be attained with less training. In a similar vein, Baker and Horton also comment that the number of active competitors in a sport and the depth of competition can also influence the ease with which one can achieve elite level. Baker and Horton's assertions may partially explain why the '10-year rule' did not hold steadfast in this study, as some of the sports involved could be described as 'new' sports with fewer athletes to choose from. For example, women's rugby and men and women's taekwondo and pole vault may not involve the same numbers of athletes as more established sports. Helsen,

Starkes and Hodges (1998) suggested that, following around 9 years of involvement, future expert athletes make the decision to invest significantly more time and effort into training in order to reach the international level. Furthermore, Baker et al. (2003) found in their study of elite endurance triathletes that the amount of time that experts and non-experts spent in training was not significantly different until after 18 years of age. After this age, experts dramatically increased their commitment to training. Pole-vaulters Olivia and Nick are examples of athletes who played other sports to a high level in their youth and then successfully transferred to their current sport in their late teens. Interestingly, once they made the move to their current sport, they progressed quickly to the top level. Between the ages of 4 and 15, Olivia was involved in many sports at school. However, out of school hours gymnastics was her main priority, and by the age of 15 Olivia represented Northern Ireland in the Commonwealth Games as a gymnast. However, shortly after the Games, for a combination of reasons Olivia realised that she was not going to improve much more as a gymnast and would not be able to retain her international status, which was very important to her:

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): ...I just got to the point where I knew realistically I wasn't going to get any better, I hadn't made the British team [in gymnastics], and I so wanted to make the British team in something. So I got out of it [gymnastics] quite sharp and I went into pole vaulting, and 2 years later I got a vest [represented Great Britain].

Prior to the age of 15, Olivia had no involvement with pole-vaulting and it was by pure chance that the national pole-vaulting squad used the same gymnastics area for some of their technical sessions and after watching them train she thought that she would like to have a 'shot at it':

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): I'm a bit of an adrenalin junkie and running and jumping isn't really enough but throwing yourself over a bar with a big pole appealed. Until then [~16] I hadn't even watched it (pole-vaulting) on TV, but they were doing some specific gymnastic associated moves ...and I just thought if I get out of gymnastics now, I can be good at something else and that was the main motivating factor.

Similarly, Nick, who is also now an international pole-vaulter, did not focus specifically on pole-vaulting until he went to university. Prior to this he still took part

in other athletic events, as well as pole-vaulting, and also played football. Furthermore, even when he was selected for the junior national pole-vaulting squad at 16, Nick started playing volleyball twice a week for his College team. Nick was actively encouraged to play other sports by his coach, until he broke his ankle playing football when he was 18 years old. At that point he was getting funding from the NGBs for pole-vaulting and both he and the national coaches agreed that he should stop playing other sports. Prior to that decision Nick describes what other activities he was doing:

(athletics, 12.11.04)...volleyball was always there, I played it at school, but then I started playing it a little more frequently, I was playing twice a week, just to fill up the time. I never liked to just sit down and watch telly or play computer games at home I always liked to be up and running around being active. I would rather even just go out on my bike or something, and I still played football for my college at that time too. ...At that stage [age 16] my coaches were quite happy that I was still playing other sports because it was still only doing pole-vault once a week and doing other events at the same time.

However, there were some participants from the more mature sports who also made the echelons of expert status prior to 10 years of deliberate practice in their primary sport. Swimmers Louise and Mike, who I have already mentioned in this chapter, were representing their country at senior level after only a few years of sport-specific training. Hockey player Stuart did not take up the sport until he was 17, less than two years later he was selected for Scotland U19's and two years after that he represented Great Britain in the senior squad. It was not only in 'minority' sports that the '10-year rule' did not apply, but at times in more established sports too.

It also has to be noted that although all the participants (with the exception of one) are still competing at international level, there is still opportunity for further improvement, which may be realised following 10 years of deliberate practice. Olivia, for example, is a successful pole-vaulter by British standards, but she also acknowledges she has some way to go to be the best in the world:

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): ...people will say 'you're Britain's number one, that's great' and like being Britain's number one is no mean feat. But in terms of the world's stage, I'm about 40cms behind the top ranked three women, so I've got a long way to go. Some people over here (GB) are quite comfortable

just being number one, for me it's not enough. I've always been like that; I'm always striving and pushing and never give myself a break.

In summary, I would suggest that whilst the 10-year rule may hold true in terms of an individual's sport experiences, this does not necessarily mean that this experience must be in the same sport. Indeed, this study has highlighted that many of the participants became 'investors' in one sport following years of experience in other sport(s). I would further argue that training and competing in a variety of sports to a later age can be both advantageous and beneficial to the aspiring sportsperson. This is consistent with Baker, Côté and Deakin (2005) who stated that participation in other relevant activities (e.g. other sports where dynamic-decision making is necessary) during early phases of development augmented the physical and cognitive skills necessary in their primary sport. Based on these results, therefore, some caution might be warranted in attempting to use the '10-year rule' to support arguments for early specialisation and investment in one sport. I will expand on this argument in the following section.

4.4 EARLY SPECIALISATION

A common issue of contention among researchers examining expertise from a developmental perspective is whether potential expert athletes should limit their childhood sport participation to one sport (Baker, 2003). Baker contends that the young 'athlete' is often encouraged to focus deliberately on training and competing in a single sport; this is commonly referred to as 'early specialisation'. The opposing perspective, 'early diversification', favours the aspiring expert athlete participating in a number of different sports throughout their childhood and not specialising in one particular sport until the later phases of their development (Weirsmas, 2000). It is important to understand that Côté and Hay's 'specialising years' differs somewhat from Baker's impression of early specialisation. According to Côté and Hay (2002), during the specialisation years the aspiring athlete may still be participating in more than one sport and, although they may be taking their training more seriously, there is still a strong element of fun involved. There were very few participants in this study who specialised in their current sport from a young age, although there were a couple who specialised in another sport who subsequently dropped out of it at a later stage.

Furthermore, even though several of the participants took up their current sport from an early age, this was generally not to the exclusion of other sports.

4.4.1 The Physiological, Psychological and Social Benefits of Specialising at a Later Age

Fun and enjoyment have frequently been cited as key to the participants' involvement in sport. When viewed retrospectively, many also suggested that specialising later in their sport had physiological, psychological and social benefits. The following comments from Rory, Alicia and Stacey highlight why they think participating in a number of different activities from a young age had been beneficial to their physiological development:

Rory (athletics, 08.11.04): *I have got very good bone density, maybe this is because I have been so active from a very young age, for as long as I can remember. You would take your trainers to school occasionally, but most of the time you would end up playing an hour of football in your school shoes on a concrete playground. So maybe it was a case of, as my bones developed they got used to being constantly pounded and active all the time and now running 120 miles a week my bones cope with it fine, or they seem to. So maybe all that running around when I was younger is doing me some good now.*

Alicia (hockey, 22.04.05): *...I also did cross country, I started in the U9's, running with all the Kenyan runners, so from a young age we were really physically fit and I think that has stood me in good stead for where I am now. From the first 4/5 years that I did it [cross country] I won it. I really enjoyed it and although I don't have anything to do with it now, I think it has really helped me physiologically. I honestly think that is the real reason I got into the Great Britain team, because of my speed and being able to go so long. These are my main assets in playing hockey, so that has helped me tremendously since I was a youngster.*

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): *I think because of my athletics background, where we would just run and run, I think that was the reason that my athletic ability in hockey was superior to most of the other people.*

Swimming is often referred to as an 'early specialisation sport'; in other words, young swimmers are often encouraged to focus specifically on their swimming from a young age. However, some of the swimmers interviewed as part of this study contend that this early concentration is unnecessary. Louise, for example, only swam

recreationally on her family holidays until she was 14-years old; this was when she started to train with the local swimming club. Louise thinks that taking up swimming at a later age has been psychologically beneficial to her and is a reason why she is still motivated to continue competing:

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04) ...I mean even though I started late I think that was to my advantage rather than my disadvantage, because I think that is why I am so keen now. Whereas, a lot of people will drop out between 18 and my age now [24], I think because I started later I have still got that keenness to keep me going on to a later stage. Like people who have been doing it since they were 4 by the time they are 14 they will have been doing it as long as I have now, so I think that is to my advantage.

In a similar vein, a study by Barynina and Vaitsekhovskii (1992) on elite swimmers indicated that swimmers who focused specifically on swimming from an early age spent less time on the national team and ended their sports careers earlier than swimmers who did not.

International swimmer Mike described rugby as his 'all consuming passion' until he focused on swimming around the age of 15/16. However, Mike quickly points out that when he began to concentrate specifically on swimming, he did not dramatically increase his swimming training, but simply cut back on playing rugby, although he still used other sports to improve his overall fitness. Mike explains some of the social benefits of not specialising in one sport at an early age:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): ...there were a lot of kids who trained like 8 – 10 sessions a week; well I won Nationals off 4 sessions a week. So at that age you can't really see the point, when you are the best with just doing the amount of training you are (4 sessions) to do any more. ...We would do 3 x 1 ½ hour sessions and one 2 hour session in the pool and I would also do circuits at rugby training, because they were still my friends, so I did circuit training with those guys. And in my lunch breaks at school I would always play basketball, just for fun. ...So I was pretty active, although I was only doing 4 training sessions a week in the swimming pool, but with everything else I wouldn't view it as training back then I would just be running around at lunchtimes playing basketball in the gym and those sorts of things.

Furthermore, although Mike argues that he started to take swimming more seriously at around the age of 15, this was not to the exclusion of participation in other sports. International marathon runner Rory also has a strong view on the disadvantages in the

longer term of training too seriously at an early age in his sport. At the age of 11 Rory beat the UK U13's 1500m all comers' record, but he argues that this title could have been detrimental to his future sporting career.

Rory (athletics, 08.11.04)...*it could have led to disaster really, because I could have got far too keen on it and got pushed into doing it constantly to always keep to that level. But, because I had football and other things going on, I just drifted along, keeping in the sport and doing quite well occasionally. I just carried on the way I was, and up until I was about 18 I was probably doing more football than running. ...Like I made my choices when I did and thankfully for one reason or another I seemed to have made the right decisions at the right times. Like, because I had done really good at 11[running], and if at that time I had slightly different coaches or slightly different parental support maybe, or there was talent spotting schemes like nowadays maybe I would have been sucked into a position where I would have been pushed into becoming serious about distance running earlier and maybe I wouldn't have lasted the course. Maybe I needed to just plod along at my own rate until I got to the point where it was time to specialise and time to get serious.*

Rory argues further that solely concentrating in athletics as a child may be a reason for high drop-out rates within the sport:

...there are not many that made the transition from juniors through to seniors that I knew. This could be for a combination of reasons, but for most of them it was a case of they were very early developers, they trained very hard, their coaches were very keen and pushed them very hard and their parents were very keen because they were doing well. So, you know, parent gets excited, kid gets excited, parents push them, coaches push them... But they get to the point maybe 4 or 5 years down the line when other people are catching up. Maybe they get injuries because they have been training so hard for 4 or 5 years or they start to find other things in life that are slightly more interesting, like university, drink, women, going out and roll them altogether and you see a lot of people disappear for one reason or another, lost from the sport.

Rory is also aware of how difficult it is to determine the right time or stage in a sports person's career to invest in their principal sport:

Rory (athletics, 08.11.04): *I don't see any reason why kids of 14/15 can't do a variety of sports and do them relatively well and then concentrate more on one when they get a bit older. The only problem is, if you don't time it quite right you can miss the net, if you want to put it that way and then you get to the age where you finish your university career and because you are not good enough in your sport you don't get funding you have to go into full time employment. So if you go into fulltime employment you get into that vicious cycle situation.*

Francesca, an international javelin thrower, also argues that she does not think that it is beneficial to specialise at an early age. She was actively encouraged by her coach to continue playing other sports throughout her adolescence, even when she reached junior international status. Although Francesca joined the athletics club in Year 9 [~ age 13], it was not until she was 18 that she stopped participating in other sports. She reached this point because she was concerned that participation in other sports increased the risks of injury and made excessive demands on her time. Francesca firmly believes that she has benefited greatly from playing other sports both for her own enjoyment and long-term development; this is exemplified by her following comment:

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): Mike [coach] just said play all your other sports, because it does have a transfer anyway for co-ordination and things like that. So I would do all the other sports to keep my strength and fitness levels up. Perhaps it wasn't ideal and I think in other countries they probably have them doing weights. But I don't really see the need and neither did Mike [coach]. The thing with javelin is, it is very much about technique and if you don't have the technique, you can be as strong as you like it is not going to go anywhere. So I think Mike was just honing my technique for years, like I think Mike saw it more long term than I did, I was just enjoying it at the time.

This is one of the reasons that Francesca is rather scathing about recent talent identification programmes that have been introduced within athletics. She argues that the programmes she is aware of discourage children from playing a variety of sports and concentrate solely on athletics. She further adds that, within track and field athletics, the National Governing Body actively encourages young athletes to dedicate their attention to one particular event. Francesca's following comment illustrates that she strongly disagrees with this practice:

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): I think they are crap. I think if you get a general grounding in all sorts of sports, and learn how to run well and how to lift well, but not made to concentrate on just athletics at their age, it would be a lot better for their long-term development in whatever sport they finally decide to do. ...I just think you should be able to try every other event in athletics, because I am sure some of them are doing an event they're not as good at, but if they are enjoying it then they should carry on doing it.

Even though Julie did not specialise in rugby until she was about 16, she still has some regrets about focusing solely on rugby in her adolescence and on occasion alludes to the fact that she is becoming a 'bit stale' in rugby:

Julie (rugby, 19.02.05): I don't regret going to 'the rugby academy', but I wish that I could have played the likes of hockey, netball, athletics, as well, and done all that up until I came to university. Because you know how most people do most sports until their A levels then they come to University and then decide to play, say rugby. I wish I had played socially at hockey for the school team or netball, instead of going purely for rugby at the age of 16. Just mainly for enjoyment, although at the time I didn't miss it that much, but looking back it, it would have been quite nice just to have kept up playing other sports, just socially. Yeah I wish I hadn't solely concentrated on rugby, probably because I would have a bigger circle of friends, whereas, now I just know rugby people and I don't think that is great to socialise too much with people who have the same interests, because I think it can get a bit much and you forget what the real world is like.

4.4.2 'Early Specialisers'

Although most of the participants suggested that playing a variety of sports when they were younger was beneficial to their long-term sporting development, some (n = 5) commented that they focused on only one sport outside of school. However, it would appear that there was a high social element involved in their training sessions. International swimmer Bob explains why he did not think spending a lot of time in the swimming pool from a young age was detrimental to his development as a swimmer:

Bob (swimming, 15.11.04): Between the ages of 7 and 12 I would have been doing 3 or 4 nights a week plus Saturday mornings or afternoon.... I really enjoyed it; it was great because I had a lot of friends at swimming, so I had lots of time to socialise too. I wasn't big into football, and most kids my age played football and I wasn't in to that, so going swimming was great fun and I had a lot of good friends there and as I said my whole family were involved with it and also my friends families were involved in it as well, so it was kind of the natural thing to do.

Marathon runner Samantha had a similar view:

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05) ...I mean it [running] has always consumed my life I think, because even when I was at school, I was out every night training apart from a Friday. So I would probably see my coach more than my dad

because I would be out all night coming home and then going to bed. But for me it was good fun, because I would go out, I'd be with my friends all evening and it was more interesting than hanging around street corners, like a lot of kids do.

Although these participants could be described as 'early specialisers', having fun and being with their friends was of key importance. This argument does not sit easily with Côté and Hay's (2002) concept of deliberate practice. The participants did not appear to have an issue with the depth and intensity of their training regime; they simply enjoyed sport and did not think they had the time or the inclination to participate in anything else.

Interestingly, there was only one participant who argued that not specialising early in their sport had been detrimental to progress:

Neil (taekwondo, 06.04.05)...there were a couple of spurts for 5 or 6 months when I just didn't go [taekwondo training]; I didn't want to do taekwondo, because I just lost interest. Then I went back and I just loved it, and carried on doing it. I think that was when I was about 11 or 12, all the way through up until about the age of 17/18 that's when I got really, really serious about taekwondo. But before that I had loads of gaps and breaks and I think that limited my development. ...I think it was really bad in my development because I never achieved anything as a junior and I think that is why, because my training was so fragmented as a junior...I think it is a sport that you have to start early and continually do it.

Although Neil has been on the GB squad for over 4 years and won several national competitions, he thinks that if he had specialised early he would have been more successful on the international circuit by now.

4.4.3 When to 'Specialise'?

As alluded to earlier, there has been much debate about the age at which the aspiring sports person should focus on one specific sport in order to achieve elite status. This is perhaps more complex than it may first seem, as some of the participants themselves (initially anyway) struggled to understand whether they should have committed themselves to achieving in their current sport earlier or later than they actually did.

At the age of 15, Gemma was actively encouraged by fellow players to dedicate more time to training for hockey and to play at a higher level (National League). However, both her PE teacher and her parents, for a variety of reasons, discouraged her from doing this. Wolfenden and Holt (2005) contend that the supportive network of parents and coaches (PE teacher) working as a team is important to the development of child athletes. In hindsight, Gemma believes her parents and teacher were correct:

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05)...but I was glad that I didn't, because it would have meant a lot of travelling at the age of 15, and I wasn't that serious about my hockey then. I liked it and I was good at it, I was a big fish at school but I hadn't even thought about playing for England at that age.

Caroline and Claire acknowledge that they may have made the senior international rugby team at an earlier age if they had played the game 'more seriously' when they were younger. However, now that they are competing at the elite level, they recognise the benefits of not solely concentrating on rugby throughout their youth. The following comments encapsulate their mixed feelings:

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): I would have loved to have played [rugby] earlier but at the same time...well Amy [fellow international] has probably been playing longer than I have and she is only 19/20. And there are other girls that started at 4 and 7 and they are 18 now and they are just coming through so that is a worry. I worry that I don't have that skill bases. I think our [squad] skill levels could be higher and I think with some of the youngsters coming through, it will become a lot higher. Like with my hockey I was playing that from when I was young, so my basic skills were there, so I just improved with practice. So hopefully in 10 years from now my ball skills will be fantastic, so if I had started 10 years earlier I would be there. However, on saying that I am so glad I played hockey, I am so glad I did water polo. I wouldn't change the sports that I have done because I absolutely loved them. But I would have loved to have picked up a rugby ball earlier, but not being obsessive about it, just having it alongside my hockey and water polo, athletics, squash.

Claire (rugby, 16.02.05): ... these days there are so many girls taking it [rugby] up at a younger age, 12 or 13 years old and they are getting so much experience, through all these youth schemes and U19 Academies and they are getting better and better. So at times I feel sad that I missed out in all these things, but other times, I am glad that I didn't take it up at a young age because maybe then I wouldn't have got the chance to do athletics and play hockey etc. I think a whole rounded experience is good.

It was interesting that Caroline emphasised the relevance of '10 years of training', because as has been mentioned previously in this section, Ericsson and colleagues (1993) and later Balyi (2001) claim that the achievement of expertise takes 10 years of specialised training. However neither Caroline, Claire, nor some participants from other sports took 10 years to reach elite level in their sport. Shona also believes that she benefited from not focusing on rugby too early. Although she played rugby throughout her time at university, her degree and student life were more of a priority to her.

Shona (rugby, 14.03.05): I am really glad that I didn't go for it when I was at university, because I can still use my degree for a career later on. And I had a really good time then, I really enjoyed my student life. Like now there are quite a few younger players coming through who are at university but I just feel that they are losing out on something. Maybe I am just getting into the squad now and they are getting in at 19, but I still think I have got a good few years of rugby in me. At university there is so much you can do and its usually spontaneous, like "lets pop down to the pub," or "let's go out and have some fun" and you couldn't do that if you were playing international rugby. I am not saying that everyone that goes to university has to drink all the time. But I just loved playing social rugby when I was at university. It's a real positive for me that I chose to wait until I finished university, I wouldn't change that at all.

Shona succeeded in making it to the highest level in her sport without jeopardising her long-term career prospects, whilst also gaining some invaluable life experiences. Arguably, because of limited opportunities, it is more common for women to take up rugby at a later age than it is in many other sports. The data from this study support this contention, as the majority of the women rugby players did not start playing rugby until they were at least in their late teens, and most commonly when they went to university. Claire acknowledges that it is because of the nature of the women's game [rugby] that she has been able to progress to elite level at a later age:

(16.02.05) it's easier for girls to take up rugby from a late age, than it would be to take up the likes of hockey from a late age and still be able to reach a high level. I just don't think you could do it anymore, just like boys can't take up football at a late stage and reach the top, it's impossible for them to do.

However, it was not only in women's rugby that the participants suggested that the sport they are now playing internationally was not the 'be all and end all' until they were at least in their later phases of adolescence. Patrick who is now an international

male rugby player started off his sporting career as a footballer. In that he initially trained with a Premiership football academy. Although Patrick played a little rugby at school 'just for a laugh', it was not until he was about 15 years old that he made the decision to give rugby some serious attention. His following comment aptly sums up his feelings on his sporting pathway:

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *I have enjoyed all the sports I've played, and I am glad now that I am playing rugby and I want to play rugby for the rest of my career. Maybe my football stint was bad for my rugby, because if I had played solidly rugby all the way through then maybe I would be better than I am now as a player. But maybe if I had just played rugby then I might not have played any other sport, then I wouldn't have known if I liked them or not. But I have played a lot of sports and I now know that rugby is the one I like the most and it is what I want to do.*

Calum concurs with Patrick and strongly disagrees with the idea that young rugby players should be encouraged to play only rugby:

Calum (rugby, 01.12.04) ... *I think if you play all sports, I think you get skills from all of them, like kicking in football, or catching and passing in rugby or playing tennis or whatever, they all improve your co-ordination. I think you should just try and enjoy sport generally as a youngster, I mean there are lads here [Premiership club] at 16, and it is just rugby, rugby, rugby all the time and I think there is going to be a saturation point at some time where they are going to think 'sod this!'*

Similarly, in both men and women's hockey, several of the respondents suggested that they did not concentrate solely on hockey until they were older. Stuart is perhaps an extreme case of this, as he did not play his first hockey match until he was 17; prior to this his main sport was football. However, by the age of 19, Stuart was an international hockey player. Stuart's following comment makes the argument that both sports have transferable skills that helped him adapt so successfully to hockey:

Stuart (hockey, 27.04.05): *I think there are a lot of similarities in team games especially with hockey and football; it's basically all about having speed, finding space and being in the right position. I think I picked up hockey quite quickly because I had learnt those skills through playing a lot of football.*

Stuart's philosophy appears to be consistent with research that has examined the transfer of learning and the effects of cross training. Schmidt and Wrisberg (2000)

also suggest that there are elements between tasks that are transferable; they categorise these elements into movement, perceptual and conceptual parts. Movement elements refer to the biomechanical and anatomical actions required to perform a task. Perceptual elements refer to environmental information that individuals interpret to make performance-related decisions. Lastly, conceptual elements refer to strategies, guidelines and rules regarding performance. As far as hockey and football are concerned, Schmidt and Wrisberg (2000) contend that both sports require the participants to accurately interpret the actions of their opponents in order to be successful. These sports share the perceptual element and to some extent the conceptual element.

Colin argues that in taekwondo it is not necessary to progress into the investment stage at a young age in order to achieve success at international level. As described above, it was not until he was 17 years old that Colin had the opportunity to invest in taekwondo full time. When asked if he thought his break from the sport was a good or bad thing, Colin replied:

(taekwondo, 06.04.05): Yeah, I definitely think it was a good thing, maybe I wouldn't have enjoyed it [taekwondo] anymore, and maybe I would have got fed up with it and stopped. So I think it was good that I had the breaks when I did or I might not have got to where I am today.

Later in the interview, when discussing changes in his sporting pathway that he would have made, Colin says that waiting until he was in his late teens before investing all his time and energy into taekwondo was beneficial to him:

(taekwondo, 06.04.05): I don't know, maybe I would have started a little bit earlier, because I missed out on the junior part, but maybe if it had been different I wouldn't have been around today. Even though I started out late, everything has worked out wonderfully. I wouldn't want to say I would have done something differently because maybe if I started earlier I might have lost interest and not got as far, these things can happen. The way things have turned out has been good for me, so no I don't think I would change anything.

Stacey first took up hockey at school, at the age of 14. The following year she was selected to play hockey for England U16's and has progressed steadily through the ranks until she reached international senior level. Stacey got her first senior 'cap' the

year after she left university. Consistent with previous comments, Stacey believes that her athletic background helped her to quickly progress into junior international hockey. However, she also thinks that long-term it has been beneficial that her progression into senior international hockey was far steadier.

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): I was really happy that I went to University and got a degree between the ages of 18 and 21 and I was still able to play England U21. Some people are pushed into the senior team at that age, but I am glad that didn't happen to me, I am glad that I made the progression from U18 and then U21, then into the seniors. That wasn't necessarily my choice, but the most developmental time of my hockey progress was probably from 21 up until now. ...the progress that I have made in the last 5 years has been absolutely phenomenal, I am very happy with the way my game has progressed.

It was evident that investing in a particular sport at a later age was not detrimental to the progress of many of the participants in this study: indeed, it could be argued that it was beneficial.

Consistent with the experience of many of the participants, Stacey's comment above also emphasised the importance of her university education. Even though Stacey was a full-time lottery-funded hockey player during her university years, passing her degree was as important to her as playing hockey. This conflict of 'roles' for the student-athlete can be problematic and if not dealt with sympathetically and appropriately can lead to burnout and its associated emotional exhaustion (Rabin et al., 1999). This issue was a reoccurring theme that many of the participants had experienced. I will analyse this area in greater detail in the next section.

4.5 HIGHER EDUCATION: 'MAKE OR BREAK TIME'

Many of the participants who went to university commented that this was a critical step in their sporting progression and they suggested that attending university coincided with them 'investing' in one particular sport. Indeed, many remarked that this challenging stage was 'make or break time' for them. The Department of Education and Skills' 2001 report stated that the number of student-athletes attending Higher Education Institutions (HEI) is on the increase. This was reflected in this

study as the majority of the participants involved attended, or were still attending university, or college. This is an important fact given McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis' (2004) argument that HEIs are an important site for elite athletes who are pursuing Olympic or World titles.

There may be a number of reasons why this particular study was heavily influenced by undergraduate and postgraduate student-athletes. Some of the sports (swimming, athletics and taekwondo) involved in this study have their High Performance Centres based at a university. Interestingly, the experience of the taekwondo experts involved in this study did not conform to that of the majority of the participants: only one of the players interviewed, and 30% of those who returned the questionnaires, had attended university. Furthermore, with reference to their parents' occupations, the taekwondo players were consistently drawn from the lower social class groups. In the UK, the practice of classifying the class of a population according to their occupation has a long history, and dates back to 1851 (Rose, 2003). Many of the taekwondo participants argued that because of the extensive amount of travelling they had to do for competitions and training camps it was very difficult for them to combine their sport with education at any level. They said that even as juniors they often had to travel abroad if they wanted to progress to become funded elite taekwondo players:

Katrina (taekwondo, 05.04.05): I do want to go back to College, but it's just finding the time. Already, this year [March] we've been away four or five times, like we've got the Worlds now, the Europa cup in a couple of months, then the Europeans at the end of the year all abroad, nothing is ever in this country. ...Taekwondo tends to take over everything; there are very few people on the World Class squad that have done anything academically.

Sonya (taekwondo, 05.04.05): Taekwondo isn't a seasonal sport; you have to do it all the time. Like you'll say you're going to College and you sort everything out and then you can't go, because you are going to a camp that week. Like they'll [coaches] say to you 'You're going to Spain on Friday,' like two days before you go.

According to Sonya, Katrina and several other participants, going on to HE was not a viable option for them. However, both these taekwondo players and some other participants who did not attend university or college acknowledged that their academic work had never been a priority for them. Likewise, a similar study by Martens and Lee (1998) proposed that an athlete who is completely committed to

their sport might believe that competing in sport or something similar (e.g. coaching) is their only viable career option. Martens and Lee further add that this commitment to sport may ultimately limit the committed athlete's career development even as it enhances athletic performance. This was also an issue for those participants who prioritised their sport from an earlier age, perhaps whilst they were still at secondary school, as witnessed by the comments from hockey players Susan and Alicia:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): ...for the first three years of secondary school, it worked out okay, but when it came to GCEs and especially my 'A' levels, hockey definitely got in the way. When I got to 'A' level standard, I was pushing England U21's, and in that year I had the World Cup in Korea and it was then that I was really struggling to get everything done. I didn't realise how much more they [hockey management] expected you to work, and my school work suffered quite substantially and I didn't get the grades that perhaps I should have got.

Similarly, Alicia also concedes that being an international hockey player throughout most of her secondary school life (including achieving her first senior cap at the age of 17 slightly prior to her 'A' level examinations) impacted adversely on her school exam results. However, Alicia argues that even though she could have achieved more academically, she firmly believes that her sporting achievements will hold her in equal if not in higher stead in her future career when she has retired from playing hockey. Alicia explains:

(hockey, 22.04.05) I didn't get the 'A' levels that I should have got, because I basically devoted a lot of my time to hockey. I didn't do badly, but I could have done a lot better. ..But anyway, I did get into one of the best Business Schools that I could have in this area, and I wanted to stay around here so that I could still play for my club side. ...My education is important to me but at boarding school you learn so much, you become so much more independent and I have learnt so much more than just what grades I got, so hopefully that will get me a decent job.

However, Alicia did not say at this stage of the interview that the reason she wasn't accepted by her first choice of university was that she didn't achieve the required 'A' level qualifications. Not only did Alicia have to change her preference of university and attend, arguably, a less selective institution, but she also had to enrol on a different course.

4.5.1 University: Academia and Elite Sport

The participants who attended university gave a variety of reasons for choosing a particular HEI. Some suggested that their choice was affected by the sporting opportunities; others prioritised the academic context or the social life; and for some, it was a combination of all those reasons. Mike was one of the participants who chose to attend a particular university mainly because of the excellent swimming and coaching facilities. Initially Mike considered going to a university that was more academically suited to him, but then decided that he wanted to prioritise his swimming, although not to the complete exclusion of his studies:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.05): *I decided that at 18 I was going to put swimming a bit on the back burner and I was going to concentrate on my studies, I was going to go to Burford University. But I think, I then had a really big realisation about what I actually really wanted to do, and that was to swim for my country. I wanted to develop and represent my country at a sport, and I felt that I could do that at swimming. ... My relocation here was not all about swimming, because there was a good course here that I wanted to do but the swimming was going to be the main factor that drove me here, because there are other universities that do the course that I wanted to do. But the swimming was really good here; well it's great here, so that is what pushed me to come to this university.*

Olivia also explains that her choice of university was influenced more by her sporting ambitions than her academic aspirations.

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): *I went to Shelden University because of my pole-vaulting, because it had the best pole-vaulting centre in Great Britain. ... Sport has always come first for me, so if Shelden hadn't done the degree that I wanted to do, then I would have just done something else.*

These participants and several others recognised the longer-term importance of gaining a degree, but they still considered success in their sport to be key priority. But some participants strongly argued that their student life, both socially and academically, was of greater importance. This notion is illustrated by the following participants' comments:

Shona (rugby, 14.03.05): *I went to Bramble University and fortunately they had a really good rugby team, although that was not the reason that I went there. It was just a lucky choice, because I liked the city and although I*

definitely wanted to play rugby and I checked that they had a team; that would have been the extent of it. ... I was really pleased not to be involved in the England set up at that time because I was enjoying my university life, I was enjoying the social aspect of it, and I was enjoying the rugby that I was playing. And at that time I didn't feel that I wanted to take it any further, the ambition just wasn't there really. I was enjoying myself so much how it was and I think I had got the balance really well at the time so I didn't really want to rock that.

William (swimming, 02.12.04): ...recently I have switched to swimming full time, just to see how far I can go, but during my degree, my degree took preference. If I had a deadline and a competition on the same date I wouldn't do the competition. I was very conscious during my degree that if I didn't get a 2:1 or above then that would have affected my life considerably. So I was willing to sacrifice my swimming to do my degree, to get a decent degree so that I can achieve my future career in a year's time or whenever I decide to do it. I have seen a lot of people here, swimmers, graduate with 2:2s and regretting it because they can't get interviews for jobs they want to do, so I was very conscious of that. I think I would have been quicker by now if I hadn't spent so much time on my course, and I split my last year over 2 years so that I had more time to actually do my work as well as my training.

Shona and William indicated that they balanced their sporting and academic aspirations whilst at university and kept their sport 'ticking over' whilst they placed greater emphasis on their study. According to Stacey achieving this balance has long-term implications. She explains further why she thinks gaining a degree should be better supported and encouraged:

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): I went to university, got a professional qualification and still managed to play international hockey [England U21], so I was happy with that. It was just as I qualified, that I managed to get into the senior England training squad. So I feel comfortable about the way round that I decided to it. I don't have to work too hard now because I have got a basic qualification that I can work from. And I know there is a lot people in hockey who just don't know what they are going to do I just couldn't handle being in that situation [i.e. Lottery funding being dramatically cut, because of failure to qualify for last Olympics]. ...I don't think it is encouraged enough for people to get qualified. It is difficult because people do want to play their sport, but there is an element of having to be sensible about it as well. If you were in a professional sport, and you were paid to do your sport, like properly getting paid, then fine, perhaps it is not so much of an issue, like in football and maybe even rugby. But I wouldn't want to rely on that, I mean what happens if you get injured. There is nothing to say that as a professional sports person that you won't get injured and what if you can't do anything else?

Stacey's sentiments are echoed by Metsä-Tokila (2002) who states emphatically that an athlete needs education, since research in the United States suggests that the majority of athletes tend to end up in career positions outside of sport. Metsä-Tokila further warns that it is increasingly difficult to enter a permanent job or profession without a degree. This view can be construed as 'middle-class thinking' (see for example, Reay et al., 2001) and arguably some of the non student-athletes involved in this study would have no intention of proceeding on to HE whether or not they had become expert performers.

As mentioned previously, some (n = 5) of the participants thought future employers would be attracted by their achievements on the sporting field and that they would take this into account if their academic qualifications failed to match the job specification. Therefore, achieving a recognised degree had some importance for Olivia, but she also argued that being a successful sports woman would make up for any shortcomings in qualifications:

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): It's important to me that I get my degree, because obviously, as an athlete your shelf life is quite short, but at the same time I am quite happy to get a 2:2. I want my job to be associated with sport, so I will be able to use my sporting prowess as sort of a buffer to my lack of academic achievement, but together I think that's what an employer will want. It is hard to excel at two things and sport is my first love so it's not much choice to what gets the more attention.

Given that Olivia wants at some stage to work within sport it could be argued that her sporting achievements will give her more credibility in this area. However, it has been suggested that it might be naive to think that this would be the same for student-athletes who want to work out-with the sporting arena, which according to Metsä-Tokila (2002) applies to the majority of ex-athletes. This view has also been supported by previous studies in the United States which argue that ex-athletes, just like others, are most likely to have a job equivalent to their educational level (Sage, 1991; Metsä-Tokila, 2002).

However, as Olivia suggests, it is not easy to 'excel' in both sport and academia and several other participants mentioned the difficulties they had meeting the competing demands. Caroline ultimately wanted to be a professional rugby player, but she

shrewdly acknowledged that only the top 40 women rugby players are eligible for funding, with only the elite few being fully funded. The following statement from Caroline highlights some of the frustrations she experienced whilst trying to combine her studies with her sporting career:

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): *...work definitely came second to my rugby, but because of our funding system, only if I became good enough could I do it [rugby player] as a job. So I wanted and needed to do my NQT year, so that I could become a teacher, then I'd have that as a career. But I really struggled with that, because I was trying so hard to fit in my rugby and I was trying so hard not to let the school down and it was such a struggle that year.*

Bob agrees and also understands the importance of gaining a good degree; in retrospect he adds:

(swimming, 15.11.04): *...for the last few years I've been sacrificing my education for swimming and sacrificing swimming for education, so I wasn't giving either 100%. Looking back, I would have focused a little more on university I think. There are too many swimmers who have nothing to do with their lives when they've finished swimming. I am fine because I'm doing a Masters in finance and will hopefully get a good job, but I did take a lot of risks, I could have done a lot worse in my degree and I might not have had as many prospects as I have. But I would be much more of the view now that I should have focused more on University, I should have tried to have achieved a better balance between the two because it is important...I was always aware that there was life after swimming, but I still let it [education] slip a lot more than it should, so I think that is one thing that I would have changed. I wouldn't have worked any less in the pool I just would have compromised more in other things just making sure I got the university work done.*

Several other participants in this study acknowledged the importance of gaining a 'good' education ahead of realising their sporting ambitions prior to focusing on their sporting ambitions. James, a professional rugby player, was particularly pleased that he managed to successfully complete his law degree whilst also continuing to play premiership rugby. The following quotation from James encapsulates how keen he was to secure his degree at the 'right' age:

James (rugby, 10.03.05): *You look around the lecture theatre and you see all these old guys. Nobody wants to be in their seminar groups, nobody wants to sit beside them or talk to them. I didn't want to be a 'saddo' like them ...being about thirty, and trying to get a degree!*

James acknowledged he was fortunate that both his club coach and his national coach were accommodating and supportive of his university life. Likewise, his university lecturers helped and encouraged his sporting life. Consistent with this observation, several other participants also commented on the importance of having the support of both their HE institution and their sporting management. The participants believed that this support was necessary if they were to succeed in both domains. After failing to get her desired 'A' level grades at school, Susan was delighted to gain a 1st class degree at university. She gives a lot of credit for this academic success to her university lecturers who she claims were a great deal more supportive of her sporting commitments than her school teachers had been. The following comment highlights Susan's appreciation of this:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): ...one of the biggest things I had was the support of my lecturers, like every Wednesday morning I would go to 'A' to do one of my fitness sessions and I would have to miss the same lecture every week and my lecturer would be fine about it. He would say 'Yes that's fine; hockey takes priority, just come and see me afterwards and we'll go through the notes', and he would give me the extra help that I needed. Or my uni friends would get the notes and photocopy them for me before I got back. So I just had so much support around me that I was able to cope with hockey and my work. ...And again I know a lot of team mates in the England set-up who have struggled to do both, because they just haven't had the support or network behind them to be able to do it.

Fellow international hockey player Carol was one of those players mentioned by Susan who did not get the support from her university to help her combine her studies with her sport. At one stage she even thought about either leaving university or prematurely retiring from top-level hockey. Carol explains why she thought she might have been forced to make that choice:

Carol (hockey, 14.04.05): The head of my department made it quite clear that if I played too much hockey and missed lectures because of it, I would be chucked out. This really annoyed me because other students would just stay in bed and not say they weren't going in and nobody said anything to them. But because I told them that I couldn't go to a lecture because of a game or a training camp, they took the hump.

From the aforementioned comments it can be seen that many of the participants considered their academic studies to be an important part of their life. However, at

the same time they wanted continued success in their sport. It was the means of balancing the two spheres that was often the problem. With the increase in the number of student athletes, the evidence from this study suggests that it is important that these young people are provided with adequate support in order for them to realise their potential in both their sporting and academic domains. In a recent study, McKenna and Dunstan Lewis (2004) acknowledged that establishing priorities (i.e. student role versus athlete role) was often a challenge for student-athletes. They argue that on most days, student-athletes had to “make effortful and repeated decisions about academic, social and sporting priorities, and that resolutions often hinge on disciplined allocation of time” (pp. 189). They added that if student-athletes remained unassisted then they appeared to cope with these problems rather than deal with them proactively.

Some participants said that they attended university to gain access to excellent sporting facilities and high-quality coaching. For others studying for a university degree was a means to appease parents whilst at the same time continuing to play sport. For example, Nick achieved a degree whilst competing as a junior international athlete, and he felt the best way to progress to the senior international scene would be to continue studying. The following statement explains why Nick moved on to another university to study for a Masters degree:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): I had to decide what to do, do I want to be a senior international athlete or do I want to go off and find a job and be a club athlete? But because I still enjoyed it and wanted to see how far I could go, I thought the way of carrying on with athletics would be to carry on studying, because you can get funding and your parents are also willing to support you. And anyway you are adding to your profile and you are not throwing it all away by doing nothing.

Indeed, in direct contrast to James (see above) Nick argues that he wants to realise his sporting ambitions first and then think about his future career at a later age. Nick’s argument is:

(athletics, 12.11.04): I don’t want to be sitting in a pub in 10 years time saying “oh I could have done this and I could have done that”. Because you can only have that one chance; like I could go and work in the city when I’m 35, there

is no sort of restriction on that, where as trying to start pole vaulting when you are 35, well, it just isn't going to happen.

Similar to Nick, Cameron was also clear that his academic work would come second to his athletic commitments. His following comment also illustrates why he felt the necessity to go to a particular university in order to increase his chances of success in athletics:

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): At the age of 19 I was a junior Great Britain medallist, and I knew then that I really wanted to continue in the sport. I came to university in 2000, primarily for my running, and I am still there. I spoke to Peter [head coach] and I told him I wanted to improve my running and he was fine about it. So I came here in the provision that my study would always come second, and to see if I could become a better runner and further my running career; any academic stuff would always come second to any races. ...Initially I came here for the facilities and the fact that this university has got the reputation and is renowned for its sporting achievements with a lot of quality athletes. ...but also to keep my parents happy, because I was actually pursuing a degree. So I think all those things combined made this university the best choice. ...I got a 2:2 in the end, just! But I didn't want anything more than that from the outset.

It is evident that although many of the participants had attended university and had participated in elite sport, the relative priorities of these activities is not clear; for some, it was their academic studies, and for some it was undoubtedly their sporting aspirations. For the majority it was a combination of both.

4.5.2 The Challenges of Combining Higher Education with Elite Sport: "zombiefied" "massive culture shock"

It appears that many of the participants involved in this study concentrated on one specific sport when they entered university. It was also at this time that the intensity of their training increased dramatically. For some of these athletes, their arrival at university marked a transition from the 'specialising years' into the 'investment years' (Côté 1999). Several of the participants commented that initially they struggled to cope with both student life and all that entails (i.e. academic pressures, cooking and cleaning etc, along with social/peer pressure) alongside a greatly increased training regime. They made comments such as they were 'zombiefied' and that the change in

their lifestyle had been a 'massive culture shock'. The following statements illustrate this point:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *...When I joined the university squad my training increased massively, probably up to 50% more and I was absolutely 'zombified', I think that is the word, for my first 3-6 months of university, but obviously the demands in your 1st year education wise, are not huge, so I managed to make ends meet in that respect and my progression was such that I could justify doing that much training.*

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): *I went from training 8 hours a week to a minimum of 12-15 hours a week when I joined the uni squad. Plus I had 3 - 4 circuits' sessions and 3 weights sessions and these were really intense weights sessions focused on swimming. I started lifting really heavy weights and doing different exercises from I'd ever done, and studying as well plus having to look after yourself, all these things that you have to do when you move away from home. It was a massive culture shock!*

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): *I made the decision to go to St John's because the national coach was there and they were offering good scholarship schemes that couldn't be matched elsewhere. That was kind of the turning point; and this was the time when I concentrated specifically on pole vault. Because when I went to that University I wasn't doing anything else, I was training solely for pole vaulting. Everything I was doing was specific to pole vaulting, which was a bit of a shock and it took a bit of adjusting to.*

Although these participants managed to work through the initial shock of their dramatically increased training regime as a student-athlete, some others did not. With the increase in intensity and hours of training Olivia found it 'impossible to keep-up with her studies' and made the decision to change from a full-time course to a part-time one. Olivia explains why:

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04) *...I had the time to do it, but I was just too physically tired to do it, because I just wasn't in any great shakes to want to sit down and read a book or write an essay. I am still finding it quite hard because being an athlete is a full time job and outside of training you've got recovery sessions, so you are getting massages for an hour here or seeing the doctor for an hour there etc.*

As has been discussed above, in order to be a senior international athlete it is necessary to train for many hours. Thus, to combine these demanding training hours with higher education is obviously going to be extremely difficult for the elite athlete. Furthermore, several of the respondents complained that it was not just the increase in

their training that they found hard to adjust to when they went to university, but also looking after themselves. Most of the student-athletes had lived at home with their families prior to coming to university, and their parents had taken care of most of the household duties. It seemed that many of them were somewhat surprised at the time and effort these extra tasks took. Tracey and Kate found it particularly difficult to adjust to this extra workload of household duties when they came to university:

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *I lived at home until I came to university, so my parents did all the food shopping and cooked for me, but now I have to do it for myself and that takes up more of my time.*

Kate (swimming, 15.11.04): *...it wasn't just having to train on my own, but having to cook for myself and do washing and stuff like that. I was staying in self catering halls and I didn't actually improve an awful lot in that year, I only improved by a tenth of a second, where I was use to taking off big chunks each season. I think it was partly because I was adjusting, I think quite often people find it hard to adjust, like it either makes or breaks them coming to university, because you do see an awful lot of people drop out.*

William also found the combination of almost doubling his training load and fending for himself a very arduous experience, which was detrimental to his performance in the pool. William explains his frustrations:

William (swimming, 02.12.04): *I was living in halls for two years and it was a big culture shock. I struggled a lot for the first few months, because I went from five sessions a week, to nine sessions a week plus circuits etc, so that was over double what I had been doing. Plus cooking for yourself and looking after yourself, I struggled a lot. I got to Christmas and I was slower than I was when I got here [October]!*

Most (n = 25) of the participants stayed in halls of residence for at least one year of their time at university. However, there was some disagreement between the participants about whether or not this type of accommodation was suitable for elite student-athletes. Indeed, a Great Britain coach stated that a certain university was renowned for being an athletes' graveyard, because so many promising athletes went to the university, but failed to progress into the senior international level. He strongly argued that this was largely because of the halls of residence system, including: poor food (quality and quantity); inflexibility of meal times, other students' lack of respect for elite athletes' training demands; and basically that living in a loud, busy, largely

undergraduate environment was detrimental to any elite sports person. Although this view was echoed by a few of the participants, most also commented that they did not feel this had any long term negative effects:

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): *I lived in halls for the first couple of years and I was initially a bit worried because I wasn't getting a great deal of sleep because of the racket. I also kept missing meal times, so I often had to cook for myself which was a bit of a disaster. ...But I don't know, I must have been lucky and did enough of the right thing, I must have got just enough sleep and had just enough good nutrition because I was still able to keep up with my training.*

Furthermore, some participants went further and suggested that they thought living in halls with non-athletes was actually good for them and they enjoyed not being surrounded by fellow athletes '24/7'. In contrast, some argued that living in HE halls of residence was only acceptable if they were in halls specifically designated for elite athletes only. Tracey is very supportive of this idea, as she has experienced both 'sides of the coin'. Her argument is:

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04) *I think it works better living with other athletes, because in my 1st year I was in a flat with non athletes, I mean these are the people I am going to see next weekend, so I do really get on with them. But it was sometimes quite difficult because they always wanted to go out and I had to say "sorry, I can't come". Whereas you don't have that pressure at all living with other athletes, because they live very similar lifestyles, so I would say that I prefer that.*

Kate also thinks that it is more appropriate for elite athletes to share accommodation, and moreover she would advocate that living with people who are involved in the same sport would be best:

Kate (swimming, 15.11.04) *...I liked living with swimmers because they kind of understand that you've got to go to bed early and you've got to get up early, and you need to sleep during the day. If you live with people who don't really understand it then they might make lots of noise or whatever. Or if they wanted to go out all the time at night, then they might get a bit annoyed that you are not socialising with them when you've got to go to sleep. And also if you want to talk about swimming, like if you are having trouble coping with it you can talk about it with them.*

On the other hand, some participants remarked that they did not enjoy living with fellow athletes, even though they agreed that it was advantageous because they all appreciated each others' training demands. However many suggested that they found it almost claustrophobic:

William (swimming, 02.12.04): *It's nice in some respects, like people are encouraging when you have to get up early, but I'd rather not live with other swimmers because I like to escape. The last thing you want to do when you've been training all day is to come home and to talk about swimming.*

Similarly, Gemma also thinks it is healthier not to be constantly surrounded by other hockey players:

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): *When I came to university I wanted to go into halls and integrate with other people, so I ended up with loads of friends all over the place. I had my hall friends, my course friends and I had my hockey friends, who were in town. I think it is good to have different sets of friends, because there are times when you have had enough of hockey and you want to be with normal people, there are times when hockey people start to get on your nerves, and different personalities annoy you...sometimes you just need to switch off from it.*

On the whole, most of the respondents agreed that living in halls was all part of the university/student experience. These respondents suggested that there were pros and cons to this lifestyle and that missing out on the social aspect of it was just part of the sacrifices they had to make as elite performers. Caroline sums up this feeling:

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): *I got a lot of grief from my hall mates that I wasn't drinking. I would go out, but I would go home early because I would have training. They knew why I was doing it, but they would still say 'come on out for a bit, get a life'. It was difficult, but I loved uni and I wouldn't change it. I missed out on some of things but I gained in others.*

In summary, many of the participants involved in this study were also students at HE institutions and their move to university/college occurred at the time that many moved into the investment phase of their sporting career. The student-athlete had to contend with a dramatic increase in the hours and intensity of physical training, alongside the demands of academic study. Unsurprisingly these pressures combined with other social factors involving peers and general household duties to cause some anxiety and

had a negative effect on their performances, both academic and sporting. However the majority of student-athletes, after the initial shock, successfully managed to combine both their sport and their study. This was obviously helped if they had support from both domains. Nevertheless, it was also clear that most of the student-athletes had learnt from a younger age to be organised and had become very proficient at managing their time. There were some differences of opinion between the participants on the relative priorities of their academic work, their sport, and getting the most out of the 'typical student' social life.

4.6 CONCLUSION

The evidence presented in this chapter would suggest that that the sporting pathway of the young athlete to expert performer is complex, highly nuanced, and to some extent unique to each individual participant in the study. At the same time, this evidence also suggests that the study participants shared many aspects of their socialisation into sport that closely conform to Côté and Hay's description of the developmental socialisation process. Furthermore, in agreement with Toms (2005), Côté and Hay's model needs to be carefully contextualised and may benefit from further development.

The enjoyment of being active and physically capable was the main motivation for the initial phases of sport participation and although this was still a significant factor in the later phases, being successful in a particular sport was of greater importance. To gain this success it was necessary for the participants to increase dramatically the intensity of their training. Although many of the participants had trained specifically in their sport for 10 years or more, this study would argue that it is not a necessary prerequisite for everyone to have the 10 years of deliberate practice, as suggested by Ericsson et al., (1993) prior to achieving expert status. Furthermore, from the evidence presented in this chapter, it could be argued that early specialisation in one sport is not a necessity and that participation in a variety of sports in the early years is often both motivational and beneficial to an aspiring performer. With respect to this view, many of the participants were moving into the investment phase at the same time as they were entering higher education. This meant that the student-athlete had

to be capable of balancing academic work alongside sporting ambitions, if they wanted to be successful in both domains.

In support of earlier studies (e.g. Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993 and Gould, Dieffenbach & Moffett, 2002) the evidence from this study supports the suggestion that talent development must be viewed as a long-term process which involves both the talented person and a strong support system. The family has often been acknowledged to play a key role in this system and consequently, the following chapter will discuss the various types of support the participants received from their family throughout the different phases of their sporting development.

Chapter Five

The Influence of the Family on Expert Performers' Developmental Socialisation into Sport

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the sporting pathways that the participants followed on their pathway to becoming expert performers. This chapter builds on from this and highlights the importance of the support of the family throughout the participants' routes to sporting success. In this chapter, I will examine the data that were generated in relation to the family and seek to explore the influence that these 'significant others' had on the participants' developmental socialisation into elite level sport. In accordance with Côté (1999), this chapter will show the role of the family in children's sport participation as a complex and dynamic phenomenon which evolves throughout the various phases of their development. In other words, how the family plays a different role throughout the participants' sporting careers. Furthermore, this chapter will also discuss the various forms and levels of support and encouragement that the participants received from their parents and how influential this was in their continuation in sport. This chapter and the following two chapters will address the research question relating to the influence and role of significant individuals throughout the developmental process, from novice to expert.

5.1.2 Introduction to Sport

"Sponsored recruitment" is how Prus (1984; pp. 301) describes the person who is willing to support an athlete's involvement in a sport; or provide the opportunities that encourage the athlete's involvement. Stevenson (1990) suggests that these sponsorships may be provided by parents, siblings, friends, and others; such as relatives, teachers, coaches and neighbours. Stevenson's findings are consistent with other talent development literature, which has shown that talented youth do not

transform their potential into accomplishments without a support system of significant others (Gould et al., 2006). The family is extremely influential within the lives of young people (Simmons & Wade, 1987). It is perhaps not surprising that several studies have concluded that the family is a critical agent of sports socialisation, especially in the early years (Kay, 2003). The importance of parental influence has frequently been cited as a key determinant of children's involvement and achievement in sport (Bloom, 1985; Brustad, 1996; Côté, 1999; Green & Chalip, 1997; Hellstedt, 1995; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). These findings are consistent with the theorising of Fredrick and Eccles (2001) who suggest that the primary way in which parents influence children's sport participation is by serving as 'providers' of experience. However, this family support is not necessarily a positive experience as there has been much criticism and reports of 'ugly parents' (Billante & Saunders, 2002) and over-involved parents who have shown negative parental behaviours. These negative behaviours can include over emphasising winning, holding unrealistic expectations and criticising their child (Hellstedt, 1987; Woolger & Power, 1993; Gould et al., 2006). This behaviour was not evident in this study, as most of the participants argued strongly that their parents had a very positive impact on their sporting career. Although a few participants did comment that their parents had little to do with their introduction to sport, most were very supportive and encouraging in their continued participation. Only very occasionally, when they were in the specialising or investment phases did any of the participants mention anything negative about their parent's involvement in their sporting career. It was also evident, from the participants' comments, that the primary reasons the parents encouraged sport participation was for the health and social benefits often associated with sport, rather than success.

5.1.3 Parental Encouragement in Sport Participation: "My mum encouraged me to try everything"

According to Côté and Hay (2002), the parents of children in the sampling years were responsible for igniting their children's interest in sport and enabling their children to experience a wide variety of sports. This conclusion is similar to the findings of this study whereby many ($n = 32$) of the participants suggested that their family,

especially their parents, played an influential role in their sporting career. The majority of the participants mentioned how important their parents had been in encouraging their initial interest in sport, although not necessarily in the sports in which they would eventually achieve international status. The following comments exemplify how many of the participants perceived that their parents had positively introduced and encouraged them to sample a number of different sports and facilitated their involvement:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): *My mum was a PE teacher, so she encouraged me to try everything, to do as much as possible, and she would happily take me there, she would take me to anything active basically.... We were a sporty family and we would just do as much as possible.*

Katrina (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *My mum used to take me to do everything, to see what I liked, so I got the chance to do loads of stuff as a child, just to see what I liked.*

Bob (swimming, 15.11.04): *they [my parents] let me do what I wanted to do if I didn't want to swim or whatever.....I also played a bit of rugby for my school and they just said do whatever you want to do, do as much as you want to do. ...and if you want to do one more than the other then fine.*

However, as was common throughout this study, there were also some 'exceptions to the rule'. For example, a few ($n = 7$) of the participants commented that they did not consider their parents were the ones to encourage them to participate in sport, although they did agree their parents were generally supportive once they had shown an interest in sport(s):

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *They [parents] have never really said "Oh, do you fancy trying this?" or "I think you would be good at this", but like I said when I started at the athletics club it was my mum that took me down, and in the end it was my mum that said "you'll be alright, you'll make some friends".*

Similarly, Carol (p10) comments:

(hockey, 14.04.05) *My parents weren't into sport at all; I don't really remember them ever asking me if I wanted to play anything. So I guess I initiated joining different sports clubs but my parents would facilitate them, by taking me and paying for it, but they very rarely came to watch me.*

In a similar vein, it was a friend, rather than her parents, who suggested to Louise (aged 14 years old) that she should come along with her to a swimming club. This argument, perhaps unsurprisingly, is consistent with Stevenson's (1990) study where he suggests that introductions that were 'sponsored' by friends or others tended to occur at a relatively later age than the parental sponsorships:

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): *When I started swimming it was what I really wanted to do, I started swimming because I solely wanted to do it. My parents were really taken aback with my enthusiasm, because they had no input into it whatsoever, they're just not sporty and they didn't understand the [swimming] club system.*

Although most of the participants gave credit to their parents, and some their peers, for initially introducing them to sport and for encouraging them to play a range of sports during their sampling years, they invariably believed that the deep-seated desire for playing sport came from themselves. "I played, because I wanted to" was a common phrase used by the participants throughout the interviews. Furthermore, as Stevenson (1999) found, because their parents (or whoever) introduced them to a sport did not necessarily or inevitably mean that that the participant became committed to it. While this view was strongly held by many of the participants in this study, the evidence presented in this and other chapters qualifies this argument and suggests that this desire to participate was in itself shaped by a coming together of a range of factors. These factors included early success, opportunity, a supportive infrastructure, financial capability, and a family situation that was at least not antagonistic to sports participation.

5.2 PARENTAL SUPPORT

In this study parental support was often identified by the participants as being key to their sporting success. This is not a novel understanding; for example, Côté and Hay (2002) argue that the psychosocial support provided by parents is an essential element in the development of children's self-esteem, competence, and achievement. Similarly, in an earlier study, Power and Woolger (1994) showed that parental support positively correlated with children's enjoyment and enthusiasm in swimming. In a similar vein, Brustad (1993) demonstrated that higher parental encouragement was

associated with greater perceived physical competence for children. In line with these earlier studies, most ($n = 32$) of the participants in this study also stated that their parents were very supportive in their encouragement to play sports and strongly argued that the support their parents had given them had been instrumental in their success in sport.

5.2.1 A Supportive Balance between Parents: "...he [dad] was great at supporting me when I felt my coaches couldn't. ...and my mum was a very passive creature..."

Cauce et al., (1990) identified four different kinds of psychosocial needs of young athletes; 'emotional support'², 'information support', 'tangible support' and 'companionship'. The participants in this study often suggested that they received a combination of these types of support from each of their parents. It was particularly in the specialising years that the participants commented that they looked to their parents for some independent advice rather than from their coach. Furthermore, several ($n = 8$) of the participants appreciated the balance of having one parent who was very objective about their sport and one that was emotionally supportive:

Bob (swimming, 15.11.04): *My dad was great, he was always very, very supportive, he was always there and I knew that he had been through swimming so many times (with my brothers) like if I had any questions he could guide me or tell me to talk to this person, or talk to that person, so he was great at supporting me when I felt my coaches couldn't. ... and my mum was a very passive creature, ... she would see me everyday coming home from school really tired and she would be like 'Oh take a break' it was always 'take a break, take it easy' and I would be like 'no, no, no I can't do that'. She just supported and comforted me whenever I needed it.*

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): *My dad is really honest, if I play well he'll tell me and if I play badly then he will tell me that too, my mum just comes along to support me.*

² Emotional support includes 4 dimensions: 1. Support during positive events and experiences. 2. Support during negative events and experiences. 3. Support for understanding self. 4. Enhancement of self-worth (Cauce et al., 1990)

Katrina's father is also her coach and although this was not uncommon in the sampling years, she was the only one in this study who was still being coached by a parent. I will discuss this more in Chapter Six. Katrina explains that:

Katrina (taekwondo, 05.04.05): My dad has been behind me 100%, he is the first one to pick me up when I am down and when I am at the top to kick me back down, but he has been there for me since day one when I started and he is still helping me now... My mum would understand too, she would be like 'Oh give her a day off, she's tired, she's been training hard, let her go out.' So I think that I had the best of both worlds, my mum would let me go out and my dad well, he wouldn't say I couldn't go out, but he'd say 'look you've got to go training.' Sometimes it would be a good balance but sometimes it would make them argue.

It was interesting to note that in this study it was often ($n = 11$) the father who appeared to provide the 'information support', whereas the participants' mothers generally provided the more 'emotional support'.

As was discussed in Chapter Four, there was some diversity in the participants' sporting paths; and this includes the support and encouragement that they received from their parents. For instance, a small number ($n = 4$) of participants claimed they received little or no support or backing from their parents throughout all the phases and they gave their parents little credit for their sporting success. In two of these cases the participants suggested that the break-up of their parents had been a confounding factor. For example:

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): My dad has remarried, (my mum died when I was 6) and his new wife had 3 kids, which was fine to start with, but then I didn't really get on with the step family. My dad decided to go his way and sort of left us to fend for ourselves. That sounds really bad, I mean he has supported me but not in the same way as my friends have been supported by their family, if you know what I mean.

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05): ...when my mum and dad separated, my mum moved to Cornwall, and although she was the one that initially introduced me to running, she wasn't really part of my life, I mean I still talked to her, and I've seen her, but she never really came to watch me in my races when I was growing up. I guess as you grow up and you see other parents there, you think 'oh well, my parents don't come to watch' and I kind of wished they would make more of an effort, but then I knew that, that was the way it was, so I just got on with it.

However, it is also important to highlight that some of the other participants whose parents had separated ($n = 7$) (or a biological parent had died $n = 2$) did comment that they still benefited from a great deal of support from at least one of their parents if not both:

Julie (rugby, 19.02.05) I gave up swimming because my parents broke up, but I wasn't too bothered because I loved having more freedom to see my friends and having lies in. ...then when I took up rugby my mum was really supportive, but I only saw my dad at weekends so if he wanted to see me, he would have to come to rugby with me. That's when he took a real interest in me and my rugby. He used to drive me to all my training and all my matches. He'd watch all my matches; and sometimes he'd even watch me train!

These comments from the participants in this study suggest that the contribution of parents, particularly during the early sampling years, was important in balancing the young athletes' needs for support of various kinds, and that often, but not always, different kinds of support came from different people. This feature of more and increasingly specialised support from family members and significant others was accentuated during the specialising and investing years, as is demonstrated later in this chapter.

5.2.2 Supportive, but not 'pushy!'

As discussed in the previous section, many ($n = 32$) of the participants stressed the point that their parents were supportive but were not the stereotypical 'pushy parents' often associated with children's sport. In fact, not one of the participants suggested that their parents had put excessive pressure on them to succeed in the sport in which they are now expert. Although one of the women rugby players did say that when she was a swimmer in her younger years, her mum was 'obsessive' about her swimming and times, and this 'obsessiveness' was part of the reason she gave up the sport. This belief is consistent with Power and Woolgers' (1994) argument that an intermediate level of expectation from parents was associated with children's highest level of enthusiasm for swimming. Similarly, Hellstedt (1987) argues that 'moderately-involved' parents have a more positive effect on the child athlete. The following

comments exemplify the notion that in the sampling years the participants' parents were supportive but not excessively so:

Shona (rugby, 14.03.05): *I think my dad probably thought that I would go quite far, but my parents have never pushed me, they have given me support, but they are not pushy parents.*

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *It was always my dad that took me to the primary cross country races and supported me, but he was never pushy. My dad used to say to me that he could never cheer for me because he had a lump in his throat, I don't know if that was quite true, but he was never one of those parents running alongside their kids shouting their heads off.*

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *My parents were always very wary of pushing me into anything, they just said to me 'do you want to go swimming?' and I would say 'yes' and they would take me. So in that respect they were fantastic and if I had said 'no' they would be like 'alright', there wasn't a problem. Because I have seen a lot of people burn out over the years, by the old pushy parent's syndrome. I think you see a lot of it in swimming, because of the nature of it, people are always trying to do a little bit more than anybody else. My parents were definitely not like that, they just wanted to support me, and as long as I was enjoying it, they had no problem in taking me to swimming.*

These were just a small selection of comments which highlight the importance the participants placed on having parents that were prepared to support and facilitate their sporting aspirations. It was also evident that the participants wished it to be made clear that the desire to succeed and the motivation to train hard had come from them and not their parents. Indeed, it was also interesting that during the interviews, if the participant had said something that may have been construed as their parents being defined as being pushy, they were quick to nullify this notion:

Claire (rugby, 16.02.05): *I've always enjoyed it [sport] and they have pushed me to do things that I have enjoyed, not pushed, but encouraged me to do things that I have liked and I have always liked sports. So they have always taken me places so I can do it and therefore I have been able to do this and that.*

Sonya (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *My mum and dad always pushed me, well pushed me a little bit, like sometimes if I didn't want to go training, they would say 'You're going training!'*

It would appear that these participants were aware of the negative issues associated with having over-ambitious parents and were keen to dispel the idea that this had been

their experience. Moreover, the participants were extremely appreciative of this support and recognised that it would have been difficult to succeed without it. Indeed, several further commented that achieving international status in their sport has been a way in which they could 'pay back' their family for all their years of support. Some meant financially, but others meant the kudos and the simple pleasure gained by parents from seeing their child being successful. This notion is highlighted by the following comments:

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *My parents have supported me in everything, they have gone with me in every decision that I have made, like when I wanted to go back and play rugby they were happy for me to do that. ...When I was playing at Belfield [football] my dad had to take me there twice a week after work, and we weren't back until 10pm, so it was a big commitment on his part too. I think that was a bit of an inspiration for me to make it as a rugby player, so that I can maybe make enough money so that he can retire early or something like that.*

Bob (swimming, 15.11.04): *They never put any pressure on me to succeed, but I suppose just doing well would be a way of me saying 'thanks'.*

Kate (swimming, 15.11.04): *I do like them [parents] to come and watch, especially if I swim well, because it kind of pays off for all the time and effort that they have put in.*

It is evident that these participants felt that being successful in their sport was the best way to reimburse their parents for their continued involvement and support, and the time and the money they had invested throughout their sporting careers. Although some previous research has suggested that young athletes sometimes feel obliged to continue training and competing in order to fulfil parent or coach expectations (e.g. Coakley, 1992; Raedeke & Smith, 2001), this was not evident in this study.

5.2.3 Parents Watching: A Source of Support or Pressure?

There were mixed emotions from the participants concerning how they felt about their parents and other family members coming to watch them play their sport. Some (n = 14) said they liked, and have always appreciated their parents being at competitions, others (n= 7) felt it was an extra source of pressure or simply awkward. It was particularly when the participants had moved into the investment phase that they

mentioned having a problem with their parents coming to watch them compete. Much of the related literature suggests that young athletes' competitive trait anxiety was related to parental expectations and evaluations of performance (Brustad, 1988; Gould, Horn, & Spreeman, 1983; Scanlan and Lewthwaite, 1984). However, in contrast to this view, most of the participants in this study argued that the pressure to succeed was one that they had placed on themselves and had not come from their parents. This complex debate is similar to the findings of Scanlan, Stein and Ravizza (1991) who reported that elite figure skaters found the family to be a source of stress, but also to be a refuge from the pressures of elite competition. The participants who enjoyed having their parents supporting them from the sidelines gave a number of reasons for this: they played better; they were used to their parents being there; they liked that their parents had made the effort to come and support them:

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *I have always liked my mum and dad coming to watch me play and I still do, some people say that they don't like it when some people are watching. But there is something inside me that wants them to be watching and I like them to be there, and it makes me want to play well, so that I don't let them down or to show them that I'm playing well. ... I do want to play well for them but it doesn't put me off playing, and that has always been the case.*

Sonya (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *...my family come and watch a lot, it's like a family outing, and they love it. If it's in this country they will come and watch and they have been abroad a few times. They've been to the Olympics to watch, both times. It's good, it's nice to see them there, especially at something like that, you need to see your family in the crowd, and my dad loves it....When I was younger I always liked them there too, it was just like a normal thing to come and watch me at competitions, because I was fighting just about every weekend when I was younger and they were always there.*

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): *I really like it when they come to watch me, I get really excited because they have made the effort to come and watch me. I'll put in a harder hit, well I don't know if I actually do, but I just think that.*

Shona (rugby, 14.03.05): *They have always come to watch me and I have always loved it. I know with some people their parents never come to watch them and I can't quite grasp that concept, I've always wanted them to come and watch, and they like to watch too.*

In contrast to the positive comments above, the participants who did not like their parents coming to watch said that this was because they felt extra pressure to perform well. They also suggested that the pressure became more intense the further they

progressed in their sport, perhaps because they had greater expectations of themselves and/or they had often moved away from home by then and it was more of a novelty when their parents came to watch them:

Katrina (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *My mum isn't allowed to come and watch me at all and that is my choice, because every time she has come to watch, I lose! Now I sometimes feel a bit of pressure when my dad comes to watch, I'm like 'What's he going to say to me?' Because I know he is sitting somewhere watching what I am doing. And if they travel abroad to come and watch you and you get nothing, you feel even worse. It's not them that puts the pressure on you, you do that yourself, because they want you to do well, for you, opposed to them. But sometimes it's best if they are not there and you don't feel that pressure. It's a bit selfish but sometimes you have to be a bit like that.*

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *I liked it when they came and watched me play rugby and I liked it when they came to watch me swim. But quite recently I didn't like it when they came to watch me swim, because when I was at home I saw them all the time so it wasn't really a big thing, now for them to come and watch me they would have to travel and I felt like it was added pressure that I didn't need. They had come all the way to watch me swim for 50 seconds. So if I wasn't up to scratch I would feel bad about it.*

William (swimming, 02.12.04): *It was mainly my dad that came to watch but sometimes my mum would come too. I did like them to come when I was younger, because I would look for them in the crowd and it was nice to see them. Now it puts me off, I can be in front of 30,000 people, say at the World Championships with TV cameras on me etc and I won't feel as nervous as I would if I know my parents are watching me. I am not sure why, maybe because I know they have made the effort to come and watch and I don't want to go slow.*

However, it should also be noted that several ($n = 5$) of the participants were quite ambivalent as to whether their parents watched them or not, as the following comments illustrate:

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): *I might be strange but my mum will ask me 'if I want them to come and watch a competition?' and I'll say 'Look, honestly I really don't care. If you want to come and watch, well that's fantastic, but if you don't then that doesn't bother me at all'. And that is literally how I feel. If they are there well and good and if they are not then I really don't care.*

Stephen (rugby, 10.03.05): *...I wouldn't say it makes much difference to me if they come or watch or not, but I think that they quite enjoy it and come and watch the rugby. When I was younger they came and watched pretty much all of my games, basically because they had to take me there anyway. I suppose it*

was better when I was younger that they were there but really if they weren't there I don't think it would have made much of a difference.

Rory (athletics, 08.11.04): *It doesn't make much difference to me to be honest, because you get on and do what you have done for years and years. If they're there, they're there, if they're not they're not. And that's the way it's always been.*

In agreement with Woolger & Power (1993), supportive statements and behaviours need to be considered in the context of the individual parent-child relationship. What is supportive to one child (e.g. a parent attending competitions) may be averse to another.

As the participants progressed into the investment phase and reached elite level in their sport, most of them commented that their competitions were often held further afield, including abroad. Many of the participants commented that their parents now took the opportunity of combining watching them compete whilst having a holiday. It was clear that the participants thought that this was good for both them and their parents:

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): *...now if I've got an international competition, and it's somewhere that they haven't been, they'll take it as a holiday, and they'll go sight seeing and do whatever they want to do and then they'll come and watch me when I am swimming. So they'll combine it and get the best of both.*

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): *...my parents have been around the world watching me play, like Australia, Korea, Europe, they have been to all the big tournaments, and they just make a holiday of it.*

Bob (swimming, 15.11.04): *...Like next week they are coming out to Vienna to watch the Europeans, but I sense more for the holiday than to watch me swim!*

Even though most of the participants recognised that their parents were generally well-intentioned and appreciated that they had come a great distance to support to them, some also felt that it could be frustrating:

Colin (taekwondo, 06.04.05): *My mum came to watch me at the Olympics, but it was a nightmare because I worried about her all the time. I was worried about where she was going to stay and how she was going to get to and from*

the venues and things like that. And I didn't really want that worry in my head, worrying that she would get lost, or get in trouble or whatever...

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): *Dad always comes and whistles so as to let me know that he is there in the stadium, and I'm just like 'Agggghhhh, shut up, go away!'*

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): *...he[dad] always wants a bit of the spotlight, and it's like he would go on trips and get his nose into places which were inappropriate and really annoying....Like family members are not allowed into the team hotels, because its not fair having parents walking around staring and saying 'oh, there's so and so'. The hotel is meant to be a retreat for athletes, but he would just come in, and I would be like 'Dad, you're not supposed to be here!' I hate it when he does things like that.*

Clearly, having to deal with this type of extra stress could have a negative impact on an athlete's performance.

5.2.4 Tangible Support: "Finance was never an issue, although my parents may say otherwise!"

According to Kay (2000) the expense of supporting a talented child is consistently identified as the most significant demand on families, and many parents report experiencing moderate or severe financial hardship as a result. It is perhaps surprising that, with the exception of two of the taekwondo players, lack of finance was seldom mentioned as being an issue for the rest of the participants involved in this study during their sporting development, although as Julie comments: "maybe my parents would say otherwise!" However, as discussed in Chapter Four, this apparent lack of concern over finance may also be related to the sports and social class of the participants involved in this study. The socio-demographic information gathered by the questionnaires in Appendix B provides greater detail on this.

In this study any financial issues appeared to be more prevalent when the young athlete reached an age where they no longer felt that they should be financially dependent on their parents. The vastly differing funding/payment levels between the sports made this issue dependent on the particular sport. Most of the male rugby players in this study are professional; they can earn an adequate living from the sport,

whereas the women hockey player's recently had their funding drastically reduced, so only a select few receive financial assistance from their National Governing Body (NGB).

As already mentioned in this chapter, most of the participants were unaware of any financial problems that their sport involvement may have caused their family when they were younger. On the whole, most participants argued that their parents were able and happy to provide the finance they required to compete and train in their chosen sport(s). This is consistent with Côté and Hay's (2002) view that families of performers who are committed to their child's involvement in sport will somehow find the financial resources necessary. The following comments exemplify this point:

Rory (athletics, 08.11.04): *If money ever was an issue, my mum didn't tell me because she always wanted me to do it [run] so she would give me the money anyway. She was supporting me in her own little way, like if she couldn't come and watch me herself she wanted me to go and that was the important thing, so that was the way in which she supported me.*

Julie (rugby, 19.02.05): *Finance was never really an issue, well not that I was aware of. Although my parents may say otherwise!*

Lewis (swimming, 29.11.04): *...my folks paid for it [swimming] so I don't really know how much it cost. But, I know it used to cost a lot having to go away and stuff and I knew it cost a lot just for training. Although I used to get a local council grant each year when I was younger, but obviously my parents paid for all the rest. And I did feel a bit guilty about it, but they seemed to get some enjoyment out of it and they didn't seem to mind. I think my parents would have given me anything so that I could go to a competition, but I was never aware of it being a problem.*

Calum (rugby, 01.12.04): *...my parents were always alright [financially], they were never wealthy, but they always looked after me when it came to me being able to play rugby.*

Even though the participants in this study did not appear to suffer from lack of financial support, some did mention that they realised they were very fortunate in this aspect. They acknowledged that without financial backing from their parents it would have been very difficult for them to participate and progress in their sport. The following comment from Nick is perhaps an extreme example, but nevertheless it highlights the financial implications involved in competing at pole vault:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04) *When you are at a young age, you need to move on to the next level and if you didn't have money you couldn't progress. Like pole vault is probably the worst sport to pick in terms of financial reasons, like a pole would cost about £300 a piece, so within a season when you are young and growing you go through poles like there is no tomorrow. ... Without my parents I wouldn't have been able to progress. We were maybe buying 3 poles a year, but not many parents would be willing to give that to a kid for just a hobby basically.*

As Nick acknowledges in the above quotation, if his parents had not been able to support him financially he would have struggled to continue in his sport. Other participants also commented on the inequality of funding between sports and how some athletes from families with less disposable income are disadvantaged. Several of the participants also highlighted that being a competitive sportsperson is expensive for parents, not only when they are children but also when they are adults and competing at senior level:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04) *...this might be bitterness in my part but I have always been there or thereabouts and my successes speak for themselves, but financially the support just hasn't been there [from the NGB]. It's always been from my parents so it has been kind of okay for me, but now I have got to an age where I have realised; 'look that is not my money' and I'm going to be 25 [years old] in a couple of months and I want to be able to afford to do it myself but I can't, because if my mum were to stop paying my rent, that would be it, I would have to go on to something else. So in that respect I think that is a big issue that people need to address, I think they are getting around to it, but I think there are a lot of families that are a lot worse off than mine and I just think they could be 10 times more talented than me, but that's it, they just have to stop because they just can't afford to swim.*

Calum (rugby, 01.12.04): *...before I got paid to play rugby I was self employed, so financially I was penalised when I was away with England. But there was never a time that I couldn't go on anything because I made that sacrifice, like I would give up a week's wages to play rugby, but I was lucky because I never left home until I was 25, so basically my parents subsidised me. ... One of the biggest things that cheesed me off, especially at the very highest end, like England, there was guys that couldn't possibly play for England because they couldn't afford to. Then there were guys that came from a wealthier background, suddenly they could go because they could afford to go, but to me sport shouldn't be like that. You should be picked on your ability to do that sport and not on if you can afford to do it.*

However, not all the participants were fortunate enough to receive financial backing from their parents all the way through their sporting development and had to depend

on working in low-paid jobs until they received funding from their NGB or through sponsorship:

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): *He [dad] took me to gymnastics at first but when he remarried I had to go on my bike, like going to hockey matches or going to school. It was very much I had to look after myself. Financially, he supported me until I got a job, but I got a job at 14, just doing odd jobs, and I moved out when I was 17. But prior to that I was paying rent, for the whole of the 6th Form College... This was fine, because I think that has without a doubt made me a stronger character. I am not worried to be on my own 2 feet at all, things happen for a reason I guess. That is probably why I am much more independent than a lot of people that I know, I am pig-headed, stubborn but, I can fend for myself.*

Neil (taekwondo, 06.04.05): *...like when I was 17, instead of going out with my mates, I had a job in Burger King or wherever. I was working just so I could do taekwondo. ...I don't know if I would be competing now if I didn't get some sort of financial support because I have sacrificed so much in the past, I think it would have worn thin by now. Because I was living that sort of life right up until I was 19 when I got on to the World Class programme. I think I probably would have still been doing taekwondo but I think I would just have been doing it on a recreational level.*

As reported in Chapter Four, Colin dropped out of competitive taekwondo for several years and then returned to the sport at around 16/17 years old determined to make it to elite level. However, his mother was hesitant to support him financially when he was old enough to gain full-time employment. As Colin explains in his own words:

Colin (taekwondo, 06.04.05): *She has given me a lot of help in the past and she was happy for me to go taekwondo when I was younger, but when I went back at 16/17 she was like 'You're getting old now; you need to start paying your way. I'm not going to keep paying for you to go; you need to get a job. Where's my money for this month?' and I'd be like 'Mum I've got to go and compete' and she'd be like 'You've got to start paying your way. Taekwondo isn't going to pay your way.' And I'd say don't worry Mum, if I do get on the programme [World Class funding] I will be able to pay my way, and she'd be like 'Oh yeah and how do you know that you are better than the others.' But when I did get it [funding] she was very happy, very happy!*

Although a couple of participants experienced some financial hardship throughout their sporting progression, most of the others did not make any reference to this until they reached senior level. At this level, it was evident that there was a vast difference between the sports in the amount of funding that was available to the performers.

Nevertheless, this study suggests that the participants who came from wealthier backgrounds had an easier transition into the higher ranks. This is often reflected not only by the funding provided by parents, but also in practical terms - for example, as I will discuss in the next section, parents often need to have a car for taxiing young people to sport. It is significant that few of the participants in this study encountered serious financial obstacles during their sport careers since they are all in the investment phase. It is those performers who did not make it to this level that as a corollary are more likely to have met financial barriers in the course of their sport careers.

5.2.5 Supportive Parents: Time, Effort and 'Taxiing'

As discussed above, only a few ($n = 7$) participants in this study mentioned the financial commitments their parents had made to support their rise to the elite level in their sport. On the other hand, the great majority ($n = 32$) of the participants showed a greater appreciation of the time and effort that their parents had expended so that they could participate and compete in their chosen sport(s). This evidence lends weight to the findings of other studies, (such as, Yang et al., 1996; Kirk et al., 1997; Kay, 2000) that supporting children's sport participation at high performance levels also requires a great time commitment by their parents. Most of the participants commented that transporting them to and from training venues and competitions, particularly during the time they were in the sampling and specialising phases, was a key role of their supportive parents:

Lewis (swimming, 29.11.04): They [parents] have always helped me and backed me in whatever I've done, they use to take me to competitions, like when I went to Wales or Scotland or wherever, they took me there and stayed with me for the weekend. But it was like a family thing because my dad and my brother would also go too, so all of us would go, because my brother competes as well. ... I trained in the same squads as my brother, so it was like they [parents] would take us, watch the session and then take us back home, even in morning sessions, Dad would get up early and take me before he went to work.

Stephen (rugby, 10.03.05): My parents obviously played an important role in that they supported me by 'taxiing' me around to all my games and training too.

Kate (swimming, 15.11.04): *...my mum would get up at 5am and take me swimming, sometimes she would stay and chat to the other parents and other times she would go home and get tidied up and then pick me up at 8am for a quick breakfast before taking me to school.*

In a similar vein, and in agreement with Côté (1999) and more recently Wolfenden and Holt (2005) this study showed that, not only does the athlete have to make sacrifices to pursue elite level sport, but so do their families.

Bob (swimming, 15.11.04): *...my dad always went horribly out of his way to do stuff for us. I don't think my dad took a holiday for 15 years just so that we could compete or go on swimming camps. My dad didn't make massive amount of money, I mean we weren't poor by any means, but he put all his time and effort in to us, so we could swim or do whatever we wanted to do.*

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): *My parents were stupidly supportive, every Tuesday and Thursday night my mum would spend an hour travelling in the evening giving me a lift there and back to training. ...so every Tuesday and Thursday night was thrown for her too.*

To accommodate their child-athletes' training schedules, some of the participants described how it was necessary that their parents had to take time away from their work. It was also frequently mentioned that their parents had to split their roles in order to cater for all their family's needs:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): *...twice a week my dad had to drive me over to Heavesham (training), which was a 70 mile round trip. We left just after school, so he had to take an hour off from work, and we often didn't get back until 11pm, which was a big sacrifice for him.*

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): *When it came to needing to go places like for training or competitions Mum would always be there to take me. Dad was always busy and he didn't really have the time, so Mum was like my sort of 'transporter', a bit like a taxi service. She said that she didn't mind, she said that she would rather I did it [took part in competitive sport].*

It was evident in this study that most of the participants were more aware and appreciative of the time and sacrifices that their parents had committed to their sport than the money their parents had invested, in their pursuit of sporting excellence. Having parents who had the time, money and effort to support their sporting aspirations was important for many of the participants in this study.

5.2.6 Keeping-Up with School Work

The importance of keeping-up with school work was often mentioned by the participants as taking priority over their sport. Indeed, several ($n = 10$) of the participants claimed that they soon realised that if their school work was not completed satisfactorily then their parents would not allow them to play their sport. This prioritising of school work accords with Côté's (1999) study, where he reported "in all the interviewed families, it was acknowledged that school achievement was more important than sport achievement" (p.405). The following comments exemplify the importance that the parents of the participants in this study placed on their child-athlete's education:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *There was support in both fronts [school and sport]. I don't think it ever came to it but if I did want to go swimming and I hadn't done my homework, well that just wouldn't have happened, and of course they[parents] have the control because at 16 you can't get anywhere without them. So if I had school work to do then it wasn't an option, the work had to be done first, so I guess it was early on that I learnt how to manage my time.*

Carol (hockey, 14.04.05): *For me sport has always taken priority, I have always preferred to be running about playing games and stuff. I was never a bright, bright kid and my parents knew that but they always insisted that my homework was done before I was allowed to go out to hockey practice.*

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *...I kept telling my mum and dad that I was going to be a professional rugby player, but even that didn't get me out of doing my homework!*

Moreover, many ($n = 18$) of the participants argued that they were confident in their ability to balance both their education and sport. They perceived that this was due to their good organisational skills. Only a few ($n = 5$) participants suggested that their sport had been detrimental to their education, indeed, others argued that being involved in competitive sport from a young age had been beneficial to their academic studies. A number of participants suggested that their time management and organisational skills were good, because they had to balance their sport with their school work from a young age:

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05): *I don't think my school work suffered because of my running, if anything it helped it, because I think it made me more*

balanced and made me more organised because I had to make sure that I had my school work done so I could do my running.

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): *I think sport had a good influence on my school work, in that I had the ability to time manage. Whenever, I sat down and did the work it would take me....well say if my friends were revising for about 3 hours I would probably get the same amount of work done in half the time, just because I knew I had to do it, so it got done.*

Stephen (rugby, 10.03.05): *I never really found it a problem keeping up with school work, I am quite organised in terms of getting things done and to be able balance stuff like that.*

Similarly Kirk et al. (1997) reported that most of the junior sport participants they interviewed felt they were able to balance both their sport and school work.

Indeed some (n = 4) of the participants said that their parents would sometimes stop them from playing their sport as a means of discipline; for example, if they had been in trouble or if they had not done their homework. Interestingly, the same participants also believed their sport was a means of channelling their aggression:

Colin (taekwondo, 06.04.05) *...my mum used to use it as a punishment, because I loved taekwondo and if I wasn't doing good at school, she wouldn't let me go to taekwondo. If she had said anything else it wouldn't have bothered me, but when she said that, I'd be like 'Cool Mum' cos that was a really big punishment'. ...there's nothing I like more than taekwondo training. The way you get to express yourself is why I do it. Because doing taekwondo has kept me out of so much trouble, especially from where I grew up. It's the way that you can channel all your aggression and emotions and a way of letting off a lot of steam...*

Calum (rugby, 01.12.04)...*I enjoyed the physicality of it [rugby], the confrontation of the front row, it suited me down to the ground really, I managed to find something that I could channel all my energy and aggression through, which is quite good, because I was or could be a bit of a handful in everyday life, at times. So it was good for me really because it gave me a real focus. And for me the punishment was, if you don't behave, or you haven't done your school work then you don't play rugby and that was the incentive that I channelled my energies through.*

From the participants' comments education was evidently a key priority for most of their parents in this study. Although their parents often encouraged their participation in sport, this was not to the detriment of their academic studies. I acknowledged in Chapter Four, that the participants who went on to study at a Higher Education

institution were often able to balance both their degree alongside competing at a high level in sport. I would suggest that their parents' influence in prioritising both domains from an early age played dividends in their later years. Parents can be influential in a number of ways and the following section will determine the level to which parental attitudes and beliefs surrounding sport can impact on their child.

5.3 PARENTAL ROLE MODELS

A role model is considered to be someone a person likes to imitate or be like because this person is perceived to be exemplary and worthy (Yancey, 1998). Bandura (1986) argues that "modeling has always been acknowledged to be one of the most powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes and patterns of thought and behaviour" (pp. 47). That is to say people learn by observing the behaviour of others as well as the consequences resulting from that behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Previous research has been inconsistent in determining the relationship between the level of involvement of the parents in a specific domain and the child's level of performance in the same domain. However, in a sporting context, Côté and Hay (2002) argue that it is possible that a child who does not come from a 'sporting' family background can still be motivated to participate in and achieve a high level of performance. In this study many of the participants did appear to be heavily influenced by their parents. Many suggested that they initially got involved in a sporting activity primarily because their parents did or had done ($n = 15$). Several ($n = 7$) also remembered spending a lot of their childhood on the sidelines watching their parents compete:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): I started to play hockey, because both my parents played, so I have been next to the pitch practically since I was born, I would be in my pram next to the pitch.

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05): My mum ran a lot, just to keep fit and I remember going to watch her racing in fun runs or half marathon, or 10kms on the road. And I remember going out with her on my bike and eventually I managed to nag her to take me out running. I think I was about 9 years old when I first asked my mum if I could go out running with her.

Not all participants remained committed to their parents' sport, and some went on to excel in another sport, as international hockey player Stacey describes:

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): *I did athletics because my dad was an athlete, and was quite good at it. So he encouraged me to go the athletics club and we had a family membership there. ...I played some netball at primary school as well, and I enjoyed that. I was quite good at that as well, because I had that in my background as well, because my mum used to play netball and as a young child I went with her and sat on the side lines.*

Nevertheless, it was more often the case that the parents of the participants were happy to encourage their child to play any sport because of the social and health benefits commonly associated with playing sport. Moreover, as mentioned previously, it was more common that the participants did not remain in the sport that their parent(s) played, despite their parents' encouragement:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *My dad liked the fact that I swam because that was his thing and that was more of his interest, but he never pushed me to do it. And my mum played a lot of tennis and she tried to get me more and more into that because she liked the fact that I could play with her. So in that respect they moved me in different directions, but my dad loves rugby and he enjoyed the fact that I played rugby. I think they just liked the fact that I was very active and healthy and they respected that.*

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): *I think if you asked my dad I think he would say that he would have wanted me to play football, because he really likes football, but now I play rugby they are fully behind me.*

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): *When they [parents] were younger, they were both very sporty, my dad played football and squash and my mum played netball and swam. So I was always around sport when I was a child....My earliest memories are sitting at a netball match watching my mum, or watching my dad play squash, so I think that just rubbed off on me, although they are not the sports that I took up.*

Interestingly, very few ($n = 2$) of the participants' parents were ever involved in sport to the same elite level as their off-springs. Alicia was one exception:

Alicia (hockey, 22.04.05): *...Dad was a professional golfer, my mum was a pro squash player, my Grampa was a boxer, and my Granny was a tennis player...and my brother plays rugby for England.*

However, the majority of the participants did describe their parents as being active and that they were often involved in sport to some level. For example:

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): *My dad was always into football, he was a good centre forward, and he was in one Cup Final when he was young and my mum played netball and stuff, so they are quite a sporty family, but not overly.*

Claire (rugby, 16.02.05): *We have always been a very able family because my dad is very physically strong and my mum is obviously strong because of the horses. We have always been a very physical family, we have never sat in front of the TV and 'vegged' out for days on end; we've always been out doing stuff.*

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): *My parents have always been very laid back in terms of what sports I play, they are both fairly active, we are a pretty active family and we always have been.*

On the other hand, some ($n = 5$) of the participants could not explain where their sporting prowess had come from, because neither of their parents were remotely interested in sport. This uncertainty is illustrated by the following participants' comments:

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): *Neither of my parents are particularly sporty, my dad is a musician and he hates sport or doesn't see the point in it, he sees the similarity in performing but that's it.*

Carol (hockey, 14.04.05): *My parents weren't into sport at all; I don't really remember them ever asking me if I wanted to play anything. So I guess I initiated joining different sports clubs but my parents would facilitate it, by taking me and paying for it...*

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *I don't think they were ever very good at sports, certainly as far as doing it themselves; they have never really been interested in running. My dad doesn't even enjoy watching athletics...*

In agreement with Côté and Hay (2002) the evidence from this study would seem to suggest that parents do not necessarily have to be a 'sport model' of participation and performance. But similar to previous research (e.g. Monsaas 1985; Sloane 1985; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993) it was more important that the parents promoted values such as: the importance of achievement; hard work; success; being active and being persistent. I also discovered that, just as the participants were often influenced by their parents to take up their sport, several participants claimed that their parents had subsequently become involved in their sport.

Nick (athletics, 12.11.05): *They don't just come to watch me compete, because my mum is involved in athletics now, she runs the young athletes team at my*

old athletics club. She started helping out when I was there and has just carried on. So she knows a lot of other people involved in the sport, so she is interested in other events as well.

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): *She [mum] was never really interested in athletics before I got into it, but now she loves it [athletics] and she watches it a lot and gets a lot of exhilaration out of it. She probably knows more about what distances people are throwing, than I do!*

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): *...they [parents] had never experienced hockey before and it was completely a new entity for them and it has been a really good journey for them as well, because they have travelled to watch me play and they come and watch me play every weekend and they really enjoy it. So for them, I think it has opened a new door to them, because every time we go away, especially when go to Europe, they've been there and made a holiday of it. They still come every weekend to watch me play National League, home and away, and most of my international games. Not just because of me, because last year, because of the GB programme we weren't allowed to play much club hockey and they still went to watch my club side play at the weekends.*

Consistent with this observation Côté (1999) reported that parents often develop an interest in the sport in which their child-athlete specialised. Furthermore, Green and Chalip (1997): pp. 63) also commented that parents often become involved in their children's sporting lives, and in their children's sport organisations. 'They are thus being socialised themselves'. Kirk and MacPhail (2003) reported that parents occupied one of four main positions during the sampling phase of their children's sport socialisation: firstly the non-attender; secondly the spectator; thirdly the helper; and fourthly the committed member (pp. 33). All these parental positions are evident in this study, with most of the parents falling into the second and third categories.

Although some of the participants' parents had no involvement in sport, it was very common for their siblings to play competitive sport. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following section, but the following comment from Lewis aptly sets the scene:

Lewis (swimming, 29.11.04): *My dad was never really into any sport, my mum used to swim but not to a high level, just club standard. But my brother is an international swimmer as well. So it's funny in a way that we both swim internationally and they [parents] were never involved in elite swimming at all.*

5.4 SIBLINGS: FRIEND OR FOE?

Few studies have examined the similarities in physical activity or factors influencing sport participation among siblings (Duncan et al., 2004). This is surprising, because the evidence from this study suggests that siblings were often influential in the participants' initial involvement in sport. For example, several ($n = 17$) of the participants saw their elder siblings as role models and commented that they had become involved in sport because their (generally elder) sibling(s) encouraged them:

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): *I had an older brother and he made me play a wide variety of sports in the garden, like football and French cricket and things like that. He was very 'sporty' when he was younger, but he is probably the laziest person I know. He was an awesome games player he could have been incredibly good at a range of sports, so we were quite similar in that way, our motor ability was quite good, but I don't think he liked the competitive side of it, in terms of trials and things like that. He would never push himself to do that. So he is not involved in sport now, which is silly.*

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *I've got 2 brothers and so we've always played sports together as we were growing up Just doing things in the garden after school probably helped me to be a bit more aware of team sports, and coordination and things like that.*

Although several of the participants reported that their siblings were also good athletes, it would appear that few ($n = 4$) of them continued to go on to compete at senior elite level. Moreover, according to the participants their siblings had the potential, but not the same determination or motivation, to succeed. The following comments illustrate how other interests became more of a priority to their siblings:

Sonya (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *My big brother used to do it [taekwondo] but he stopped years ago, he did alright, he did it to quite a high level in England and he has fought abroad but he hasn't fought for Great Britain, but he was alright. He got to about 16 or 17 and that was it, he was one of those ones, who went for women and booze.*

Shona (rugby, 14.03.05): *I started by watching my twin brother play rugby, then I got a bit bored just watching so I started playing too, that was when I was about 8 years old. When we were younger my twin brother was a very good rugby player, I think he could have done quite well. Like when we were younger we were playing in the same team and he was much better than I was. ...he is still playing quite good Cup rugby, although I think he could play for a better side and play at a higher level if he wanted, if he pushed himself a bit more and didn't get so involved in the social side.*

I thought it was interesting that a sizeable number of the participants (n = 12) (both male and female) claimed that the sibling who was most influential in them taking up their sport was a brother who was two or three years older. This small selection of quotations highlights the frequent occurrence of this:

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): *I have a brother who is two years older than me, and he is also a keen rugby player. He was very successful at school, he was the Captain and we played together when he was in Year 13 and I was in Year 11, and yeah I liked that, that was fun. He was good, but he didn't really take it that seriously, he liked playing but he liked the social side too, so he decided not to go down that route.*

Calum (rugby, 01.12.04): *My brother is 2 years older than me and he played rugby for the school and a rugby club, so I naturally followed him to that rugby club and played for their U16s. He still plays at 35 for a junior clubhe was quite a good player, I'm a hooker and he played in the centre. But he just found more pleasure in girls, alcohol and work, so he sort of drifted off and didn't really push it.*

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *My brother is 2 years older than me so I followed him into rugby... we quite often played together in the school team, and that was a great laugh. He was a great player, probably better than me! But he was happy to play it at a social level and concentrate on his work and he's doing really well for himself now.*

It could be argued that when both siblings were socialised into sport by their parents, then similar values will be placed on the importance of sport. As a consequence of this sharing of values many respondents in this study felt a great affinity with their sibling, generally towards their elder one:

William (swimming, 02.12.04): *My brother almost set a pathway for me to follow because I was showing the same traits as him, hyper activity wise. I wasn't sleeping so I was taken along to the same things, including swimming so in a way the path had already been chalked out for me to follow.*

Lewis (swimming, 29.11.04) ... *I think he [brother] might have been quite influential in getting me into swimming because he went and so I wanted to go for that reason, but once I got in there I really enjoyed it but yeah I suppose I did look up to him.*

Supporting Côté and Hay's (2002) claim, evidence from this study suggests sibling relationships can have an important influence on a child's participation and

achievement in sport. I would also add that slightly older male siblings were especially significant in this study.

5.4.1 Sibling Rivalry

According to Côté and Hay (2002), a serious commitment to sport by one child in the family can often create an uneven distribution of resources within the family. This has the potential to cause tension, bitterness or jealousy between family members, particularly around the transitional moments from specialiser to investor, where the emotional commitment becomes stronger. This only appeared to be the case for a small number ($n=4$) of the participants in this study, as is illustrated in the following comments:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): My sister is only 2 years older than me but we are like chalk and cheese, she did have a lot of natural talent, and we were probably just about as good as each other at the same age. But when I got into England U16, I got in as captain and she didn't get in, she got into the U18's but she was only got into one tournament. So although we got into England at the same time it was 'Oh Susan, Susan, Susan! You're wonderful, etc, etc; and [as an afterthought] oh Emma, oh yeah well done'. So from then on she had some sort of issues with me and our parents and she went completely off the wall. I didn't speak to her for 2 years, but we're okay now.

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): My brother is 7 years older than me but he doesn't play any competitive sports anymore, he use to do athletics, play rugby and football for the university. He was a bit of an all rounder but didn't tend to stick at anything and still doesn't. I think he sort of feels that dad thinks that the sun shines out of my backside, he feels pressure from that point of view, because I am the golden child, or that's what he calls me anyway.

Interestingly, this bitterness with a sibling came mainly ($n=4$) from the female participants. However, most of the respondents in this study would argue that the rivalry they had with their sibling(s) was friendly and often had a positive influence on their sporting progression. Correspondingly, Côté (1999) suggests that cooperation between siblings may, in some cases, create an environment favourable to the development of sporting skills. Although Sulloway (1996) believes that competition between siblings has been observed as the common characteristic of

sibling relationships (cited in Côté and Hay, 2002), this is not necessarily a negative issue. This notion is highlighted by the following comments:

Calum (rugby, 01.12.04): *There was a massive amount of rivalry between me and my brother, positive and negative, typical brotherly love I would imagine. We played in the colts together when I first started playing, but he then went on to the senior club. In the early days I did want to try and keep up with him, but as time went on I overtook him and the shoe was on the other foot.*

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *I am very competitive, that is probably why I have been sports mad since I've been very little. And as I was the younger sibling and having an older brother, I was always very competitive against him because he is the older brother and I think that shines through, throughout.*

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): *... because he [brother] was 2 years older than me we didn't really come into competition directly. We did compete against each other but he would deal with it better, if I was honest I would say, if he won I took it badly but if he won it was just water off a duck's back. So looking back, I was the very competitive younger brother and he was probably very patient.*

Lewis's brother is also an international swimmer and, although they do not usually swim directly against each other, there is still a level of rivalry between them. Lewis explains:

Lewis (swimming, 29.11.05): *There is some friendly rivalry between the two of us, obviously if we are racing against each other we will try and beat each other, but he swims butterfly and I swim back stroke so we don't really compete against each other that much. But there is still always some rivalry but good rivalry, like his PB [personal best] in butterfly and my PB in backstroke are fairly similar, so if he has got a PB I want to get one, but it is just a bit of banter and I like it, it's good, but nothing aggressive.*

According to Côté (1999), in order to minimise any awkward, direct competition, siblings often pursue different interests and activities. Consistent with this view, Côté and Hay (2002) also argue that when one sibling excels in a specific sport, other siblings will be wary about their chances of measuring up to these achievements for fear of negative comparison. They further add that this is particularly the case with younger siblings or those who have not yet found their niche. In contrast to this notion, this study would argue that many of the participants ($n = 17$) who had elder siblings involved in sport often followed them in to the same sport. In fact, their competitive nature made them all the more motivated to be more successful than their

elder sibling. However, several ($n = 9$) of the participants did acknowledge that their sibling(s) were often more talented than them in other domains of their lives. Calum and Mike commented that their elder siblings had found their niche, not in sport, but in the academic field:

Calum (rugby, 01.12.05): *I was always very competitive and I just wanted to be better than him. But, he's a lot more academic than I am; he always did well in exams, in 'O' levels and 'A' levels, he was always good at that, whereas I was more of a practical person. Rugby was something that I was good at and I just wanted to be better than him. He was more academic than I was so it was my way of proving 'ok you're good at that but I am good at this'. It was when I was 16/17 when I was progressing and he wasn't really, he didn't have the ambition as me and he didn't want to do the work.*

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *He [my brother] is the more academic one, he loves his sport as well, but he is not as competitive, but then he always called me 'hyper competitive' and that I would turn anything into a competition, and I guess that is true. Perhaps not so much now I am a bit more laid back about things now. He is 2 years older than me and he has just qualified to be a doctor and that is more time consuming for him so he just plays socially which he loves.*

There were a few ($n = 4$) participants who mentioned that they did like having their own 'niche', and that was one of the reasons why they chose to be involved in a different sport than any of their family members:

Colin (taekwondo, 6.04.05): *I've got a sister [younger], but she doesn't do too much, she's 16. I think she did want to do taekwondo but I didn't want her to, but that was when I was little. It was something that I wanted to do on my own; I didn't want anyone else to be involved in it. I just wanted to do it myself; I didn't want anyone there because it was my release.*

Claire (rugby, 16.02.05): *...my sister was very good at sport, but then hit the teenage years and gave it all up. So it's [rugby] not part of our family life, at all, which is probably why I like it, because it is something that no one else in my family has done.*

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): *It was just by luck [that I took up hockey], because if it hadn't been for that friend wanting me to go to the hockey trials with her I don't think I would have bothered, I think I would have stuck with netball because both my mum and my sister both played netball, but that just seemed a bit 'girlie' for my liking because I liked football and running around. Netball was always a bit small scale for my liking, the pitch was too small. And because my mum and my sister were doing it, I wanted to do something different. So I just carried on with my hockey.*

In a similar vein, and as reported in prior studies, differences between siblings are often common in families (Côté and Hay, 2002; Côté, 1999; Sulloway, 1996). This study would partially agree with this view, as the following comments would suggest:

Ruth (rugby, 04.03.05): *I have 2 sisters and neither of them are sporty, they are not competitive at all, and never have been.*

Alicia (hockey, 22.04.05): *My brother doesn't understand my commitment to hockey, because he has chucked rugby on the back burner because he just doesn't want to do it, he just wants to go home [South Africa]. But I have got a completely different type of personality to my brother. I just go out and get it, if I want it.*

Julie (rugby, 19.02.05): *...my brother absolutely hates sport, he has a co-ordination problem which doesn't help, he just can't catch. You know how there are some kids at school who you just know have no hope in playing sport. Well he's like that...That why my parents have encouraged him to get into computers.*

Although these participants have described their siblings as being very different from themselves, this was not always the case. This was just a small sample and several others argued that they were similar to their siblings and shared a lot of common interests. This argument is discussed in greater detail in the following sub-section.

5.4.2 Sibling Support is Special

Côté and Hay (2002) suggest that sibling relationships have not been frequently studied because they are assumed to be inherently conflictual. This study would disagree with this view, as many ($n = 23$) of the participants said that they had a very close relationship with their siblings. Indeed, a number of the participants remarked that the support and encouragement that they had received from siblings was very special to them. Some ($n = 6$) even suggested that this support was equally important, if not more so, than the emotional support given by their parents, particularly once they reached the investment phase. The following comments encapsulate the close relationships many of the participants had with their siblings:

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): *... my brother used to play rugby, but he is now into all the extreme sports. We are like two peas in a pod, we look the same*

and we are very similar in nature. He loves coming to watch [me play rugby], and it is wicked having him on the side line, shouting. Yeah it's nice having that support.

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): *...my brother came to the Commonwealth trials in 2002 and I really liked that, I think I get more pleasure if my brothers go than my parents. I don't know why, maybe it's because they are older... My parents are always telling me how much they love me and how they are so proud of me and blah, blah, blah, whereas you don't get that from your brothers. So if they turn up then I think 'Oh good they must be interested'. And my mum will say 'Do you know that Patrick[brother] was telling everyone in his work all about you', and that means a lot, maybe because they are more of my own age and because they are my siblings instead of my parents, because I am quite sure of my relationship with my parents, whereas I think there can be jealousy and not so much surety in a sibling relationship, but I do want them to be part of me and that's why I like them to come and watch me.*

William (swimming, 02.12.05): *He [brother] was an inspiration to me, like he was in the 16 year age group and I was just starting off in the 10 year age group and at the County Championships, he was at the age where you really start to improve and he was getting really good, and everybody was watching him. He was in the oldest age group, so he was like 'top dog'. So everybody was watching him and getting very excited about that, and all my friends at that time were 'Oh look at your brother'. So that was a big thing to aspire to. And when it got to the point, that I was beating his best times, it was quite surreal because I had always been looking up to him, it just felt weird, it didn't seem right, I almost started making excuses for him like 'If he had a better stroke....' My big brother always has been and always will be a great role model for me. My parents encouraged me and my brother inspired me, so yes I always wanted to go out and be like him.*

In concluding this discussion on the influence of siblings, the data from this study suggests that they can be very influential. There appeared to be a strong sense of affinity between the participants and their siblings and it was evident that they recognised that it was not physical ability which separated them, but rather that the participants had a greater desire to succeed. Based on the evidence from this study, it can be argued that young performers may benefit from having a 'sporty' sibling, in particular a slightly older sibling, perhaps because they could aspire to be like them and they saw this as an achievable target. Several participants also described their relationship with their sibling as 'very close' and they greatly valued their support. On the other hand, a few participants suggested there was some animosity between them and their siblings; this was generally caused by their competitive natures, jealousy and personality clashes. However, on the whole, most participants argued that the rivalry between them and their sibling was good humoured 'banter'. Based

on this evidence, it can be concluded that although siblings in families can be different in a great variety of ways, they can also play an important part in one another's achievement in sport and other domains. Perhaps this should not be surprising as Côté and Hay (2002) have suggested that sibling relationships constitute a major subsystem of the family and can affect the entire climate of a family.

5.5 CONCLUSION

It is clear from this chapter that the family did play a key part in the participants' developmental socialisation into sport(s). It was especially the parents that were cited as the channel for initial socialisation. The family was also commonly described as an important source of support throughout the participants' sporting development. This support came in various ways and to various levels, and evolved as the participant progressed in their sport. As discussed in Chapter Four, most of the participants 'sampled' a variety of sports in their younger years. The parents often encouraged this general involvement in sport and there was little evidence to indicate that these participants were ever pressured into playing *a* specific sport. Even though some participants did suggest they were encouraged to follow their parents into a particular sport, it was not seen as a problem if they eventually dropped out of that sport.

The previous chapter reported that it was necessary for participants to cut down on other activities as they became more committed to specific sports. Consistent with this, it was also at this stage that the parents had to commit more to their child's chosen sport(s). For example, parents had to transport them to more training sessions and competitions, which often involved greater distances and more time. This often caused disruption and rescheduling of both their work and social life. This evidence supports Kay's (2003) proposition that a child's involvement in sport can become a commitment that gradually absorbs the whole family unit, until it determines family activities and behaviour to such an extent that it becomes the defining characteristic of family life.

Although some of the participants acknowledged that their parents had to make some financial sacrifices to assist them through their progression in sport, there was little suggestion this was ever a major problem. Indeed, none of the participants gave any indication that they had been unable to take part in any sports-related activity due to lack of money. It could be argued that most of the participants in this study were in the fortunate position to come from financially secure families. Nevertheless, it was evident that the participants' parents attached great importance to their child's continuation in sport. It was only in the later years, when the participants had progressed into the investment stages of their sport that the issue of financial limitations arose. This stage often coincided with the age at which participants could find full-time employment, and it would appear that they felt guilty about still being financially dependant on, or at least heavily subsidised by, their parents.

According to Côté and Hay (2002), emotional support is one of the most important forms of family support for young children involved in sport and this was clearly evident in this study. Most of the participants commented repeatedly that they had appreciated having the emotional support from their parents, through both their positive and negative sporting experiences. This support was apparent throughout their sporting development, from the sampling through to the investment phase.

This chapter also provides evidence that a small number of participants received very little support, in any form, from their parents. However, these participants suggested that they got this vital support from elsewhere; for example, from either siblings or from their coaches. They also argued that this lack of parental support had helped them to become stronger people, and was one of the reasons they had made it to the highest level in their sport. Siblings were also recognised as being influential in the developmental socialisation process of the participants becoming elite performers. Older siblings were often cited as positive role models and many participants further added that they were key to them becoming involved in sport. It was also discussed within this chapter, that many of the participants thought their sibling(s) were as 'naturally talented' as them. But, as discussed in Chapter Four, they were not willing to make the necessary sacrifices, or their priorities lay elsewhere. Although some participants mentioned rivalry between them and their sibling(s), most acknowledged this was good natured competition and, indeed, had been beneficial in their

progression in sport. Furthermore, several of the participants intimated that, although they appreciated the support given by their parents, sibling support was at least equally important to them. Only a small number of participants discussed any negative issues relating to their relationship with their siblings. This generally involved jealousy of the participant's success or the amount of family time that was devoted to the participant particularly around the point of transition from specialiser to investor. However, on the whole, most of the participants argued that their parents were able to accommodate both their and their sibling's interests.

It may be concluded from this chapter that both parents and siblings were a major influence through the different stages of talent development, and were key providers of both practical and emotional support throughout the participants' sporting careers. However, it is also clear that other influences were also important, and the following chapters will examine the influence of coaches and peers in youth sport.

Chapter Six

The Role of the Coach from the Participants' Perspectives

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter described how the family played a significant role in the participants' developmental socialisation into sport, particularly through their support and encouragement. According to much of the literature surrounding youth sport coaches can also have a lifelong impact on young athletes (Smoll et al., 1993; Thompson 2003). Consequently, they too are often viewed as a significant other (McPherson, 1973; Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Côté & Hay, 2002). This chapter will consider the role of coaches and their influence upon the participants throughout the different phases of their sport participation.

As discussed in Chapter Four, most of the participants progressed through phases similar to the three phases of talent development described by Bloom (1985) and further developed by Côté (1999): the sampling years, the specialising years and ultimately the investment years. In agreement with Côté, these phases have formed a useful model for studying the influence of coaches on youth sport participation and the development of expertise in sport. This chapter will now illustrate how the role, the influence and the characteristics of the participants' coaches evolved throughout each phase of their development. In this context, Côté and colleagues (1995) have defined a coach's characteristics in terms of the coach's philosophy, perceptions, beliefs, or personal life that could ultimately influence the performer. Furthermore, many of the participants commented that the ideal characteristics for a coach evolved as they progressed in their sport. It was often necessary for the participants to change coaches during their development, if they were to keep improving. Interestingly, this was not always a deliberate or conscious decision as most ($n = 33$) of the participants said that they had simply joined the club which was closest geographically, and were

happy to be coached by whoever happened to take their age or development level. It was not until they had committed to a particular sport that the participant actively sought out a coach with greater experience and a higher profile. Conversely, there were a few ($n = 4$) participants who said that they have remained with the same coach throughout their development: two taekwondo players (two females, one of whom was coached by her father) and two long-distance runners (one male and one female) said that they had never felt it necessary to change coaches. It could perhaps be argued that it would be more common for athletes participating in individual sports to be coached by the same coach throughout their sporting career, as athletes from team sports generally need to change clubs to play at a higher level.

A number of studies have highlighted the importance of the coach or teacher in helping the young performer achieve a high level of success (for example, Bloom, 1985; Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Ericsson, Krampe, Tesch-Römer, 1993; Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Partington, 1995; Bloom, 2002; Côté, 2002; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). In light of these previous studies, it is perhaps not surprising that the majority of participants in this current study acknowledged the integral role that their coach(es) played in facilitating their development to an elite level in their respective sports.

6.2 THE SAMPLING PHASE

It has been well documented, and discussed in the previous chapter, that it is often the family and more specifically the parents who are the primary socialising agents for children becoming involved in sport. However, once the child has been introduced and encouraged to participate in sport, parents and coaches often work alongside each other to assist in the development of young athletes. Some ($n = 13$) of the participants said that when they played sport in their early years it was either one of their parents or one of their team members' parents who started to coach them. Furthermore, the parents and coaches fulfil different roles that often change throughout the athlete's progression in sport (Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2003). This observation was also evident in this study. The following sections highlight that for many ($n = 20$) of the participants in this study the important role of the coach in their early days was that of

emphasising the fun element of sport and instilling a love of the sport in them. Although all of the participants said they enjoyed PE and played a variety of sports at school, almost all ($n = 34$) of them suggested that wanting to progress in their sport, had involved joining a club. They also commented that initially they looked no further than the local club and were happy to be coached by volunteers.

6.2.1 *The Fun Coach*

It was highlighted in Chapter Four that having fun was a key element of the participants' early years in sport. In relation to this notion, many ($n = 20$) of the participants argued that an important role of their initial coaches was to facilitate a fun and enjoyable environment. The following comments illustrate why many of the participants thought their early coaches had a positive influence upon their continuation in sport:

Alicia (hockey, 22.04.05): When I was a youngster, well, I always liked the fun coach, the one that would let you play games. And my first coach in Kenya was always like that; he would let you play games, play tag, play a bit of this and that. He brought a lot of fun into hockey, nothing too technical; we were doing more tactical and fun stuff. He was fantastic, and I am still in contact with him.

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): At the development stage, when I first started athletics, the coach I had was very much participation orientated, she was very relaxed and easy going. She wanted you to enjoy it and keep coming back, she was very good for youngsters in developing basic skills and I think that worked well for me.

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): I think when you are younger it's got to be purely about enjoyment, and that is what I remember my first coach being like. She used to do a lot of coaching through matches so you would always be in competition, like in silly little games, and then she would give you tips on how you could do it better. But, it would always be a competition type of thing. It wouldn't be boring stuff like dribbling around cones all the time.

I am aware that I have already drawn on the above quotation from Susan in Chapter Four, but I thought it was interesting to note that some of the participants (especially in team sports) derived much of their fun in their early years from playing small-sided games, which concurs with Côté & Hay's (2002) view of deliberate play.

The previous comments highlight that the way the coach structures a training session can be extremely influential in determining whether the young performer enjoys participating in sport. If the coach failed to create a positive environment in the sampling years, then the participants had alternative sports or activities in which to take part, which often resulted in them leaving the sport. This is highlighted by the following comments:

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *My [ballet] teacher was a bit, well, she was very strict and she was always shouting at you and always telling you how bad you were. I was doing this as a hobby so I didn't need that type of abuse. I was doing better at my running and I felt that I was fitting in better with the group there. So I thought enough is enough and I gave it [ballet] up.*

Similarly, it was partly because his coaches failed to bring out the enjoyment in the sport for Colin that he left the sport of taekwondo for several years. Colin explains further:

(taekwondo, 06.04.05): *My earlier coaches were more traditional, doing basics and patterns and things like that, they didn't really have that much experience in taekwondo. ...They couldn't show me how to express myself and how to really enjoy it, so I stopped going for a while and played football instead.*

Colin gave taekwondo a second chance and his new coaches helped develop a renewed enthusiasm for the sport:

...I've got a lot of respect for them both. They have taught me a lot about taekwondo and how to be a man and how to be a good person. Ryan showed me a different side to martial arts and I am glad of that. He showed me how to express myself and enjoy it and have a charismatic way of fighting as well, which is enjoyable to watch and more enjoyable to do.

6.2.2 Fun and Enthusiasm More Important than Coaching Qualifications

It is worthy of note that few ($n = 4$) of the participants gave the impression that they thought that coaching qualifications or their coaches' technical skills were particularly important when they were initially introduced to their sport. They appeared to place

more importance on the coach's enthusiasm for the sport, alongside a fair and friendly attitude:

Stephen (rugby, 10.03.05): back when I first started playing rugby I think the most important thing about a coach was their player management skills, making sure everyone is happy and enjoying their sport.... Like back then, my coaches were far less knowledgeable, I'm sure they didn't have a qualification between them. That is not taking anything away from them, like they have done well in developing young players and giving them the potential to be taken on by other coaches who know more. But I reckon, back then, when I was younger I think it was important that a coach knew how to make it fun, so that people carry on playing it.

The following comments from Calum and Frank further expand on the importance placed on having fun at training sessions when younger, even though they realised that the coaching they received was not necessarily tactically advanced:

Calum (rugby, 01.12.05): At the club they were just ex players, they didn't really know what they were on about, you just learned by playing and having a bit of fun.

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): I don't think I was really properly coached at a young age; it was just dads that organised it. We were just lucky that we had a good group of lads that played well; it was more of a sort of enjoyment thing.

It is evident that throughout the early phases (sampling) of their sporting development, many of the participants considered their coaches' technical knowledge to be less important than their ability to make training sessions or competitions fun and fair. This notion would again be consistent with Bloom's (1985) view that during the initiation phase, the coaches were not necessarily technically advanced, but they were able to kindle the love of the sport and enthusiastically support the child athlete. In other words, most of the participants gave the impression that in their younger years they were happy to go along to their sport practice, have some fun and gain confidence in their ability, whilst at the same time unwittingly develop basic skills. This view is consistent with previous studies that have argued that early coaching behaviours can have a significant influence on a child's psychological development, enjoyment, satisfaction and self-esteem (Smoll et al., 1993; Côté, 2002).

6.2.3 Choice of Coach: "A bit of a Lottery Really"

Most (n = 33) of the participants suggested that they looked no further than their local club to take up their particular sport and so relatively few chose their coach during the early years. They were coached by whoever happened to be coaching their age or ability group. All of the participants understood that their initial coaches were volunteers and also presumed that they had, at most, the minimum level of coaching qualifications. It would also appear that many (n = 13) of the coaches at this point were either their parents or parents of other children in their group and/or former players. The following comments highlight that in the early years of their sport participation the respondents did not appear to be particularly concerned by whom they were coached; nor did they feel they had a choice:

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *When I was younger it was a bit of a lottery who coached you. Back then I don't suppose I knew what coaching was all about, I would just go training have fun and do what they [coaches] said really.*

William (swimming, 02.12.05): *I have probably had about 12-14 coaches in my time, but I've only had a choice of coaches a couple of times, but that wasn't until I came to university. Before then it was whoever coached at the club and the coaches changed a lot, I don't know why, they just did. So unless I changed club, which wasn't really viable, I didn't get a choice, but I never thought of that as a problem.*

Mike (swimming, 02.12.05): *When I started out, you worked through the squads in your club, as you got better you moved up through the groups and I have had some great coaches. I clearly remember my first coach, his name was Brian and he was very laid back and never really pushed me, but when I went I thoroughly enjoyed it.*

When the participants were asked to discuss their earliest sporting experiences or memories, most (n = 31) of them mentioned the sport they played at school and then some (n = 11) suggested if they wanted to take the sport further they joined a club outside of school. However, many (n = 21) of the participants also said they went directly to an outside club to take up their sport. At a club is where some of the participants claimed they had their first experience of 'proper organised sport'. The main reason participants gave for joining a particular club was simply because they wanted to play the sport and the club they went to was the one closest to their home. As touched on previously, it did not appear that the participants, or their parents,

initially chose the club because of its sporting credentials or reputation for good coaching:

William (swimming, 02.12.05): *I joined the [swimming] club when I was about 5 or 6. I went to a club in Bristol because it was the closest one and also my brother and sister went there before me, so it was the logical step, they were going so I went too.*

Nick (athletics, 12.11.05): *...a few of our family friends were doing athletics at a local club and they had older children than me, so they put me in touch with the club. So I went along for a few training sessions, on a Tuesday and a Thursday just down at the local track.*

It would appear then that, if there is not an appropriate club nearby that could offer a sport the child wanted to play, children may be lost to that particular sport. The participants in this study clearly benefited from having appropriate opportunities available to them locally. This argument supports Bloom's (1985) contention that it was most important that in the early years there was a coach situated close to where the child lived.

As was noted earlier, although most ($n = 30$) of the athletes said that they had several coaches throughout their development, a small number ($n = 4$) remained with the same coach. This was more evident in individual sports, as Samantha and Sonya demonstrate:

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05): *I think I went to that club because it was closest to us and my mum's friend took her daughter there. It just so happens that Andy [coach], who is one of the top coaches now, was there. ... But no it was just purely coincidence; I didn't go there because of him. ...I guess that must be really unusual just to have had one coach, but I think that I have been very fortunate that I've had such a fantastic coach, I've never thought about going to someone else.*

Sonya (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *I've had the same coach all the way through, I've trained with other coaches, but he's always been my main coach. I don't know why we started at his classes, but my brother went there, so I went there too, I think it was probably the closest. He is a good coach and he is the best coach for me so I wouldn't pick anyone else.*

In contrast, Bloom (1985) argues that it would be very rare for the same teacher/coach to progress an individual through all three phases of development, because of the

different requirements at each phase of talent development. However, it is clear that although they had stayed with the same coach throughout their development, the coaching styles and strategies adopted by their coaches had changed as they developed:

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05)...he (coach) started totally voluntarily; I think he originally started to help out when his daughter was there, many years ago. I guess he just learnt by doing it, like learnt on the job so to speak. And since all the coaching qualifications have come in, UK Athletics have sent him on loads of courses... He's a really good coach now, he can coach athletes at my level, but he also coaches athletes who simply want to break 40 mins for 3k, so he is able to coach a whole range of girls now.

Even though many participants commented that their initial coach's technical skills were limited, they did not suggest that this was counter-productive. Indeed, most of the participants strongly argued that it was of greater importance that they were able to develop good fundamental skills in a fun and supportive environment. This notion is consistent with Côté (2002) who suggests that coaches working with children at the initial involvement phase need enthusiasm and facilitation skills above and beyond any technical expertise in the sport. Similarly, Pensgaard and Roberts (2002) advise coaches who train young people to focus on having fun and variety in the training sessions.

6.2.4 Physical Education, School Sport and Clubs

Although most of the participants mentioned that their first introduction to organised sport was during school physical education (PE) classes, not many suggested that these lessons influenced the development of their sporting skills. The general consensus was that PE was 'fun' and that on the whole the participants were happy to play any sport made available to them. However, the selection and quality of PE teachers and sporting provisions available were variable, although nobody suggested that this was detrimental to their progression in sport:

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): ...from when I started at school I've always loved all types of sports, and once I got to junior school I started doing cross country, alongside my ballet. But I would do all the things, like football at

lunchtime and badminton, but there wasn't an awful lot offered at my primary school.

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): My earliest memory of sport was that I always loved it at school and I always looked forward to PE lessons.

Lewis (swimming, 29.11.04): ...when I was at primary and secondary school I did all the sports that were provided by the school, like football, rugby or any of the other games like rounders and cricket.

Although the participants did not specifically acknowledge the importance of their primary school sporting experiences, consistent with previous studies (e.g. Kremer et al. (1997; Green, 2004), these early sporting experiences at school may have been vital in formulating positive attitudes towards habitual physical activity. It is also worthy of note that for several (n = 9) of the participants, it was their PE teacher who had encouraged them to join a local club, in order for them to progress in their sport:

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): ...in my 1st or 2nd year my PE teacher was doing some distance running and there was me and this other lad that was doing quite good at it, and he reckoned he saw something in me. So he [PE teacher] suggested that me and the other lad should go to a club, and he found a local club that we could go to.

Rory (athletics, 08.11.05): I started athletics at secondary school and I had some friends that were members of the athletics club, so I was pushed by my school teachers to go and run with some friends down at the local club.

Julie (rugby, 19.02.05): My PE teacher at school is now one of the backs coaches for England [women's rugby], and at the time when she was my teacher she was playing fly half for England. Well anyway, she saw that I could run a bit and that I could throw a shot-put quite far and she said to me 'I think I have found your sport!' So she kind of bullied me into going (giggle), and surprisingly I really enjoyed it.

It would appear that even if PE lessons are not specifically dedicated to developing the young athlete's sporting potential, the PE teacher is in an ideal position to encourage and support the student to go to a club to pursue their chosen sport. Unfortunately, this often relies on the parents' willingness and ability to facilitate this aspiration which, as was discussed in the previous chapter, is not always feasible.

However, according to several ($n = 6$) of the participants involved in this study, it was not always the situation that the club coaching was of a better standard than the school coaching, especially within hockey and rugby spheres. Calum and Gemma explain:

Calum (rugby, 01.12.05): *At school it was the patience and enthusiasm [of the coach] that I remember most. The coach at school was a really good guy, who loved his rugby and he really put a lot of time into me and the other lads in the team and that made us better players. At the club they were just ex players, they didn't really know what they were on about, you just learned by playing and having a bit of fun. ...The PE teachers were far better at coaching, than the guys at the club.*

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): *When I went to the private school and also played club hockey, the school training would have been much better.*

It would appear that the participants' initial coaching experiences were variable and the sport coaching was not necessarily better at a club or at school, but was very much dependent on the particular school or club, and more specifically the teacher or coach.

6.3 THE SPECIALISING PHASE

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, the majority of the participants suggested that their initial involvement in sport was all about having fun. They further argued that that their coach was often influential in creating this enjoyment. However, when the participants progressed into the 'specialising' phase (Côté, 1999) most of them became more focused on the importance of improving as a performer. As a consequence of this, they were willing to sacrifice some of their enjoyment for improved skill acquisition; and their motivation to participate in a particular sport began to shift from fun and enjoyment to competitive success and the gratification of winning. As part of this transitional moment from sampling to specialising, several of the participants changed coaches. In this section I will discuss how the relationship between the participants and their coaches changed as they progressed, with both parties expecting more commitment. I start this discussion by acknowledging that the coach often spotted the potential in the participants and encouraged their development by providing them with special attention.

6.3.1 Potential Talent 'Spotted' by the Participants' Coaches

It was in the specialising phases (Côté, 1999) when some ($n = 14$) of the participants said that their coaches/teachers identified them as having a special talent for their sport. They understood that they had been 'spotted' as having more potential than some of their peers in their training groups and acknowledged that they received more individual attention, because of this:

Kate (swimming, 15.11.04): When I was about 12 until about 16...well there weren't that many good swimmers and I was spotted as one of the better ones, so there was a group of us that he concentrated on that bit more, so he probably had a bit more time for us and I thought that was a good thing because your coach needs to know you and what you need to do, to be able to perform well.

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): ...when I started swimming with that club at 14, there was this couple who were very heavily involved in the club and their son had just started coaching for the club, so he hadn't really coached before and I hadn't really swam before, so we kind of developed together. Well he could see the potential in me, so he focused most of his attention on me, not to the detriment of the other swimmers but, the programme was based around me but it was a good programme so other swimmers benefited from it as well.

Not only was it participants from individual sports that appreciated and benefited from special one-to-one training from their coaches but also participants from team sports:

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): My club coach was also my county U16 coach, so for me he did quite a lot of individual coaching He was quite influential because he spent quite a lot of time with me. He started off by just encouraging and influencing me and basically developing my basic skills. He seemed to pick up quite quickly that I had something, so he started to work more on the technical side

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): ...I think the teacher could see that I could hold the stick and I had good co-ordination and that she could see potential in me. So she encouraged me to come down and play at her club and that is when it [her hockey] really took off.

It would appear that these participants liked the individual attention and had greatly benefited from the training routines that were designed specifically for them. This became more evident as the participant progressed in their sport, and will be discussed in greater detail at a later point in this chapter.

6.3.2 Authoritarian Coaches in the Middle Years

In this study, it was notable that some ($n = 13$) of the participants' descriptions of their coaches changed dramatically as they moved from the sampling years into the middle or specialising years. As discussed above, the coaches changed their approach from one of fun and fairness to one that was more demanding, authoritative and performance based. The following comments illustrate how the athletes became subject to increasingly more strict and autocratic coaching behaviour:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): *... when I moved to Stoke, the guy was much more authoritarian, much more old school teacher type, who would tell you what to do, and you had to tell him everything you were doing etc, he was much more 'intimidatory' towards what you were doing. Which at that time was good for me... having that authoritarian figure over you and questioning what you were doing all the time was really good.*

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): *... when I switched to Tony between the ages of 12 and 15, he was very much like a chaperone parent, but then again, he was quite harsh and there was a dictatorship sort of thing going on. Like I didn't have much input and he was just kind of saying "do this, do that". But I think at that time it was what I needed.*

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *My coach who got me into my first internationals when I was fourteen through until I was eighteen, was a female, Lily. She was a character for sure, she was very demanding and she shouted a lot, but because there was a big bunch of lads, it was always good fun.*

In most cases the participants did not search for this type of new coach and it was coincidental that their coaches at this phase of development took an authoritarian approach. According to Bloom (1985), athletes and their parents in the middle developmental years sought out a talented coach who was regarded as one of the best within a larger geographical area. This, however, did not appear to be evident within this study. Although many of the participants did change coaches at this point, they often remained within the same club and did not explicitly look for a new coach but simply moved on to the coach who worked with athletes of a similar age or standard. In this study it was often not until the participants were entering the investment phase that they actively sought a specific coach.

Interestingly, at this middle (specialising) phase of their sporting career many of the participants appeared to accept being dictated to by their coaches and suggested that

perhaps in their teenage years they benefited from this autocratic style of coaching. However, a couple of participants thought that their coaches had gone too far and described their coaches as abusive:

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): *When I was at Exton we had a coach called Gordon, and he was a monster, he was just a complete and utter nutter. He was abusive, aggressive, just really, really horrible...He tried to break you down, so if you were strong enough you came through it, if you weren't you broke down. But for me that was good because of my type of personality.*

Additionally, some (n = 4) participants considered this controlling type of coaching behaviour very frustrating and thought that it had a negative effect on their training. This frustration is highlighted by the following comments:

Bob (swimming, 15.11.04): *A lot of swimming is flawed, in that a lot of the coaches want to do their own thing, or only believe that they are right and no one else is; that they are the only ones that are any good at it. That was particularly the way with the 2nd coach that I had, she wouldn't let us think beyond what she did.*

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): *I went through a phase a few years ago, where I absolutely hated it, I was getting here, and getting in but I really was hating it. I really thought seriously about quitting. Then I changed coaches from Bill to John and at that point I really started enjoying it again. I literally did a PB [personal best] within three or four months of changing.*

According to David (2005) these types of coaching behaviours have until recently been considered normal in youth sport. Once the participants started to take their sport more seriously, having a positive relationship with their coach appeared important to them, if they were to continue progressing. Confronted by coaches they considered to be abusive, some of the participants claimed that their continuing involvement and progress in their sport was due to their own strength of character. We might balance this view with the evidence presented here and in other chapters that would suggest these participants had other sources of support such as parents, siblings and peers who in all likelihood would have assisted them to cope with coaches they perceived to be abusive.

6.3.3 Transition between the Specialising and Investment Phases

There is a grey area, in terms of coaching behaviours, that exists between the specialising years and the investment years and, as suggested in Chapter Four, it is often difficult to distinguish between the two phases. However, it was clear that as the athletes became more serious in and successful at their sport, the participants wanted a two-way relationship with their coach. The following statements from Francesca and Louise exemplify this desire for a change in their relationship:

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): *When I was younger I think I needed someone telling me how to do absolutely everything, but now I have got to the stage where I don't need to be told so much and that I prefer to find out things myself.*

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): *...I think as I have got older I need more support, and although Bill is a brilliant coach his style is very authoritative, and that was what I needed when I was younger... but now I am getting older I need a more supportive environment and John is much more supportive. ...I think both ways work but at different times in your career.*

Louise's comment is consistent with Salmela (1994), who contends that coaches who fail to occasionally 'back off' from strong-willed, autonomous athletes risk a possible dissolution of the coach-athlete relationship.

During the specialising years the coaches of the participants were often very dictatorial and liked to be very much in control of the participant and their training schedules. Indeed, the adjective 'authoritarian' was a frequently used word to describe their coaches in these middle years. Although many found this approach acceptable when they were younger and less experienced, it was less appropriate and began to have a negative impact on the athlete as they began to invest increasing time and energy into their sport.

6.4 THE INVESTMENT PHASE

The participants in this study viewed their coaches as being extremely important to them throughout their development, but especially so in their investment years. This view is consistent with Bloom et al. (1998) who contest that coaches, or 'mentors' as

they call them, were instrumental in helping their athletes reach and remain at the pinnacle of their sport (p. 268). As the participants moved into the later phases of their development, many sought out a coach who had the experience and reputation of taking other athletes to the highest level. The participants now considered themselves to be on an equal standing with their coach and, appreciated a relationship based on mutual respect. Additionally, they expected to be treated as an individual and liked their training schedules to be designed specifically for them. Some of the participants also reported that they liked their coach to be open and approachable and willing to discuss alternative training methods suggested by them or other coaches.

6.4.1 Mutual Respect between Athlete and Coach

In the investment phases of the participant's sporting career, the relationship between the coach and performer significantly changed from the coach being in empowerment and telling the athlete what to do, to one of mutual respect and collegiality. It is evident from the participants' comments that many ($n = 24$) encountered a different kind of relationship with coaches as they moved into the investment phase:

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): What I want from a coach now has turned a complete circle, like these days I know what it should feel like and I prefer to work things out on my own more. So in terms of feedback, I just need a word here and there; I don't need endless streams of feedback.

This finding is consistent with Mageau and Vallerand (2003) who have argued that autonomy-supportive behaviours from a coach are important determinants of positive performance and persistence. Both the athlete and the coach in the investment years claimed similar levels of expertise, and this often resulted in the participant's desire for their relationship to be built on mutual respect. As the participants made the transition into the investment phases they acknowledged that they had the ability to compete at the highest levels and they mainly relied on their coaches to refine certain specific skills. The following comment from Nick describes how his relationship with his coach had changed as he entered the investment phase:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): ...in our [coach-athlete] relationship, we sort of mould our technique and our training patterns together which I think works

well. Because he has got the skills to do that as well, he has the knowledge of the event and the knowledge of training and I bring in the knowledge of myself and then we sort of accumulate that together.

Nick emphasises the importance of his coach's technical knowledge, an aspect that several (n = 10) of the other participants thought was imperative to perform at elite level. This notion is in contrast to the sampling years, where stimulating fun and enjoyment were important features of the coaches' behaviour. The following comments highlight the importance that the participants placed on their coach's technical knowledge after they had reached the investment years:

Alex (rugby, 09.03.05): I think it's when you get to a higher level, that the importance of good coaching becomes more evident.

Stephen (rugby, 10.03.05): Some of the coaches we have now are hugely knowledgeable about the game and in what they have done. So obviously the differences at this level are huge, like in the standard of coaching and as far as knowledge is concerned.

Julie (rugby, 19.02.05): We've now got coaches trained in everything, in every aspect of training that you need to do.

Bergmann Drewe (2000) acknowledges that respect for the coach not only requires ongoing communication, but also the recognition that the coach is knowledgeable about his or her sport.

It was interesting to note that a few (n = 3) of the participants suggested that they should in retrospect have demanded this expertise at an earlier phase. Failure to do this led to some frustration and resentment, as rugby player Claire explains:

(16.02.05): They [previous coaches] weren't specialists, and I think that I accepted them for too long. ...Instead of going away and seeking a psychologist, a specific weights trainer, or a specific kicking coach. I always accepted these people who encompassed the whole lot and they didn't do a very good job of it all. Whereas now, I want a specialist to be able to explain to me why I need to do certain things, instead of just guessing. ...At the beginning I think that is fine like if you're doing it just for enjoyment or for part of the school team. But when it gets more serious I think you need to demand a specialist in all areas of your sport.

As Claire suggests, when the athlete makes the transition into the investment years many of the participants discussed the importance of having additional support to work alongside their main coach; for example, a strength and conditioning coach, a nutritionist, a psychologist, a physiotherapist and often a manager. As mentioned in Chapter Five, sources of support often diversify through the specialising and investing phases, in relation to coaching, and more and more specialists typically become part of the infrastructure. Some of the participants believed this was beneficial for them as it left their main coach with the job of solely concentrating on making minor improvements to their technical and tactical skills.

6.4.2 The Aspiration for a Coach with a Successful Reputation

At this critical phase in their development, some ($n = 7$) of the participants described why they felt that it was becoming more important to be able to trust their coach. Having a coach who had a reputation for producing successful athletes appeared to be the basis of the participants' trust. They believed that their coach's proven record inspired confidence and a willingness to put their trust completely in the hands of this man or woman:

Bob (swimming, 15.11.04): *I think he is definitely the best coach I have ever had and he has produced so many good swimmers as well, he knows what he is doing and so I have a lot of faith in him. The relationship with the coach is very important in that you trust them and you need to believe that what they are going to do is what is best for you, you need to believe that they know what they are doing and, I believe he knows what he is doing so I put a lot of faith in him.*

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05): *I think I have been so fortunate that I have had such a fantastic coach. I think because I have always achieved what I have set out to do and he's got some great runners, like [name of top class athlete], she has always led the way and like he has learnt things from her which he can pass down. So I think that I have been very fortunate to be with one of the top clubs and with one of the top coaches.*

Alex (rugby, 09.03.05): *My coach now believes in me quite strongly which is important to me because I have seen how many people that he has coached to a very high level and how good a coach he is. And to have someone with that experience and ability start telling you how good you are, well that's a big deal to me, because I think that is really important in a coach.*

Bloom (1985) argues that at the highest level, the coach often had a record of producing champions and in the pursuit of perfection the athlete was willing to put themselves "in the hands of the teacher without reservation" (p. 525). However, some ($n = 5$) of the participants, especially in the individual sports, commented that the number of expert coaches in their sporting field was often limited. They frequently had to relocate to be able to train at a higher level, or make do with fewer one-to-one training sessions. The following comments exemplify why some of the participants felt the need to change clubs:

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): *I moved to Exton because at that time they were having quite a lot of success, and the coach there had quite a high profile, so in terms of coaching I knew I was going to get some decent coaching. And I needed to step up to National League and train with other players of higher quality.*

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *It came to the stage that I knew if I was to make the next step up, like, into senior level I would need to change coaches and there wasn't an awful lot of coaches that I could have gone to. The obvious choice was Geoff, but he was coaching some of my rivals and I'd rather not train every session with them. ...The guy that coaches me now is from Middlesfield [150 miles away] he is very good and very experienced, but it means I am quite often out on the track on my own, timing my own sessions, having to pace myself, so it is quite hard to push myself at times.*

Moreover, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, for the participants in this study progressing into the investment phase often coincided with attending university. Many of the participants chose to go to Higher Education Institutions that could also facilitate their sporting aspirations.

6.4.3 Coaches Listening and Learning from other Expert Coaches and Performers

Many of the participants commented that they thought it was beneficial to them if their coaches were willing to increase their technical knowledge by discussing ideas with other 'expert' coaches and sportspeople. They thought it was helpful if the coach was open and honest in this exchange of views and was willing to listen and experiment with other coaches' techniques. In accordance with this view, Bloom (1997) and Salmela (1996) suggest that a common trait to emerge from team sport

coaches was their continued quest for greater coaching knowledge. This study supports this argument and would further argue that this was also the case in individual sports, as track and field athletes Nick and Samantha and rugby player Patrick explain:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.05): *Much of Simon's[coach] knowledge has primarily come from talking to other coaches around the world and being in this international environment where coaches communicate... it's a more sort of collective approach and they bring in every sort of element from all around the world. ...You get these coaches coming to the [high performance] centre, these are world renowned coaches, guys that have jumped world bests, telling us things that we should be doing. And we're like 'we're actually doing this already' so we're like 'well he does know what he [coach] is talking about'. And that does give you confidence to know that he does know what he is talking about.*

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05): *...he is quite good at listening to what other people think and he is very open to learn about other people's point of view. He's not like 'this is what I do and that is the right way'. He knows that other people might be doing something which is worth listening to.*

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *...the coaches are always looking for suggestions from what we feel we want to do. They are very flexible, but it is obviously up to them, but if we put an idea forward and they think we should, then we will do it, and I really appreciate that.*

A recent study of expert university coaches (Vallée & Bloom, 2005) revealed that expert coaches had a common desire for acquiring knowledge. They further added "this quest for learning was achieved through sharing with other coaches (assistant coaches or fellow coaches) and through reading relevant literature" (pp.186).

Although most of the participants agreed that it was good practice for them and their coaches to be open and discuss diverse methods of coaching with other experts in their field, this did not always happen, which often caused conflict between them and their coach:

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): *At the beginning he hated anyone having any input outside what he was doing. If I went to him with an idea someone else had given me, he would be like 'Why do you have to see someone else about it?' so I was like 'Mick I am going to see other people about some advice'. So now he lets me get on with it.*

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *One qualm I have with him [coach] is that he does like to be in control. Like there are a lot of coaches and experts that are on offer now through the EIS [England Institute of Sport] and he's not interested. ...He is quite old and he is not very accepting of new things and he is just like "Oh, we've been doing things like that for years and it's just got a new name" and all that kind of thing.*

From the previous comments it would seem that many of the participants in this study would concur with Vallée and Bloom's (2005) view, that athlete empowerment may lead to a better coach athlete relationship. I will now turn to this issue.

6.4.4 Athlete Empowerment in the Investment Phase

Once the participants had made the transition into the investment phase, many (n = 23) of them commented on the importance of having some input to their training sessions. They felt that this was important because it gave them some control over their training sessions, which in return gave them more motivation to train more efficiently. This perception is highlighted by the following comments from William and Claire:

William (swimming, 02.12.05): *I really appreciate being able to have some input, because if you are doing something that you don't really think is going to benefit you, you are less likely to commit to it, whereas if you can have some sort of input then you can structure it more towards your self.*

Claire (rugby, 16.02.05): *I like to have quite a lot of control over what I am doing, like if they say I need to work on my tackling, then I will say 'I don't because that is one of my strengths.' It has to be a two-way thing, and I think Geoff did this really well, like we would be doing weights and I wouldn't think it was right so I would always question him, and he would come up with the relevant argument and the points for it, so that would help me with the decision, rather than 'You will do this!' I don't like that I like to be involved in the process somewhere.*

However, although many said that they appreciated having some level of input into their training, they also intimated that they had to feel comfortable with their coach before they felt they could voice their opinion. For example, a few (n =4) suggested that they would confront their club coach but would be slightly reticent at speaking up to their national coach, as Claire and Julie exemplify:

Claire (rugby, 16.02.05): *I still don't feel confident enough to question my England coaches, maybe once I feel more established within the team I will question them more.*

Julie (rugby, 19.02.05): *I like it [coaching] being a bit more professional, but I think there is a time and a place, like at club rugby I wouldn't like my coach to be like that because club rugby is 3 times a week and I think it would drive me crazy if I couldn't have a joke with the coach. But at England training you are there to get the work done, you are paid money from the lottery to be there and to perform, so it is not the time and place to have a chat and a laugh. But on saying that, the head England coach, used to scare me so much, I could never just chat to him, I just listen and do what he says.*

Most of the participants suggested that it was beneficial for them to have a level of input into their training sessions, but some felt unsure about approaching their national coaches. The wider issue here may be how performers in the investment years learn to make best use of the various sources of increasingly specialised support that they can draw on, a topic that is touched on elsewhere in this thesis and that may benefit from closer examination in another study.

6.4.5 Coach-Athlete Relationships in the Investment Phase

In addition to a high level of technical knowledge, most of participants thought it was important for them to have a positive relationship with their coach. Some ($n = 10$) felt they needed and benefited from a close personal relationship, others ($n = 16$) were happy to be friendly, but preferred to keep it on a coach-athlete, professional level. According to Jowett & Cockerill (2003) even at elite level of competitive sport, the interpersonal relationship between coach and athlete is an important factor that contributes to the athlete's development. The following comments describe some of the participants' views on their relationship with their coach, now that they are competing at elite level:

Calum (rugby, 01.12.04): *I think it helps if you get on well with your coach, but if you respect the guy as a professional because you know that he does a good job, I don't think you necessarily have to be over friendly with him. You might not like him as a person particularly, but if you respect him because he does his job really well and he talks a lot of sense, and he coaches well and he puts it across well I think that is the most important thing. I don't think you have to have a personal relationship particularly.*

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): *...these days, I like a coach, who can have fun, but they have to be focused as well, I like to have a friendship with the coaches, because I think you get closer to your coaches and you respect them more, and they respect you. It's not like coach-player you have to work together, and have mutual respect for each others talents.*

Alicia (hockey, 22.04.05): *...it's a fine line between being too close to your coach and trying to be selected that way, which happens a lot in sport. But you have got to be close enough to be able to be honest with him. Be friends, but also have that, I'm the athlete and you're the coach, and there is respect both ways, and don't get too close I think that is the way the relationship should be run.*

This study demonstrates the importance to the participants of a positive relationship with their coaches. Most participants opined further that this bond with their coach was often born out of respect and trust. This study agrees with Jowett and Cockerill's (2003) findings and contends that such relationships are underlined by mutual respect, trust, care, concern, support, open communication, shared knowledge and understanding, as well as clear, corresponding roles and tasks (pp.326). However, it was interesting that although the following two statements, from Olivia and Nick, are made about the same coach, each of them have quite different views on that coach:

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): *These days I'm striking more of a balance, in that he [coach] is not my friend, he's my coach and he's meant to make me better, not be my friend. I think in a sense I miss having someone there on an emotional level, being away from your parents and things your coach is like the nearest thing you've got, who knows you well and can support you. But Simon wants to separate the two, yes he'll talk to you on a personal level but at the end of the day he is your coach and that's what he is there to do. I think we've reached a compromise now, like we're not mates but we get on, but he is my coach and I respect him fully.*

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): *...with Simon [coach], he is very much on top of things, he wants to know everything we are doing but in a more professional coach-athlete relationship. He is much more of a friend than an authoritarian, so I can go and talk to him about everything I am doing, we can relate to each other on a more relaxed relationship. Obviously I have done a lot of training before, I know how my body works, and I know what feelings I have when I am doing the event inside my body. ...we can kind of talk about it more rather than him telling me what to do and me just doing it. We have the ability to, well, like him saying 'Why don't you try this?' and I'll sort of say 'well what if I did it this way?' So we can sort of talk about it, rather than him saying 'boom, boom, boom, boom!'*

From listening to Olivia it was obvious that she feels quite isolated in her present situation and requires more emotional support, whereas, Nick feels he is fully supported by his coach in all areas of his sporting life. It was also interesting to note that although Olivia would have appreciated her coach being more sensitive, she still had a lot of respect for him in his position as coach. This suggests that different personalities are perhaps needier than others and that if the coach is not able to provide this extra support then the athlete may not perform to their best. It would appear that some athletes simply need a coach; others need a friend, a mentor or a confidant. Consistent with the findings of Baker and Horton (2004), given that a coach normally constructs a high percentage of an athlete's practice time, the ability of the coach to devise an environment that fosters optimal learning becomes a significant key to athlete development.

As has been consistently the case in this study, there was one participant who contradicted the general notion that athletes, especially in the investment years, had on the whole, a positive and healthy relationship with their coaches. Cameron appeared to have a very poor relationship with his coach and he told me that he actually disliked him as a person. What makes this all the more interesting is that Cameron has stayed with this coach throughout his athletic experience. Although Cameron did not expand on this, he did say that their relationship started off badly and did not really improve:

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): There were a couple of incidents that happened early on that in any other circumstances I probably wouldn't have spoken to him ever again, so our relationship got off to a really bad start... Then when I started getting good I really had to talk to him and I probably hated him more than he hated me, I found him really annoying.

Nevertheless, Cameron has no intention of leaving his coach, ultimately because he has recently been '*improving by stupid amounts*' and he does not believe that he could have done any better under the guidance of any other coach. As Cameron explains:

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): ... I just stuck with him and now it has got to the point where the guy knows me so well, he knows what kind of sessions makes me tick, he knows if I have got a big race coming up, he doesn't need to sit down and discuss what we need to do. We just say 'right we know what we need to do'. We have just worked so long together and we know what kind of

training makes me run well, what kind of training makes me run badly, and he knows what direction I want to go. ...I would never actually leave him because there is that certain element that I have been with him for so long, but I would certainly seek outside help.

Although several of the participants had suggested that they had not always seen eye-to-eye with their coaches at certain times of their sporting careers, none were as vociferous about their dislike for their coach as Cameron. However, the majority of the participants, including Cameron, have respect for them as coaches and appreciate the coaching they receive, even though Cameron cannot resist getting the final jibe in:

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): *I respect him as a coach and I respect him for what he does, but I wouldn't for a second say that I thought he was the best coach in the country or anywhere near that....*

6.4.6 Important to be Treated as an Individual: "I like a bit of personal attention"

Now that the participants were training at elite level, it became apparent that some (n = 16) of them liked to be treated as an individual and have their training sessions developed specifically for them. This was the same for both team and individual sports, as swimmers Kate and Mike and rugby player Calum elucidate:

Kate (swimming, 15.11.04): *I suppose I like a bit of personal attention from my coaches, like here the programme is pretty big now, but John still manages to time me, and he knows what sort of times I should be doing and what times I've been doing. Like he knows me as a person and treats me as an individual. Yeah your coach needs to know you and what you need from them and what makes you swim well and basically all the things that you need to do.*

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *... he is very much a thinking coach and if he feels that you could do without going quite so far he is not afraid to change the sessions. Probably more than any other coach that I have worked with, he will tailor it to your needs on that particular day, which I think is good for me.*

Calum (rugby, 01.12.05): *I enjoy the weight training and I enjoy any training that I perceive is going to benefit me directly. But little things like speed training, I just kind of think, well maybe in certain positions, but if I can run 100m, a tenth of a second quicker, is that going to make any difference to me as a hooker?...probably not. If you are a winger and pure out and out pace counts, well probably. So some times things can get a bit, what we call 'JJ', job justification, we do it because they [fitness advisers] say we've got to do it, without them thinking about the individual needs of the individual players.*

In relation to the previous comments, another theme that became clear in the participants investment years was their desire for their coach to understand them, not only as an athlete, but also as a person. This is consistent with Martens & Lees (1998) who argue that an athlete's career development should be seen as a holistic process that necessarily involves all aspects of a person's identity and life circumstances. The following statements exemplify why the participants in this study felt that this was important in their sporting career:

Bob (swimming, 15.11.04): *John is great, like he will bring in new things and he will talk about new things and he'll help you manage your life better and show you how you can balance it a bit better, like your education and your social life.*

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): *I think it is good to have someone who you know is interested in you as a person, and not just interested in your rugby.*

Colin (taekwondo, 06.04.05): *... they [coaches] understand me not only as a player but as a person, they know what makes me tick they know how to motivate me to do better; they know how to calm me down, like when I am too uptight. I think that it's important they know me as a person, because in a sense they are in the ring with me.*

Furthermore, both Samantha and Ruth contend that it is not only what happens in the sporting arena that can affect an athlete's performance but also issues off the 'pitch':

Ruth (rugby, 04.03.05): *Because this is now my job, anything in my personal life can effect what happens in my rugby as well, so if I needed a chat with them [coaches], then they would be around, and I feel that they are really supportive, and that support helps me concentrate more on my rugby.*

Samantha (athletics, 30.06.05): *I was quite lucky that he [coach] was quite a balanced person, because I could imagine some coaches could be very like 'running is everything'. But he was very good at seeing the athlete as a whole, and he knew if there was something wrong in my life just by watching the way that I ran, and he would stop me and ask me 'what was wrong?'*

From the evidence presented here it would appear the participants believe that in order for the elite athlete to perform at his or her best in the sporting arena, it may be helpful that if the coach supports the athlete unconditionally. The participants appreciated having training programmes designed specifically for them and being given individual attention, even within a team setting. In other words, according to

the study participants, the coach of an elite performer should recognize their athlete's needs and understand the athlete as a person (Gould & Dieffenbach, 2002).

6.5 CONCLUSION

The evidence from this study suggests that coaches play an important part in a young athlete's sporting career at all levels. In the early years, most of the participants appreciated coaches who were friendly, approachable and had the ability to make training sessions fun. These coaches were usually volunteers and, although they may have lacked technical knowledge, they more than compensated for this lacuna by their ability to keep the young athlete involved in the sport.

When the participant began to take their sport more seriously, they then seemed willing to forego some of the enjoyment in order to progress. Although having fun was still important, the coaches in the specialising or middle years were often said to be more autocratic and authoritarian in their approach. Some participants believed this approach was beneficial to them throughout their teens. They pointed out that without this stricter approach they may have "messed about" more and not progressed to the elite level of their sport. In contrast, this dictatorial attitude did not suit other participants and they felt it necessary to change coach.

Finally, once the participant reached the investment phases, when their sport was their number one priority, many of the participants believed that mutual respect and trust were key to a successful relationship with their coach. This respect was earned in a number of ways: through the coach's previous protégés' results; by allowing the respondent a level of control; by understanding the athlete as a person; and, of course, through improvement and success in the participant's performance. Interestingly, some participants mentioned that they did not have the same close relationship with their national coaches, which may be an issue that needs to be addressed. The participants at this final phase of their development also understood that they had benefited from advice from other supporting specialists in their field.

Valée and Bloom (2005) concluded that “coaching is a complex and demanding profession that includes far more than solely training athletes to compete” (pp.181). This study identified that differing needs and desires, as a consequence of different athlete’s personalities, makes the coach’s job even more arduous. Consistent with Bloom (1985), this study also agrees that the role of the coach changes but remains central to the development of the elite performer. For the majority of the participants this meant changing coaches at some point during their development. However, some participants have remained with the same coach throughout their sporting career. For those participants it was also evident that their coach’s instructional styles altered to a certain extent between each developmental phase. Furthermore, many of the participants suggested that their coaches gave them more autonomy as they progressed in their sport.

To conclude this chapter, I have summarised Nick’s comments on his perceptions of the characteristics and the roles that his coaches have played as he has progressed in his sport of pole vaulting. Although parts of this quotation have been used in isolation in previous sections of this chapter, it illustrates the coaching experiences that were typical of many of the participants:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): ... when I first started athletics, the coach I had was very much participation orientated, very relaxed easy going, she was very good for youngsters and children in developing basic skills and that worked well for me I think. ...I was doing other things and she wasn't too bothered I was doing other things, it wasn't totally elitist. Then as I moved to Stoke, the guy [coach] there was much more authoritarian, much more old school, teacher type who would tell you what to do and you had to tell him everything you were doing etc. He was much more intimidatory towards what you were doing, which at that time was good for me. ...And as I moved here, he [coach] is very much more on top of things, he wants to know everything we are doing, but in a more professional coach-athlete relationship. He is much more of a friend than an authoritarian, so I can go and talk to him about everything I am doing. We can relate to each other in a more relaxed relationship. Obviously I have done a lot of training before, I know how my body works, I know what feelings I have when I am doing the event inside my body, we can kind of talk about it more rather than him telling me what to do.

This chapter has explored how central the coach was to the socialisation process of the expert performers and examined how this role evolved throughout the young

athletes' developmental phases. Building on these findings, the following chapter will explore the role of another significant other in this process, namely peers.

Chapter Seven

The Influence of Peers from the Perspective of the Expert Performer

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters have described how young people live in a complex social environment that includes for most the nuclear family, school, structured social groups (e.g. sporting) and various formal and informal peer groupings. In a sporting setting, young athletes often perceive as significant the support of their parents, their coaches and friends. I have argued in this thesis, particularly in Chapter Five, and along with Kay (2000) that the family is a crucial facilitating agent for children's involvement in sport. Kroger (2000) concurs: "parents, first, and peers, second, appear to be the contexts for primary influence for early adolescent identity development although all contexts contribute influential socialisation experiences" (pp: 51). Furthermore, recent research concluded that there *may* be a change in the order of importance of influencers but the significance of the influencers *certainly* does change (Claes et al., 2001). In Chapter Six I reported that coaches played a crucial and changing role in the developing sporting careers of young athletes. But Smith, Balaguer and Duda (2006) reported that peers were also integral to an athlete's experiences in the sport social environment and that this influence warranted further consideration. The significance of friendships was a prominent feature in the data generated by this study and appeared to incorporate a large percentage of the participants' social experiences. This chapter will now examine the role of peers and the influence that they had throughout the participants' sporting development.

I first examine the influence peers had on the study participants' engagements with sport and also how these friendship groups developed. I then move on to discuss the 'kudos' associated with success in sport as viewed by peers and teachers. Although

the role of gender was not intended to be a prominent element in this study, it became apparent that some of the female participants experienced the disapproval of their peers for either having a muscular body or playing a traditionally 'male' sport. I also explore the difference between team and individual sports regarding the relationship with 'team mates'. I then examine some peer-pressure issues, and discuss why some of the participants felt that conforming to these pressures may have affected their sporting performance. Finally, it was evident that the nature of young people's friendships was not homogeneous, but was dynamic and contextual. Hence, I conclude this chapter by examining how the participants perceived and construed their sporting identity throughout their development and in particular (for some) through university.

7.2 THE INFLUENCE OF PEERS ON SPORT PARTICIPATION

7.2.1 *"I don't think my friends had a massive influence on me playing sport"*

As noted above, the significance of friendships was a fundamental part of the data generated by this study and evidently friendship played an important part in the participants' developmental socialisation into sport. Kirk and MacPhail (2003) report that their ethnographic study of a youth sports club showed that friendship was a very important factor in the experiences of young athletes in the sampling stage, not so much as a factor initiating entry into a sport but more importantly in terms of them continuing to stay in a sport (Kirk and MacPhail, 2003). Many (n = 23) of the participants in this study claimed they did not necessarily take up a particular sport to be with friends. The following comments show that for these participants, friends were not the main influence on their participation in sport during the sampling phase:

Shona (rugby, 14.03.05): *I don't think my friends had a massive influence on me playing sport, although a lot of my friends did play sport, but if they didn't, I think I still would have. And they certainly didn't [have any influence] when I took up rugby because none of them played.*

Neil (taekwondo, 06.04.05): *friends were never a reason for me participating in sport; I have always wanted to play sport for myself, just because I like it.*

Stephen (rugby, 10.03.05): *When I first started playing rugby, there was no one else that I knew who played, but I obviously made an awful lot of friends when I first started. And when I started playing rugby at school, pretty much my group of friends were the ones that took up rugby.*

Even though many of the participants commented that they “didn’t know anybody” prior to attending the sports clubs, they went on to stress that once they had taken up the sport, they often made close friendship bonds with their team mates and/or training partners. Their stories suggested that they had not expected or envisaged making such close friendships, and it appeared that they were simply an added bonus to taking part in the sport; although these relationships soon became increasingly important to them. The following comments exemplify how these friendships became important factors in the participants’ continued involvement in particular sports:

Lewis (swimming, 29.11.04): *I didn’t know anybody before I started swimming so I didn’t go to see my friends but I made a lot of friends there once I started. We always had a laugh at training so I guess that made it more fun and enjoyable, to be with a group that you like and get along with. But it wasn’t the be all and end all, the higher up you got, level wise, the more friends would drop out to do other social activities and that happened all the way through really. But that wasn’t a bad thing, because then I got new friends and I would still be friends with the ones that dropped out, like friends that I used to swim with 6 years ago I would still meet up and see them every now and again.*

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): *I would have definitely started playing rugby regardless of having friends there. In my first session I knew of one or two of them, but I didn’t really know them. ... It just so happened that they were all brilliant people and were a great laugh, so it all developed from there.*

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): *I put it off for a while actually going down [to the athletics club]. But my mum sort of took me down, and like I said I did fit in really well with the group and that was probably part of the reason I probably enjoyed it more than the dancing. Once I started I made quite a lot of friends which wasn’t hard at all. It was an all girl group and everyone was quite close. It was really the thought of it that was more daunting, because I didn’t know anybody.*

These views are consistent with previous studies (e.g. Weiss, Smith & Theeboom, 1996; Thomson, Rehman, & Humbert, 2005), which suggest that being with and making new friends are important reasons for continuing involvement in sport. Furthermore, some (n = 4) of the participants commented that not getting on with their peers was a reason for them not continuing in a sport. The influence fellow team

members can have on continued involvement in a sport is demonstrated by Claire, an international rugby player. Prior to going to university she played county level rugby and hockey, but after a year at University she dropped out of hockey to concentrate solely on rugby partially because she had a better relationship with her rugby peers than the hockey players. The importance Claire attached to her relationship with team mates is illustrated below:

Claire (rugby, 16.02.05): Friends have definitely played an important part in my involvement in sport. ...I think if I had got on much better with the 'uni' hockey team in my first year I would probably have stuck with hockey, but because I didn't really make good friends there and I didn't think that they were very interesting people, I just didn't bother staying with it, so it was mainly because of the people.

Even though Claire is now a regular first team rugby player in the senior international squad, she confessed that she would have rather continued playing hockey if it had not been for the attitude of some of the hockey squad at university. This perhaps shows that a positive relationship with peers can encourage a young athlete to remain involved in sport. Conversely a negative relationship can cause the reverse. This argument is consistent with Côté (2002) who argues that peers can provide encouragement and discouragement and that they can act as models of involvement or non-involvement in sport. Indeed, simply putting youths on a team will not necessarily produce positive relationships.

Although a good relationship with peers was an influential reason for most participants to continue in their sport, this was not the overriding factor for some. Louise, for example, stated that when she took up swimming she did not place much importance on acquiring friendships and she claimed friends were not a significant reason to remain involved in the sport. However, she concedes that the support of her peers has been more important to her as she progressed into the investment phase and was swimming at elite level:

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): To have or make friends was never a reason for me to go [swimming], I did have friends there especially when I got into my own age group level, there were about 3 or 4 of us who were really good friends and we would go out together sometimes, but that wouldn't have been

a reason for me to go. These days they [friends] would probably be more of a reason for me to keep training than it was then.

Similarly, William did not think that having a good relationship with his peers had much influence on him taking up swimming as he said he did not know anyone at the swimming club. However, William did acknowledge that, although he was not overly close to his fellow swimmers in the early days, they did help in his enjoyment of and persistence in swimming throughout his development, but particularly in the sampling phase:

William (swimming, 02.12.04): I guess back then it would be one of the reasons I would go training, and I would be friendly with them, but outside of swimming I probably wouldn't see them that much. ...But at that age if you didn't know and get on with people there that were your age you would have got bored. That's until it got a bit more competitive, that's when I think it becomes a little bit less important.

Further on in the interview William commented that:

...even now if I didn't get on with the people I trained with, I would have to move [clubs]. I spend four hours a day training with them and if I was with people I couldn't talk to, I would be spending four hours in solitary confinement. So if I was with people I didn't get on with, well, it couldn't be done.

Although William initially gave little credence to the influence of his peers, in hindsight he acknowledges that he may have left his club if he had not had a good relationship with them. It could be inferred that even though the participants did not necessarily take up their sport for social reasons, the enjoyment they gained from peer relationships did impact on their continued involvement in the sport. Previous research has also reported the importance of the role of peers in supporting the continued interest and involvement in talent activities (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Scanlan et al., 1993; Patrick et al., 1999)

7.2.2 "A really good social experience"

As discussed in the previous section, it was clear that by the time they reached the specialising years, most of the participants had a good relationship with their sporting peers. In this section I will expand on how special this friendship became for many ($n = 24$) of the participants by the investment years and how this relationship was often a catalyst for the participants to attend training sessions. Furthermore, several ($n = 13$) of the participants suggested that their peers from their sports clubs were of greater importance to them than peers from any other social spheres. Samantha explained that she did not know anyone at the athletics club when she first joined, but as her running developed so did her friendship with fellow athletes. She added that she was still in close contact with many of the friends she had originally trained with. The importance and influence of these relationships are described below:

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05): For me it was a really good social experience as well [the athletics club], because that is where my major core of friends came from. When I was about 14 or 15 I would spend 4 times a week at training, and at the weekend I would be racing. So I would spend all that time with those people, so those friends became more important than my school friends. ...I think because your running is up and down and you have good spells and bad spells, like when I had bad spells my friends were there, and that was what kept me in the sport. I'm sure that had a big influence on me, keeping me in the sport.

This view is consistent with Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen (2003) who argue that youth sport played an important role in the development of valuable peer bonds. Similarly, Kate thought her swimming team mates, and her parents, had been a significant factor in her becoming an elite-level swimmer:

Kate (swimming, 15.11.04): I suppose, the support from my parents and stuff, and the environment that I grew up in, like my friends at swimming....like my best friend from swimming went to the Olympics in 2000, she was a year older than me, so she would always be at training, so you're motivated to go training if you know that your friend is going to be there. Like if I was at a club and I didn't really have very many friends I wouldn't really want to go and you would miss more sessions but if you have got people to train with then you can push each other that bit more. So when I was between the ages of 12 and 18 that probably got me through then.

Cameron also argued that his peers at his athletics club were highly influential in his continued participation in athletics. His friendship with peers motivated him to attend more training sessions, an incidental outcome of which was an improvement in his racing times. Cameron explained that his PE teacher had initially encouraged him to join an athletics club because he thought he had some potential. However, Cameron initially did not really enjoy going, and would only attend training sessions “every other week or so”. It was not until he became friendly with two new boys who had joined the club that he started training regularly. Subsequently, his times became faster and the following season he won a 3km race. Cameron explains in his own words how these new friends strongly influenced his increased participation in athletics:

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): ... when I was 14, just about to turn 15, two new boys joined [the athletics club] and I became really good friends with them and for that reason I started training more regularly mainly because I enjoyed knocking about with them. ...And I actually got to the point in the following season from doing bits and bobs of training to training really regularly. Then I did a race, a 3k race, and for the first time ever I ran a really respectable time and actually won.

It would appear from the above comments that in a number of different ways, peers can lead to desirable motivational outcomes and can shape opportunities for skill development. Furthermore, friendship seemed to play a particularly significant part in participants’ investments of time and energy into sport during transitions into the specialising and investment phases. Weiss and Smith (2002) reported that there was a positive association between the quality of friendship and the enjoyment of and commitment to youth sport participation. Conversely poor peer relationships can lead to an athlete dropping out of a particular sport. In the following section this study will explore the relationship between a participant’s physical competence and their social status and popularity within their peer groups in both the club and school setting.

7.3 POPULARITY AND STATUS WITHIN PEER GROUPS AND TEACHERS

7.3.1 *"All of a sudden quite a few people at the club noticed me, and they thought: 'Crikey that was a good run'"*

It was evident within this study that several ($n = 18$) of the participants believed that being competent sportspeople had a positive impact on their popularity and status amongst their peers and others, particularly in the specialising and investment phases. For example Cameron, quoted in the previous section, commented that it was not until after he won his first competition he felt that he was accepted by the rest of his athletics club:

Cameron (athletics, 18.02.05): ...after that race, all of a sudden quite a few of the people at the club noticed me and they thought 'crikey that was a good run'. And the popular kid from the club came up to me and congratulated me and it was suddenly like 'Oh my God he [popular kid] is talking to him'. Then other folk started to get along with me and I started to make a lot more friends and I really started to enjoy it then.

This idea of relating popularity with athletic success was a common theme that ran through many of the interviews. Furthermore, several ($n = 12$) of the participants suggested that being a competent sportsperson had increased their self-confidence, which they thought had a positive effect on their popularity within their peer group:

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): I think being successful affects your self esteem, like if you are good at something then you feel better about yourself so you are more confident in social circles and I think that makes you even more popular, because you are confident. Like being given school colours for representing your county, at my school they made quite a big thing about it, you got your name read out at assembly and you would get your name in the local paper. So I think little things like that made me more popular because people want to be associated with you if you're being successful.

International hockey player Susan echoes this sentiment:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): ... I also think my confidence was a big factor, because I was far more confident in my ability at playing hockey and I knew that I could succeed in whatever I was doing in hockey. Therefore you get a bit more respect from people and then they want to be your friend.

Although many of the participants in this study support previous studies that have suggested that competence in sport skills are likely to be a strong social asset in peer relations (Coie et al., 1991; Weiss & Duncan, 1992) this was not always the case. Mike thinks that this often quoted increase in popularity and status is variable and often dependent on the sport in which you are successful:

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *I think being a successful sports person can have an effect on your popularity and the status that comes with it. Like, perhaps with girls when you are young it is quite an influence, I guess it's like being a footballer they always have attractive girlfriends and that kind of thing. ... but I think because it's swimming it's not that high profile so it's not that great a deal, but sometimes I think it influences some type of people.*

Agreeing with Mike, Louise feels that being a successful swimmer does not have the same status as many other sports and she does not think swimmers benefit in the same way as many other sportspeople. Louise is quite bitter that at her school, boys who represented the first XV rugby team were presented with an 'honours' blazer but she and her swimming coach had to fight for similar recognition even though she had represented her country at the Commonwealth Games in swimming. The following quotation from Louise exemplifies her frustration:

Louise (swimmer, 18.11.04): *I don't know if it's the same over here [England], but in Ireland, schools don't view swimming as a proper sport and it has actually been quoted that swimming isn't a proper sport, it's amazing that people can think like that, but they do!*

Consistent with Louise and Mike's views, Sonya did not think that her sport of taekwondo attracted the same appreciation from her peers as many other sports. She did not talk about her sporting achievements with her school peers, and not until it was reported in the national press that she had won the junior world taekwondo championships did most of her peers or teachers learn of her achievements:

Sonya (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *...when I was about 15, I started getting quite good and I won the 'junior worlds', but at school I didn't tell anyone that I did taekwondo, because people don't appreciate you doing taekwondo, you get called the 'karate kid' and you know what it's like they want to pick fights with you.*

Clearly some of the participants felt that their sporting achievements did not receive the same level of appreciation that is often given to other sports. Interestingly, it was more often those who participated in individual sports who claimed that they were not fully accepted by school mates. Holroyd (2003) argues that in order to achieve success among peers in relation to physical activity, it is not only important to possess relevant physical capital³ but also to retain the respect of the group. Donnelly and Young (1988) also pointed to this issue in their study of sport sub-cultures, in which they noted that an individual's acceptance among their sporting peers relied on both the construction and confirmation of an appropriate identity. Although most of the participants did acknowledge that being good at sport, in general, was a good opportunity to become respected by their peers, this was sometimes dependant on the particular sport and its subculture.

7.3.2 "...You get more respect from the teachers..."

Several (n =7) of the participants suggested that it was not only their peers who were influenced by their success, particularly in the specialising and investment phase, but also some of their teachers; although not always positively. The following comments suggest that many of the participants believed that they were given more respect by their teachers because of their sporting prowess:

Stephen (rugby, 10.03.05): *Playing a good level of rugby was good for me at school because you get more respect from the teachers. It's not that you would get privileges but they understood things, like if there were deadlines for school work and I'd say 'I've got training the night before, can I hand it in a day later?' and they were ok about it.*

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *When I was 16 I swam for GB, but not really many people knew that I swam, apart from my friends and the people that I swam with. So when it came out that I had swam for GB, my school teacher was like 'Oh well how did that come about then?' because it was outside of*

³ Physical capital (Bourdieu, 1978) can be seen to comprise those physical attributes and abilities such as strength and skill that are embodied through particular sporting and social practices, and that can be readily converted into other forms of capital (e.g. money, fame, status). In organised sport, it is necessary for individuals to abide by universally accepted rules if they are not to challenge the status quo and as a result they learn appropriate forms of action and behaviour compliant with their position within the field. Positioning within this field can broadly relate to an individuals tastes and interests (for example, being positioned as a rugby player, swimmer, athlete etc.), as well as to their position within the structure of the activity (e.g. coach, captain, forward etc.). In each case, however, it is dependent upon the possession of valued capital (Holroyd, 2003).

school completely. I think their respect for me was boosted quite a lot. So yeah, I do think they [teachers] thought a bit more about me, because I was actually doing okay at school and I was playing rugby. So I think they thought 'Well actually this guy does do a fair bit and to a reasonable level'.

However, not all the participants' teachers were as enthusiastic about their sporting achievements: some gave the impression that they thought their sport interfered with their education and others thought it made them appear arrogant. As Calum and Gemma explain:

Calum (rugby, 01.012.04): Yeah, well it's like everything else, if they liked rugby then they were a bit more lenient, and the ones that didn't...well they knew that I wasn't that keen on education and that I preferred to play rugby then they were like, he's a bit too big for his boots because he is good at rugby.

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): I think being good at sport at school had a positive effect on my popularity with my peers, but not necessarily with my teachers because I had to miss quite a few lessons, like on Saturdays. Not all teachers would look on you favourably because you were the sporty one; I think some thought you might be a bit arrogant.

The participants not only had to deal with teachers thinking they might be arrogant, but some of them were also aware that being good at sport could have a similar effect on their peers, as I will discuss in the following section.

7.3.3 "...I was always wary of showing off..."

According to Adler and Adler (1998), popular kids have greater 'savoir-faire'; this they define as "a pupil's sophistication in social and interpersonal skills" (p42). It would appear that at least some of the participants in this study had a degree of saviour-faire in that they made a conscious effort to be modest about their successes particularly in the specialising and investment phases. These participants (n = 7) said that they were aware that they could easily be perceived as being a "show-off" if they did not. The following quotation from Tracey acknowledges these concerns:

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): I've never liked to show off at all, I would very rarely tell them about what races I was doing and if I ever got mentioned in assembly, they would be like "Oh well done!" and I would play it down. So

they were supportive in that way, but they never really knew how much I was doing or how hard I was training. If they ever saw me in PE running quite fast, they would say "Oh you're so fit" [envious tone]. But I was always quite wary of showing off and things, because you can get a really bad name for yourself if you start getting a bit arrogant.

There would appear to be a fine line between being perceived as arrogant and actually being arrogant. Frank and Julie both sounded despondent when they described how they felt that some of their peers had unfairly adjudged them to be arrogant because they had succeeded in becoming international rugby players; however they often put this down to jealousy:

Frank (rugby, 09.03.05): I think sometimes people misjudge you, I think people who still play locally, misjudge success with arrogance. Because you are doing well they think you're arrogant, I think some of the people that I played with think like that, but I think it is a jealousy thing. My friends don't think that, but people I used to play with and against, I think they are a bit jealous, and stupid, but that doesn't bother me really.

Julie (rugby, 19.02.05): ...some of the girls I used to play rugby with, have got a bit funny with me, the ones that haven't made it in to the national squad don't really want to have much to do with me anymore. I don't know if they think I'm arrogant or they are just jealous. But that really surprised me, and I'm disappointed because I thought we were quite close, but maybe I'm just naive.

In contrast to Julie, Olivia was not at all perturbed about what her school peers thought of her and she further commented that she 'used them' as an antithesis of what she wanted out of life. I was actually quite taken aback at how little she thought of her so-called friends now that she has made the transition into the investment phase, but was not surprised to learn that she only had few school mates:

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): I didn't really have that many friends at school, I had about four that I use to hang around with at secondary school but I didn't really see that much of them outside of school. I think that more than anything, I used them in the way that they were something that I didn't want to be. Like just hanging around waiting for life to happen and I've sort of moved on from that. I meet up with them every now and again, including what you would call my best friend from back home; I've known her since I was 5 years old. But she's never really progressed and exciting things for her are going shopping in town, I'd much rather be jet setting around the world. It's no detriment to their lives, but it's just that I want something that bit better.

It could be argued that Olivia does not intend to be condescending towards her school peers, but that she has higher expectations for both herself and her friends. In an earlier study on children's expectations of their friends, Zarbatany, Ghesquiere, and Mohr (1992), concluded that friendship expectations varied considerably as a function of the social context. In other words, children may have different expectations of school friends than they do of team mates, particularly during the later years of their development.

It can be argued that within certain circles social status can be enhanced by being good at sport. There is nothing new about this claim; Coleman (1961) reported over 40 years ago that social status is earned through activities that are conspicuous and bring credit to the school, such as participation in athletics (cited in Feld, 1991). However, it is noteworthy that success in sport does not automatically attract praise from peers and many of the participants who were competent sports people needed to take care not to appear arrogant or overconfident. The following comment from Nick exemplifies how he perceived it to be considered socially acceptable amongst his peers to be seen to be pushing himself athletically but not academically when he was in the specialising phase of his development:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): I've never really been motivated or dedicated to achieve academically and put commitment into academic work or push myself to the limit like I do at training. ...when you are in the classroom you don't want to stick out as a 'boffin' or whatever, you just want to blend in. ...But in sport that's different, I will push myself to the limit to get the maximum results.

It has been suggested that athletic ability attracts high status for males but this has not been so unequivocal for females (Lindstorm & Lease, 2005). The following section will expand on this debate and will explore some of the complexities surrounding this area.

7.4 THE COMPLEXITIES OF PEER STATUS AND ACCEPTANCE FOR MALE AND FEMALE PERFORMERS IN THE SPECIALISING AND INVESTMENT PHASES

As discussed in the previous section, many of the participants talked about how their sporting competency had generally provoked a positive reaction from their peer groups. Indeed, both the male and female participants in this study repeatedly referred to the increasing amount of kudos they gained from their peers by excelling at sport. Although research has repeatedly identified athletic ability as one of the most significant criteria for achieving high peer status for males, historically it has not been as clear cut for females (Lindstorm and Lease, 2005). The findings from this study were equally ambiguous. Many of the participants including females who play traditionally male-defined activities stated that they had gained a lot of kudos for being successful sportspeople. However, a few participants also expressed some frustrations relating to their peers' lack of acceptance of the sport they played and/or the physique they had. Scraton et al., (1999) argues that this disapproval is because women athletes who exhibit strength and muscularity challenge conventional standards of femininity. This study would agree with Messner (1988) in saying that women in sport are still a 'contested terrain'. In other words, while women are attempting to make their mark in sport, their efforts to do so are constrained by broader forces (Theberge, 2002). Furthermore, many of the female participants often corroborated with what Coakley (1998) terms the 'gender logic'⁴ in that they often used vocabulary to suggest that the typical female was inferior to males in a sporting context. For example, some (n = 9) of the female participants distanced themselves from being a typical female and further suggested playing with or against men made them better players.

⁴ Dominant forms of sport in most cultures are played and organised in ways that work to the advantage of most men and to the disadvantage of most women. When people participate in sports they often learn a form of 'commonsense' that leads to the conclusion that women are 'naturally inferior to men' (Coakley, 1998).

7.4.1 One Side of the Coin: “being a good runner got me a lot of kudos at school”.

As touched on in the previous section, many of the participants commented that being good at sport increased their status and gained them acceptance from their peers particularly when they could be described as ‘specialisers’ or ‘investers’. The following comments are just a small sample of quotations to illustrate the common use of the word ‘kudos’ and how this respect was earned by both the male and female participants:

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05) I wasn't very mature at school and you know how you get a group of girls that are the 'in crowd.' Well, I was able to access that social crowd because I was good at running. So it gave me a lot of kudos at school that I wouldn't have otherwise had, and it gave me more confidence as well.

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): I got a lot of kudos for playing for England and that was how I got known around the uni, and that settled me in quite quickly due to it really. Had I not got that achievement, I think I would have struggled there, because it really wasn't me and I really only got kudos because I was an England player, so everybody wanted to know you.

Calum (rugby, 01.12.04): Rugby became particularly important to me when I was about 15, obviously at that time it was just an amateur sport, so in those days the kudos was being a good rugby player, like playing for England at 16, there is a certain amount of kudos that comes with that, like in your peer group at that age it takes you up the pecking order, if you know what I mean. By your peers you are deemed to be slightly better so I think it possibly increased my popularity. It's like if you are good at something, it makes you more accepted into your peer groups.

However, this was not always the case, particularly for some of the females involved in this study, and especially if they were specialisers in sports that required strength and aggression. The following section will explore why some of the participants thought that they attracted criticism from their peers.

7.4.2 The Other Side of the Coin: “...they just kind of took the piss”

It is evident from the previous section that many of participants felt that their status amongst their peers had increased in line with their sporting achievements. However, this experience was not universal and some (n =5) of the female participants had to

deal with criticisms of their choice of sport, their physique and sometimes their sexuality. Despite the negative reaction of some of their peers, very few suggested that this had been a deterrent to them taking part in physical activities, although one participant said that she chose to play a more 'gender-appropriate' sport. The following comments highlight some of the disparaging comments received from their peers:

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): *I think doing javelin it was a bit, well with the boys at school, I think it was a bit of an issue, just because they see that you have to be quite strong and aggressive. They just kind of took the piss, but that was in my adolescent years, but when I got a bit older about 15 or 16 and they could see I was doing quite well, they soon changed their tune. I think they were a bit jealous that I was throwing further than most of them. It upset me a little bit; I think it could have affected me more if I let it but I had confidence in myself and I had plenty of friends that supported me, so I wasn't too bothered.*

Claire (rugby, 16.02.05): *I have achieved a lot more than many of the males on campus, but they'll still look down on me, and they'll still try to kick you off the machines in the gym. And I'm like 'you've never played for your country and I have, and you're kicking me off this machine!' ...Also other girls on the campus stereotype you as a rugby player, they think you're big and you're fat or 'muscle' and aggressive and of course you must be gay, so they look down on you as well. But I guess choosing a sport like rugby you make it difficult for yourself.*

The latter comment from Claire is consistent with Lenskyj's (1991) claim that "women are the frequent targets of labels intended to devalue or dismiss their successes by calling their sexuality into question" (pp. 386). In a similar vein, Birrell and Theberge (1994) argue that the efforts to discredit women athletes by disparaging their appearance and reconstructing them as unnatural women has been one of the main weapons employed in the effort to maintain sport as a male preserve. In agreement with Gorely, Holroyd and Kirk (2003), the participants in this study also made associations between forms of femininity and masculinity and body shapes and sizes, and the risks associated with transgressing heterosexuality through the use and display of the body (pp.435). Such perceptions were acknowledged by the following comments:

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): *I don't think its playing rugby that I get a lot of stick for, but I do get a lot of comments about the way I'm built. Some people*

are like, 'you play women's rugby?' and they take the Mickey and some people think 'that's wicked'. But it's mainly my size that gets grief. At times it bothers me, and I think I want to be smaller, but I know at the level that I am playing at, I can't be smaller.

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): I initially played football, I was always a bit of a tomboy, but I stopped playing because I didn't want to be seen as a boy when I was going into secondary school. I think hockey is sometimes seen as not very feminine, but it's not as bad as say football or rugby and I do like aggressive sports. ...Like netball was just a bit too girlie, girlie for me, there wasn't enough bosching around for my liking.

The above comment from Gemma also highlights just how complex the notions of gender-appropriate sport and physical activity are. On one hand, she is reticent about playing football because she is worried that her gender may be questioned, but on the other, she was attracted to sports that had the traditional markers of male appropriate sports. This confusion was evident throughout all the phases of participation, but especially when the participants invested specifically in one sport.

Over the last two decades there has been an erosion of the traditional exclusiveness of some activities to males (Gorely et al., 2003), evidenced by the increasing numbers of women participating in activities such as rugby, pole-vaulting and marathon running. It should be noted that these sports are considered in this study. However, it is debateable how much this has impacted on hegemonic gendered representations. Women athletes who exhibit strength and muscularity may appear to be demonstrating a shift to what is deemed to be acceptable female behaviour as they challenge conventional standards of femininity. But, according to Scraton et al. (1999), this does not present a major challenge to the enduring masculine/feminine dichotomy. Rather, these women have simply crossed gender boundaries in order to access a sport that is associated with masculine traits (Coakley, 1998). Scraton and her colleagues further add that this does not help redefine hegemonic notions of femininity but if anything perhaps rarefies masculinity by their aspirations to be 'like a man'. This ideology was also evident in this study and will be discussed in greater detail in the following section of this chapter.

7.4.3 The Participants' Perspectives of Gendered Characteristics: "...she plays like a man but she's a woman!"

Several (n = 9) female interviewees commented that the stereotypical female lacked the physical skills not only of their male counterparts but also of themselves. Indeed, they often made statements that disassociated themselves from what they thought were typical female characteristics. The following comments illustrate how many of the female participants used vocabulary and statements that were disparaging about many of their same-sexed peers, even in the sampling phase:

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.04): Sometimes it was a bit demoralising playing with girls that didn't want to play, just a bit frustrating that they wouldn't run after a ball. ...sometimes I would train with the boys although that was rare, it made it a bit more interesting and competitive.

Ruth (rugby, 04.03.05): ...like a lot of girls don't want to go out in the cold or they don't want to get wet and muddy, but that didn't bother me. I enjoyed it [outdoor PE lessons], I liked being outside and thought of it as a break from school work.

Alison (taekwondo, 05.04.05): I've always been like, not scared to try new things and try to do well. Whereas you know in PE there are always girls who don't want to be there and just stand on the side lines. Whereas I have always been very competitive and like I say I always like challenging myself and trying to do well.

It would appear that some of the female participants felt that being good at sport or physical activities was the antithesis of having typical female characteristics. As Tracey alluded to in her comment above, many of the female participants strongly argued that playing or training with boys/men had made them stronger and better sportspeople. This view is consistent with what I reported in Chapter Five, in that, many of the participants (male and female) felt that playing sport with an older brother had been influential in their sporting development. This perspective concurs with Coakley's argument that when people participated in sports they often learned that 'common sense' led to the conclusion that women were 'naturally' inferior to men in any activity requiring physical skills and cognitive strategies (1998: pp.10).

Interestingly, one of the participants considered it a particular compliment when she was adjudged by her hockey peers to play like a man when she was in the investment phase:

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): *...I am adamant that the two or three years that I spent 'physioing' the men's team and watching them play, week in week out, is the key reason why I play the way I play. Because a lot of people have been quoted in saying that 'Stacey Wilson plays a man's game like a woman'. Like even a lot of male players will say 'she plays like a man but she's a woman. ...I did actually play in some of their [men's team] preseason training matches and I think in a way it was a real confidence boost because they were really complimentary and they were quite surprised that I could play alongside them, and actually play quite well.*

Stacey was clear in her views that males were superior in their athletic ability and it was they that should be emulated. Others (n = 6) also alluded to this ideology:

Alicia (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *I learnt so much from playing with the boys, because they are so much faster and quicker and their technical ability is so much better. I used to get a lot of flak and I would get 'taken out' a lot of the time and if I scored my team would laugh and snigger 'you've just let a girl score!' but it was just banter. ...As I said it made me a stronger and harder player because I hardly get knocked off the ball now, because I have been playing with boys that are so much stronger than women, it probably made me a better player in the end.*

Shona (rugby, 14.03.05): *I first started playing rugby when I was about 8 but I had to give it up when I was about 11 or 12 because I wasn't allowed to play with the boys anymore. When I came back to it when I was nearly 16, I think that early stint of playing against boys stood me in good stead because I wasn't scared of the physical contact, like most girls are when they start.*

In contrast to these dominant views on male superiority, taekwondo player Sonya interestingly commented that:

Sonya (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *I think because the girls have always produced more titles and medals than the boys, there has never been any of that 'we're [boys] better than you' stuff. We all just work together and learn from each other.*

In concluding this section I would suggest that the participants' status amongst their peers was more complex than I initially realised. On my first analysis of the data, it

appeared quite straightforward, and I would have argued that most of the participants were generally well accepted and had a lot of kudos within their peer groups. However, after subsequent readings it became evident that there were some undercurrent themes arising. It became clear that the extent to which their sporting ability influenced their popularity and acceptance by their peers was often mediated by their gender and also often related to the sport in which they participated. Moreover, even though there has been a dramatic increase in the participation rate and variety of sports that females now have access to, there still appear to be some prejudices towards women who participate in traditionally male-appropriate activities. It was also evident that many of the female participants, at any rate, in their use of vocabulary, suggested an ideology that was consistent with traditional ideas about masculinity. In their terminology it is derogatory to 'play like a girl' but complimentary to 'play like a man'.

It was also apparent that from an early age many of the participants were drawn to peers who held similar views on sporting ability. Indeed, very few suggested that there was anyone in their close friendship groups who did not play sport during their childhood and adolescence, although these friends did not necessarily play the same sport as them. Relationships with other sports people, and in particular other team members, became particularly evident when the participants moved into the specialising phase. In relation to this observation Adler and Adler (1996) reported that there is more similarity to the friendship structures and interactions across gender than up and down the status hierarchy. Boys and girls are thus competitive and cooperative, hierarchical and levelling, and they compose their peer societies into stratified groups that are fundamentally comparable (pp.136). It is my intention in the following section to explore in greater detail the participants' friendship groups, particularly in the context of school.

7.5 PEER RELATIONSHIPS IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL

7.5.1 "My friends at school were the sporty people"

The previous section highlighted the complexities of the relationship between athletic ability and peer status. However, many of the participants gave the impression that they were not particularly concerned with enhancing their prominence or peer status, but were simply happy to 'hang around' with other 'sporty people'. In Savin-Williams and Berndt's (1990) study of adolescents they reported that young people said that they can most 'be themselves' when they are with their peers. The following comments on friendship groups, both at school and outside were typical:

Kate (swimming, 15.11.04): *...my friends at school were the sporty people, although not to the level that I did it to.*

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): *...well the sporty people did hang around together and in school it was the same people playing all the sports.*

Mike (swimming, 02.12.04): *...most of my friends at school were the guys that I played rugby with or the guys that I went swimming with. I think the guys that did sport stuck together. ...I have always hung out with sporty people and that has been since I have been young. I think it is because we have the same passion and I think that is basically what friendships are built on, the same interests and having respect for whatever each of you do.*

In agreement with Mike, previous studies have also reported that some of the basic facets that are important for developing and maintaining positive relations with peers include empathy, cooperation, social responsibility and communication both in terms of listening and being able to offer encouragement (Furman & Gavin, 1989; Gresham & Elliot, 1990).

Harris (1998: pp.241) reported that a child's primary objective was not to become a successful adult but rather a successful child, and, the most important people at school are the other pupils, for "it is their status among their peers that matters most to them". This study would agree with this argument in part. However, I would suggest that because the participants were competent sports people, this achievement enabled most of them to be accepted into a peer group with similar aspirations, which had greater importance to them. Furthermore, it became apparent that some (n = 11) of

the participants were willing to sacrifice friendship groups at school for the sake of their progression in sport. Consequently, they began to feel more affiliation with their peers involved in their sporting activity. Indeed, some (n = 6) participants said that they felt some pressure from their 'non-sporty' peers at school to get involved in activities that would interfere with training.

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): There was times when I was a bit miffed because my friends would be organising a party or they would be going into town after school, not to do anything in particular but just to hang around, and I would kind of resent it because I wouldn't be included in that little group. And I would get to school the next day and they'd be chatting about what had happened the day before and I would just be totally out the loop, so it would be hard that way. But I got to do lots of things they didn't, like travel.

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05): my non sporty friends from school would be like 'Are you coming out?' and I'd be 'No, I am racing this weekend.' So I had a lot of social pressure from school but then they soon realised, and stopped asking after a while. So your social friends then become your running friends because they understand more.

It would appear to be difficult for committed sportspeople to find time to socialise with their peers outside of their sporting communities, particularly as 'specialisers' moving into the investment phase where deliberate practice comes to dominate so much of their time. Some of the participants felt that it was preferable to associate with peers who shared similar attitudes about sporting endeavours.

7.5.2 Different Aspirations from their Peers: "I'd no interest in hanging around street corners"

Several of the participants commented that they found it difficult to find time to spend with friends when not playing sport, and that this became more evident when they reached their later adolescent years and as they moved through the specialising phases. This was also the stage when many of them started taking their sport more seriously and when their training demands became more intense. It was also around this time that some (n = 11) of the participants became aware that their aspirations for the future were different from those of their peers:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): *...most of my school friends were associated with sports, and then I would go to the sports clubs and meet up with my friends there. Then I would go home and sometimes I felt a little bit isolated, because all my friends who lived in the village were just hanging around the corner shop, and I wouldn't be into doing that. Then when I got older, that pattern continued because I took on a few more serious sports and I devoted a bit more time and dedication to them. And my friends, instead of hanging around the corner shop, they're now hanging around the pub every evening.*

Consistent with the comment above from Nick, it became evident that some of the other participants also acknowledged that they were in many ways different from their adolescent peers. Adler and Adler (1998) stated that closer friendships were generally built upon shared tastes, values, or interests; findings which were echoed in the comments of the interviewees: .

Julie (rugby, 19.02.05): *I got on okay with my friends at school but I was always a bit different, they always liked to go out and secretly have a drink behind their parents' back and stuff, whereas I was never really into that. I just never really saw the point of standing beside the freezing cold river drinking cider I just never really fancied it.*

Similarly, Samantha was also not interested in spending her time in the same ways as many of her peers. Although, she was training most nights of the week, she also saw this as a social occasion, as her following comment exemplifies:

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05): *...but for me it was good fun, because I would go out, I'd be with my friends all evening and it was more interesting than hanging around street corners, like a lot of my old friends did, and I would never have bought into that.*

Although most of the participants suggested that they preferred to spend their time in the company of their sporting peers, in hindsight, a few (n = 4) of them gave the impression that they wished they had made more of an effort in keeping in touch with their other friends. The quotations below highlight the difficulties participants had in finding time to spend with people out-with their sporting circles and how this was tinged with some regret:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): *Those outside of my hockey wouldn't necessarily understand what it was all about. Like they would be organising their*

weekend around shopping and I would be like 'No I'm not going shopping, I'm playing hockey!' and they would say 'why?' and I would say [in a frustrated voice] 'Because my life doesn't revolve around shopping!' Their highlight would be to get on a bus and go to town, and mine would be to play a match. In the end it did cause a bit of a problem, because they kept asking me to go out and I kept saying 'no', then in the end they stopped asking me. And then I would be like 'Ah, they don't want to go out with me now'. So I eventually lost touch with them all, which was a shame.

Katrina (taekwondo, 05.04.05): Now I have got older most of my friends do taekwondo, but when I was younger I used to knock about with my mates and go out and stuff. But now it's harder because I'm always away or I'm training. They'll say 'are you going out at the weekend?' and I'll say 'I'm away'. Or they'll say 'Are you coming out for something to eat?' and I'll say 'I can't eat, because I am dieting' and they start pulling away slowly and slowly. So they can't be bothered asking and then when I can, it's like 'Why is my phone not ringing?'

It would appear that losing contact with some of their friends was a sacrifice that many of the participants considered a necessary loss for committed sportspeople. However, it was also evident that the more dedicated to sport they became, the more they felt they had to prioritise different aspects of their lives. It is perhaps because of this disassociation with their peers outside of their sport that many of the participants placed a greater dependency on team mates, as will be explored in the following section.

7.6 IMPORTANCE OF TEAM MATES

7.6.1 "The friendships you make with team mates are very special"

In this study many (n = 20) of the respondents suggested that as 'investers' they had a great affinity with their team mates/training partners and they believed that this relationship was quite special and different from any other peer-group friendship. This is not a novel observation, as Cox (1994) stated that not only do successful teams have the ability to work together (team work), they also enjoy a certain attraction to one another. In other words, teams who like each other and enjoying playing together will generally be more successful than teams lacking that quality. The following

comments acknowledge how deep many of these friendships were with team mates in the investment phase:

Ruth (rugby, 04.03.05): *I can imagine when I stop playing for England, when I don't get selected or retire, it will be the people that I will definitely miss, like the friendships that you make. The friendships you make with team mates is very special, I think you make a bond that you will never lose.*

Michelle (rugby, 24.03.05): *My team is very close, which I think you get quite a lot in rugby, because the way you have to play for each other, but sometimes you get teams that argue a lot, but our team wasn't like that, they were really good girls and I think we had a special bond.*

Stephen (rugby, 10.03.05): *At school my group of mates were my [rugby] team mates too so I had quite a close knit group of friends. So that was pretty cool.*

Perhaps for Alicia, making friends within her sport was particularly important to her because she went to boarding school and her family lived, and still live, thousands of miles away in Kenya. I would suggest that her need to have a particularly close bond with her team mates is perhaps more pertinent because she lacks familial support. The following comment from Alicia highlights, in her words, her reasons for becoming involved in sport, in particular hockey:

Alicia (hockey, 22.04.05): *...because I hated boarding school, coming from such a culture change, like coming fresh out of Kenya, to a boarding school in the UK. I didn't know what had hit me, I was crying all the time about being away from home, and I was so homesick. And hockey was a bit of an escape from that because it kept me busy. So at weekends I wasn't one of the girls sitting in the house wanting to go home, I was more outdoors, having fun meeting new people.*

The importance she places on the need for a strong friendship bond with her team mates was evident throughout her hockey career and is illustrated by her following comment about the importance of friends:

Alicia (hockey, 22.04.05): *They [team mates] were, are, so so important. Friends are so important to me, definitely. If you don't have friends you don't have the motivation to play, and I think that it is so important that when you are in a team to be mates with everyone. ... some of my best friends I have made through hockey, and it is important because if you are mates then you are willing to push yourself that little bit more, if you have to get that goal*

against a certain team, and you know that all your mates are working really, really hard to help you out. And that is why you play sport to meet new people and make new friends. I mean I have made friends for life through hockey.

Alicia leaves no doubt about the importance she places on friendships within her sport of hockey. The following comment from Patrick highlights the strong sense of cohesion that he and most of the participants felt that they have/had with their team mates particularly now that they have reached a level to which most can only aspire:

Patrick (rugby, 09.03.05): ...back then the important thing was the fun side and being with your mates and the social side of it, but now, although I still really enjoy rugby loads and there is still a social side, but that is very much after the game. I mean you have fun with the guys but it is a different type of fun, it is more of an understanding you have with them. Like in that week leading up to internationals you have that understanding between people, it's a special understanding that you know what is going to happen at the end of that week and I really like that.

In contrast to the notion that it was important and desirable to have a close relationship with team mates, a couple of the participants felt that this was unnecessary. Stacey, for example, had a good relationship with three of her team mates, but did not have the same affiliation with the rest of the team. Stacey thought this was because they disapproved of her having a personal relationship with their coach. This is Stacey's view on the importance of the role team mate's play:

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): I've got three close friends from hockey, because I wouldn't say that all the people I play hockey with are friends, they're more like colleagues. Sport is a very competitive thing, and I have made a lot of friends through hockey. But I think some people are nice to your face, and then they will talk about you behind your back. But I think it's like that in any sport because it's so competitive, and I don't think you have to particularly like your team mates to play well with them.

Stacey commented that she had three 'special' team mates. Nevertheless, according to a few ($n = 5$) of the participants these sorts of relationships can cause cliques within a team and this can be problematic in all stages of performance. Susan enjoys an excellent relationship with her club team mates and contends that "you couldn't be part of a more fun group." However, she does not have the same affiliation with her international team mates. Even though she suggests that it is improving now that she has become more established within the international set-up, she still feels that it can

be very cliquy. The following comment from Susan highlights how this lack of cohesiveness can lead to poor performance and ultimately to drop-out:

Susan (hockey, 25.04.05): I think it really affected my game and I don't think I was playing at all well for England, so much so I nearly gave it all up, but now I feel as though I am on the top of my game. I don't think it was all because I didn't get on that well with my team mates, but I think it was part of the issue.

Caroline had a similar experience and was disappointed that the close relationships that she thought she had built up were, in fact, quite shallow:

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): In rugby it can be quite a fickle circle, not long after I got into the England set up, I got injured, and I got no support, nothing from them. And here I was thinking that I had got a whole new bunch of friends, but no. It was just me back at Uni, which was fine because I had that, but it can be a really fickle circle. If you are not in the team, that's it, it's as if you're invisible!

In a similar vein, Shona explained that it was not necessarily a straightforward matter to continue playing or training with the same friendship group, especially if they do not progress at a similar rate or level. At the time of the interview Shona was being pressurised by her international management team to play for a club in a higher league in order to play against teams of a higher level. She has previously experienced playing club rugby in this league but felt that she did not get on particularly well with her team mates. This, she felt, knocked her confidence and she did not play to the best of her ability. She returned to her former club, even though they played in lower league. Shona summarises some of the issues she had with changing clubs:

Shona (rugby, 14.03.05): I didn't really enjoy it, I didn't feel the same sort of comradeship that I have at my club and I didn't really get on that well with the other players maybe because I am quite quiet, and I didn't get on to the first team until near the end of the season, and there were attitudes flying all over the place and I couldn't be doing with that. ...But there is a huge difference between playing in our league and the premiership, so I think if I stay any longer it will be detrimental to my England career. But I don't think that it has been detrimental up until now, and I really don't want to move [clubs].

From the evidence in this study it would appear that team mates can have a positive and/or a negative influence on the young performer, and that peer friendships within a

particular sport become increasingly important during the specialising and investment phases. Peers can be a good influence on performance, but this is only one component of a complex structure. Côté (2002) agrees when he asserts that simply putting youths together on a team will not necessarily produce positive relationships or results. Although most of this section has discussed team sports, it was interesting to note that many of the participants involved in individual sports had similar views on their relationship with training partners. This will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

7.6.2 An Individual Sport, But in a Team Environment: "They must be lonely; who do they share their laughs with?"

As has been discussed in the previous section many of the team sport participants discussed the importance that they placed on their team mates, and how they enjoyed and felt that a positive relationship was beneficial to their performance, particularly in the later years. Indeed a few ($n = 4$) of them suggested that they preferred to play in team sports, rather than individual sports, because of the team camaraderie, as the following comment from Gemma suggests:

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): Friends and peers have always been important to me. I am quite a social person anyway and I like the attention of being in a team. It's definitely been a factor [for why I play sport] I would find it really hard, especially with all the ups and downs in sport and you don't know if you are going to be successful or not. That's why I think it is important to have your team mates around you. I look at people in individual sports and I think: 'they must be lonely' who do they share the laughs with.

On the contrary, several of the participants involved in individual ($n = 11$) sports also argued that they had a similarly strong relationship with their training partners. Indeed many of these participants suggested that friendships within their individual sport were equally, if not more important to them. The following statements encapsulate the importance the individual sports participants placed on the support and understanding of their fellow athletes in the investment phase:

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): *We've got a really good training group. There are about 11 of us, boys and girls mixed and there's good banter and we all push each other on. It's nice because we are like a little family, because we are all not originally from the same area, so it's nice having that support system. I train with them all the time, so although it's an individual sport, you do feel part of a team.*

Sonya (taekwondo, 05.04.05): *...as I said there were only one or two of my friends who understood what I was doing, but my friends in taekwondo really know what it's like, so they become my closest friends they're almost like family because I'm away with them so much and they understand everything because they have gone through the same things, so I like being with them.*

Colin (taekwondo, 06.04.05): *When you are training, you are in a team environment, except when you are sparring, then it's individual. But when you are training you're trying to push each other, you try to keep each other going. And when you are competing it is like a team event, because you know that the rest of them are behind you, to give you encouragement. But you are the only person in the ring, you are in that ring by yourself, so in that sense it is individual. But we are like a team because we are always together, we're always helping each other out, and when someone is down we will help to get them back up again.*

Pole-vaulter Nick also thinks it is beneficial to have a friendship bond with fellow training partners, even when competing at international level. Although he often competes against other pole-vaulters in his training group, he does not see this as problematic or detrimental to his training regime. The following statement from Nick illustrates his views on having friendly interaction with his training partners:

Nick (athletics, 12.11.04): *We are always competitive but it is a friendly competitive, like all the guys I train with all take the Mickey out of each other, there's some good banter and if one person drops out of a run then they are just crucified for the next week because they haven't finished the session. ...I don't think I would be able to train to the same level if I was on my own.*

Although Nick and his coach had no problem with him training alongside fellow competitors, this was not the case for all of the participants. A couple of the track and field athletes said that felt that if they were training alongside competitors then they could 'give too much away', and found it too stressful. Tracey and Olivia explain in their own words how this can be problematic:

Tracey (athletics, 08.11.05): *...since I've come here it's been a lot harder because I've had to do an awful lot by myself. I sometimes train with a few of*

my rivals and that is a bit more nerve racking. If I am running with someone I am going to be racing against I don't want to give them any sort of edge or advantage. That's why I don't train very often with them, because if you do too much with your rivals you give too much away.

Olivia (athletics, 12.11.04): *There is one girl that I train with who is better than me, but she is from Canada, so there are no domestic issues there, so that's good. But the other girl, Jill, she clears similar heights to me and she has just joined our group and that has really narked me. I hate her being there; it just really pisses me off. I just hate it, just seeing her there. I wish she'd just go away. I mean she is a good lass, I don't not like her, it's just the way she makes me feel. I just feel pressured and feel like she's sort of in my space...*

It was evident that for these athletes' training with their rivals was problematic. Nevertheless for the other participants, whether they were in a team or an individual sport, they suggested that having a positive relationship with their team mates and training partners was beneficial to them, both professionally and socially. The following quotation from javelin thrower Francesca puts the team sport versus individual sport debate into perspective:

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.05): *...at school I preferred playing hockey, because I was competing with friends and there is a different sort of buzz and it's nicer winning with other people and when set plays have gone really well and stuff like that. But when you get to international level [in javelin] like competing at the Olympics in front of 70,000 people, there's a pretty big buzz from that too!*

Peers are not only influential during school years. Indeed, according to Weiss and Duncan (1992) the number, importance, and quality of peer relationships in the social and psychological growth of young people changes with age and with peer group-membership. Hence I considered it worthwhile to examine the influence of peers on the participants in later years and in particular when they progressed to university.

7.7 UNIVERSITY, PEERS AND THE INVESTMENT PHASE

As discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, many of the participants suggested that going to university was a critical step in their sporting progression because entry to university often coincided with them specifically 'investing' in one particular sport.

Consequently, there was a dramatic increase in the intensity and the number of hours spent training. It was also sometimes the first time that they had moved out of the family home; not only did they have to cope with the practical aspects of this, but they also had to cope with a lot of other social issues. Several of the participants discussed the pressure from their peers ('normal people') to enjoy the social side of university, by going out drinking and partying. Some felt that this was stressful and detrimental to their sporting career. In contrast, however, others felt that it was beneficial to have some diversions from the pressures of their sporting and academic life.

7.7.1 To be With, or Not to be With, 'Normal' People

Rory, for example, lived with non-athletes, often described by the participants as 'normal people', in his first year at university. He initially tried to "burn the candle at both ends" by socialising in the evenings and getting up early the next morning to train. At the time he did not think this was ideal preparation, but surprisingly to him, that year was one of his most successful seasons, and he was running times faster than he ever had. The following year he lived with fellow athletes, and did not socialise as much; however, he felt that he over-trained that year and that his racing times reflected this by not improving as much as the previous year. By his third year he learnt to balance all aspects of his life and did what he believed was best for him by not conforming to either his athlete peer groups or student peers.

Several ($n = 16$) of the other participants also commented that it was a matter of being able to balance their sporting life with their social and academic life. Moreover many acknowledged the pitfalls of bowing to peer pressure and becoming too involved in the social side of student life. On the other hand, they also felt that it was important not to become totally absorbed in their sport. The following statements highlight the importance the participants placed on being able to get the balance and timing right of their social occasions:

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): ...when I came to university I didn't want to be hockey, hockey, hockey. (I am now!) I wanted to go into halls and integrate with other students. In the end that was a plus and a minus really, because I did get to meet other people but I couldn't spend much time with them because

I was off playing hockey. And there was always the peer pressure to go out and get pissed, but it was just a matter of balancing it.

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): *Some of my uni mates have tried to tempt me go out on a big social, but never when it interrupts my training session. I could have done the whole student thing, but then I wouldn't have gone to the Olympics, so to me it's not worth it. So that is the thing that I kept in the back of my mind. I think it is just about being a bit wise in the timing of when you go out, because I think it is absolutely fine to go out and enjoy yourself, but not before important sessions.*

Stacey (hockey, 15.04.05): *I knew that I was at university to study, and I knew that I couldn't afford to go out as much as other people did. I did go out sometimes, it wasn't that I was a complete 'stigma', and that I wasn't social, because as a person I am very social, but I'm fairly disciplined with regards to going out and drinking etc etc. So yes I had a lot of support from my friends at university with regards to going out. But they would still go out and I didn't feel uncomfortable about that. I did go out but I just curbed the amount of times I went out.*

It is interesting to note in the comments above and throughout the preceding chapters that many of the participants referred to themselves as 'rugby players', 'swimmers', 'athletes' and so on. In other words, the participants took their identity from the sport they played, whereas they identified their peers as other people or, more commonly, 'normal' people. Some (n = 11) of the participants suggested that they liked to be associated with the sport at which they excelled:

Samantha (athletics, 30.03.05): *I don't know why but I just loved running and it being part of my life, and it became my identity as well, I was known as the runner and I liked that.*

Others were not so keen:

Shona (rugby, 14.03.05): *It's quite nice not always being Shona the rugby player.*

Stephen (rugby, 10.03.05)...*it can be quite annoying because you become known as 'Stephen the rugby player'.*

Stevenson (1999) contends that individuals are actively involved in the process of identity formation; that is active in developing, appropriating and supporting those 'role identities' that they perceive to be desirable or valuable. This use of 'role identity' is not a new concept: almost 30 years ago McCall and Simmons (1978)

described role identity as “the character and the role that an individual devises for him [her] self as an occupant of a particular social position” (p: 65). From the following quotations it is clear that the participants make a clear distinction between their role identity and that of their fellow student peers:

Gemma (hockey, 19.03.05): *I think it is good to have different sets of friends, because there are times when you have had enough of hockey and you want to be with normal people, there are times when hockey people start to get on your nerves, and different personalities...sometimes you just need to switch off from it.*

Louise (swimming, 18.11.04): *There's a swimmers' flat [at university] where they put all the swimmers, but I was quite pleased that I wasn't put in there and that I was with some normal people, because you could get away from it and that you had other friends. That was important to me, and it still is, because I had a bigger group of friends and I could get away from swimming. Because swimmers and maybe other athletes are the same, but they have this really bad habit of speaking about swimming 24/7 whenever they are with each other, and all of a sudden it is like 'agggghhhhh, shut up!'*

Francesca (athletics, 11.11.04): *I lived with athletes for 2 years, and this year I haven't because I wanted a change. I didn't want to go home and talk about athletics, not that they always did, but it's nice to be with normal people They are really good and I like the balance that you can come back home and switch off from it because you are not talking about training....*

It should be noted that it was not only at HEIs where the participants felt the desire to separate their role as a sportsperson from other areas of their life. No matter how close they were to their team mates or training partners, many (n = 15) participants remarked that they liked to have time away from their sport associated peers:

Caroline (rugby, 04.03.05): *I do have a circle of friends who are not involved with rugby and I like to keep them quite separate. Not because I don't think that they would all get on, because I am sure they would, but I like to have my time out space. So I've got my old uni mates on the other side of London, I've got my mates in Hereford, I've got the lads that are in the gym with me and I've got the Brumble [rugby team] girls. So I have got a few different pods of mates, which keeps me sane.*

It is evident that although the participants valued the cohesive nature of their peer group (team mates/training partners) and regarded their interactions with friends as a central part of their social experience, there was also the suggestion that at times it could be rather “claustrophobic”. It would appear that the need for personal space,

away from other athletes, is fundamental especially for young people who spend a lot of time together during the investment phase.

7.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes that as samplers, most of the participants did not initially take up their sport to be with or make friends. First and foremost they wanted to play the sport and/or they were encouraged to by their parents. However, once they became more deeply involved in the sport, their peers became an influential and important element of their sporting experiences. The relationship with their team mates and training partners often became increasingly special. On the whole, the participants agreed with Ungar (2000) that their sporting peer group provided a means of support and security. The participants further suggested that this support was motivational and was often significant in keeping them involved within their sport. This was especially the case in their adolescent years, when they were becoming more independent and were also making the transition from the specialising phase into the investment phase. This is consistent with previous literature which has also suggested that the peer-group becomes particularly significant in the teenage years because adolescents seek to assert some degree of independence from the family and establish their own sense of self among their contemporaries (Adler & Adler, 1998).

This discussion also highlighted that many of the participants were drawn to similar, like-minded people, in other words, 'sporty people'. Several suggested that they liked to be identified by their sport, and they often gained a lot of kudos for being successful at it. However, this relation with status was variable and sometimes dependant on their sport and often mediated by their gender. Seldom did any participants mention any negative issues to do with their peers involved in sport, but those that did, felt that this was detrimental to their performance and on occasion led to them to dropping out of a sport. Although some participants suggested that they lost some friends because of their dedication and commitment to their sport, on the whole, they argued that they gained more friends within their sport. The main difference of opinion became evident when the respondents reached the investment

stages. Some were content with spending the majority of their time with their fellow athletes others found that overbearing.

The evidence from this study would agree that peers are important agents in the social context of youth sport, in that they can shape opportunities for skill development and serve as sources of validation, social support and positive affect in achievement contexts (Evans & Roberts, 1987; Weiss, Smith & Theeboom, 1996; Patrick et al., 1999). Peers are important throughout the developmental socialisation process, but the nature of peer relations and their significance can change depending on the particular phase they are in. By the time the individual is in the specialising phase and moving into the investment phase it is clear that many of their closest friends are involved in sport, often the same sport, and play at the same or similar level. Perhaps this should not be surprising, since they have experienced a broadly similar experience of socialisation into their current sport and have consequently developed similar lifestyles, beliefs and values. Peers, as well as family and coaches, can have desirable and positive motivational outcomes in sport. However, it is vital to note that the converse is also true. It is to an examination of these significant others, in addition to other central themes identified within this chapter, and the previous three analysis chapters, that I now turn as I move into the concluding chapter of the thesis.

Chapter Eight

Thesis Conclusion: Summarising the Key Findings; Limitations of the Study; and Suggestions for Future Research.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the developmental socialisation process of 36 expert performers into a range of sports and investigates to what extent Côté and colleagues' Developmental Model of Sport Participation (Côté, 1999; Côté & Hay, 2002; Côté, Baker & Abernethy, 2003; Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2006) was applicable to this study. As discussed in the previous chapters, this study also investigates the influence of significant others, namely the family, coaches and peers within this socialisation process. Initially, this chapter will revisit the aims of this study and then bring together the main findings from the four previous chapters and consider how the evidence presented answers these aims as well as addressing further questions that the data raise. In addition, this final chapter will also discuss the possible implications of these research findings and suggest some recommendations and directions for future research, whilst at the same time recognising the limitations of this study.

Before moving on, it is important to provide a brief reminder of the aims of this study as introduced in Chapter One:

- To determine whether and to what extent the 36 expert performers' socialisation into six sports followed a developmental pattern of 'sampling', 'specialising' and 'investing' (as suggested by Côté, 1999), noting any similarities and differences between the sports women and men, within and between sports;

- To establish the influence and role of significant others (family, coaches and peers) throughout the sport socialisation process of the 36 investors, and examine how these influences and roles change over time;
- To investigate the part played by significant others in the developmental socialisation of individual sports performers;
- To establish how the interaction of individual and social factors may have influenced the transitions from the early to middle and later years (from the 'sampling phase', to 'specialising' and 'investment phases');
- To investigate the part played by HEIs in the sports socialisation process, in particular their role in assisting some adult performers to enter late into the investment phase of a sport;
- To illustrate the extent to which Côté and colleagues' Developmental Model of Sport Participation was reflected in the lives of the participants as told in retrospective life story interviews.

The following section provides a summary of the key findings from each of the data analysis chapters, and then moves on to consider the implications of these findings.

8.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE KEY FINDINGS

8.2.1. The Developmental Socialisation Process

The findings of this research confirm that most of the participants followed a similar sporting socialisation pathway to that described by Côté (1999) and Côté and Hay (2002). That is to say, the participants 'sampled' a wide variety of sports in their early years, prior to 'specialising' in two or three and then finally 'investing' in one specific sport. Although there were some exceptions to this pattern and the progression to expert level was not always a linear process, the data from this study support Côté and colleague's Developmental Model of Sport Participation. The findings also support Côté (1999) in that the phases of the model provide a useful framework for researchers studying the influence of significant others on youth sport, sport development and expertise in sport (see *Sporting Pathway*, pp. 118). The importance of this finding is that it provides support for the view that it is possible to

identify distinct phases in the sport socialisation process that have different emphases. This may be in terms of the number of sports an individual might participate in, the balance between deliberate play and deliberate practice, the motivational profiles of individual sports performers, or the relationships between individual sports performers and significant others.

The data from this study suggest that the sampling years are especially significant, with all the participants suggesting that they had an active childhood in which fun and enjoyment were notable features of their sport participation. Generally, these activities would take place in an organised sport setting, either at school and/or a club, but many also said that they spent much of their free-time 'messing about' in some related physical activity (see *The Early Years: Sports Crazy*, pp. 122). Many participants further suggested that being physically active from an early age was a crucial foundation to their subsequent sporting development (see *The Physiological, Psychological and Social Benefits of Specialising at a Later Age*, pp. 150). This finding supports previous studies which have suggested that quality early learning experiences are crucial to continuing development in sport and that what is done in the early years can have a profound impact on the achievement of expertise given that, without this foundational period, there may be no middle or later phase (Kalinowski, 1985; Côté et al., 2003; Kirk, 2005). In a similar vein, Seefeld et al. (2002) have argued that the European model of 'sport-for-all' is better suited to encouraging continued participation through youth into adulthood than the highly competitive model currently in vogue in North America where drop out rates are particularly high by the mid-teenage years.

As the participants in this study progressed to higher levels in their sport, they invariably reduced the number of activities in which they were taking part. This reduction in activities was often because of time constraints and time clashes with other activities (see *Sporting Pathway*, pp 118). It was not unusual for the participants to be highly competent in more than one sport, indeed, several competed to at least county level in two or three different sports (see for example, *Progressing in Sport*, pp. 129 & Appendix B). Nevertheless, for all of the participants in this study there eventually came a time when they focussed on one particular sport. Several of the participants said that an initial indication they were more likely to be successful in a

particular sport was because they did not have to train as hard as their peers, but yet still managed to achieve better results (see *Nature versus Nurture*, pp. 127). This was not always the case however, as some participants suggested that because they were late to develop physically, they were in their late teens before they were able to compete on an equal basis with their peers.

Although many of the participants did engage in at least 10-years of deliberate practice (Ericsson et al., 1993) before they reached senior international level, this experience was not necessarily in the same sport (see *Does the 10-year Rule Apply to the Participants in this Study?* pp. 142). As noted earlier, there were several participants who did not take up the sport in which they are now 'expert' until their late teens; however, once they had made this commitment to the sport they appeared to progress very quickly. This finding suggests that, for these participants, competing and training in a variety of sports to a later age was both advantageous and beneficial. In relation to the notion of delaying specialisation in one particular sport, none of the participants interviewed in this study suggested that they had, from a young age, specialised solely in the sport in which they are now competing. Although some had been introduced to the sport at an early age, this was not to the exclusion of other sports (see *Early Specialisation*, pp. 149). Some participants did initially say that they thought if they had committed to their sport earlier they would have progressed to the top sooner but, upon further consideration, they thought this may not have been beneficial to their long term involvement in the sport (see *When to 'Specialise'?* pp. 155). This view echoes Côté (1999) and Hill (1993) who argue that training specifically for one sport as a child does not appear to be an essential ingredient for exceptional sport performance as an adult. Moreover, many of the participants in this study argued that playing a variety of sports had a positive 'knock-on' effect on the sport in which they eventually became an investor. This argument is consistent with the findings from a recent study of team sports by Baker, Côté and Abernethy (2003), which argues that participating in other relevant activities, for example sports where dynamic decision-making is necessary during the early phases of development, augmented the physical and cognitive skills necessary in a selected investment sport. Although Baker and colleagues were referring to team events, participants involved in individual sports in this study felt that skills in their investment sport were enhanced by taking part in other sports.

A number of the participants involved in this study were current or former student-athletes and, for most, their choice of university was determined by the opportunities to progress in their sport (see *Higher Education: Make or Break Time*, pp. 160). This often meant combining academic studies with a dramatic increase in training schedules, alongside doing domestic duties that many were experiencing for the first time. Many of these student-athletes said they struggled initially with the increased workloads, but after a while they learnt how to balance and prioritise their sporting, academic and social lives. Conversely, some of the other student-athletes said they were keen to experience the typical student life and let their sport tick over until they finished their degree. In these cases, only once they had achieved their degree qualification did they focus totally on their sport (see *University: Academia and Elite Sport*, pp. 163).

8.2.2. Family

The family was frequently acknowledged as having a significant influence on the participants' socialisation into sport and throughout their development (see *Supportive Parents: Time, Effort and 'Taxiing'*, pp. 192; *Keeping-Up the School Work*, pp. 194; Appendix B). In the initial phases, parents often introduced, encouraged and facilitated the participants' involvement in a variety of sports and activities (see *Parental Encouragement in Sport Participation*, pp. 177). Although some followed their parents into a particular sport, this was not always the case, and very few remained committed to that sport. According to many of the participants, their parents' primary motivation for encouraging their sport participation was for enjoyment and health, and not necessarily to achieve sporting excellence (see *Parental Role Models*, pp 195). Furthermore, throughout the participants' progression and development in their sport, most parents provided the necessary support practically, emotionally and financially (for example, see *A Supportive Balance between Parents*, pp.180; *Tangible Support*, pp. 188). Most of the participants understood this support to be unconditional, although some did suggest that becoming successful in their sport was one way in which they could pay back their parents (see *Supportive but not 'Pushy'*, pp. 182).

However, some of the participants (particularly in the investment phase) did say that they sometimes felt that their parents' presence at competitions could be a source of stress. This was generally not because of their parents' behaviour, but mainly because they felt additional pressure to perform well. On the other hand, there were some participants who argued that their parents had little influence over introducing them to the sport, and/or their continued progression to expert level. This was sometimes because their parents had little interest in or knowledge of sport, but on occasion was due to changes in the marital set-up of the parents (see for example, Caroline and Samantha, pp. 181).

Siblings also appeared to be influential in the participants' involvement in sport, especially slightly older brothers (see *Siblings: Friend or Foe*, pp. 200). The participant often saw their sibling as a role model and wanted to follow in their footsteps. This was often encouraged by their parents, arguably as much for convenience as for any other reason. Although many of the participants mentioned that there had always been competitive rivalry between them and their siblings, most said that this was generally in good humour (see *Sibling Rivalry*, pp. 202). Furthermore, several of the participants suggested that their siblings were at least as talented as them and, although a small number were also international performers, most lacked the same dedication (see for example, Sonya and Shona, pp. 200).

8.2.3 Coaches

Most of the participants had several different coaches throughout their sporting careers; however, it was often not until they had reached the specialising or investment phase that they actively sought out a specific coach with renowned credentials. Prior to this, most of the participants simply joined the club closest to them geographically and remained with the coach who happened to train their age group or development level (see *Choice of Coach*: pp.215). This was the same in team and individual sports, the only difference being that some participants in team sports moved to clubs that played in a higher league. Reflecting shifts in relationships across the phases between individuals and significant others, there was a notable change in the role of the coach throughout the participants' progression in their sport.

The coaches they remembered and liked in their early years were what they often called 'fun coaches'. Most of these coaches were volunteers, with few qualifications, but they were able to instil a fun ethos to training and competition (see *The Fun Coach*, pp. 212). In the middle years, when many of the participants were starting to commit more time to a smaller number of sports, they often described their coaches as being much more 'authoritarian'. These coaches were also generally volunteers, but were much more focussed on improving the participants' skill levels (see for example *Olivia*, pp. 221). Finally, as the participants moved into the investment phase, their relationship with their coach often became one of mutual respect. These coaches were often technically well qualified and had a reputation for coaching other expert performers (see for example *Patrick*, pp. 231).

Only a small number of participants said that they had remained with the same coach throughout their development (see *Choice of Coach?* pp. 215). These participants said that they were simply 'lucky' that their initial coach from the nearby club had many of the necessary attributes described above and that therefore they had never felt the necessity to change coaches.

8.2.4 Peers

Very few participants thought that they took up their sport to be with or to make new friends; they simply said that they wanted to participate in the sport (see for example *Shona, Neil and Stephen*, pp.239). However, once they became involved in the sport, their team mates or training partners became an important factor in their continued participation. This was evident for both males and females in team and individual sports (see *An Individual Sport But in a Team Environment*, pp. 264). Throughout their school years, most of the participants commented that they were drawn to like-minded people and that most of their friends were involved in sport to some level (see *My Friends at School were the Sporty People*, pp. 257). Moreover several participants further suggested that they always felt 'a bit different' from many of their non-sporting peers, because they would rather be training for their sport than 'hanging around' or 'going shopping' (see *Different Aspirations from their Peers*, pp. 258).

Some participants suggested that being good at sport had gained them some extra 'kudos' from their peers, however, this was often dependant on the sport and on the gender of individuals (see *One Side of the Coin*, pp. 251). Furthermore, some of the participants said that they kept their sporting achievements quiet for fear of being labelled as arrogant or 'big headed' (see "I was always wary of showing off", pp. 248). The further the participants developed in their sport, the more time they spent training and competing. This frequently involved extensive travel and spending a great deal of time away from home which sometimes meant that they lost contact with many of their friends outside of their sport, but this was a sacrifice they understood to be necessary if they were to continue improving. As a result, they often spent much of their time in the company of their team mates or training partners, which some enjoyed, but others felt was rather 'claustrophobic' (see *To be With, or not to be With 'Normal' People*, pp. 267).

The data reported in this study provide support for the concept of developmental socialisation as evidenced in Côté (1999) and Côté and Hay's (2002) model, as well as raising some further questions. In particular, support is provided for the possibility of identifying specific phases in this process and the distinctive features and points of emphasis within these phases. However, while the study findings do offer broad support for Côté and colleagues, they also provide clear evidence of the complexity of the process, with no two individuals sharing identical experiences of socialisation. This finding is important in that it points to the necessity of understanding individuals' pathways in greater detail than has perhaps been acknowledged previously and, in particular: some of the issues around early specialisation; the non-linearity of the socialisation process; moments of transition; the '10 year rule'; and the role of higher education. The need for an in-depth understanding of individuals' pathways within the broad developmental socialisation process has a number of important implications for all involved in youth sport. This is a key outcome of this research and will be discussed further in the following section.

8.3 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY FOR PERFORMERS, FAMILIES, YOUTH SPORT COACHES, PEERS AND SPORT PROGRAMMES

8.3.1 Early Specialisation

Arguably one of the most significant aspects of this study is that, based on the life stories of these successful sports people, there appears to be little justification for young performers to specialise early in a sport in order to progress to expert level. Indeed, it was evident from the participants' life stories that sampling a variety of different sports may have been beneficial for them. The participants suggested that for physiological, psychological and social reasons, waiting until they were in their later adolescent years before specialising in one specific sport had been significant in their sporting success. This finding reinforces the need for NGBs, as well as parents, coaches and young athletes to recognise the importance of young performers having a positive experience in their early years of a range of sports, particularly if they are to continue in sport to expert level. Previous studies have also emphasised this point, for example, Seefeld et al. (2002) and Green (2004). Furthermore, Côté, MacDonald, Baker and Abernethy's (2006) study on birthplace also provides strong support for a sport environment that includes sampling and playing activities instead of early specialisation and deliberate practice.

8.3.2 The Non-Linearity of the Developmental Socialisation Process

The findings from this study suggest that it might be helpful to stress the complexity and non-linearity of the developmental socialisation process. At the moment, it is considered that in order to progress to expert, the young performer typically builds on the previous stage of development (Balyi, 2001), or phase (Côté & Hay, 2002), in a linear pattern. Data from this study illustrate the ways in which the reality of the participants' sporting development was far more complex than a simplistic reading of Côté's model would suggest. For many of the participants in this study, their progression in their sport was neither straightforward nor direct. Many participants reflected that their sporting pathway had been rather more fluid between the phases

than both Côté's and especially Balyi's model suggest (see *Sporting Pathway*, pp.118). Indeed, it could be argued that it would be prudent to avoid language such as 'stages' because it fails to capture the fluidity of the movement between each of the phases of the developmental socialisation process.

8.3.3 Moments of Transition

The findings of this study suggest that the moments of transition between the sampling, specialising and investment phases are of particular importance, though they are difficult to identify and can be different for some individuals. There appeared to be a range of factors that influenced the transition of individuals from one phase to another. In Chapter Two, it was noted that the extent to which individuals felt they made decisions and choices affecting these transitions were always embedded in, constrained and circumscribed by other factors. As mentioned previously, all of the participants sampled a variety of sports and activities as children. As they progressed they invariably reduced the number of activities they were involved in; often, they reported, because of time constraints and clashes. From the individual's points of view, the transition from the sampling phase to the specialising phase was often reported to be dependent on which activity gave them most enjoyment, whereas 'potential to succeed' was regularly identified as a reason to invest in one specific sport (see *Success and Enjoyment*, pp. 136).

It also appeared that several of the participants had what Walters and Gardner (1986) describe as a 'crystallizing experience'. This experience can be described as a sudden moment of insight that sets the person on his or her life's course; a sudden illumination that dramatically affects the person's view of his or her ability within a given domain (Freeman, 1999). For example, Susan's 'crystallising experience' happened when she was 11 years old, when she received feedback from a sports camp suggesting she was a 'potential international'. Other participants mentioned occasions that could also be described as 'crystallising experiences'; for example, after winning specific competitions or being selected for a particular squad (see Susan and Cameron, pp. 133). In agreement with Freeman (1999), therefore, the findings of this research suggest that understanding more about crystallising experiences could be

useful in gaining insight into what motivates young performers to take decisions about their development and potential in particular sports. This concept was not familiar to me until after completion of the interviews and much of the data analysis but from the interview transcripts it became evident that at some stage many of the participants mentioned a dramatic event that could be described as a 'crystallising experience'. This is an area that I would like to develop further in future research.

8.3.4 The '10-Year Rule'

The '10-year rule' (Ericsson et al., 1993) has frequently been linked to sports developmental models (Balyi, 2001), and although its influence was evident in this study, I would suggest that it may be helpful to think about it in a different way from that typically presented in the literature. It is important to recognise that several of the participants in this study did not take 10-years' deliberate practice in one sport to become an expert performer in that sport (see Does the '10-year Rule' Apply to the Participants in this Study, pp. 142). In other words, it does not appear to be necessary to push all young aspiring athletes to focus on one sport at an early age with the belief that it will take 10 years of specialised training for them to achieve expert status. In agreement with Baker (2003), the types of training (deliberate practice) advocated by the 'early specialisation' approach is often at odds with the level of enjoyment necessary for a long-term commitment to physical activity involvement.

Although some of the participants 'specialised' in one specific sport for 10 years prior to becoming expert, for many of the others reaching the investment phase took a lot less time. Some were training in one sport and then for a number of reasons transferred to another. For others, they did not take up the sport in which they are now expert until at least their late teens. The findings from this study may suggest that NGBs, significant others, and the performers themselves, should not be misled into thinking that if the performer is not participating in a certain sport, at a young age, then they have lost their opportunity to excel. Indeed, these older performers may be motivated and have a more mature attitude to the intense training that is required to develop into an expert performer. Furthermore, the data from this study would support the English Institute of Sport (EIS) and UK Sport's recently developed Talent

Transfer Programme, sometimes referred to as the talent 'swap shop'. According to UK Sport, this programme aims to recruit athletes already retired or nearing retirement, and provide them with a 'second chance'. UK Sport believe that many of these sportspeople who have perhaps not quite made it as an athlete in their chosen sport, may have the transferable skills (physiological, technical, physical, perceptual, motor and conceptual) to succeed in an alternative sport (uksport.gov.uk, 2007). There is certainly evidence in this study to support this belief.

8.3.5 The Role of Higher Education

Given the number of present and post student-athletes involved in this study and the increased level of performance sport currently being developed in the HE sector (McKenna & Dunstan-Lewis, 2004), it is clear that this issue warrants further consideration. Although several of the participants in this study went to university specifically to focus on their sport, many also recognised the long-term significance of gaining a 'good degree'. Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) argue that education and sport can complement each other very well and can be pursued together at a high level if athletes manage their time effectively. Indeed, after the initial shock of combining an intense training schedule with academic study, most of the participants in this study were able to balance both areas, but much of the time this was without the benefit of support programmes implemented to assist athletes in establishing their priorities. Ideally such programmes could assist the student-athlete to be highly successful in both domains. Currently in England (only) there is a Government funded Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) which distributes awards to athletes who are committed to combining sport with education. This is primarily financial support (up to £3000) and although student-athletes on the TASS programme are also offered additional academic, sporting and personal support from the Professional and Athlete Life Skills (PALS) scheme through mentors and workshops (tass.gov.uk, 2006), this is only available to a limited number of athletes participating in non-funded sports. The PALS initiative would appear to be a step in the right direction for personal development, but the level of support available is variable throughout different Higher Education institutions. Furthermore, it is the National Governing Bodies that determine who should be allocated the TASS

scholarships; this may suggest that there will be a greater emphasis placed on sports performance rather than education.

The evidence from this study does not suggest that a young performer should forego his/her sporting ambitions solely to pursue further education, nor vice versa. In contrast, the data suggest that with support from both domains the student-athlete (in many sports) can pursue a successful academic and sport career simultaneously. This view is perhaps reflected by the fact that many HEI's now encourage flexible timetables and examination dates, as well as allowing time-off for competitions or games to support the sporting student. Indeed, with this support in place, several of the past and present student-athletes involved in this study, believe that they were young enough to get the most out of their university experience, academically and socially, whilst also preparing to be senior international performers.

There has been very little research about the student-athlete experience conducted in the United Kingdom (UK); most of the previous research surrounding this topic has been based in the United States (US). Nevertheless, it could be suggested that the UK is moving more towards the performance elements of the US Varsity system. Consequently, the UK could learn from some of the mistakes made in developing that system. In particular, it could be acknowledged that the student is not simply treated as the short term 'high performer', as is often the case in the US system. Rather, in the words of an international coach and Director of Swimming at a leading sports university in the UK:

“... university swimming is like a compass – success is measured in degrees, as well as minutes and seconds.”

8.3.6 The Role of the Family

Consistent with many other studies, it was evident from this study that the family was influential in their child's socialisation into sport. Most of the participants claimed that their parents' support was crucial throughout their sporting development. This suggests that it is important that parents are made aware of the significance of their role and understand that their position will evolve as their child progresses in their

sport. It also appears to be an anomaly that few NGBs or Government policies acknowledge the importance of the family's role. There has recently been some attempt to educate parents on how best to support their child, for example through the Youth Sports Trust's 'Sports Parent' and 'Junior Athlete Education' documentation. This information is useful in so far as it informs parents of good practice in a sporting context, such as: appropriate 'side-line' behaviour, the importance of promoting performance rather than success, working with coaches and how to balance a young sports person's life, for example. These practices can certainly optimise young people's participation in sport and can alert them and their parents to the range of personal and social benefits to be gained from positive sport experiences. However, these programmes do not appear to cover many of the important issues that arose from this study. For example, within this thesis the respondents have espoused the benefits of participating in a number of different sports during their childhood, but they also recognised that it was invariably their parents who had to support this. Right from the initial stages of the respondents' sport involvement, it was clear that participating in sport can be expensive in terms of both money and time, making it difficult for low-waged and/or single parents to be able to support their child throughout their sporting development. Even if the parents have the financial resources, they may not have the time or the opportunity to physically support their child which is often frowned upon by others. This finding is not new and was also reported in studies by Kay (Kay, 2000; Kay & Lowrey, 2003). Indeed, it has been suggested that in contemporary society parents are considered to be 'good' if they attend, and even better if they help out at their child's training session, but are in some way deficient as a parent if they do not (Kirk & MacPhail, 2003; Bond, 2005). As was suggested by the participants in this study, as the young athlete progresses in their sport, this often entails going to more training camps and competing in a greater number of competitions, which can involve travelling long distances and sometimes overnight accommodation. This obviously has time and financial implications, not only for the parents but also for the rest of the family.

Many of the participants remarked that they had a close and good relationship with their siblings, however, it must be remembered that this is from their perspective. As Jeffrey Bond, head sport psychologist at the Australian Institute of Sport for over 20 years warns:

“Sibling rivalry often doesn’t come to the surface; it’s suppressed. If you’ve got one child in the family who’s particularly talented, it does take up a lot of extra parental and family time. There is extra psychological and financial focus on the talented, particularly if they get to the stage where they gain some notoriety. I’ve known cases of siblings who haven’t said much up front in the family, but its simmering away underneath. They feel that they’re being swept aside and that’s fairly understandable” (Bond, 2005: pp. 263).

Although the participants in this study suggested that their siblings had been influential in their socialisation and continued participation in sport, it is unclear whether this feeling of goodwill was reciprocated. The relationship and influence of siblings is evidently an area worthy of further consideration.

In summary, the evidence from this study suggests that there is a place, and a need, to educate family members and advise about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ practice in a sporting context. But the evidence from this study suggests that there also needs to be some form of recognition in sport policies to support families of child athletes who are unable (or perhaps unwilling) to make the necessary commitment. Côté and Hay (2002) argue that families who are dedicated to their child’s involvement in sport will somehow find the financial resources necessary, and this was the case in this study. I would argue that it is not as simple as that and that there must be many children who drop out of sport due to lack of finance, even with committed parents. Fraser-Thomas et al. (2005) suggest that given the increasing elitism, institutionalisation, and competition in youth sport, policy makers should assure the accessibility of youth sport programmes to all young people, regardless of socio-economic status, race, culture, ethnicity, or gender. Whilst this idealistic argument is good in theory, the evidence from this research points to the commitment of families, in particular the parents, in helping influence the success of the 36 expert performers involved in this study. This finding raises the question: What would have happened to these sports performers without this level of familial support?

8.3.7 The Role of Coaches and Peers

In addition to the changing influence of the family during the developmental socialisation process, the findings from this study also recognised the significance of

the changing role of the coach. The data generated in relation to the sampling and often the specialising phase suggested that most of the coaches were volunteers with few qualifications but they had the ability to create a fun and motivational environment. In order for coaches of young performers to create this type of climate it is crucial they understand the importance of enjoyment in this phase. There is a need, therefore, for such coaches to learn how best to generate this type of environment, whilst also developing fundamental skills. The evidence from this study would also suggest that the coaches in the early phases should understand the long term benefits that can be associated with young people taking part in a range of activities. This argument would suggest that coaches should be encouraged to develop training schedules that specifically allow time for practice in other sports, and that coaches should encourage their charges to engage in them. This was not always the case for the participants in this study, which sometimes led to animosity between them and their coach.

Although most of the participants in this study stated that making friends was not the main reason for taking up sport, they did contend that the friendships they made within their sport became very important and were often described as a key motive for many of them continuing in sport. It is therefore important that coaches are aware of how influential other team members and/or training partners can be and should actively encourage these positive relationships. According to De Lench (2006) there is little evidence to suggest that playing with children who are less talented will prevent the more 'gifted' players from developing their talent. However, the participants in this study did suggest that they preferred to be in a training group that were of at least an equal standard. Consequently, the coach has the complex situation of maintaining 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; 1993) in practices, thereby, having the difficult job of pitching the training sessions at an appropriate and enjoyable level for all the young people involved.

Participants from both individual and team sports in this study indicated that although they enjoyed being part of a team they also benefited from receiving individual attention from their coaches, which made them feel 'special'. In relation to this personalised treatment, previous studies (Hill & Hansen, 1988; Siegenthaler & Gonzalez, 1997; Gilbert et al., 2001) have also shown that coaches who place primary

emphasis on winning often exploit their athletes rather than considering their athletes' developmental stages and advancing their athletes' psychological and social best interests.

Recently sports coach UK have recognised that coaching is under-developed as a profession and that there is a shortage of appropriately trained, high quality coaches (North, 2006). They further state that existing coach education systems are patchy and inconsistent and that the philosophy and approach of coach education structures are overly-focused on 'what to coach' (technique and tactics) rather than 'how to coach'. Consequently the importance of experience in applying coaching knowledge and of decision making has been undervalued (www.sportscoachuk.org). As noted earlier, the majority of the participants in this study were initially coached by volunteer coaches with limited qualifications. However, as the participants progressed into the specialising and, in particular, the investment phases, they often made a concerted effort to seek out a recognised and respected coach in their field. Although most of these coaches were full-time, well qualified and professional, the participants still wanted them to be open and willing to learn from other expert coaches. Fraser-Thomas et al. (2005) argue that sport programmes should include more extensive coach training opportunities through training, education, and experience. In partial agreement, the data from this study suggest that the participants preferred their coaches to take the 'coffee table' approach whereby they had open discussions with other experts in their field (and other sports) and shared good practice, rather than simply furthering their coaching qualifications. This argument is similar to previous studies which claim that experience and other coaches are important factors in shaping the development of coaches and impact on the way they do things in the coaching process (Gould et al., 1990; Salmela et al., 1993; Cushion, 2001).

To conclude this section, the following quote from sports coach UK (2004) aptly highlights the importance of coaching both at expert level whilst also recognising the enjoyment it can bring to participants at all levels:

“Good coaching (66%) is crucial for top sports people to become successful in their sport while over half (53%) say that it improves people enjoyment of the sports that they play, however good they are” (www.sportscoachuk.org)

8.3.8 Implications for Sport Programmes

Previous research has shown that the making of an expert performer usually begins in an environment where children are exposed early and regularly to sporting activities (Kalinowski, 1985; Monsaas, 1985; Baker, Côté & Abernethy, 2003; Soberlak & Côté, 2003). Accordingly, some young people might benefit from situations that provide them with more opportunities to become involved in sport (Côté, MacDonald, Baker & Abernethy, 2006). In support of these studies, most of the participants in this study remarked that they had participated in many different activities at their school or at a club that was local to them. Hence, it would appear to be important that young people have access to good coaching in a variety of sports at a location close by. The Youth Sport Trust (YST) has gone some way towards recognising these needs and with funding provided from the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the YST has introduced Multi-skill Clubs and Academies. These programmes form part of the Government’s Physical Education School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy, with Multi-skill clubs sitting within the Club Links strand and the Multi-skill Academy programme forming part of the Gifted and Talented element. Both these programmes are non-sport specific, but are based around the development of fundamental movement and sport skills.

The Multi-skill Clubs and Multi-skill Academies are linked to schools and clubs; this would perhaps suggest that all children should have equal access to this type of activity, which is an ideal situation. As suggested in the previous section, sport programmes in developed countries have become increasingly elitist and institutionalised and as, was evident in this study, a high proportion of the participants came from middle to upper class families. For this reason, steps could be taken to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to participate and develop their potential in various informal and organised sports. Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2006) argue that in order for all young people to have the opportunity to sample a variety of sports, funding should be directed towards grassroots levels rather than focusing

directly on elite levels of participation. Consequently, it could be argued that there is a sound foundation to programmes such as multi-skill Clubs and Academies, particularly with respect to the move away from early specialisation. In agreement with Bailey and Morley (2006) high-level performance in any formalised physical activity would be impossible without an adequate foundation of fundamental movement skills. Nevertheless, ultimately the outcome of these programmes will depend on the delivery and coaching of the activities. Some of the participants in this study commented that they preferred playing games rather than practising skills, reinforcing the importance of the emphasis on enjoyment and fun through games, as well as skill acquisition. Indeed, the need for more sport-specific provision was highlighted in a recent report of a pilot multi-skills camp that took place at a UK university. The executive summary stated that although the majority of the comments from the young people involved in the camps were positive, there was a feeling in some instances that the lack of end-product or more specifically 'games' was a flaw in the programme (Morley, 2005).

An increase in the number of Multi sports camps and clubs available to young people could be beneficial to the development of young performers. The Sports Council for Northern Ireland (SCNI) was recently funded by the Government to pilot five Multi Sport Camp Programmes throughout the province. The SCNI believe that these programmes represent a key step on the performance ladder for young people in sport in Northern Ireland (SCNI, 2006) and it is anticipated that these programmes will encourage young athletes to become involved in a diversity of sports or generic skill based activities whilst helping them develop their personal skills and sports experience. Similar to the Multi-skill Academies, the ideas behind the Multi sports clubs and camps are good in theory, in that they may facilitate the benefits of sampling behaviour and also keep track of potential expert performers. The long-term benefits of such programmes are still unknown, but may be dependent on the depth of funding and the quality of coaching.

8.4 LOOKING AHEAD: FUTURE RESEARCH

Using a retrospective life story approach as the main research method in this study has proved to be helpful in gaining an understanding of the complex lives of expert performers. However, I would suggest that this thesis discusses only the tip of the iceberg and that there is clearly a need for further similar studies to elucidate more information concerning the conditions that facilitate shifts through each of the developmental socialisation phases of the expert performer. There is certainly a need to undertake longitudinal studies and in particular to address what happens to young performers who show potential as juniors but fail to reach expert status as seniors. Given the extensive data collection process associated with retrospective and longitudinal studies, such research may be likely to remain limited. In spite of this, additional studies would help to determine whether the findings from this study apply to different sport types (individual and team; male and female), in different sport contexts (club and school) and at different levels of development (sampling, specialising, investment). Although this study briefly touched on issues relating to gender, future research could expand on this area and greater emphasis could also be placed on other integral social issues such as class, culture and ethnicity. Whilst some research (e.g. Hellison & Cutforth, 1997) has highlighted the critical role youth sport programmes can play in promoting the development of young athletes in underprivileged communities, more extensive studies framed in the talent development paradigm are needed to examine the unique challenges and requirements of sports development programmes and implementation in disadvantaged areas.

Throughout the 20th century, sporting opportunities for athletes with disabilities have increased tremendously; indeed, there are now major international competitions for elite disabled athletes in virtually every sport (DePauw & Gavron, 2005). However, there appears to be a paucity of research relating specifically to the developmental socialisation process of the expert disabled performer. Clearly, there will be individual factors that would impact on this type of research, such as, nature of disability and the age of onset of the disability. However, further research into this area could determine whether the Developmental Model of Sport Participation (sampling, specialising and investment) applies also to disabled athletes.

Whilst there was no opportunity in this particular study, it would be beneficial in the future to interview the influential 'others' mentioned in the life stories of the expert performers. Not only could this add more depth to this type of study, by triangulating the information given by the performers, but it would also give an insight into the participants' sporting lives from a different perspective. Moreover, future research should continue examining the role of coaches, teachers, peers and the family, to better understand how these influential individuals can effectively foster positive outcomes throughout youths' sports development. In agreement with Fraser-Thomas and Côté (2006), as a greater number of findings become more consistent, research can then be conducted at a programming level, to increase understanding of the specific means by which training and psychosocial influences can facilitate positive youth development, expertise, as well as life long recreational sport participation.

8.5 A CONCLUDING COMMENT

The participants in this study experienced a high level of success in their sports careers in so far as they had become senior international squad members; this places them in a small minority of the community of sports performers. Undoubtedly for many other young athletes this successful outcome was not achieved. Consistent with Stevenson's (1999) study of international athletes, this research acknowledges that the sporting careers of the participants seemed to be neither inevitable nor unproblematic. Furthermore, even the most advantageous genetic composition combined with training in the most favourable environments is not a guarantee of success (Baker & Horton, 2004). I also understand that there is a degree of good fortune involved in becoming an elite athlete. This study does not claim to have a definitive answer to how best to produce expert performers, but it does raise some questions and gives an indication as to where and when, and who and what can assist in this process. Additionally, although Côté and colleagues' Developmental Model of Sport Participation cannot necessarily identify which performers will make it to the top of their sport, it does provide a sense of the sorts of conditions that would appear to be important in this process.

REFERENCES

- Abbott, A, Collins, D., Martindale, R., & Sowerby, K. (2002). *Talent identification and development: An academic review*. Edinburgh: SportsScotland.
- Abernethy, B., Cote, J., & Baker, J. (1999). *Expert decision-making in sport*. Canberra, Australian Institute of Sport Publication.
- Abernethy, B., Cote, J., & Baker, J. (2002). *Expert decision-making in team sport*. Report to the Australian Commission. University of Queensland: Brisbane, Australia.
- Abraham, A. & Collins, D. (1998). Examining and extending research into coach development. *Quest*, **50**, 59-79.
- Adler, P.A., & Adler, P. (1996). Preadolescent clique stratification and the hierarchy of identity. *Sociological Inquiry*, **66** (2), 111-142.
- Adler, P.A., & Adler, P. (1998). *Peer power: Preadolescent culture and identity*. New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Adler, P.A., Kless, S.J., & Adler, P. (1992). Socialization to gender roles: Popularity among elementary school boys and girls. *Sociology of Education*, **65**, 169-187.
- Allard, F., Starkes, J., & Deakin, J.M. (1998). *The microstructure of practice in wrestling*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Andersen, J.L., Schjerling, P., & Saltin, B. (2000). Muscle genes and athletic performance. *Scientific American*, **3**, 30-37.
- Anfara Jr., V.A., Brown, K.M., & Mangione, T.L (2002). Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public. *Educational Researcher*, **10**, 28-38.
- Atkinson, R. (1998). *The life story interview*. Thousand Oaks CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Atkinson, R. (2002). The life story interview. In J.F. Gubrium & J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 121-140). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Azmita, M., & Hesser, J. (1993). Why siblings are important agents of cognitive development: A comparison of siblings and peers. *Child Development*, **64**, 430-444.
- Bailey, R.P. (2003). Learning to be human: Teaching, learning and human cognitive evaluation. *London Review of Education*, **1**, 177-190.
- Bailey, R. (2006). Physical education and sport in schools: a review of benefits and outcomes. *Journal of School Health*, **76**(8), 397-401.
- Baker, J. (2003). Early specialization in youth sport: A requirement for adult expertise? *High Ability Studies*, **14**(1), 85-94.

- Baker, J. & Côté, J. (2003). Resources and commitment as critical factors in the development of 'gifted' athletes. *High Ability Studies*, 14(2), 139-140.
- Baker, J., Côté, J., & Abernethy, B. (2003). Sport-specific practice and the development of expert decision-making in team ball sports. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 15, 12-25.
- Baker, J., Côté, J. & Deakin, J. (2005). Expertise in ultra-endurance triathletes early sport involvement, training structure, and the theory of deliberate practice. *Journal of Applied Sports Psychology*, 17, 64-78
- Baker, J., Horton, S., Robertson-Wilson, J., & Wall, M. (2003). Nurturing sport expertise: Factors influencing the development of elite athlete. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*, 2, 1-9.
- Baker, J., & Horton, S. (2004). A review of primary and secondary influences on sport expertise. *High Ability Studies*, 15(2), 212-228.
- Ball, S. (1983). Case study research in education: Some notes and problems. In M. Hammersley (Ed.), *The ethnography of schooling: Methodological issues*, (pp.93-95) Driffield: Nafferton.
- Balyi, I. (1990). *Quadrennial and double quadrennial planning of athletic training*. Victoria BC.:Canadian Coaches Association.
- Balyi, I. (2001). *Sport system building and long-term athlete development in British Columbia*. 6th national coaching forum, National Coaching Training Centre, University of Limerick, Ireland.
- Balyi, I., & Hamilton, A. (2004). *Long-term athlete development: Trainability in childhood and adolescence. Windows of opportunity. Optimal trainability*. Victoria: National Coaching Institute British Columbia & advanced Training and Performance Ltd.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall
- Bartmus, U., Neumann, E., & de Marées, H. (1987). The talent problem in sports. *International Journal of Sports Medicine*, 8, 415-416.
- Barynina, I.I., & Vaitsekhovskii, S.M. (1992). The aftermath of early sports specialization for highly qualified swimmers. *Fitness and Sports Review International*, 27(4), 132-133.
- Basit, T.N. (2003). Changing practice through policy: Trainee teachers and the National Numeracy Strategy. *Research Papers in Education*, 18(1), 61-74.
- Beam, M.R., Chen, C., & Greenberger, E. (2002). The nature of adolescents' relationships with their "very important" nonparental adults. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(2), 305-325.

- Beamer, M. (2001). *The development of expertise in rhythmic gymnastics*. Unpublished MSc. thesis. Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.
- Beamer, M., Cote, J., & Ericsson, K.A. (1999). *A comparison between international and provincial level gymnasts in their pursuit of sport expertise*. Proceedings of the Tenth European Congress of Sport Psychology. Prague, Czech Republic.
- Bell, J. (1993). *Doing your research project: A guide for first time researchers in education and social science*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Belle, D. (1989). Gender differences in children's social networks and social supports. In D. Belle (Ed.), *Children's social networks and social supports* (pp.173-190). New York: Wiley.
- Berg, B.L. (1995). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (3rd Edn.) Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bergmann Drewe, S. (2000). Coaches, ethics and autonomy. *Sport, Education and Society*, 15(2), 147-162.
- Bergsgard, N.A., Houlihan, B., Mangset, P., Nodliand, S.A., & Rommetvedt, H. (2007). *Sport policy: A comparative analysis of stability and change*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Berndt, T.J. (1989). Obtaining support from friends during childhood and adolescence. In D. Belle (Ed.), *Children's social networks and social supports* (pp.308-331). New York: Wiley.
- Berndt, T.J., & Perry, B. (1986). Children's perceptions of friendships as supportive relationships. *Developmental Psychology*, 5, 640-648.
- Bertaux, D. (1981). *Biography and Society: the life history approach in the social sciences*. London: Sage.
- Bigelow, B.J., Lewko, J.H., & Salhani, L. (1989). Sport-involved children's friendship expectations. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 11, 152-160.
- Billante, N., & Saunders, P. (2002). Why civility matters. *Policy* 18(3), 32-36 www.cis.org.au/POLICY/Spring02/po/spring02-6.pdf Accessed 22.07.07
- Blanchard, K., Zigarmi, P., & Zigarmi, D. (1985). *Leadership and the one minute manager*. New York: Morrow.
- Bloom, B.S. (1985). *Developing talent in young people*. New York: Ballantyne.
- Bloom, G. (2002). Role of the Elite Coach in the Development of Talent. In J. Silva & D. Stevens (Eds.), *Psychological Foundations of Sport* (pp.466-483). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

- Bloom, G., Durand-Bush, N., Schinke, R.J., & Salmela, J.H. (1998). The importance of mentoring in the development of coaches and athletes. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, **29**, 267-281.
- Bogdan, R.G., & Biklen, S.K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education* (2nd edition). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bompa, T.O. (1994). *Theory and methodology of training*. (3rd edition). Duboquie IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Bond, J.W. (2005). A professional perspective. In P. Coates (Ed.), *Raising champions: A parents' perspective* (pp. 261-265). Melbourne: Thomas C. Lothian Pty Ltd.
- Booth, D., & Tatz, C. (2000). *One-eyed: A view of Australian sport*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Bourdieu, P. (1978). Sport and social class. *Social Science Information*, **17**(6), 819-840.
- Bourn, J. (2005). UK Sport: Supporting elite athletes. National Audit Office press notice. www.nao.org.uk published 27.01.05, accessed 5.05.07.
- Bouchard, C., Malina, R.M., & Pérusse, L. (1997). *Genetics of fitness and physical performance*. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Brackenridge, C. (2006a). *Purity and danger: Researching child protection and welfare in youth sport*. Researching Youth Sport Conference, Loughborough University, UK.
- Brackenridge, C. (2006b). *The parents' optimum zone: Measuring and optimising parental engagement in sport*. CIOSC conference.
- Brannen, J. (2007). Working qualitatively and quantitatively. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J.F. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 282-296). London: Sage.
- Brennan, D., & Bleakley, E.W. (1997). Predictors, patterns and policies for post-school participation. In J. Kremer, K. Trew, & S. Ogle (Eds.), *Young people's involvement in sport* (pp.78-97). London: Routledge.
- Bromnick, R.D., & Swallow, B.C. (1999). I like being who I am: A study of young people's ideals. *Educational Studies*, **25**(2), 117-128.
- Brown, J. (2001). *Sports talent: How to identify and develop outstanding athletes*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Brustad, R.J. (1988). Affective outcomes in competitive youth sport: The influence of intrapersonal and socialisation factors. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, **10**, 307-321.

- Brustad, R.J. (1993). Who will go out and play? Parental and psychological influences on children's attraction to physical activity. *Pediatric Science*, *5*, 210-223.
- Brustad, R.J. (1996). Parental and peer influence on children's psychological development through sport. In F.L. Smol & R.E. Smith (Eds.), *Children and youth in sport: A biopsychosocial perspective* (pp. 112-124). Madison, WI: Brown & Benchmark.
- Brustad, R.J. (1998). Affective outcomes in competitive youth sport: The influence of intrapersonal and socialisation factors. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *10*, 307-321.
- Brustad, R.J., Babkes, M.L., & Smith, A.L. (2001). Youth in sport: Psychological considerations. In R.N. Singer, H.A. Hausenblas, & C.M. Janelle (Eds.), *Handbook of Sport Psychology* (pp.604-635). Toronto: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bryman A. (2001). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Bryman, A., & Burgess, R.G. (1994). Developments in qualitative data analysis: An introduction. In A. Bryman & R.G. Burgess (Eds.), *Analysing qualitative data* (pp. 1-17) London: Routledge
- British Olympic Association (2006). Wining London 2012 www.olympics.org.uk Accessed 15.05.06.
- Buber, M. (1923). *I and thou*. New York: Macmillan Library
- Buchanan, H.T., Blankenbaker, J., & Cotten, D. (1976). Academic and athletic ability as popularity factors in elementary school children. *Research Quarterly*, *47*, 320-325.
- Buhemester, D. (1992). The development courses of siblings and peer relationships. In F. Boer & J. Dunn (Eds.), *Children's sibling relationships: Developmental and clinical issues* (pp.19-40). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bukowski, W.M., & Hoza, B. 1989. Popularity and friendship: Issues in theory, measurement, and outcome. In T.J. Berndt & G.W. Ladd (Eds.), *Peer relationships in child development* (pp.15-45). New York: Wiley.
- Burns, R.B. (2000). *Introduction to research methods* (4th Ed.). NSW: Pearson Education Pty Limited.
- Butcher, J., Lindner, K.J., & Johns, D.P. (2002). Withdrawal from competitive youth sport: A retrospective ten-year study. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, *25*, 145-163.
- Butler, R. (1989). On the psychological meaning of information about competence: A reply to Ryan and Deci's comment of Butler (1987). *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *79*, 474-482.
- Caillois, R. (1961). *Man, play and games*. New York: The Free Press.

- Cannell, C.F., & Kahn, R.L. (1968). Interviewing. In G. Lindzey & A. Aronson (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology, vol. 2, Research Methods*. New York: Addison Wesley.
- Carlson, R.C. (1988). The socialisation of elite tennis players in Sweden: An analysis of the players' backgrounds and development. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *5*, 241-256.
- Carlson, R.C. (1997). In search of the expert performer. *Science in the Olympic Sport*, *1*, 1-13.
- Carpenter, L.J., & Acosta, R.V. (2005). *Title IX*. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Cashman, R., & Hughes, T. (1998). *The Green Games: A golden opportunity*. Sydney: Centre for Olympic Studies: University of New South Wales.
- Cauce, A.M., Reid, M., Landesman, S., & Gonzales, N. (1990). Social support in young children: Measurement, structure, behavioural impact. In B.R. Sarason, I.G. Sarason & G.R. Pierce (Eds.), *Social support: An interactional view* (pp. 64-94). New York: J. Wiley & Sons.
- Chalmers, A.F. (1999). *What is this thing called science?* (3rd Edition). Buckingham; Open University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd Edition) (pp. 509-535). London: Sage
- Charmaz, K. (2002). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J.F. Gubrium & J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 675-694). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded theory in the 21st Century: applications for advancing social justice studies. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd Edition) (pp. 651-679). London: Sage.
- Chase, M.A., & Dummer, G.M. (1992). The role of sports as a social status determinant for children. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, *63*, 418-424.
- Chase, S. (2005). Narrative Inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd Edition) (pp. 651-679). London: Sage.
- Claes, M., Lacourse, E., Bouchard, C., & Luckow, D. (2001). Adolescent's relationships with members of the extended family and non-related adults in four countries: Canada, France, Belgium and Italy. *Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, *9*, 207-225.
- Clegg, S. (2006). *London Olympics 2012*. www.olympics.org.uk accessed 15.05.06

- Coakley, J. (1986). When should children begin competing? A Sociological perspective. In M.R. Weiss & D. Gould (Eds.), *Sport for children and youths* (pp.59-63). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Coakley, J. (1992). Burnout among adolescent athletes: A personal failure or social problem? *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *9*, 271-285.
- Coakley, J. (1998). *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 6th Edition. USA: Irwin McGraw-Hill.
- Coakley, J. (2001). *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 7th Edition. USA: Irwin McGraw-Hill.
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. London: Sage.
- Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1994). *Research Methods in Education*, 4th Edition. London: Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* 5th Edition. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Coie, J.D., Dodge, K.A., & Kupersmidt, J. (1991). Peer group behaviour and social status. In S.R. Asher & J.D. Coie (Eds.), *Peer rejection in childhood* (pp. 17-59). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Colley, A., Elington, E., & Elliott, E. (1992). Sport participation in middle childhood: Association with styles of play and parental participation. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, *23*, 193-206.
- Coleman, J.S. (1961). Athletics in high school. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *338*, 33-43.
- Connell, R.W. (1995). *Masculinities*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin
- Connor, H., Dewson, S., Tyers, C., Eccles, J., Regan, J., & Aston, J. (2001). *Social class and higher education: Issues affecting decisions on participation by lower social groups*. DfEE, Research Report. RR267.
- Converse, J.M., & Schuman, H. (1974). *Conversations at random: Survey research as interviewers see it*. New York: John Wiley.
- Conroy, D.E., & Coatsworth, J.D. (2006). Coach training as a strategy for promoting youth social development. *The Sport Psychologist*, *20*, 128-144.
- Corradi, C. (1991). Text, context and individual meaning: Rethinking life histories in a hermeneutic framework. *Discourse and society*, *2*, 105-118.
- Cooley, C.H. (1902/1956). *Human nature and the social order*. Glencoe IL: Free Press.

Côté, J. (1999). The influence of the family in the development of talent in sport. *The Sport Psychologist*, *13*, 395-417.

Côté, J. (2002). Coach and peer influence on children's development through sport. In J. Silva & D. Stevens (Eds.), *Psychological Foundations of Sport* (pp.503-519). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Côté, J., Baker, J., & Abernethy, B. (2003). From play to practice: A developmental framework for the acquisition of expertise in team sports. In J. Starkes & K.A. Ericsson (Eds.), *Expert performance in sports: Advances in research on sport expertise* (pp89-114). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Côté, J., & Fraser-Thomas, J. (2007). Youth involvement in sport. In P.R.E. Crocker (Ed.), *Introduction to sport psychology: A Canadian perspective* (pp. 266-294). Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Côté, J., & Hay, J. (2002). Children's Involvement in sport: A Developmental Perspective. In J. Silva & D. Stevens (Eds.), *Psychological Foundations of Sport* (pp.484-502). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Côté, J., & Hay, J. (2002). Family influences on youth sport performance and participation. In J. Silva & D. Stevens (Eds.), *Psychological Foundations of Sport* (pp.503-519). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Côté, J., MacDonald, D.J., Baker, J., & Abernethy, B. (2006). When "where" is more important than "when": Birthplace and birthdate effects on the achievement of sporting expertise. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, *24*(10), 1065-1073.

Côté, J., Salmela, J., & Russell, S. (1995). The knowledge of high performance gymnastic coaches: Competition and training considerations. *The Sport Psychologist*, *9*, 76-95.

Côté, J., Salmela, J., Trudel, P., Baria, A., & Russell, S. (1995). The Coaching Model: A grounded assessment of expert gymnastic coaches' knowledge. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *17*, 1-17.

Côté, J., & Salmela, J. (1996). The organizational tasks of high-performance gymnastics coaches. *The Sport Psychologist*, *10*, 247-260.

Cox, R.H. (1994). *Sport psychology concepts and applications*, 3rd edition. USA: Brown & Benchmark.

Creswell, J. (2002). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Creswell, J.W., & Miller, D.L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice* *39*(3), 124-131.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research*. London: Sage Publications.

- Csikszentmihalyi, M., (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. Harper and Row: New York.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., (1993). Activity and happiness. *Journal of Occupational Science* 1(1), 38-42.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., Rathunde, K., & Whalen, S. (1993). *Talented teenagers: The roots of success and failure* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cushion, C. J. (2001). *The coaching process in professional youth football: An ethnography of practice*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Brunel University, UK.
- Cushion, C. J. (2006). *Talent and sport: Issues and controversies*. Researching Youth Sport Conference, Loughborough University, UK.
- Cushion, C.J., Armour, K.M., & Jones, R.L. (2006). Locating the coaching process in practice: models 'for' and 'of' coaching. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 11(1), 83-99.
- Dale, G.A. (1996). Existential phenomenology: emphasising the experience of the athlete in sport psychology research. *The Sport Psychologist*, 10, 307-321.
- Dalton, S.E. (1992). Overuse injuries in adolescent athletes. *Sports Medicine*, 13, 58-70.
- d'Arripe-Longueville, F., Fournier, J.F., & Dubois, A. (1998). The perceived effectiveness of interactions between expert French judo coaches and elite female athletes. *The Sport Psychologist*, 12, 317-332.
- David, P. (2005). Human rights in youth sport: A critical review of children's rights in competitive sports. In J. Parry & M. McNamee (Eds.), *Ethics in sport series*. London: Routledge.
- Davies, B., & Harré, R. (2000). *Positioning: The discursive production of selves*. In B.Davies (Ed.), *A body of writing 1990-1999*. Oxford: Altamira Press.
- DCMS/Strategy Unit (2002). *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering government's sport and physical activity objectives*. London: Cabinet Office.
- Deakin, J.M., & Cobley, S. (2003). A search for deliberate practice: An examination of the practice environments in figure skating and volleyball. In J. Starkes & K. A. Ericsson (Eds.), *Expert performance in sports: advances in research on sport expertise* (pp.115-136). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum.
- Denscombe, M. (2002). *Ground rules for good research: A ten point guide for social researchers*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- Denzin, N.K. (1975). Play, games and interaction: The contexts of childhood socialisation. *The Sociological Quarterly*, **16**, 458-478.
- Denzin, N.K. (1989). *Interpretive interactionism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. (1989). *The research act: a theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (third edition) Engle wood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Denzin, N.K. (1995). Stanley and Clifford: Undoing an interactionist text. *Current Sociology*, **43** (2/3):115-123.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* 2nd Edition (pp.1- 22). London: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* 2nd Edition (pp.1-28). London: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2005). *Handbook of qualitative research* 3rd Edition. London: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* 3rd Edition (pp.1-32). London: Sage Publications.
- DePauw, K.P., & Gavron, J. (2005). *Disability sport*, 2nd edition. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Dexter, L.A. (1970). *Elite and specialized interviewing*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative data analysis: A user friendly guide to social scientists*. London: Routledge.
- Dey, (2007). Grounded Theory. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J.F. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 80-93). London: Sage.
- Dilley, P. (2000). Conducting successful interviews: Tips for intrepid research. *Theory into Practice*, **39**, 3, 131-137.
- Dollard, J. (1935). *Criteria for the life history: With analysis of six notable documents*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Donnelly, P., & Young, K. (1988). The construction and confirmation of identity in sport subcultures. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **5**, 223-240.
- Donnelly, P. (2000). Interpretive approaches to the sociology of sport. In J. Coakley & E. Dunning (Eds.), *Handbook of sports studies* (pp. 77-91). London: Sage.

- Duffy, P. (2005). *Stages of talent development in sport: Implications for the player/athlete pathway*. LTPAD workshop, Mary Peters track, Belfast.
- Duncan, S.C., Duncan, T.E., Strycker, L.A., & Chaumeton, N.R. (2004). A multilevel analysis of sibling physical activity. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *26*(1), 1-10.
- Dupuis, S.L. (1999). Naked truths: Towards a reflexive methodology in leisure research. *Leisure Sciences*, *21*, 43-64.
- Durand-Bush, N. (2000). *The development and maintenance of expert athletic performance: Perceptions of Olympic and World champions, their parents and coaches*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.
- Durand-Bush, N., & Salmela, J.H. (1996). Nature over nurture: A new twist to the development of expertise. *Avante*, *2*, 87-109.
- Durand-Bush, N., & Salmela, J.H. (2001). The development of talent in sport. In R.N. Singer, H.A. Hausenblas, & C.M. Janelle (Eds.), *Handbook of sport psychology*, 2nd Edition (pp. 269-289). New York: Wiley.
- Durand-Bush, N., & Salmela, J.H. (2002). The development and maintenance of expert athletic performance: Perceptions of world and Olympic champions. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *14*: 154-171.
- Dworkin, J.B., Larson, R., & Hansen, D. (2003). Adolescents' accounts of growth experiences in youth activities. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *32*, 17-26.
- Earle, C. (2005). *You've got me, now keep me! An introduction to the principles and practice of Long Term Athlete Development*. ISRM Conference, Loughborough University, UK.
- Eder, D., & Parker, S. (1987). The cultural production and reproduction of gender. The effect of extracurricular activities on peer-group culture. *Sociology of Education*, *60*, 200-213.
- Eitzen, D.S., & Sage, G.H. (1993). *Sociology of North American Sport*. Dubuque, IA: Brown & Benchmark publishers
- Ely, M., Vinz, R., Downing, M., & Anzul, M. (1997). *On writing qualitative research: Living by words*. London: Falmer Press.
- Ericsson, K.A., & Charness, N. (1994). Expert performers. *American Psychologist*, *49*, 725-747.
- Ericsson, K.A., Krampe, R.T., & Tesch-Romer, C. (1993). The role of deliberate practice in the acquisition of expert performance. *Psychological Review*, *100*, 363-406.

- Ericsson, K.A., & Lehmann, A.C. (1996). Expert and exceptional performance: Evidence of maximal adaptation to test constraints. *Annual Review of Psychology*, **47**, 273-305.
- Ericsson, K.A. (1996). *The road to excellence: The acquisition of expert performance in the arts and sciences, sports and games* (pp.81-106). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Ericsson, K.A. (2003). Development of elite performance and deliberate practice: An update from the perspective of the expert performance approach. In J.L. Starks & K.A. Ericsson (Eds.), *Expert performance in sports: Advances in research on sport expertise* (pp. 49-190). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics
- Evans, J., & Roberts, G.C. (1987). Physical competence and the development of children's peer relations. *Quest*, **39**, 23-35.
- Evans, J., & Davies, B. (2006). *The Poverty of Theory: class configurations in the discourse of Physical Education and Health (PEH)*. Inaugural paper presented to the Physical Education UK Special Interest Group, British Educational Research Association Conference, Warwick University, UK.
- Fairs, J.R. (1987). The coaching process: The essence of coaching. *Sports Coach*, **11**(1), 17-19.
- Faraday, A., & Plummer, K. (1979). Doing life histories, *Sociological Review*, **27**, (4) 773-798.
- Faulkner, G., & Sparkes, A. (1999). Exercise as therapy for schizophrenia: An ethnographic study. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, **21**, 52-69.
- Fegal, K.M., Carrol, M.D., Ogden, C.L., & Johnson, C.L. (2002). Prevalence and trends in obesity among US adults, 1999-2000. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*. **288**(14), 1723-1727.
- Feld, S.L. (1991). Why your friends have more friends than you do. *The American Journal of Sociology*, **96**(6), 1464-1477.
- Fine, M. (1994). Working the hyphens: reinventing self and other in qualitative research. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 70-82). London: Sage.
- Fine, M., Weiss, L., Weseen, S. & Wong, L. (2000). For whom? Qualitative research, representations and social responsibilities. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research 2nd Edition*. (pp107-132). London: Sage.
- Fisher, R.J., & Borms, J. (1990). *The search for sporting excellence*. Schorndorf: Verlag Karl Hofman.
- Flick, U. (1998). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage.

- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. (1994). Interviewing: The art of science. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 619-644). London: Sage.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J.H. (2000). The interview: From structured questions to negotiated test. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (pp.645-672). London: Sage.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J.H. (2005). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. . In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (pp.695-728). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fraser-Thomas, J., & Côté, J. (2006). Youth sports: Implementing findings and moving forward with research. *Athletic Insight: The Online Journal of Sport Psychology*, 8(3).
- Fraser-Thomas, J., Côté, J., & Deakin, J. (2005). Youth sport programs: an avenue to foster positive youth development. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 10(1), 19-40.
- Fraser-Thomas, J., & Côté, J. (2006). Youth sports: Implementing findings and moving forward with research. *Athletic Insight: The Online Journal of Sport Psychology*, 8(3).
- Fraser-Thomas, J., Côté, J., & Deakin, J. (2005). Youth sport programs: an avenue to foster positive youth development. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 10(1), 19-40.
- Freeman, C. (1999). The crystallizing experience: A study of musical precocity. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 43(2), 75-85.
- Fry, M.D., & Duda, J.L. (1997). A developmental examination of children's understanding of effort and ability in the physical and academic domains. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 68, 331-344.
- Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (1985). Children's perceptions of the personal relationships in their social networks. *Developmental Psychology*, 21, 1016-1024.
- Furman, W., & Gavin, L. A. (1989). Peers' influence on adjustment and development: A view from the intervention literature. In T.J. Berndt & G.W. Ladd (Eds.), *Peer relationships in child development*. (pp. 319-340). New York: Wiley.
- Gagné, F. (2000). Understanding the complete choreography of talent development through DMGT-based analysis. In K.A. Heller (Ed.), *International handbook of giftedness and talent* (2nd edition, pp. 67-79). Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science Ltd.
- Gagné, F. (2003). Transforming gifts into talents: The DMGT as a developmental theory. In N Colangelo & G.E. Davis (Eds.), *Handbook of gifted education* (3rd edition, pp. 60-74). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

- Gallagher, J.D., French, K.E., Thomas, K.T., & Thomas, J.R. (1996). Expertise in youth sport: Relations between knowledge and skill. In F.L. Smoll & R.E. Smith (Eds.), *Children and youth in sport: A biopsychosocial perspective* (pp. 338-358). Indianapolis: Brown & Benchmark.
- Game Plan (2002). DCMS/Strategy Unit. *Game Plan: a strategy for delivering government's sport and physical activity objectives*. London: Cabinet Office.
- Giddens, A. (1993). *Sociology*, 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gilbert, W., Côté, J., & Mallett, C. (2006). Developmental paths and activities of successful sport coaches. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 1(1), 69-76.
- Gilbert, W.D., Gilbert, J.N., & Trudel, P. (2001). Coaching strategies for youth sports. Part 1: Athlete behavior and athlete performance. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 72(4), 29-33.
- Gilgun, J.F. (1992). Definitions, methodologies, and methods in qualitative family research. In J.F. Gilgun, K. Daly, & G. Handel (Eds.), *Qualitative methods in family research* (pp. 22-39). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Gill, D.L., Gross, J.B., & Huddleston, S. (1983). Participation motivation in youth sports. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 14, 1-14
- Gillham, B. (2000). *Case study research methods*. London: Continuum.
- Giorgi, A. (1975). An application of phenomenological methods in psychology. In A. Giorgi, C. Fischer & E. Murray (Eds.), *Duquesne studies in phenomenological psychology II* (pp. 82-103). Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine.
- Gnida, J.J. (1995). Teaching "Nature versus Nurture": The case of African-American athletic success. *Teaching Sociology*, 23(4), 389-395.
- Goldberg, A., & Chandler, T. (1989). The role of athletics: The social world of high school adolescents. *Youth and Society*, 21(2), 238-250.
- Goodson, I (1983). The use of life histories in the study of teaching. In M. Hammersley (Ed.), *Ethnography and schooling*. (pp. 131-154). Driffield: Nafferton.,
- Goodson, I. (1992). *Studying teachers' lives*. London: Routledge.
- Goodson, I., & Sikes, P. (2001). *Life history research in educational settings: Learning from lives*. Buckingham: University press.
- Gorden, R.L. (1980). *Interviewing: Strategy, techniques and tactics*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey.

- Gorely, T., Holroyd, R., & Kirk, D. (2003). Muscularity, the habitus and the social construction of gender: towards a gender-relevant physical education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *24*(4), 429-448.
- Gould, D., Dieffenbach, K., & Moffett, A. (2002). Psychological characteristics and their development in Olympic champions. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *14*, 172-204.
- Gould, D., Gianinni, J., Krane, V., & Hodge, K. (1990). Educational needs of elite U.S. national Pan American and Olympic coaches. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, *9*, 322-344.
- Gould, D., Horn, T., & Spreeman, J. (1983). Competitive anxiety in junior elite wrestlers. *Journal of Sports Psychology*, *5*, 58-71.
- Gould, D., Lauer, L., Rolo, C., Jannes, C., & Pennisi, N. (2006). Understanding the role parent's play in tennis success: a national survey of junior tennis coaches. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, *40*, 632-636.
- Gould, D., & Petlichkoff, L. (1988). Participation motivation and attrition in young athletes. In F.L. Smoll, R.J. Magill, & M. J. Ash (Eds.), *Children in sport* (pp.161-178). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Greaves, W. (1999). *A family affair; an investigation into the roles parents play in the lives of their elite age group swimmers*, unpublished M.Sc. thesis, Loughborough: Loughborough University.
- Green, B.C., & Chalip, L. (1997). Enduring involvement in youth soccer: The socialisation of parent and child. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *29*(1), 61-77.
- Green, K. (2004). Physical education, lifelong participation and the 'couch potato society'. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* *9*(1), 73-86.
- Green, M., & Houlihan, B. (2004). Advocacy coalitions and elite sport policy change in Canada and the United Kingdom. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*. *39*(4), 387-403.
- Green, M., & Houlihan, B. (2005). *Elite sport development: Policy learning and political priorities*. London: Routledge.
- Green, M., & Oakley, B. (2001). Elite sport development systems and playing to win: uniformity and diversity in international approaches. *Leisure Studies* *20*, 247-267.
- Greenbank, P. (2003). The role of values in educational research: the case for reflexivity. *British Educational Research Journal*, *29* (6), 791-801.
- Greendorfer, S. (1977). Role of socializing agents in female sport involvement. *Research Quarterly*, *48*, 304-310.

Greendorfer, S. (1992). Sport socialization. In T.S. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (pp.201-218). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.

Greendorfer, S. (2002). Socialization processes and sport behavior. In T. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology, second edition* (pp.378-402). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.

Greendorfer, S., & Lewko, J. (1978). Role of family members in sport socialization of children. *Research Quarterly*, *49*, 146-152.

Greendorfer, S.L., Lewko, J.H., & Rosengren, K.S. (1996). Family and gender-based influences in sport socialization of children and adolescents. In F.L. Smoll & R.E. Smith (Eds.), *Children and youth in sport: A biopsychosocial perspective* (pp.89-111). Indianapolis: Brown & Benchmark.

Gresham, F.M., & Elliott, A.N. (1990). *Social skills rating system*. Circle Pines: American guidance system

Gruneau, R. (1999). *Class, sports, and social development*. Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.

Guba, E.G. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Newbury Park, CA : Sage.

Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1998). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. California: Sage Publications.

Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and "ethically important moments" in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *10*(2), 261-280.

Güneri, O., Sumer Z., & Yildirim, A. (1999). Sources of self-identity among Turkish adolescents. *Adolescence* (Fall).

Gustin, W.C. (1985). The development of exceptional research mathematicians. In B.S. Bloom (Ed.), *Developing talent in young people* (pp139-192). New York: Ballantine.

Hakim, C. (2000). *Research design: Successful designs for social and economic research*. London: Routledge.

Hall, D., & Hall, I. (1996). *Practical social research: Project work in the community*. Houndmills: MacMillan Press Ltd.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. London: Routledge.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (2nd ed.) London: Routledge

Hanson, N.R. (1958). *Patterns of discovery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

- Harris, J.R. (1995). Where is the child's environment? A group socialisation theory of development. *Psychological Review*, **102**, 358-389.
- Hardy, M., & Bryman, A. (2004). Introduction: Common threads among techniques of data analysis. In M. Hardy & A. Bryman (Eds.), *Handbook of data analysis* (pp.1-13). London: Sage.
- Harris, J.R. (1998). *The nurture assumption: why children turn out the way they do*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Harter, S. (1988). Causes, correlates, and the functional role of global self-worth: A life-span perspective. In J. Kolligan & R. Sternberg (Eds.), *Perceptions of competence and incompetence across the life-span* (pp67-98). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Harter, S. (1998). *The development of self-representations*. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology*, 5th ed., Vol. 3, (pp533-617). New York: Wiley.
- Hasbrook, C. (1999). Young children's social constructions of physicality and gender. In J. Coakley and P Donnelly (Eds.), *Inside Sports* (pp. 7-16). London: Routledge,
- Hatch, J.A., & Wisniewski, R. (1995). Life history and narrative: Questions, issues, and exemplary works. In J.A. Hatch and R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and the narrative* (pp.113-136). Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis.
- Hayes, J.R. (1981). *The complete problem solver*. Philadelphia, PA: Franklin Institute Press.
- Hellison, D.R., & Cutforth, N.J. (1997). Extended day programs for urban children and youth: from theory to practice. In H. Walberg, O. Reyes, & R. Weissberg (Eds.), *Children and youth: interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 223-249). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Helsen, W.F., Starkes, J.L., & Hodges, N.J. (1998). Team sports and the theory of deliberate practice. *Journal of sport and Exercise Psychology*, **20**, 12-34.
- Helsen, W.F., Hodges, N.J., Van Winckel, J., & Starkes, J.L. (2000). The roles of talent, physical precocity and practice in the development of soccer expertise. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, **18**, 727-736.
- Hellstedt, J.C. (1987). The coach/parent/athlete relationship. *The Sport Psychologist*, **1**, 151-160.
- Hellstedt, J.C. (1995). Invisible players: A family system model. In S.M. Murphy, *Sport Psychology Interventions* (pp117-146). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Hemery, D. (1986). *The pursuit of sporting excellence: A study of sport's highest achievers*. London: Willow.

- Hertz, R. (1997). *Reflexivity and voice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Hill, G.M. (1993). Youth sport participation of professional baseball players. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **10**, 107-114.
- Hill, G.M., & Hansen, G.F. (1988). Specialization in high school sports – the pros and cons. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, **59**(5), 76-79.
- Hodge, T., & Deakin, J.M. (1998). Deliberate practice in the martial arts: The roll of context in motor recall. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, **20**, 260-279.
- Hodges, N.J., & Starkes, J.L. (1996). Wrestling with the nature of expertise: A sport-specific test of Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Romer's (1993) theory of deliberate practice. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, **27**, 400-424.
- Hoey, K. (2000). *A sporting future for all: the government's new sports strategy*. FHS, Article 8, 13-15.
- Hogan, K., & Norton, K. (2000). The "price" of Olympic gold. *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*. **3**(2), 203-218.
- Holroyd, R.A. (2003). *Fields of Experience: Young People's construction of embodied identities*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Loughborough University, UK.
- Horn, T.S., & Hasbrook, C.A. (1986). Informational components underlying children's perceptions of their physical competence. In M.R. Weiss & D. Gould (Eds.), *Sport for children and youths* (pp81-88). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Horn, T.S., & Hasbrook, C.A. (1987). Psychological characteristics and the criteria children use for self-evaluation. *Journal of Sport and Psychology*, **9**, 208-221.
- Horn, T.S., & Harris, A. (2002). Perceived competence in young athletes: Research findings and recommendations for coaches and parents. In F.L. Smoll & R.E. Smith (Eds.), *Children and youth in sport: A biopsychosocial perspective*, 2nd Edition (pp. 435-464). Dubuque, IW: Kendall-Hunt.
- Horne, J., Tomlinson, A., & Whannel, G. (1999). *Understanding sport*. London: E & FN Spon.
- Houlihan, B. (1997). *Sport policy and politics: A comparative analysis*. London: Routledge.
- Houlihan, B. (2000). Sporting excellence, schools and sports development: the politics of crowded spaces. *European Physical Education Review*. **6**(2), 171-193.
- Houlihan, B., & White, A. (2002). *The politics of sports development: Development of sport or development through sport*. London: Routledge.

- Howard, D., & Madrigal, R. (1990). Who makes the decision – the parent or the child? The perceived influence of parents on children in the purchase of recreation services. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *22*(3), 244-258.
- Howe, M.J.A., Davidson, J.W.W., & Sloboda, J.A. (1998). Innate talents: Reality or myth? *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, *21*, 399-442.
- Hughes, E.C. (1971). *The sociological eye: Selected papers*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.
- Irwin, G., Hanton, S., & Kerwin, D.G. (2004). Reflective practice and the origins of elite coaching knowledge, *Reflective Practice*, *5*(3), 425-442.
- Jackson, S., Csikszentmihalyi, M (1999). *Flow in sports: The keys to optimal experiences and performances*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Jacob, E. (1987). Clarifying qualitative research: A focus on traditions. *Educational Research*, *17*(1), 16-24.
- Jenkins, R. (1996). *Social Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Johnson, J.M. (2002). In-depth interviewing. In J.F. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research*. California: Sage Publications Inc. (pp.103-119).
- Jones, R.L. (1997). A deviant sports career: Towards a sociology of unlicensed boxing. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*. *21*(1), 37-52.
- Jones, R.L., Armour, K.M., & Potrac, P. (2003). Constructing expert knowledge: A case study of a top-level professional soccer coach. *Sport, Education and Society*, *8*(2), 213-229.
- Jones, R.L., & Wallace, M. (2005). Another bad day at the training ground: coping with ambiguity in the coaching context. *Sport, Education and Society*. *10*(1), 119-134.
- Jowett, S., & Cockerill, M. (2003). Olympic medallists' perspective of the athlete-coach relationship. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *4*(4), 313-331.
- Kahn, R., & Cannell, C.F. (1957). *The dynamics of interviewing*. New York: John Wiley.
- Kalinowski, A.G. (1985). The development of Olympic swimmers. In B.S. Bloom (Ed.), *Developing talent in young people* (pp. 139-192). New York: Ballantine.
- Kane, M.J. (1988). The female athletic role as a status determinant within the social systems of high school adolescents. *Adolescence*, *23*, 253-264.
- Kaplan, A. (1964). *The conduct of inquiry*. San Francisco: Chandler.

- Karp, G.G. (1989). Participant observation. In P.W. Darst, D.B. Zakrajsek, & V.H. Mancini (Eds.), *Analyzing physical education and sport instruction* (pp.411-430). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Kay, T.A. (2000). Sporting excellence: A family affair. *European Physical Education Review*, 6(2), 151-169.
- Kay, T.A. (2003). *The family factor in sport: A review of family factors affecting sports participation*, unpublished report to the Institute of Youth Sport, Loughborough University, UK.
- Kay, T.A., & Lowrey, J. (2003). *The role of families in supporting children's sports talent*, unpublished report to the Institute of Youth Sport. Loughborough University, UK.
- Kellmann, M. (2002). *Enhancing recovery: Preventing underperformance in athletes*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Kenyon, G.S., & McPherson, B.D. (1973). Becoming involved in physical activity and sport: a process of socialisation. In G.L. Ratrick (Ed.), *Physical activity: Human growth and development*. New York: Academic Press.
- Kenyon, G.S., & McPherson, B.D. (1974). An approach to the study of sport socialization. *International Review of Sport Sociology*, 9, 127-139.
- Kerlinger, F.N. (1970). *Foundations of Behavioural Research*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Kidd, B. (1995). Confronting inequality in sport and physical activity. *Avante* 1(1), 3-19.
- Kidd, B. (2006). Muscular Christianity and value-centred sport: The legacy of Tom Brown in Canada. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. 23(5), 701-713.
- Kimble, G.A. (1993). Evolution of the nature-nurture issue in the history of psychology. In R. Plomin & G.E. McClearn (Eds.), *Nature, nurture and psychology*. Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Kimiecik, J.C., Horn, T.S. & Shurin, C.S. (1996). Relationships among children's beliefs, perceptions of their parent's beliefs, and their moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*. 67: 324-336.
- Kirk, D. (2005). Physical education, youth sport and lifelong participation: The importance of early learning experiences. *European Physical Education Review*, 11, 239-255.
- Kirk, D., & Gorely, T (2000). Challenging thinking about the relationship between physical education and sporting performance. *European Physical Education Review*, 6, 119-134.

- Kirk, D., Brettschneider, W., & Auld, C.J. (2005). *Junior sport models representing best practice nationally and internationally*. Canberra, Australia: Australian Sports Commission.
- Kirk, D., Carlson, T., O'Connor, A., Burke, P., Davis, K., & Glover, S. (1997a). The economic impact on families of children's participation in junior sport. *The Australian Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, *29*(2): 27-33.
- Kirk, D., & MacPhail, A. (2003). Social positioning and the construction of a youth sports club. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *38*:1; 23-41.
- Kirk, D., O'Connor, A., Carlson, T., Burke, P., Davis, K., & Glover, S. (1997b). Time commitments in junior sport: Social consequences for participants and their families. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, *20*(1):51-73.
- Klein, D.M., & White, J.M. (1996). *Family theories: An introduction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kleinsasser, A.M. (2000). Researchers, reflexivity and good data: Writing to unlearn. *Theory into Practice* *39*(3), 155-162).
- Kremer, J., Trew, K., & Ogle, S. (1997). *Young people's involvement in sport*. London: Routledge.
- Kroger, J. (2000). *Identity development: Adolescence through adulthood*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage.
- Langness, L.L. (1965). *The life history in anthropological science*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Lanning, W. (1982). The privileged few: Special counselling needs of athletes'. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, *4*, 19-23.
- Lareau, A. (1989). *Home advantage: Social class and parental interventions in elementary education*. Philadelphia: The Falmer Press.
- Law, M.P., Côté, J., & Ericsson, K.A. (2007). Characteristics of expert development in rhythmic gymnastics: A retrospective study. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *5*, 82-103
- LeCompte, M.D., & Preissle, J. (1992). Towards an ethnology of student life in schools and classrooms: Synthesizing the qualitative research tradition. In M.D. LeCompte, W.L. Millroy, & J. Preissle (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp.815-859). New York: Academic Press.

- Lewko, J.H., & Greendorfer, S. (1982). Family influence and sex differences in children's socialization into sport: A review. In R.A. Magill, M.J. Ash, & F.L. Smoll (Eds.), *Children in sport* (pp.279-293). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1979). *Naturalistic Inquiry* (2nd Edition) Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Lindstrom, W.A., & Lease, A.M. (2005). The role of the athlete as contributor to peer status in school-age and adolescent females in the United States: From pre-title IX to 2000 and beyond. *Social Psychology of Education*, 8, 223-244.
- Lofland, J. (1971). *Analysing social settings*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Lofland, J. & Lofland, L.H. (1984). *Analysing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (1995). *Analysing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Loy, J.W., Kenyon, G.S., & McPherson, B.D. (1981). *Sport, culture and society*. Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger.
- Lyle, J. (1999). The coaching process: an overview. In N. Cross & J. Lyle (Eds), *The coaching process: Principles and practice for sport* (pp. 1-24). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Lyle, J (1999). Coaching philosophy and coaching behaviour. In N. Cross & J. Lyle (Eds), *The coaching process: Principles and practice for sport* (pp.25-46). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Lyle, J. (2002). *Sports coaching concepts: A framework for coaches' behaviour*. London: Routledge.
- MacLellan, E. (2005). Conceptual learning: The priority for higher education. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 53(2), 129-147.
- MacPhail, A., Gorely, T., & Kirk, D. (2003). Young people's socialisation into sport: a case study of an athletics club. *Sport Education and Society*, 8(2), 251-267.
- MacPhail, A., & Kirk, D., & Eley, D. (2003). Listening to young people's voices: Youth sport leaders' advice on facilitating participation in sport. *European Physical Education Review*, 9(1), 57-73.
- MacPhail, A., & Kirk, D. (2006). Young people's socialisation into sport: Experiencing the specialising phase. *Leisure Studies*, 25(1), 57-74.
- Mageau, G.A., & Vallerand, R.J. (2003). The coach-athlete relationship: a motivational model. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 21, 883-904.

- Malina, R.M., & Bouchard, C. (1991). *Growth, maturation and physical activity*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Mallett, C., & Côté, J. (2006). Beyond winning and losing: Guidelines for evaluating high performance coaches. *The Sport Psychologist*, *20*, 213-221.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (1989). *Designing qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd Edition.). Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Marsick, V. (1989). *Learning to be: Life history and professionalization*, paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, March.
- Martens, M.P., & Lee, F.K. (1998). Promoting life-career development in the student athlete: How can career centres help? *Journal of Career Development*, *25*(2), 123-134.
- Martens, R. (1993). Psychological perspective. In B.R. Cahill & A.J. Pearl (Eds.), *Intensive participation in children's sports* (pp. 9-18). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Mason, J (2002). *Qualitative researching*. London: Sage
- Matsudo, V.K.R. (1996). Prediction of future excellence. In O. Bar-or (Ed.), *The child and adolescent athlete* (pp. 92-108). Berlin: Blackwell Science.
- Maxwell, J.A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, *62*, 3, pp. 279-300.
- May, T. (1999). *Social research: Issues, methods and process*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Measor, L., & Sikes, P. (1992). Visiting lives: Ethics and methodology in life history. In I. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying teachers' lives* (pp.209-233). London: Routledge.
- Metsä-Tokila, T. (2002). Combining competitive sports and education: How top level sport became part of the school system in the Soviet Union, Sweden and Finland. *European Physical Education Review*, *8*(3), 196-206.
- McCabe, A.E., Roberts, B.T., & Morris, T.E. (1991). Athletic activity, body image, and adolescent identity. In L. Diamant (Ed.), *Mind-body maturity* (pp.91-103). New York: Hemisphere.
- McElroy, M.A., & Kirkendall, D.R. (1980). Significant others and professionalized sport attitudes. *The Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, *51*, 645-653.

- McPherson, B.D. (1981). Socialisation into and through sport involvement. In G. Lueschen & G. Sage (Eds.), *Handbook of social science of sport* (pp.246-273). Champaign IL: Stipes.
- McPherson, B.D. (1982). The child in competitive sport: Influence of the social milieu. In R.A. Magill, M.J. Ash, & F.L. Smoll (Eds.), *Children in sport* (pp.247-277). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Merton, R.K., Fiske, M., & Kendall, P.L. (1956). *The focused interview*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Metsä-Tokila, T. (2002). Combining competitive sports and education: How top-level sport became part of the school system in the Soviet Union, Sweden and Finland. *European Physical Education Review*, 8(3), 196-206.
- Middleton, S. (1993). *Educating feminists: Life histories and pedagogy*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Miles, M.B., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source book (2nd Ed.)*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.
- Miller, R.L. (2000). *Researching life stories and family histories*. London: Sage Publications.
- Minnett, A.M., Vandell, D.L., & Santrock, J.W. (1983). The effects of sibling status on sibling interaction: Influence of birth order, age, spacing, sex of child and sex of sibling. *Child Development*, 54(4), 1064-1072.
- Monsaas, J. A. (1985). Learning to be a world-class tennis player. In B.S. Bloom (Ed.), *Developing talent in young people* (pp.211-269). New York: Ballantine.
- Morgan, T.K., & Giacobbi, P.R. (2006). Toward two grounded theories of the talent development and social support process of highly successful collegiate athletes. *The Sport Psychologist*, 20, 295-313.
- Morley, D. (2005). The Carnegie Regional Multi-skill camp: Executive Summary. www.talent.matters.org Accessed 5.12.06
- Morris, T., & Summers, J. (1995). *Sport psychology: Theory applications and issues*. London: John Wiley.
- Morse, J. (1994). Designing funded research. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp.220-235). London: Sage.
- Moynihan, C. (2006). *London Olympics 2012*. www.olympics.org.uk. Accessed 15.05.06.
- Munro, P. (1998). *Subject to fiction: Women teachers' life history narratives and the cultural politics of resistance*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- Nelson, C., Treichler, P.A., & Grossberg, L. (1992). Cultural studies. In L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, & P.A. Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural studies* (pp.1-16). New York: Routledge.
- Newell, A. & Rosenbloom, P.S. (1981). Mechanisms of skill acquisition and the law of practice. In J.R. Anderson (Ed.), *Cognitive skills and their acquisition* (pp1-55). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- North, J. (2006). Community Sports Coach: Coaches Profile survey Report. www.sportscoachuk.org Accessed 30.11.06.
- Oakley, A. (1981). Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms? In H. Roberts (Ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*. London: Routledge.
- Oakley, A. (1999). Paradigm wars: some thoughts on a personal and public trajectory. *International Journal Social Research Methodology*, 2(3), 247-254.
- Odendahl, T., & Shaw, A.M. (2002). Interviewing elites. In J.F. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research*. California: Sage Publications Inc. (pp.299-316).
- O'Kane, C. (2000). The development of participatory techniques: Facilitating children's views about decisions which affect them. In P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (136-159). London: The Falmer Press.
- Oliver, K.L., & Lalik, R. (2000). *Bodily knowledge: Learning about equity and justice with adolescent girls*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Ommundsen, Y., & Vaglum, P. (1991). Soccer competition anxiety and enjoyment in young boy players. The influence of perceived competence and significant others' emotional involvement. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 22, 35-49.
- Ommundsen, Y., Roberts, G.C., Lemyre, P.N., & Miller, B.W. (2005). Peer relationships in adolescent competitive soccer: Associations to perceived motivational climate, achievement goal and perfectionism. *Journal of Sport Sciences*, 23(9), 977-989.
- Orlick, T., & Botterill, C. (1975). *Every kid can win*. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.
- Orlick, T. (1990). *In pursuit of excellence* (2nd Ed.), Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Parker, J.G., & Asher, S.R. (1987). Peer relations and later personal development: Are low-accepted children at risk? *Psychological Bulletin*, 102, 357-389.
- Parker, J.G., & Asher, S.R. (1993). Friendship and friendship quality in middle childhood: Links with peer group acceptance and feelings of loneliness and social dissatisfaction. *Developmental Psychology*, 29, 611-621.
- Partington, J.T. (1995). *Making Music*. Ottawa, ON: Carleton Univ. Press.

- Passer, M.W. (1996). At what age are children ready to compete? Some psychological considerations. In F.L.Smoll & R.E. Smith (Eds.), *Children and youth in sport: A biopsychosocial perspective* (pp73-86). Toronto: Brown & Benchmark.
- Patrick, H., Ryan, A.M., Alfeld-Liro, C., Fredricks, J.A., Hruda, L.Z., & Eccles, J.S. (1999). Adolescents' commitment to developing talent: The role of peers in continuing motivation for sports and the arts. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, **28**(6), 741-763.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. (2nd Edition). California: Sage.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Payne, G., & Payne, J. (2004). *Key concepts in social research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Pensgaard, A.M., & Roberts, G.C. (2002). Elite athlete's experiences of the motivational climate: The coach matters. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine and Science in Sports*, **12**, 54-59.
- Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity – one's own. *Educational Researcher*, **17**(5), 17-21.
- Petlichkoff, L.M. (1993). Coaching children: Understanding the motivational process. *Sports Science Review*, **2**, 48-61.
- Philips, M., & Magdalinski, T. (2003). Sport in Australia. In B. Houlihan (Ed.), *Sport and society: A student introduction*. London: SAGE publications Ltd.
- Pink, S. (2007). Visual methods. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J.F. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 361-376). London: Sage.
- Plummer, K. (1990). Herbert Blumer and the life history tradition, *Symbolic Interactionism*, **13**, 125-144.
- Pollard, A. (1985). *The social world of the primary school*. London: Cassell.
- Postman, N. (1994). *The disappearance of childhood*. New York: Vintage books.
- Power, T.G., & Woolger, C. (1994). Parenting practices and age-group swimming: A Correlational study. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, **65**(1), 56-66.
- Procter, I & Padfield, M. (1998). The effect of the interview on the interviewee. *International Journal of social Research Methodology Theory and Practice*, **1**(2) 123-136.

- Prus, R. (1984). Career contingencies: Examining patterns of involvement. In N. Theberge and P. Donnelly (Eds.), *Sport and the sociological imagination* (pp. 297-317). Fort Worth TX: TCU Press.
- Punch, S. (2002). Interviewing strategies with young people: The 'Secret Box', Stimulus material and task-based activities. *Children and Society*, *16*, 45-56.
- Rabin, S., Feldman, D., & Kaplan, Z. (1999). Stress and intervention strategies on mental health professionals. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, *72*: 159-69.
- Raedeke, T.D., & Smith, A.L. (2001). Development and preliminary validation of an athlete burnout measure. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *23*, 281-306.
- Raising the Game (1995). Department of National Heritage. *Sport: Raising the game*. London: Department of National Heritage.
- Rapley, T. (2007). Interviews. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J.F. Gubrium & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 15-33).
- Raymore, L., Barber, B., Eccles, J., & Godbey, G. (1999). Leisure behavior pattern stability during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *28*, 79-103.
- Reay, D., Davies, J., David, M., Ball, S.J. (2001). Choices of degree or degrees of choices? Class, 'race' and the higher education choice process. *Sociology*, *35*, 855-874.
- Regnier, G., Salmela, J., & Russell, S.J. (1993). Talent detection and development in sport. In R.N. Singer, M. Murphey and K.L. Tennant (Eds.), *Handbook of research on sport psychology* (pp. 290-313). New York: Macmillan
- Rennie, K.L., & Jebb, S.A. (2005). Prevalence of obesity in Great Britain. *Obesity Reviews*, *6*(1), 11-12.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of enquiry. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Edition. London: Sage Publications.
- Richardson, L. (2001). Getting personal: writing stories. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. *14*(1), 33-38.
- Roethlisberger, F.A. (1970). Socialization of the elite gymnast. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Wisconsin.
- Rose, D. (2003). *Social research update*, issue nine.
<http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sru/SRU9.html> Accessed 27.9.06.
- Rosenberg, E. (1980). Social disorganisation aspects of professional sports careers. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *4*(2), 14-25.

- Rosenfeld, L.B., Richman, J.M., & Hardy, C.J. (1989). Examining social support networks among athletes: Description and relationship to stress. *The Sport Psychologist*, 3, 23-33.
- Rowe, N. (1998). *The development of sporting talent (1996-7)*. The English Sports Council.
- Rowley, S. (1992). *TOYA (Training of Young Athletes Study): Identification of talent*. London: The Sports Council.
- Ruble, D.N. (1983). The role of social comparison processes in achievement-related self-socialisation. In E.T. Higgins, D.N. Ruble, & W.W. Hartup (Eds.), *Social cognitions and social development: A sociocultural perspective* (pp.134-157). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Russell, G.M., & Kelly, N.H. (2002, September). Research as interacting dialogic processes: Implications for reflexivity. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 3 (3). www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-02/3-02russellkelly-e.htm
Accessed 27.06.07
- Rutt-Leas, R. & Chi, M.T.H. (1993). Analyzing diagnostic expertise of competitive swimming coaches. In J.L. Starkes & F. Allard (Eds.), *Cognitive issues in motor expertise* (pp.75-94). Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Publishing.
- Ryan, G.W., & Bernard, H.R. (2000). Data management and analysis methods. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2nd Edition, (pp. 769-802). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sage, G. (1991). *Power and ideology in American sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Salmela, J.H. (1994). Phases and transitions across sport careers. In D. Hackfort (Ed.), *Psych-social issues and interventions in elite sports* (pp.12-28), Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH.
- Salmela, J.H. (1996). *Great Job coach: Getting the edge from proven winners*. Ottawa, Ontario: Potentium.
- Salmela, J.H., Draper, S.P., & La Plante, D. (1993). Development of expert coaches of team sports. In S. Serpa, J. Alves, V. Ferreira, & A. Paulo-Brito (Eds.), *Proceedings of the VIII World Congress of Sport Psychology* (pp. 296-300). Lisbon: FMH.
- Salmela, J.H., & Moraes, L.C. (2003). Development of expertise: The role of coaching, families, and cultural contexts. In J. Starkes & K.A. Ericsson (Eds.), *Expert performance in sports: Advances in research on sport expertise* (pp.275-294). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.
- Salmela, J.H., Young, B.W., Kallio, J. (2000). Within career transitions of the athlete-coach-parent triad. In P. Wylleman & D. Lavallée (Eds.), *Career transitions in*

sport: A sourcebook for practitioners and researchers (pp.181-193). Morgantown, WV: FIT Publications.

Santrock, J.W. (2001). *Child development* (9th d.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Sartor, C.E., & Younnis, J. (2002). The relationship between positive parental involvement and identity achievement in adolescence. *Adolescence*, *37*(146), 221-234.

Saury, J. & Durand, M. (1998). Practical knowledge in expert coaches: on site study of coaching in sailing. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, *69*(3), 254-266.

Scanlan, T.K., Carpenter, P.J., Schmidt, G.W., Simons, J.P., & Keeler, B. (1993a). An introduction to the sport commitment model. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *15*, 1-15.

Scanlan, T.K., & Lewthwaite, R. (1988). From Stress to Enjoyment: Parental and coach influences on young participants: Predictors of enjoyment. In E.W. Brown & C.F. Branta (Eds.), *Competitive sports for children and youth: An overview of research and issues* (pp.47-58). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Scanlan, T.K., & Lewthwaite, R. (1984). Social psychological aspects of competition for male youth sport participants: I: Predictors of competitive stress. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, *6*, 208-226.

Scanlan, T.K., & Lewthwaite, R. (1985). Social psychological aspects of competition for male youth sport participants:III. Determinants of personal performance expectancies. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, *7*, 389-399.

Scanlan, T.K., & Lewthwaite, R. (1986). Social psychological aspects of competition for male youth sport participants: IV: Predictors of enjoyment. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, *8*, 25-35.

Scanlan, T.K., & Simons, J.P. (1992). The construct of sport enjoyment. In G.C. Roberts(Ed.), *Motivation in sport and exercise* (pp. 199-215). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Scanlan, T.K., Simons, J.P., Carpenter, P.J., Schmidt, G.W., & Keeler, B. (1993b). The sport commitment model: Measurement development for the youth-sport domain. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *15*, 16-38.

Scanlan, T.K., Stein, G.L., & Ravizza, K. (1989). An in-depth study of former elite skaters: Sources of enjoyment. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *11*, 65-83.

Scanlan, T.K., Stein, G.L., & Ravizza, K. (1989). An in-depth study of former elite skaters: Sources of stress. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *13*, 103-120.

Scheurich, J. (1995). A post modernist critique of research interviewing. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, *8*, 239-252

- Schlossberg, N.K. (1981). A model for analysing human adaptation to transition. *The Psychologist*, *9*(2), 2-18.
- Schmidt, R.A., & Wrisberg, C.A. (2000). *Motor learning and performance: A problem-based learning approach*, 2nd Edition. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Schulz, R., Musa, D., Staszewski, J., & Siegler, R.S. (1994). The relationship between age and major league baseball performance: Implications for development. *Psychology of Ageing*, *9*, 274-286.
- Scruton, S., Fasting, K., Pfister, G., & Bunuel, A. (1999). 'It's still a man's game: The experience of top-level European women footballers'. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *34* (2), 99-111.
- Seefeld, V., Malina, R.M., & Clarke, M.A. (2002). Factors affecting levels of physical activity in adults. *Sports Medicine*, *32*(3), 143-168.
- Selman, R.L. (1971). Taking another's perspective: Role-taking development in early childhood. *Child Development*, *42*, 1721-1734.
- Selman, R.L. (1976). Social-cognitive understanding: A guide to educational and clinical practice. In T. Lickona (Ed), *Moral development and behaviour* (pp.299-316). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Semin, G.R. & Manstead, A.S.R. (1983). *The accountability of conduct: A social psychological analysis*. New York: Academic Press.
- Shotter, J., & Gergen, K. (1989). *Texts of Identity*. Inquiries in Social Construction Series, Vol. 2. London: Sage.
- Siedentop, D (1994). *Quality PE through positive Sport Experiences: Sport Education*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Siegenthaler, K.L., & Gonzalez, G.L. (1997). Youth sports as serious leisure. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, *21*, 298-314.
- Sikes, P., Measor, L., & Woods, P. (1985). *Teacher careers: Crises and continuities*. Lewes: Falmer Press.
- Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction*. London: Sage.
- Simmons, C., & Wade, W. (1987). A comparative study of young people's views of the family. *Educational Studies*, *13*(1), 45-56.
- Simon, H.A., & Chase, W.G. (1973). Skill in chess. *American scientist*, *61*, 394-403.
- Singer, R.N., & Janelle, C.M. (1999). Determining sport expertise: From genes to supremes. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, *30*, 117-150.

- Slack, T. (2003) Sport in the US and Canada. In B. Houlihan (2003) *Sport and society: A student introduction*. London: SAGE publications Ltd.
- Sloane, L.A. (1985). Phases of learning. . In B.S. Bloom (Ed.), *Developing talent in young people* (pp. 439-476). New York: Ballantine.
- Sloboda, J.A., & Howe, M.J.A. (1991). Biographical precursors of musical excellence: An interview study. *Psychology of Music*, **19**, 3-21.
- Smith, J.K. (1989). *The nature of social and educational enquiry: Empiricism versus interpretation*. Norwood, NJ. Ablex.
- Smith, A.L. (2003). Peer relationships and physical activity contexts: A road less travelled in youth sport and exercise psychology. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, **4**, 25-39.
- Smith, A.L., Balaguer, I., & Duda, J.L. (2006). Goal orientation profile differences on perceived motivational climate, perceived peer relationships, and motivation-related responses of youth athletes. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, **1**, 1-13.
- Smith, R.E., Smoll, F.L., & Smith, N.J. (1989). *Parents complete guide to youth sports*. Costa Mesa, CA: HDL Communications.
- Smith, R.E., & Smoll, F. L. (1990). Self-esteem and children's reactions to youth sport coaching behaviors: A field study of self-enhancement processes. *Developmental Psychology*, **26**(6), 987-993.
- Smith, A.L., Ullrich-French, S., Walker II, E., & Hurley, K.S. (2006). Peer relationship profiles and motivation in youth sport. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, **28**, 362-382.
- Smoll, F.L., & Smith, R.E. (1989). Leadership behaviours in sport: A theoretical model and research paradigm. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, **19**, 1522-1551.
- Smoll, F.L., Smith, R.E., Barnett, N.P., & Everett, J.J. (1993). Enhancement of children's self-esteem through social support training for youth sport coaches. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **78**(4), 602-610.
- Soberlak, P. (2001). *A retrospective analysis of the development and motivation of ice hockey players*. Unpublished MSc. thesis, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.
- Soberlak, P., & Côté, J. (2003). The developmental activities of elite ice hockey player's. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, **15**, 41-49.
- Sosniak, L.A. (1985). Learning to be a concert pianist. In B.S. Bloom (Ed.), *Developing talent in young people* (pp.19-67). New York: Ballantine.

- Sparkes, A.C. (1992). The paradigms debate. In A.C. Sparkes (Ed.), *Research in physical education and sport: Exploring alternative visions* (pp. 9-60). London: The Falmer Press
- Sparkes, A.C. (1993). Challenging technical rationality in physical education teacher education: the potential of a life history approach. *Physical Education Review*, 16(2), 107-121.
- Sparkes, A.C., & Templin, T.J. (1992). Life histories and physical education teachers: Exploring the meanings of marginality. In A.C. Sparkes (Ed.), *Research in physical education and sport: Exploring alternative visions* (pp. 118-141). London: The Falmer press
- sports coach UK (2004). *Sports coaching in the UK: Final report*. www.sportscoachuk.org Accessed 30.11.06.
- sports coach UK (2006). *Community sports coach: coaches profile survey report*. www.sportscoachuk.org Accessed 30.11.06.
- Sports Council Northern Ireland (2006). *Multi Sports Camps*. www.sportsni.net Accessed 05.12.06
- Sport England. (2004). *The Frame for Sport in England*. London: Sport England.
- Spradley, J.P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Spreitzer, E., & Snyder, E.E. (1976). Socialization into sport: an exploratory path analysis. *Research Quarterly*, 47(2): 236-45.
- Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1993). *Breaking out again: Feminist ontology and epistemology*. London and New York: Routledge
- Starkes, J.L., Deakin, J.M., Allard, F., Hodges, N.J., & Hayes, A. (1996). Deliberate practice in sports: What is it anyway? In K.A. Ericsson (Ed.), *The road to excellence: The acquisition of expert performance in the arts and sciences, sports and games* (pp.81-106). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Starkes, J., Helsen, W., & Jack, R. (2001). Expert performance in sport and dance. In R.N. Singer, H.A. Hausenblas & C.M. Janelle (Eds.), *Handbook of Sport Psychology* (pp604-635). Toronto: John Wiley & Sons.
- Stephens, N. (2007). Collecting data from elites and ultra elites: telephone and face-to-face interviews with macroeconomists. *Qualitative Research*, 7(2), 203-216.
- Stevenson, G.L. (1990). The early careers of international athletes. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 7, 238-253.

- Stevenson, C. (1999). Becoming an international athlete: making decisions about identity. In J. Coakley, & P. Donnelly (Eds.), *Inside sports* (pp. 86-96). London: Routledge.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (2nd Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sullivan, H.S. (1953). *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: Norton.
- Sulloway, F. (1996). *Born to rebel*. New York: Pantheon.
- Tannenbaum, A.J. (1983). *Gifted children: Psychological and educational perspectives*. New York: Macmillan.
- Taubas, G. (2000). Toward molecular talent scouting. *Scientific American*, *3*, 26-31.
- Teitel, J. (2000). The kidnapping of play. In P. Donnelly (Ed.), *Taking sport seriously: social issues in Canadian sport* (pp. 96-107). Canada: Thomas Educational Publish, Inc.
- Templin, T., & Schempp, P. (1989). *Socialization into physical education: Learning to teach*. Indianapolis: Benchmark Press.
- Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research: analytical types and software tools*. Lewes: Falmer Press.
- The English Sports Council. (1998). *The development of sporting talent*. London: English Sports council.
- Thomas, G., & James, D. (2006). Reinventing grounded theory: some questions about theory, ground and discovery. *British Educational Research Journal*, *32*(6), 767-795.
- Thomas, N., & O'Kane, C. (2000). Discovering what children think: Connections between research and practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, *30*, 819-835.
- Thomas, R. (1995). Interviewing important people in big companies. In R. Hertz and J. B. Imber (Eds.), *Studying elites using qualitative methods* (pp3-18). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tierney, W.G. (2000). Undaunted courage: Life history and the postmodern challenge. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp. 537- 553. London: Sage.
- Thompson, J. (2003). *The double-goal coach*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

- Tofler, R., Stryer, B.K., Micheli, L.J., & Herman, L.R. (1996). Physical and emotional problems of elite female gymnasts. *New England Journal of Medicine*, **354**(4), 281-283.
- Toma, J.D. (2000). How getting closer to your subjects makes qualitative data better. *Theory into Practice*, **39**(3), 177-184.
- Toms, M.R. (2005). *The developmental socialisation of young people in sport: An ethnographic account*. An unpublished PhD. thesis, Loughborough University, UK.
- Tranckle, P., & Cushion, C. (2006). Rethinking giftedness and talent in sport. *Quest*, **58**, 265-282.
- Tremblay, M.S., Katzmarzyk, P.T., & Willms, J.D. (2002). Temporal trends in overweight and obesity in Canada, 1981-1996. *International Journal of Obesity and Related Metabolic Disorders*, **26**, 538-543.
- Trudel, P., Côté, J., & Donohue, J. (1993). Direct observations of coaches' behaviours during training and competition: A literature Review. In S. Serpa, J. Alves, V. Ferreira, & A. Paulo-Brito (Eds.), *Proceedings of the VIII World Congress of Sport Psychology* (pp316-319). Lisbon: FMH.
- Ungar, M. (2000). The myth of peer pressure. *Adolescence*, 167-180.
- UK Sport (2006). A sporting chance for 2012 Additional funding to support Team GB success at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games: Options for the chancellor's 2005 pre-budget report. www.uk sport.gov.uk Accessed 15.05.06
- UK Sport (2007). Talent transfer in full swing. www.uk sport.gov.uk Accessed 24.09.07
- Universities UK (1998 – 2006). Higher education and sport. www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sport Accessed 09.07.07
- Universities UK (2004). Participating and performing: sport and higher education in the UK. www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sport Accessed 09.07.07
- Van Volkom, M. (2003). The relationship between childhood tomboyism, siblings' activities, and adult gender roles. *Sex Roles*, **49**(11/12), 609-618.
- Van Yperen, N.W. (1995). Interpersonal stress, performance level, and parental support: A longitudinal study among highly skilled young soccer players. *The Sport Psychologist*, **9**, 225-241.
- Vallée, C.N., & Bloom, G.A. (2005). Building a successful university program: Key and common elements of expert coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, **17**, 179-196.
- Vogler, C.C., & Schwaitz, S.E. (1993). *The Sociology of Sport*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Voss, J., Green, T., & Penner, B. (1983). Problem-solving in social sciences. In G. Bower (Ed.), *The psychology of learning and motivation: advances in research theory*. New York: Academic Press.

Veroff, J. (1969). Social comparison and the development of achievement motivation. In C.P. Smith (Ed.), *Achievement-related motives in children* (pp.46-101). New York: Russell sage Foundation.

Wallingford, R. (1975). Long distance running. In A.W. Taylor, & F. Landry (Eds.), *The scientific aspects of sport training* (pp118-130). Springfield IL: Charles C. Thomas.

Walters, J., & Gardner (1986). The crystallizing experience. In R. Stenberg & J. Davidson (Eds.), *Conceptions of giftedness* (pp. 306-331). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ward, P., Hodges, N.J., Williams, A.M., & Starkes, J.L. (2004). Deliberate practice and expert performance: Defining the path to excellence. In A.M. Williams and N.J. Hodges (Eds.), *Skill acquisition in sport: Research theory and practice* (pp. 231-258). New York: Routledge.

Watson, L.C., & Watson-Franke, M. (1985). *Interpreting life-histories*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Watt, D. (2007). On becoming a qualitative researcher: The value of reflexivity. *The Qualitative Report*, 12(1), 82-101. www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR12-1/watt.pdf
Accessed 14.06.07

Weiss, M.R., & Chaumeton, N. (1992). Motivational orientations in sport. In T.S. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (pp.61-99). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.

Weiss, M.R., & Duncan, S.C. (1992). The relationship between physical competence and peer acceptance in the context of children's sport participation. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 14, 177-191.

Weiss, M.R., & Ferrer-Caja, E. (2002). Motivational orientations and sport behaviour. T. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (pp.101-184). Champaign IL: Human Kinetics.

Weiss, M.R., & Petlichkoff, L.M. (1989). Children's motivation for participation in and withdrawal from sport: Identifying the missing links. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 1, 195-211.

Weiss, M.R., Smith, A.L., & Theeboom, M. (1996). "That's what friends are for": Children's and teenager's perceptions of peer relationships in the sport domain. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 18, 347-379.

- Weiss, M.R., Weise, D.M., & Klint, K.A. (1989). Head over heels with success: The relationship between self-efficacy and performance in competitive youth gymnastics. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, *11*, 444-451.
- Weirsmas, L.D. (2000). Risks and benefits of youth sport specialization: Perspectives and recommendations. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, *12*, 13-22.
- Wellington, J. (2000). Survey research. In J. Wellington (Ed.), *Contemporary issues and practical approaches* (pp. 101-107). London: Continuum.
- Whannel, G. (2000). Sport and the media. In J. Coakley & E. Dunning (Eds.), *Handbook of sport studies*. London: SAGE
- Whitehead, A.N. (1929). *The aims of education*. New York: Free Press.
- Williams, M. (2002). *Generalisation in interpretive research*. In T. May (Ed.), *Qualitative research in action* (pp.125-143). London: Sage.
- Williams, A.M., & Reilly, T. (2000). Talent identification and development in soccer. *Journal of Sport Sciences*, *18*, 657-667.
- Wood, K., & Abernethy, B. (1989). Parental influences on the competitive sport experiences of children. *Physical Education Review*, *12*(1), 56-69.
- Woodman, L. (1993). Coaching: A science, an art, an emerging profession. *Sport Science Review*, *2*(2), 1-13.
- Woods, P. (1985). Conversations with teachers: Some aspects of life history method. *British Educational Research Journal*, *11*, 1, pp.13-25.
- Woods, P. (1996). *Researching the art of teaching: Ethnography for educational use*. London: Routledge.
- Wolfenden, L.E., & Holt, N.L. (2005). Talent development in elite junior tennis: Perceptions of players, parents, and coaches. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, *17*, 108-126.
- Woolger, C., & Power, T.G. (1993). Parent and Power socialization: Views from the achievement literature. *Journal of Sport Behaviour*, *16*(3), 171-189.
- Wuerth, S., Lee, M.J., & Alfermann, D. (2004). Parental involvement and athletes' career in youth sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, *5*(1), 21-33.
- Wylleman, P., & De Knop, P. (2000). *Career transitions in sport: International perspectives*. Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.
- Yang, X., Telama, R., & Laakso, L. (1996). Parents' physical activity, socio-economic status and education as predictors of physical activity and sport among children and youths - A 12 year follow-up study. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *31*(3), 273-289.

Yancey, A.K. (1998). Building positive self-image in adolescents in foster care, the use of role models in interactive group approach. *Adolescence*, **33**(3), 253-267.

Young, B.W., & Salmela, J.H. (1998). Athletes' perceptions of deliberate practice in Canadian middle distance running. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, **10**, 89-99.

Youth Sport Trust (2007). Our core work: How we make a difference. www.youthsporttrust.org Accessed 16.06.07

Zarbatany, L., Ghesquiere, K., & Mohr, K. (1992). A context perspective on early adolescents' friendship expectations. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, **12**, 111-126.

Appendix A

Questionnaire

DATE:

Expert Performers' Socialisation into Sport

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this research, which is a key part for the fulfilment of my Ph.D. within the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences at Loughborough University.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to provide some basic information on the socio-demographics of expert performers. In other words, I am interested in gaining a better understanding of the personal and sporting backgrounds of top-class athletes. This questionnaire has been administered to many athletes involved in a number of different sports (individual, team and multi-disciplinary).

The return of the questionnaire is paramount to the success of this study; however it must also be acknowledged that all the questions are optional and that you may at any time withdraw from participating in this research. All personal details that you supply will be treated in strictest confidence and there will be no direct reference to you, other than, if required, through the use of a fictional identity.

If you have any further questions relating to this research please feel free to contact me at K.E.Stewart@lboro.ac.uk or telephone 01509 228451. Your signature on this form indicates that you agree to complete this questionnaire.

Once again many thanks for your assistance and time!

Signature of Participant:

Contact Details of Supervisor:

Professor David Kirk
School of Sport and Exercise Sciences
Loughborough University
Leicestershire
LE11 3TU

D.Kirk@lboro.ac.uk

Contact Details of Researcher:

Karen E Stewart
School of Sport and Exercise Sciences
Loughborough University
Leicestershire
LE11 3TU

K.E.Stewart@lboro.ac.uk

Socialisation into Sport Questionnaire

1. Personal

- (a) Name: (b) E-mail:
(c) Telephone Number(s) (d) Occupation:
(e) Date of birth:

2. Education

- (a) Which secondary school did you attend?

(b) Did you go to University/College? If so, which one and which qualification did you achieve?

3. Sport

- (a) Which sport(s) are you playing/competing in at the moment and to what level?

(b) At what age and where (e.g. club/school) did you initially take up this/these sport(s)?

(c) Are you professional/amateur or other (please state)?

(d) In this/these sport(s), at what age did you first compete at **senior** international level?

(e) In this/these sport(s), did you compete at **junior** international level, if so, at what age?

(f) Who and what was the most influential reason for you participating in this/these sport(s)?

(g) What other sports have you played and to what level?

4. Family

(a) Were you brought up in a single or two parent family? Please specify and expand if necessary, for example, were they your biological parents?

(b) Through out your childhood did your parents work and, if so, what were their occupations?

(c) Were your parents involved in competitive sport and, if so, which sport and to what level?

(d) Do you have any siblings involved in competitive sport and, if so, which sport and to what level?

5. Further Participation

(a) Would you be willing to assist further in this research by taking part in an audio-taped interview, lasting approximately 1 hour? If so, please make sure you have filled in your contact details above.

(b) Any additional comments?

Thank you

Appendix B

Outcome of the Questionnaires

Initially the data from the questionnaires were entered into Excel, but in order to achieve more detailed results the data were transferred on to SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The results were separated into three categories: 1. Sport. 2. Gender. 3. Combination of all categories.

1. Sport

(a) Gender (%):

Sport	Male	Female
Rugby Union	21	24
Field Hockey	69	17
Swimming	5	5
Track and Field Athletics	5	5
Taekwondo	7	3

(b) Month participants were born (%):

	Hockey	Rugby	Swimming	Athletics	Taekwondo
January	9.1	11.6	30.0	10.0	----
February	6.8	5.8	10.0	----	10.0
March	9.1	8.1	10.0	----	10.0
April	2.3	8.1		20.0	20.0
May	18.2	7.0	20.0	10.0	10.0
June	9.1	8.1	10.0	----	----
July	9.1	5.8	----	20.0	10.0
August	15.9	9.3	20.0	----	10.0
September	4.5	14.0	----	10.0	20.0
October	6.8	5.8	----	10.0	----
November	4.5	8.1	----	----	----
December	4.5	8.1	----	20.0	10.0

(c) Type of secondary school the participants attended (%):

	Comprehensive	Grammar	Independent
Field Hockey	55.6	13.3	31.1
Rugby Union	44.0	7.1	48.8
Swimming	80.0	10.0	10.0
Track and Field Athletics	70.0	10.0	20.0
Taekwondo	100	----	----

(d) Current or former Higher Education student-athletes (%):

Sport	Percentage
Field Hockey	91
Rugby Union	47.7
Swimming	100
Track and Field Athletics	100
Taekwondo	30

(e) Professional or amateur sports people (%)

	Amateur	Professional
Field Hockey	88.9	11.1
Rugby Union	30.2	69.8
Swimming	50.0	50.0
Track & Field Athletics	50.0	50.0
Taekwondo	60.0	40.0

(f) Initial introduction to their primary sport (%)

Sport	School	Club	University
Field Hockey	53.0	46.7	
Rugby Union	24.4	68.6	7.0
Swimming	----	100	
Track & Field Athletics	50.0	50.0	
Taekwondo	----	100	

(g) Who or what was the most influential reason for the participant taking up their primary sport (%)

Sport	Family	Teacher	Coach	Friends	Other
Field Hockey	51.1	22.2	2.2	4.4	20
Rugby Union	48.2	12.9	3.5	7.1	28.2
Swimming	70			10	20
Track & Field Athletics	40	20	10	10	20
Taekwondo	30		20		50

(h) The level the participants played other sports (%)

Sport	Did not play other sports	Recreational sports	County level	International level
Field Hockey	2.2	24.4	64.4	8.9
Rugby Union	1.3	15	72.5	11.3
Swimming	----	60	40	----
Track and Field Athletics	----	40	20	40
Taekwondo	10	50	30	10

(i) Participants brought up in a single or two parent (heterosexual) family (%)

Sport	Two Parent	Single
Field Hockey	88.9	11.1
Rugby Union	81.4	18.6
Swimming	100	----
Track & Field Athletics	80	20
Taekwondo	80	20

(j) Social Grade* of their fathers' occupation of (%)

Sport	Social Grade 1	Social Grade 2	Social Grade 3	Social Grade 4	Social Grade 5	Cat. 6	Cat 7
Field Hockey	32.6	46.5	18.6	2.3	----	----	0
Rugby Union	30.8	37.2	23.1	7.7	----	1.3	0
Swimming	50	40	10	----	----	----	0
Track & field Athletics	20	50	20	10	----	----	0
Taekwondo	11.1	22.2	33.3	22.2	11.1	----	0

*SG1 Managerial and professional occupations.

SG 2 Intermediate occupations.

SG 3 Small employers and own account workers.

SG 4 Lower supervisory and technical occupations.

SG 5 Semi-routine and routine occupations.

(National Statistics Socio-economic Classification, 2005)

Category 6 – Housewife/husband.

Category 7 – Unemployed

(k) Social Grade of their mothers' occupation (%)

Sport	Social Grade 1	Social Grade 2	Social Grade 3	Social Grade 4	Social Grade 5	Category 6
Field Hockey	6.7	44.4	6.7	15.6	4.4	22.2
Rugby Union	9.9	39.5	6.2	9.9	9.9	24.7
Swimming	10	30	----	10	30	20
Track & Field Athletics	11.1	44.4	11.1	11.1	----	22.2
Taekwondo	----	----	----	40	20	40

(l) The standard participants' fathers played sport (%)

Sport	Did not play sports	Recreational sports	County level	International level
Field Hockey	30.2	11.6	39.5	18.6
Rugby Union	36.6	34.1	17.1	12.2
Swimming	30	20	50	----
Track & Field Athletics	50	40	10	----
Taekwondo	70	----	10	20

(m) The standard participants' mothers played sport (%)

Sport	Did not play sports	Recreational sports	County level	International level
Field Hockey	51.1	6.7	31.1	11.1
Rugby Union	74.1	7.4	16.0	2.5
Swimming	80.0	----	20.0	----
Track & Field Athletics	40.0	50.0	10.0	----
Taekwondo	100	----	----	----

(n) The standard participants' brother(s) play(ed) sport (%)

Sport	Did not play sports	Recreational sports	County level	International level	No Response
Field Hockey	28.9	2.2	6.7	13.3	48.9
Rugby Union	3.5	10.5	11.6	7.0	67.4
Swimming	----	10.0	20.0	30.0	40.0
Track & Field Athletics	30.0	10.0	20.0	10.0	30.0
Taekwondo	20.0	20.0	----	20.0	40.0

(o) The standard participants' sister(s) play(ed) sport (%)

Sport	Did not play sports	Recreational sports	County level	International level	No Response
Field Hockey	22.2	2.2	6.7	15.6	53.3
Rugby Union	1.2	4.7	2.3	8.1	83.7
Swimming	----	----	10.0	----	90.0
Track & field Athletics	40.0	----	10.0	----	50.0
Taekwondo	20.0	10.0	----	----	70%.0

(p) Initial age the participants took up their primary sport (years):

Sport	Number of Respondent's	Minimum Age	Maximum Age	Mean	Standard Deviation
Field Hockey	45	4	17	9.44	2.701
Rugby Union	86	3	21	9.53	4.101
Swimming	10	4	14	8.10	3.414
Track field Athletics	10	9	17	12.6	2.716
Taekwondo	10	5	15	8.20	3.425

(q) Age the participants played sport at junior international level (years):

Sport	N	Did not play junior international	Minimum Age	Maximum Age	Mean	Standard Deviation
Field Hockey	44	1	12	18	15.11	1.513
Rugby Union	86	15	14	21	16.56	1.239
Swimming	10	2	13	16	14.75	1.035
Track & field Athletics	10	----	14	18	16.20	1.476
Taekwondo	10	1	13	15	13.67	.866

(r) Age the participants first played their primary sport at senior international level (years):

Sport	Number of Participant's	Minimum Age	Maximum Age	Mean	Standard Deviation
Field Hockey	45	16	25	25.09	2.087
Rugby Union	86	17	30	20.16	2.125
Swimming	10	16	21	18.30	1.636
Track & field Athletics	10	18	24	20.70	1.947
Taekwondo	10	15	22	16.70	2.111

(s) Further Participation in the study (%)

Sport	Yes	No	No Response
Field Hockey	40	60	
Rugby Union	33.7	53.5	12.8
Swimming	70	30	
Track & Field athletics	70	30	
Taekwondo	60	40	

2. Gender

(a) Completed questionnaires:

Male: 107

Female: 54

Total: 161

(b) Month participants were born:

Month	Males %	Females %
January	12.1	9.4
February	8.4	1.9
March	5.6	13.2
April	9.3	3.8
May	7.5	18.9
June	8.4	5.7
July	6.5	9.4
August	13.1	7.5
September	12.1	7.5
October	4.7	7.5
November	7.5	1.9
December	4.7	13.2

(c) Secondary school the participants attended:

School type	Male%	Female%
Comprehensive	46.7	70.4
Grammar	6.7	13.0
Independent	46.7	16.7

(d) Current or former Higher Education student-athletes (%):

	Yes %	No %
Male	56.1	43.9
Female	84.6	15.4

(e) Participants professional or amateur:

	Professional %	Amateur %
Male	61.7	38.3
Female	24.1	75.9

(f) Initial introduction to their primary sport (%)

	School %	Club %
Male	25.2	74.8
Female	42.6	46.3

(g) Who or what was the most influential reason for the participant taking up their primary sport (%):

	Family	Teacher	Coach	Friends	Other
Male	51.9	11.3	3.8	3.8	29.2
Female	42.6	20.4	5.6	11.1	20.4

(h) Level to which the participants played other sports (%):

	No other sport played	Recreational	County	International
Male	.9	24.3	61.7	7.5
Female	3.7	22.2	55.6	18.5

(i) Social Grade* of their fathers' occupations (%)

	Social grade 1	Social grade 2	Social grade 3	Social grade 4	Social grade 5	Househusband
Male	33.6	33.6	15.9	6.5	.9	.9
Female	18.5	44.4	27.8	5.6	----	----

(j) Social Grade of their mothers' occupations (%)

	Social grade 1	Social grade 2	Social grade 3	Social grade 4	Social grade 5	Housewife
Male	7.6	38.1	5.7	12.4	9.5	26.7
Female	9.3	35.2	5.6	14.8	9.3	18.5

*SG1 Managerial and professional occupations.

SG 2 Intermediate occupations.

SG 3 Small employers and own account workers.

SG 4 Lower supervisory and technical occupations.

SG 5 Semi-routine and routine occupations.

(National Statistics Socio-economic Classification, 2005)

Category 6 Housewife/husband.

Category 7 Unemployed

(k) The standard the participants' fathers played competitive sport (%)

	Did not play sport	Recreational	County	International	No Response
Male	31.8	25.2	23.4	14.0	5.6
Female	44.4	22.2	24.1	9.3	----

(l) The standard the participants' mothers played competitive sport (%)

	Did not play sport	Recreational	County	International	No Response
Male	69.2	6.5	15	4.7	4.7
Female	55.6	13.0	25.9	3.7	1.9

(m) The standard the participants' brother(s) play(ed) sport (%)

	Did not play sport	Recreational	County	International	No Response
Male	4.7	6.5	12.1	11.2	65.4
Female	29.6	13	7.4	11.1	38.9

(n) The levstandard the participants' sister(s) play(ed) sport (%)

	Did not play sport	Recreational	County	International	No Response
Male	2.8	1.9	5.6	5.6	84.1
Female	25.9	7.4	1.9	14.8	50

(o) Age the participants initially took up their primary sport; played as a junior international; and as a senior international (years):

	Initial age took up sport (mean)	Junior international age (mean)	Senior international age (mean)
Male	8.74	16.01	19.93
Female	11.09	15.36	19.69

(p) Further Participation (%):

	Yes	No
Male	39.2	60.8
Female	54.7	45.3

3. Combination of all Categories

(a) Sports involved in this study (%):

Sports	Percentage (%)
Field Hockey	28
Rugby Union	53.4
Swimming	6.2
Track & Field Athletics	6.2
Taekwondo	6.2

(b) The month the participants were born (%):

Month	Percent (%)
January	11.3
February	6.3
March	8.1
April	7.5
May	11.3
June	7.5
July	7.5
August	11.3
September	10.6
October	5.6
November	5.6
December	7.5

(c) The type of school the participants attended:

Comprehensive: 54.7% Grammar: 8.8% Independent: 36.5%
 Co-educational: 81.1% All girl School: 5.7% All boy: 13.2%

(d) The percentage of participants that attend(ed) University:

Yes: 65.4% No: 34.6%

(e) Are the participants' professional or amateur sports people?

Professionals: 49.1% Amateurs: 50.9%

(f) The participants' occupations:

Student: 34.2% Within own sport: 51.3% Out with own sport: 14.6%

(g) Did the participants initially start playing their primary sport at a club, school or university?

School: 31.1% Club: 65.2% University: 3.7%

(h) Most influential reason for the participant taking up their primary sport:

	Percent (%)
Family	48.8
Teacher	14.4
Coach	4.4
Friends	6.3
Other	26.3

(i) To what level did the participants play other sports?

	Percent (%)
Did not play other sports	1.9
Recreational level	24.5
County level	61.9
International	11.6

(j) Participants brought up in a single or two parent (heterosexual) family:

Single parent: 15.5% Two-parent: 84.5%

(k) The occupational classification of the participants' parents

Occupation classifications	Father (%)	Mother (%)
1. Managerial and professional	28.6	8.1
2. Intermediate	37.3	36.6
3. Small employers and own account workers	19.9	5.6
4. Lower supervisory and technical occupations	6.2	13.0
5. Semi-routine and routine occupations	.6	9.3
6. Housewife/husband	.6	23.6
7. Unemployed	----	----
No response	6.8	3.7

(l) The standard participants' families play(ed) sport

Level sport played	Father (%)	Mother (%)	Brother (%)	Sister (%)
None	36.0	64.6	13.0	10.6
Recreational	24.2	8.7	8.7	3.7
County	23.6	18.6	10.6	4.3
International	12.4	4.3	11.2	8.7
Don't know	3.7	3.7	56.5	72.7

(m) Descriptive Statistics:

	N	Minimum Age	Maximum Age	Mean	Std. Deviation
Initial age the participant took up their sport	161	3	21	9.53	3.674
Initial Age as junior international	142	12	21	15.80	1.581
Initial Age as senior international	161	15	30	19.84	2.257

(n) The number of participants that agreed to take further part in the study, by means of an interview:

Yes: 41.6% No: 51.6% No Response: 6.8%

Appendix C

The Participants

TRACK AND FIELD ATHLETES

Tracey is a 22-year old, senior international 800m runner. She started running at school when she was 9 years old; she then stopped for a while, before joining a running club when she was 12. Tracey was a keen participant in all the sports that were on offer at her primary school and she also did ballet dancing out of school up until the age of 13 or 14. At secondary school Tracey continued playing many sports, including hockey, rounders, basketball, football and netball. She also ran in the school cross-country team, which sometimes caused a bit of conflict, because there were often clashes between the school league and the club league. Tracey generally chose to run for her club because that was of a higher standard, but she felt that decision disappointed her teachers and she often felt that she had let her school down. Initially Tracey was not sure if she preferred to run cross-country or track, but at 15 years old it became clear that she was more successful on the track. This is when she broke through into the junior international scene, initially in the 1500m. However, two years later she moved on to concentrate on the 800m. Tracey's parents were always supportive and proud of her athletic achievements, and actively encouraged her to be independent from an early age. For example, they liked her to save up to buy new trainers and equipment as well as make her own way to training. Tracey has only had two coaches throughout her athletic career. In her early years, she thought her coach was very good because he did not push her too hard, too early. As she progressed in her running she felt there were limitations to his coaching and subsequently changed coaches. Her new coach is much more "accommodating" and although he can be quite stubborn he does not see running as the 'be all and end all,' which she appreciates. Tracey made a lot of friends when she initially started at the running club and she enjoyed the intimacy of her running group. At the moment, she is a post-graduate student and trains at a university but she is still 'attached' to her old club. She therefore finds she has to do the majority of her training on her own which she finds difficult, but hopes it will make her a stronger runner in the long run.

Francesca is a 22-year old, international javelin thrower. She was heavily involved in a lot of sports in her early years and believes this was heavily influenced by having an older brother, who she played a lot of sports with in their back garden. She was also a national U11 table tennis champion and at school she continued to play a wide variety of sports, many to county level. At around the age of 10, her PE teacher thought she had a natural talent for throwing the javelin and asked a qualified coach to come and look at her, but the coach said that she was too young to focus on one sport. However, when she was about 13, he did watch her throw, and he agreed that she did have a lot of potential. At 14, she started training at the athletics club, throwing the javelin once or twice a week. Nevertheless, her coach encouraged her to keep playing all her other sports for both fitness and co-ordination. Even though at the age of 16 she had competed in the U20's at the junior World Championships, it was not until she finished her 'A' levels [age 18], that she decided to solely concentrate on throwing the javelin. Francesca took a gap year before coming to university so that she could totally focus on her javelin and train twice a day most days of the week, which she really enjoyed. Her parents have always been very supportive and her mum's wage paid for her to go to a Private school where the sporting facilities and PE staff were 'excellent'. Her dad "hates sport", but is very proud of her and she thinks her brother could have succeeded in sport if he hadn't been so "lazy." Up until this year Francesca had the same coach, she even chose to study at a University that was close enough for her to continue being trained by the same coach. However, he has now retired, and she is looking for a technical coach to work alongside her strength and conditioning coach. Francesca was never dependent on others, and could train with or without her friends being there. However, she did add that during her gap year she "threw with 2 other guys" and that they were influential in her development because she enjoyed their company, and motivated her to train harder. Francesca claims that the 2004 Olympic Games was the first competition that she 'absolutely loved competing in' and would really like to get another opportunity in 2008.

Samantha is a 31-year old, senior international long distance runner. Between the ages of 5 and 10, Samantha "dabbled" in quite a lot of sports both within and out of school. Samantha's mum ran a lot and when she was about 9 years old she persuaded her mum to let her go running with her. When she was in middle school she entered her first cross country race and won it easily. A friend of her mum's then suggested

that she should join a running club, which she did and subsequently “hooked up” with the coach who still coaches her now. At U11’s she was very successful and won most of the local races that she entered. However, as she progressed through the age groups she wasn’t quite as successful, but she recognised that she was running against a lot of talented athletes. At 12 years old her parents split up, initially she moved away to live with her mum, but after a year she returned to live with her dad, primarily so that she could rejoin her old athletics club. She had her ‘first taster’ of running for England at the age of 14 [English Schools] and has steadily progressed to competing for Great Britain at the Olympics. Although her mum was the initial person to introduce her to running, Samantha explained that she was not really part of her life. Her dad funded her running, but because he worked long hours he could not give her his full support. Samantha recalls that she saw more of her coach than her dad, and her coach would refer to her, and treat her as his ‘second daughter’. Her mother subsequently remarried and had another family but none of her step siblings are involved in competitive sport. Samantha believes that being good at sport had a positive effect on her popularity at school, because of the kudos that came with it. Samantha’s friends at her running club were, and are, very important to her and she believes they were very influential on her remaining within the sport, especially when she was going through bad spells. Samantha trained, qualified and worked as teacher for several years but since 2001 she has been a full-time athlete.

Olivia is a 21 year old international pole-vaulter. She was a former gymnast, who competed for Northern Ireland at the 1998 Commonwealth Games. Therefore, most of Olivia’s early years were taken up with training for gymnastics. However, she still played a lot of sport within school, and was titled ‘female athlete of the year’ for her year group, every school year. She was also a district and county athlete at middle distance running. In April 1999 she retired from gymnastics, aged 15½ years when she believed she had reached her peak, for example, she had not made the British team in gymnastics, and was determined to “make it on to the British team in another sport.” She explained that some pole-vaulters came to her gym for some technical sessions, and she thought it looked like it could be good fun and something that she might be able to do. Two years later she represented GB in pole-vaulting at an international meet. Olivia’s family have always been very supportive and are still heavily involved in sports themselves. Her brother has played a lot of sports, but has

never committed to any particular one. In the early days, she was quite happy to do exactly as her coaches told her, but these days she prefers it to be a much more democratic relationship and does not appreciate being told what she must or must not do. Olivia does not like getting too close to training partners who could be fellow competitors; this was both in gymnastics and pole vault. She would rather train with a mixed group of athletes, both male and female, that can motivate each other. Sport has always taken precedence over her academic work, but she hopes to complete her part-time degree next year. Olivia will be content if she achieves a '2:2' because she believes her sporting achievements will give her additional credibility alongside her academic achievement.

Rory is a 28-year old, long distance runner. He described himself as being a very "active kid", and his main sport was football up until he went to college at the age of 18. He started cross country in his first year at secondary school, where he was 2nd in his first county schools competition. After this, his PE teacher encouraged him to join the local running club. He liked having two sets of friends: his 'athlete friends' and his 'football friends'. In the early years it was not unusual for him to be running in a race in the morning and playing football in the afternoon. According to Rory, his progress in running developed slowly and although he was always improving, in his middle years he got a lot of "pastings." He blames this on being a physically late developer and also because he was not training as often as his fellow runners, mainly because of his football commitments. He believes that his running career took off when he was about 17, when other runners were starting to fall by the wayside. This is also around the time when he quit football and focused totally on running. Rory's parents split up when he was 11 and he found sport was a means to take his mind off what was going on at home. However, he also states that both his parents have supported him in everything he has done, and that those difficult times have made him more independent, which he believes, is a good thing. Now that he is a successful runner and his family life has settled down, his parents come to watch him more often. It was not until Rory decided to invest in running that he relocated to be closer to a recognised coach and he has worked with him ever since. Rory argues that he has seen too many athletes burn out at a young age, primarily because of over training. Therefore, he is happy that his progress was slow and that he decided not to specialise in running at an earlier age.

Cameron is 23-year old and has competed for Great Britain as both a junior and senior level long distance runner. He has always 'loved' sport and between the ages of 8 and 16, football was his favourite sport, although he admits to only being 'very average' at it. He started doing some distance running with his PE teacher at secondary school and this teacher put him (and two of his mates) in contact with the local athletics club. For the first year he only went now and again because he did not really enjoy it, his friends had given up and he had not made any new friends. However, his parents encouraged him to keep going for the health and social benefits, opposed to them seeing any potential in him as an athlete. He did not enjoy training until he was almost 15, this was when two new boys joined the athletics club and he became very friendly with them. This friendship was the catalyst that encouraged Cameron to train more often and a short time later he ran a very good time in a 3km race. He thinks that good run gave him more respect from other runners and made him more popular with his athlete peers. This development happened between the ages of 16 and 18, and Cameron contends that "he was improving ridiculously through those years," including winning the prestigious English schools competition (3 years in a row). Cameron describes his parents as being "stupidly supportive", although he adds that his mum was the one who had to do all the 'donkey work' when he was younger and it is only now that he has been successful, that his "dad wants some of the limelight". Although Cameron has stayed with the same coach since he started running, they do not have a harmonious relationship. However, they realise that they are good for each other, and they respect each others input. Although success is important to Cameron these days, in the initial years, it was primarily his friends that motivated him to keep running. Similar to Rory, he also thinks that specialising early in his sport would have been detrimental to his long term running career.

Nick is a 24-year old, international pole-vaulter. At primary school he liked to play all sports available. Out of school he spent most of his time doing gymnastics, and playing football on a Sunday. At the age of 11 he was 'scouted' by a Premiership football team and was asked to join their Academy side. For a year he managed to combine both football and gymnastics, but at the age of 12 his gymnastics coach told him he had to decide between the two sports. He chose football because he "wanted to have fun and be a kid, basically". At around this age he also joined an athletics club to help fill the void that gymnastics had once filled. Throughout his secondary

schooling he still played a wide variety of sports and made the 1st team in most sports whilst still playing and training with the Football Academy. He was disappointed to be dropped from the Academy at the age of 16. At the athletics club he started off competing in mainly sprint events, but at an U15's athletics competition there was no one available to do the pole vault and he offered to "give it a go", in order to get their team some points. He had never even held a pole before that day, but he ended up winning the competition. He believes that he had an advantage in the sport because his body-weight-to-strength ratio was good, mainly, because of his previous involvement in gymnastics. Nick subsequently went on to successfully compete in the English Schools National Championships. At the same time (between the ages of 16-18) he was still playing football and volleyball for his College team. Indeed, it was not until he was 18 when he broke his ankle playing football that he agreed with the national pole-vaulting coach and the NGB that he should stop playing other sports, particularly as he was now being funded as a pole-vaulter. Nick explains that he had "masses" of support from his parents in whatever sport he was playing and he appreciates that they let him chose what direction he took. In pole vaulting Nick has had 3 coaches, and he thinks they were good for him at each stage of his development. Having fun with his team mates has always been important to Nick. Even in an individual sport like pole vaulting, Nick enjoys the camaraderie he has with his training group. Nick acknowledges that Great Britain is currently a little behind in terms of world pole vaulting, but he is hopeful that he (and a couple of others) will be "knocking on the door of the international scene" in a couple of years.

SWIMMERS

Louise is 24-years old and has been a lottery-funded swimmer since 2001 and this year she has also started working part-time as a sport psychologist. Although Louise learnt to swim when she was age 4, and has always loved swimming, it was not until she was 14 that she accepted a friend's invitation to join a swimming club. Initially she was only training 6-8 hours a week, but her swimming progressed very quickly and by the age of 17 she had qualified for the Commonwealth Games. It was at this stage that Louise decided to stop playing other sports so that she could concentrate on her swimming. However, it was not until she came to University that her training increased dramatically, it almost doubled. This dramatic life change took Louise

several months to adjust to, especially as she was a conscientious student, and also because it was the first time she had lived away from home. Louise describes her parents as “not sporty at all”, but very supportive. Her brother played a lot of sport at school, but he is no longer playing any competitive sport. It was not until this year that Louise has changed coaches, prior to this she was simply coached by whoever took her age group at the club she trained with. Although it was her friend that introduced her to the swimming club, Louise does not think that making friends was a key reason for her joining and staying with her swimming club. However, she does concede that her swim-mates are more important to her these days, but she still does not like to be surrounded by swimmers ‘24/7’. At the moment Louise is concentrating on the 2008 Olympic Games and then she plans to retire.

William is 22-years old and although he played several sports at school, swimming has always been his main sport. He joined a swimming club at the age of 5 or 6 and started competing at the age of 9. William regularly won local age group titles between the ages of 11 and 15, but it was not until he was between 15 and 16 years old that he made any “big jumps”, and won some National titles. He suggests this was because he matured later than other swimmers. William has never particularly enjoyed training, but he likes winning, and success is the key motivating factor for him to train hard. When William came to University he joined the swimming club, but, he made it clear to his coaches that his academic work was more important to him than his swimming. He understood that a career in swimming would be relatively short term; therefore, it was crucial to him that he gained a “good degree”. He thinks that he would have been swimming far better times by now if he had not spent so much time and effort on his academic course, but this is not a cause for regret. Now that he has his degree, he is focusing full-time on his swimming and hopes to make that deficit up. William’s parents have always been very supportive and encouraging, both emotionally and practically. His elder brother was also very influential in his sporting development, particularly in swimming. William thought his brother was a great role model; I quote: ‘...my parents encouraged me and my brother inspired me.’ William has had many coaches throughout his sporting career, and part of the reason he gives for this is because of his ‘explosive’ personality which he does acknowledge can be self-destructive. Many of William’s friends are now swimmers but they have never been a reason for him to continue swimming. William is going to give

swimming his "all" until the Commonwealth games and dependent on his times and results he will then reassess his options.

Kate is 22-years old and her parent's took her to swimming lessons when she was 5 years old, mainly for her safety reasons (for example, in case she fell into a river etc.) She joined the swimming club at around the age of 9, as well as playing a wide variety of sports both within school and outside of it. Kate believes she had a 'natural' talent for most sports and played county squash and hockey and also ran county standard cross-country. At the age of 12 she made the national time trials for her age group [swimming] and she was then asked if she would like to add one early morning session to her training week, which she did. When she was 15, she "dropped" all her other sports because she was training more for swimming, this left her tired with little time for other activities. She has been competing as a senior from the age of 16 and is now a lottery-funded swimmer, whilst also studying and working part-time. Kate's parents have always been very supportive and she gives them much of the credit for her achieving her ambitions in swimming. Her mum was the one who took her to most of her training sessions and competitions, whilst her dad took her younger brother to play rugby, cricket or football. Both her parents were county squash players, but they both stopped playing so that they could "ferry" her and her brother around to various sporting events. Between the ages of 12 and 18, Kate trained at one club and was coached by the same person for those 6 years. Although it was only a small club, she believes that she benefited from having a good coach who picked her out as having special talents and gave her a lot of individual attention. Her swimming-mates have always been very important to Kate and they are one of the key reasons that she enjoyed going training, both in the early stages and presently. Kate's academic work is also important to her, and that is why she does not want to swim full-time. This is because when she finishes competitive swimming it is important to her to get a "good" job.

Lewis is 20-years old and learnt to swim around the age of 5 or 6 and has been swimming competitively since the age of 9. At primary school he loved playing lots of other sports, for example, rugby, football, rounders and cricket. At secondary school he specialised mainly on rugby and swimming, but between the ages of 14 and 15 his swimming coach suggested that he should stop playing rugby, mainly, for fear

of injury. Lewis agreed and was happy to focus on swimming, because at that stage he was beginning to enjoy it more than rugby and also he thought he was a better swimmer. Lewis won his first national age group competition at the age of 12 and has made steady progress ever since. He always has, and still does consider swimming to be "a lot of fun", including the early morning training sessions! At the age of 15, Lewis was first selected for the senior Great Britain squad and at 19 years old he went to university, mainly to concentrate on his swimming, but also to study at the adjoining college. His parents have always been very supportive and he is appreciative of the time, money and effort that they have given to both him and his elder brother, who is also an international swimmer. Lewis has had 3 coaches throughout his swimming career, two from his local swimming club and one from the university swimming club. He likes to have a good relationship with his coaches and more recently likes to be treated as an individual and given 'sets' specific to him and not the group. Although Lewis did not take up swimming to make friends, he has made some very good relationships and he thinks these swimming-mates make training much more fun. Lewis would like to swim "forever", but his short-term goal is to focus on the 2008 Olympics, and then he is going to re-evaluate his position.

Bob is 24-years old and comes from a family of swimmers; his 4 older brothers all swam to a high level, with his eldest brother swimming at the World Championships in Madrid in 1986. His dad and brothers taught him to swim at about the age of 6 or 7. He initially did not enjoy swimming because he found it difficult and did not think that he was very good. It was not until he was about 14 or 15 years old that he thinks he made a bit of a "jump" in his swimming. Up until that age, Bob was also playing rugby and was showing quite a lot of potential in that sport too. However, his rugby coach was becoming frustrated that he was missing games to go swimming and gave him an ultimatum to choose between rugby and swimming. Bob chose swimming because he enjoyed it more and thought he had more of a chance of being successful at it. After a slow but progressive development, at the age of 17, he won 13 Gold Medals at the National Championships in both junior and senior competitions and at age 18 won the European junior championships, his swimming at senior level took off from then. Although his initial coach at his local club was very good and enthusiastic, Bob felt he had to change clubs at 18 because he had no competition from the other swimmers, and believed that he needed competition to motivate him in training

sessions. This caused some animosity between him and his former club, but he felt the move was necessary if he wanted to succeed to a higher level. Bob continued swimming competitively throughout his undergraduate degree and his Masters degree. Although he felt that he did not do either his swimming or his academic work justice by trying to be successful in both domains. He now wishes he had concentrated more on his academic work as he realises that he will have a "life after swimming". Fun and enjoyment with his fellow swimmers has always been of key importance to Bob. Those friendships and also his pure enthusiasm for swimming is why Bob thinks he has made it to elite level.

Mike is 24-years old and he described himself as being 'sports crazy' as a youngster. Up until the age of 14, Mike argues that rugby was his main sport, playing or training for it four times a week. However, he was also swimming at a club at this stage and at about the age of 15 he felt that he was progressing quicker in his swimming without doing a great deal of training. At the age of 16 he realised that he could not succeed in both sports, so he chose to focus solely on swimming. Even though he was more "passionate about playing and watching rugby", realistically, he knew he had more chance of being successful at swimming. He went to a 'swimming university' at 18, so that he could focus on his swimming whilst also studying for a degree. Initially Mike found balancing both his work and training quite difficult because his training had increased by at least 50%. However, by his 2nd year he felt he had adapted to his new training regime and he was able to cope with both demands. This was evident when he won his first senior international competition aged 21. Mike's father was an Officer in the army and he was therefore brought up in an army camp, where there were a lot of sport facilities at his disposal. His parents have always been very supportive and encouraged him in both his academic work and his swimming. He is very close to his elder brother and he appreciated the friendly sibling rivalry between the two of them. Mike thinks that he has benefited from having good coaches all the way through his development in his swimming, but argues that this has been by chance, as he has never actively sought out a particular coach. Mike has always enjoyed the company of fellow sports people, not necessarily other swimmers, but like-minded people, who understand the commitment you have to put in if you want to reach the pinnacle of your sport.

FIELD HOCKEY PLAYERS

Alicia is 19-years old and has represented England in hockey at U16's, U17's, U18's, U21's and the full senior squad and also more recently the senior Great Britain hockey squad. Alicia was initially brought up in Kenya and most of her young life was spent playing various sports in the sunshine. She did not concentrate on any one sport in particular but she would argue that running cross-country with Kenyan runners when she was in the U9's has stood her in good stead, fitness wise, for where she is now. Her parents 'sent' her and her older brother to England to study at a boarding school when she was 12 years old, and she stayed there until she was 18 years old. Initially, Alicia 'hated' her new boarding school and was very homesick; she missed the freedom of Kenya and found her new life to be a bit of a "culture shock". However, her new school did provide a lot of excellent sporting opportunities, so Alicia played as much sport as she could and ended up "captaining most of the squads". Alicia was first introduced to hockey when she about 9 or 10 years old and when she went for her first hockey trials at her new school the PE teacher told her she had the potential to play for England. This comment motivated her to work even harder at her game. She was also invited to go for England trials in athletics (200m), but this was on the same day as the England hockey trials, she chose hockey because she thought she was better at it and she preferred to be with other people and be part of a team. At the age of 15 she was playing England U16's and has since progressed through the England age groups until she got her first senior cap at the age of 17. However, it was not until she was in her final year at school that she joined a National league club side. This was mainly because she was a sports scholar at her school and she was therefore obliged to play for her school hockey team, in both the girls and the boys' teams. Her PE teacher also advised her not to join an outside club at that stage because she was still busy playing other sports as well as trying to achieve three 'A' levels. In retrospect, she thinks her teacher was right and appreciates now that it would have been a hard struggle to fit everything in. Sport has always been a high priority in Alicia's family; her dad was a professional golfer, her mum was a professional squash player and her brother played rugby for England at U19 and U21's. However, Alicia argues that she never felt any pressure from her family to succeed in sport, although she acknowledges that this was perhaps because they were living on the other side of the world! As a youngster Alicia found it

difficult when other parents came to watch and her team mates would go away with them at the end of the game Alicia recalls: "that wasn't a very nice feeling". However, her brother would often come and support her and she really appreciated that. Initially, Alicia liked a 'fun coach' that would let her play 'fun games' however, now she views her hockey more seriously and likes a coach who is more technically and tactically sound. Perhaps not surprisingly, Alicia's team-mates are "very, very important" to her, they are her motivation to play as well as she can. She likes to be friendly with all her team-mates; however, she does find it awkward playing for both the U21 side and the senior team. This is because she feels she is abandoning her U21 team-mates when she is called up to the senior squad. Alicia likes to go home to her family in Kenya as often as she can and she still likes to play other sports including some extreme sports. Moreover, although she is not supposed to, she will still regularly turn out for her university hockey team, "on the fly".

Carol is 24-years old and works part-time as a secondary PE teacher and represents England in hockey. Carol played all the sports that were available at her primary school and remembers being quite good at them all. She described herself as always being very competitive and especially liked to play netball and football as well as competing in sprint races. Carol was first introduced to hockey when she went to secondary school, and again she "picked the game up fairly easily". Her PE teacher was a hockey umpire and Carol claims that she was very influential in her decision to play hockey and that she is still in regular contact with her. Following her PE teacher's encouragement and advice Carol joined the local hockey club. A couple of years later Carol was selected to play for her regional side, it was at this stage she decided to move to another hockey club which played in a higher league. When Carol came to university she continued to play hockey and made it straight into the first team, which again was another step up from the level she had been previously playing at. At this stage she still liked to play other sports, but found that she did not have much spare time in between her studies and her hockey. Whilst at university Carol went for England U21 trials, but did not get past the second round and she describes her progression in hockey as "painfully slow at times". However, when she was 21, she got her first international cap against Spain. Carol was "very disappointed" to be dropped for the following international, but she blames this on politics within the sport and "if the face fits syndrome". Following a change of national coaches and

backroom staff, Carol is now a regular member of the senior England squad, having recently gained her 30th senior international cap. Since finishing university, she has moved to a National league team but has also needed to work part-time as her funding was “drastically slashed” after poor results in international competitions. According to Carol, her parents have never been involved in sport and they did not particularly encourage her to participate in any physical activities. They were happy to financially support her when she needed new equipment or went on tours etc, but when she was younger, they very rarely came to watch her. Her parents split up when she was 15, and as she has 2 younger sisters, she did not like to keep asking her parents to do things especially for her. She argues that this has made her a “stronger and more independent woman”. Now that she is playing for England her parents come and watch her “now and again” and so do her sisters, but Carol adds “they just don’t get sport”. Carol remembers her coach at her first club as being fun and she enjoyed ‘messaging around with her friends’. These days Carol has to travel two hours each way to go training, but she argues that it is worth it because of the quality of coaching. She also believes that trust and respect are key characteristics of a good coach. Carol is glad that she managed to get a degree as well as concentrating on her hockey. She was happy to sacrifice the social aspect of university life to further her sporting career. Even though she thinks some of her university friends thought she was a “bit of a geek”, she does not think that her hockey career would have continued to develop if she had engaged in “normal student social life”.

Stacey is 26-years old and has been a regular member of the England and GB hockey squad for the past 4 years. She has also recently returned to work as a part-time physiotherapist in a city hospital. At primary school Stacey enjoyed PE and played most of the sports that were available to her, and she especially enjoyed playing netball. When she was around 10 or 11 years old Stacey joined her local athletics club, as both her parents were actively involved with the club and they encouraged her to go running. She went to the athletics club twice a week until she was around the age of 14. This was when she was first introduced to hockey and also the time she suffered from an eating disorder and lost 4 stones in 4 months. Although Stacey still doesn’t know what sparked her illness off she commented that she felt more “comfortable in a team sport” and more “vulnerable in an individual sport”. Her PE teacher was also very influential in her decision to concentrate more on hockey. He

would give her (and some of the other girls who showed some potential) some extra skills practice in the evenings. He was also the coach at the local hockey club and he actively encouraged her to join his hockey club. Stacey's progression in hockey was extremely quick, she first played hockey at 14 years old and by the age of 16 she played for the senior county team and was also selected to play for England U16's. She continued to progress through the England age groups and received her first senior cap when she was 22 years old. Stacey continued to play other sports until she came to university at the age of 18, but by that stage hockey was becoming more of a priority and she also wanted to get a "good degree". She is glad that she was able to combine her studies and have a "regular student social life", as well as play a good level of hockey. Stacey believes that she was able to balance everything because she was still "only" being selected for England U21's, as she thinks playing for the full senior squad would "have tipped the balance". During this period Stacey was on full lottery funding and, ironically, it was this additional funding which supported her student lifestyle. Although Stacey thinks her dad may have been slightly disappointed when she decided to give up running, she acknowledges that both her parents have fully supported her in her transition to hockey. Most weekends her parents watch her play club hockey and now that she plays for the national team, they will often travel abroad to watch her international games. They have also financially supported her and made many sacrifices; for example, when she was 16 years old they took out a loan to finance her new kit and to pay for competitions and training abroad. Stacey argues that the three coaches she has had through her hockey career have all been very influential, but in various ways and with vastly different coaching styles. She has four close friends who have progressed through the same clubs and squads as she has and because of this she feels they have a very tight friendship bond and loyalty to each other, an intensity of friendship that she thinks would be unusual outside of team sport.

Gemma is 28-years old and plays hockey for England and Great Britain. She described herself as being very active when she was a youngster, although she did not recall playing any structured sport until the end of her primary school years. Around the age of 11 she played in all the school sports teams, including being captain of the netball team and the girl's football team. When she went to secondary school, there was no girl's football, so she continued to play netball and also a friend persuaded her

to go along to the school hockey trials, Gemma got into the team and her friend did not. She really enjoyed playing hockey and after a couple of months her PE teacher, who played hockey for a local club, encouraged Gemma to join her club, this was when she was about 12 or 13 years old. She initially started off in the 4th team, and was often playing alongside ladies who were “20 or even 30 years her senior”. At that stage she enjoyed the social side of playing and “enjoyed being with the team, because the girls were so nice”. When she was 15 years old she was selected to play for her county, and many people suggested she should move to a national league side. However, her PE teacher did not recommend that, because she thought she was too young to make that type of commitment. In retrospect, she was glad that she did not change clubs at that stage. However, when she was 16 her family moved house and consequently she moved to another hockey club, which happened to play in a higher league than her previous club. Gemma also moved from a state school to a grammar school where she was accepted on a sports scholarship (not only for hockey, but because she excelled in many other sports). Therefore, she had the opportunity to play “better” hockey both at school and at her new club. This paid dividends, as she was soon selected to play for England U18’s and in her 2nd year at university she was playing England U21’s. It was not until she had finished university that she made it on to the full England senior side. Gemma’s family have always been involved in sport and from a young child she remembers watching her parents play some type of sport and she thinks that their enthusiasm has “rubbed off” on her. Gemma has had a number of different coaches throughout her development, and has benefited from their varying coaching styles. She has always enjoyed being part of team and does not think that she would have continued in hockey if she had not made the “special friends” that she has. Gemma is glad that she did not take hockey too seriously when she was younger and similar to Stacey she is glad that she was able to enjoy her university life before solely concentrating on hockey.

Susan is 25 years old and plays hockey for England. She was first introduced to hockey by her parents at the age of 6, they both played at a local club, as did her older sister. At primary school she would play any sport that she could and this was encouraged by her mother. At secondary school, she was in every sporting team that she “possibly could be”. However, at the age of 11 she had to make a decision whether she played county hockey or county netball because the trials were on the

same day. Susan chose hockey because she thought she was considerably better at hockey; for example, at age 11 she was playing county level hockey for the U16 team. At this stage Susan still played competitive sport for school, but outside of school she focused solely on hockey. And when she was 15 years old she was selected for the England U16 squad, but it was suggested that if she wanted to continue being selected then she would have to join a national league team. She therefore had to leave the family club, which she found quite difficult. Susan was selected for the England U21 squad whilst also studying for her 'A' levels and perhaps not surprisingly her grades were a bit of a disappointment, but at that stage her hockey was her priority. However, when she went to university her lecturers were much more accommodating of her hockey commitments and she ended up with both a 1st class degree and a call up into the England senior squad. Susan claims that her mum was the biggest influence on her sporting career. Her mum was also her first coach at club level and when she went to secondary school. Although this coach-parent relationship sometimes caused friction between them, she acknowledges that her mum was an "awesome coach". Susan's older sister also played hockey and played one game for England U18's. Her closest friends have generally been her team-mates, because she feels they are on the "same wave length as her".

Graeme is 23-years old and has been a regular in the England squad for the previous 3 years. Graeme played many sports for his primary school and at break times he and his friends were always playing football. Both his parents and his older brother all played hockey and Graeme joined the club on a family membership at the age of 7. At the age of 14, Graeme was still participating in many school sports and regularly played in one of the senior hockey clubs sides. On occasion he played on the same team as his brother and his father, which he thought "was a really good laugh". At 15 years old Graeme played for his county and at the end of that season he was selected for England U16's; and at the age of 18 he was delighted to be selected to go to the junior World Cup in Australia where England finished fourth. He enthuses that his World Cup experience was "awesome" and it was then that he said he wanted to completely focus on playing hockey. He deliberately chose to go to a university where the hockey was of a good standard, but he also wanted to get a recognised degree. In his 2nd year at university, Graeme gained his first senior England cap and since then he has regularly been selected for the national squad. Since finishing

university, with a “respectable 2:1”, Graeme has kept playing for his university team and is now doing some part-time coaching to help subsidise his “pitiful” funding. According to Graeme, his father has been very influential in his development as a hockey player. When his dad was not playing himself he would always come to watch and support him. His mum was also very supportive, both practically and emotionally. He also thinks his older brother was very motivational and a “smashing” player. Indeed, when he joined the club many people said: “if you’re half as good as your brother you will be doing alright!” Graeme did not feel any jealousy towards his brother, just pride, although he did admit that he enjoyed it when people started to talk about him in the same light as his brother. Graeme also gives his U15 coach a lot of credit, he argues that his coach at that stage “tweaked his basic skills” but was also very enthusiastic and motivating, which he found inspiring. However, he further adds that all the coaches he has been coached by, have all helped him progress to the level that he has now reached. Graeme likes to “have a laugh” with his team (mates), and even now, he likes to be “the joker in the pack”.

Stuart is 33-years old and has played international hockey for the past 14 years, for both Scotland and Great Britain. Stuart’s earliest sporting memories are playing football in the back garden with his two brothers. He recalls these games were always competitive and that he always liked to win. At school it was again mainly football that he played, both in the playground and in the school team. Stuart enjoyed playing all different sports at PE, and picked up most sports “fairly easily”. At around the age of 9 he joined the local football club where his uncle coached and he was soon acknowledged as being one of the teams better players, even though he was a year younger than most of his team-mates. When he was 12 years old he also started to play rugby at his local club and for a number of years he was playing football on a Saturday and rugby on a Sunday. He doesn’t remember ever feeling tired; he simply thought of it as being good fun. When he got to the age of 16, his passion for football was dwindling; he was not enjoying the way his team-mates were “carrying on”, and there was a “lot of niggling arguments and back stabbing going on”. It was also around this time his dad and brother’s hockey team were short of a player and they asked Stuart if he would be willing to play to make up the numbers. He regularly watched his dad and brother play but prior to then Stuart had only “messed about with a hockey stick in the garden”. He really enjoyed that first game,

and shortly after he decided to quit football in order to play hockey on a Saturday. He then decided to stop playing rugby because there were often regional hockey games on the Sunday. Two years later Stuart was selected for Scotland U19's and he has progressed from there. According to Stuart, his family have had the greatest influence on his sporting career as many of them have also played high level hockey, both his older brother and his cousin have played Scotland U21 and his dad and younger brother have both played in the national hockey league. Stuart thinks that he has also benefited from good coaching through out his career, but especially when he relocated to England. Although Stuart is the oldest player in the squad he is still enjoying his hockey and the company of his team-mates.

RUGBY UNION PLAYERS

Ruth is 26-years old and plays in the forwards for England. She played several sports at school, but only netball to county level. When she went to university she knew that she wanted to play a sport, and presumed she would carry on playing netball, but she also had an inclination to try rugby. In the end, she had to choose between netball and rugby because both teams played and trained on the same day. She chose rugby because of the people she had met at the fresher's bazarre and also because her boyfriend played rugby and she had always thought it "looked like fun". Ruth had only been training twice a week for a few weeks before she played in her first BUSA (British Universities Sports Association) game. Several months later a fellow player suggested that she should come and play for her Premiership club side as well as the student team, because the standard of rugby was a lot higher. She did this, and ended up training and playing club and university rugby for the following three years. Ruth quickly progressed through the ranks; starting off with England students, then moving on to England Academy. She was in England 'A's for 2 years before being selected for the full England senior team at the age of 25. Ruth does not think her parents were particularly influential in developing her interest in sport. They never encouraged her to play nor did they ever watch her play netball when she was at school. Initially her mum was "scared to death" when she started to play rugby, but now that she is playing for England her parents make more of an effort to come and watch her. Ruth thinks that she got a lot of encouragement from her PE teachers at school to play sport and thinks they may have seen some potential in her mainly

because she was tall and quite strong compared to her peers. Ruth likes to have a “good” relationship with her coaches, but argues she has learned almost as much through her fellow players. This is how Ruth sums up her feelings about being a professional rugby player: “It’s brilliant, I love it, it’s the best! I find it hard to explain to people how it feels doing something you love as a job, I just love it!” Evidently, she is delighted that she selected to play rugby over netball.

Michelle is 18-years old and is the youngest women ever to play for the England senior team at the age of 17. She describes herself as always being quite ‘sporty’ and would have played most sports when she was at school. She also went to dancing classes out of school. Prior to going to secondary school she was unaware that girls were allowed to play rugby. However, in year 8, one of her PE teachers played rugby, and taught rugby as part of her school’s curriculum. Michelle’s school rugby team was quite successful and went on to compete in several national 7’s competitions. At the age of 15, she joined her nearest Premiership team and was selected to play in the first XV, when she turned 16 years old. After playing there for approximately 3 months, Michelle was selected to play for her county and then shortly after was selected for England U19’s. The following year Michelle was delighted to get her first full England cap, although she acknowledges that this was mainly due to a lot of injuries in the squad. However, she played well enough (including scoring a try) to be in the starting line up for five of the games in the 6 Nations, and has since held her position. Michelle’s parents have always encouraged and supported her to play any sport that she has wanted to, rugby included. Her parents “go jogging” but they have never been interested in competitive sport, similarly neither of her older sisters has shown much interest in sport. Michelle gives a lot of credit to her former PE teacher for getting her to the level that she has reached at such a young age. She also pays tribute to her fellow player’s whom she admits to being “still in awe of”. Although Michelle got the required qualifications to enable her to go to her chosen university, she decided to turn the opportunity down. She wanted to totally focus on her rugby, with her main aim being part of the next World Cup squad.

Caroline is 25-years old and plays in the backs for England. She has always enjoyed playing a wide variety of sports, but her first main sport between the age of 7 and 12

was gymnastics. Caroline's mother died when she was 6 years old, and her father remarried a few years later, and at the age of 10 her family moved to South Africa. Caroline did not get on with her new step family, and felt that her father was more interested in them, than her and her brother. However, in South Africa she was given the opportunity to sample many different sports, both on land and sea. This is also where her passion for rugby came from, because in 1995 South Africa won the rugby World Cup (men's) and she recalls how it was "such a big thing over there and that everyone was playing with a rugby ball". There were no women's clubs near where she lived; so she "just messed about with the lads" (playing rugby). At the age of 16 she and her 'new' family came back to England, and she continued to play hockey, in which she reached county level. It was not until she went to university that she got the opportunity to play organised rugby, although she also continued to play hockey. Caroline "absolutely loved the game" [rugby] and progressed very quickly. She was selected for England students in her 2nd year of university, by-passed the England Academy squad and went straight in to England 'A' and subsequently the full England side at the age of 24. Unfortunately, she has suffered many injuries in her relatively short rugby career; she blames this on hyper-extending her joints when she was involved in gymnastics. As mentioned previously, Caroline says she had very little support from her father and step mother, but she is very close to her brother who has "always been there for her" and comes to watch and support her regularly, which she really likes. Caroline has always liked a coach who will push her to her limit and she likes them to be able to justify all aspects of her training. Caroline argues that she would have played rugby regardless of whether or not she had friends there, but now some of her closest friends are her team mates. At the time of the interview Caroline was recovering from a shoulder operation but has now fully recovered and was subsequently selected for the 2006 World Cup squad.

Julie is a 20-year old, England rugby player and has always played 2nd row. Although she enjoyed playing all the sports available to her at primary school, her main sport between the ages of 5 and 14 was swimming. From 7 years old until about 14 years old, she swam three mornings a week before school, and also every evening, with only a Sunday off. Julie describes her mother as being "obsessed" about her swimming; watching, timing and evaluating every training session. She stopped swimming when her parents split up when she was 14, as a direct consequence of her

mother's new circumstances (emotional, transport and financial issues). However, Julie enjoyed the break from her arduous training regime and decided that she did not want to return to swimming, even when "life was getting back to normal". Julie attended a "very sporty" secondary school and was given the opportunity to play a wide variety of sports, including rugby. Her PE teacher was the head backs coach for the England women's team, and she thought that Julie showed a lot of potential and encouraged her to join her nearest Premiership club. Julie immediately "loved the sport" and progressed extremely quickly, so much so, she was selected for England U16's in her first full season. At age 16 she moved away from home and moved into the Rugby Football Union Women (RFUW) Academy which was "great for her rugby, but a disaster for her education". She is now at college trying to more successfully combine both her studies and her rugby. Julie's father has become very involved with her rugby, this was mainly because he only got to see her at the weekends and therefore had to come and watch her play rugby. She now really likes the fact that her dad makes the effort to come and watch her and she values his opinion on how he rates her performance. What Julie likes from a coach has greatly differed from when she first started playing to what she appreciates now and she believes that she has been fortunate that the clubs that she has chosen to play for have all had "good coaches". Julie always felt that she was "a bit different" from her school peers, because she was always wanting to do something active and they were happy to spend their spare time "hanging around parks or going shopping!" Therefore, she felt she had a lot more in common with her team mates, although she feels some were jealous when she got her England call up. Interestingly, retrospectively Julie wishes that she had continued playing other sports during her adolescence and not solely concentrated on rugby.

Claire is 23-years old and plays in the backs for England. Her primary school did not provide many opportunities to play sport, but she did all the sports that were on offer. Nevertheless, she argues that she has always been very active, playing in the garden with her friends or horse riding and "messaging around" at the farm next door. According to Claire, the secondary school that she attended was renowned for its sport and PE department, and she had the opportunity to play many different sports. Claire picked up most sports quite quickly and made the school's first team in all the sports she played. Around the age of 14 she was mainly concentrating on hockey and

athletics and was “competing at them to quite a high standard”. Her parents split up in her 3rd year of secondary school and she moved to Scotland with her mother. The sport at her new school was “awful”. She therefore joined the local athletics club and the hockey club, and disappointingly for her, the standard was as poor as it was at her school. In her last year at secondary school, her PE teacher started up a girl’s rugby team, which she joined, but they only had the odd game and training session “here and there”. Claire thinks she picked up rugby fairly easily, mainly because she watched a lot of rugby on television and when she was living in England she regularly went to watch her local Premiership team. When she went to university she initially joined the hockey team, but she only made it into the 4th team, which really frustrated her as she felt she should have been playing at a far higher standard. Half way through the season she also joined the rugby team and was a regular in the first XV. This meant that she played BUSA (British University Sports Association) rugby on a Wednesday and BUSA hockey on a Saturday. This “annoyed” the hockey team selectors because they often had ‘friendlies’ on a Wednesday and many of them accused her of not being committed to hockey. This riled Claire, and because she was doing well in rugby and preferred the company of her rugby team mates, she decided to drop out of hockey to solely concentrate on rugby. Claire’s progression in rugby was very quick, retrospectively she thinks too quickly. In her 2nd year of University she played for England students and was also selected for the England Academy. In her 3rd year she went straight into the full England senior team. She feels that at that stage she was not physically or mentally prepared for it and subsequently suffered a lot of injuries. The following season Claire was dropped back down to the Academy squad and although disappointed, she felt more confident in that team. She played better and trained hard that year and was consequently moved back up into the senior team where she has kept her place for the last two seasons. Similar to many of the participants Claire likes to be treated as an individual by her coaches and likes her training programme to be specific to her. At present Claire is working part-time as PE teacher with her main focus being on the next Rugby World Cup.

Shona is 25-years old and plays in the forwards for England. She described herself as always being “quite sporty” and has played many team and individual sports. She first started playing rugby when she was 8 years old, along with her twin brother. However, when she was 12 years old she had to stop playing because she was no

longer allowed to play alongside the boys, and neither her club nor any other clubs nearby had a girl's youth section. At secondary school, she again enjoyed playing most sports, but netball, athletics and hockey were her main sports. However, when she was 15 years old, her former rugby club started up a women's section and she played for the senior team [there were no age laws at that stage]. Although she was by far the youngest player on the team, she was one of their best players; she believes this was because she had played before, and most of the others had no previous rugby playing experience. When she went to university she continued to play rugby and was also selected to play for the Welsh student's team. However, at this stage she was quite happy to play a good standard of rugby but had no aspirations to play internationally at senior level, mainly because she wanted to enjoy her "university life to the full". After university she took a year out and went travelling and played no rugby at all. The week after she returned she was asked to go for England trials and much to her delight and surprise she was selected for the England Academy squad. The following year she was initially selected for England 'A', and by the end of the season she was selected for the full England senior team. According to Shona, her dad has always thought she had the potential to be an England player, but neither of her parents pushed her to train or play more; they simply supported her in whatever she wanted to do. She has a close relationship with her twin brother and her elder brother, both of whom also play rugby, although not to the same level as Shona. She argues that they are both very proud of her and there is no jealousy at all between them. Shona thinks that she has been "quite lucky" with her coaches, especially when she was at university, as she feels they helped develop her into the player she has become. A lot of Shona's friends also took part in sport although she does not think they had a massive influence on her playing sport, especially rugby, because none of her friends did. Although she is very friendly with most of her team-mates she does like to socialise with people not involved in rugby as she thinks it is quite nice not being "Shona the rugby player". Shona is now a full time professional rugby player and is glad that she did not try and get into the England set up any earlier. She argues that it was beneficial for her to wait until after she had finished university and had a gap year because she is now motivated to commit herself fully rugby.

Calum is 35-years old and has always played in the front row. He retired from international rugby shortly before I interviewed him, but he was still playing

Premiership rugby. When Calum was at primary school, football was his favourite sport; he played with his mates every break time at school and then played for the local club at the weekend. When he went on to the local comprehensive, they did not have a football team, only a rugby team. He jokes that he had the choice of rugby or cross-country and because he was "short and fat" his PE teachers put him into the front row of the rugby team, and he has stayed there since. At around this stage (age 12-14) his football club team disbanded, so it was mainly rugby that he was playing. When he was 15, he joined the local rugby club where his older brother played, and Calum often played three games in a weekend; for the school on a Saturday morning, the senior club side on a Saturday afternoon and for the colt's team on a Sunday morning. It was when Calum was selected to play for England U16's that he thought that he could one day make it into the senior England side. After several disappointments, he was eventually selected for the England squad at the age of 27, although he has been dropped on several occasions for what he calls "politics". Calum's parents encouraged and supported him throughout his sporting career, especially in his formative rugby years. He is very passionate about 'rugby being for all' and not only for the wealthy. He thinks that playing for England gave him a lot of kudos from his peers, which he liked. Calum still "loves going to work" to meet up with his team mates and although he has had mixed relationships with his coaches; he thinks that having mutual respect for each other is the most important criterion.

Stephen is 20-years old and plays in the forwards for England U21's. Initially, Stephen liked to play football, but he always thought he was a better rugby player. When he was 6, a friend of his mother's suggested that he should join the local rugby club, which he did. He started off playing in the U7's and stayed at the same club all the way through to U16's. Stephen also played rugby for school and from the age of 8 or 9 he was playing rugby for his school on a Saturday morning and for his club on a Sunday morning. He did this up until he was 16; then he felt it was physically too much, and so he stopped playing for his club and concentrated on his school rugby, which was of a higher standard. Shortly after making this decision he got selected for the England U16 squad. Stephen is now at university and continuing to play Premiership and international rugby. Although he has had to take several weeks out of studying for his rugby commitments, he feels that at the moment he is managing to balance the two. His education is important to him as he is very aware that his rugby

career could be short lived. Stephen acknowledges that his parents were always very supportive both practically and emotionally. He claims that his dad is his biggest critic, who sometimes annoys him, but usually it is “in a good way” and it “keeps his feet firmly on the ground”. Stephen’s younger sister plays netball for school, but he does not think she has the same level of commitment as him. When Stephen first started playing rugby he liked coaches who had good player management skills, making sure that everyone was enjoying the sport and getting fair share of playing time. These days he likes a coach who is more technically knowledgeable and thinks that it is important to have a mutual respect between the two parties. Throughout his childhood and more recently most of Stephen’s friends have been involved in rugby to some level, but he dislikes being known “as just a rugby player”. Looking back, Stephen thinks that he played too much rugby when he was younger and thinks that he was fortunate that he did not suffer more injuries. He also thinks that psychologically it was detrimental and once he stopped playing for both the school and his club he regained his “passion” for the game.

James is 25-years old and plays in the back row for his Premiership club and England ‘A’. He has also been playing in the England 7’s squad this season. James has always been passionate about sport and was fortunate that both his primary school and his secondary school were very much sport orientated. He practically played all the sports that were offered to him, and he claims that he was “pretty good at all of them”. At the age of 10 he joined his local rugby club and played there until he was 17 years old. When he was at middle school, he initially excelled in both football and rugby, including going to trials for a Premiership football team. However rugby prevailed and as well as playing club rugby he also played for the first XV for his “eminent rugby school”. At the end of his school years, James was disappointed not to get selected for the England U18 squad; he therefore decided to take a gap year and go travelling. However, when he returned, he was offered a fulltime professional contract with a Premiership club, which he took up. In the same season he was selected to play for England ‘A’ and he also got his first England cap in the 7’s series. James’s family have supported him ‘tremendously’ throughout his life, not only in rugby, but in everything that he has chosen to do. However, he does acknowledge that his dad was keener that he played rugby than football because he was a “big rugby man”. Indeed, both his dad and his grandfather both played first XV rugby for

what are now Premiership clubs. His older brother also plays rugby to a relatively high level, but he also enjoys the social side of it (“perhaps too much”). James acknowledges his brother as being an important role model and thinks he was very influential in his development as a rugby player. He also thinks he has been very fortunate with the coaches that he has had, citing his PE teacher as being motivational and encouraging. James likes having friends outside of rugby, so he can completely switch off, but conversely, he also argues that the bond between him and his team mates has always been very special, especially when he was at school. James’s main aim for next season is to keep injury free and hopefully be selected for the full senior England squad.

Frank is 20-years old and at the moment plays for England U21, in the 2nd row. At primary school age, Frank played a variety of sports both at school and at outside clubs. For example, he played football in the winter and cricket in the summer; he also swam 3 times a week for his local swimming club. When he first started secondary school, they did not have a football team until year 9, so he “had to play rugby”. Between the ages of 14 and 16, he played football and rugby for both his school and a local club. However, at the age of 16, even though he preferred playing football he decided to stop playing it, in order to concentrate on playing rugby. He thought he had more chance of “making it” as a professional rugby player than a professional footballer and he was desperate to make a living playing some type of sport. Frank still claims that he would much rather be a professional footballer because he “loves everything about football”. Moreover, he would much rather watch a football game than watch a rugby match. He has not played football for years, in fear of sustaining an injury that might jeopardise his job, rugby. Frank’s parents have always been very supportive of him whatever sport he played and although he thinks his dad would have preferred him to play football; he has backed him all the way in his rugby career. Frank explains that the PE teacher who first coached him at rugby was very influential in keeping him interested in the game, and, because he made the game enjoyable Frank kept going back. These days he does not think it is necessary to be “too friendly” with his coaches but he likes them to know him as a person and not just as a player. Frank thinks that a lot of his fellow school mates thought he was arrogant, but he argues that they were probably jealous of his sporting achievements.

Frank's main aim for the future is to continue being a professional rugby player; basically because he does not think he could do anything else as successfully!

Patrick is 20-years old, and plays scrum-half for his Premiership club, England U21's and England 7's. Patrick played both football and rugby at local clubs from the age of 5. Both he and his elder brother played rugby on a Sunday morning and football on a Sunday afternoon. When Patrick got to about 9 years old, he and his parents thought it was getting too much trying to fit both sports in on one day and therefore he had to chose which sport to play. Patrick chose football and his brother chose rugby. He played football for his local club for about another 2 years and then he got 'scouted' by a Premiership football club and he played at their Academy for the next 3 years. However, when he was about 14/15 he decided to quit the Academy and go back to his local football team. He left the football Academy because he was travelling a long distance to get there, and in most of the games he was 'starting on the bench and lucky to get 5 minutes playing time'. At this stage, after much encouragement from his school-mates, he also started playing rugby for the school team, and at the age of 15 he decided to quit football completely so that he could have another "go" at rugby. At 16 he was playing school rugby, senior first XV club rugby and he was also selected for England U16's. At 17 years old he signed a professional contract with a Premiership club and was also selected for England U19's. This season, he has changed Premiership clubs, and has been selected for England U21's as well as the England 7's squad. Similar to Frank, Patrick also wanted to be a professional sportsman and although he initially preferred playing football he thought, and other people told him, that he could really make it as a rugby player. In retrospect he is glad he made that decision, because he has made it as a professional rugby player and he is thoroughly enjoying it. Again, similar to Frank, Patrick thinks that his dad would have preferred him to be a footballer, because he was a footballer himself. Nevertheless when he decided to stop playing football, both his parents were happy with his decision and supported him in whatever he chose to do. Patrick's brother was the captain of the school rugby team and they often played together in the same team, which he liked. His brother still plays club rugby but does not want to take it too seriously. One of the key reasons Patrick decided to quit the football Academy was because of the coaches. A sense of fairness is very important to Patrick and he does not think his former football coaches were fair. Patrick argues that they failed to

give him an opportunity to show his skill on the football field because he was not as tall as the other players. Patrick likes to have a close relationship with his coaches, so that they get to know each other better and can then build a mutual respect for one and other. Another reason Patrick decided to swap from football to rugby was because most of his friends at school played rugby and they encouraged him to come and play for both the school and the club team. Patrick does not regret his "football stint", because he has "made it" as a professional rugby player and he now thinks that if he had stayed with rugby all the way through his childhood, that he might have got bored with it by now. He really enjoys playing rugby and as he says; 'I really enjoy playing the [rugby], like, when I am out there running about and annoying defenders...you can't beat it!'

TAEKWONDO PLAYERS

Neil is a 21-year old, international and World Class funded Olympic taekwondo player. Neil's dad owned a taekwondo club and Neil started training there when he was around 6 years old. He also played many other sports at school, as well as playing football and rugby at a club out with school. When Neil was 10 years old he started competing in taekwondo at the weekends and was training every other night. In his teenage years Neil had many breaks from the sport, either because he "couldn't be bothered" or his dad had banned him for misbehaving. Neil thinks these gaps in his training regime were detrimental to his development in taekwondo and the reason why he never achieved any junior titles. It was in these rebellious years that Neil also stopped playing rugby because the position his coaches put him in was "dead boring". When Neil was 16 years old he left school and went to live in Korea for a year and although he did not enjoy the experience, his taekwondo improved greatly. When he came back to England he totally focused on his taekwondo, for example, he sacrificed nights out with his mates and worked part-time in order to fund his renewed passion for the sport. This dedication paid off and by the time he was 19 years old he was representing Great Britain and was a full-time taekwondo player on World Class funding. According to Neil, his parents have played a "crucial role" in his sporting achievements, especially his dad as he was the one that introduced him to the sport and has always encouraged and influenced him to keep doing taekwondo. He also thinks that his involvement in taekwondo has helped him deal with the major

behavioural issues that he had as a teenager. Neil was initially coached by his dad and although Neil thinks that his dad was harder on him than anyone else in the class, he still gives his dad credit for giving him a good foundation in the sport. Between the ages of 17 and 19, Neil did not have a specific coach and he trained himself most of the time and it was not until he made the national squad that he had a personal coach. Neil thinks this coaching developed him from being “a talented piece of raw material into something a bit special”. Neil does not think his friends have had any influence on him playing any sport because he has always wanted to play sport for his own sake. Indeed, only his close friends at school knew that he did taekwondo, others just knew that he was a “good fighter!” Neil thinks if he had not kept on with taekwondo he would be in jail by now, but both he and his parents are proud of how things have worked out for him.

Colin is 24-years old and first represented Great Britain at the 2004 Olympic Games in Olympic taekwondo. In his early years Colin was a competent sports person in many different sports at school and he also played football for a local club out with school. Colin had wanted to do a martial art from a young age, but his mum would not take him. It was not until he was 11 years old; when a new taekwondo club opened up near to his home, did his mother allow him to take up the sport. However, his participation in taekwondo in the early days was very fragmented, sometimes he would not go so he could play football and sometimes he would not go to football because he wanted to do taekwondo. Furthermore, between the ages of 15 and 17, Colin more or less stopped doing taekwondo because of some issues at school [he did not want to expand on this]. However, when he was 17 years old he watched the taekwondo at the 2000 Olympics on the television and one of his old training partners was competing in it. This gave him the determination to take up the sport again but this time to take it more seriously. Even though he did not come back with any major goals (he just wanted to enjoy the sport) 7 months later he made his first Great Britain selection. Colin's mum was happy for him to go to the taekwondo classes when he was younger, but when he suggested training full-time for taekwondo when he was 17 she was very much against it. His mum thought he should be earning a wage because she had supported him for the past 17 years. However, when he got on to the World Class funding scheme, she was pleased and very proud, and likes to come and watch him fight whenever she can. Colin did not live with his father, so initially he was not

involved in his upbringing, but when Colin started his sporting come back his dad was able to give him a job. This enabled Colin to earn some money, but also his dad allowed him to take all the time off that he needed to compete or train. Unfortunately, his dad died just prior to the qualifiers for the Olympic Games. As Colin progressed in his sport, he felt that he needed to change coaches to someone who had more experience at international level. He is extremely close to his present coach and describes him as being like a father figure. Colin played football because he liked playing with his friends, but with taekwondo he did it because it was what he wanted to do. Colin thinks specialising later in his sport was beneficial to him, he thinks that if he had taken it more seriously when he was younger then he might not be as enthusiastic about it now.

Alison is 29-years old and represents Great Britain in Olympic taekwondo. Alison enjoyed success in many sports when she was younger. Although her secondary school did not have a great range of sports, Alison claims that she held every female sporting record in the school. Outside of school Alison was a member of an athletics club and a karate club. It was not until she went to university that she took up the sport of taekwondo; prior to then she did not know anything about the sport. However, from her first session she was "hooked" on the sport and although her initial goal was to gain progression through the grades and belts, that soon changed to wanting to compete internationally. She achieved this ambition when she was 21 and by the time she was 22 years old she was selected for the Great Britain squad. Alison's parents were more involved in her participation in athletics, simply because she was younger and still living at home. Also, her mother competed at county level in athletics and both Alison's 2 brothers and her 2 sisters all competed in athletics. Alison remembers these days as fun family days out. Alison's parents separated and subsequently divorced when she was 14, this caused a lot of conflict within the family and from that time she has had little contact with her father or her 2 sisters. However, her mother has supported her in every way she could, including helping her raise £800 to enable Alison to attend her first competition representing GB in the USA. Alison describes her mum as her 'number one supporter' and acknowledges that without her mum's support she would not have reached the level she has in taekwondo. Although Alison is no longer at university, she has stayed with the same coach throughout her career in martial arts. She likes that he knows everything about her and can

immediately tell if there is anything on her mind. Alison got involved with the sport because she wanted to do something different and not necessarily to make new friends. However, she hopes to retire soon and she will miss the special bond that she has with her fellow players.

Sonya is only 22-years old but has competed in taekwondo at 2 Olympic Games; the first time was when she had just turned 16. Sonya did not play much sport out with primary school when she was younger, although she did enjoy taking part in different sports in her PE classes. She was introduced to taekwondo by her elder brother when she was 7 years old and soon started training three times a week. By the time she was 13 or 14 years old, she had started to win senior international competitions and was regularly travelling abroad to compete or train at taekwondo. Sonya's parents have always encouraged her to do taekwondo and have occasionally "pushed" her to go training when she did not feel like going. Initially her brother was training at the same time; therefore if he went she had to go. Her brother fought to a reasonable level in England and sometimes fought abroad but he has never represented Great Britain. He stopped competing in taekwondo when he was 17, because, according to Sonya, "he preferred women and booze". Her parents have always come to watch her in any of her major competitions, and she likes to know they are there, especially if she wins. Sonya has had the same coach since she started taekwondo at 7 years old; he just happened to be the coach at the local club closest to her home. Initially, she was scared of him because he was "big and hairy". That soon changed and she has since become very close to him, and trusts and respects him completely. Sonya also describes her team-mates in the squad as very special; she argues that this is because they have grown up together and they are always travelling abroad, competing together. Conversely, she does not think her peers outside of taekwondo understand the commitment she has to put into her sport. Sonya uses the analogy of a roller coaster to describe her life as an elite performer; sometimes she loves it and sometimes she hates it, but she would still rather do taekwondo for a living than work at anything else.

Katrina is 21-years old and competes for Great Britain in the lightweight category at Olympic taekwondo. Katrina described herself as always being an athletic person who 'loved playing any sport'. Her mum has always encouraged her to play as much

sport as she could and her dad was a taekwondo player so he encouraged her to take the sport up from a young age. She recalls that she first went to the taekwondo gym when she was about 4 or 5 years old for a “kick about” and when she turned 8 years old she started to take it more seriously, training four times a week. When she got to about 13 or 14 years old, she had to make a choice whether to continue doing taekwondo or to play football. A clash of training times, made doing both sports no longer a viable option. Although she enjoyed playing football, she chose to stick with taekwondo, because she was more successful at it and she got a lot of enjoyment from it too. Whilst still at school, Katrina started to travel abroad to compete in taekwondo competitions, and she remonstrates that her school were unsupportive of her commitment to her sport and gave her “a hard time” for having so many days off school because of it. However, now that she has been successful in taekwondo some of her former teachers have asked her to come into her former school to show the pupils the medals she has won and to talk about what she has managed to achieve in her life. Katrina has refused to do this because she argues that they did not support her when she needed it most. Prior to Katrina being selected on the World Class Programme, her father had always coached her. She thought that was “a good and a bad thing”. On a positive note, she argues that her dad was always 100% behind her and he was always the first to pick her up when she was down, however, she also said that he was the first to knock her down when she was getting “too cocky”! Being both her father and her coach sometimes caused some friction at home. For example, if she was relaxing at home, watching the television, her dad would come in and tell her to do some stretching etc. This really annoyed her, but her mother always supported her and took her side in any disagreements. These situations would sometimes cause her parents to argue. Katrina feels that she has lost contact with many of her old friends because of sporting commitments. However, she argues that this does not bother her because she has her fellow team-mates around her who care about her and they completely understand all the ups and downs involved in competing at an international level. Katrina said she sometimes wishes she had achieved more at school, but does not think that it is possible to achieve success in taekwondo and obtain school qualifications. She further adds: “there are not many people her age who can say they have travelled around the world.”

