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Sport Sociologist, Jay Coakley (2009), identified elite sport specialization as one of five trends in contemporary youth sports. Specialization within youth sports promotes single sport rather than multi-sport athletes, includes pressure to participate at the highest level as early as possible, and encourages year-round participation (Brenner, & Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness, 2016). While specialization may be advantageous in certain situations, the negative implications may be long term and affect multiple parties, including the family unit (LaPrade et al., 2016). The time and financial commitments required for participation can be a source of conflict within the family, often causing distress on the individual players (parents, athlete, siblings) as well as the marriage relationship. The purpose of this study was to explore how an athlete's participation in sports specialization affects the family unit, focusing on the time and resource commitments along with effects on the individual actors (parents, athletes, siblings) as well as their relationships. Parents of athletes, ages 7-14, who have at least one child currently specializing completed a survey (n=100) and participated in an individual virtual interview (n=11) sharing their family's elite sport experience. Most survey respondents stated that the athlete's sport involvement had no effect on the marriage (60%), relationship with extended family (39%), or the athlete-sibling relationship (43%), but 45% of parents reported that the child's sport participation placed a great deal of time commitment on the family. While the cost to participate in select sports can be high, most parents stated that the financial commitment placed little (39%) or no (43%) strain on the family. Over half (53%) of respondents stated that their athlete's social life was positively affected by their sport participation. Analysis of the open-ended and interview data confirmed and added detail to the survey responses. Participants cited positive effects on family relationships and athlete development, with few negative effects. The relatively positive experiences may be partly due to the sample, participants were relatively well-off financially and most of the athletes were not highly specialized.

SPORTS SPECIALIZATION AND THE FAMILY: EXAMINING

THE EFFECTS OUTSIDE THE LINES

by

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Approved by

Dr. Diane L. Gill

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DEDICATION

To David, who pushed me to pursue my dream and picked up my slack when it became too much. You have never complained about any late night, early morning, or request for help during this process. Your love for me shows through in your daily sacrifices.

To my children, Mateo, Abram, Seely, and Everlee—you are the reason why I pursued this degree. Thank you for your patience and understanding these last four years. Remember our family mantra: *The way you do anything is the way you do everything.*

To my parents, Lynn and Paula Bennett--thank you for pushing me to never settle for mediocrity. Your love and support at every stage of my life journey has always been felt. Thank you for showing up.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I: PROJECT OVERVIEW

The culture of youth sports has changed dramatically over the last half-century (Brenner, & Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness, 2016) transitioning from unstructured, youth-led activities to overly structured, parent-driven practices aimed at elite level skill development rather than sport enjoyment (Lindstrom Bremer, 2012). This desire to be the best has evolved into an era of sports specialization (Coakley, 2009). Sports specialization can be described as focused year-round training in a single sport at the exclusion of other sports (Myer et al., 2015). Indeed, while the structure of the specialization environment may create an opportunity for families to spend more time together, the consequences of this shift have placed multiple stakeholders at risk. Athletes may be at an increased risk of experiencing problems on multiple fronts including above average rates of burnout (Horn, 2015), overuse injuries (DiFiori et al., 2014), and social isolation (Malina, 2010). In the background, secondary players, such as the family, quietly suffer considerable costs linked to the athlete's specialization (Kirk et al., 1997; Bean et al., 2014) including time constraints, hefty financial requirements, and marital and/or sibling conflict stemming from the demands of specialization. Research on how sports specialization affects the family unit is limited, but needed to help families make more informed decisions, which will, in turn, enhance the youth sport experience for athletes and their families.

Relevant Literature

The early part of the 21st century has seen a shift in how we approach youth sports, from youth-driven sport activities to adult driven skill development aimed at achieving elite level status in a single sport (Feeley et al., 2015). In 2009, sports sociologist, Jay Coakley, identified elite sport specialization as one of five trends in contemporary youth sports (Coakley, 2009). Sports specialization is characterized by year-round, intense, physical, and mental training in a single sport, at the exclusion of other sports (Jayanthi et al., 2013). While research verifies the many benefits associated with youth sport participation (National Council of Youth Sports, n.d), the intense nature of specialization often requires parents and families make sacrifices for their child to participate at the elite level, dedicating significant family money, time, and emotional energy to youth-sport activities (Lindstrom Bremer, 2012).

Recent findings on the family focus on those who have the most to gain and lose from the athletes' sports participation: the parents and siblings. Participating families may encounter

challenges stemming from specialization's requirements. Over 60% of parents reported spending two or more hours per week attending competitions or waiting in a pickup line, with around one-third spending more than four hours per week (Kirk et al., 1997). Managing this everyday routine coupled with other family and work commitments meant there was a considerable amount of negotiation and reorganization of work hours and household responsibilities among the family actors to accommodate the youth sport participants' training schedules and other commitments (Kirk et al., 1997). As stressful as the time constraints may be, it is nothing compared to the financial obligations of select sports.

The cost commitment for families continues to rise within youth sport due to the popularity of elite travel teams with parents typically covering the costs of participation (Dunn et al., 2016). According to a 2019 parent survey conducted by The Aspen Institute with the Utah State University Families in Sports lab, parents spend on average \$693 per sport, per child, per year for participation, with some families spending upwards of \$12,000 per year for their child to compete in sports like baseball, gymnastics, and ice hockey (The Aspen Institute, 2019). This cost can quickly become overwhelming (Hyman, 2012). Parents have prioritized spending for their child's sport involvement instead of saving for their college and in some cases, even using retirement savings to pay for activities (Bean et al., 2014). Household income has been cited as a key influencing factor in extracurricular activities and is the most commonly cited difficulty faced by parents related to their child's sport involvement (Dunn et al., 2016; Townsend & Murphy, 2002). The financial burdens experienced by many often cause distress for parents, siblings, and the marriage relationship (Townsend & Murphy, 2002).

In addition to the financial sacrifices' parents make for their child to specialize, they may also forfeit personal and social time, including quality time spent as a couple. Parents feel obligated to place their child's needs above their own and those of the marriage (Bean et al., 2014). In a study by Lally and Kerr (2008), parents of retired athletes were interviewed regarding their experiences including the effect of participation on their marriage. Parents acknowledged that the time demands related to their child's sport commitment had put a significant strain on their marriage and only after the athlete's retirement was the relationship restored (Lally & Kerr, 2008). Siblings can experience both positive and negative emotions related to the athlete's sport involvement. The specializing athlete may serve as a motivator and role model creating a positive relationship between siblings (Bean et al., 2014). However, studies have also shown that

feelings of bitterness and isolation may be felt stemming from the family distributing its resources unequally (Bean et al., 2014). The overall time demands of the athlete's schedule may interfere with other children's ability to participate in activities (Townsend & Murphy, 2002). In some cases, parents found that despite their best efforts they could not treat all their children equally in terms of attention and time, as more resources were dedicated to the child athlete who specialized (Bean et al., 2014; Helliker, 2014; Kirk et al., 1997).

Current research investigating specialization's impact on the family unit thus indicates that significant financial, personal, and familial costs are a possible consequence of elite sport participation. While there is an abundance of research related to specialization, most of it revolves around an athlete's increased risk of overuse injuries, burnout, and the negative effects on overall motor skill development. The above-mentioned studies provide merely a glimpse into the lifestyle challenges these families are facing. There is a notable scarcity of literature published in this area. Only a handful of studies (Bean et al., 2014; Dunn et al., 2016; Kirk et al., 1997; Lally & Kerr, 2008) focus on how all members of the family unit may be affected by the choice to specialize. Lally and Kerr (2008) provide hindsight knowledge from parents who were able to look back and identify areas in their marriage which suffered due to the athlete's sport participation, with the time demands being identified as the primary contributor to marital strife. Bean et al. (2014) explored a wide range of effects on family life including finances, sibling effect, and interpersonal relationships identifying possible familial implications of participation. Research by Dunn et al., (2016) examined the economic demands linked to youth sport participation and identified those obligations as the most cited difficulty faced by youth sport parents. The time commitment required within the youth specialization environment was identified by Kirk and colleagues (1997) as a key factor contributing to the negative consequences on the family life and may have implications for interpersonal relationships between parents, parents and children, and between siblings. The relevant literature reviewed in this section makes clear that with more athletes and families participating in sports specialization, the implications on the family unit must be examined. Exploring how participation in specialization affects all members of the family is critical to helping parents deal with challenges and make more informed decisions about whether specialization is the right choice for their athlete and family.

Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this study is to explore how an athlete's participation in sports specialization affects the family unit, focusing on the time and resource commitments along with effects on the individual actors (parents, athletes, siblings) as well as their relationships. The specific aims are:

Aim #1: To explore how participation in sports specialization affects interpersonal relationships within the family unit.

Aim #2: To explore how participation in sport specialization affects the time and resource commitments of family life.

Methods

A mixed-methods approach was used to explore the family's experience with specialization. To address the aims, parents of athletes who were specializing were surveyed to gather initial data. To gather more in-depth information, parents were invited to participate in individual interviews to discuss how specialization affects the family.

Preliminary Work

In the Fall of 2019, I completed a pilot study using observations and retrospective interviews and focus groups to explore how an athlete's participation in sports specialization influenced various aspects of family life. Six parents of athletes (baseball, softball, volleyball) who had completed the specialization process were asked to identify challenges they experienced and provide recommendations with the goal of reducing the risk of negative consequences on family life. Money and time presented themselves as the major challenges and Saturday-only tournaments were identified as the primary recommendation to help reduce negative consequences. Feedback from this study was used to inform the methods and refine interview questions for the proposed project. Examples of the findings are presented in Appendix A.

Participants

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board, recruitment of parents for survey participation began. Recruitment of survey participants was initially limited to the East Texas region, but expanded with sharing through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Recruitment strategies also included reaching out to individual families as well as contacting local select organizations. The target population for this study was parents of athletes, ages 7-14, who have at least one athlete currently specializing in baseball, softball, or

volleyball, the primary select sports offered in the East Texas region. The 7-14 age range was chosen based on it being the most popular age group for select sports in the East Texas Region. In this paper the terms “select”, “travel”, and “club” are used interchangeably to reflect elite level sport competition. Parents were asked to use Jayanthi et al.’s (2015) definition of specialization as ‘year-round intensive training in a single sport at the exclusion of other sports’ (p. 795) with “year-round” being greater than 8 months of the year. Additionally, specialization can be categorized into three degrees: low, moderate, or high based on the number of definition components an athlete meets: “Can you pick a main sport?”, “Did you quit other sports to focus on a main sport?”, and “Do you train greater than eight months in a year?” (Jayanthi et al., 2015). The sum was used to categorize degree of specialization: 3 was classified as highly specialized, 2 as moderately specialized, and 1 or zero was considered low specialization.

Survey Participants

A total of 100 parents completed the digital survey. Of those, 81 participants (81%) were female and 18 (18%) were male. The ages ranged from 27-68 years with an average of around 40 years old ($M=40.16$, $SD= 6.51$). Most of the respondents were married (89) with five listed as single, never married and the remaining selecting divorced ($n=4$) and separated ($n=1$). The sample was largely (94%) Caucasian. Other races represented were African American ($n=3$), Asian ($n=1$) and other ($n=1$). The majority (49%) of participants stated they earned between \$100,001- \$250,000 in 2019 along with 27% reporting a total household income of \$50,000-\$100,000. Other 2019 incomes reported were less than \$50,000 ($n=9$), \$250,001-\$500,000 ($n=6$), and more than \$500,000 ($n=3$). Most of the participants ($n= 80$) were mothers of the athletes and 16 were fathers. The average number of children per family was 2.65 ($SD= 1.02$) with a total of at least 265 children represented among the 100 survey participants.

Interview Participants

Parents had an opportunity to volunteer for the follow-up interview by providing their contact information at the end of the survey. A total of 11 parents ($M= 40$ years; $SD= 5.06$), four male and seven female, participated in virtual one-on-one semi-structured interviews (Appendix C). Of the 11 parents, five had multiple children participating at the select level. The parents combined for 18 athletes with seven considered low specializers, eight moderately specializing and three classified as highly specialized. A variety of their child’s main sports were identified including baseball ($n=10$), softball ($n=3$), swimming ($n=2$), basketball ($n=1$), and volleyball

($n=1$). While most of the parents identified a main sport for their child, the majority ($n=13$) of the 18 athletes also participated in other sports throughout the year. Household income was as follows: \$50,000 - \$100,000 (two families), \$100,001 - \$250,000 (eight families), and \$250,001 - \$500,000 (one family). A more detailed description of all interview participants and their children's sport information can be found in Appendix D.

Measures

Data collection included a survey and an individual parent interview. The survey addressed the family's experience with sports specialization and how it affects family life. Upon completing the survey, parents had an opportunity to volunteer for an individual interview.

Survey

The survey was administered online using Qualtrics survey software and shared via email and social media platforms. After obtaining consent, the survey began by gathering basic demographics and family information. Parents were then asked about their family's experience with specialization and how that experience impacted various domains of family life including time, finances, relationships, and social opportunities. See Appendix E for the full survey.

Individual Interviews

Interviews with 11 parents representing 11 different families were conducted virtually via the Zoom platform. An interview guide (Appendix C) was used to gather information on the family's experience. The main interview questions focused on various aspects of family life including finances, time, sibling effects, relationships, as well as the athlete's social life and academic commitments. Follow-up questions were used to obtain further insight into each area.

Procedures

The survey data collection began in August 2020. Social media platforms and direct email messages targeted parents of children who participate in select, travel, or club sports. Parents were encouraged to share their family's elite sport experience by clicking on the link and completing the survey. In addition, local select organization administrators were contacted. With permission, the project description and link were shared with their parents via the organization's social media page, email listserv, or group messaging system. Participants spent 15-20 minutes completing the survey. A google form at the end of the survey requested contact information for those interested in sharing their family's experience through a virtual interview. As an incentive,

interview participants were placed into a drawing for one \$50 Amazon gift card. Interviews were conducted over a four-week span in Fall 2020.

Data Analysis

Survey data were analyzed using SPSS software and Qualtrics reports. Descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, and frequencies were gathered for the survey questions. Open-ended survey responses were organized in a Google document and uploaded to Atlas.ti 8 for coding, along with the interview transcripts. Interviews were recorded during the Zoom session and transcribed using an online transcription service. Each automated transcription was checked back against the original audio recording to ensure accuracy. The first step in the analysis process was reading each interview transcript to get an overall sense of the participant's experience followed by repeated active readings of each transcript to gain immersion in the material. The second step consisted of going line by line and highlighting participant's significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provided an insight into how the family experienced specialization. The final step involved developing clusters of meaning from the participant's experience into themes. The same process was repeated for the document containing the open-ended survey responses. Predefined themes and categories stemming from the aims were used to help guide analysis while others were data-driven and formed inductively. Results were organized into three main themes: interpersonal relationships, time, and family resources. Open-ended survey and interview responses resulted in 55 codes, which were categorized into 14 code groups. Upon continued revisiting of the data, the following ten categories were formed: (a) marriage, (b) sibling effect, (c) extended family, (d) financial commitment, (e) athlete's personal growth, and (f) social life, (g) academics, (h) extracurricular opportunities, (i) church attendance, and (j) family time.

Member checking, peer debriefing, and clarification of researcher bias were completed as evidence of trustworthiness. Interview participants were emailed a copy of the interview transcription and encouraged to review their comments for accuracy and provide reactions and further insights if desired. All participants responded with agreement and positive feedback. A colleague provided peer debriefing services by reviewing the project's methodology, interpretation, and data analysis sections. A brief researcher positionality statement is included below with an expanded statement found in Appendix B to help clarify any researcher bias.

Researcher Positionality

The stance of the researcher can affect every phase of the research process from initial construction to dissemination of outcomes (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). My experiences as an athlete, coach, and parent have all provided me with varying degrees of viewpoints surrounding specialization. Therefore, a researcher positionality statement has been included in Appendix B in which I present my biases and how I will work to control them. Evidence of acknowledged bias is essential to ensure trustworthiness (Amnotte & Thomas, 2017).

Findings and Discussion

This project was designed to explore how participation in sports specialization affects various aspects of the family life including interpersonal relationships as well as time and resource commitments. The findings are organized under the three main themes and categories developed in the thematic analysis. Within each section, survey results are presented first followed by results from the open-ended survey questions and interview analysis. Quotes are used to highlight the findings. Quotes from interviewees have the participants name (pseudonym) while quotes without names are from the survey. More detailed information regarding the themes and subthemes can be found in Appendix J.

The families represented in the survey responses had been participating in sport at the select/club/travel level for an average of 4.4 years ($SD= 2.27$) with 17 of the 100 families participating more than seven years. Of the 100 participants, 57 reported having at least two kids participating in youth sport. Parents reported information on all children participating in sport even if they were not specializing. However, when responding to questions about effects on family life, parents were asked to identify the athlete who has been specializing the longest as athlete #1.

The average age of athlete #1 was 11.3 years old with 63 being male and 35 being female. The main sports for athlete #1 were baseball ($n=57$), softball ($n=17$) and volleyball ($n=13$); other sports were basketball ($n=3$), soccer ($n=3$), competition cheerleading ($n=1$), and mixed martial arts ($n=1$). Many of the athletes also participated in other sports throughout the year including basketball ($n=52$), football ($n=20$), track and field/cross country ($n=18$), volleyball ($n=15$), baseball ($n=10$), soccer ($n=9$), softball ($n=8$), and other ($n=7$). When responding to questions related to the degrees of specialization for athlete #1, 94 of 98 parents answered yes to the statement: My child participates in one sport for greater than 8 months of the

year; 79 of 98 answered yes to: My child focuses on a single main sport above all others; and 15 answered yes to: My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport. Based on those responses, 22 athletes were low specializers, 61 were moderately specialized, and 15 were considered highly specialized.

Interpersonal Relationships

Interpersonal relationships include familial relationships such as the marriage, sibling, and extended family (primarily grandparents).

Marriage

The majority (60%) of survey respondents stated that their athlete's sport involvement had no effect on their relationship with their spouse/partner. Moreover, a combined 34% of respondents declared that the participation had a positive (21%) or very positive (13%) effect on the relationship. The open-ended responses indicated that the positive effects stemmed from increased time together during the weekend tournaments and seeing a side of their spouse that they did not get to see in another setting.

My spouse coaches our daughter and her team which allows me to see a side of him I absolutely adore.

Spending more time together with common interests.

A common statement was that the participation can be "positive at times and negative at times". Working together to manage the schedule and prioritizing alone time helps to keep the relationship strong. The parents were also willing to give up time together to support their child's ambitions. Possible negative effects were suggested with families who had more than one child participating causing the family to spend less time together as a couple as well as a family.

We make an effort to spend time alone together. Weekly lunch dates keep us grounded and allow us to focus on each other... We have to be intentional though to make it happen.

It can be stressful, not allowing much time for you to spend with your spouse. But we both agree it benefits the kids so it's an even trade-off.

So, at first it was good...but as [son's name] got older and...started getting involved in his sports then that kind of caused us to have to break and one go with one (Sarah)

Co-parenting was an element of the equation for 17 of the survey respondents. Most of those parents (11) stated that the athlete's sport involvement had no effect on the relationship with their co-parent with some expressing positive experiences such as "we co-parent very well, and the ballpark is a good place to do this". However, there were some comments which indicated that some aspects of the involvement could be a point of contention. For example, a survey respondent stated, "the constant running and exchanging of kids and equipment is stressful along with the financial expenses of which parent will pay dues..."

Current research acknowledges the significant strain the sport commitment can put on a marriage (Lally & Kerr, 2008). In contrast, many respondents in this study declared that the sport involvement had no effect on their marriage, with many citing positive effects. Previous studies have found that parents may feel obligated to place their child's needs above their own and those of the marriage (Bean et al., 2014). They were also willing to sacrifice their relationship at this time with the assumption that they would reconnect when the kids left home. The current study supports this thinking with Julie commenting that she and her husband "look at it like it's just their time and then it'll be our time all over again". This can be concerning as putting the marriage relationship on the back burner for so many years may affect the long-term success of the marriage, particularly after the athlete(s) retire from sport and parents become empty nesters.

Sibling Effect

The decision to specialize may affect all members of the family including siblings. Implications for the sibling may involve their relationship with the athlete, their relationship with the parents, as well as their opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. When asked about how the athlete's sport involvement has affected their relationship with his/her siblings, most parents (43%) stated no effect with some noting positive (18%) or very positive (19%) effects, as well as a few negative (12%). The positive experience involves shared interest, supporting each other, and making connections with other siblings at practices and competitions.

My boys all participated in travel sports and can share their experiences.

They work together to practice and get better...have each other to throw to or hit with...attend each other's games. They basically are each other's biggest fans.

A lot of the boys on my team have younger siblings that she is friends with and that she has fun with. (Landon)

The time demands required of an elite sport commitment can make it difficult for parents of multiple children to balance the time and family resources equally among all children as noted by some participants in the open-ended responses. However, more than half of parents (55%) stated that the athlete's sport involvement had no effect on their relationship with their other children. A combined 22% parents stated that the experience resulted in a positive effect on their relationship with their other children declaring that "sports bring us closer" due to "more family time together". It is worth noting that 14% of survey participants stated that the sport involvement had a negative impact on their relationship with their other children. Both survey and interview participants referenced an unbalanced allocation of time and attention.

My other child feels like we do more for his brother than him.

Like last Saturday I wasn't able to go to his football game because I was at a travel tournament with her or um you know there are some evenings that I can't go watch his football practice because I am taking her somewhere.
(Sarah)

The time and financial resources allocated to the athlete can also play a role in the sibling's opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities. However, 53% of survey respondents stated that the athlete's sport involvement had no effect on the sibling's extracurricular opportunities stating that they often "divide up and rotate if an event ever overlaps" and they "make sure the kids all get to participate in their chosen activities". It appears though that, in some cases, thinning resources may negatively impact other children in the home. A combined 38% of parents noted that siblings' extracurricular opportunities are affected at some level whether it be a little (15%), somewhat (19%), a lot (4%), or a great deal (1%). This can stem from financial limitations to time and attention imbalances.

I feel that time, money, and attention can sometimes affect the other children in the home in a negative way.

Because of the time commitment with volleyball, my youngest son wasn't able to participate in the soccer league in the fall...we've kind of given the girls and I hate to say preferential treatment...(Matthew)

Current research indicates that the time and cost commitment may have effects on the siblings (Dunn et al., 2016; Townsend & Murphy, 2002). While current study participants noted impacts, the majority of respondents reported a positive impact on the siblings. Sport provided a shared interest and an opportunity for the older sibling to serve as a role model and positive influence on the younger sibling. They all enjoyed attending events and supporting the athlete.

Extended Family

A majority of survey participants relayed the athlete's relationship with extended family as positive (39%) because of the sport involvement, 13% identified it as very positive, and an additional 39% cited no effect. While the numbers were similar for the parental relationship with extended family (54% no effect; 28% positive), the number of respondents who noted a more negative (6%) and very negative (2%) effect on their relationship with extended family was slightly higher. Open-ended responses suggest this may arise from a disagreement between parents and extended family on the amount of time devoted to the sport with multiple parents stating that extended family "just doesn't get it".

However, a greater number of parents report positive effects on relationships with extended family as the weekend tournaments provide an opportunity for grandparents and extended family to attend competitions. Interview parents supported the survey results in that most families stated that the sport involvement had no effect on relationships with extended family. In fact, most respondents spoke of how the participation has been "more positive than negative". The tournaments bring the families out of town which allow them to stay overnight with family and facilitate time which would not have happened had it not been for the select sport.

I feel like it really helps my dad who is a very introverted person... We invite him to all his games...so I feel like it helps get our like extended family to come to see him. Instead, if we weren't playing travel ball we wouldn't be in there. (Brianna)

The time commitment appears to play both positive and negative roles on the extended family depending on location. For families who do not live close to extended family those weekends that were spent at grandparent's house prior to sport participation were now spent competing. This takes time away from family visits and may create stress on the extended family

relationship. If the athletes live close to extended family sport participation had a more positive effect because it allowed family to watch the athlete compete.

Time

When asked how much of a time commitment was placed on the family, 45% of parents cited a great deal with 39% stating “a lot”. The remaining 16% cited a moderate amount. The demanding schedule of select sports include weekly practices and training sessions in addition to weekend tournaments. Travel time to practices and competitions must also be considered as some families participate on teams outside of their hometown. Approximately 73% of study participants reported spending more than three hours per week traveling to competitions and practices (Appendix I). While traveling for practices and competitions can be time consuming, time spent at the field or gym for practices, competitions or individual and group training sessions outweigh the travel time. Figure 1 provides the weekly time commitment reported by survey parents for training and competitions.

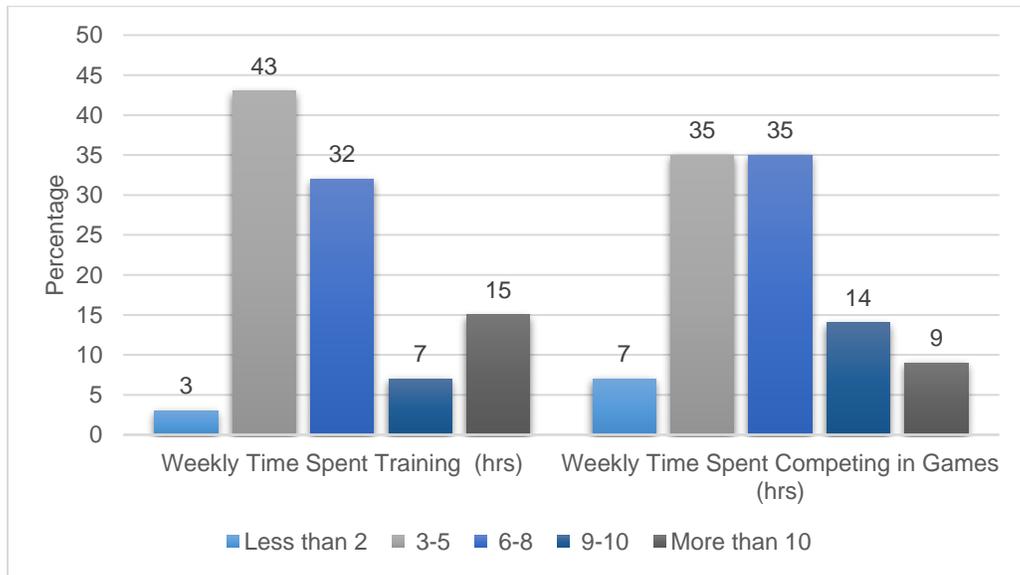


Figure 1. Training and Competition Time Per Week

Interview parents reiterated the consensus among survey participants that sports specialization has placed a significant time commitment on the family with one parent referring to it as a “time sucker”. The demands of weekly practices coupled with work and school, weekend tournaments, in addition to commuting time for practices and games presented many challenges with the schedule but also increased the amount of family time.

There are also weekends where I'm like, if I just didn't have to drive to someone's baseball game, I would be the happiest human in the world. You need to get some stuff done at home or, you know, we both work full-time jobs and, busy jobs and you know, you're either working or at a baseball game. (Maggie)

The current results follow research trends surrounding the intense time commitment of elite sport (Bean et al., 2014; Kirk et al., 1997). Most families stated that their athlete's sport participation required significant time investment by the family. Traveling, competing, practicing, volunteering, fundraising, and for some, coaching, all required families to adapt the family routine around the athlete's schedule. Managing this schedule along with other family and work commitments may require sacrifices on the part of family members including parents, siblings, and even the athletes themselves (Townsend & Murphy, 2002). Parents tended to place their children's activities at the center of the family's schedule and neglect their own needs including leisure time pursuits and social time with friends (Bean et al., 2014). The time theme encompasses additional aspects of life affecting both the athlete and the family including social life, academics, religious services, extracurricular opportunities, and family time.

Social Life

Over half (53%) of respondents stated that their athlete's social life was positively affected by their sport participation. Parents noted that their athletes were competing with kids from neighboring schools, which expanded their social circle resulting in more friendships, allowed more time to spend with current friends who are also their teammates and positively affected their willingness to partake in social activities.

Nobody from her school was on her swim team but she ended up making friends...She met people that she would have never met at all through swimming. (Jane)

The majority of his friends are on his team. (Brianna)

He isn't near as shy as he used to be. He has made lifelong friends.

Select sports is not school-sponsored and many kids are playing on teams with athletes from other school districts. While this does promote the development of more friendships, it may

isolate student-athletes from their local social circle and prevent them from participating in other social activities.

They do have less time with friends that don't play on their teams.

They have never been able to spend the night on the weekends with friends from school unless those friends could travel with us to games. Again, they've only attended a couple birthday parties with friends from school and even family members' parties.

Academics

Student-athletes were able to maintain their grades; 65% of parents stated that academics were not at all affected by the sport participation. In fact, 27% of respondents stated that the involvement appeared to have a positive effect on the athlete's academic performance. The busy schedule forced the child to develop good time management skills. Many parents stated that the sport participation was a privilege that was earned by keeping up with their schoolwork, and the sport was an incentive to maintain above average grades. The overwhelming consensus was that "school comes first" as shown by comments such as "academics always come first" and "he knows our priorities and works hard so he can play".

While many comments portrayed a good balance between study time and sports, balancing school and athletics could "get a little overwhelming". Getting in homework and study time required creativity and discipline. The athletes spent time studying in the car on the way to practice and staying up late to finish homework showing their dedication.

They've stayed focused...it's helped them because knowing that they have softball practice...they know they've got to stay locked in and get their work done. (Bryan)

Conflict with Religious Services

The weekend time commitment was an issue for some families because it kept them from attending religious services. Some parents discussed the feeling of guilt they experienced by choosing sports over church.

We used to be involved with Sunday Morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night church activities but that all had to be put on hold.

You go back to that guilt feeling Sundays has been a big deal for us... We just have not been successful in allowing them to compete fully and make church. (Matthew)

Most sports require athletes to be present on Saturday for pool play and Sunday for bracket play which means that they may have games during weekend worship times. Swimming was the only sport mentioned to be more flexible as it was an individual sport, and the parents had the option of choosing events that did not conflict with worship times. Previous research confirms that the time demands of competitive youth sport proved challenging and negatively affected church attendance (Livingston, 2019).

Extracurricular Opportunities for the Athlete

At times, the time commitment required of select sports prevented the athlete from participating in outside extracurricular activities such as after-school clubs and other sports. However, this seemed to be a trade-off that the parents were willing to make.

He always wants to play soccer. And we really only let him do it in the winter. So I think, you know, in that sense he's bummed sometimes. (Maggie)

Yeah. She can't do any after school clubs. You know, around here they had an outdoor club and she couldn't do it because she would be going to swim practice. (Jane)

Increased Family Time

While parents have stated that select sports has been a significant time commitment for their family, it is not without its positive effects on the family. An overwhelming majority of parents from the surveys as well as the interviews noted that the sport involvement has allowed for “a lot of bonding time driving to games and practices”. Families are spending more time together in this environment and it has had positive effects.

We spend more time together and have something to talk about.

Spending time together and opportunities to connect on drives and time on weekend competitions.

Previous research has supported this increased family time with parents reporting more bonding time and stronger connections with the athlete because of the sport participation (Livingston, 2019).

Family Resources

Many parents view youth sport participation as an investment in their child's future and the allocation of family resources including financial support is vital to participation. Select sports can be a large financial commitment for any family. The nature of the sport requires a larger financial investment compared to a recreation league. Athletes must have uniforms, specialty equipment, registration fees, tournament entry fees, as well as fees associated with travel such as gas, lodging, food, gate fees and entertainment costs. See Appendix H for more examples of the interviewee's financial commitments. Most survey respondents indicated that their family's estimated financial cost per year is between \$1,000 - \$2,499 (39%) or between \$2,500 - \$4,999 (32%). The highest 6% of participants spend more than \$10,000 per year while the lowest 10% spend less than \$1,000. While the stated cost may be, as one interview parent put it, "more than I probably should have been spending on a sport", most parents stated that the financial commitment placed little (39%) or no (43%) strain on the family. Parents stated that they "have the money for them to play" and/or "select sports are expensive, however, it will benefit in the future" and "it cost us a good deal of money, but we budget for it".

Many parents view youth sport participation as a vital part of their child's development and the financial cost as an investment in their child's future (Dunn et al., 2016). The current study participants were no different with some parents stating that the cost is high but "it's worth it". They also relayed a strong desire to support their child in their quest to accomplish their dreams and the financial commitment was part of that support. Respondents supported the current research in that they placed a priority on spending for their sport instead of saving for college, growing savings, upgrading their home, and paying for family vacations (Bean et al., 2014). The cost to participate at the select level continues to rise with the popularity of elite leagues, private coaching, high-end equipment, and more (Dunn et al., 2016). Current research indicates that financial cost is the most cited difficulty faced by parents related to their child's sport involvement (Dunn et al., 2016; Townsend & Murphy, 2002). While current interview and survey participants were spending between \$125 and \$2400 for registration fees (varied by sport), few reported the cost as negatively impacting their family. Parents managed the cost by

including participation in the family budget and/or cutting cost in other areas such as entertainment, family vacations, and eating out.

Current literature surrounding financial cost of youth sport suggest a more negative familial consequence compared to current study findings. Multiple reasons may account for the different findings - the first being related to degree of specialization. Only 15 survey participants and three interview participants classified their athlete as highly specialized. Highly specialized athletes may invest more in their sport having given up all other sports to focus on their main sport. This may involve additional lessons, more specialized equipment, and participation in a more expensive select organization. The second reason may stem from the make-up of study participants. Most athletes participated in baseball (57) or softball (17) with only 13 citing volleyball as their main sport. Financial data collected in the current study as well as the pilot study indicate that the cost and travel requirements of select baseball/softball is lower than volleyball. Additionally, the study sample's cited income is above average. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, median household income in 2019 was \$68,703 (Semega et al., 2020). Over half (53%) of study participants reported their 2019 annual income fell in the \$100,001-\$250,000 range. Increased discretionary income aligns with the family's ability to pay for registration cost, equipment, and travel associated with select sports without negative familial effects (Walker et al., 2021). Overall, families considered the cost an investment in their child's future and "as long as the child is seeing a benefit, sports are worth some sacrifice".

Athletes Personal Growth

A positive aspect of specialization mentioned by both survey and interview parents is the development of life skills. Sportsmanship, hard work, accountability, respect, teamwork, and self-discipline are just a few life skills that were noted by parents as a byproduct of the elite sport experience.

The lessons that she learns from this, not just talent wise but you know these things build character, they build responsibility. (Sarah)

My children are being taught/coached the importance of exercise, being a team member and respecting adults. They are also expanding their friendship circles and being taught self-discipline.

Despite the challenges elite sport presents, many parents discussed the unique life skills provided by youth sport participation. The development of life skills via the sport environment

was important to parents and they were willing to endure the cost and time demands as a trade-off for future success.

As previously mentioned, the current results indicate a more positive experience associated with sports specialization compared to the current literature. In addition to family resources and sport cited above, other possibilities include the self-selected sample, age of the athlete, as well as the viewpoint of the parents. The sample was self-selected meaning that the researcher simply asked for qualified volunteers to complete the survey. Participants who volunteered may have had a more positive experience, which was reflected in the survey and interview results. The average age of athlete #1 was 11.3 years. Previous research has shown that the average age a child starts to specialize in baseball (M=15.6), softball (M=13.5), and volleyball (M=14.1) comes in later adolescence (Swindell et al., 2019). Current study participants who are low or moderate specializers may move into the high specialization category in the future. Additionally, parents who have children who are currently participating in select sports may view their family's experience more positively compared to families who are finished with specialization and can look back at the experience with a clearer picture of how it affected their family. The pilot study conducted retrospective interviews with parents who had children who were finished with select sports. Those interview responses tended to reflect the current literature more closely regarding their family's overall experience.

Conclusion

Based on the current findings, participation in sports specialization was an overall positive experience for families. Involvement positively affected relationships with friends and family as well as fostered the development of life skills among the athletes. Many parents reported that the participation had no effect on the marriage, other siblings, the athlete's academics, and the family's financial status. In contrast, the extreme time commitment negatively affected the family's opportunities to attend weekend religious services and the athlete's chance to participate in activities outside of their sport. Current study results differ from previous literature, which suggests a more negative familial experience, possibly stemming from sample make-up, sport chosen, and/or higher than average income. As the popularity of elite sport continues to rise, family implications should continue to be monitored. These findings can help parents, coaches, and other youth sport stakeholders build programs in which best practices are implemented to ensure families thrive throughout their elite sport experience.

CHAPTER II: DISSEMINATION

The dissertation findings will be presented to study participants in the form of a detailed report aimed at educating parents on specialization and its broadening effects. The report will include athlete and familial effects stemming from specialization along with recommendations to improve positive outcomes. Findings from parent surveys and individual interviews will be referenced throughout the report. Specifically, the interview participants and those survey participants who indicated interest in viewing the results by providing their contact information on the google form attached to the survey will be targeted. This report will serve as a starting point for my long-term objective aimed at developing and disseminating a variety of resources to help parents, coaches, and youth sport stakeholders better understand the implications of specialization outside the lines. The report will be shared via parent email and will contain recommendations for families to consider as they engage in elite sport. In addition to providing study participants with the results, a request to local select/club teams will be made to gauge interest in sharing the presentation/written recommendation with their parents. While the current study results were mainly positive, other research, including my previous preliminary research, revealed more opposing parent views. The goals of the report are to 1) Provide an overview of sports specialization, 2) List the areas of family life which may be affected by participating in the select environment, 3) Provide parents with a detailed description of how these areas may be affected both positively and negative, 4) List strategies that may help to mitigate any negative family impacts and optimize the youth sport experience for all.

A Parent's Guide to Family Functioning in the Specialization Environment

The landscape of youth sports has changed significantly in the last 20 years with the emergence of club sports and more athletes focused on developing elite level skill rather than sport enjoyment. This increased focus on performance has many athletes and parents choosing to forego multi-sport participation to focus on a single main sport as early as elementary school. While specialization may benefit some athletes in the form of enhanced skill and performance resulting in high-level playing opportunities, it can also lead to negative consequences for the athlete as well as the family. In contrast, participation in select sports can foster the development of important life skills while providing families with an opportunity to spend a significant

amount of quality time together resulting in closer relationships with positive lasting impact. The purpose of this report is to provide parents and youth sport stakeholders with an overview of specialization, share study findings on how participation may affect various areas of the family life, and to present recommendations which may help mitigate any negative familial impacts.

Making the Choice to Specialize

Sports specialization is a path to athletic development that can be described as focused year-round training in a single sport at the exclusion of other sports (Jayanthi et al., 2015). Elite sports specialization has been identified by researchers as one of five trends in contemporary youth sports (Coakley, 2009). Does your athlete focus on a single main sport above all others? Does he/she participate in one sport for more than eight months of the year? Has your athlete quit all others sports to focus on one sport? Your answers to these questions will determine your child's degree of specialization. Answering yes to all three categorizes them as highly specialized, two as moderately specialized and ≤ 1 as a low specializer. Research has shown that highly specialized athletes have the greatest risk for injury and serious overuse injury, while the risk was reduced for athletes who were moderately specializing and even less for low specializers (Jayanthi et al., 2015). In addition, athletes who specialize may be at an increased risk of dropout (Bell et al., 2019), burnout (Horn, 2015), and social isolation (Malina, 2010). In the current study, only 15 athletes were considered highly specialized while the majority (61) were categorized as moderate specializers. Moderate specializers are at a lower risk of injury and negative effects compared to highly specialized athletes. To reduce the risk of injury due to youth sport specialization, current researchers have established a list of recommendations aimed at addressing the health and well-being of youth and adolescent athletes.

Specialization: Recommendations for Positive Outcomes

Delay specializing in a single sport for as long as possible: Adolescents and young athletes should strive to participate in a variety of sports and avoid specializing until middle or late adolescence (14-16 years of age).

Take a break: Adolescents and young athletes should not compete in a single sport for more than eight months of the year.

Implement a day of rest: A minimum of at least one day off per week from training and competitions for rest and recovery should be implemented.

No more hours per week than age in years: Adolescents and youth athletes should keep their total hours of organized sports per week less than their age to prevent overuse injury.

One team at a time: Avoid competing in multiple sports or on multiple teams at the same time.

It is important for parents to understand that your athlete is not the only family member who will be experiencing elite sport participation. The entire family including parents, siblings, and extended family will experience indirect effects of the athlete's participation. Various aspects of family life may be tested with possible economic, social, and relational costs linked to the athlete's specialization. On the other hand, the specialization environment may yield positive outcomes in various aspects of family life - specifically relationships and life skill development for the athlete as shown by the current study's results. Parents noted "his involvement has actually brought us closer" and that "it's been a great tool for my daughter to learn life lessons". The specialization environment can be a place to develop strong family and friend connections while the level of commitment required may foster the growth of skills regarded as essential in adulthood. The following report includes possible areas of impact based on current study findings. In addition, recommendations and strategies cited by participants are included.

Marriage

The majority of study participants reported that their athlete's sport involvement had no effect on their relationship with their spouse/partner, but as noted by some parents, they had to "work together" and "make an effort to spend time alone together". The time and financial demands of select sports require that parents work together to ensure smooth operation of the family system during the season. While weekend tournaments may increase family time for some, parents who have multiple children participating in activities may have to get creative with their strategies to maintain those positive outcomes. Some study participants reported experiencing positive marital effects from the sport participation. The weekend tournaments meant more time together and both enjoyed supporting their children and watching them do what they love. Parents also noted how special it was to see their spouse coaching and serving as a role model for the kids while building strong friendships throughout the years.

Marriage: Recommendations for Positive Outcomes

Prioritize weekly alone time: Scheduling a lunch date or date night throughout the week will help to ensure you stay connected even if the athletic schedule pulls you away from each other.

Open Communication: It is important for parents to be honest regarding the sport participation. Items which should be shared include cost of participation, athlete behavior and performance expectations, parental behavior expectations, and each parent's expected contribution to the schedule (shuttle to practice, prepare dinner, clean up house, etc.).

Be Intentional: It is the little things that count. During this season of your relationship kids tend to take up most of your time, energy, and conversations. Find small ways to show your spouse you love them and are there to help make this process smoother. Some ideas might be bringing home dinner one night, volunteering to take the athlete to practice, cleaning up the house, scheduling a date night or lunch, telling them how much you appreciate their hard work, and more. Acknowledge your partners contribution to the marriage and their role as parent.

Shared Interest: Both parents have a shared interest in supporting their athlete(s). Many parents stated that it was “another thing we can discuss and support” and that they “have made many friends and enhanced our relationship”. Use the sport participation as an opportunity to come together as a “team” to support your athlete’s interest and develop new friend relationships with other parents who are sharing a similar experience.

Time

Many of the surveyed and interviewed parents stated that elite sport participation placed a significant time commitment on the family citing “no free time because of sports” and that their “weekends are tied up”. The demands of weekly practices, weekend tournaments, and travel time, coupled with work and school commitments can challenge the typical family life pattern. Dinner time is pushed back, and sibling and parent schedules must be rearranged. Parents of multiple children also noted the additional challenges to the schedule when you add in other children participating in extracurricular activities. As suggested by many study participants, this extreme time commitment can also cause stress in other areas that may be getting neglected such as time with other children, weekend visits with extended family, athlete’s academic performance, and weekend religious services. However, one continuous positive noted by many

parents was the increase in family time. Weekend tournaments and drives to practices and competitions allow families to spend more quality time together possibly fostering stronger connections among all familial relationships. This is a great opportunity to include extended family in the fun. Inviting them to tournaments and games is a great way to foster strong bonds between the athlete and his/her grandparents while supporting them in the sport(s) they love. This was mentioned by parents as “a fun way to spend time as a family”.

Time: Recommendations for Positive Outcomes

Managing the schedule:

- Prepare dinner the night before so it can just be reheated.
- Have a Sunday family meeting to lay out the week’s schedule and determine who will be responsible for commuting to practice and divvy up other important responsibilities.
- Set up a carpool schedule with other families if possible.
- Enlist the help of grandparents to shuttle to practice. This will also allow for some quality time.
- Have the athlete pack their sports bags the night before and place them in the car. This should include all gear as well as water and healthy snacks to eat on the way to practice.
- If possible, participate with a team in your local town to minimize travel and time.

Religious Services:

- If you are out of town for a tournament, find a local worship center with a service time that works for your schedule.
- Stream worship services from your home church if possible.
- Prioritize a morning devotional or worship time with your family to show them that while you are away, it is still important to prioritize your spiritual life.
- If possible, try to attend other services offered throughout the week.

Academics:

- Promote good time management skills with your children.
- Encourage them to take advantage of small pockets of time to study such as travel time to and from practices as well as early mornings before school.
- Implement no pass no play rules by prioritizing academics over athletics. Discuss academic expectations with your athlete and the consequences for not meeting them.

Extended Family:

- Invite extended family to watch competitions and even travel together if possible.
- Include one-on-one time during the weekend, if possible, to make it even more special.

- Explain to extended family how important the participation is to the athlete and the family. Encourage them to share in his/her dreams.
- Be intentional about talking or video calling throughout the week to check in. Plan a trip to visit on weekends with no sport commitment.

Balancing time spent with other children:

- Be intentional about spending time with kids who are not participating in select sports.
- Enroll them in something they have been wanting to do.
- Be creative with available time:
 - Drop the athlete off at practice and go out for ice cream or shopping.
 - Bring them with you on errands.
 - Have them help you cook dinner
 - Bring a game to play while the sibling is at practice or to play between games.

Family Resources

Many parents stated that their children’s sport participation is an important component to their childhood and an investment in their future. A significant part of that investment is the financial cost. When considering registration fees, equipment, and travel cost, it does not take long to realize that this can be an expensive endeavor. Parents cited that “it takes a lot of money and time, but it is worth it”. Many parents suggested “not participating in clubs that we cannot afford” and “putting aside money” and “budgeting” for the expense. Most survey respondents indicated that their family’s estimated financial cost per year is between \$1,000 - \$2,499 (39%) or between \$2,500 - \$4,999 (32%). While most study participants stated that the financial commitment placed little or no strain on the family, it is important for families to explore the expected financial contribution prior to committing. The cost will vary among teams and sports.

Finances: Recommendations for Positive Outcomes

Know the hidden costs: Most parents are aware of the most common costs associated with select sports: registration fees, uniform and equipment cost, and travel cost (gas, hotel, food). However, some parents made sure to mention that there are some hidden costs that may arise during the season which were unexpected and can place significant strain on the family’s budget. Possible hidden costs noted by study participants were entertainment between games, entry/gate fees, restaurant prices for food, paying for another child’s meal, and tournaments being added to the schedule at the last minute. When budgeting, prepare for the unexpected.

Do not prioritize sport over your family's present or future wellbeing: It can be tempting to prioritize sports spending instead of saving for college, retirement, or funding your emergency savings with the reasoning that you will get a return on your investment when your child gets a college scholarship. Unfortunately, the odds are not in your favor. According to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), only 2% of high school athletes will obtain a scholarship. Even if your child is one of the lucky ones the scholarship may not cover the full cost. In fact, only six NCAA sports offer full scholarships (football; men's and women's basketball; women's gymnastics, volleyball, and tennis). Contrary to popular thinking, there is no evidence to support specialization increases your chances of being offered a scholarship.

Budget, Budget, Budget: Make a plan. A consensus among study participants was the need to budget for sport expenses. Sit down and estimate how much the sport participation will cost your family taking into consideration known and potential hidden fees. Look at your monthly income and decide how much you can start setting aside for the sport. Create a line in your budget for your kids' extracurricular activities so that your other children have opportunities as well.

Athlete Development

Personal Growth. While this report focuses primarily on elite sport participation's effect on the family unit, we cannot forget about the person who is directly involved: the athlete. How will they be affected? The current literature and immediate study findings support both positive and negative outcomes. On the downside, research finds an increased risk of injury, burnout, dropout, and the current study found limited outside extracurricular opportunities may occur with parents stating that their athletes have "had to choose to forego certain activities in favor of their sport". Parents can help by paying careful attention to their athlete for signs of stress linked to sport including anxiety, fatigue, loss of interest or motivation, insomnia, weight loss, depression, irritability, and frequent illness. Positive outcomes may include enhanced skill and performance along with development of life skills and social connections. Current study participants noted the development of specific life skills such as sportsmanship and respect, as a byproduct of the elite sport experience. This contributed to the athlete's personal growth, which was especially important for future success. In addition, parents noted the participation positively affected their social life by expanding their friendship circles and improving their social skills noting that they

are “a lot more outgoing” and that “they have made so many friends outside of our local community/school”.

Athlete: Recommendations for Positive Outcomes

Delay specialization to avoid burnout and dropout: Studies have shown that athletes who specialize early (before age 14) are likely to dropout.

Encourage participation in other sports and activities: Multi-sport athletes have many advantages over single sport athletes including longer-term success, fewer injuries, less incidences of dropout, and the development of transfer skills (skills that can be applied to a variety of sports). Multi-sport athletes should still follow the hours per week recommendations totaling all sport participation. In addition to sports, encourage your child to participate in other non-sport activities including school clubs and academic teams.

Use the sport participation as an opportunity to teach life skills and social skills: As noted by many participants, the sport environment can be ideal for teaching important life and social skills. Time management, self-discipline, teamwork, accountability, and hard work were all mentioned as possible outcomes of elite sport participation. Youth sport has always been an important avenue for socialization. Elite sport is no different. Parents specifically cited working with athletes from other schools, knowing your role on the team, and learning how to talk to coaches as a great way to build new friendships and improve social skills.

Conclusion

My personal experience of parenting four child athletes along with coaching high school and youth sports has allowed me to see the good and bad surrounding elite sports. While specializing in a single sport can afford young athletes the opportunity to participate year-round and improve their skills, it can also lead to long-term negative implications for the athlete as well as the family if not monitored. It is the responsibility of parents, coaches, and youth sport stakeholders to understand the current and future impact specialization can have on all involved. The goal should be to reduce negative outcomes while creating a positive elite sport experience for the whole family. As the current study results show, participation in sports specialization was an overall positive experience for families. Let us continue to foster an environment in which this remains the case for years to come.

Resources

Podcast

- I Love to Watch You Play: <https://ilovetowatchyouplay.com/category/podcast/>
- Way of Champions: <https://wayofchampions.libsyn.com/>

Websites

- The Aspen Institute Project Play: <https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/>
- National Alliance for Youth Sports: <https://www.nays.org/>
- AOSSM Stop Sports Injuries: <https://www.stopsportsinjuries.org>
- Changing the Game Project: <https://changingthegameproject.com/>
- Moms Team: <https://www.momsteam.com/>
- 5 Crucial Reasons Kids Should Play Multiple Sports
<https://ilovetowatchyouplay.com/2015/10/14/5-reasons-your-kid-should-sport-diversify/>

Books

- The Most Expensive Game in Town: The Rising Cost of Youth Sports and the Toll on Today's Families by Mark Hyman
- The Sports Gene by David Epstein
- Changing the Game: The Parent's Guide to Raising Happy, High-Performing Athletes and Giving Youth Sports Back to Our Kids by John O'Sullivan

CHAPTER III: ACTION PLAN

The primary objective for this research was to explore how an athlete's participation in sports specialization affects the family unit, focusing on the time and resource commitments along with relational effects between individual actors (parents, athletes, siblings). The results may provide elite sport families with practical advice for optimizing the select sport experience for the whole family. The findings also contribute to the sports specialization literature by identifying elements of specialization that may lead to the familiar negative effects as well as the positive outcomes stemming from specialization. The findings from this study could provide information to families about how to successfully navigate the elite sport experience. In addition to helping families, this study could also help select sport administrators and coaches improve the design and implementation of their programs with the goal of optimum athletic experience and high-level family functioning. Dissemination of results will be divided into relevant groups and include plans for youth sport stakeholders (parents, coaches, youth sport organizations), professional collaborations/research, and academic/professional presentations.

Youth Sport Stakeholders

Youth sport stakeholders include individuals or organizations whose thoughts and actions can influence participants, teams, or entire youth sport environments. Examples may include but are not limited to parents, coaches, and youth sport organizations. The findings from this study may provide these stakeholders with an evidence base enabling them to make educated decisions on specialization.

Parents

The first step in improving the family experience is getting the information to individuals who stand to benefit the most from the project results. Families within the elite sport environment are at the top of this list, specifically the families who participated in the research study. Findings will be shared via the email interested participants provided at the end of the survey. Emails will include a letter of appreciation to parents as well as content from Chapter II of this dissertation (presentation and recommendation handout). In talking with parents throughout the project, it is clear that familial outcomes do not receive attention prior to participation.

Coaches

Specifically, building off the dissemination plan I would like to reach out to coaches. It is not uncommon for high school coaches to encourage athletes to participate in select/club sports in the off season. This encouragement may pressure athletes into competing in one sport year-round rather than participating in multiple sports for their high school which, in turn, may produce negative outcomes in a multitude of areas. Presenting these findings to the high school coaches may cause them to re-evaluate their recommendations or at least realize outside factors which may affect the athletes. One specific conference where this might be an option is the annual Texas High School Coaches Association conference which includes coaches from a variety of sports in the state of Texas.

Youth Sport Organizations

In addition to sharing the study results with participating families, I will also reach out to local select organizations and request the opportunity to share the recommendations with parents via an email listserv, social media post, or in-person presentation. In addition to the parents, I will also seek to educate select coaches on the possible positive and negative outcomes associated with specialization. Select organizations provide an ideal opportunity to reach families who are currently participating within the targeted environment and stand to benefit immediately from the study results.

Professional Collaborations/Research

One of my former college teammates was recently named the Head Coach of the Dallas Skyline, an American professional basketball team based in Addison, Texas and a member of The Basketball League (TBL). The TBL is a minor professional basketball league. Her hiring was a milestone moment for women in sport as she is the first ever female head coach of a professional men's basketball team. Prior to her hiring as the head coach, she was the CEO of Train Up A Champion (TUAC), an organization aimed at improving leadership skills among their target audience of sport stakeholders. She hosts a weekly podcast, "TUAC Talks" and recently contacted me with an offer to discuss my research on her show. This is a great opportunity to reach a larger audience and possibly open more avenues for dissemination.

The rise in specialization has prompted an increased interest in the phenomenon among researchers. I plan to reach out to other scholars who have similar lines of research within youth sport for possible collaboration. Ideally, I would love to establish some type of mentor

relationship with these more seasoned researchers with the hopes of collaborating on future projects and improving my research and publication skills. Other possible collaborations include the Institute for the Study of Youth Sport and the Aspen Institute, both of whom have active research lines exploring sports specialization. I have already established a connection with Michigan State University's Institute for the Study of Youth Sport as I was able to visit the Institute in February of 2020 as a recipient of the 2019-2020 Kate R. Barrett Student Professional Development Award. During my visit, I was also able to meet with administration at the Michigan State High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) regarding their task force on specialization. Plans were made to reconnect following the completion of my dissertation with the goal of collaborating on a resource regarding specialization's effect on the family which can be posted on their website as a resource for families. The MHSAA is a great example of how high school sport associations can go beyond competition governance to include a holistic approach to athlete development. I also plan to establish a more local connection with a similar agenda. High school sport associations can play a vital role in the development of athletes. After seeing how MHSAA approaches athlete development, I would like to establish the same model in Texas by working with the University Interscholastic League (UIL). UIL governs academic, musical, and athletic contests for all public schools in Texas. This includes administration of contest in 72 activities for approximately two million participants across the state (University Interscholastic League, 2013). UIL has become the largest inter-school organizations of its kind in the world (University Interscholastic League, 2013). Getting involved with UIL would provide an opportunity to disseminate knowledge to athletic stakeholders including coaches and athletic directors.

Academic/Professional Presentations

Disseminating my results at professional conferences is something I plan to continue throughout my career as the research expands. These may be conferences whose primary attendees fall into a wide range of categories including coaches, youth sport administrators, parents, and higher education researchers. Some possible target organizations include American Baseball Coaches Association, National Alliance for Youth Sports Congress, SHAPE America, and the National Association for Kinesiology in Higher Education. Conference attendance and presentations provide not only an opportunity to formally present my research to my peers, but it

also provides an opportunity to network with other researchers whose focus is on improving the youth sport experience.

Conclusion

My long-term goal with this line of research is to optimize the youth sport experience for all participants including the athlete as well as their family. This topic hits close to home as I am a former high school coach, mom to four youth athletes, as well as the wife of a high school coach. My family and I experience the effects of youth sport participation on a near daily basis. I have been coaching my kids in their youth sport endeavors for the last ten years. These varied experiences have provided me with a unique perspective. These experiences, combined with my professional and educational background, make me uniquely qualified to help youth sport families. One thing I have learned throughout this research journey is that I am only touching the surface of this topic. I plan to continue to engage in research involving youth sports' effect on the family unit throughout my career.

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APPENDIX A: PILOT STUDY FINDINGS

The participants in this study were parents of children who have completed the specialization process and were ideal in that they spent years supporting their athlete(s) by traveling many miles, providing financial assistance, and sacrificing personal time. In addition, they attempted to balance the demands of their child(s) sport commitment, family, and job responsibilities. The pilot study parents were able to look back on their experience years later and provide valuable insight into how the demands of sports specialization affected their family life.

Prior to data collection, an interview and focus group guide were developed. Questions were designed to explore how participation in sports specialization affected multiple domains of family life. Initial steps included a baseball/softball tournament observation followed by three individual parent interviews and concluded with a five-participant focus group. Results of field note analysis were used to inform the interviews and focus group. Following completion of the interviews/focus groups, recorded data were transcribed and analyzed looking for positive and negative factors associated with participation in specialization as well as advice for current and future families who find themselves immersed in the specialization environment. Highlighted results are presented below.

Table 1: Parent Quotes

Identified Theme	Focus Group Quotes	Interview Quotes
Challenges		
<i>Money</i>	<i>We had two boys playing, about \$1500 each per season. So, one weekend my older son, one weekend my younger son, so it was 12 straight weekends of hotels and that got kind of crazy and then, uniforms were on top of that... \$80 for one pair of baseball pants.. had to pay the coaches hotels and every tournament we had to pay \$60-\$70.</i>	<i>We were spending a lot of money. We knew it was expensive, but the weekends and spending the night. It was a lot. Honestly, credit cards were charged pretty good for hotels, food, everything.</i>
<i>Time</i>	<i>Our problem was each team got about six tournaments but we had the same coach so what would happen is we had 12 straight weekends of travel ball instead of everyone else having a weekend off here and there</i>	<i>Takes us an hour to drive to practice. They would practice for at least two hours sometimes more and then the hour drive back so let's just say four hours and that is 3X per week unless there was a tournament. We would go down on a Friday night for tourney and then spend all day Saturday and Saturday at the tournament.</i>
Benefits		
<i>Increased Family Time</i>	<i>"...we did have a lot of time together on the weekends so granted it was in a gym and shopping or going out to eat but for a while that was really nice cause I did feel like we were all together"</i>	<i>"...we actually got to spend a lot of time together as a family because we all went. We didn't split up, we would just all go together"</i>
Advice		

<i>Saturday Only</i>	<i>"I would do it but totally different. #1 find a team that only played on Saturdays..."</i>	<i>"I would want to do Saturdays only if that was an option".</i>
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APPENDIX B: RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

I have experienced sports specialization from multiple perspectives. My experiences as an athlete, coach, and parent have all informed my viewpoint on sports specialization. As an athlete, I always played multiple sports growing up and experienced the benefits of this throughout my playing career. Most of my teammates throughout high school and college were multi-sport athletes as well primarily because specialization was not as popular. Also contributing to my multi-sport background was my childhood community. I grew up in a very small town and attended a high school which had a student body enrollment of less than 100. This small student body did not keep us from athletics, but the one thing that was required was multi-sport participation. Everyone had to play every sport for us to have a team.

I was a high school basketball coach for 5 years and witnessed the positives and negatives of specialization. While my athletes who specialized were highly skilled, they also experienced higher rates of injury, burnout, and pressure from their parents to perform. I am no longer an athlete or coach, but I am experiencing the pressure of specialization now more than ever. I have four children (ages 14, 13, 9, 7) and my older two are boys who play football, soccer, basketball, and baseball at various times throughout the year. No matter the sport, we are encouraged by other parents to continue playing by picking up with an elite travel team. This statement is quickly followed by the explanation from the parents that the only way my sons will get better is to pick one sport and play it year-round. Most of these parents are trying to “keep up with the Joneses” and think that their child will get left behind if they do not participate year-round.

I know that I am biased when it comes to specialization because I have seen the negative effects of this type of participation. I have also seen the statistics related to overuse injuries, burnout, motor skill development and a host of other sociological, psychological, and physiological issues that can arise from the intense participation required of specialization. Related specifically to my area of interest, I have witnessed families who have experienced both positive and negative family impacts stemming from specialization. I do not expect my positionality to interfere with my research during this study. I am more interested in learning about the family's experiences than sharing my opinion on specialization at this point in my career.

All researchers must be conscious of possible positionality issues and take measures to reduce the influence throughout the research process. As I consider my positionality as a researcher and attempt to identify the type of researcher I am and what role that will play throughout the process, I must first ask what is the goal of my research? The answer to that would support the goal of interpretative research, which is exploring what actions mean to people who engage in them (Pope, 2006). Pope (2006), describes interpretative researchers as “excavators”, selecting methods aimed at getting inside the way others think and seeing the world from the viewpoint of the participants (p. 22). My goal with this type of research is to obtain a descriptive understanding of the meanings, values, and actions presented by the families in the study. According to Schwandt (2010), to find meaning in an action requires the researcher to interpret what the participants are doing. The survey and interviews have allowed me to collect detailed data to aid in answering this question.

An additional threat to the trustworthiness of this research could be the perspective of the participants. There are many families who participate in select/club sports and everyone will have a different experience. This study contains only a small sample of those families and their responses are a result of their perspective. There could be many other life events going on simultaneously which could cause some of their responses to the questions to be skewed therefore eliciting an experience taken out of the context.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Prior to beginning interview

1. Make introductions.
2. Remind participants of confidentiality. Review consent form again.
3. Explain purpose of the study.

Introduction

1. Tell me a little bit about your family's sports experience.

General

1. At what age did your child begin the specialization/select sports?
2. What was the primary reason your family chose to participate in select sports?
 1. Whose idea was it?

Focus of Study

1. Overall, how do you think the athlete's specialization affected the family as a whole?

Time Demands

1. How much of a time commitment does the sport participation place on the family? Could you tell me a little more about that?
 1. How were you able to manage the schedule?

Marriage

1. How did your athlete's participation in select sports affect the relationship with your spouse/partner if at all?

Finances

1. Participating in select is not a cheap investment, can you talk to me about how the financial commitment affected your family?
 1. Did you, as parents, work together on the financial obligation?
 2. Did you have to cut back on other things to be able to cover the expenses of the sport?
 3. Did the financial commitment affect any of the family relationships?

Siblings (*only if athlete has siblings*) and Extended Family

1. How do you feel the athlete's participation in select sports affected the siblings?
 1. How does the sibling(s) feel about the athlete's participation?

2. Have you ever had to tell any of your children they could not participate in an activity they wanted to do because of the obligation to the select sport?
 3. How are you able to balance the time spent with all your children?
 4. How has the athlete's sport involvement affected your relationship(s) with your other children?
2. How do you feel the athlete's participation in select sports affected their relationship with extended family (grandparents, cousins, etc.)?
 3. How has the athlete's participation in select sports affected *your (parent)* relationship with extended family?

Social

1. How do you think your athlete's sport involvement has affected their social life?
 1. Has their relationship with friends been affected?
 2. How has their sport involvement affected their opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities outside of sports?
2. Has the schedule affected *your (parent)* social opportunities?

School

1. How has the athlete's sport involvement affected their academics?

Other

1. If you had to do it over, would you encourage your child to specialize or participate at the select/club level again? Why or Why not?
2. Is there anything you wish you would have done differently during this experience?

Wrap-up

1. Is there an area in your family life we haven't discussed that you feel was affected by the athlete's sport participation?
2. Is there anything else you would like to add about how specialization affects your family?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Interview Participant Information (all names are pseudonyms).

Name	Gender	Age	Income	Status	Main Sport	# of yrs
Cody	M	36	\$50,000-\$100,00	Married	Baseball	2
Matthew	M	42	\$100,001-\$250,000	Married	Volleyball	3
Julie	F	36	\$100,001-\$250,000	Married	Baseball	10
Sarah	F	37	\$250,001-\$500,000	Married	Softball	4
Jane	F	49	\$50,000-\$100,00	Married	Swimming	3
Bryan	M	47	\$100,001-\$250,000	Married	Softball	4
Jennifer	F	32	\$100,001-\$250,000	Married	Baseball	2
Brianna	F	40	\$100,001-\$250,000	Married	Baseball	3
Landon	M	35	\$100,001-\$250,000	Married	Baseball	3
Maggie	F	43	\$100,001-\$250,000	Married	Baseball	5
Karen	F	43	\$100,001-\$250,000	Married	Basketball	1

Average age: 40 years ($SD= 5.06$)

Average number of years participating at the select level: 3.6 years ($SD= 2.26$)

Cody, Male, 36

- a. Cody is a married father of two, a daughter, age 8 and a son, age 12. His family earned between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in 2019. Cody's son's main sport is baseball and he has been participating at the elite/travel level for two years. This fall he entered 7th grade and is participating in football and plans to join the track and field team in the spring. Cody used to be a high school coach and has used his sport knowledge to help coach his son's select team.
- b. Additional Role: Coach
- c. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: Two
- d. Son, age 12
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Moderately Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Baseball
 - v. Other sports: Football, Track & Field/Cross Country

Matthew, Male, 42

- a. Matthew is a married father of three, a daughter, age 16; a daughter, age 14; and a son, age 8. His family earned between \$100,001 and \$250,000 in 2019. All three of his children compete in select sports. Matthew was a high school basketball coach for 20+ years and just recently transitioned into administration.
- b. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: Three
- c. Daughter, age 16:

- a. Degrees of Specialization: Highly Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **Yes** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Volleyball
 - v. Other Sports: None
- d. Daughter, age 14
 - a. Degrees of Specialization: Low Specialization
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **No** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Plays two sports but does not recognize one over the other
 - v. Other Sports: Volleyball and Basketball
- e. Son, age 8
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Low Specialization
 - i. **No** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Baseball
 - v. Other Sports: Tennis

Julie, Female, 36

- a. Julie is a married mother of three, a son, age 15; a son, age 13; a daughter, age 12. Her family earned between \$100,001 and \$250,000 in 2019. Both of her boys compete in select sports.
- b. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: 10
- c. Son, age 15
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Low Specialization
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **No** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Baseball
 - v. Other Sports: Football, Track & Field/ Cross Country
- d. Son, age 13
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Low Specialization

- i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
- ii. **No** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
- iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
- iv. Main Sport: Baseball
- v. Other Sports: Football, Basketball, Track & Field/Cross Country

Sarah, Female, 37

- a. Sarah is a married mother of two, a daughter, age 13 and a son, age 5. Her family earned between \$250,001 and \$500,000 in 2019.
- b. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: Four
- c. Daughter, age 13:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Highly Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **Yes** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Softball
 - v. Other Sports: None

Jane, Female, 49

- a. Jane is a married mother of two, a daughter, age 13 and a son, age 11. Her family earned between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in 2019.
- b. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: Three
- c. Daughter, age 13:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Low Specialization
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **No** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Swimming
 - v. Other Sports: Volleyball
- d. Son, age 11:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Low Specialization
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **No** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Swimming
 - v. Other Sports: Soccer, Basketball

Bryan, Male, 47

- a. Bryan is a married father of two, a daughter, age 13 and a daughter, age 12. His family earned between \$100,001 and \$250,000 in 2019. Both of his daughters compete in select softball. Bryan's select experience is actually very interesting because he is the head coach for his 12-year-old daughter's team and his wife is the head coach for his 13-year-old daughter's team.
- b. Additional Role: Coach
- c. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: Four
- d. Daughter, age 13:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Moderately Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Softball
 - v. Other Sports: None
- e. Daughter, age 12:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Moderately Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Softball
 - v. Other Sports: None

Jennifer, Female, 32

- a. Jennifer is a married mother of two boys, ages 10 and 6. Her family earned between \$100,001 and \$250,000 in 2019.
- b. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: Two
- c. Son, age 6:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Moderately Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Baseball
 - v. Other Sports: Basketball

Brianna, Female, 40

- a. Brianna is a married mother of a nine-year-old boy who participates in select baseball and football. Her family earned between \$100,001 and \$250,000 in 2019.
- b. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: Three
- c. Son, age 9:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Low Specialization
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **No** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Baseball
 - v. Other Sports: Football

Landon, Male, 35

- a. Landon is a married father of two, a son, age 8 and a daughter, age 4. His family earned between \$100,001 and \$250,000 in 2019. He is the head coach for his son's select baseball team.
- b. Additional Role: Coach
- c. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: Three
- d. Son, age 8:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Moderately Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Baseball
 - v. Other Sports: Soccer, Basketball, Golf

Maggie, Female, 43

- a. Maggie is a married mother of three boys, ages 17, 13, and 10, all of whom participate in select baseball. Her family earned between \$100,001 and \$250,000 in 2019.
- b. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: Five
- c. Son, age 17:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Highly Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **Yes** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Baseball
 - v. Other Sports: None
- d. Son, age 13:

- a. Degree of Specialization: Moderately Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Baseball
 - v. Other Sports: Football and Basketball
- e. Son, age 10:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Moderately Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Baseball
 - v. Other Sports: Soccer

Karen, Female, 43

- a. Karen is a married mother of two daughters, ages 14 and 11. Her daughters have participated in a local select team for a few years, but this year is the first year her the 14 year old will participate in a more competitive team which travels and practices in a large metropolitan city about an hour from their home. Her family earned between \$100,001 and \$250,000 in 2019.
- b. Number of years the family has competed at the elite level: 1
- c. Daughter, age 14:
 - a. Degree of Specialization: Moderately Specialized
 - i. **Yes** My child participates in one sport for greater than eight months of the year.
 - ii. **Yes** My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - iii. **No** My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - iv. Main Sport: Basketball
 - v. Other Sports: Volleyball, Track & Field/Cross Country

APPENDIX E: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Part I: Demographics and Family Information

- 1) What is your age?
- 2) What is your gender identity?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other: _____
- 3) What is your marital status?
 - a. Single, never married
 - b. Married, or in a domestic partnership
 - c. Divorced
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Separated
 - f. Other: _____
- 4) Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?
 - a. No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin
 - b. Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
 - c. Yes, Puerto Rican
 - d. Yes, Cuban
 - e. Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- 5) Please select your Race.
 - a. Caucasian
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - d. Asian
 - e. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - f. Other: _____
- 6) Total household income earned for 2019?
 - a. Less than 50,000
 - b. 50,000 - 100,000
 - c. 100,001 - 250,000

- d. 250,001 - 500,000
- e. More than 500,000
- f. Prefer not to say

7) How many children do you have? (drop-down box)

8) Do you have a child between the ages of 7 and 14 participating in baseball, softball, or volleyball?

- a. Yes
- b. No

9) Is at least one of those children (ages 7-14 only) specializing in a single sport (greater than 8 months of the year training in a single sport at the exclusion of other sports)? **Training should include team or individual practice, competitions, private lessons, summer leagues, etc.**

- a. Yes
- b. No

10) **Part II: Family's Experience with Specialization**

a. If yes, please complete the following:

b. Athlete #1:

i. Age: _____

ii. Gender: (Circle One)

- 1. Male
- 2. Female
- 3. Other: _____

iii. Your relationship to the child: (Circle one)

- 1. Mother
- 2. Father
- 3. Stepmother
- 4. Stepfather
- 5. Other: _____

iv. Main Sport: (Circle One)

- 1. Baseball
- 2. Softball
- 3. Volleyball
- 4. Other: _____

v. Other Sports: (Circle One)

- 1. Baseball

2. Softball
3. Volleyball
4. Soccer
5. Football
6. Basketball
7. Track and Field/Cross Country
8. Other: _____
9. None: The athlete only participates in one sport

vi. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #1:

1. My child participates in one sport for more than eight months of the year (please make sure to take into account practice, games, summer leagues, private coaching, etc.).
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

vii. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #1:

1. My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

viii. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #1:

1. My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

11) Do you have another child who participates in youth sports (any age and does not have to specialize)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

12) If yes, please complete the following:

- a. Athlete #2:
 - i. Age: _____
 - ii. Gender: (Circle One)
 1. Male
 2. Female
 3. Other: _____
 - iii. Your relationship to the child: (Circle one)
 1. Mother
 2. Father
 3. Stepmother

4. Stepfather
5. Other: _____

iv. Main Sport: (Circle One)

1. Baseball
2. Softball
3. Volleyball
4. Other: _____

v. Other Sports: (Circle One)

1. Baseball
2. Softball
3. Volleyball
4. Soccer
5. Football
6. Basketball
7. Track and Field/Cross Country
8. Other: _____
9. None: The athlete only participates in one sport

vi. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #2:

1. My child participates in one sport for more than eight months of the year (please make sure to take into account practice, games, summer leagues, private coaching, etc.).
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

vii. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #2:

1. My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

viii. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #2:

1. My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

13) Do you have another child who participates in youth sports (any age and does not have to specialize)?

- a. Yes
- b. No

14) If yes, please complete the following:

- a. Athlete #3:

- i. Age: _____
- ii. Gender: (Circle One)
 - 1. Male
 - 2. Female
 - 3. Other: _____
- iii. Your relationship to the child: (Circle one)
 - 1. Mother
 - 2. Father
 - 3. Stepmother
 - 4. Stepfather
 - 5. Other: _____
- iv. Main Sport: (Circle One)
 - 1. Baseball
 - 2. Softball
 - 3. Volleyball
 - 4. Other: _____
- v. Other Sports: (Circle One)
 - 1. Baseball
 - 2. Softball
 - 3. Volleyball
 - 4. Soccer
 - 5. Football
 - 6. Basketball
 - 7. Track and Field/Cross Country
 - 8. Other: _____
 - 9. None: The athlete only participates in one sport
- vi. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #3:**
 - 1. My child participates in one sport for more than eight months of the year (please make sure to take into account practice, games, summer leagues, private coaching, etc.).
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- vii. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #3:**
 - 1. My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- viii. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #3:**

1. My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

- 15) Do you have another child who participates in youth sports (any age and does not have to specialize)?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

16) If yes, please complete the following:

a. Athlete #4:

- i. Age: _____
- ii. Gender: (Circle One)
 1. Male
 2. Female
 3. Other: _____
- iii. Your relationship to the child: (Circle one)
 1. Mother
 2. Father
 3. Stepmother
 4. Stepfather
 5. Other: _____
- iv. Main Sport: (Circle One)
 1. Baseball
 2. Softball
 3. Volleyball
 4. Other: _____
- v. Other Sports: (Circle One)
 1. Baseball
 2. Softball
 3. Volleyball
 4. Soccer
 5. Football
 6. Basketball
 7. Track and Field/Cross Country
 8. Other: _____
 9. None: The athlete only participates in one sport

vi. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #4:

1. My child participates in one sport for more than eight months of the year (please make sure to take into account practice, games, summer leagues, private coaching, etc.).
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

vii. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #4:

1. My child focuses on a single main sport above all others.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

viii. Please select the choice that describes Athlete #4:

1. My child has quit all other sports to focus on their single main sport.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

17) How many years has your family participated in the sport at the select/club/travel level (count current year as 1) (drop down box)?

Note: The remaining questions refer to your experiences with youth sport specialization (greater than 8 months of the year training in a single sport at the exclusion of other sports). Please think about your child who is specializing when responding. If you have more than one child specializing, please consider the child who has specialized the longest.

18) The choice to participate in select sports is driven by different reasons for every family. Please consider your family's situation and evaluate how important each was in the decision to first participate in select sports.

Extremely Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not at all Important
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Social Opportunities
Skill Development
Opportunity for future college
or Professional Career
School coach requires it
Higher-level competition
My child wanted to
Play at this level
Other: _____

Part III: Sport Specialization's Effect on Multiple Domains of Family Life

Time

While answering this next group of questions, please consider both travel and school sport if your child is participating in both at the same time.

- 19) How much of a time commitment does your child's sport participation place on the family?
- A great deal
 - A lot
 - A moderate amount
 - A little
 - None at all
- 20) How many hours per week do you spend **commuting** to and from your child's practices and games?
- Less than 1
 - 1-2
 - 3-4
 - 5-6
 - More than 6
- 21) How many hours of **practice/training** does your child participate in per week for their main sport? (Please also consider the school sport if they are competing in both at the same time)
- 0-2
 - 3-5
 - 6-8
 - 9-10
 - 11+
- 22) How many hours of playing **competitive** games does your child spend per week? (during the season)
- Less than 2
 - 3-5
 - 6-8
 - 9-10
 - More than 10

Finances

- 23) Select the option that best describes your family's estimated financial cost per year related to your child's sport involvement? (consider registration, equipment, travel, lodging, food, etc.) **Please only consider for the child who is specializing.** Circle one.
- a. Less than \$1,000
 - b. \$1,000 - \$2,499
 - c. \$2,500 - \$4,999
 - d. \$5,000 - \$9,999
 - e. More than \$10,000
- 24) Have you paid for any other supplemental coaching/instruction for your child related to the sport? Check all that apply.
- a. Personal Trainer
 - b. Skill Coach other than the team coach (ex. Hitting coach, pitching coach, etc.)
 - c. Nutritionist
 - d. Mental Skills Coach
 - e. Other: _____
- 25) How much has the financial commitment of select/travel/club sports negatively affected your family?
- a. A great deal
 - b. A lot
 - c. A moderate amount
 - d. A little
 - e. None at all

26) *Explain:*

Relationships

- 27) How has your athlete's sport involvement affected your relationship with them?
- a. Very Negative
 - b. Negative
 - c. No Effect
 - d. Positive
 - e. Very Positive

28) *Explain:*

- 29) How has the athlete's sport involvement affected your relationship with your spouse/partner?
- a. Very Negative
 - b. Negative
 - c. No Effect

- d. Positive
- e. Very Positive

30) *Explain:*

31) How has the athlete's sport involvement affected your relationship with your co-parent (if separated /divorced)?

- a. Very Negative
- b. Negative
- c. No Effect
- d. Positive
- e. Very Positive
- f. N/A (not co-parenting)

32) *Explain:*

33) How has the athlete's sport involvement affected their relationship with his/her sibling(s)?

- a. Very Negative
- b. Negative
- c. No Effect
- d. Positive
- e. Very Positive
- f. N/A (no siblings)

34) *Explain:*

35) How has the athlete's sport involvement affected your relationship(s) with your other children?

- a. Very Negative
- b. Negative
- c. No Effect
- d. Positive
- e. Very Positive
- f. N/A (no other children)

36) *Explain:*

37) How has the athlete's sport involvement affected their relationship(s) with extended family (grandparents, cousins, etc.)?

- a. Very Negative
- b. Negative

- c. No Effect
- d. Positive
- e. Very Positive
- f. N/A (no extended family)

38) *Explain:*

39) How has the athlete's sport involvement affected your relationship(s) with extended family (grandparents, cousins, etc.)?

- a. Very Negative
- b. Negative
- c. No Effect
- d. Positive
- e. Very Positive
- f. N/A (no extended family)

40) *Explain:*

Siblings

41) How has the athlete's sport involvement affected the sibling's extracurricular opportunities?

- a. Not at all
- b. A little
- c. Somewhat
- d. A lot
- e. A great deal
- f. N/A (no siblings)

42) *Explain:*

Social

43) How has the athlete's sport involvement affected their social life? (time spent with friends, opportunity to participate in non-sport activities, etc.)

- a. Negatively
- b. Not at all
- c. Positively

44) *Explain:*

45) How has the athlete's sport involvement affected their academics?

- a. Negatively

- b. Not at all
- c. Positively

46) *Explain:*

- 47) How has the athlete's sport involvement affected your family's opportunity to spend time with extended family/friends? (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, family friends, etc.)
- a. Negatively
 - b. Not at all
 - c. Positively

48) *Explain:*

COVID Effect

COVID has affected sport participation in many ways, and many programs have not transitioned to full participation. Please answer the following questions related to your family's sport experience during the COVID pandemic.

- 49) Given the COVID pandemic, what is your athlete's **current** level of participation in their sport due to the COVID pandemic?
- a. Full Participation (team competitions, team practices, individual workouts, etc.)
 - b. Partial Participation (team practice and individual workouts only)
 - c. Slight participation (individual workouts only)
 - d. No participation (no games, team practices, or individual workouts)
 - e. Other: _____

- 50) Given the COVID pandemic, what were your athlete's **prior** restrictions on sport participation (months of March, April)?
- a. No restrictions: Full Participation (team competitions, team practices, individual workouts, etc.)
 - b. Partial Participation (team practice and individual workouts only)
 - c. Slight participation (individual workouts only)
 - d. No participation (no games, team practices, or individual workouts)
 - e. Other: _____

- 51) What is the **current** status of parent/family involvement in the athlete's sport participation due to the COVID pandemic?
- a. Full participation (no restrictions)
 - b. Partial participation (only one parent allowed at event)
 - c. No participation (no spectators allowed at competitions)
 - d. Other restrictions: _____

- 52) Given the COVID pandemic, what were the **prior** restrictions on parent/family involvement in the athlete's sport participation (months of March, April)?
- a. Full participation (no restrictions)
 - b. Partial participation (only one parent allowed at event)
 - c. No participation (no spectators allowed at competitions)
 - d. Other restrictions: _____

Part IV: Final Thoughts

- 53) Is there anything else you would like to add about how your athlete's participation in sport specialization has affected your family?
- 54) Would you be willing to talk further about your family's experience by participating in a virtual interview or focus group? *Interview and focus group participants will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 gift card.*
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- 55) If so, please provide contact information
- a. Name: _____
 - b. Contact Phone Number: _____
 - c. Contact Email: _____
- 56) Interest in future results: Upon completion of the current research, I would like to disseminate the findings to participating families. If you are interested in viewing the results, please include a valid email below:
- _____

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW VOLUNTEER EMAIL

Good afternoon,

Thank you for taking part in my survey as part of the research project entitled “Sports Specialization and the Family: Examining the Effects Outside the Lines”. I appreciate your thoughtful responses and hope you found the experience to be a constructive use of your time.

You are receiving this email because in completing the survey, you indicated your interest in being involved in a follow-up interview to provide more detailed reflections on your family’s elite sport experience. If you are still interested in this opportunity, please click on the following link to sign up for an available interview time slot. You can also copy and paste this link into your browser: <https://calendly.com/araguilar/individual-parent-interviews>. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes and be conducted via Zoom Video Conferencing.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the email or phone number listed below. I will be happy to visit with you and address any concerns you may have. Thank you for your time and I look forward to talking with you about your family’s elite sport experience.

Best Wishes,

Amanda Aguilar

Amanda R. Aguilar, M.S.
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Department of Health & Kinesiology
Lamar University

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

Theme	Subtheme	Data Source	Sample Responses
Marriage		Survey	<p><i>I don't see the travel team as having any impact on our relationship.</i></p> <p><i>We are one unit. He helps work with our kids in the yard. He is a big role model.</i></p> <p><i>I love my husband even more for his involvement and it's an additional topic of conversation.</i></p> <p><i>Doesn't hurt or enhance our relationship</i></p> <p><i>It can be positive at times and negative at times.</i></p> <p><i>Another thing we can discuss and support</i></p> <p><i>We tag team most things. Our kids are older and we take opportunities to get our dates in. When things get really hectic with schedules, we tend to run a little short with each other, but we are aware and have learned to take the time and effort for the marriage.</i></p> <p><i>It can be stressful, not allowing much time for you to spend with your spouse.</i></p> <p><i>We both coach their two teams and love being with the kids. Spending more time together with common interests</i></p> <p><i>We love to travel and see our son play!</i></p> <p><i>My wife and I have made many friends and have enhanced our relationship.</i></p>
		Interview	<p><i>Um, I don't know that it's ever really put a strain. (Maggie)</i></p> <p><i>Yeah, there's times we definitely have to split up...my daughter had a four-hour cheer choreography session, so the wife did that while we do baseball...and that's pretty typical...the first year it was good because it forced us to, you know, hang out together. I would say this year with the daughter's cheer, we spend more time apart. (Cody)</i></p> <p><i>In terms of like, as having like relationship wise or anything like that, I don't actually see it interfering. Yes. I understand that we're in different places, but we actively chose this...We look at it like it's just their time and then it'll be our time all over again (Julie)</i></p> <p><i>It dominates a lot of our discussion and every few months I'm like, Ooh, we are a little imbalanced here. Like, I feel like it's all we're talking about, but I think that we kind of just make light of it. We joke that we're going to have absolutely nothing to talk about when our kids are done with baseball and we retire from UTA. Like I don't even want</i></p>

		<p><i>to talk about, um, you know, from a time standpoint we can go months without, and it will be like, Oh crap, we haven't gone out to dinner or done anything together outside of sitting at a baseball game. And most of the time we're separated because we're at different places, um, you know, but so there, there are definitely impacts. Do I think it's negatively impacted? Probably at times, you know, when you don't see each other and you're just passing in the hallway and while, you know, certainly important discussions aren't had, right. Because you're all too busy. Um, but I think that we try to, you know, keep tabs on it. (Maggie)</i></p> <p><i>So a lot of times, uh, it would cause strife because he would be stop yelling at her, you know, things like that, where it would be hard. Cause he had, he was like, Oh, just let her go and have fun. I'm like, no, you gotta go faster than that. Yeah. Where I would pay attention to her times and um, encourage her and give her pep talks and he'd be like, you know, just don't do that. (Jane)</i></p> <p><i>My wife was very against it first. (Landon)</i></p> <p><i>And most of the time we're separated because we're at different places, um, you know, but so there, there are definitely impacts. (Maggie)</i></p> <p><i>Yeah. I think it's made us stronger. I think our marriage is as strong as ever. (Bryan)</i></p> <p><i>The time demands to pull us away from each other. (Sarah)</i></p> <p><i>He feels like I don't sometimes give as much time to us as I do to the team. (Sarah)</i></p> <p><i>Um, no, I'm sure it affects it in ways that we don't even know about, we try not, you know, we try to make an effort to not, you know, not get stressed out, not get overwhelmed and take it out on each other and all that but I'm sure time apart has some effect (Cody)</i></p> <p><i>We've had friends with kids who we have seen, it sort of destroyed their marriage, this, you know, this going constantly and, for a long time, we didn't do the select thing because of that, because we had seen that and we had seen people split up. And so I guess, going into it, that was our fear. So I feel like we've made efforts to not let it go that route. (Cody)</i></p> <p><i>So, at first it was good when [son's name] was younger. I mean, we did everything as a unit. There were even times when we all went to her practices and then as [son's name] got older and then the weekends we didn't really have much of a life anyway so the travel tournaments it was a family affair. So, we looked at it almost as like little mini vacations when we went on travel tournaments. But as [son's name] got older and this last year, so it was last year, started getting involved in his sports then that kind of caused us to have to break and one go with one, one go with the other and switch off when we could, but with him coaching that switch can't happen anymore so it's ya know [son's name] has practice Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays, football and then [daughter's name] goes to practice on Tuesday and Fridays and then we, he has games on Saturday and she has tournaments every other weekend. So, whereas we would come</i></p>
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			<p>home after work or after school and go to a practice and sit down and eat as a family, now it's like pick up stuff on the run, a lot of video chat, a lot of text message and when we are home together it's usually later in the night in the evening, but we really enjoy those passing moments where we can all be together. To be honest, it's been rough but I actually feel that it's helped us to really appreciate those times a lot more because when you are with each other all the time you don't really think about it, you split and have to go your separate ways for practices and games and stuff, when you are back together as that family unit you really appreciate more of the time you have together. (Sarah)</p>
Sibling Effect		Survey	<p>Conquer and divide.</p> <p>One was chosen to play all-star and the other wasn't. They bickered over that.</p> <p>They each have their sports and they support/coach/build up each other.</p> <p>I worry he doesn't think we spend enough time.</p> <p>No extra money to give the older sibling the same opportunities. But they aren't as athletic to be honest.</p> <p>The expense of the travel sport sometimes makes our money tighter which would impact our ability to give our older kids money for things if they ask for it.</p> <p>Takes some time away from them</p> <p>They practice together at home.</p> <p>She can get jealous at times on how much time we spend at the fields so we have to make it a point to spend extra time with her</p> <p>This strengthens their bond!</p> <p>We have to make special time for her too</p> <p>Time is stretched</p> <p>I'm always with the one in this sport. I don't get to go see the older siblings soccer games and things like that.</p> <p>I show each child the same level of attention, just in different areas.</p> <p>My other child feels like we do more for his brother than him.</p> <p>It's very difficult to spend the one on one time needed with each child without jealousy sparking from the other two.</p>

			<p><i>My other child has his things that he is into. As long as I don't make one more important than the other it's fine</i></p> <p><i>My 4 kids all love being at the fields.</i></p> <p><i>They all support each other.</i></p>
		Interview	<p><i>He's so used to it. I mean, she had already started travel ball, he was only a year old so he's used to being at the ball field, he's used to being drug around, he's used to me being gone with her already. I mean he doesn't know any different. (Sarah)</i></p> <p><i>So yeah, he probably does suffer a little bit from us being, doing baseball all the time nonstop, but he's doing football too at the same time. (Jennifer)</i></p> <p><i>My middle played baseball for a couple of years when he was really young, but took a break and didn't want to do it anymore. Um, and we, I think some, because he was tired of going to his brother's baseball game. (Maggie)</i></p> <p><i>Oh, absolutely. We've had to because of the time commitment with volleyball, my youngest son wasn't able to participate in the soccer league in the fall. They actually have a fall baseball League that we said no to this year, we did participate last year. And we just said no this year, simply because we felt like he needed a break. We needed a break from traveling. We've kind of given the girls and I hate to say preferential treatment, but we tend to, you know, we've only got them for a short period of time. So, you know, we've tried to put a little more effort into making their volleyball games. And so consequently my boys had to miss out on fall baseball. (Matthew)</i></p> <p><i>It has allowed them to bond over something. (Sarah)</i></p> <p><i>I think it's positive because she is like his biggest fan, she'll stand behind the fence when he's batting and then yell for him and hug him after the game. So, I say positive because she's actually gotten friends out of it. (Landon)</i></p> <p><i>It was just, hey, we have to go to sister swim practice, we got to go pick her up. You're gonna have to sit all day in the bleachers...So for him, that was a struggle. (Jane)</i></p> <p><i>My older one, he doesn't enjoy going to the games. (Jennifer)</i></p>
Extended Family		Survey	<p><i>My mom comes to my son's travel games when they are closer to her. It gives us the opportunity to see her on weekends that we wouldn't have otherwise. We also stay at her house sometimes if it is a weekend tournament closer to her house or an early morning game. It saves us money on hotel expenses.</i></p> <p><i>My parents attend every game and tournament. Our daughter has really bonded with them during this time that they have supported and encouraged her so regularly.</i></p>

			<p><i>My parents attend every game and tournament. Our daughter has really bonded with them during this time that they have supported and encouraged her so regularly.</i></p> <p><i>There is always family at tournaments and always someone cheering or offering advice.</i></p> <p><i>Several family members have come from all over just to watch him play. And he loves it.</i></p> <p><i>Traveling out of town allows us to see family members more often</i></p> <p><i>More opportunities for them to watch.</i></p> <p><i>We rarely can make it to family gatherings or dinners. We miss many birthday parties including their own as we are always playing ball. I don't feel my children are very close to their grandparents as I was to mine growing up. They only see their cousins once or twice a year so they don't have a relationship with them at all.</i></p> <p><i>Our participation in sports to this degree is a choice we have made as a family. Extended family does not always understand our choice, however, we find value in our choice.</i></p> <p><i>Their aunt thinks we're crazy for investing money and time</i></p> <p><i>The sport is demanding of time. Sometimes it is stressful on all relationships. Time with other family members is taken away.</i></p> <p><i>They love to watch</i></p> <p><i>His grandparents always love to come watch him play.</i></p> <p><i>I don't think it's negative but we do sacrifice time with extended family at times due to the games and weekend commitments</i></p> <p><i>Their aunt thinks we're crazy for investing money and time</i></p> <p><i>They are very supportive.</i></p> <p><i>We do not get to see extended family as much as we would like</i></p> <p><i>Extended family does not always understand our choice, however, we find value in our choice.</i></p>
		<p>Interview</p>	<p><i>So I think that has definitely been an impact. You know, my sister and my brother, they're just like, we just don't get it. We don't get that life. (Maggie)</i></p> <p><i>They don't get it at all (Julie)</i></p> <p><i>I feel like it really helps my dad who is a very introverted person. He's very like to himself since she's passed away. We invite him to all his games, that kind of stuff. So this weekend we're going to Charlotte, so I</i></p>

			<p><i>feel like it helps get our like extended family to come to see him. Instead if we weren't playing travel ball we wouldn't be in Charlotte and she lives in Charlotte. So like she gets to come see, like my whole family where I'm from. So they're all coming to see and he's excited about that. So I think it helped extended family as well. (Brianna)</i></p> <p><i>Um, my parents just, they just don't understand. They're like, I don't understand why this has to consume your life and I'm like, it's not consuming our life, but this is our commitment that we've made. (Julie)</i></p> <p><i>At the same time, you know, my mom would always say, Oh my God, you're doing you're, you're all playing again!?! (Bryan)</i></p> <p><i>So yeah, I think that's, I will probably look back on that and feel like that's what we gave up the most. (Maggie)</i></p> <p><i>A lot of times our going to a swim meet would help us to see them because we would spend the night at their house before the meet on Saturday. So actually it was a help because they would come and cheer her on and, and, and be a part of it. Um, it, it hasn't affected anything. Um, grandparents obviously loved to, to cheer them on. (Jane)</i></p> <p><i>They're fortunate enough to have both grandparents on both sides, and one set of my wife's parents live around the corner from us. They've been a great big help in getting kids to where they need to be, um, they it's a good thing. They love to watch the kids play. They love to come to their tournaments. It's also a strain on them as both sets are kind of getting older and travels not always easy on them, but it does take away, my parents live down south, a couple hours away and so weekends, where we used to go visit them are now in you know, a ballpark or a gym and some of those events my parents are able to make and a lot of them they're not, so my kids have missed out on time with their grandparents. But obviously, that's you go into it, knowing that that's, um, been a willful decision. But again, grandparents love to watch them, but I think they would probably prefer more time spent with them. (Matthew)</i></p>
<p>Financial Commitment</p>		<p>Survey</p>	<p><i>The cost seems to go up each year so it's something we plan for and he works for</i></p> <p><i>We put aside money in order to allow him to participate</i></p> <p><i>We made sure to budget for it before we started.</i></p> <p><i>We sacrificed other financial expenses (vacation, etc) to pay for sports.</i></p> <p><i>Takes away from upgrades to our house at times.</i></p> <p><i>Ball takes financial resources that could go towards other activities such as family vacations.</i></p> <p><i>We do not participate in clubs that we cannot afford.</i></p>

			<p><i>Our family budgets for extracurricular activities.</i></p> <p><i>It's just less for savings for future plans</i></p> <p><i>It is money we could set aside and save</i></p> <p><i>It takes a lot of money and time but it's worth it.</i></p> <p><i>We have the money for them to play.</i></p> <p><i>Just a lot of money for a single mom</i></p> <p><i>We knew going in the expense and amount of time that it would take.</i></p>
		Interview	<p><i>Please refer to Appendix K for detailed financial responses from interviewees</i></p>
Athlete's Personal Growth		Survey	<p><i>Sports allow each of the kids to develop important social skills</i></p> <p><i>It's been a great tool for my daughter to learn life lessons.</i></p> <p><i>Overall, sports teach kids some important life lessons and accountability.</i></p> <p><i>For both myself and my husband, it is a tool we can use to teach many life lessons and time spent together working on skills allows for relationship building</i></p> <p><i>Sports teach very good life lessons and we always intermingle them both. You win some, you lose some...learn from it and better yourself due to it.</i></p> <p><i>My children are being taught/coached the importance of exercise, being a team member and respecting adults. They are also expanding their friendship circles and being taught self-discipline.</i></p> <p><i>My son and husband collect cans and have for years. We use that money for baseball gear, fees, long-distance tourneys or any needs to supplement. It's our way of teaching our son that his passion is an investment and to earn his equipment. His willingness to do so has bought him some of the best equipment on the market through his own sweat and hard work. It teaches him to take care of his equipment and to truly know the worth of it. Being a catcher and a power hitter is PRICEY!!! But over the years we've calculated how much we've come out of pocket and it's been under \$500 for everything over the 3 years he's played. For our family that doesn't make much to begin with that's saying quite a bit. ALL of this is his choice and we stand behind him. He chooses when he wants to practice on his own and workout on weights and stretches outside of practices. He chooses when to put in extra hours. I'm super proud of his commitment.</i></p>

		Interview	<p><i>We're trying to teach them what it's like to win and lose and teach them what it's like to get out played. I mean, yeah. You tell them, Hey, you got out played today because you didn't try as hard as you could. Stuff like that. (Landon)</i></p> <p><i>I enjoy having something with her that we do together and watching her enjoy doing it and the lessons that she learns from this, not just talent wise but you know these things build character, they build responsibility. Her coach gives them work, they have weekly workout schedules where they have to do so many push-ups, they have to do so many sit-ups, they have to run a mile in a certain time, they have to get so many pitches in, so many swings in, so you know that's me not having to stay on her. That's her knowing and taking that responsibility, that hey I have to do this and accountability if she doesn't and building those relationships from the team sport of the how to work well with people, so I think that just in general her experience even if she doesn't play college is going to help her in the long run in life. (Sarah)</i></p> <p><i>Cause you know, one thing we tell the girls, like you're not going to be professional softball players. You need to use this to help you get where you want to go in your career...and find their pathways. And so yes... I look at this as an extension of kind of what kind of an extension of what our values are and what we believe in for our kids. (Bryan)</i></p> <p><i>That's her knowing and taking that responsibility, that hey I have to do this and accountability if she doesn't and building those relationships from the team sport of the how to work well with people, so I think that just in general her experience even if she doesn't play college is going to help her in the long run in life. (Sarah)</i></p> <p><i>It's been a great tool for my daughter to learn life lessons. She has faced difficulties playing at school (small town politics) so playing select has helped her grow in her sport and show her that hard work pays off. (Karen)</i></p> <p><i>My children are being taught/coached the importance of exercise, being a team member and respecting adults. They are also expanding their friendship circles and being taught self-discipline. (survey)</i> <i>I think that just for my son, like I think it's been a really good experience cause he's very hard on himself. He doesn't like to lose and he's had to learn how to lose gracefully. That's been our challenge with him because he's super motivated and he wants to play all the time and he wants to win and he wants to do his best. But when he does bad, he holds on to it and like it can affect his whole game. And so that's something we've been working on with him, but I think just like character building and just being a team player, being part of a team and working together, I think all of that has helped. I mean, this experience has helped with all of that. And I think it's great that he's learning it so early because hopefully he'll just continue to carry that on with him. (Jennifer)</i></p>
Time Commitment		Survey	<p><i>Weekends are tied up</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes we don't have as much time to spend at home or with friends on the weekends</i></p>

			<p><i>Traveling to tournaments or games can sometimes cause a hectic, overwhelming schedule, but we enjoy the time we spend together as a family.</i></p> <p><i>Swim is a very large time and financial commitment for the family.</i></p> <p><i>It keeps us busy but as long as he still enjoys the game and wants to play, we will continue to let him.</i></p> <p><i>Honestly, we enjoyed the normal life of being home more during the pandemic. Home cooked meals, spending quality time together, and developing new hobbies. As sports pick back up, I will need to ensure more time is planned around family time versus 7 days a week of traveling to and from ball practice and games.</i></p> <p><i>Less free time</i></p> <p><i>No free time because of sports and school</i></p> <p><i>Takes up some time</i></p>
		<p>Interview</p>	<p><i>During the week, during the busiest time of the year, when it's spring baseball season, you know, there is not a night of the week that we don't have somebody going somewhere, whether a game or a practice or both, or all three. (Maggie)</i></p> <p><i>It's usually every night it's every other night. So I have [son's name] Monday, Wednesday, then [son's name] would be Tuesday, Thursday and then usually there's a Sunday practice that comes into play on our off weekends. We have to leave from work, so we pack up the morning before we leave, probably leave at 4:30, get there about 5:30 practice from 5:45 you know, start warmups practice runs from 6:00-8:00, eight o'clock we start heading home, usually run by Sonic cause it's right around the corner, grab some food and then head home, get home about 8:45-9:00.(Julie)</i></p> <p><i>Well, I'll go back and recount the spring from January through up till the time we were forced to quit playing which is right around the beginning of April. Time commitment was just crazy. Each girl had practice twice a week and so we had four practices a week between the two girls, neither of the two girls had practice on the same night. So, my oldest had Monday, Wednesdays and my youngest had Tuesday, Thursday. So the only way we were able to make it work is we had three to four girls per age group. And we had a caravan, pretty much other parents, we were dependent on other parents, we would split up weeks and we were able to just kind of carpool. But my oldest daughter was driven twice a week by my wife, because it just didn't work out, time wise for her to be able to do that, the youngest she would carpool. And we would be responsible for one week usually every month. So there were my responsibility was to get the boy to his baseball practices which started late January, my wife would end up taking the girls most nights to Shreveport (an hour away), it's also tough when you get back at 10 o'clock at night and you got to get home and they've got a shower and eat and do whatever school work was left over. And</i></p>

			<p><i>then they've got to get up the next morning and be ready for school. (Matthew)</i></p> <p><i>Right now they switched their practices too. It was Tuesday and Wednesday night, so it was kind of a beat down. Luckily, she and I are both night owls, so she wasn't dying too bad. Cause Wednesday nights were like 7:15-8:45. So when we get home, it's almost 10, but it hasn't been too bad. I mean almost anywhere she plays, it'll be a drive out here. So, it's been a lot of time, but she puts in. (Karen)</i></p> <p><i>It has caused a lot of pre-planning you know, to make sure, but everybody's where they're supposed to be. The time commitment has pushed back dinner time. So we had to factor that in and who's getting off work when and can do that...The only hard part would be a Saturday when your Saturday shot cause you spent all day at a pool. (Jane)</i></p> <p><i>So like this weekend we are going to [town name], which is three and a half hours away to play. (Brianna)</i></p> <p><i>We travel an hour for practices and then games and stuff like that. (Karen)</i></p> <p><i>She practices twice a week. They practice every night but we are only required to go twice a week because we live so far away. Every night except Wednesday because the coach has church. (Sarah)</i></p>
	Social Life	Survey	<p><i>He is making more friends other than the ones he has grown up with.</i></p> <p><i>We don't really do anything socially with friends because we are traveling most weekends.</i></p> <p><i>Allowed her to hang out with girls from other schools</i></p> <p><i>Their friends are on the same team.</i></p> <p><i>We don't really do anything socially with friends because we are traveling most weekends.</i></p> <p><i>They just don't have the extra time to spend with friends if the friend isn't on their team.</i></p> <p><i>They have made so many friends outside of our local community/school.</i></p> <p><i>They have made friends and extended their friendship circles.</i></p> <p><i>They just don't have the extra time to spend with friends if the friend isn't on their team.</i></p> <p><i>A lot more outgoing and making friendships</i></p>

			<p><i>Has made friends with other students in other local schools and has had spend the night parties, games on the computer.</i></p> <p><i>Not able to make plans</i></p>
		Interview	<p><i>I don't know that it's affected it negatively. He plays baseball with a lot of the same kids he hangs out with at school. So I mean, I don't know that it's affected him in the eyes of others socially, but I think he feels like he just doesn't have enough time with them to do the things everybody else is doing. (Cody)</i></p> <p><i>So actually think it's been good for him. He has other friends that play on different teams...I love it. I think it's been really good for his social life. (Jennifer)</i></p> <p><i>I think that's been a great big positive for my girls, especially because they're a little older, a little closer to adulthood and they have a little more adult relationships. One I think their interactions with their coaches have been very positive, I think their interaction with their teammates that they're exposed to teammates that aren't necessarily from just here. (Matthew)</i></p> <p><i>When we lived in Virginia, nobody from her school was on her swim team but she ended up making friends, which was awesome. She had her school friends, her swim friends, church, friends. So we thought we really liked that aspect of it. She met people that she would have never met at all through swimming. And since swimming is a lot of sitting around time she would get to know kids very well cause they would be sitting, waiting for their events, things like that. (Jane)</i></p> <p><i>There are a lot of times that she's not able to do things because she either has practice or a tournament. (Sarah)</i></p>
	Academics	Survey	<p><i>She is very dedicated and organized to academics</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes he's too tired to do homework on those nights.</i></p> <p><i>School still comes first</i></p> <p><i>They have learned time management is key. Homework first then baseball.</i></p> <p><i>Academics always come first. We have skipped practice or left practice early if we have a lot of homework or a project due.</i></p> <p><i>He does well in school but it is a lot of studying on the road which gets hard.</i></p> <p><i>The stress of managing school work and athletic events sometimes gets a little overwhelming.</i></p> <p><i>She keeps her grades up or she doesn't play.</i></p>

			<p><i>He occasionally misses a homework assignment because on practice nights we usually don't get home until around 9:30 pm. Sometimes he's too tired to do homework on those nights.</i></p> <p><i>They have learned time management is key. Homework first then baseball.</i></p> <p><i>Late practices are an issue on occasion.</i></p> <p><i>Sports motivate our children to perform better academically.</i></p>
		Interview	<p><i>It's actually helped...It's helped her, I think, to help her to stay focus and things like that. (Jane)</i></p> <p><i>So far it's been pretty good for school-wise we've been able to stay on top of it. Her grades have stayed up, she's doing well. (Karen)</i></p> <p><i>So it's helped him in school and everything to focus and get his schoolwork done. (Brianna)</i></p> <p><i>So now I think they have found some pretty good balance of softball, with other interests and of course, schoolwork there, they're both pretty good students and work hard to get their schoolwork done. (Bryan)</i></p> <p><i>We've not found any adverse effects. I know that there's been times where they come in from practices late at night and they still have to study or they still have to get a project done and it's stressful. I don't mind that at all. (Matthew)</i></p>
	Extracurricular Opportunities	Survey	<p><i>They've had to choose to forego certain activities in favor of their sport.</i></p> <p><i>There may have been activities here or there that we have missed but nothing noteworthy</i></p> <p><i>They do not have schedule conflicts</i></p>
		Interview	<p><i>Yeah, she can't do any after school clubs. Around here they had an outdoor club and she couldn't do it because she would be going to swim practice. (Jane)</i></p> <p><i>During a regular year it probably would a little bit, we've pretty much been able to finagle everything. I mean, she does all her FCA stuff. (Karen)</i></p> <p><i>My oldest enjoys running distance running. She's wanted to participate with cross country but we play volleyball matches on Saturdays and cross country runs on Saturdays. She just couldn't make it work. You know, so she had to make a decision which one of those that you want to do more obviously volleyball was going to win out. (Matthew)</i></p> <p><i>So I mean, he is friends with them, but it's not the friends that he's around all the time. It's probably kept him from hanging out. You</i></p>

			<p><i>know, he has a friend down the street and that dad, coaches soccer every season. He always wants to play soccer. And we really only let him do it in the winter. Yeah. So I think, you know, in that sense he's bummed sometimes. He's never not wanted to go to baseball. He just wants to do it all and we can't do it all. (Maggie)</i></p> <p><i>We made it work. I mean they did a drama class and again, they did it together. They both wanted to do it. (Bryan)</i></p>
	Church Attendance	Survey	<p><i>Used to be involved with Sunday Morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night church activities but that all had to be Put on hold.</i></p> <p><i>Another concern is not being able to attend church due to Sunday games.</i></p>
		Interview	<p><i>Yeah, we do. However, we go to church every Wednesday. I make sure we don't practice on Wednesdays. So we at least get one day at church a week, no matter what. (Landon)</i></p> <p><i>I think one of the biggest things, you go back to that guilt feeling Sunday's has been a big deal for us. Not going to church on weekends, where we are away has been you know that's something that we always start out every year and we say we're not doing this, you know, we're gonna make a commitment. We're going to stay home on Sundays, but I'll be honest we haven't been good you know one thing leads to the next and say, you know, you're not at home on a Sunday and your kids are not in church, and that's one thing that you know we feel strongly about. We just have not been successful in allowing them to compete fully and make church. That's probably been one of our bigger. I won't say we've disagreed on it. It's just that things have popped up. And, well, you know, they're going to play at nine o'clock now on Sunday, as opposed to one where we could have made church you know if it would have been, so unexpected changes, sometimes, you know, Yeah, you've gone into it, saying, no, no. We're going to be at church on Sunday and you end up making a different decision when faced with it. (Matthew)</i></p> <p><i>That was one of the things my husband said from the very beginning we were not missing church.(Jane)</i></p>
	Family Time	Survey	<p><i>Takes away some family time</i></p> <p><i>We get a lot of bonding time driving to games, practices, and games. After the games we laugh, talk or ride in silence as he breaks down the plays/games in his head. Then when he is ready we talk about it. Then I get to uplift him and discuss what he needs to work on based off what he says he did wrong.</i></p> <p><i>His involvement has actually brought us closer. We enjoy our road trips to and from games. And use tournaments as vacations when we can.</i></p> <p><i>Spending time together and opportunities to connect on drives and time on weekend competitions</i></p> <p><i>Traveling for playing games is a fun way to spend time as a family.</i></p>

			<p><i>We spend a great deal of time together</i></p> <p><i>We spend a lot of time as a family as well as getting to watch her play a sport she loves</i></p> <p><i>We have more bonding time</i></p> <p><i>We spend more time together traveling and visiting.</i></p> <p><i>Spending more time together, outside the house.</i></p> <p><i>We love participating as a family</i></p> <p><i>We spend a lot of time together and they are a lot more open to talking about things going on during the week.</i></p>
		Interview	<p><i>Baseball is what we do as a family and it's a family affair (Maggie)</i></p> <p><i>Yeah. You know, for us, it's, I think it's brought us even more together, especially during COVID, you know, I mean, we went out to the fields almost every day, just the four of us and hitting high pops, hitting ground balls, you know, things that they're working on because they wanted to stay active. (Bryan)</i></p> <p><i>I think so, because baseball is what we do as a family and its a family affair...But, um, I think the time we still spend a lot of time together, it's just not on a vacation, it's at the baseball fields (Maggie)</i></p>

APPENDIX H: EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEWEE FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

The following appendix contains quotes from interviewees regarding the financial experience with their respective sport and select/club teams. They may discuss registration fees and what was included in the fee, equipment purchased, travel expenses, hidden or extra cost, how the financial commitment has affected their family, and ways they have attempted to manage the financial component of select sports.

Cody, Male, 36

- a. *Sport: Baseball (son)*
- b. Yeah. If we paid, uh, like for this season \$125 for a uniform, and then every tournament will have an entry fee that the players will split up, it'd be like 30 or \$40 on a weekend.
- c. Um, I feel like the financial part, that's kind of been negligible. I haven't noticed it hasn't cost us a ton of money the way we do it.

Matthew, Male, 42

- a. *Sport: Baseball (son)*
- b. *Volleyball (two daughters)*
- c. Things though they come with costs that you did not consider before, so we obviously agreed on it before we started. And then we get into it halfway and sometimes we look at each other and say, hey, we didn't necessarily sign up for this or we didn't realize this was going to be a part of it.
- d. Yes, we've had to change some spending habits. Probably the biggest decision we had to make related to finances is did we take a big family vacation over the summer that we normally do. We've been very intentional since the girls were born about taking a vacation. And just due to sheer costs for what they were participating in and the time.
- e. You know, another obvious impact has been financially. These elite teams are not cheap on the front end as far as the fees that are required. Just to start playing. It's not cheap when you start driving back and forth to practice two to three times a week, or if you're traveling on the weekends, you're staying in hotels, you're feeding your family. A fast-food restaurant is no longer cheap. It's an expensive endeavor. So obviously, we've had to make choices and sacrifices financially to continue to do certain things.
- f. That was the biggest probably the biggest discussion we had going into it was the finances, one, can we afford it and two, is it worth it. And sometimes we found that it was worth it. Sometimes, you know, we look back and thought, you know, that would have been money better spent in another area. But yes, we agreed, initially you know on the upfront cost. But what we have found once you get into it. You're halfway through the season and there's all these other costs that you didn't consider. I hate to call them hidden costs, but they are to some degree. They're just things you don't realize you're spending money on beforehand, and you get into it and you feel obligated to remain with the team and to keep doing certain things you know. They were playing on the weekends or, you know, traveling during a week for practice so we had to rearrange family vacation plans or just not take a vacation that we wanted to because of the finances involved in their travel teams. That's probably been two of the bigger compromises we've had to make.

- g. *Volleyball*: Okay, their cost just to participate was around \$2,400, that was per child. Now we got a little bit of a discount for the second child. The program that they went through actually gave you a discount if you had multiple children participating. So it was \$2400, I believe, for the first one I want to say was \$1800 for the second. That doesn't include though you know your own travel costs. That is tournament fees, their coaches' salaries, their gear, those types. And I think that also included the hotels when they stayed. That included the girl's hotels, that did not include mine.
- h. Baseball right now was much cheaper. It was much more reasonable and the way we handled the baseball end of it. We actually did a per tournament basis. So each child was responsible for a portion of the tournament fees. It may be \$50 one weekend and maybe \$60 the next and some of them were dependent on the number of games that you actually played in for that tournament so you weren't out money up front and then had to be refunded later or some cases not refunded. I think it was \$60 bucks for the uniform and we were responsible for bat bags and their equipment which I liked a lot better. I was in control of what I spent.

Julie, Female, 36

- a. *Sport: Baseball (two sons)*
- b. His first time was \$2,400 something around in there. We had access to their indoor facility or whatever.
- c. Golly, what did I pay? It's right around like \$1,000 a kid. Okay, maybe like \$1400. And that includes Jersey and tournament and coaches fees, but that does not include bags. It didn't include any of the extras which I was okay with but when they first started out, it was like \$400.
- d. Luckily it always happens right around tax return time so even when money was really tight we had a tax chunk come through. So we knew where that money was going.

Sarah, Female, 37

- a. *Sport: Softball (daughter)*
- b. Well, obviously the concessions at the tournaments are insane, \$3.00 for a coke is crazy so they do try to bring a team cooler. The parents, we bring our own stuff in, even a lot of times they will tell you that you can't. But we have the Pay at the Plate fee, obviously, for the weekend per girl that we pay. The gate fees are \$8.00 a piece, you know, so those are expensive but when we do stay overnight, we very seldom do anything outside of the hotel. We usually get a bunch of food and use the grill area and the whole team will go down and grill and just sit around ya know. If the pool is open they can swim. If not, they just run around but none of us really try to spend a whole lot of money because like I said a lot of our families can't and even we really can't. So, we try to keep it low key.
- c. So on Mondays and Fridays they rent a batting cage at a facility and they have a batting instructor. It's \$20 a girl and then she does pitching lessons with her head coach for free.
- d. So, I had a Nissan Armada that I was driving, which is a gas guzzler and because of the travel I was paying over \$600 a month in gas alone for tournaments and practices and so I actually had to trade my car in and get a smaller vehicle. I've got a GMC Acadia now that gets 25 miles to the gallon

as opposed to 14 and I cut my gas usage in half so we actually had to get rid of a vehicle because of the cost.

- e. The commitment fee is \$100 for the Fall and \$100 for Spring and then we bought uniforms last year that we still use that cost \$185 a girl. But as far as yearly registration fees, he doesn't really get into that. She tried out for another team and they wanted \$1250 up front for the season.

Jane, Female, 49

- a. *Swimming (one son and one daughter)*
- b. And then you have the fees of a swimsuit or any other accessories needed for practice. This year we had to buy a Kickboard, we had to buy a buoy, we had to buy fins.
- c. Yes with swimming too, you have to pay to enter invitationals. So when my daughter would swim an invitational in Virginia, we would have to pay so many per event and then so much to enter the invitational. So say like she was swimming an invitation, will we pay \$20 to enter the invitational, and then \$5 for each event.
- d. Um, well, uh, yeah, that was tough because you had to pay obviously gas and then to get there and things like that. So a lot of times we would pack food. We wouldn't buy it there, to save as much as we could. If, uh, we had in a way swimming in Virginia, I had a brother who was living in Northern Virginia. So we actually spent the night at his house, which was very fortunate. We never had to get a hotel or anything, which was very convenient. So yeah, it was a little taxing when we figured out, oh, we just have to pay for every event. There was a couple of times when we were in Virginia that my husband was a little frustrated because he was like, I didn't know that meet costs that much. If it cost that much, we wouldn't have done it.
- e. My husband is a very type A personality and he has a budget and that was budgeted in sport from the very beginning. That was always there because we knew that that was important.
- f. Initially they had like a joining fee to join the team. In Virginia, it was close to \$1,000 but not quite. And here it was, it was not even half of that.

Bryan, Male, 47

- a. *Softball (two daughters)*
- b. So our costs, so it's usually \$125 a kid, we pay \$90. We get the coach's discount then, but then I haven't done the math on it to figure it out perfectly...It's by month. So if you look at it from a yearly standpoint, I guess it's gosh, when you think about its \$1,500 for the year. People are paying per kid And that, that covers your indoor facility... it covers the tournaments, it covers, like we have to pay for lights when we practice outside...It does not typically include uniforms, includes our indoor facility, tournaments, and our practice area.

Jennifer, Female, 32

- a. *Baseball (son)*
- b. Yeah, so we paid \$150 our first year. I thought that was a great price because our city league is like a hundred and then this last year went up to \$250 and you get two jerseys and I guess just like all the entries to the tournaments and stuff. We played one tournament in fall ball in [town name] I think we paid

like \$300 for a hotel for the weekend and then eating out and all that, gosh, I don't even know how much we spent, but we did make it like a little vacation. So there hasn't been a huge financial burden, but I know I've heard that when you get up to like 9U, it goes way up. I think it goes up to like \$700 or 800 something like that. It's a significant jump and they do raffle tickets and stuff like that. So you can kind of earn your money in or you can pay it out. Which I mean we'll definitely have to do something different when we get up that high.

Brianna, Female, 40

- a. *Baseball (son)*
- b. Yes, per kid. I'd say \$150 for the tournament fee for him...then it's \$15 per day. You don't get a weekend pass.
- c. Our biggest thing was our dog. He was having major anxiety attacks being gone every weekend. So we've now had to find someone to come in the house and take care of the dog so he doesn't think we're leaving him every weekend...So our biggest expense is our animal. We spent almost a hundred dollars on a weekend just boarding him.
- d. So for one season of baseball, it's for his age group, he's in 10U I think it was \$1350. So it's \$1300 and then \$50 for the registration.
- e. It includes his four coaches and then it includes three tournaments. It is not like say if you go to any big out-of-state tournaments, it does not cover if they make it to playoffs, it doesn't cover if it's, um, if they choose, like we went to Texas and it doesn't cover any of the travel, any of that. Okay. So it does help pay for the coach's expenses. It helps pay for refs and umpires, that type of thing.

Landon, Male, 35

- a. *Baseball (son)*
- b. So, I fundraise for entire seasons. So as of now, my team hasn't come out of pocket for anything. I try to make it a point that when the money runs low, I run a fundraiser. So I don't, I try to make it a point to not have any financial burden on my, on our families. There is a financial burden on my family, but it's not one that I answered that question in the survey. Honestly, I do spend money. I probably spend \$1,000- \$2,000 a year, but I have it to spend and I'm not worried about it. And in our family budget, I budget for my daughter's activities and I budget for my son's activities.
- c. The financial burden is not one that has any effect on my family. It doesn't affect it negatively or positively, I guess it's just in the budget.

Maggie, Female, 43

- a. *Baseball (three sons)*
- b. It was expensive, you know, the first thing it's like, you're not really sure what it's going to be, uh, and you do it. And I think that first fall, it was like, okay, like that's not as expensive as I thought it would be, but it certainly was more than I probably should have been spending on a sport. Right. I mean, you know, when you think, I don't even want to add up all the money that I've spent.
- c. No, uh \$800. And then, you know, when it really didn't give you that much, you got like four tournaments in the fall, which if you break that down, that's \$200 a tournament. Now you got practices and there were coaching fees

- cause he was coaching, but that pulled into the 800, but it was like, well, but then as soon as we're done in November, we really want everybody to do this velocity camp. And you know, we're like, Oh gosh, you better pay for the velocity camp. So then you can pay even in the off season, like 200-250 a month, okay. Spring fees are due. And so spring rolls around and it was like, I want to say \$1200. So that first year, \$800 plus the \$1200. And it included basically your tournament fees, but he also would make you show up, you know, tournament's have a gate fee so at every tournament the parents had to show up and pay like \$10 out of pocket for a gate fee.
- d. And I pointed out to him once I'm like, you've increased your prices 50% in two years. And we're not getting a different experience. So it went from being \$800 in the fall to \$1,200. And then from \$1200 in the spring to like \$1800 or \$2000, and they started offering these like package things, but you could get your velocity camp and your uniform, if you paid so much per month over time, which I guess then it did end up saving you, maybe like the cost of the uniform over the course of 12 months. Um, but generally I would say it was at least \$3000 a year.
 - e. My youngest, his first one at 9U it was like \$600 in the fall. They turn around in the spring and it was like \$1200. So double last fall, they came back and said it was going to be like a thousand. And we left. Um, no, I think it was, we stayed, the fall prices came out. They were going to some \$500 uniform and these were dads coaching. So this is like daddy ball, \$500, 300, \$500 uniform. And then it was also going to be like 12 or \$1,500 on top of it. And we bolted, um, we found a team that is closer to our house and we paid \$800 for the spring.
 - f. But financially it would be, you know, we just don't go on a ton of vacations anymore. You know, some of it is our schedules, but a lot of it's been financial. Like, you know, I just don't have \$2,000-\$3,000 to take a family vacation because we've spent it all on other things that's probably, um, and then just everyday kind of entertainment around here. Right. You know, I don't go to the state fair, we don't, you know go to six flags, we're not doing like all of the things. I probably know that that \$300- \$500 it would take me to go do that is probably going to go to lessons and probably going to go to these other things. And you know, probably should've saved to do my bathroom renovation that I've been waiting to do forever.
 - g. You know, some other things, for sure, those conversations in my head of, you know, when you think about college savings and all of that, it's like, man, if I want to put all this select money and, you know, into college savings and what are the benefits?
 - h. It was probably the times that we did have to put something, you know, a thousand bucks on a credit card for something. And then I'm just mad, you know, probably should've saved to do my bathroom renovation that I've been waiting to do forever.

Karen, Female, 43

- a. *Basketball (daughter)*
- b. So for her team, it's 150. It might be 160 now. No, maybe it's 150. It kind of changed because they changed how they do their teams 150 a month. If you do the extra stuff, that's another 40 extra a month. Like trainings, we just spent \$400 in uniforms, uh, fees, which was like. We just happened to come in at the last six months they had the old uniforms, so we had to get those and

- then they keep it. They don't do reversible and like warmups and they're Adidas sponsored. So you have to get all that stuff. And then like 500 something dollars for all the tournaments from the fall. And then for this league coming up. So it's a, I mean, I guess it's not horrible. I know some are more, but then they include the tournaments and everything in it, ours do it separate.
- c.* Um, and then we have like tournament fees and uniform fees and all that kind of stuff. And then of course getting in and out of the tournament, which I'll work. Um, cause I work in the schools right now, so I'll work games for extra money and stuff, so we can afford it and offset it. It's just, we have to kind of, When COVID hit, it killed all our extra jobs
 - d.* This costs us hundreds of dollars a month. We travel an hour for practices and then games and stuff like that.
 - e.* I mean, if you're going to do this, I mean, cause you have to pay for the coaches and all that kind of stuff. I knew it was going to be, I mean, there's a monthly commitment then if you do the extra training on top of it, it's a little more which we did do

APPENDIX I: WEEKLY TRAVEL TIME TO PRACTICES AND COMPETITIONS

