

A Qualitative Study of Sport Enjoyment in the Sampling Years

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This focus group study examined the sources of enjoyment and nonenjoyment among younger and older English children in the sampling years of sport participation (ages 7–12). Concurrent inductive and deductive content analysis revealed that, consistent with previous research, younger and older children reported sources of enjoyment such as perceived competence, social involvement and friendships, psychosocial support, and a mastery-oriented learning environment. Nonenjoyment sources included inappropriate psychosocial support, increasing competitive orientation, negative feedback and reinforcement, injuries, pain, and demonstrating a lack of competence. Differences between younger and older children's sources of enjoyment and nonenjoyment also emerged. Younger children reported movement sensations as a source of enjoyment and punishment for skill errors and low informational support as nonenjoyment sources. Older children reported social recognition of competence, encouragement, excitement, and challenge as sources of enjoyment with rivalry, overtraining, and high standards as sources of nonenjoyment. These differences underscore the importance of tailoring youth sport in the sampling years to the needs of the child.

Enjoyment has been acknowledged as a foundation of motivation in sport (Scanlan, Carpenter, Lobel, & Simons, 1993a; Scanlan & Simons, 1992) and a key predictor of sport commitment (Scanlan, Carpenter, Schmidt, Simons, & Keeler, 1993b; Weiss, Kimmel, & Smith, 2001). Indeed, the retrospective accounts of elite sport performers documented enjoyment as a crucial element of their early development in sport known as the sampling (ages 7–12) and specializing (ages 13–16) years (Côté, 1999; Côté & Hay, 2002; Stevenson, 1990). By contrast, sport-attrition research indicated that many children drop out of sport because of a lack of enjoyment in the sampling years (Gould & Horn, 1984). Relatively little is known about the changes in sport enjoyment sources or the factors that reduce sport enjoyment as children progress through the sampling years. In an effort to fill a gap in this field, the current article reports a study of sport enjoyment and nonenjoyment in a sample of English children during the sampling years.

Investigations by Côté and colleagues (Abernethy, Côté, & Baker, 1999; Beamer, Côté, & Ericsson, 1999; Côté, 1999) on the career development of elite Canadian and Australian athletes in rowing, gymnastics, basketball, netball, and

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field hockey identified three stages of sport participation from early childhood to late adolescence. These three stages consisted of sampling, specializing, and investment/recreational (age 17+) years. In the sampling years, children were generally introduced to sport by their parents and were given a chance to sample a variety of sports, with enjoyment and excitement being key features of sport involvement. Enjoyment in the sampling years fits neatly with research that investigated children's motives for participation in sport (Weiss & Petlichkoff, 1989). In particular, enjoyment was reported as one of the most common reasons for participating in sport worldwide (De Knop, Engström, & Skirstad, 1996). Essentially, the sampling years represent a key stage for each child to develop basic identities, motivations, values, and beliefs about sport and remain critical for long-term involvement in sport and physical activity (Côté & Hay, 2002). Understanding the contribution of sport enjoyment to that process is paramount for continued involvement in sport.

Sport enjoyment is "a positive affective response to sport experience that reflects generalized feelings such as pleasure, liking, and fun" (Scanlan & Simons, 1992, pp. 202–203) and is a component of most major sport-motivation theories such as the sport commitment model (Scanlan et al., 1993b) and competence motivation theory (Harter, 1978, 1981). Early research on the construct of sport enjoyment resulted in the development of the sport commitment model (Scanlan et al., 1993b). According to this model, sport commitment is predicted by sport enjoyment, personal investments, social constraints, involvement opportunities, and involvement alternatives. Studies using the Sport Commitment Model consistently reported enjoyment as the strongest predictor of sport commitment (Scanlan et al., 1993b; Weiss et al., 2001). Although a wide range of ages and developmental stages were used to develop the sport commitment model, the model does not account for cognitive and social developmental changes (Crocker, Hoar, McDonough, Kowalski, & Niefer, 2004). To explain, Crocker et al. suggested that the antecedents of commitment should be expected to vary with development.

In the case of sport enjoyment, because children primarily rely on parents and coaches for social support and approval, their perceptions of enjoyment might be tied to the support and approval they receive from these individuals. On the other hand, as children get older their perceptions of sport enjoyment might be more closely tied to peer support and approval. In contrast, competence motivation theory (Harter, 1978, 1981) does account for cognitive and social developmental changes. According to this theory, individuals have a natural desire to experience feelings of competence and these feelings might be attained through mastery experiences in various achievement domains (e.g., academia, sport). Enjoyment is associated with these feelings of mastery, which in turn increase motivation (Harter, 1978, 1981). Parents, coaches, and peers influence the perceived competence and enjoyment of youth athletes through appropriate approval and reinforcement for mastery attempts, with peers establishing a more dominant role in this process as children grow older (Black & Weiss, 1992; Horn & Weiss, 1991). Scanlan, Babkes, and Scanlan (2005) suggested that by combining this research with sources of enjoyment, it should be possible to understand how emotional responses vary with developmental progression in the social component.

In an effort to understand what makes sport enjoyable, Wankel and Kreisel (1985) examined factors underlying enjoyment among male team-sport participants (ages 7–14). The relative importance of enjoyment factors across both sport and

age groups was noticeably consistent. Specifically, intrinsic factors (e.g., excitement of the sport, personal accomplishments, and improving one's skills) were rated most important, with social factors (e.g., being with friends) of intermediate importance and extrinsic or outcome-related factors (e.g., winning the game and pleasing others) rated least important. Scanlan and Lewthwaite (1986) examined intrapersonal variables (i.e., age and perceived ability) and significant adult influence involving mothers, fathers, and coaches among a sample of male wrestlers (ages 9–14). Younger boys and those with greater perceived ability enjoyed wrestling more than older boys and those with lower perceived ability. Boys who perceived greater parental and coach satisfaction with their season's performance, more positive adult involvement and interactions, and less maternal pressure and few negative maternal reactions enjoyed wrestling the most. Briefly, these studies demonstrated that the supportive behavior of parents, coaches, and peers together with a positive perception of one's ability is a powerful combination for enjoying sport among youth athletes.

Scanlan and Lewthwaite's (1986) study resulted in a framework to classify the range of enjoyment sources. Specifically, they used the two dimensions of intrinsic–extrinsic and achievement–nonachievement to create four categories of sport enjoyment. The intrinsic–achievement category consists of perceived competence and control such as mastery–goal attainment and perceived ability (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985). Enjoyment can also be derived from winning, demonstrating superior ability, and receiving rewards (Scanlan et al., 1993b). The extrinsic–achievement category consists of perceived competence and control that result from social evaluation and recognition sources. Scanlan, Stein, and Ravizza's (1989) study of sources of enjoyment among 26 former elite figure skaters indicated that social recognition of achievement was one of five major sources of enjoyment. The intrinsic–nonachievement category represents movement aspects such as competitive excitement, sensations, and action. Youth and elite athletes have consistently reported movement sensations, exerting effort, and excitement associated with competitive sport as sources of enjoyment (Boyd & Yin, 1996; Scanlan et al., 1989). Finally, the extrinsic–nonachievement category consists of affiliation with peers and adult interactions. Positive peer and adult interactions strongly influence the enjoyment experienced in youth sport (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Brustad, 1988; Power & Woolger, 1994). In summary, this framework suggests that enjoyment in youth sport could stem from one or a few sources that might be performance or nonperformance related.

Côté, Ericsson, and Law (2005) explained that analysis of the lives of athletes at different levels of performance (e.g., sampling years) will provide useful information about the optimal conditions for learning and will provide athletes, parents, and coaches with guidelines on how to maximize learning and participation at various stages of an individual's involvement in sport. Therefore, building on the work of Scanlan and colleagues (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Scanlan & Simons, 1992), the main aim of the present study was to examine the developmental progression of sources of sport enjoyment and nonenjoyment in the sampling years. Moreover, because children tend to drop out of sport during the latter stages of this phase of sport participation (Gould & Horn, 1984), a second, related aim was to examine the changes in enjoyment and nonenjoyment across this stage of sport participation. There is limited evidence in the youth sport literature on sources of nonenjoyment,

although by understanding what contributes to low enjoyment it should be possible to outline strategies for coaches and parents to develop enjoyment when working with sport participants in this age range.

Method

Participants

The participants were 22 male ($M_{age} = 9.95$, $SD = 1.25$) and 23 female ($M_{age} = 10.35$, $SD = 1.07$) athletes who participated in organized youth sport in central England. The criterion for inclusion in these focus groups was participation in an organized competitive youth-sport program. Participation in an organized youth-sport program was operationally defined as being a member of a team or club that has a coach, holds regular practice, and competes in scheduled games (Wankel & Kreisel, 1985). This sample participated in team sports such as rugby ($n = 6$), soccer ($n = 13$), hockey ($n = 2$), netball ($n = 6$), and individual sports such as cross-country running ($n = 6$), swimming ($n = 5$), gymnastics ($n = 3$), martial arts ($n = 1$), golf ($n = 1$), and cricket ($n = 2$).

Research Design

Focus group interviews were used in this investigation. A focus group is a discussion involving a small group of participants, led by a moderator, that seeks to gain an insight into the participants' experiences, attitudes, or perceptions (Hennessy & Heary, 2005). Children in middle childhood struggle to understand and describe abstract concepts such as sport enjoyment and are less adept at information processing (Brustad, 1998). This methodology allowed the interviewer to explain or rephrase specific questions and limit the complexity of questions being asked during the interview. Furthermore, others' opinions in the group help stimulate thoughts and contributions among all members (Hennessy & Heary, 2005).

Interview Guide

A pilot study was conducted with younger children to develop a moderator's guide for the focus-group interviews to ensure that the younger children would understand the questions being asked in subsequent interviews. After analyzing the pilot study, a semistructured interview guide with three sections was established. First, introductory questions explored demographic information and the participants' backgrounds in sport to orient the participants to the interview (Scanlan et al., 1989). For example, participants were asked "Tell me what sport you play the most." These questions are necessary to make each child feel comfortable and understand that his or her participation will not be evaluated. In addition, to help with the orderly conduct of focus-group interviews with children, each child said his or her name before providing a response to each question (Vaughan, Shay Schumm, & Singagub, 1996).

The second section contained lead questions, elaboration, and confirmation probes to establish what children found enjoyable and not enjoyable about sport participation (Patton, 2002). First, to determine what intrapersonal factors contributed

to sport enjoyment and nonenjoyment, participants were asked what they did that they enjoyed and did not enjoy about sport. One lead question asked participants, "Tell me what you enjoy about sport." Elaboration probes included "What it is about [event] that you enjoy?" Next, in separate questions, participants were asked how parents, coaches, and peers contributed to their enjoyment of sport. In the final section, the moderator asked participants to consider any additional sources of sport enjoyment not considered in Section 2. The final section also provided a reliability check to establish and clarify that the moderator had understood what the participants had reported during the interview (Biddle, Markland, Gilbourne, Chatzisarantis, & Sparkes, 2001).

Procedure

Because the participants in the present study were under the age of 18 years, permission from each participant's parent or guardian was requested. All seven focus-group interviews, four with younger children and three with older children, were conducted separately in a classroom setting. Three changes were made to the group characteristics as recommended by Vaughan et al. (1996) when working with children. First, each focus group consisted of 6 children, with an even gender balance when possible, allowing both sexes to detail their sport experiences without being inhibited or externally influenced. Focus groups create a safe peer environment similar to a classroom setting, which children are familiar with. Second, the recommended 90 min allocated for adult focus groups was adjusted for children under 10 to about 45 min and around 60 min for children between 10 and 14 years of age. Third, to account for developmental differences (e.g., language and understanding) that might be apparent between children in middle childhood and early adolescence, children in each group were within a 2-year age span (Hennessy & Heary, 2005).

Children were divided into younger (ages 8–10) and older (ages 11–12) age groups because research on the importance of significant others as sources of competence information suggests a shift in adult-centered to peer-centered social evaluation as children develop into adolescence (Horn & Hasbrook, 1987; Horn & Weiss, 1991). Sport-enjoyment literature has demonstrated that parents, coaches, and peers contribute significantly to athletes' emotional responses. Although the overall emotional responses might remain the same, the social-evaluation literature suggests that the relative importance of coaches, parents, and peers as specific sources of enjoyment might change as the child matures. By combining the two research areas, it should be possible to understand how emotional responses vary with developmental progression in the social component (Scanlan et al., 2005).

Younger participants ($n = 23$) had between 1 and 2 years experience with organized sport and participated in club competitions within the county. Older participants ($n = 22$) had 3–5 years experience with organized sport and competed at county and regional level.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Sport researchers have highlighted the importance of establishing trustworthiness criteria within the qualitative research process (Biddle et al., 2001; Hardy, Jones,

& Gould, 1996). Accordingly, many specific steps were undertaken. First, a knowledgeable researcher carried out the focus-group interviews to establish coherence and ensure credibility of the data collection. Second, extensive procedural detail was used to document the credibility and transferability of the research. Third, sample size was determined when the focus-group interviews reached saturation. Saturation, a point when no new information is emerging (Biddle et al., 2001), was determined by transcribing the initial interviews and examining the main themes therein. Fourth, to avoid excessive rigidity in the interview process (Dale, 1996), a pilot study with two groups of participants was conducted. This pilot study established boundaries for the research that allowed the participants to explore personally relevant issues. Fifth, an independent researcher trained in qualitative research served as a "devil's advocate" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) questioning the methods, procedures, and content analysis of the research. Finally, peer debriefing occurred after each focus-group interview by summarizing to the participants what the moderator had recorded and ensuring that the interpretation was correct (Hardy et al., 1996).

Analysis

Focus-group interviews were transcribed verbatim by the primary researcher. Analysis of transcripts from younger and older children was carried out separately. Considering that the primary and secondary researcher had an established knowledge of the sport-enjoyment literature, a process of deductive and inductive analysis was used (Biddle et al., 2001; Patton, 2002). Deductive analysis was used to identify specific units associated with previous sources of sport enjoyment (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986), and inductive content analysis was used to generate raw data themes not specifically accounted for by previous research on sport enjoyment and nonenjoyment. To maintain procedural consistency and in line with recommendations for content analysis of focus groups (Vaughan et al., 1996), each researcher summarized the main ideas, unitized the data, and categorized the units associated with sport enjoyment and nonenjoyment. Finally, through critical questioning by the second author, consensus was reached on the main themes.

Results

Research findings are presented in sequence, with higher order themes described initially, followed by relevant lower order themes. In line with previous recommendations for reporting qualitative research (Krane, Andersen, & Streat, 1997), as much primary data as possible are presented. The enjoyment sources are presented first (illustrated in Figure 1), followed by the nonenjoyment sources.

General Dimension: Children's Sources of Enjoyment

The search for a general dimension emerged from third-order themes—*intrinsic achievement, intrinsic nonachievement, extrinsic achievement, and extrinsic—nonachievement* and four second-order themes: *perceived competence, psychosocial support from parents, peers, and a mastery learning environment* based on Scanlan and Lewthwaite's (1986) theoretical model of the sources of sport enjoyment.

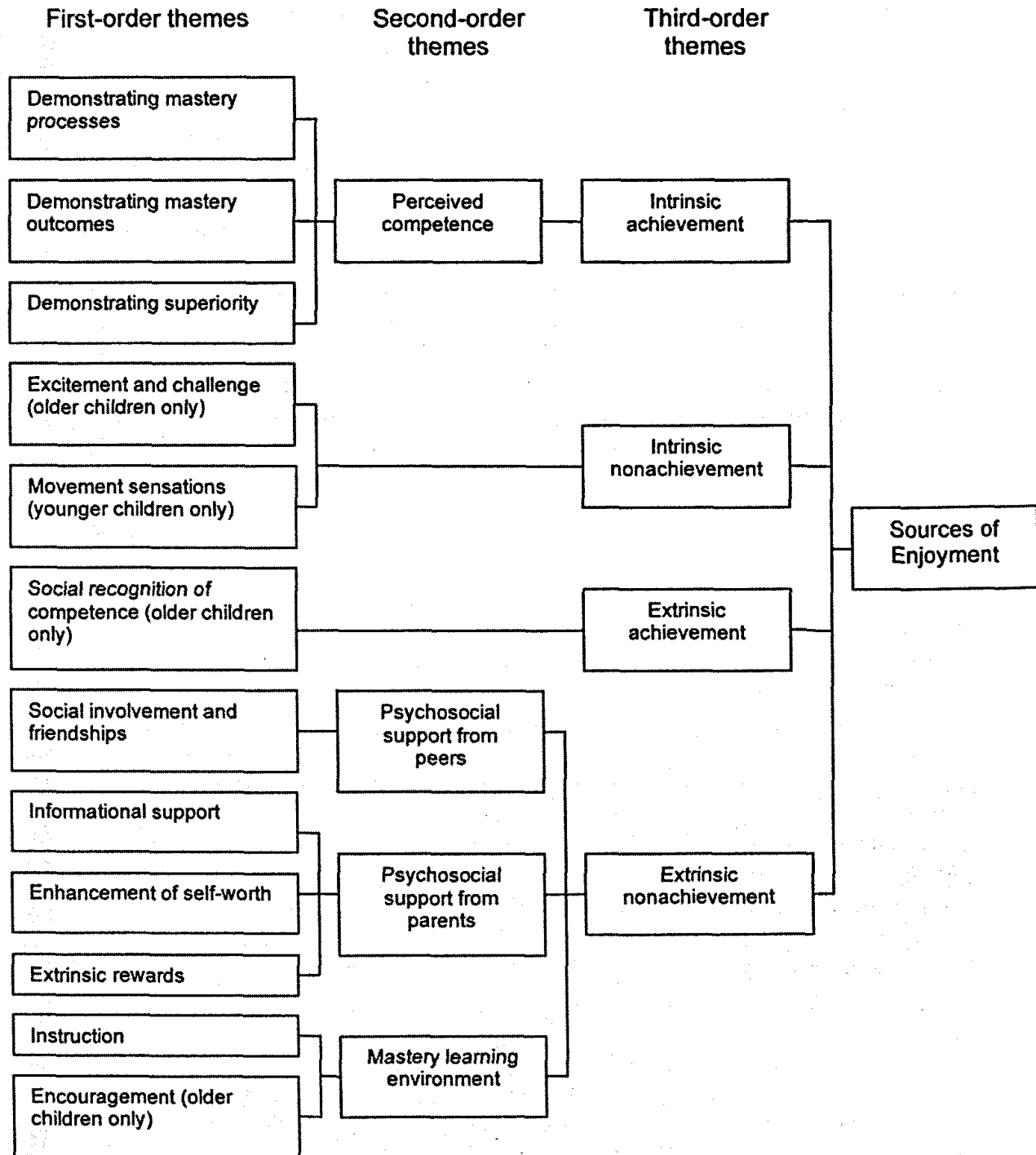


Figure 1 — Hierarchical structure of general dimension: sources of enjoyment for younger and older children.

Third-Order Theme: Intrinsic Achievement. Perceived competence was the individual's belief regarding how competent he or she is at a particular activity. One difference in perceived competence among younger and older children was reflected in the older athletes' greater emphasis on demonstrating superiority

through winning and tangible recognition of their achievements (e.g., receiving medals, trophies).

Demonstrating mastery processes was an independent achievement related to developing skills during training, competitions, and practices. Both younger and older children identified mastery processes as an important part of sport enjoyment. For instance, one golfer identified being able to "hit really far balls with your clubs." Similarly, a rugby player suggested, "when you do a good tackle." A soccer player explained that he enjoyed "making a save."

Demonstrating mastery outcomes was an independent achievement related to outcomes of mastery processes. The younger children participating in team games (e.g., soccer) highlighted "scoring goals" as an important enjoyment factor in their sport. Older children also identified these outcomes. For instance, an older cricketer commented, "when you have bowled someone out or hit it for a six." An older cross-country runner explained about the future possibilities of performing well in her sport: "If I get good [places in a race], I might be able to do it in the future and be an athlete [elite]."

Demonstrating superiority is being better than peers at a sport or receiving recognition for your achievements in your sport. Demonstrating superiority emerged among younger and older athletes, highlighting the importance of winning and achievement in sport. Children in both groups were aware of the rewards available for demonstrating superiority in their sport. For example, a cross-country runner explained, "You are going out to try to win things and do your best for the team."

Third-Order Theme: Intrinsic Nonachievement. Excitement and challenge was challenging sport experiences in the sport environment. Excitement and challenge emerged among older children only. A soccer player explained the variety of activities associated with playing her sport: "It never gets boring and you can play all different games with it." Similarly, a hockey player echoed these sentiments: "I get to do lots of things and not just one thing."

Movement sensations were kinesthetic and tactile sensations derived from the movement experiences in sport. This source of enjoyment emerged among younger children only and was expressed as "the feeling when I go over in the air [gymnastics]" and "you are in the air and it's like you are floating [gymnastics]."

Third-Order Theme: Extrinsic Achievement. Social recognition of competence was praise and admiration received for achievement in sport. Social recognition of competence emerged as a higher order theme among older children only. It would appear that older children valued the recognition of their ability by socially significant others. One cross-country runner explained, "It's nice that you can see people knowing what you are good at." Another hockey player said, "It's enjoyable that you are competing against other people and you're showing what you can do."

Third-Order Theme: Extrinsic Nonachievement. A series of raw-data themes pertaining to psychosocial support factors were divided into three first-order themes. Psychosocial support was any support that aided the development of an individual's self-esteem, competence, and achievement. For younger and older athletes, psychosocial support was a key focus of conversation during the interviews.

Social involvement and friendship was forming and maintaining relationships with peers and adults in sport. Social involvement and friendship emerged as a

higher order theme among both younger and older children. Although being with friends was important for both younger and older children (e.g., "My friends are there and we have a good laugh"), developing friendships was a more important function among older children. For example, one older cross-country runner explained, "When you go to other places, sometimes you meet other people when you go against them and stuff, and the next time you go like you know who to talk to next time." Another older netball player said, "What I like is that you get to meet new friends."

Informational support was advice or guidance provided by others to solve difficult situations. Younger and older participants emphasized the parental influence within the informational-support theme. For instance, one gymnast explained, "She [mother] went to karate and she can like bend down and stuff and it's like gymnastics and she teaches me how to do it [stretching]."

Enhancement of self-worth was verbal or nonverbal support provided by socially significant others to enhance self-worth. Both younger and older participants valued the enhancement to their self-worth received through verbal and nonverbal reinforcement, especially from their parents. For instance, one swimmer stated, "They are always up on the balcony or something watching." Nonverbal support was also important for self-worth development. Two swimmers explained, "My mum waves, and my dad sticks his thumb up" and "They'll stand there and watch you and it just feels good that there is someone taking an interest."

Extrinsic rewards were rewards received from others. Only 1 younger athlete and 2 older athletes reported extrinsic rewards as a source of enjoyment. The younger athlete did not provide a description of the rewards received, but one older soccer player said, "When I did something really well, he [father] would like get me something to do with the sport I was doing." Another older soccer player explained: "If I win or do my best, sometimes I get rewards for it—like I get another PlayStation game or something."

A mastery-oriented learning environment provides children with a learning experience in which success is focused on effort and improvement and participants develop skills at their own developmental rate. In the mastery-oriented learning environment, two lower order themes emerged: instruction and encouragement.

Instruction is verbal explanations and nonverbal demonstrations for skill learning. Both younger and older children emphasized the need for coaches to assist them in learning the skills of their sport. One soccer player commented, "[Coach] tells me what to do and how I can improve." A swimmer commented, "They make you really good at the sport and they teach you in a nice way, like not complaining when you do it wrong, just going over what you need done to make it better."

Encouragement was positive verbal or nonverbal support for skill attempts. Encouragement emerged among older athletes only for the coaching environment. Many of the encouraging statements were about pre- and postgame talks with the children, perhaps reflecting an increase in competitive involvement for these athletes. For example, one soccer player explained that before a game the coach supported the team when he spoke to them: "He encourages you and says like we can beat them." Similarly, after the game, the coach recognized the efforts of the players: "If you play a full match and then at the end of the match he says well done you have played well today."

General Dimension: Children's Sources of Nonenjoyment

The search for a general dimension emerged from three third-order themes: intrapersonal, socioenvironmental, and environmental factors. The socioenvironmental theme had lower order themes: inappropriate psychosocial support, increasing competitive orientation, and negative feedback and reinforcement from the coach (illustrated in Figure 2).

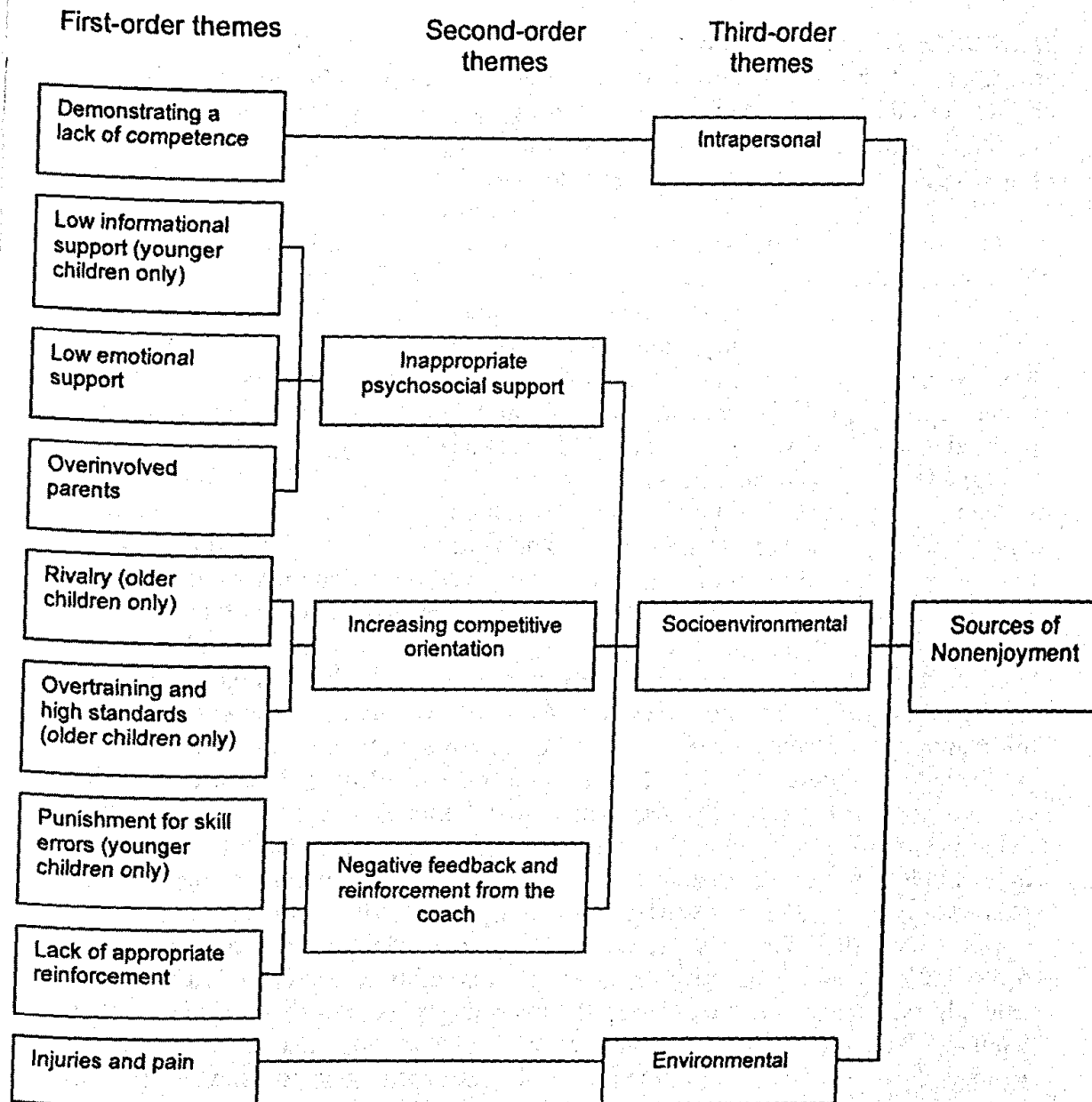


Figure 2 — Hierarchical structure of general dimension: sources of nonenjoyment for younger and older children.

Third-Order Theme: Intrapersonal. One first-order theme emerged within this category, demonstrating a lack of competence. Demonstrating a lack of ability or competence was an individual's belief that he or she was incompetent at a particular activity. Both younger and older athletes cited occasions when they demonstrated a lack of ability or competence. Most of these situations were tied with an inability to perform well in front of peers. A netball player explained, "When I get things wrong and everybody is like there and they look really good and when I do it, I mess everything up and it's all wrong." Similarly, a swimmer commented, "Doing something that everyone else can do but I can't do it very well."

Third-Order Theme: Socioenvironmental. Within this category, three second-order themes emerged: inappropriate psychosocial support, increasing competitive orientation, and negative feedback and reinforcement from the coach.

Inappropriate psychosocial support was any support that did not aid the development of an individual's self-esteem, competence, and achievement. Many lower order themes emerged within the category of inappropriate psychosocial support.

Overinvolved parents have excessive involvement in the athletic lives of their children. This theme was common to younger and older children. To illustrate, one rugby player explained, "Mum keeps shouting at me, 'C'mon Jack, score' and I feel dead embarrassed because my mates who are off the pitch, keep laughing at me." Similarly, a netball player commented, "When you are doing a sport and all the other parents are dead [really] quiet and your mum and dad are there just there jumping up and down and screaming their heads off, it is dead [really] embarrassing."

Low informational support is a lack of provision of advice about solutions to problems. Only younger children reported this theme. For example, one swimmer explained, "If you do something and you know you have done something wrong and you don't do it right, they [parents] just say you have done it wrong but they don't correct you on what you have done wrong, they just leave it at that."

Low emotional support refers to a lack of appropriate comfort and security from others in times of stress and anxiety and was reported by younger and older children. A soccer player reflected on the lack of opportunity to receive support from his teammates: "When you have just had a dreadful game and you come off and you have to go [home] without talking to your mates and stuff about the game."

An increasing competitive orientation was demands or consequences of participating in organized sport as a consequence of getting older. Within the increasing-competitive-orientation category, two lower order themes emerged among older athletes: (a) rivalry and (b) overtraining and high standards.

Rivalry is behavior designed to beat another. Many of the older athletes recounted occasions when they competed against other teams or individuals. For example, one soccer player explained that when they play their rivals and "the other team win," they shout "losers." Even as young teenagers, other teams use put-downs to anger the other competitors. One runner also commented on put-downs: "People saying my grandma can run better than you and she's dead."

Overtraining and high standards were consequences of commitment to organized sport reported by older children only. One swimmer lamented on the cost of such commitment to his social life: "Well you have to go practicing four times a week and I don't really like practicing that much time because you don't get to play out with your friends." One martial artist said, "Doing the moves over and

over and over again until I get it right 'cause my master keeps saying if you don't get it right then you have to do 10 press-ups."

Negative feedback and reinforcement from the coach was verbal and nonverbal interactions that serve to increase negative affect. Two lower order themes emerged: punishment by coach for skill errors (younger children only) and a lack of appropriate reinforcement from coach. Younger children did not like the punishment exercises they were given after skill errors. For example, one soccer player reported, "When I do something wrong like my instructor says 'do five press-ups and then run half of the field.'" Similarly, a swimmer explained, "When I do something wrong, he says you have to do two lengths swimming back." The children did not enjoy the lack of appropriate reinforcement from their coaches. For instance, one rugby player said, "Sometimes like they [the coaches] have explained it to you and you do it but you do it wrong and then they say: No! You could have done that better and you have to pass this way and that way and it makes me feel angry with the coach." Similarly, a cross-country runner explained: "When we do cross-country and we come in bad places he [coach] says you could have done better than that."

Injuries and pain are negative consequences of participating in sport. One younger gymnast commented on the pain associated with some gymnastic moves: "When I am doing my splits and I can't get down on one leg, he [coach] forces me down and I don't like it 'cause it wrecks [hurts]." An older cross-country runner explained about the pain she experienced running in the cold weather: "When you have to go running in the cold 'cause that's when it gets your breath [hard to breathe]." In addition to these physically painful experiences, an older soccer player reflected on the disappointment of losing coupled with injury: "When you are losing and you get a tackle and you get injured and you can't play."

General Discussion

Evidence from these focus-group interviews has shown the significance of sport enjoyment to children in the sampling years and provides further support for Scanlan and Lewthwaite's (1986) theoretical model of sport enjoyment. Specifically, content analysis indicated that children in the sampling years experience enjoyment from intrinsic and extrinsic sources that are both achievement and nonachievement related (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Scanlan et al., 1989). Furthermore, understanding sources of nonenjoyment is necessary to provide useful advice to parents and coaches to maximize learning and participation in sport (Côté et al., 2005) because nonenjoyment is strongly influenced by parental and coach involvement in youth sport. Finally, children in the latter stages of the sampling years do report other enjoyment and nonenjoyment sources compared with children who have just entered the sampling years. This finding supports the notion of developmental progression of emotional responses during the sampling years. Accordingly, although many of the emotional responses are similar, these results, aligned with the social evaluation literature, indicate that the relative importance of coaches, parents, and peers as specific enjoyment sources change as a child matures (Scanlan et al., 2005).

To begin with, these children reported a range of sport-enjoyment sources in line with previous research (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985). These sources of enjoyment can be grouped into three categories—intrapersonal,

situational, and significant others—and might operate independently or interactively with another source (Scanlan et al., 2005). Certain enjoyment sources feature among younger and older children in the sampling years. In particular, positive interactions with socially significant others (i.e., parents, coaches, and peers) and opportunities to develop one's competence are principal.

The differences between younger and older children in their sources of enjoyment were located within three categories: extrinsic achievement (social recognition of competence), intrinsic nonachievement (excitement and challenge), and finally extrinsic nonachievement (encouragement, social involvement, and friendships). Only older children reported enjoyment from social recognition of competence afforded them through the competitive process with their peers. This developmental progression in sources of competence information was reported by Horn and Weiss (1991), who showed that peer comparison was rated as an important source of competence information among older children (ages 11–14 years), whereas younger children (ages 8–10 years) tended to rely on parental feedback, as well as game outcome. It would appear that younger children's lack of a mature understanding of the competitive process (Coakley, 1993) suggests that only certain sources of enjoyment are available to them.

Further support for this contention comes from the excitement and challenge reported among older athletes only. Indeed, MacPhail, Gorely, and Kirk (2003) suggested that as youth performers begin specializing in their sport, they might get more enjoyment from the excitement of competition and performing. Accordingly, this cognitive-developmental difference might contribute to older athletes' greater competitive excitement. Finally, encouragement and social involvement and friendships reported among older children indicated that although affiliation with peers in youth sport is an important source of enjoyment for children (Allen, 2003), older children are more strongly influenced by peers in sport, reflecting a developmental shift in enjoyment perceptions. The desire for interpersonal attachments is a fundamental human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and sport provides youths with an opportunity to derive positive affect through forming and solidifying social bonds (Allen, 2003). In other words, sport provides older children with an opportunity to satisfy their need to belong (Allen, 2003).

Briefly, these findings emphasize the importance of understanding the developmental progression of enjoyment sources to maximize enjoyment and continued involvement in sport. More critically, enjoyment is a major component of the sport commitment model and competence motivation theory; therefore, consideration of the developmental nature of enjoyment should be included in these theories. Future research should examine other important emotional responses such as anxiety from a developmental perspective.

This study also illuminated a gap in the research relating to sources of nonenjoyment. Nonenjoyment stemmed mainly from inappropriate psychosocial support from coaches and parents and demonstrating a lack of competence. Differences in sources of nonenjoyment between younger and older children also emerged. Younger children reported low informational support from parents and punishment for skill errors from the coach, whereas older children reported rivalry, overtraining, and high standards demanded of them. These sources of nonenjoyment reflect the importance of appropriate psychosocial support from parents and coaches for children and the increasingly competitive nature of youth sport as children progress

through the sampling years into the specializing years of sport participation (Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007).

The environmental demands of youth sport are changing for the young athlete; however, not all children can cope effectively with these demands. Previous research revealed that one reason young athletes drop out of sport is because their activity becomes too time consuming (McPherson, Marteniek, Tihanyi, & Clark, 1980). Furthermore, having no time for friends has been highlighted as a source of stress among young athletes (Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991). Coaches and parents should recognize the physical, psychological, and time demands on children during the sampling years of sport participation and remember that children are not miniadults (Gould, Wilson, Tuffey, & Lochbaum, 1993). Appropriate physical training, instruction, and social support aligned with a child's physical, social, and psychological development are key objectives in youth sport (Smith, Smoll, & Passer, 2002; Weiss, 1991). These sources of nonenjoyment also have implications for developing talent in sport, especially considering that to attain expert status, one should engage in over 10,000 hr of deliberate practice (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993). In some sports, early specialization is necessary for elite performance (e.g., women's gymnastics); however, for many others, engaging in deliberate play in a variety of activities appears more valuable for elite talent development and continued involvement in sport (Côté et al., 2007). Deliberate play involves early developmental physical activities that are intrinsically motivating, provide immediate gratification, and are expressly designed to maximize enjoyment (Côté, 1999).

Regarding practical implications, the current study suggests that when working with child athletes in the sampling years, sport psychologists should recognize the child's psychosocial development and communicate to parents and coaches the importance of placing the well-being of the child first at all times. Youth sport becomes increasingly competitive during the sampling years and children often lack the resources to deal effectively with issues such as negative feedback and reinforcement, injuries, and low emotional support. By involving parents and coaches in psychological interventions, the greatest gains in psychological well-being and performance should be realized. Coaches, in particular, can maximize the enjoyment and involvement of children by designing optimal skill challenges in practice and providing appropriate competitive opportunities (Côté et al., 2007). As children get older they continue to value non-performance-related enjoyment sources such as opportunities to develop new friendships, excitement, and challenging their peers in practice and competition. These particular enjoyment sources provide support for Crocker et al.'s (2003) contention that sport enjoyment, an antecedent of sport commitment, does vary with development. This finding is similar to the results of other studies demonstrating that maintaining and developing social relationships as well as excitement and challenge, are key sources of enjoyment among developing athletes (MacPhail et al., 2004; Scanlan et al., 1989).

The current study examined sources of enjoyment and nonenjoyment among children age 8–12 years only; perhaps future investigations could continue this investigation among adolescents in the specializing years to provide a more detailed analysis of enjoyment and nonenjoyment in the second stage of sport participation. Furthermore, focus-group interviews offer a useful method of exploring the child's perspective on sport experiences in the sampling years, especially when

one considers the struggles children encounter understanding and describing their emotional experiences (Harris, 2000).

In summary, the current study expands on previous research on youth sport enjoyment by exploring the differences in sport enjoyment and nonenjoyment among children in the sampling years using focus-group interviews. By combining two research fields, an important first step in understanding how emotional responses vary with developmental progression has been taken. Furthermore, this study contributes to our current knowledge base by detailing how these findings can help parents, coaches, and sport psychologists develop more enjoyable experiences for children in sport.

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