

FLOW: FAMILY DYNAMICS AND ADOLESCENT EXPERIENCES IN SOCCER

By

Elizabeth Wedemeyer Moon, MS

Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

Human Development
(Marriage and Family Therapy Option)

Approved By:

Janet Sawyers, Ph.D (Chair)

Fred Piercy, Ph.D

Scott Johnson, Ph.D

Wayne Denton, MD, Ph.D.

Anne Prouty, Ph.D

April 2, 2003 Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: sports, family dynamics, support, challenge, Flow

Flow: Family Dynamics and Adolescent Participation in Soccer
by Elizabeth Wedemeyer Moon

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to conduct an exploratory study of parental involvement in youth sports. The Flow Model developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is used as the basis of my theory behind the research. Although there has been recognition that it is important to study young athletes, little is known about parental involvement. Thus, my three main research questions are: (a) How do adolescents experience their participation in soccer? (b) What are the family dynamics, as expressed by parents, related to challenging and supporting their children? And (c) How do adolescents experience the relationship between these family dynamics and their participation in soccer?

My methods of inquiry of this study included collecting data through two questionnaires: (a) Experience Sampling Method (ESM) and (b) Support/Challenge Questionnaire (SCQ). I also conducted in-depth interviews. My participants included 11 males and 10 females 14-15 years of age. Each of these participants were administered the two questionnaires. Of these 21 participants, eight adolescent athletes and their parents were followed up with in-depth interviews.

The results of this research are organized into four main categories including communication, family interaction, goals and beliefs, and expectations. From these themes, three categories for implications were developed to encompass soccer implications, therapy implications, and research implications. Ultimately, acknowledging how adults affect the outcomes of children's stress and enjoyment, parents can deal more successfully with the social, emotional, and psychological needs of their young athletes (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986).

Table of Contents

<i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>Research Questions</u>	5
<i>Chapter 2: Review of Literature</i>	<i>8</i>
<u>Systemic Framework</u>	8
<u>Brief History of Flow</u>	8
<u>Definition of Flow</u>	9
<u>Enjoyment</u>	11
<u>Family Dynamics of Flow</u>	12
<u>Support</u>	16
<u>Challenge</u>	18
<i>Chapter 3: Methodology</i>	<i>23</i>
<u>Introduction</u>	23
<u>Data Collection</u>	24
<u>Participants</u>	24
<u>Measurements</u>	25
<u>Experience Sampling Method (ESM)</u>	25
<u>Support/Challenge Questionnaire (SCQ)</u>	27
<u>Interviews</u>	29
<u>Procedures</u>	31
<u>Data Analysis</u>	34
<u>Table 1: Summarized Description of Each Group</u>	36
<i>Chapter 4: Results</i>	<i>37</i>
<u>Introduction</u>	37
<u>Table 2: Summary of Adolescents' Experiences</u>	38
<u>Graph displaying gender differences between S&C</u>	39
<u>Table 3: Experience Sampling Method of 8 Participants</u>	40
<u>Definition of Family Challenge and Family Support</u>	41
<u>Summarized Examples of Each Category</u>	42
<u>HC/HS</u>	46
<u>Robert</u>	46
<u>Tracy</u>	50
<u>HC/LS</u>	55
<u>Henry</u>	55
<u>Amanda</u>	65
<u>Madison</u>	73
<u>LC/HS</u>	80
<u>Scott</u>	81
<u>Leslie</u>	89
<u>LC/LS</u>	95
<u>Elizabeth</u>	95

<u>Reflections of Researcher</u>	101
<i>Chapter 5. Discussion and Assertions</i>	103
<u>First Research Question</u>	103
<u>Second Research Question</u>	106
<u>Third Research Question</u>	108
<u>Communication</u>	109
<u>Family Interaction</u>	112
<u>Goals</u>	114
<u>Expectations</u>	116
<u>Conclusion</u>	120
<u>Quick Tips for Parents</u>	121
<u>Implications</u>	122
<u>Soccer</u>	122
<u>Therapy</u>	125
<u>Sport Psychology</u>	127
<u>Research</u>	128
<u>References</u>	131
List of Tables	
<u>Table 1</u>	36
<u>Table 2</u>	38
<u>Table 3</u>	40
<u>Graph</u>	39
APPENDICES	
<u>APPENDIX A: Experience Sampling Questionnaire</u>	137
<u>APPENDIX B: Support/Challenge Questionnaire</u>	139
<u>APPENDIX C: Athlete's Interview Guide</u>	140
<u>APPENDIX D: Parent's Interview Guide</u>	142
<u>APPENDIX E: Consent Form</u>	144
<u>APPENDIX F: Minor's Assent Form</u>	147

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

Headline reads: Self-Defense Plea Eyed in Hockey Death. In amazement several young children stood watching as one youth sport hockey Dad banged another Dads' head against the concrete floor. The single father of four children died the next day of cerebral hemorrhage (Newsweek, 2000). What could have possibly started such an intense, enraged fight between two adults? It began over a youth sport practice of 9- and 10-year-olds.

Part of my current interest in studying adolescent soccer players and their family's stems from my personal experience. I grew up playing sports. My brother was a soccer "star" at a young age, and I followed in his footsteps as soon as I could. My entire family's identity was wrapped around being a "soccer family". I started on an all-boys traveling soccer team when I was seven. [I will refer to "traveling" soccer at times throughout the paper, and I am basically referring to a higher level of soccer than a recreational league.] I eventually played in college on a Division 1 soccer scholarship. I had parents who were very involved with my soccer. Although I can say that my parent's involvement was mostly positive, there were times that their involvement may have been considered "too much." There were many games where my father was kicked out for yelling at the referees too loudly and too aggressively. At a young age, I would sometimes feel the embarrassment of knowing that everyone else knew that was my Dad yelling. As time passed, I just accepted it, as other parents and coaches and players appeared to do, as part of his involvement. But should this type of behavior be accepted?

As evident by my personal experience, and my education of a masters in sport psychology and a masters in marriage and family therapy, my interest in parental involvement and youth sports has grown, along with the need to study this area.

I conducted a pilot study in the Fall of 2001. Four adolescent females ranging in the age from 14 to 15 years were interviewed about their parents' involvement related to their participation in soccer (Moon, 2001). Several themes emerged from the data analyses including communication, definition of involvement, parental expectations, and decision-making power.

One of the most consistent themes related to whether the child had decision-making power over whether they played soccer or not. It was important for these girls to feel like they had the final decision about playing, and that their parents would support them in whatever decision they made.

Along with decision-making power, participants expressed a desire for open communication with their parents. However, three of the four participants reported limiting their communication out of the concern of "hurting my parent's feelings," or "making them mad." There appeared to be a "guilt-like" feeling suggested by the participants. They felt that they owed their parents for the many and significant sacrifices their parents had made to encourage and support them in playing soccer and that they felt guilty and reluctant to communicate different opinions or expectations about their involvement in soccer. It was also interesting to hear the participants speak of the need to take time after a game before talking about it with their parents, their fathers in particular. I realize this may be a gender issue, and hence I will add adolescent males to my current study.

Findings from this pilot study left me with more, different, and better questions to continue my quest to understand the experiences of adolescent soccer players. My continuing review of the literature has pointed out the possibility of integrating my interest in the study of sport psychology and marriage and family therapy through the theory of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000).

Youth Sport Participation

Youth sports have been an important part of our society since the late 1920s. In American society today, approximately 17 million children currently participate in youth sports (Faucette, & Osinski, 1987). However, “According to the National Alliance for Sports, seven out of 10 will have quit by age 13, frustrated by pushy parents who focus on talent, technique and toughness – everything but fun” (Denver Post, 2001). Many factors influence children’s initial and continued participation in sports. Research has repeatedly shown that parents play an integral part in the decision of children becoming involved in sports and the types of activities chosen (Smoll, Magill, & Ash, 1988). Brustad (1993) states that “the role of the family as the major initial socializing influence upon children’s physical activity seems indisputable” (p. 211). Although parents have a strong influence over their children, relatively little attention has focused on parent/ child relationships in adolescent sport. More specifically, questions still remain as to how parental involvement influences children’s enjoyment in sport.

It has been hypothesized that the main reason children participate in sport is because playing promises to be fun and exciting (Hanlon, 1994). Parents of young

athletes have immense influence on the happiness and success of their children's experience in sport (Hanlon, 1994).

The youth sport experience can have significant consequences on the personality and psychological development of children (Kamm, 1998). However, these positive benefits do not occur simply because a child is participating in sport, but occurs when competent, knowledgeable adults are involved. Some of the healthy benefits include children learning about sportsmanship, goal setting, increasing self-esteem, respect for rules, developing character, persistence, and positive thinking (Kamm, 1998).

Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) state,

“Learning to enjoy the intrinsic rewards of hard work is essential to successful development. In their classic survey of American youth, James Coleman and his co-authors wrote that one of the essential objectives our society should strive for is to develop in youth the capabilities for engaging in intense concentrated involvement in an activity. The most personally satisfying experiences, as well as the greatest achievements of man, arise from such concentration, not because of external pressure, but from an inner motivation which propels the person and focuses his or her attention. Whether the activity be scholarship, or performance (. . . athletics),. . . it is the concentrated involvement itself, rather than the specific content, that is important”(Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000, p13).

As described briefly, the sports environment can provide ample opportunities for success for young athletes. The success and benefits of sport participation may not only be reaped immediately, such as increased self-esteem, but there may be long-term effects,

such as improving the general quality of life for children. It is with this knowledge that we must focus on how parents and children together can promote and support environments to enhance this quality of life.

Beginning in the 1980s, a wave of quantitative researchers studied children and sports. There seemed to be a consensus that this was an important area to explore, but much of the focus was on children and why they participated in sports (Brustad, 1988; Brustad, & Weigand, 1989; Faucette, & Osinki, 1987). Inventories were created for children to test levels of anxiety, and stress (Martens, 1977; Harter, 1982; & Hellstedt, 1987). Soon it became apparent that parents played a role in how children experienced their participation in sports (McElroy, & Kirkendall, 1981; Robinson, & Carron, 1982; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1984) but that role was never clearly defined. Although there has been recognition that it is important to study young athletes, little is known about parental involvement, and how children view their parents' involvement in relation to enjoyment of sport.

Research Questions

Three main research questions will guide this study including:

1. How do adolescents experience their participation in soccer?
2. How do adolescents experience family dynamics of support and challenge?
3. What are the family dynamics, as expressed by parents and teens through interviews, related to challenging and supporting their teen athlete?

Wylleman states, “Research needs to take an ‘in-depth’ perspective . . . assessing athletes’ perceptions of the interpersonal behaviors as they ‘actually’ occur, as well as how athletes would ‘prefer’ them to be, [so as to] provide more insight into athletes’ satisfaction with the characteristics of the relationship” (Wylleman, 2000, pg. 566). Lewko and Greendorfer (1988) state that, “the task for future research is to understand how social-psychological forces, such as parents, affect the child’s entry into, persistence in, and/or withdrawal from physical activity and sport and shape his or her desire to excel” (p. 297). There has been a growing concern over the psychological and social effects of the competitive sport experience on children. This concern stems from the importance of understanding any social process by which so many children are affected. Unfortunately, about one third of the 17 million children drop out of sports each year (Faucette, & Osinski, 1987). Research has demonstrated that children drop out of sports due to lack of playing time, lack of success, lack of fun, competitive stress, and too much criticism (Hanlon, 1994). By acknowledging how adults affect the outcomes of children’s stress and enjoyment, parents can deal more successfully with the social, emotional, and psychological needs of their young athletes (Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1984). Therefore, in order to gain more insight into this area of study, I will investigate how children experience their parents’ involvement and the influence it has on their sport.

I will first examine a brief, but significant view of parent and child relationships within a systemic framework. Then, I will define and address the influential model of Optimal Experience called Flow by Csikszentmihalyi (1983, 1985, 1990, 1988, & 2000). I will then explore the impact of adult participation in youth sports supported by research.

Then I will describe my methodology, concluding with limitations, possible implications, and future directions.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

Recent research has attempted to acknowledge the importance and utility of viewing a sport system incorporating a family systems model (Brown, 2001; Hays, 1998; Hellstedt, 1987; Russel, 1996; & Zimmerman, 1993). Hays (1998) states, “The system comprises a psychosocial unit, with focus on information processing, feedback mechanisms, and patterns of communication” (Hays, 1998, p. 7). Although there has been an attempt by researchers at creating more of a systemic viewpoint when working with athletes, there remains a knowledge “gap” where the relationship between the athlete and parents has not been adequately or thoroughly explored. With this in mind, I attempt to fill in some of that gap with my current research using the Flow model.

Brief History of Flow

Csikszentmihalyi (1983) has been studying human behavior, particularly looking at intrinsic motivation. He first studied artists who completed works of art with an exceptional amount of concentration, and according to Csikszentmihalyi, they received little extrinsic reward for finishing a painting. It was the *process* that Csikszentmihalyi became interested in studying. His research has led him to the important concept of optimal experience called “Flow.” Csikszentmihalyi has accumulated such extensive research on Flow, that it has been applied in educational, clinical, and commercial fields. (Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, I., 1988).

Most of Csikszentmihalyi’s research has involved extensive interview processes to understand this state of “Flow.” He has looked at various groups ranging from artists,

musicians, rock climbers, and other athletes. This study will explore the flow concept, reflections of enjoyment, and the family in relation to parental involvement and youth soccer. It is through this research that the reader will have a better understanding of how parents influence enjoyment of soccer with young athletes through understanding optimal experience in general, and the influences families have on young athletes developing the opportunities to encounter that optimal experience called flow. Csikszentmihalyi, M, & Csikszentmihalyi, I. (1988) stated, “Whenever the quality of human experience is at issue, flow becomes relevant. It helps explain why people enjoy their work and their leisure. . . (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 14). For instance, according to Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) in Becoming Adult they explain the most important perception for adolescents is to perceive an activity as being both like work and like play. Extracurricular activities, such as athletics, were reported as feeling like both work and play by the teens. Activities that feel both like work and play are described as difficult but fun.

“When a work-like activity is accompanied by [the] perception that it is also play-like, the activity may increase a teenager’s self-esteem, positive affect, salience, and enjoyment . . .’ In this sense, activities that invite such balanced responses might provide the most important training for the merging of personal commitment with social needs advocated by most theories of vocational development”(Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000, p75).

Definition of Flow

As a result of an extensive qualitative study involving 8, 000 participants from around the world, 8 essential components of Flow experience were developed

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1983). The first component includes having a *clear goal*. Often times the experience of flow is inhibited by unclear expectations, uncertain aspirations, and conflicting goals. Another main component of “Flow” incorporates a combination of *concentrating and focusing* on the task at hand so much that the person *loses the feeling of self consciousness*. The focus is on the present moment, and many describe feeling a *distorted sense of time*, where time is measured by the activity itself. The fifth component comprises *feedback*. Clear feedback is important to the participant involved in the activity so that behavior can be altered or adjusted accordingly. It is also crucial for *challenges to match the skill level*. Persons experiencing “Flow” also describe a sense of *control* over situation or activity. And the last component involves participants feeling as if the activity was rewarding in and of itself, also called *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1983).

Optimal experience can also be broken down into two measurements. The first dimension is referred to as “challenges”, and the second is termed “skills.” It is when these two dimensions are equal, that optimal experience or Flow is likely to happen. “When artists, athletes, or creative professionals describe the best times experienced in their favorite activities, they all mention this dynamic balance between opportunity and ability as crucial” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1983, p. 17). Csikszentmihalyi developed a model or chart of flow state. This chart describes the dance between *Action Opportunities* (Challenges) and *Action Capabilities* (Skills). When activities or challenges overwhelm a person’s capabilities, the person may experience anxiety. However, when these two are matched equally, and are in balance with one another, the person experiences a Flow state. At the other end of the model, when skills are greater than the challenge presented, the person experiences boredom (Csikszentmihalyi, 1983). It is through this model that a

possible definition of optimal parental involvement may be defined so as to enhance the opportunity for youth athletes to experience flow and enjoyment in sport. With this in mind, enjoyment in relation to the Flow model will be discussed.

Enjoyment

Csikszentmihalyi asks, “How does it feel to have fun? And what are the conditions that help produce it?”(Csikszentmihalyi, 1985, p. 490). These are two questions Csikszentmihalyi (1985) was interested in learning more about in relation to the flow experiences. Enjoyment has been distinguished as a sense of accomplishment. “Enjoyable events occur when a person has not only met some prior expectation or satisfied a need or a desire but also gone beyond what he or she has been programmed to do and achieved something unexpected, perhaps something even unimagined before” (Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1990, p. 46). Csikszentmihalyi goes on to assess that there are two things that must take place in order to help facilitate a structural context where flow may occur. First, it is essential to have the chance to be involved in an activity to perform or be challenged. Secondly, when these opportunities present themselves, the person must have the ability and skill level to meet the challenge or activity. This is appropriate to keep in mind for parents who have some control over creating environments for their children. It is important that parents create opportunities for their children, allow for the freedom to explore other opportunities, as well as have a sense of their child’s ability and level of skill when facing these challenges.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) further explored the concept of enjoyment, expressing, “That there are two main strategies. . . The first is to try making external conditions

match our goals. The second is to change how we experience external conditions to make them fit our goals better”(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 43). Understanding the concept of enjoyment, teaches us how we can learn to create or increase enjoyable experiences.

From the research Csikszentmihalyi (1990) has completed over the years, he has found that the description of enjoyment or feeling of flow described by people doing various activities, from rock climbing, surgery, athletes, chess players, salesman, artists, etc., the feelings of enjoyment were described if not exactly the same way, very similarly. He also discovered that differences in culture, social class, age, gender, and degree of modernization did not matter when describing how people felt when they were experiencing flow or enjoying an activity. However, a possible limitation to this current study may involve a lack of cultural or class integration of research participants. This has been acknowledged, and is something that should be integrated into future studies.

According to Csikszentmihalyi, “The capacity to experience flow seems to be an extremely important personal skill. At the same time, it is also clear that the way society structures action opportunities (challenges) will affect the ease with which people may find optimal experiences in their daily lives” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1983, p. 25). With this in mind, a review of flow and the family will be introduced.

Family Dynamics and Flow

Csikszentmihalyi states, “There is ample evidence to suggest that how parents interact with a child will have a lasting effect on the kind of person that child grows up to be” (M., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.88). One of Csikszentmihalyi studies observed teenagers and their relationship with their parents. From this study five major characteristics evolved describing a family context which promote optimal experiences in

relation to their teenager. The first characteristic is *clarity*. Clarity involves the teenager feeling that they know what their parents expect from them. This includes explicit goals and clear feedback. Clear goals and feedback cannot be determined unless there is good lines of communication from the parents to the child, and vice versa, from the child to the parent. The second important factor is termed *centering*. This is namely, “the children’s perception that their parents are interested in what they are doing in the present, in their concrete feelings and experiences, rather than being preoccupied with whether they will be getting into a good college or obtaining a well-paying job” (Csikzentmihalyi, 1990, p. 88). This has to be established as real by the parents. This means getting to know your child, his or her likes and dislikes, and paying attention consistently to the verbal and non-verbal communication sent. *Choice* is the next key ingredient. This includes children feeling the freedom of opportunity, even if they choose an opportunity against the parents’ rules, as long as the child is willing to face the consequences. This often is a tough key ingredient for parents. It is through these opportunities for choice that children feel a sense of control, and become differentiated. *Commitment* is the fourth important aspect. With commitment, comes the security that allows a child to feel safe enough to lose his defenses, and become “unselfconsciously” absorbed in whatever he is interested in, without the fear of judgment. The last key point is *challenge*. This encompasses parents taking the time, energy, and commitment to provide continual and appropriate opportunities for children to be challenged. If these five important points are created, developed, initiated, and nurtured within a family, Csikszentmihalyi suggested that children will have more opportunities to experience flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). According to the flow model, less mental energy is used when children and parents are

not constantly fighting for power over rules, goals, and expectations. This in turn helps a child develop a strong sense of self, where defenses are limited or non-existent because their ego is not constantly being challenged by other people, such as parents. It is supported that these teenagers that were studied, their experiences were not just when they were with their family or in the family context, but that this sense of experience is expanded to other areas of their life, thus crossing over contexts.

Modeling by the parents is a meaningful avenue when developing an environment for optimal experiences to take place (Scherer, 2000). If children see parents being involved in activities and expressing enjoyment, then they provide a living example. Through modeling several things may occur. One is that it provides ideas for children about activities that they may find enjoyable for themselves, as well as it promotes doing things for intrinsic reasons versus extrinsic motivations.

In a recent article M. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) discusses a research study he conducted on 1,000 children from grades 6 through 12. Csikszentmihalyi was interested in understanding whether students cared about learning. Each child was given a programmable pager for a week. This pager would go off at least eight random points throughout the day. The participants were to record where they were, what they were doing, what they were thinking about, their level of concentration, how happy they were, and how creative they felt when doing different activities. Each participant also had to reflect on whether what she or he was doing felt more like play, more like work, both play and work, or like neither play nor work. Researchers suggest that the best position is when a person views an activity as both work and play. However, the results of this study showed that only about 10 percent of the time students experience this balance. The worst

scenario is when the activity the participant is involved in is seen as neither enjoyable at the time, nor positive groundwork for the future. Within this same study, it was found that males described what they do as play significantly more often than females did. It is also reported that it is extracurricular activities that “students most often say that they are both working and playing”(Scherer, 2002, p. 13). Students respond further by saying that the activity is usually something that is important to them, and usually a voluntary activity. This coincides with the idea of flow in which an adolescent’s interest and skills are matched, creating more of an opportunity for flow to occur.

Csikszentmihalyi in his interview with Sherer (2002) further explains what family characteristics are most conducive to inspiring a love of learning. This is where the importance of modeling comes to light. If parents demonstrate that most of the activities they are involved in are due to extrinsic rewards such as money, it lessens the chance for their children to learn doing activities for intrinsic reasons.

There are two essential points when creating flow opportunities for their children: support and challenge. Challenge is defined as high expectations and standards, as well as giving the child autonomy, and presenting children with new opportunities. Along with this, challenge presents vision and direction for the child, as well as determination. Support is defined as “the child feels that the family as a whole is interested in every member’s welfare” (Scherer, 2002, p. 16). This support gives the child a protection from worry and apprehension, which can accompany children when they are attempting new things.

Ideally, when a family displays both of these key ingredients, in relation to school, children will choose tougher classes, earn better grades, attend better colleges,

and have higher self-esteem. Interestingly, if children only get support, the child may be happy, and feel good about themselves, but may not aspire for higher goals. On the other hand, if the family expresses a lot of challenges without the supportive piece, then children may perform well in school, but are not very content. It appears to be very unfortunate for a child, when parents display neither support nor challenge. With these key points in mind, a more detailed look at how parents influence children in sport will be reviewed. The next two sections are broken up into support and challenge literature.

Support

Researchers have focused on the importance parents play in their child's sport experience. Socialization is a key factor in influencing the amount and type of involvement in youth sport. Socialization is defined as "the process whereby individuals learn skills, traits, values, attitudes, norms, and knowledge associated with the performance of a present or anticipated social role" (Brustad, 1993 p.211). One framework developed by Eccles and colleagues (1991), dealt with studying socialization processes. Their model is based on children's motivation related cognitions, such as perceived competence, and how they are shaped through interactions with parents. Parents are strong socializing agents in shaping children's social behavior, such as sports. Brustad states, "Parents are presumed to influence children's judgments by communicating their own beliefs about the child's likelihood of success and the relative value of the various achievement areas" (Brustad, 1993 p. 211). In the socialization process, children learn skills, values, attitudes, norms, and knowledge of social roles. Parents are in the position to teach, encourage, and therefore, enforce appropriate role

behavior in sport. Those who receive positive reinforcement for sport participation will be more likely to become and to stay involved in sports, versus those who receive messages that are negative or neutral towards sport (Smoll, Magill, & Ash, 1988). Research shows that the family has the initial and most invariable influence on the child's sport involvement. Family members nurture the sport role in different ways, including creating a positive environment for participation, supporting and enhancing motivation for involvement, allowing and creating opportunities for participation, and being role models themselves in sports themselves (Smoll, Magill, & Ash, 1988).

Research shows support that parental reinforcement influences children's motivation in different domains. For example, Harter's Competence Motivation Theory (1982) looks at self-perceptions of competence and control in motivational processes. Harter states that significant others, mainly parents, influence children's self-related perceptions by giving feedback. If the child has perceived personal competence and the parent supports mastery efforts, then the child is more likely to develop intrinsic motivation. Ideally, this intrinsic motivation will transfer into other activities or schoolwork. If the child feels competent and in control, they will choose opportunities that are challenging in the future. In contrast, if the child senses disapproval from parents of his or her efforts to master a skill, then he or she will have a lower sense of competence. This could lead to an extrinsic motivational orientation or an increase in negative feelings, such as anxiety, in future challenges or learning experiences (Brustad, 1992).

One study by Brustad and Weigand (1989) found that children who feel their parents repeatedly show support and encouragement for their efforts in sport have greater

intrinsic motivation in the way of a higher preference for challenge than children who receive less positive parental support (Brustad, 1992). Along with these findings, Duda (1987) suggests, that when children are anxious about negative evaluations by parents, they tend to develop an ego-involved orientation toward their sport participation. Ego-oriented individuals believe they must outperform others, which often leads to experiencing a decline in children's sense of ability. Poor performance, which might accompany this decline in children's sense of ability, may decrease enjoyment and subsequently lead to children's withdrawal from sport when they are faced with failure. Therefore, parents play a major role in children's motivational orientation development.

Power and Woogler state, "Parental support is thought to play an important motivational role in affirming the child's efforts, in building feelings of acceptance and self-worth, and in giving the child the confidence to persist in the face of failure" (Power & Woogler, 1994, p. 59). In relation to parental directiveness, too much direction and external pressure can decrease intrinsic motivation. Modeling defines and communicates standards for desirable behavior. If parents have realistic performance outcome goals then they are likely to have children who develop a positive attitude toward the sport. Unrealistically high goals may discourage motivation because the child may feel she or he cannot live up to her or his parents' expectations.

Challenge

Sagor (2002) was interested in understanding the motivation and commitment level of skateboarders. Similar to Csikszentmihalyi (1983), Sagor was interested in understanding intrinsic motivation. From his research he developed an acronym CBUPO (Sagor, 1993), which describe five important needs for intrinsic motivation to occur. He

concluded that if these needs are met, motivation and commitment will be significant. The five needs include: The need to feel *competent*; The need to *belong*; The need to feel *useful*; The need to feel *potent*; And the need to feel *optimistic*. Sagor emphasizes the importance of learning and understanding what motivates youth. He found that skateboarders inherently met each of these important points. With the sport of skateboarding, developing and mastering skills takes enormous effort and persistence. Once a skateboarder succeeds in a skill, it led to feeling competent.

Most skateboarders have an identity allowing them the feeling of belonging to a distinct group. Not only do they feel a separate identity, skateboarders usually practice in a group, increasing the chances of learning from one another and thus feeling useful. And as skateboarders become better, there is an understanding of hard work, and success, which exudes a sense of potency.

Sagor(2002) also talks about ways of building feelings of competence through setting own personal goals, intrinsic goals if you will, versus outcome goals, such as comparing yourself to others. This relates to parental involvement in the way that if parents support developing personal records and goals in sport, while at the same time giving nonjudgmental feedback, children are much more likely to feel competent, motivated, and committed.(Sagor, 2002) Sagor goes on to state that it is important for students to feel a sense of community or belonging, need to also feel they are involved with decision-making processes. This again relates to parents who are involved with their child's youth sport (soccer), because as related to my earlier pilot study, children feel that it is important for them to have some power in deciding about their involvement in their sport (Moon, 2002).

Power and Woogler (1994) reported that *moderate* levels of parental directiveness and performance outcome goals lead to greatest children's enthusiasm for swimming. Forty-four families of 6 to 14 year-old competitive swimmers were studied to examine the parenting correlates of children's expectancies in age-group swimming. In this study it was predicted that moderate levels of performance goals and directiveness would be related with the largest optimal child outcomes. The parents completed questionnaires that provided self-reports of their parenting practices regarding swimming. Parents completed ratings of child behavior, also the coaches rated the child's behavior, and then the children filled out a questionnaire. As predicted, parental support was positively correlated with child enthusiasm. Performance outcome goals and directiveness showed curvilinear associations. The only difference concerned modeling where mother modeling was positively correlated with child enthusiasm for both boys and girls. These results are consistent with the achievement literature investigating the relationship between parent behavior and children's motivation and enjoyment. Children with the greatest level of enthusiasm for the sport had parents who were supportive and provided moderate levels of performance pressure and instruction. However, this relationship may be bi-directional: Parental support may lead to greater enthusiasm by child which leads to increased support from parents and so forth. However, this study was limited by only using one measure. For future research Scanlan and Simons (1989) suggested combining self-report with observational measures, and following the child and parents over time. Also, children of different ability levels should be studied, as well as different sport activities. Another possibility is to study social class and ethnic differences.

Parental involvement is also associated with higher levels of self-esteem, and excessive parental pressure is positively correlated with a child's negative self-evaluation. Parents are important in shaping children's belief about personal competence. Leff and Hoyle (1995) studied adolescent tennis players who evaluated their own perceptions of their parents' involvement related to tennis, their enjoyment of tennis participation, their self-esteem, and burnout with tennis participation. Parents supported both males and females at similar levels. Although the females felt they received a higher level of support from both parents. Females felt there was equal pressure from both parents, whereas the males felt there was more pressure from their fathers than from their mothers. Parental support was seen as positive and was related to enjoyment of tennis participation and self-esteem for both females and males (Leff & Hoyle, 1995).

A study by Faucette and Osinski (1987) looked at how children viewed winning and losing and how it affected their feelings. Overall, children felt that winning was important to their parents and that they were liked more by their parents when they won. This evaluation, that comes from adults in sport, can be a source of stress for children. Here again we see how parents can affect their child's enjoyment in sport participation.

“According to Rosenberg (1979), individuals seek similarity between their own judgments and those of significant others [parents]” (McElroy, & Kirkendall, 1981 p. 244). Parents who estimate their child's ability unrealistically high, may lead their child to see themselves as a “failure” if they do not meet the high standard. There may also be a conflict if the child evaluates their own sport ability higher than they feel their parent's evaluation to be. If this is the case, the child questions why their parents are not more supportive in their sport involvement. Perceived parental judgments that differ from the

child's self-evaluations may decrease the child's self-esteem. To test this hypothesis, McElroy and Kirkendall (1981) compared self-esteem scores of those with consistent parent/child perceived ability judgments to those who differed on parent/child perceived ability judgments. Boys who saw a difference between their parents' ability judgments and of their own ability judgments scored significantly lower on self-esteem when compared to boys with ability judgments consistent to their parents'. It was the same for females. The results from this study supported the social conflict issue that when children's perceptions of their sport ability differs from their parents' it can lower self-esteem, which in turn affects enjoyment.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The research that has been reviewed suggests that parental involvement in youth sports is more complex than can be understood through only quantifiable terms. Hence, the importance of using a mixed methodology, that includes a strong qualitative component. Csikszentmihalyi states, “Family dynamics and their influence on the attitudes and actions of youths have often been overlooked in large data sets with nationally representative samples because of the difficulty of identifying, isolating, and measuring the most critical components of family interaction.” “. . . It is important to capture the family experience as each adolescent perceives it.” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 114). But this also includes capturing how parents perceive family experience. Several of the studies have emphasized the need for the use of longitudinal and qualitative methodologies, such as interviewing and observation (Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988; Wankel & Kreisel, 1985). The study herein provides intimate knowledge to bridge the gaps we have yet to fill as researchers of parental involvement and youth sports. Thereby, using the questionnaires and interviewing provide a new depth of understanding of the experiences and context of these young athletes (Merriam, 1998).

Data Collection

The Participants

Questionnaires and follow-up in-depth interviews were used to investigate the three research questions of this study.

1. How do adolescents experience their participation in soccer?
2. How do adolescents experience family dynamics of support and challenge?
3. What are the family dynamics, as expressed by parents and teens through interviews, that are related to challenging and supporting their teen athlete?

The participants were drawn from approximately 40, 14 and 15 year-old females and males who played soccer for the Roanoke Star Traveling Team. The Roanoke Star Traveling Soccer Club members are young athletes who try out every spring for a team in their age group. Usually, the age groups are divided by two years, e.g. under-10 age group, under-12 age group, etc. The teams are constructed in the spring with a short spring season, but the main competitive season is in the fall, when most of the traveling takes place. The Roanoke Star teams play teams from Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and other states. The young athletes and their families travel on the weekends to games and tournaments. Tournaments usually consist of several games in a weekend, and involve teams from all over the United States.

Membership in the Roanoke Star Traveling Soccer Club involves yearly dues, as well as additional fees for tournaments, and travel expenses such as food and hotel accommodations. There usually is a strong commitment from not only the athlete, but from the parents, including attending two to three practices a week and playing games most weekends.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, adolescence has been identified through research as the age most children drop out of sports. The teens I chose to study provided insight into a unique group who have not dropped out. Through the questionnaires and interviews with both the parents and teens, I identified and clarified the most critical components of family interaction related to teens continued involvement in soccer. I think soccer is an important sport to study at this present point in history due to the ever-increasing involvement of youth participating and the growing popularity of this particular sport in our country. My knowledge and background of this particular sport enhanced the study, as well as added depth to the analyses.

Measurements

The three major sources of data for the study included: (a) An adaptation of the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) questionnaire; (b) The Support/Challenge Questionnaire (SCQ); and (c) In-depth interviews with eight adolescent soccer players and their parents.

Experience Sampling Method

Over the course of twenty years, Csikszentmihalyi and colleagues have sought to capture people's subjective experiences as they interact in their natural environments through the use of the Experimental Sampling Method (ESM) (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). Typically, respondents are equipped with a pager or preprogrammed wristwatch and are signaled randomly a number of times each day. Each time signaled, the respondent completes a questionnaire. The ESM questionnaire captures the experience by using point scales (ranging from 7 to 10) of challenge and skill which provides a description of cognitive and affective states of the participant in relation to the

activity. Seven variables are used to measure the quality of the experience respondents report while in these activities: Level of concentration, enjoyment in the activity, feelings of happiness, feelings of strength, the extent to which the person wishes to be doing the present activity, level of self-esteem, and the extent to which the person sees the activity as important to future goals.

The unit of analysis in most research using the ESM is the person, not the response. This is achieved through calculation of each person's mean response to any given item across the multiple forms. For the purposes of this study, the ESM procedure, questionnaire, and unit of analyses were modified greatly to capture the adolescent's subjective experience related to participation on a traveling soccer team. The participants answered the modified ESM questionnaire only once rather than multiple times. The collection of the questionnaire data was not random but collected by the researcher at the conclusion of a game at a soccer tournament. The questionnaire was shortened and specified playing soccer as the main activity to be described (Appendix A). In essence, the soccer players were asked to provide a reflective and more general description of their subjective experience as related to playing soccer.

This questionnaire allowed me to access the participants' affective and cognitive experiences of playing soccer. One sample question included asking the participants to "think back over the soccer season and whether soccer has felt more like play, more like work, like play and work, or neither play nor work." I asked the participants to think back over the previous season because I am looking for their general feeling of soccer, versus asking them to think about the last practice or game. I feel that if I asked them if their last game or practice was more like play, more like work, or like both work and play, the

context is more situational. This could alter their feelings of soccer depending on whether they won or played well, or had a tough practice. Other questions included, “How well were you concentrating?”, “Were you living up to expectations of others?”, and “Did you feel in control of the situation?” The participants were also asked their feelings in regard to the challenges of soccer over the past season, and their skill level in relation to soccer over the season. This questionnaire data was ultimately used as a descriptive measure of the experiences of the participants in relation to soccer.

Support/Challenge Questionnaire (SCQ)

The second source of data was the Support/Challenge Questionnaire (SCQ) originally developed for use in the study of talented teenagers (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen;1993) and expanded for use in a national longitudinal study of adolescents reported in Becoming Adult (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). This thirty-two item questionnaire (Appendix B) measures the supportive and challenging aspects of an adolescent’s family environment separately on an “agree” or “disagree” scale. Items were designed to assess family dynamics as a whole and included both positive and negative aspects of challenge and support. Examples of the four types of statements follow: “We enjoy playing competitive games” (positive challenge); “We have few interests and hobbies outside of the home” (negative challenge); “No matter what happens, I know I’ll be loved and accepted.” (positive support); and “The only time I’m noticed is when there is a problem.” (negative support).

The developers of the questionnaire report that although they found a strong correlation between the support and challenge indices, the analyses of their findings indicated that the indices appeared to measure different family characteristics

(Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). Responses on the SCQ were split at the mean to create four family typologies: (a) High Support/High Challenge, (b) High Support/Low Challenge, (c) Low Support/High Challenge, (d) Low Support/Low Challenge.

Distribution of the adolescents studied in the national longitudinal study were HS/HC, 45%; HS/LC, 11%; LS/HC, 14%; and LS/LC, 30% (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000).

The SCQ was used in this study to ascertain the adolescent soccer player's participation of their family dynamics of support and challenges. Their affirmative responses to the positive support items and to the negative support items were summed. A total family support score was computed by subtracting the sum of the negative items from the sum of the positive support items. The same procedure was followed to determine the Family Challenge Score. The Family Support scale has 11 positive and 5 negative items. In Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) study of adolescents in Becoming Adult, the scores on the support scale of 5.5 or higher were classified as High Support and scores of 5.4 and lower was classified as Low Support. The Family Challenge Scale has 12 positive and 4 negative challenge items. Scores of 6 or higher were classified as High Challenge and scores of 5.9 or lower were classified as Low Challenge. Distribution of the adolescent soccer player's scores were computed. The anticipated distribution was not achieved, therefore eight adolescents and their parents representing the most diverse scores on the support and challenge scales were selected for the follow-up interviews.

However, for the purpose of this study, the most varied scores were used, and the means for the scales were adjusted to fit the four-family typologies. Each adolescent who

was categorized in the High Support group, scored 8 or higher. Although, the only deviation was Henry, who rated an 8 on the support scale but was categorized as High Challenge, Low Support. This was strongly debated, but his rating was the most varied in relation to the difference between High Support and High Challenge for males.

Adolescents who rated 4 or lower were considered in the Low Support category, again with the exception of Henry; who rated an 8. Ratings of 6 or higher were classified as High Challenge, with the exception of Leslie who rated a 6 and Scott who rated an 8 on Challenge. Again, it was determined that their ratings varied enough to be assumed in a different category. Ratings of 5.9 or lower were classified as Low Challenge. (Please see Table 3 on p. 40).

It should be noted when determining the classification of the ratings, the descriptive data from the Experience Sampling Questionnaire was taken into consideration, particularly the question reporting whether soccer was more like play, more like work, like both, or like neither. Other descriptive data was used as well including the enjoyment question pertaining to the adolescents' experience of soccer.

Interviews

The third method of data collection was in-depth interviews of the adolescent soccer players, as well as their parents. I interviewed the adolescents individually, and the parents were interviewed together, except in the case of a single parent. These interviews were audio-taped. One male and one female, and their parents, from each of the four typologies were selected to participate in in-depth follow-up interviews.

Based on the findings of the national, longitudinal study of adolescents reported in Becoming Adult (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000), my interview questions covered

four main areas. These four main areas have been found to reveal important aspects of family dynamics that differentiate among families that were either high and low on measures of both support and challenge. These areas include: (a) Family Interaction, (b) Expectations, (c) Communication, and (d) Clarity of goals and beliefs.

The same interview questions were used with the adolescents and their parents (Appendix C). The teen's and parents' responses enabled me to understand how the participants experience the dynamics in their family in general and more specifically as related to the teen's participation in soccer.

Questions related to communication explored the frequency, breadth and substance of the communication. An example included, "How much time, on average, do you think you spend talking or communicating with your parents/ adolescent over the course of a week?" "What type of things/subjects/issues do you talk about with your parent/ adolescent?" And, "Are there certain things that you talk with your parent/adolescent about more in-depth, or in more detail?" Respondents were asked what they expect of one another in general, and about expectations in relation to soccer to determine overall family expectations. Questions to assess family interaction included asking about the frequency of joint activities and teen's time alone; examples of shared interests and passions; and how much time is spent involved with soccer. The level of responsibility parents take in rearing their child was assessed through questions that determine the extent and clarity of plans, beliefs, and goals for their child. I followed-up on unclear responses to the questions with further probes and second interviews were not deemed necessary.

The interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient to the teen and the parents. The teen was interviewed alone, and, when possible, the parents were interviewed as a couple. The interviews were between 45-60 minutes in length and were audio-taped for transcription by the researcher. The transcriptions were also checked for accuracy by the researcher. Participants were given the option of keeping the interview tape after full transcription was achieved by the researcher. If they chose not to keep the tape, the tape was destroyed. No participant chose to keep the tape. It was also presented to the participants that they could have access of a summary of the results after the conclusion of the study. The identity of the participants was held confidential, and pseudonyms were used. The researcher reflected on her own feelings, thoughts, and experiences throughout the study by keeping a reflection diary and field notes on important contextual variables.

Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. The questionnaires and audio-tapes were placed in a locked file cabinet.

Procedures

Access to the specific age group teams and participants was completed through contact with the Director of the Youth Soccer Organization of the Roanoke Valley. My brother was Assistant Director two years ago and through his connections I was allowed access to teams and parents. I have also been involved with the organization through volunteer coaching of the female soccer teams. Having a strong background of soccer in Roanoke assisted me in conducting this study.

I attended a practice session for the male and female Under 15 soccer teams. At the practice I explained the study, handed out assent forms and consent forms within an

envelope to be delivered to their parents. I introduced myself and the study by stating, “I am interested in learning more about parental involvement and youth sports. I am specifically interested in the experiences of the athletes, and how they describe their parent’s involvement.” I then sent home a consent form for the parents, as well as an assent form for the athlete in a closed envelope to read over and sign if they agree to the terms and bring back to the following practice or game. The assent and consent forms (see Appendix E & F) listed my telephone number so they could call me if they had any questions. A cover letter explained the purpose of the study and gave directions on when and where to return the forms.

The Roanoke Star Soccer Club puts on a tournament every fall to end their season. This year the tournament was the weekend of November 16th and 17th. I administered the questionnaires during that weekend, when most of the teams were gathered together. It was a very cold and rainy day. The threat of the tournament being called off was high. Usually tournaments start Saturday morning and end sometime Sunday afternoon or evening, depending on whether your team makes it to the finals. However, this particular weekend’s weather was so bad, they called the games early, and terminated the tournament by Saturday afternoon.

I was given a schedule of the games and the places they would be playing. The male team was playing at a field in Salem, and the girl’s team played their games in Vinton. If you know anything about Roanoke, these two fields could not be farther apart. I woke up at 6:00am to make it to the girls’ 8:00am game. Since the weather was so bad, the girls and parents asked if I would come back to the second game to pick up the forms since they wanted to fill them out in their cars, where it was dry. I then trekked across

town to the Salem fields, to catch the male players and their parents. I caught the male team warming up, and had each one fill out the assent forms, and questionnaires underneath my small umbrella. I then tracked down the parents waiting, not only for the game to start, but literally “wading” in mud up to their ankles. I had each one of them fill out a consent form. Beth, the team’s manager, also helped gather the forms that had already been filled out at the practice the week before. Interestingly, more males remembered to fill out the forms than the females. After retaining the questionnaires and forms from the male players and their parents, I went back to the field where the females were playing their second game. Most of the players forgot to fill out their questionnaires in the car in between games, and had to go ahead and fill them out after the game.

One particular girl came up to me and told me, “My mom won’t let me participate.” I looked surprised, and replied, “I’m sorry, is there something I could talk to her about, or something you may have a concern about?” She then replied, “No, I would like to be involved in the study, but my mom has a problem.” I then asked for her to point her mom out to me. I went over to her mom, and introduced myself. I politely told her I was interested in becoming a better researcher, and was curious as to any problems or concerns she had with her daughter filling out the questionnaire. She said, “It has nothing to do with your questionnaire, it has something to do with me and my daughter.” I probed a little more, and she responded, “I am trying to teach my daughter a lesson.” This is what I understood from the mother’s explanation. She explained that her daughter was filling out the questionnaire in the car, and she [the mother] had a question to ask her daughter about how she answered one of the questions. Her daughter did not want to tell her what she put down for her answer, thus starting the issue of the daughter not being in

the study. However, the mother proceeded to talk to me for quite a bit longer expressing interest in the study.

I scored the questionnaires according to Csikszentmihalyi's model. However, the means from his model did not adequately diversify the scores reported from my participants. Thus, the discussion involving myself and Dr. Sawyers, led to the modification of the means to try and capture the most diversified scores. Together, we identified the 8 participants for follow-up interviews that we felt fit into each category according to their scores from both questionnaires. I contacted these families to arrange for a follow-up interview. Data collection began in November, when participants were involved in the end of their soccer season, and concluded by the end of January.

Data Analysis

Question one was answered by analysis of the adolescent's responses to the modified Experience Sampling Method questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were computed for the 20 males and 20 females. However, due to some incomplete and non-returned questionnaires, only 10 females fully completed both questionnaires, and only 11 males fully completed both questionnaires. Question two was answered by the analysis of the adolescent's responses on the Support/Challenge Questionnaire. Again descriptive statistics were computed. The responses to the follow-up interviews with eight of the adolescents and their parents were coded by completing a qualitative constant comparative method. In this constant comparative method, four themes identified in the Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) study, (a) family interaction, (b) communication, (c) expectations, and (d) goals, were highlighted, as well as any additional themes that emerged from the data. Each of these themes was compared to the other interviews. For

example, of a within group comparison I compared the male interview of the High Challenge /Low Support group themes to the female interview in the same group HC/LS and compared the themes to assess gender differences or similarities. However, I also compared each group HC/LS, HC/HS, LC/ LS, and LC/HS to each other to assess the differences and similarities among themes across groups. Essentially there was within category comparisons, as well as cross category comparisons. This constant comparison established emergent categories, which were then collapsed into larger, presentable themes.

The final step in the data analysis involved comparing the data of the eight teens' responses to the two questionnaires, their responses to the interviews, their parent's responses to the interviews, and my field notes. This final analysis led me to identify, isolate and measure the most critical components of family interaction/dynamics as perceived by the adolescent soccer players.

Table 1

Summarized Description of Each Group

High Challenge / Low Support	High Challenge / High Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parents stress the need to develop highest potential -Sometimes excessively competitive, e.g. w/siblings -Adolescents may perceive parents “pushing too hard.” -Expectations may be too high -Parents may covertly show disappointment in reality of child’s potential which can lead to a sense of limited support felt by child -Adolescent may identify with parent’s expectations, but not share them as their own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parents expect responsibility from adolescent. -Learn new skills -Take risks in a secure environment -Parents listen with a nonjudgmental ear -Allow child to explore interests -Parents model for children -Family involved in outside activities -Clear sense of direction and how to reach goals -Each member concern for the well-being of others
Low Challenge / Low Support	Low Challenge / High Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parents are often absent -Less family interaction -Less communication -Goals are vague, e.g. “whatever direction the child takes is all right.” -Parents often answer questions about child with, “I don’t know.” -There is a lack of cohesion and spirit / hope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Parents emphasize “not wanting to push” child -Children even feel that they are “not pushed” -Communication stems around trust and respect -Communication is open and is experienced on a regular basis -Child may feel parents are “too involved” -Close-knit and warm family -Sometimes a lack of boundaries -Less purposeful towards future goals -Family offers stability and emotional support

Note. Information gathered by Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Schneider, B. (2000). *Becoming adult: How teenagers prepare for the world of work*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Chapter 4

Results

As reported throughout this study, supportive evidence points to the consistent idea that family dynamics play a key role in the physical, emotional, and psychological development of children.(Brustad, 1988; Kamm, 1998; Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider 2000). I will first chart the Support and Challenge scores of the 21 participants on a scatter graph. Secondly, another chart will display the scores from the Experience Sampling Method of the 8 subjects, specifically focusing on the questions pertaining to motivation, concentration, and enjoyment, describing each participants' level of "Flow." Lastly, similar to Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) study, several shared themes emerged across all families. For example, each adolescent participant stated that their parents want them "do their best in school, in soccer, in life, and to be happy and successful" (Moon, 2003). I also found that parents validated their adolescents' insight, reporting that they also want their children "to be the best she /he can be in life and in soccer, to be successful, to figure out what she/he is good at, and be happy" (Moon, 2003, p.1).

Although there may be similarities across families, there are also differences that surfaced around four main themes: (a) family interaction, (b) communication, (c) expectations, and (d) goals. The process of describing the experiences of the participants and their family dynamics will be broken up into the four quadrants discussed in the methodology section: High Challenge/High Support, High Challenge/Low Support, Low Challenge/High Support, and Low Challenge/Low

Support. The adolescents' experiences will be described first, followed by descriptions of their parental experiences.

Table 2

Summary of Adolescents' Experiences According to Family Typology in Relation to Soccer and Life in General				
	HC/HS	HC/LS	LC/HS	LC/LS
Family interaction	-parents involved in outside activities (volunteer) -mutual involvement (church)	-Parents less involved w/ soccer (not go to all games) -less understanding of what parent's outside activities are (speech thing, on some boards)	-with family a lot - parent drives teen to school, practice, games	-limited interaction -parents comes to certain games-not all -spends more time alone
Communication	-bi-directional -talk a lot in car -talk about current events -opinions validated	-parent tells child what they can do better -talk to dad more about soccer -talk to mom more about school and friends -parent questions what child wants	-family concerned about one another -real positive -open communication -talk every night	-very limited -no in-depth conversations -no communication about expectations -no set times to talk
Goals	-practice more -future-oriented goals -care about each other's goals	-to make commitments -friends are important to soccer -to play until H.S.	-parent doesn't push -advises -parent knows limits	-play until H.S. -does not set goals -parent does not influence enjoyment of soccer
Expectations	-knows what's expected -choice whether to play -desire to do well by teen	-not give up -to try hard -do well in school -money is talked about -to try and please parents	-high expectations, but not pushed -never tells child they expect more from them -has a choice to play or not	-play hard -not sure if they have a choice to play or not (soccer used as a threat sometimes)

Graph 1

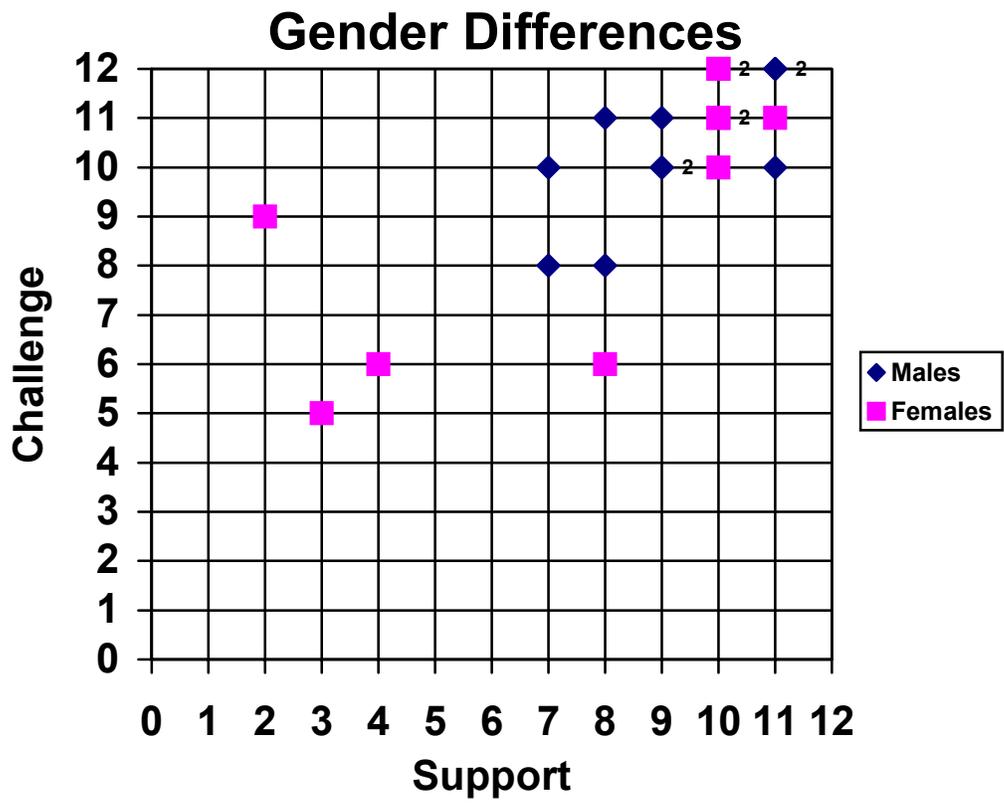


Table 3

Experience Sampling Method Chart of the Eight Participants

	Support & Challenge scores <i>Total S=11 Total C=12</i>	Motivation <i>1. Wanted to play 2. Had to play 3. Had nothing else to do</i>	Concentration <i>Rating range 0-9 0=low 9=high</i>	Enjoyment <i>Rating range: 0-9 0=low 9=high</i>	Soccer felt like... <i>1. work 2. play 3. both 4. neither</i>	Challenge & Skill <i>Rating range: 1-9 1=low 9=high</i>	Importance of soccer... <i>Rating range: 1-9 1=not at all 9=very much</i>
HC/HS							
Tracy	S=10 C=12	Wanted to play	6	9	Both, play and work	C=7 S=8	9
Robert	S=11 C=10	Wanted to play	9	9	Play	C=9 S=9	9
HC/LS							
Henry	S=8 C=11	Wanted to play	7	8	Both, play and work	C=7 S=6	6
Madison	S=4 C=6	Had nothing else to do	5	0	Work	C=7 S=5	5
Amanda	S=2 C=9	Wanted to play	5	7	Both, play and work	C=5 S=4	5
LC/HS							
Scott	S=8 C=8	Wanted to play	6	9	Play	C=8 S=7	8
Leslie	S=8 C=6	Wanted to play	5	8	Both, play and work	C=7 S=7	8
LC/LS							
Elizabeth	S=3 C=5	Wanted to play	4	5	Play	C=6 S=4	7

Definition of Family Challenge and Family Support

Csikszentmihalyi (2000) describes these parental dynamics create the most optimal environment for “Flow” to occur. In “Do Students Care About Learning” (Scherer, 2002), Csikszentmihalyi discusses the definition of *Family Challenge*, which he states, “mean[s] high expectations, high standards, allowing the child a lot of independence, exposing students to new opportunities whenever possible”(p.16). Ideally these aspects will help cultivate independence and self-direction. The relationship is bi-directional, meaning challenge incorporates the expectations the child perceives family members have of her or him, as well as the motivation to carry out those expectations.

Family Support is defined as, “the responsiveness of the entire family unit”(Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider 2000, p.115). This includes the child feeling content in the home, spends time with family members, and feels appreciated and cared for.

Characteristics of children who are involved in a supportive family environment display happy, unconstrained, and emotionally charged experiences. As for challenging family environments, children exhibit determined, conscious, and future oriented behaviors that lead them to choose activities that promote these ideals. As Csikszentmihalyi summarizes, “When both of these conditions are present, children are more likely to confront their adult responsibilities with enthusiasm as well as competence” (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000, p. 116).

Examples of Each Category Conveyed by the Participants in their Interviews

High Challenge / High Support (Robert, Tracy & after interviews Scott)

Communication: With communication the important points to consider are the frequency, breadth, and substance of the information that is shared between parents and children. Any form of interaction between parent(s) and child will be a bi-directional relationship, meaning each will influence the other, particularly depending on different or similar personality characteristics. Here are a couple of examples from the interviews with Robert and Scott, which display positive communication.

Robert reported that he and his family talk about issues such as soccer, school, and current events. He has this to say about the amount of information he talks with his parents about, “I talk a lot about soccer and school. More than they probably want to hear [laugh].” Scott’s parents talk about how they call each other after school to check in with one another. This shows the two-way communication where the parents not only feel comfortable talking to their child, even just about daily issues, but the child feels comfortable initiating conversation too.

Family Interaction: This involves looking at the amount and shared involvement among family members. This includes being aware of common interests and level of joint activities. Robert’s mom discusses how she is involved with soccer such as being the manager of his team and helping out with Olympic Development Program. Both Scott’s parents, as well as Robert’s parents talk about the importance of Church. Both boys belong to a youth group, and participate with the family in Church related activities. Tracy discussed spending a lot of time with her family. One particular activity that she is involved with her family includes working out together every day.

Expectations: Scott’s parents have this to say about expectations, “We want him to be the best he can be and set goals to enhance opportunity. We expect him to do well in school, have values, and handle his money wisely.” Robert has this simple statement about his parents expectations, “Cs are not acceptable.”

Goals: Tracy talks about the importance of setting “reasonable goals,” but she also gives this example, “I try to push myself, like go a little bit farther. Like running, everything relates to running [laugh]. If I am going 1 mile and I am at 2 and then [mile] 3 is only 7 more laps around the track, it just depends on how I am feeling, . . .”

High Challenge / Low Support (Henry, Amanda, Madison)

Communication: Henry presented the idea that soccer seemed to be the only in-depth subject he talks with his parents about. In the interview his mom mentions that his dad is not as hard on Henry as he use to be. His dad responds by stating, “I will tell him he should have done this or that.”

Family Interaction: Madison discusses that her parents are involved in her soccer almost the same amount she is involved. When I asked her how much time she spends away from the family during the weekends she reported, “48 hours.” She talked a lot about the importance of her friends, and spending time with them.

Expectations: This is an interesting point to be aware of in particular with Madison’s parents in their presentation of what they expect of their adolescent in the future. For example, Madison’s parents have this conversation:

Mom: I hope there is a fit somewhere [laugh]. Waitressing or something.

Dad: That is what I am thinking [laugh]. She would be a wonderful waitress.

Mom: She is not the most motivated student I have known, that is why I am thinking, ‘Oh God.’

In Amanda’s interview she expressed the knowledge that her father wanted her to play a different position on the soccer team, but she felt comfortable with the position she is in right now. She has this to say, “My dad always asks me if I should play offense and all that stuff, but I like defense and that’s where I want to stay. That’s the only thing that bothers me.”

Goals: Henry discusses throughout the interview about, “not wanting to be the best soccer player, but above average.” However, his dad has this to express, “I have tried to get Henry to do Olympic Development Program.” Which the mom reports that Henry did not want to do ODP. This is an example of parents having expectations or goals that may not fit with the adolescent.

Low Challenge / High Support (Leslie)

Communication: I sensed a lot of caring and warmth for one another between Leslie and her father. Well-being of all family members were expressed in the interview. For example, Leslie was the only interviewee that said anything about asking how her dad was doing when she got home from school. There also seems to be a lot of interaction, including the dad taking her to and from school, and to and from practice, and to and from games, including tournaments. Another point that struck me was that there are many opportunities for communication, which is utilized consistently. For example, Leslie mentioned that she and her dad talk every night. She even reported that he turns down the TV when they talk, showing interest in what she has to say.

Family Interaction: Again, it is expressed that a lot of time is spent with one another. It appears that there is a mutual interest in spending time with each other.

Expectations: Leslie reports this about her dad's expectations, "He has high expectations, but he does not push them bad." She also reports that, "He never tells me he expects more because he knows I am always trying my best. He is proud of me, I can tell." Her dad has similar thoughts, "I am not a driving parent. I guess maybe I should be more than what I am, but I feel like they kind of choose their own way of course with some direction, with some prodding . . ."

Goals: As far as goals go, it was hard to determine by either Leslie or her father. In general this is what he had to say, "She is real interested in going to a four year college what she wants to do I do not know exactly. That remains to be determined by a lot of people once she gets to school. I stand behind her on that."

Low Challenge / Low Support (Elizabeth)

Communication: There was some limited communication among these family members. Overall Elizabeth reports that she spends about 1-2 hours talking to her dad the entire week including weekends. She also reports that there is really nothing that she talks to him in-depth about. She has this to say about their communication style, "When I feel like talking, he doesn't, and when he feels like talking, I don't [feel like talking]. Elizabeth's father talks about how the shy personality of Elizabeth makes it difficult sometimes to communicate.

Family Interaction: Elizabeth talks mentions that they do not spend a lot of time together. She states, "We eat dinner together sometimes." However, she does report that he comes to her in-town games, but no longer her out-of-town games anymore. He

expresses the idea that his children are adolescents and their interests have changed, and, “they’re not really into doing things with their dad.”

Expectations: He describes that when he does try to talk to her about expectations, “they are stormy talks.” He also reports, “I am not sure what she expects of herself.” She also responds to the same question with this answer, “I guess [he expects me] to succeed in whatever I do that’s good I guess?”

Goals: Elizabeth expresses an issue about goal setting in that they try to set goals as a family, such as buying new furniture. But she continues with this, “We set goals to buy furniture and stuff but that doesn’t ever happen [laugh], so that is as far as it gets.... We forget about them.” She also reports about herself that, “I just kind of do whatever comes along you know. I don’t really try to reach for something.”

High Challenge/High Support Families

ROBERT (HC/HS):

Robert is a 15-year-old white, male who reported both High Challenge (10) and Support (11) on the Support and Challenge Questionnaire. On the Experience Sampling Questionnaire he reported a 9 out of 10 on the enjoyment scale. He also reported on this same questionnaire that soccer was more like *play* to him. I interviewed Robert at his home in what appeared to be a separate seating area closed off from the rest of the house. He was dressed in UVA paraphernalia, including a hat and sweatshirt, and had been working on a school project most of the day. He was polite during the interview, often replying, “Yes Ma’am.” I also interviewed his parents in the same room after I finished with Robert’s interview. They were dressed casually also. The mom immediately mentioned that the kids had school off that day, and the dad was home sick for a little

while. He laughed, and stated that it was, “much more zoo-like here at home, so I left to go back to the office.”

Families are usually involved with each other, as well as with outside activities, such as with the church, extended family, and other community groups. For instance, Robert reports that his dad plays softball with their church, belongs to the Kiwanis club, and tutors at the Westend Center. The parents tend to lead by example as well. Robert father states, “[Robert] needs to get involved in a service type of project . . . , one it is important for college applications, but number two, it is important to just give back and have that experience of giving back.” Both Robert’s mom and dad also do Meals on Wheels monthly. As far as family experiences and soccer, both Robert and his parents report spending a lot of time with soccer, particularly on the weekends for games and tournaments. Robert’s mother is the soccer team manager, and Olympic Development Program (ODP) administrator. Mom reports, “I usually do not do anything, I just do ODP stuff and soccer stuff.”

Communication in High Support/High Challenging families is more open and occurs more frequently. For example, Robert states, “[we] usually talk in the evenings at dinner, and we talk a lot in the car back and forth from soccer.” When Robert describes what he talks to his parents about, issues include, "soccer, school, whenever I have a question, what happened during the day, what’s going on, current events sometimes.” There appears to be a variety of issues Robert and his parents communicate about, including a two-way communication, where he feels he can talk to them, as well as they can talk to him. However, Robert’s father mentions this statement in the interview, “He [Robert] talks to her [mom] more than he talks to me. I don’t know why.”

In relation to soccer, Robert's parents describe their behavior at Robert's soccer games in the following dialogue:

Dad: Beth yells.

Mom: Yeah I do yell, but I also sit all the way over on the end zone by myself or with another mom.

Dad: I have mellowed.

Mom: Yeah, Matt started out yelling, but has mellowed.

Interviewer: How long would you say you have been mellow?

Mom: [laugh] Now wait a minute, sometimes you can be mellow, but sometimes you are not always.

Dad: It was a whole lot more intense when Robert was playing in the 10 or 11 year olds, about three or four years ago, and now his younger brother is playing. Yeah, now that C.J. is playing I go to his games, and he is such a different player. I have just kind of gotten over it.

His parents go on to talk about how Robert's younger brother is not as competitive as Robert, and seems to enjoy the game more. Robert's parents describe his behavior at games as being "too uptight" and "very competitive." This may reflect on how each react to one another in regards to different personalities.

Expectations and goals are clear. Robert replies, "They let me know about a whole lot more than I talk to them. Especially with school and stuff, and I know their expectations." There is also a sense of supporting individuality based on expectations, as seen in this quote by Robert's parents where his dad states, "I think he realizes the importance [of expectations]." This statement was followed by the comment from his mom, "I think he is just going to go on his own path to get there." In relation to soccer, Robert depicts what his parents expect of him in soccer, "They expect me to try my best. Um, this hasn't really been a problem, but they spend a lot of money and a lot of time.

They expect it not to be just something that you go out on weekends and screw around and not take it seriously, they want to see me do well.”

As far as goal setting, Robert talks about a conflicting situation with school and soccer. He states, “I would like to stay in governor school, it is a whole lot of work. I am not sure if I am going to have time for it actually, and I want to keep up with soccer.” In the interview, he was then asked if he would have a choice on whether he decided not to do governor school, and he replied, “Yeah, they [parents] would let me decide because they know I am not giving up soccer. I know they would like me to stay in governor school.” As far as enjoying soccer and his families involvement, Robert states, “I am grateful that they drag me around and put as much time and money into it as they do. Because, I mean if they did not pay all that money, then I would not be doing it, but as far as sheer enjoyment of it [soccer], it comes from me.”

It is interesting to note that Robert’s expectations of himself appear higher in soccer. He discusses his goals of wanting to play Division I soccer in college, play professionally, and possibly for the national team. His parents are quoted saying, “I think his expectations of himself in soccer are a whole lot higher than what we expect of him.” But as far as expectations in school, Robert states, “I think they expect a little more of me, but I guess that is just natural.” He discusses the reaction from his parents that occurred when he got a C on his report card. “C’s are not acceptable, and I had to find out the hard way. My dad was really mad and threatened to not let me go to a soccer tournament that weekend. My coach called and talked my dad into letting me go to the tournament. Then my coach gave me a talk about keeping my grades up [laugh].”

As seen from the excerpts from the interviews with Robert and his parents, several things appear important in the category of High Challenge and High Support family dynamics. Some of these include the large amount of time spent together, specifically around soccer, the openness and frequency of communication, which allows for the opportunity to discuss expectations, and the goals that are set which reflect future orientation.

TRACY (HC/HS):

Tracy is a 15 year-old, white female. Tracy rated her family high on both Support (10) and Challenge (12) on the Support/Challenge Questionnaire. She also described her soccer experiences as *both work and play*. She reported a rating of 9 out of 10 on the enjoyment for soccer scale. According to the family, they had very little time, and could not schedule a time for a face-to-face interview, so our interview was completed over the phone. I interviewed her parents first on a Monday, and then called Tracy on a Wednesday night, right after she got home from volleyball practice. Tracy's father works out of town every other week, so this scheduled time on the phone was critical in order to interview both mom and dad at the same time.

Both Tracy and her parents seemed to display a sense of confidence. When I first spoke with Tracy, she immediately reports, "All three of us [she and her two siblings] play soccer, most of our time together as a family is related to soccer." When they are not involved with soccer, she reports that her family goes to the local gym and works out together and enjoy boating and water skiing during warm weather. When discussing the amount of time she communicates with her family, she states, "probably 5 hours a week, because we talk a lot, I am pretty open with them. Mom works at school so

she knows everything that is going on so we can talk and she knows what I am talking about.” She mentions that she communicates less with her dad due to his out-of-town work schedule. When asked when she tends to talk with them most, she reports, “ in the car a lot on the way back from things.” She also mentions that she feels comfortable talking to them about anything. When it comes to soccer, she states that her parents, “don’t pressure me . . . [but they ask] how I am playing, and they are always asking if I would like to do this in college or what that status is and how far I want to go with this.” When asked what her parents behavior is like at a game, she talks about how they get excited, but are not “trash-talkers.” She talks about how her mom was her coach when she was younger, and so she [mom] understands “the coach has pressures too and you [parents] do not need to be coaching his team.”

Tracy talks about her parents’ expectations as well as her own expectations, “they expect me to do my best.” And “I expect to go all out. Just if I am happy with it, cause I know I won’t live up to what they want. But as long as I am happy and I know my life will not end if I did not make a goal or . . . I mean I push myself, but I am not sure yet if I want soccer to be like a life career. I have other goals too.”

When Tracy talks about setting goals, she states, “I will set a goal, but not too high of a goal . . . if you set a goal way too high then you don’t achieve it, you just disappoint yourself.” When she speaks of her parents setting goals for her, she relates that they have goals and expectations, but leave it up to her on finding how to be successful, as we see in this quote: “They just want to see me happy and successful and doing what I like. [They] do not really have any criteria for that as long as I am successful and happy

in my own right. They said they would support me in anything I decided to do if I ever decided to stop all sports and take up an instrument they would support that.”

Tracy reflects on her parent’s role in relation to how she experiences soccer by stating, “I think it is someone who comes and watches the games and you get to make someone proud.” Also in relation to parents, enjoyment, and soccer experiences, she offers this advice, “I guess the sideline yelling. I mean that can really just turn you off to soccer. You know you are in the middle of a game and your dad is yelling something you just get zoned out. You just want to get off the field if your father is cussing out the ref. So I think [parents need to] be more understanding that you are a spectator and there is a line you shouldn’t cross, you should enjoy watching the game . . .”

As seen in this interview with Tracy, she expresses her individuality and independence in setting goals, but at the same time understands her parents’ expectations. There is a sense of a drive to be successful, however, how she achieves that is left up to her. You also get a sense the depth and breadth of communication in her family, as well as the respect for different opinions that is expressed within this family. Tracy talks about a current issue that happened at school, “If there was something that went on at school and I feel really strongly about it I can talk to them about it. Last week a kid at our school committed suicide and so we talked about that for a while.”

It is reflected in the parents’ interview how much support and time they devote to their children. When asked what activities the two of them do outside of the home, the mom replies, “I have zero time.” The dad validates that statement with, “Yeah my wife has no hobbies, her family is her hobby.” However, the dad’s activities include running and playing racquetball.

In this dialogue, the parents discuss what type of things they talk to Tracy about:

Mom: Boys, definitely, and school, soccer, uh a lot of social stuff. See our house is very social, we have kids here all the time, so we know who all of her friends are.

Dad: And we are always talking to them about character issues, like what is right and wrong, we argue all the time about, you know which is healthy arguing.

Mom: [We talk about] things that are in the newspaper and someone will bring it up and we will discuss it, or something that happened in school that was a real issue.

Dad: No one in this house keeps their opinion to themselves.

These statements are similar to the points Tracy made in her interview, describing open communication, respect for different opinions, and the breadth of their connection. Expectations are expressed as well, such as in this statement made by Mom, “How are they suppose to know what you expect of them if you don’t [talk openly with them about the expectations]”. She also expresses this idea about expectations, “We do not have unrealistic expectations. It is sort of like we know our kids potential.” Dad adds his perspective on expectations by stating, “Good grades, and I do not like anything lower than a B, and if they start sliding below a B, then maybe we are doing too many outside activities.” As these excerpts suggest, there is a sense of “we-ness” that is emulated from this family’s conversation. The father makes a statement very similar to the philosophy of Ckiszentmihalyi in that he feels his children should, “find what you are interested in and pursue excellence.” This resonates with the philosophy of Flow in that, “To educate is to expose kids to many possibilities until they find a connection between what’s really important to them and the world out there. And then we must nurture and cultivate that connection” (Scherer, 2002, p. 17).

When looking at their participation in Tracy's soccer experiences, both parents talk about what they have learned over the years, having three children playing soccer. They have an older daughter, eighteen years old, who is about to play soccer in college. Dad reflects on how he *use to be* in relation to his children's soccer involvement, "I would say we were more serious about their soccer when our oldest one was 8 or 9 years old; I mean, at least I was. I would get emotionally involved with it, and it was ridiculous; I wanted them to do well. We burned out on living and dying with every game." Mom admits as well, "when we first got involved we were very exuberant parents, I was yelling on the sidelines do this, do that. I do not even talk anymore, I sit back in my chair and watch the game."

Tracy's view of her soccer experience as both work and play can be seen in her parents' description of how they as parents experience it.

Mom: We try to emphasize the positiveness of the game and not the negativeness.

Dad: but we emphasize playing hard too. . . We do like competitive teams and we like winning. Winning is good. It is not like they are totally participating for the fun of it. We want them to win. Winning is great and losing is not so great, and they are both parts of life.

Dad sums up his viewpoint he has about sports involvement in relation to the future by stating:

We have given up a good part of our life and time at this age when they are so busy so that they can do whatever they want to do. Frankly, it is good because it is a positive use of their time. Idled, bored teenagers get into things that are not so good things. So, it is quality of life stuff. He also states, the lessons you learn on the field apply to life and . . . preparation, hard work, practice paying off with

success. In a team sport like soccer, you have to learn how to work with other people and come together for a common goal. It is a blueprint for any goal in life.

High Challenge / Low Support

Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) discuss this family typology as putting success above everything else. Inordinately high expectations, goals, and competitiveness are conveyed to adolescent in an external, non-communicative manner. Adolescents who experience these family dynamics know what is expected of them, and although the adolescent may connect with their parents expectations in some way, there is still a sense that the expectations are not their [adolescents] own. With this being the case, some adolescents may choose to discard their parents' expectations altogether.

HENRY (HC/LS):

Henry is a 15-year-old male. Henry reported High Challenge (11) and Support (8) on the Support/Challenge Questionnaire. He also reported an 8 out of 10 in relation to enjoying his soccer experience. Henry has dark hair and slightly dark complexion, possibly with some Italian or Spanish descent in him. We conducted the interview in his living room, while his parents watched TV downstairs. Henry was a very willing participant, and talked more than most of the other participants.

Henry describes his family interaction time as revolving around sports a lot. Both he and his younger brother, age 10, play soccer for the Roanoke Star. And he reported that when he is not playing sports, he is watching sports with his dad. Although Henry reports spending a lot of time around sports-centered activities with his family, in general he states, "There is not a lot of time where we are all together because we are all running around. My mom works different hours during the week, and my dad has to stay over at

his job sometimes.” When asked about whether his parents participate in any activities outside of the home, he has this to say, “No, neither of my parents. My dad use to when he was younger, he is getting older now [laugh]. When he was young he was like me playing all kinds of sports. I guess that is why I am so much involved in sports now because of my dad and his love for it.”

Henry also distinguishes between summer and winter hours as far as how much time he spends alone or with friends versus how much time he spends with his family. This also affects the amount of communication he feels he has with his family, for example, “When it is light outside I am usually out with friends, like playing football, or riding bikes, or playing video games. . . , but now I usually come home and do homework and maybe go out for one hour.” He also goes on to report, “When it is brighter outside I am not usually here as much. The thing I hate is being inside, I would rather be outside and playing sports or with friends.” But when he and his family do talk, he states that it is usually in the car or at dinner. He also has this to say about communication, “Any time I am in the house I talk to my parents a lot. . . I don’t try to avoid it, it is just there, there aren’t certain times, just whenever you feel like talking.” There is also a difference between what he talks to his mother about versus his father, for instance, “[I talk] with my dad about sports a lot and my mom we talk about school a lot and friends.”

In relation to soccer Henry voices his opinion about his mom’s involvement:

She works a lot . . . There are certain times when I wish she was at my games more, but then there are other times when I don’t really want her at the games, especially when we lose really bad or something, it’s okay [if she is not there at the game]. You get to this age, you are taught to think losing is okay as long as

you played hard, but still everyone wants to win. It is hard or aggravating when mom wants to talk about stuff like that. . . You are there to win. It does not feel like it is okay, you just want to beat the other team.

It is interesting to note that Henry does not “buy into” the notion it is “okay to lose.” This shows how his mom is trying to be supportive, and often the coaches contradict what parents tell their kids, thus creating an almost “false praise” from the parents’ side of communication.

When asked what it is like with his dad when relating to soccer, Henry has this to say, “He tries to help, but he will say that I could do this better or you could do that better. I mean you did good at this, but this needs to be done better. I mean he is so involved with sports. He is big into it, he likes it a lot.” Henry also reports that soccer is really the only subject that gets talked about in depth. He describes his parents’ expectations of wanting him to practice more at home, and states, “They want me to be doing more practicing, more at home by myself. I mean I don’t mind running and practicing at home a little bit here and there, but I just don’t want to live soccer every moment, I want to do other things. I want to go out with my friends. . . and not have everything be about soccer.” He distinguishes a difference between his parents’ behavior at his soccer games, stating, “My mom is usually just the one to sit and talk with other moms. I think she sometimes just likes to sit there and talk more than watch the game. My dad talks to most of the dads and watches the games. If I am like on his side of the field he will say things to me. I mean he will not yell them out to everyone, but he will be like, try to do this better, or try to do that better, or if he sees something I don’t [like an opponent coming up behind me] he will let me know.”

Henry talks about the expectations his parents have for him in relation to soccer, as well as the expectations his parents have for him about life in general. “Travel soccer is not cheap, so my dad always tells me if I quit playing sports then it is not going to make him feel or think lesser of me. I don’t have to play just to make him happy. But he would rather see me in sports or in activities like sports than being out with friends all of the time. Because a lot of kids that are not in sports, it seems to me, they end up making worse choices. I have learned a lot ever since soccer since there are 10 other people out there on the field and you have to work with a team.” When he describes what his parents expect of him in general, he reports:

They usually tell me my future is what I make of it. They stress grades because neither one of my parents went to college. Everybody goes to college now, unless you really don’t have the desire. If you want to make any type of money you pretty much have to go to college. Anything that they have expectations of me they tell me, and if that is their expectation and I don’t meet it, I might get grounded. They don’t stress anything as much as grades. I always talk about getting these nice cars, but that is expensive, and [they tell me] we want you to be one of those people who work over the people who work at McDonald’s, and making good money and living the lifestyle you want to live.

It is interesting to note what Henry states about his own expectations in relation to soccer, “I don’t really try hard enough to be the best because I do not want to be the best. I don’t like being the center of attention. I want to be better than the average player, but not the person who is the best. People who know they are the best, they always have that attitude that they are the best, that you are not as good as them, and I don’t want to really

get that attitude [laugh].” This perspective also applies to his expectations in general, “I expect to make good grades. I just do the best I can and try to be above average, but not the best of everything.” Henry reports that he feels his parents expectations are similar to his, but differ in that, “I think that they expect me to be and do the best I can at all times, but they expect me to be or try a little bit better. They want me to try a little bit more to be a better soccer player than what I already am.” He also points to the idea that he thinks the amount of practice he does for soccer is enough, but that his parents do not think it is enough, and that he should be training more. When asked if he had a choice in whether he was involved in soccer or not, Henry had this to say, “Yeah, to a certain extent, like if they don’t think I am doing enough then they will let me know. I think the main reason for that is that they are paying thousands of dollars for me to be able to do this.” He also discusses the issue that his parents invest a lot of time too because of the location of practices which are all the way across town, so his parents usually end up staying at his practices. He also reports that his dad is probably more involved with his soccer because his mom works on the weekends, and also that his brother has games too.

When asking about future goals, Henry talks about possibly coaching after college in soccer or some other sport. He also states, “Being just above average, I would rather go to a small school and play soccer and if I could get a scholarship, rather than go to a big school and not play.” He also relates that his parents expect him to go to college too, for instance, “I know they want me to go to college whether it is with soccer or without. So a scholarship would be a way that would save money.” He expresses some of his goals include, “to be a starter on the [Star] team now, because starting on this team is getting harder and harder. Going to college on a scholarship is a goal, and I guess I want

the best grades I can get is a goal.” He mentions the issue of getting his driver’s license and that his parents have set the goal that, “If I am not making A’s and B’s they can’t pay a lot of money a month for insurance because insurance for teenagers is so high. Insurance companies give good student rates, so they are not going to let me drive if I can’t keep up with my school work.”

Henry reports on his parents’ role in whether he enjoys soccer by stating, “I think more like when they pressure me to do stuff, I seem to not like it as much because I am always thinking about soccer.” He also reports that his dad lets him choose the hotel they stay at when they go out of town for games. Henry reports, “I like to stay where there is a teammate because this is someone to talk to or hang out with, and if he [dad] did not let me choose I think it would be a lot less enjoyable.” When talking about parents in general when it comes to increasing enjoyment for adolescents, Henry offers this advice, “I think something that bothers a lot of players is when their parents start to yell when a ref makes a bad call. Which to a certain point, everybody is going to do that, but some parents will keep yelling out. [Laugh] Most of the time everybody knows whose parent that is. Sometimes you just want to go over and tell them to sit down and shut up. It kind of makes you feel weird, that is the biggest thing. It use to happen to me every once in a while with my mom, well usually my dad would say something. Not so much as anyone else’s parents, but still when you are on that side of the field and you hear him say something to the ref, it kind of makes you feel funny. Sometimes when we will be talking as a team, and that [parent’s yelling] comes up before. At home if they pressure you to do things at home, it kind of wears you down.”

Finally, Henry has this to say about open communication around expectations, “They [my parents] talk to me more I think about their expectations than what I talk to them about my own expectations. Usually my expectations I just try to achieve by myself without talking a lot about it, and just go out and do it.”

It is interesting to note that these excerpts from Henry’s interview convey these high expectations his parents have set for him. But that at times, he is reluctant to fulfill those expectations. One example is the issue of Henry going to college, considering neither of his parents attended college. It appears that he knows exactly what is expected of him, but he is not sure he totally buys into those expectations. Take the extra soccer practice time his parents would like him to participate in for example. He feels that he should practice more because his parents think he needs to, but at the same time, he enjoys being with friends and doing other things. This is also seen with school work, by this statement, “They [my parents] do not see the studying time. Studying is something I don’t like to do because I am sitting in one spot, I would rather be active and outside with my friends. My parents tell me if something were to happen to me and I got hurt, I need school to fall back on.”

It is also possible that Henry’s desire to be above average, but not the best, puts him in a position to experience Flow. It is possible that he is attempting to find the balance that works for him. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2000), if we allow children to make choices, then they will adjust and will get into Flow.

Let us now take a look at Henry’s parents’ perspective on these issues. Henry’s parents agree that they spend most of their time as a family doing soccer. However, there seems to be a conflicting point of view when it comes to describing the amount of time

they spend with Henry. For example his father states, “I would say [we spend] 2-3 hours a day with the homework, but Henry is getting more independent of course at his age. He spends too much time on the computer.” His mother follows up with this statement, “But also, he doesn’t go out with friends much like most kids do, he is here watching TV with us.” His mother also states that she talks with Henry mostly in the car, but also states, “here lately we talk a lot, we have gotten close. He had a friend die and he opened up. I think he really, you know, he talks a lot more.” Dad adds his perspective on what he and Henry talk about, “We are working on the basement and he will talk about how he likes to use his hands a lot and build stuff, and I talk to him about that because that is my line of work.” Mom also reports the difference between what each of them talk to Henry about, “I think he talks to his dad about sports, hunting, building, and cars. And we talk about friends, work, and school. Dad does the fun stuff, I do the scary stuff.”

His parents describe what they talk to Henry about in depth, the father first replies:

Dad: no, I wouldn’t say nothing in particular

Mom: Well, I talk to him a lot about his teacher and getting along with kids.

Dad: Yeah, I talk to him about that too. He use to be in the accelerated grade, and I think the peer pressure has put him in the point that he does not want to be in the ID program which he is very capable of doing. I told him if he wants to be on their level, but I think you need to excel in your grades because they will be the ones checking out McDonald’s and who will be laughing then? It is time to be serious about your studies. He seems to be realizing it, but he still has a long way to go with that, there is a lot of peer pressure.”

Mom and dad also have a dialogue about their communication to Henry about soccer:

Dad: I guess if he wants to be serious about it we want him to do some running on his own, personal training. Sometimes he will run, but he has to be pushed. We

have told him if he does not want to be in this elite field as a star with the traveling team he don't have to be. If this is where you want to be with the expense we are going through, it's not cheap, he needs to show more dedication towards it.

Mom: He has lost some of his drive I think, and that is what I talk to him a lot about. And two I talk to him about he is a good team player, but he just . . .

Dad: Too much of a team player sometimes I think.

Mom: no, the other boys stand around and talk, and he is not, . . .I am always worried he is not clicking or something.”

His parents go on to talk about how Henry feels different because he goes to a different socioeconomic school than the rest of his team. His mom backs this statement up with a quote, “He [Henry] told me one time, ‘I am not inviting anybody to my house.’”

You can also see the pressure Henry talked about in this statement made by his father about what they talk about in relation to soccer, “[We talk] probably on the way back and forth to practice and games, and I probably critique his game more than I should.” This reflects the mom’s attitude about Henry’s dad’s behavior at games, such as in this statement made by the mom, “I don’t like his [dad’s] behavior. [Sarcastically] Describe your behavior Vince.” This flow of dialogue points out the issue between the parents:

Dad: [My behavior at games] is a whole lot better than I use to be

Mom: Yeah, you are better.

Dad: I mean if I see that a ref missed a call, I will say, ‘Come on there are two teams out there.’ I am probably more vocal than I should be, sometimes I don’t say nothing.

Mom: It has caused a lot of problems.

Dad: I don’t yell any more than Mrs. B does [laugh]

Mom: I yell and cheer, but I never yell at a kid or at the ref.

Interviewer: What would you say is different now than before?

Dad: Just less of it

Mom: You are not as hard on Henry. Like letting a girl beat him, but that one time, he [dad] said to Henry, ‘you let that girl beat you!’”

Interviewer: So how did Henry respond?

Dad: He don’t ever talk about it.

Henry’s parents replied emphatically about communicating their expectations to Henry. Mom replies, “We do not expect any more than we think he is capable of, but we know he is capable of a lot. We know he is capable of A’s.” His father goes on to describe how Henry did very well on the SOL’s in science and math in elementary school, but has been bringing home Cs lately. He also discussed the same issue in relation to soccer, where Henry’s previous coach, ‘knew Henry was much more capable than what he was putting out on the field.’” This issue seems to come full circle when his dad reports, “I guess he doesn’t push himself hard enough sometimes. Henry needs a kick in the butt, he gets lazy.” This parental perspective is revealed in this dialogue between mom and dad:

Dad: we are probably more involved than most parents. A lot of times you see some kids travel with other kids and stuff, but we always go, one of us or both of us are always there. I enjoy watching him. I mean some of these other kids do Olympic Development Program (ODP) and get tired of doing soccer all the time. That is another thing, I have tried to get Henry to do ODP.

Mom: But he didn’t want to do it. See you didn’t understand that because it costs a lot of money and he knows that.

Dad: I just think he did not want to have to do all that training.

Mom: He could have done it.

The money issue is something that has been a consistent concern. Mom reports, “He [Henry] wasn’t even sure about playing this year because he did not want to be the only one not going to Europe. And I told him there will be a way.” When asked if Henry felt guilty about the money issue, mom replied, “Just aware of it.” When speaking of future soccer possibilities, Henry’s mom put it into these words, “A soccer scholarship is not why I want him to be doing soccer. I think he interacts with some really good kids and keeps him busy, and out of trouble hopefully.”

Again, we can see some of the perception that Henry’s parents “push” him because they feel he needs it. The push, however, appears to come strongly from the father. This is noted in the dialogue between Henry’s parents earlier about the conflict between their expectations of how they should be involved with Henry and his soccer. The question comes into play on whether that relationship has an effect on why Henry chooses to be just above average player or student. It is also displayed throughout the interviews that Henry sees other things important to be a part of too, such as being with friends, rather than practicing soccer all the time or studying all the time, which seem to be his parent’s expectations. It appears that these family dynamics include both challenge and support, but the challenging piece seems to overshadow the supportive piece.

AMANDA (HC/LS):

Amanda is 14 year-old, white female. I interviewed her in her home, in what appeared to be a dimly lit living room. She is the youngest of three girls. Her sisters are ages twenty and seventeen. Amanda is of small stature, and appeared shy during our interview. Amanda’s rating of a 2 on Support and 9 on Challenge on the SCQ, place her

in the High Challenge /Low Support category. She also experienced soccer as *both* work and play. She reported a 7 out of 10 for her level of enjoyment of soccer.

She reflects that her family spends time together on “vacations and going out to eat and stuff.” She also expresses that she spends a lot of time with friends on the weekends, stating, “sometimes I am gone from Friday afternoon until Saturday evening.” She also reports that she is involved with a carpool for soccer practices and games. When asked if her parents participated in any outside activities, she replies, “nothing sports wise, my mom is in the choir and the bells thing, and my dad is on some boards, but I don’t know what boards though.” This possibly conveys some type of lack of communication as far as the limited knowledge she has of her dad’s interests/activities. She also reports, like the other interviewees that she communicates mostly with her parents in the car, “mostly when they are giving me a ride to school or from ball practice and during dinner.” When speaking of communicating with her family, Amanda talks about conversations consisting of a here-and-now focus. She also reports, “I never really, like, say much. I just answer the questions they have.” She identified a variety of issues that she and her parents talk about including, “school, sports, and things on TV like the news.” Similar to the other teens interviewed, she talks to her dad “about more soccer stuff than with my mom. With mom more school stuff.” When she does talk to her dad, “He always asks me if I would rather be playing a different position, if I am getting tired of it [soccer], if I am happy, and if I like my coach.” She also states, “My dad seems always more into the game than my mom. I think he is just more interested.” She describes her parent’s behavior at games as encouraging, “they don’t try to coach me or

anything, just encourage people.” She reports that her father tends to stand while her mother usually sits at games.

When asked if they talk openly about expectations in relation to life and soccer, she replies, “Not really, basically they just make sure I am doing what I want to do. They never really tell me what they expect of me. They make sure I am doing well.” When asked for some examples, she refers to her parent’s comments such as, “How’s soccer? Was practice good? How’s school? They always make sure I do my homework, which is not always fun. They make sure I don’t spend too much time on the computer.” Amanda basically reported that she and her parents do not talk about expectations except for one time dealing with soccer. Here is what she had to say, “At the beginning of the season before try-outs I didn’t want to play because I was not happy with it [soccer]. They just encouraged me to give it a chance; we were getting a new coach. Just to try things and not give up on it.” When asked why she was not happy with soccer, she replied, “It was year round, it kind of took up a lot of time, but now it is only in the fall. It’s just easier and more fun.” Her parent’s expectations of her in soccer are to, “Try hard when at practice and games, have a good attitude, and good sportsmanship.” When discussing college, she reports that she would “rather choose a school for what it is based on what I want to do, not just based on soccer.” When asked about the enjoyment of soccer, Amanda responds, “I think I would be less interested if I didn’t play with my friends. Since we are all together it’s fun. Being serious, but not obsessed with it.” She uses an example with swimming, “I used to swim and I just got sick of it. My mom wanted me to keep doing it and I just quit because I didn’t like it. I think I felt forced to do it, but I don’t feel forced to play soccer.” However, she does include this point about relating to

her father about soccer. “My dad always asks me if I should play offense and all that stuff, but I like defense and that’s where I want to stay. That’s the only thing that bothers me.”

In this next section we can see how some of her parent’s expectations are integrated into her own expectations. The question asked to her by the interviewer was, “What type of things do you like to do?” Amanda replies, “My moms whole side of the family is into that medicine stuff, they are all doctors or physical therapists and stuff, so something like that, or I like art a lot. I like engineering and stuff like that, also law, that kind of thing.” It is interesting to note that most of these things Amanda listed are higher end type careers. When she speaks of expectations her parents have of her in life in general she states, “To do well in school, all the moral things, and just do what I like doing.” She also reports that she would like to go to college and find a job.

When interviewing Amanda’s parents, the dad immediately speaks of his pursuit to get his children involved in sports, including golf and tennis, but admits he has not been successful. He has this to say about his own interests, “My passion is just being outdoors. I like to fish, hunt, golf, you name it, I am outside doing it. Amanda likes a variety of sports. She is pretty good at what ever she does, she has great hand – eye coordination.” He also talks about how he and his wife both enjoy doing yard work, as well as travel. He states this about his wife’s interests, “Church, PTA, band, school in general, what ever is coming down the pike, she is the volunteer.”

He also reports that the, “best quality time I have with her is taking her to and from practice. . . car time is quality time.” He has this to say about the communication style they have with Amanda, “sometimes you get conversation, sometimes not. We try

to keep our kids involved with sports, keep them involved with church, youth group. We try to have a close eye on her friends.” When asked, the mom has this to say about talking to Amanda about issues in-depth, “That I would like to, or that actually happen.” The mom goes on to say, “I feel like I am trying to draw her out more than I have ever use to. She use to talk to me a lot. I think it is typical of this age, more independent, wanting more privacy. I ask probing questions, which they get real tired with. I try to pull back sometimes and not be so intense.” This supports the communication dynamic the father talks about in relation to the limited access and depth of communication. He goes on to report that his knowledge of soccer is minimal, therefore he does not “throw out” advice at games. He also admits that, “It’s [soccer] been great for us as a family because we travel with her and that’s quality time.” The next statement about communicating in more depth with Amanda seems important with how Amanda’s dad views her participating in sports /soccer:

The only thing that comes to mind is that Amanda is really talented and I am not sure, she can do anything she wants to do. You can’t give somebody that determination, dedication and heart. I try to inspire her. When I was in high school I clearly didn’t have the talent she has, and there wasn’t anybody that had more heart than I did. I played sports out of just sheer determination. I look at her and she has the talent, but I wonder about the determination. I wonder if she really wants to be doing it. In soccer she really seems to have that aggression and she loves the sport. And as I said earlier, I have tried to get her into tennis or golf, something more individual because she is just really talented.

As we saw in Amanda's interview, that she seems to resent the feeling of "being pushed", and therefore makes her own decisions based on what makes her happy, yet she still feels the pressure. This has been described by Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) as a family dynamic in the family typology of high challenge and low support. Amanda's dad continues to display concern over Amanda's low view of herself in soccer, "She never really gives herself any credit. That's what troubles me the most about her playing sports. She is always down on herself, like, 'I didn't do very well,' 'I didn't have a good game,' or 'I could have done better.' I don't know if that is good or bad." He goes on to talk about how Amanda seems to have higher self-esteem when it comes to school, "She doesn't think she measures up when she plays sports. It's kind of a contradiction in her personality because anything else she's not intimidated or questions her ability. We are not parents that push her in athletics. Some people try to push their kids I think because they are living through their children in athletics a lot of times, but we just let them decide what they have wanted to do and we try to support them." He continues to express this concern about Amanda when she loses a soccer game, "Amanda is not one to come home and dwell on it. I wonder what's going on inside her when they win or lose because she's not real outwardly emotional." He is also quoted saying, "I am extremely competitive, but I am not a great talent, I played sports only because I had the determination." Although Amanda's father expresses these concerns, it is interesting to see how he talks about wanting her to be involved in other sports, and what his experiences were like when he was in high school. Although he does not see that he is "living" through his child, his interview shows otherwise. This is a point to present that it may be hard sometimes to see the perspective of parental influences from the parents

themselves. This previous discussion by the father seems to be a contradiction that he feels he does not “push” Amanda, but on the other hand he discusses how he wants to decide what sports she plays and even what position she plays.

Amanda’s father has this to say about setting goals for her, “Things come easy for her academically and athletically. So we wanted her to be challenged. She is able to do a lot of different tasks at the same time. She can manipulate her schedule and her schoolwork so that she had plenty of extra time too. Things just come easy for her.”

Although this is the father’s perspective, in Amanda’s interview she discussed at one point not wanting to play soccer because of the amount of time it took up. Amanda’s

mother has this to offer about goal setting and expectations, “Number one, is that she is the only person responsible for her happiness. No one else is going to give her that.

Number two is to be able to set goals because I am not good at that. And you always want for your kids what you didn’t have. And number three, to do the best you can.” When

asked whether each of them thought Amanda’s expectations were similar or different

than theirs, the dad responded, “Good question. I don’t know. I really don’t know.” The

mother also responded, “I don’t have a clue. I think she wants to do well.” An interesting

point to tag onto the communication piece is what Amanda’s father says about their

communication style which is in agreement with what Amanda revealed in her interview,

“I think it is one way [communication]. Amanda is very private. We are picking out of

her what’s going on. I am her dad and she emotionally leaves me out whether it is boys or

whatever. I am not somebody she is going to be talking to about it.” This point is

important to consider when looking at communication between different gender parents

at this stage on life. Another perspective to consider is the different personalities of parents and children, and how each will influence interaction and communication.

When the mom was asked about setting goals, she stated, “It’s really hard. I think childhood has become so stressful. If they don’t make straight A’s- if they want to fine- but don’t get an ulcer over it. But then you have to look at why am I not doing it. What can we do to improve it. I don’t want to be pushy.”

He continues in the interview to describe their investment in her sport of soccer, which includes, a lot of time and money. But he also reports that although there is much time and money involved, “it has put her with a group of kids outside of her circle of friends, which is a good thing. Kids from other parts of town, kids from other schools, and it has been a very good thing for her to experience.” He also talks about Amanda’s learning experiences including, “understanding of fairness and team play, contribution, and self-discipline.” Amanda’s father shares his view on his role in whether she enjoys soccer or not:

Yes, because we are involved. We are always there. No matter what they are doing, whether it’s band, sporting events, church events, we are always there. She can look out in the audience and see us. When you have children you sacrifice for them. That is important because you only get one shot at it. I lost my dad when I was 13, my children are my world. Amanda is the baby, and when she is out of here it is going to be tough.

The mom’s perspective about Amanda’s involvement in soccer is this:

Oh yeah [we have a role in whether she enjoys soccer or not]. She’s heard comments from other parents on the sidelines, and they hate that. When parents

try to coach them, it confuses them. I really think it is recreation. Nobody can tell you what you should do with it, you have to be the one who learns what you want to do with it [soccer]. I would like to see her excel and maybe go to another [soccer] camp to learn more. I would like to see her work on her left foot more, she knows she needs to. We see a lot of potential in Amanda intellectual wise and sport wise.

As seen between the two parents, there are possible differences between the perspective(s) of the mom versus the dad. With these conflicting perspectives, it could potentially be confusing for the adolescent. This is an area that needs further exploration.

MADISON (HC/LS):

Madison is a 15-year-old, white female. I interviewed Madison at her mother's house, whom she lives with most of the time. Madison is a vibrant, enthusiastic girl, who seems to have a lot of nervous energy. She had a smile on her face during most of the interview. She has dirty blonde hair and blue eyes. Madison rated her family dynamics a 4 on the Support Scale and a 6 on the Challenge Scale. She reported that her soccer experiences felt more like *work*. She was the only participant to report a 0 on the enjoyment question. Our interview was conducted in the dining room. Madison's parents are separated, but her father came to the mother's house for the interview.

Madison initially describes spending more time with her mom, since that is who she lives with. She reports that she talks to her dad every night on the phone, and he takes her places when her mom cannot. She reports that her dad is in a "speech thing" and her mom is "in class for school right now." Her mom is taking classes to become a teacher. She also states that the car is usually where she talks the most to her parents. When asked

what she talks to them about she replies, “Cliques and who is dating who at school. We talk about that a lot. And my dad really gets into the soccer about who is not so good and stuff.” She states that they talk about soccer a lot when she has had a bad day and they ask her if she still wants to play. I asked her what her parents response usually is, and she states, “my mom usually takes me home from games, so I usually talk to her, but I would have to do something else if I didn’t play soccer. My dad would not let me just not do anything.” It is interesting to note the differences between the parents when asked about how they behave at games: “They cheer a lot. With the rest of the parents they get kind of obnoxious, not because they are trying to, but you can just hear them really loudly [laughing]. They are pretty encouraging usually. I don’t really look at my dad, my mom usually gets into it, but my dad claps a lot. I don’t think he really says that much.”

When talking about expectations, Madison suggests that there are different expectations between her and her parents with this statement, [do you talk openly with your parents about expectations?] “There are a few arguments we have like if I get a bad grade and I am really mad, we start yelling at each other.” As far as in soccer, she states, “[My parents want me] to do well. I don’t think they would tell me if I was doing bad, they usually point out what I do good.” [What do you expect of yourself?] I try to do good in school, and try to please them, is more of my goals.” As seen by this statement, she is interlocking her parents expectations with her own goals. She also reports that her expectations are different than her parents, particularly when it comes to soccer, “I don’t want to make a commitment. I’d rather do other things, and they definitely want me to do soccer.” When asked for an example, she reported, “If I have to do something like go to a

tournament and leave on a Friday night, and my friends are going to the movies, I'd rather do that."

She has this to say about her parents investment and involvement in her soccer, "[laughing] they put a lot of money into soccer, and commitment. There rarely are times when they can't get me somewhere. There have been times my dad had to go out of town and my mom had class, so my friend took me up. My mom would call and we talked about how I did and stuff. They have been pretty involved." She reflects on her perspective on how soccer is related to her future in this next statement,

I probably see it as something I will do up until I graduate [high school], but I am not sure I will play it in college or anything. I think my parents think I will be playing it for a while. My friends play, and you[Liz /interviewer] have interviewed like Amanda and Elizabeth, and our team is really close, so we wouldn't want to quit and lose that bond. We have had discussions about how we would rather be with our soccer friends than our school friends because it is all about cliques and stuff.

This statement appears to contradict what Madison talks about in the previous paragraph about "wanting to do other things" besides soccer, but then she states how she feels closer to her soccer friends.

In soccer her goal is more to do her best, "I know I am not always going to win, so my main goal is to do my best, and probably to do my best in life too." Her perspective on her parents' goals are, "to do well and make commitments." She follows with an example of the feedback she receives from her parents, "Usually I take a test and bring it home and show my mom. If I didn't do well, I explain why and if it is just

because of the studying then they are not happy, but if I know the material then she is not mad.”

She was then asked how she defined “doing her best,” and this is what she had to say, “I just have a feeling. We don’t talk about goals very much, it is usually just events that come up and we deal with it. I really enjoy soccer because of my friends.”

The last question dealt with whether her parents could do anything more or less for her to have a better experience with soccer, and she replied, “I don’t think there is really anything they could do, it is usually my coach. My parents are usually pretty supportive.”

The themes that stuck out for me when I interviewed Madison is that there is the strong push for commitment from her parents, however, Madison displays a different attitude towards commitment. This issue will be discussed further.

Madison’s mom also appears to be an energetic person too, whereas the father appears a little more quiet and laid-back. The mom first describes the lack of time for family interaction. She is currently taking classes to become a teacher, and this takes up a lot of time. She reflected that she sometimes feels guilty, but also sees it as an opportunity to be a role model for her daughters. The dad states that he usually spends time with Madison “watching TV, playing on the computer, and movies occasionally.” The mom expresses her outside interest in bridge and the dad “runs half marathons.” The parents seem to agree when describing the communication style they have with Madison, “There is a difference between communicating and trying to communicate [laughter from dad and mom].” The mom supports this comment with: “Trying to talk to her and communicating with her, like talking to her the way I talk with you and eye contact- she

does not listen. She is better than she use to be.” However her mom reports that there are, “times she just wants to talk.” Dad adds,

It depends on if her friends are around, there is no reception at all. Now if it is just she and her sister and me, then she will be very interactive, very animated, like a storyteller. But when she is with her friends, her communication style is almost different, it is more of a performance. I usually talk with her in the car or on the weekends.

Both seem to talk to her about a variety of issues such as school, friends, soccer, but her mom adds, “I am probably good about talking about things that are going on at school, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t, but I’ve tried.” The father describes the effort of trying to teach them about listening to the news, “I try to get them aware.”

Both the parents appear to agree in what they talk to her about in relation to soccer. Mom suggests,

We try to tell her that she has a talented team, she just doesn’t want to hear that. I don’t know if she goes in thinking the worst and then she is happy if it is not a disaster. I try to talk to her about attitude.

The dad follows with, “In the car sometimes before a game it is ‘woe is me’ and I will try to have a discussion with her about it, and there is no listening to that.” Both agree that her reception is much better when it is just the two of them together- whether it is with just mom or just dad.

The mom goes on to describe her behavior at Madison’s soccer games,

Mom: I make a lot of noise usually, but it is all positive, you know I yell and cheer. One time many years ago, she told me not to say anything.

Interviewer: [So did you guys discuss that?]

Mom: Yeah, but then she asked at another game if I was watching because she couldn't hear me. I then told her yeah, but that I was not to talk [laughter]. She just assumed if I was not yelling, I was not watching. She never complained again.

Dad reports about the same issue, "It's similar. 'Don't say anything dad,' but I will yell like 'nice shot.' I won't just say it to Madison, I will say it to anyone else on the team." They also agree on the issue of not talking to Madison after a game when she is walking off the field; mom reports, "She does not want the attention in front of her friends." The mom also reports that Madison will usually respond to conversation after the game with, "We hated the way we played, we are horrible." Dad states that he sometimes tries to "construct it with her sometimes, so to get her focused on how they did some things right, and less focused on 'we are terrible.' The coach is different, he will tell them they played 'like shit.' Here we see how Madison's parents are trying to be supportive by not dwelling on the negative aspects of the game. On the contrary her coach is telling her and the team that they did not play well. This leads to not only mixed messages, but gives a sense of false praise (Damon, 1995). Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) discuss the importance between evaluative feedback and informative feedback, and adolescents need informative feedback. This point is important to consider in relation to the issue of feedback because there seems to be a difference in the type of support parents give their children. In relation to the false praise, often times parents worry about their child's self-esteem, thus they think they can "hand it [self-esteem] out, even though it is not earned (Damon, 1995, Wedemeyer, 2003). For instance, Madison is receiving more informative feedback from her coach and more evaluative feedback from her parents, which she seems to not buy into. And when children , and particularly

adolescents do not “buy into” false feedback, then parents lose a sense of credibility.

Adolescents need meaningful feedback even though it may be negative.

The parents go on to talk about their expectations of her in life and in soccer. The mom gives this as an example, “She wanted to quit [soccer] a couple of years ago in the middle of the season. We told her that she was committed and if she doesn’t want to try out next year then that is okay. We both feel commitment is important. What she is doing now will have an effect on her in the future.” Dad states, “I will have a tendency to tell her what she is sowing now . . .you can’t fix it.” Mom jumps in with, “You can’t wait until you are a senior [in high school] and get the drill, the drill starts now.” The parents are talking about the importance of Madison’s grades and how she performs in school will have an effect on how she does in the future.

The next section describes the investment that Madison’s parents have put into soccer. Mom replies, “money, it is definitely the focus of our lives. There was one point we had practice four nights a week between Madison and her older sister.” Dad agrees stating, “during soccer season that is all there is time for.” Mom also was the manager at one point for Madison’s soccer team and she describes what that was like, “It was a lot of time, trying to get money from parents, paper work, and tournament stuff.” Mom also relates her perspective on soccer and Madison’s future, “I will be shocked if she does not play all the way through high school, but college, I don’t think so. She likes getting gear, like sweatshirts- it’s a team thing.” Dad reports, “I think it’s part of her identity.”

When they discuss the issue of goals, mom states, “We don’t have goals too far out.” And the dad feels that Madison has an “I want to do it myself” attitude, with mom supporting that notion with, “what does your parent know!” In relation to that concept, dad displays

concern in that, “that is kind of scary at times, because some things are better left explained than finding out for yourself.” The final comments include whether they feel they impact Madison’s enjoyment of soccer.

Dad: Yes, but I would not say the major part. I think the group of girls she is with, they are all basically really good friends.

Mom: In my view that is a learning experience too. Being competitive against friends.

Dad: I think having friends from all different schools has broaden her horizons. I heard her say in the car, ‘I really like my soccer team.’ I think they are older now. You use to be able to know who would walk across the field together, and now they are all together.

Although mom and dad seem to have similar perspectives on how they view their relationship with their daughter, communication seems to be an area of concern. Madison appears to relay that her expectations are not necessarily what her parents’ expectations are. She even admits to “arguments” around those issues, intimating that her parents expectations are arbitrary or too high, which would fit the family dynamics of a high challenge / low support family environment. I would also comment on the stark difference Madison displays in relation to non-commitment, where as her parents display a strong notion towards commitment. One possible explanation for this non-committal perspective from Madison may stem from her parents’ separation, which reflects on her experiences in other parts of her life.

Low Challenge / High Support

Ckiszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) speak of this family dynamic as parents “not wanting to push” their children, as well as the children “feel like they are not being pushed.” Communication is usually open, and sometimes adolescents describe their

parents being very involved in their lives. Trust and respect in the home is important as well. Goals and expectations are not focused with future intentions, but rather are more present-like. These families tend to be close, but lack the limits and expressed direction that High Challenge and High Support families have. However, these families “offer stability and emotional support”(p.136). Parents appear to concede to the adolescents’ interests and goals.

SCOTT (LC/HS):

Scott is a 14-year-old white, male. He has short brown hair, dark eyes, and a big smile. He has good manners, replying with “Yes Ma’m” and “No Ma’m”. Scott reported an 8 on the Challenge Scale and an 8 on the Support Scale in relation to his perception of his family dynamics. He reported that soccer feels more like *play* to him. He recorded a 9 on the enjoyment question. After the interview, I felt that the family dynamics expressed in this family appeared to fit more into the category of High Challenge and High Support. We start the interview at the kitchen table. There is a bowl of popcorn he popped for an afternoon snack. He has an older brother who plays soccer and basketball. His brother is a senior in high school and is looking to go to college to play soccer. When asked about his parents outside activities he has this to say, “My dad is in the Masonic Lodge, he is part of the Lion’s Club, he is with the Shriner’s Club too. He goes to Lancerlot [to workout] a lot too. My mom pretty much does mom stuff [laugh];gets groceries and stuff.” He states that he talks to his parents “about every night, about stuff going on at school . . .when they give me rides places, especially on soccer trips.” He reports that he talks to them about “school events, sports, grades, definitely grades, and stuff during the week that is upcoming.” However, when it comes to talking about things in depth he

reports, “I would say it varies between my brother and my parents. I can talk to my brother about a lot more stuff than I can my parents.”

He describes what it is like to have his parents involved in his soccer:

First off I find out when my practices are and what time they are over and who is going to pick me up. And if they watched me, I ask them how I did. They start telling me right when I come off the field [from practice or a game]. It is good. It helps me if I am doing good, or if I could be doing better, like at ODP tryouts.

[He motions thumb out for okay, thumb down for bad, and thumb up for good.]

He states that this is what his dad does to let him know how he is playing.

This is a possible example of informative feedback. As you can see from what Scott reports, it helps him know how he is doing. He also confers that his dad usually takes him to soccer events, especially the “big events.” He describes his mom’s involvement as “a lot of fun because she will bribe me that if I get a goal I will get a CD or something [laugh]. She bribes me a lot.” He reports that his parents have mostly good comments, “not wanting to get him down.” He continues to describe that they are “pretty calm [at games]. If all the other parents are cheering, they will jump on the band-wagon and start cheering and be loud with them. They talk to me during the game too. Like, you are doing good keep it up, or watch number 13, he fouls a lot, letting me know who is a dirty player so I can watch out for them.”

He has this to offer about his parents and their expectations:

They let me know what all is going on and they tell me if I can do better. . . . I will call them up and tell them I got a B in this class and they will be like ‘that is great’ and cheer me on all the way, and support me in whatever I do.

He states that his parents let him know their expectations such as this example, “They will just tell me nothing below a C or you will lose everything in your room, but they prefer higher than a C.”

He expresses high goals for himself when talking about life goals and soccer goals.

I wish to do really well in school like make A’s and B’s and if I can make straight A’s, because grades are really important to me, and to do well in soccer because I have coaches watching me. I have an older brother so coaches should know who I am and expect more out of me than anyone else.

When answering the question [Why are grades so important to you?] he replies,

I want to get into a good college and get a good job. I do not want to have to go to Virginia Western, I want to go straight to a good college. If I do well in soccer and get good grades, I can pretty much go anywhere hopefully.

When asked what his parents expected of his soccer in relation to his future he stated, “They definitely want me to play soccer in college. I don’t think they expect me to go professional or anything.”

He talks about setting goals for himself, and then if he reaches the goal that it “will be nice to tell my parents because they will get excited.” He feels that his parents goals are pretty similar to his goals to “definitely going to college, playing soccer, and making good grades to go to a good college and I guess get a good job when I am older and out of school.” In relation to soccer he discusses the goal that his parents have for him which is to “practice more outside of practice and go out and condition myself more.” The feedback he receives from his parents appears encouraging. He states, “The

feedback I get is if I reach the goal, then I will hear about it a lot, like ‘good job’, and if I haven’t reached the goal, my parents will get me hyped up and encourage me to do better.” He states, “They [parents] care more about my goals than the goals they set for me.” This simple quote supports the family dynamics of this group, low challenge / high support, in that his goals seem to have more influence than what his parents set for him. They appear to encourage him and support him regardless of the outcome.

In concluding the interview questions pertaining to parental roles and enjoyment, Scott reports his view,[do they make you enjoy the game more?]

Yes, definitely. If I score a goal there is someone to congratulate me after the game, and we have something to talk about after the game. If they are not there and I do something spectacular, then I have to tell them about it, and they missed it. . . .It is better for them to be there to see it.”

He also adds, “New equipment would encourage me to do better [laugh], like buying a new pair of cleats because that would get me excited about playing.” His advice for other parents is, “I would tell them that I like my parents to be there at all games, and watch me play because it makes me feel better than if they were not there.” He concludes with this statement about ever feeling pressure, “Sometimes I feel pressure, but if I make a mistake or something, they just encourage me to do better or they won’t let me know about it, and just say, ‘nice try.’”

Scott’s parents seem to be an enthusiastic couple with a good sense of humor. They appear relaxed during the interview. Scott’s parents talk about both sons playing soccer and the things they do as a family are, “go to soccer games, that really is foremost, but go to church together, but it is really all we have time to do.” Throughout the

interview it was interesting to see how each answered for the other. For example, when asked [what activities do they participate in?], this is how the dialogue proceeds:

Mom: [laughing] he [dad] participates a lot

Dad: Last night I had a Masonic Lodge meeting, so I am a Mason, and soon to be a Lion. I am a Shriner, and being with the board with the city sheriff's office we have special activities and events I attend. I try to workout diligently at gold's gym and Lancelot, and of course church. I am ready to become a deacon, so I stay pretty busy.

Dad: She holds the fort together

Mom: Well, um I really don't do anything. I do not go to the gym to people's dismay. About the only thing I attend is the boosters club at the high school that the boys belong to.

Dad: You do all the soccer mom activities for all the fund raising.

In response to communication this is what they each had to say:

Mom: We call him too [laughing], because he comes home in the afternoon and we will call him so he will have someone to talk to.

Dad: Or I will have him call me to check in to let me know where is at and we will chit chat, and I will ask him what was in the mail and what his big brother is up to.

Mom: and he gives us an animal report and how they are doing.

Dad: and what the weather is doing outside. So we find a way to chit-chat with him when we are not home.

Here we see the two-way communication, considering not only does Scott check in with his parents, but his parents check in with him as well. This highlights that it is not just the parents who determine the level, breadth, and depth of communication, but the child or adolescent affects it too. Personalities of the parents and the adolescent will be factors in determining the type of relationship they will have with one another.

When asked if they discuss soccer, Scott's mom states, "Oh yeah, quite a bit, but he gets to the point where sometimes we try to point out his weaknesses and he doesn't care to hear about his weaknesses. Now, if he plays well, he likes to talk about it" Dad reports, "he just kind of ignores us, or brushes us off, so then you know that is the point that part is up to the coach. I don't try to contradict what a coach might tell him, I suggest he talk to his coach." This appears to be an appropriate way to handle a situation where a parent may attempt to give informative feedback, and the adolescent is not open to it, then offering the adolescent to talk to the coach may be the next route to take.

They also state that the car is when they seem to communicate a lot with him, particularly about soccer. The father, in this next section, talks about what he talks to Scott about in relation to soccer:

I try to point out things he needs to focus on, particularly Olympic Development Program (ODP), and try to remind him the importance of what he is doing and the negatives as well as the positives, and the end results of what he is trying out for. Scott tried out for the JV basketball team and got cut, and came home and told his brother that was the first time he had gotten cut from anything. I did not really prepare him for that. That was certainly a learning experience for him. Mostly what I talk to him about is preparing himself for tryouts and for big events he is trying to participate in, like hustling, and being aggressive, and playing good defense- in other words he needs to show himself well.

This brings up a point about how parents can encourage a child or adolescent to tryout for a team, but to also think through what might happen if they do not make the team.

Scott's parents talk about their behavior at his games, and offer what they observe from other parents:

Mom: Myself, I don't like to yell. I only yell if someone does something really dirty, mostly just clapping, and I get excited when we score a goal. Some parents make a comment on every play, they make comments about the players, and there are certain people I would never sit with at a game, I have even been known to move during a game to get a way from people.

Dad: I stand and pace and offer words of encouragement. Occasionally I get disgruntled with calls. I think one time Scott got pulled out for whatever reason, and I went over and asked the coach if he was feeling okay. This was two to three years ago, and in my own mind I was questioning why he was being taken out. It turns out that Scott asked to be taken out. I am genuinely concerned with how he is playing and how things are going for him. I try not to be belligerent or offensive to anyone. Occasionally there have been groups of parents that are belligerent and act ugly and we tend to talk about them on the sidelines, but try not to let the kids hear us.

Interviewer: Do you address those parents who are like that?

Dad: I don't, but there are other parents who do. I think when the parents are confronted it aggravates the parents that already appear to be aggravated. It turns into a shouting match of sorts and probably a poor example of how to behave in front of the kids.

Mom: They really should hand out medication.

Dad: The coaches actually come over at some point and discourage parents from saying things to the referees or even to the children on the field because it interferes with what they [coaches] are trying to do with them.

The Dad continues to talk about how Scott communicates that he wants to continue playing soccer at a higher level, such as college, and possibly Professionally. However, the dad reports that he sometimes "prods" Scott "because I think Scott would take the easy way out if he could shoot basketball with the girls across the street and be just as happy." They also talk to him about the expenses it takes to play club soccer and the time commitment. Although they report that the soccer is very expensive and time consuming, they also admit that they have met some of their closest friends through

Scott's traveling soccer, and that Scott too has met some of his best friends through soccer as well. One serious point of contention is the topic of missing so much church due to travel soccer, and the mom has this to say,

We have missed a lot of church over the years because of soccer. We have known other families to drop out because they have missed so much church. That is why we make it mandatory when we are in town to make it to church.

Scott also belongs to a "strong youth group" according to his father. Scott's older brother seems to be a role model as far as setting goals, such as this example his dad describes:

I prod him [Scott] by words of encouragement that if he continues to practice and play and take his soccer seriously, it will pay off in the end. He sees that with his brother who has a great workout program and receiving letters from colleges.

Scott takes all that in, and that helps to keep him focused.

Mom concurs, "Yeah, ever since they were little going to college has not been a question. He has always known that we had those goals for him."

The parents also express wanting Scott to be the best he can be, and setting goals to enhance that opportunity. Mom reports that,

Every once in a while I will ask him if he is happy. Do you want to continue to play soccer? Do you like what you are doing? Because sometimes you feel like he has lost interest and you get to talking to him and he will tell you something that you did not know he felt that way.

The father adds, "work ethic, committing to something and following through, and doing the best you can do," as important goals as well. Both parents feel they play a part in whether Scott enjoys soccer or not, dad states, "I think we do probably have a big

influence over that, by the way we encourage him to participate.” Mom agrees, “we certainly support him. We got the van with the VCR in it to make the trip more enjoyable. And any time, but within reason, we get him whatever he wants equipment wise, and that makes him happy.” However, mom also states,

I am looking forward to life after soccer. If they play in college that will be a while [laughter]. But with Scott the goal is to get him out of high school and out of travel soccer, where we have to do the driving.

LESLIE (LC/HS):

Leslie is a 15 year-old white, female. Due to her busy schedule, I was only able to conduct a phone interview with Leslie and her dad. Leslie gave her family a 6 on Challenge and an 8 on Support. She reported that her soccer experience feels *both like work and play*. She scores herself an 8 on the enjoyment scale. Leslie reports that her home situation has been different for the past three months. Her father, who raises her alone, works the night shift for the railroad, recently had knee surgery and has been out of work for three months. Leslie’s description of her relationship with her father appears very warm and close. She reports that he is very involved with her soccer, “He takes me to practice and sometimes he will watch. He is at every single game, even warm-ups, and he might field marshall at tournaments.” She states that, “He asks a lot about school, usually during dinner and asks about tests. And if I have a test the next day, he will help me study and ask me questions, and then he asks me on the way to school what I am doing at school that day.”

She also reports that she talks to her father before she goes to bed. This is what she had to say, “Usually before I go to bed when I tell him goodnight, he will be

watching TV and he will mute it, and we will talk for a little while just about everything.”

I think it is noteworthy that he mutes the TV to show respect and importance of what Leslie has to say.

The communication appears two-way. Such as in this statement about what they talk to each other about, “I just started track, so he asks me about track, and about school a lot, just about life, just how I am doing, and I ask him about his knees and what he did that day.” Again, it is interesting to see how he is not only concerned about her, but that she is concerned about him too. There appears to be a mutual caring and interest in one another. She also discusses a personal issue that she is currently dealing with in respect to her mother. She reports, “. . .my parents were separated when I was 3 and I never really saw that much of her [mom], and she just recently moved back to Roanoke, . . .we talk about that because it is hard at the age I am and stuff.”

When it comes to communicating about soccer, this is what Leslie has to say, “He use to be like you know how parents try to coach on the sidelines, he is not that bad now. But it was like, ‘I don’t listen to you dad, so there is no point in wasting your breath,’ so he has calmed down about that. I mean it was not so bad before, he is good, he will cheer me, very supportive.” When asked if she talked to him about it, she replied, “Yeah, he did not take it personally. He was like, ‘Okay, that is fine.’ I am sensitive and if it was something out of my control or something, I did not want to get mad and have that on my mind when playing soccer. So it would get me off the subject of playing soccer when he would coach from the sidelines.”

In relation to expectations, Leslie feels that her dad has “pretty high expectations.” However, she also feels, “He does not push them bad like some parents.

But like when I get a bad grade, I can see the disappointment, but he is like, ‘try better next time.’ Or, ‘Do you need help studying is that it?’ Again, we see the close bond that Leslie and her father have, based on the sense she feels when she disappoints him. She also has this to say, “He never tells me he expects more, because he knows I always try my hardest. He is proud of me, I can tell he is proud of me.” This type of closeness is also reflected in his involvement with her soccer. For example, “When after a game when I do not feel like I played a good game, he tells me things to make me feel better and talks it out with me.” When asked about his level of involvement she responds, “Well as much as I am involved in it [soccer] he is. I have been playing for the Stars as long as I can remember and he has always been there, and he tries to come to every game. He works the night shift, so when I played for high school, he would come to the first half and his job would start at 8’o’clock and he would leave at 7:45pm.” Overall she states this about her dad’s involvement in relation to soccer:

I think my dad is doing a good job. He makes me want to be a better soccer player if I can see the disappointment in his eyes or whatever, if I didn’t do so well. I mean he does not come out and tell me, but I just know him that well. I like what my dad does, he always drives me to games and he always tells me I played good and calms me down about games. Other parents should be that way too, because soccer is really competitive, but some people, at our age it should not be so competitive as some people make it out to be.

She has this to say about feedback in relation to goals, “I mean if we have conflicting opinions, we just talk about it. He doesn’t really change my mind, and I don’t really change his, it is just good to know that we know how each other feels.” She also

states that her dad's goals for her are, "Just to be the best I can be, and to always try a little bit harder, he definitely doesn't push anything, but he encourages it strongly. He knows my limits."

Leslie's father reports that he has raised four children as a single parent. He appears to have similar thoughts about when he and Leslie communicate the most, "In the car is a good time, if you can get the radio turned down, you can have a one on one and they cannot go too far. . . . At night times, we try to talk before she goes to bed, which is a pretty good time." He has this to say about the type of things he and Leslie talk about,

We discuss soccer, high school soccer, going to the weight room, doing indoor track for the first time, and start up with a new coach this spring. School grades, and we discuss our family members, which is very important cause we have had different children take different routes you know, and her being the youngest she gets to observe each and every one. We talk about her social life, TV. I try to talk to her about world events which I think is very important.

In relation to soccer, Leslie's father states he,

Tries to encourage her, to do her best and give 100%, and once you do that, it is all you can ask. I do not get down on her about any particular thing or any particular play that maybe she missed, cause we all know that happens, . . . it is a team thing and anyone that points fingers, that is not quite the way it is suppose to be."

He also reports that he seems to talk to her about soccer,

On the way over [to practice or a game]. I will just ask her how she feels and try to make sure she has eaten something substantial before she plays. Then after a

game try to discuss it about who did what, or about what she did or what the other team did. Other than that, we watched the World Cup and Olympic soccer, which is very interesting. I was getting off work every morning and getting her up to watch the 7am game. She has never watched the boys play that much. It is fun to watch the two different styles between the boys and girls.

In this next statement, Leslie's father discusses his expectations for her in general and in soccer:

Yeah, she is real interested in going to a four-year college, and what she wants to do I do not know exactly. That remains to be determined by a lot of people once she gets to school. I stand behind her other than that. And as far as soccer goes, that is up to her. I will get her to where she needs to go, and if she wants to play and if she wants to continue playing club soccer it is just up to her. When they become 16 or 17 years old there are a lot of things going on, and it [soccer] is a big commitment and she likes the girls she is playing with.

He goes on to describe whether he thinks his expectations are similar or different than Leslie's:

I think they are pretty much on line. I do not think there is a whole lot of difference. I am not a driving parent, I guess maybe I should be more than what I am, but I feel like they kind of choose their way, of course with some direction, with some prodding, and they make their choices. I would not want to force somebody into something and then later on, 'well, why did you make me do this . . .,' just be supportive of anything she wants to try or achieve.

This quote very much supports the family typology of Low Challenge / High Support, in that he feels he can direct her in some ways, but ultimately the final decision is hers, but that he will support whatever it is she chooses. He goes on to report what his involvement and investment is in Leslie's soccer, and he has this to say:

When it is all said and done, gas, fees, . . . probably 1500-2000 dollars a year, and depending on what weekend tournament costs are, and then you pay for food, time, wear and tear on a car . . . I look forward to taking a Sunday trip, and a lot of people do not understand that. It just gives you that day together, that experience of the whole ball of wax, not only the soccer, but everything.

It is neat to see that although Leslie participating in soccer has many drawbacks, nothing out ways the positive experience of spending quality time with his daughter.

In conclusion Leslie's father reports on whether he plays a role in whether Leslie enjoys soccer or not:

Well, yeah, yeah I try to help her enjoy it. Leslie does not take criticism well . . .so I try to point things out to her, but not be so critical, but in a nice way, and I think that helps. I like the club because of the different girls they meet number one, outside of their normal circle, and the whole camaraderie thing is nice. . . .

That is another thing about traveling soccer, is that we have family we can visit.”

Overall it appears that this family fits into the Low Challenge / High Support typology that Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) talk about in Becoming Adult.

There is emotional support, and a warm and caring environment. However, there is also the lack of future oriented goals or direction that High Challenge / High Support families engage in.

Low Challenge / Low Support

Csikszentmihalyi states that, “And if they [children] have neither support nor challenge from the family, then it’s bad all around” (Scherer, 2002, p.16). This family typology varies from the other types in that communication is often lacking, as well as physical presence among family members. Goals and expectations are obscure, making future direction uncertain.

ELIZABETH (LC/LS):

Elizabeth is a 15-year-old white, female, with long brown hair, and brown eyes. She is tall and slender. She comes across somewhat shy. Elizabeth’s ratings of 5 on Challenge and 3 on Support put her in the Low Challenge/Low Support family typology. She describes her soccer experiences as being like *play*. However, she reported only a 5 on the enjoyment question.

Elizabeth comes from a single parent home where her father has been raising her alone for the past 3 years. She has an older brother age 19. From the start of the interview, Elizabeth makes it clear that she is not involved with her family much, as seen here in this statement, “Um [nervous laugh] well, we don’t do much together, eating dinner sometimes.” She also describes her families involvement with her soccer in a brief statement, “Like my brother never comes to my games, but my dad only comes to the games in town.” Elizabeth reports the things she does talk to her dad about include, “where I am going, or stuff like that, or when he does something that makes me mad, like not giving me phone calls or something, I will say something about it.” It appears that even when they do communicate it is sometimes around conflicting issues, rather than more positive issues.

In relation to soccer, Elizabeth states that her dad, “will ask who is at practice, and he will say stuff about what I should have done better in games or stuff that I did do good in games.” It is interesting to note Elizabeth’s perspective on her depth of communication with her dad:

Interviewer: Are there certain things that you seem to talk to him [dad] about in more depth?

Elizabeth: Maybe school, I am not sure

Interviewer: In your opinion do you talk to him in depth about school?

Elizabeth: No, not really, but that is the most I talk to him about.

In reference to communication about expectations, she has this to say, “I mean I kind of know what they are, but that’s because they come up when we are fighting or something, but I don’t really talk to him about it.” She is then asked [what would make her feel more comfortable talking about issues?] She replies, “I don’t know. I don’t really like talking really that much. I really don’t think about it that much I guess so I don’t really talk to anyone about it that much.” As seen here in this dialogue, there may be some personality characteristics that play a part in the communication pattern of this family. For example, a shy child may in general have a hard time communicating. Elizabeth goes on to talk about her father’s expectations and her own expectations. She reports that, “I guess to succeed in whatever I do that’s like good I guess?” She still appears uncertain of what is expected of her. She reports expectations of herself are, “To do whatever I can, and make good grades, um well I would like to be happy with myself.”

Elizabeth speaks about whether she feels she has a choice to play soccer or not, and this is what she had to say:

Sometimes I guess, because he is always asking me if I want to do it, and I would say yes. But then whenever we are in a fight he is always saying he will take me off the soccer team or something, but he never does. Sometimes I think I do [have a choice] and sometimes I don't know.

She also explains that when she was younger her father would take her to the out-of-town games, but now that she knows the girls on the team she usually goes with one of her friends to the out-of-town games.

When talking about goals, she reports that she does not set goals for herself, but rather, "I just kind of do whatever comes along you know, I don't really try to reach for something." However, she does explain that she and her family do try to set goals for example,

Interviewer: Do you guys set goals together?

Elizabeth: Well, like behind me [easel listed of goals] we set goals to buy furniture and stuff, but that doesn't ever happen, so that is as far as it gets. For whatever we need to do and to try to talk more, but that doesn't usually work either.

Interviewer: Why do you think those things don't work?

Elizabeth: I don't know, just whenever I feel like talking he doesn't, and when he feels like talking I don't.

Interviewer: So why do you think some of the goals set for buying furniture don't work?

Elizabeth: Because we forget about them

Interviewer: So do you receive any feedback about any goals?

Elizabeth: Well, yeah, it is just the same thing over and over again. Like we will try to and then we don't and he will say it again and then we won't.

Interviewer: Do you ever receive any feedback when things are going well?

Elizabeth: Yeah, like he will comment about it, and say something to me about it like I am doing something good, but that is pretty much it.

In conclusion of the interview, Elizabeth talks about whether her father plays a role in whether she enjoys soccer or not.

No, [laugh] I am not trying to be mean or anything but no not really. Because he is not there a lot, and even when he is not there I am not upset or anything. But when he is there I will be happy, but then sometimes I wish he was not there cause then I know if I don't play good he will say something to me about it and I won't want to talk about it."

Elizabeth is then asked:

Interviewer: Do you feel if you are having an issue in general or about soccer you are able to talk to him about it?

Elizabeth: No, because I don't like to talk about things much and most of the stuff I would be upset about I don't think he understands, because he doesn't understand much of what I say anyway."

Interviewer: Is there anything that would help you talk to him more?

Elizabeth: I don't know. If he would listen more instead of freaking out after I say one sentence and then trying to understand things more from my point of view, I can't think of anything else."

We will now review the interview with Elizabeth's father. Her father initially admits to the lack of family interaction with this statement, "There is soccer, uh there is soccer [laughter]. I mean they are teenagers, they're really not into doing things with their dad, and that's understandable." He also admits, "Around here because of their ages, they are very quiet and to start conversation is an achievement and flows much more smoothly with my fiancé present."

The times he does spend with Elizabeth include taking her to and from school, and dinnertime. He also states that he takes, “her to soccer and to friends’ houses on the weekends and to the movies.” He also reports that, “This is a source of contention I do not allow her to ride in cars with guys, and a lot of her friends are able to.” He also further explains the disadvantages of being a single parent, “You can’t be a good cop and a bad cop, but you have to be a cop, and there is no buffer here. When one person is not getting along they cannot go to the other person [parent].”

Elizabeth’s father talks about a difficult and tragic situation that his family has been dealing with for the past three years. He presents this situation as something that has affected how his family communicates:

Interviewer: Are there things that you talk to Elizabeth in more depth about?

Dad: Well, we could have. It just doesn’t happen that much now. You know we obviously had a really difficult period after my wife died and we certainly talked about that, very emotional. But we don’t now it doesn’t come up.

He then proceeds to talk about what he expects of Elizabeth in relation to soccer and this is what he had to say:

To be honest there was a problem before Mike [the coach] with cliques with South Roanoke kids versus Salem kids. I told Elizabeth that I expected her to work on breaking up those cliques, that I wanted her to be more of a leader rather than a follower. . . .My instructions to her were all of this is great, but there is a quid pro quo, If I am going to spend all of this money, then you are going to be a team player.

As far as how open he is with talking about expectations he states, “they are stormy talks. I mean she is a good kid, she is very, very private about her feelings. I have no problems

trusting, I just think occasionally there is the potential for her to be led astray by a friend. . . ., so I do some strategizing about it.” He also feels that she is dependable on academic matters, and that she knows what he expects of her. However, he was not sure what she expects of herself, but ultimately thought that the expectations are similar.

He continues to report about his expectations in relation to her soccer, and this is what he states:

I just want her to improve and for the team to improve. The team was light years away from the way they were last year and it was frustrating. All we wanted, the reasonable parents wanted, and they are all not reasonable parents on this team, trust me The coach said that it is much better to work on the process and not the results of the game, and that is how I feel.

He has this to say about whether he plays a role in whether Elizabeth enjoys soccer or not:

Gosh, yeah, I mean I hope I am just on the sidelines really. It is her thing. Getting her there, and yelling go E., and taking them out to Famous Anthony’s afterward is all logistical. The enjoyment is on the field I would think.

When setting goals for her, Elizabeth’s father reports, “find something you are good at and figure it out. I think most of that is implied, and expect to go to college, all that has been given to her from childhood.” In conclusion Elizabeth’s father adds:

I think you have to understand the family context. We are coming out of something that was pretty terrible, and it is really, really hard for any parent to relate to any kid, but I think different gender parent is really hard. We sorely lack another point of view from the adult side, and a buffer and someone who can just

change the subject [laughter] when it needs to be changed. I think it is brutally hard, I mean it is hard for me, but I think it is really hard for a kid.

As we see within this family, there are some contextual things to consider.

However, taking a closer look at family interaction, communication, expectations, and goals, may better help families understand the complexities of parental influences and adolescent development. According to Csikszentmihaly in (Scherer 2002, p.16), “Challenge gives children vision and direction, focus and perseverance. Support gives the serenity that allows them freedom from worry and fear.” Both of these parts communicate special strengths, so that the sum total will equal positive experiences for children and families.

Reflections of Researcher

It was interesting to listen to other families’ experiences with soccer. I felt I could relate at many different levels with the participants. To help my reader understand my background better, I will discuss some of my experiences relating to family dynamics and soccer, which include issues presented by my participants. I will also briefly talk about my therapy background, and how that affected my research.

My ultimate goal of this research is to hopefully help families learn healthy ways of interacting. There were points in my interviews where it felt more like I was conducting therapy rather than a research interview. Particularly when a parent would ask, “Why is it that my son talks to his mom more than to me?” I had to make a conscious effort to not take on an atmosphere where they felt like I was mediating their family dynamics, and offering suggestions, even though they are soliciting my advice.

My therapy skills helped in joining with the participants, as well as gave me the knowledge base to ask systemic questions. My experiences with soccer helped as well.

Both of my parents were highly involved in soccer. However, much like what the participants discuss, my dad had more of the role of challenging me, and my mom played more of the role of the supporter. I would not hesitate to say that most of our family life revolved around soccer. These were some of the most wonderful, connecting times I can remember with my family as a whole. It was apparent that we all had each others well-being in mind. From the age of 5-until 15 I played on a boys soccer team, including at junior high school. When I turned 16, my dad started traveling with me every weekend to Washington, Northern Virginia, or Richmond to play with high level girl's teams. I would usually practice with the guys during the week and my dad or mom would take me to play in Washington, Richmond or Northern Virginia on the weekends. My mom would take me when there was a conflict between my brother's soccer schedule and mine. I began playing Olympic Development Program soccer starting at the age of 12. The Olympic Development Program usually was focused all summer long, but I often traveled by myself because the soccer I was involved with usually did not have parents involved. So most of my summers were spent traveling and playing soccer. It was not always easy, I missed some things, including dances, birthday parties, etc. I also remember times when I felt tired and wondered what a "normal" summer felt like. I remember, very rarely, but at times, my dad being upset with how I played, and him letting me know that. However, my mom was there to tell me that I played "just fine" and to "not worry." Here was a sense of "false praise" sometimes, and I remember replying back to her, "You're my mom, you are just saying that." Money never seemed to be a

factor, as well as the pressure of a college scholarship. It felt more like, this is what you are good at, let's see how far you can take it, and we will be here to provide, support and encourage the opportunities. I think my family's support, encouragement, involvement, and commitment helped me understand about hard work.

It also helped me to understand a sense of well-being, which included taking care of myself and not using alcohol, drugs, or smoking. I would also have to give an enormous credit to my older brother who modeled that well-being. I looked up to him, and he provided a strong path to follow, academically and athletically. He worked harder than anyone I have ever known. He would practice all the time, on his own or with me. And Csikszentmihalyi (2002) talks about modeling as significant for families in creating a supportive and challenging environment.

The times we did have during out-of-town games and tournaments were filled with long car rides where we would talk, sleep and stop for food along the way. I made some great friendships through soccer and my parents also felt this social aspect. Most of their best adult friendships were made with parents of our teammates.

Overall, I think, for me, once you get to the level of soccer my participants are at, parents almost have to be involved, as well as be supportive, or else they would not provide these opportunities. From each of these parents I sensed that they were trying as hard as they could and doing the best they knew how. Many things come into play, and hopefully, some guidance can come out of this research to help make these opportunities and experiences the most positive they can be.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Assertions

“The Flow model (Csikszentmihalyi 1975b) focuses on one kind of interpretation of a situation – the ability to find in it opportunities for meaningful action or challenge – which leads to the optimal experience of flow and appears to have many healthy and beneficial consequences, including a path for differentiation and growth” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982 & Rathunde, 1988, p. 342).

First Research Question

The first research question states, “How do adolescents experience their participation in soccer?” The Experience Sampling Questionnaire (ESQ) was used descriptively to help answer this first question, as well as information gathered from the interviews.

In general, most of the participants reported very high scores for enjoying soccer. More males reported higher scores ranging from 7 to 9 on the enjoyment question, whereas the females reported a range from 0 to 9. The females’ scores seemed to linger more around the middle ranking of 5-6. Most male participant reported feeling like soccer was more like *play*, except for two males who reported that soccer felt like *both*. For the females, there was a variation with three reporting soccer feels more like *play*, four reporting soccer feels like *both work and play*, one reporting that it feels like *work*, one reporting it feels like *neither work nor play*, and one female participant failed to answer. Every participant reported that they wanted to be doing this activity (playing soccer), except one, who stated that she “had nothing else to do.” (Please see Table 3 on p.40).

Adolescents experience soccer in various ways. The importance of knowing this is that parents need to learn what it is that *their* child enjoys about the sport. Simply asking your child, “What is it about soccer that you like, and even dislike?” “What makes you happy?” can help with understanding and knowing your child better.

Several adolescents talked about playing soccer because of the friendships they have made. However females seemed to mention this as a reason more often than did males. As for males, soccer seemed to represent an opportunity to challenge himself through competition and skill advancement, and looked at soccer as something that would impact their future in some way. Some examples consist of soccer “looking good on a resume,” “I want to play in college or professionally,” or “I might coach sometime.” Two females suggested that they may play in college if the opportunity were to come along. Other positive descriptions of soccer included enjoying spending time at tournaments, traveling, and meeting new people. Some enjoy the self-identity that comes along with being an athlete and belonging to a group, which includes “getting gear” that singles you out as part of that group.

For whatever reason a child is participating in soccer or even some other activity, helping your child understand her or his experiences will help foster an environment and characteristics to enjoy activities to their fullest. This is part of developing intrinsic motivation, specifically the optimal experience of Flow, which then will lead to fostering more of these positive experiences.

Second Research Question

The second research question asks, “How do adolescents experience family dynamics of support and challenge?” The Support /Challenge Questionnaire (SCQ) helped look at the various components of Support and Challenge, as well as be able to group the participants into the four family typology: HC/HS, HC/LS, LC/HS, LC/LS. Again, interview data was used also to assess this question. The researcher’s bias needs to be made overt, in that there was the possibility of me looking for particular themes once the participants were categorized. Another point to mention is that support and challenge sometimes seemed to go hand in hand and it was hard to distinguish between the two complex terms.

Most males reported high levels of support and challenge from their families. The lowest support score was a 7 and the highest support score was an 11. The lowest challenge score was an 8 and the highest challenge score was a 12. For the females, the scores varied. The lowest support score was a 2, and the highest support score was an 11. The lowest challenge score was a 5, and the highest challenge score was a 12. Support seemed to be expressed in various forms ranging from, “they [parents] help me with my homework” to “they [parents] come to all of my games. In relation to soccer, and in life in general and regardless of category, most teens reflected that their parents were supportive. Particularly with soccer this would seem to be a given, based on the level of soccer these adolescents are playing. But I also think that if parents are supportive with a sport, then parents will be supportive in general, and vice versa, if parents are supportive in general then they are probably supportive in sport. With soccer, support seemed to be expressed or internalized as the time commitment and financial help parents provided for

their adolescent. These forms of support came in the way of coming to games, taking to teens and from practice, tournaments, and even some parents managed their adolescents' soccer teams. Money came in the form of paying Club dues, traveling expenses, and equipment expense. Communication could be seen as supportive and challenging, depending on the type of communication. For example, if a mom were to cheer for her adolescent on the soccer field, and it is positive, then the child saw it as supportive. If a parent tries to talk to the adolescent about practicing more at home, then it was viewed more as challenging.

Challenge seems to be, in some ways, more difficult to conceptualize. Challenge seems to come in the form of setting goals, high expectations, and money. For instance many adolescents expressed that their parents would tell them, "If we are spending this much money for you to play, then we expect you to work hard, and not goof off." Another example of challenge, was the idea that parents expected their child to practice more at home. Several of the participants, more males than females however, talked about how their parents expected them to practice more at home. Some participants agreed that they should, and others felt like they got enough practice with the team, and might burnout if they practiced more.

One female adolescent responded to this interview question, "Do you feel that your parents play a part in whether you enjoy soccer or not?" with, "I think so. Because if they were too serious about it and I felt like I was forced to play, then I know I would not enjoy it as much. I used to swim and I just got sick of it and my mom wanted me to keep doing it. I just quit because I didn't like it and I felt forced to do it, but I don't feel forced

to play soccer.” I do not get the feeling that any of these players “felt pressures” to play soccer. I think that pressure was felt more around “school” and doing well in school.

These complex concepts are not only hard to classify and understand, but they are also hard to find a balance between supporting enough, but not too much, and challenging enough, but not too much. I think it is a delicate balance of knowing your child’s limits, and pushing her or him past their comfort zones, academically and athletically, but at the same time providing that safety zone that they know they are fully accepted.

The Third Research Question

The third research question asks, “What are the family dynamics, as expressed by parents and teens through interviews, related to challenging and supporting their teen?”

In general, Csikszentmihalyi (2000) explains “that the most effective families appear to be those that give teenagers the sense that they are loved, together with the sense that much is expected from them. This combination is related to students’ self-esteem, as well as to their feeling that their present actions contribute to the future” (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000, p. 138).

Csikszentmihalyi and Schneiders’ (2000) research expressed a difference among families across four main themes: communication, family interaction, expectations, and goals. These four themes were used to help differentiate between the classifications of support and challenge, i.e., HC/HS, HC/LS, LC/HS, and LC/LS, and were used to develop the qualitative themes.

Communication looked at the breadth, depth, and level of communication between family members, and *family interaction* looked at the level of involvement,

including mutual involvement family members had with one another. With *expectations*, I looked at whether expectations were expressed, and if so, how they were expressed among family members. Lastly, *goal* setting was determined by whether goals were individually set, mutually set, or not set at all, as well as whether the goals appeared present-oriented and / or future-oriented.

Communication

Overall, parents tended to spend more time trying to communicate with the teen, versus the teen trying to communicate with the parent(s). Which is probably normal for most families. Again, communication is something that will be determined by personality characteristics of both parents and children. For instance, one participant expressed not talking to her parent(s) very much about anything. But she also reports that she doesn't like to talk to "anyone" about things. The father supported this statement by mentioning the shy personality of his daughter, "which can make communication difficult." Some adolescents expressed that they felt very comfortable talking to their parents about anything, at any time.

No participant, including parents, reported having designated times that they talk, but that communication usually occurred on the way to and from activities in the car and at dinner. One parent stated, "The best quality time I have with her is in the car to and from soccer practice." In the Marriage and Family Therapy literature, "family meetings" are often suggested as something that allows families to communicate mutually and consistently, and could be part of developing communication skills with families.

School seemed to be the biggest issue that every family discussed. Mom's tended to be the ones that the adolescents talked to more about school and social issues. Dad's

appeared to be the one that adolescents talked to about sports, and this was consistent with both males and females. Dad's even admitted to this limited communication with adolescents and some appeared concerned, or questioned why that was the case. For the fathers of the females, they suggested that there is a gender difference when communicating, and that "You know when they [girls] get to this age, they do not feel comfortable talking to dad about stuff."

Another parental difference found, was that moms tended to not have many outside activities, and one quote sums the idea up: "Yeah, my wife does not have no hobbies, her family is her hobby," although this mom works full-time too. Fathers however, tended to have at least one outside activity if not several.

In relation to soccer, adolescents expressed a concern for parents "yelling" on the sidelines at games. I get the sense from the interview data, as well as from my personal experiences, that this issue is "downplayed" in some form. For example, most adolescents brought this issue up as something they would not like their parent(s) to do, however, it is apparent that parents(s) continue this practice. What was interesting is that most of the adolescents, reported that *their* parents were not the ones that do the yelling on the sidelines. There were a couple of participants who reported that their parents *use* to be "bad," but that they "have gotten better." This issue was engaging to observe parents discuss the issue between themselves. The positive aspect of interviewing the parents together, when possible, was that each seemed to hold the other accountable. Overall, it was interesting to get to the conclusion that parents tend to be worse "yellers" on the sidelines when their child is around the age of 9,10, or 11 years of age. One parent reported, "I would say we were more serious about their soccer when our oldest one was

8 or 9 years old, . . . I would get emotionally involved with it, and it was ridiculous.’ ‘But we realized it is stupid and it is a game. And we put it into perspective and just say you know you cannot live and die over a game.’”

It also appeared that both male and female teens had or have a hard time accepting feedback, particularly informative feedback. It also seemed that females were harder on themselves about how they play soccer. Unfortunately the way some parents handled this idea of females lacking in self-esteem was or is to give “false praise,” or evaluative feedback. For example, they would tell their daughter that she played well even if she did not. Children and adolescents need to have credible feedback if they are going to trust their parents. On the other hand, males appeared confident in their abilities as soccer players, and often times think they do better than they really do (Wedemeyer, 2003). But they also had a hard time hearing informative criticism from parents. Many parents related that their child did not want to hear any thing negative in relation to how they play or played. What this sets up is for adolescents not to be able to handle appropriate feedback by adults. “Constructive criticism is crucial to not only the development of the child, but also in soccer and in life skills. They will have to take constructive criticism sometime in their life, and the longer that is postponed, the greater the detriment to the child” (Wedemeyer, 2003). One parent made the suggestion that when her son feels like he has not played well or is having a hard time listening to his parents, she suggests, “Talk to your coach.” I think this is a very appropriate way to handle this situation, and I am not sure many parents offer that as a suggestion to their child. It is sometimes hard to give up that control and trust another adult to advise your child, even though you feel you know your child better. But the positive point of

directing your child to talk to the coach is that it one, puts the responsibility on the child, and two, it teaches the child to handle constructive and informative feedback (Wedemeyer, 2003). When children or even adults are unable to accept that type of communication, it really hinders the opportunities for growth and skill enhancement, whether it is academically or athletically.

One other technique offered to parents about how to handle giving informative feedback is to do what is called the “sandwich approach” (Gould, 1995, & Wedemeyer, 2003). This is where the child receives a positive comment about play, then a corrective, informative comment, followed by another positive comment. Recognize and be aware of when your child or adolescent feels most open to talking; when are those times she or he is more talkative? Where are you when you are communicating? Who is present? What is their body language? When do they seem more closed off? Most importantly, this communication has to start at a young age. Parents need to be aware of how they can reach their child so that defensive walls are not put up. Trust needs to be established. Listening is a key component to communication too.

Family Interaction

Most families who have children or adolescents that play soccer at this level have to be pretty supportive and committed. Fortunately, along with this support are opportunities to interact as a family unit, whether it is taking your child to practice, or going to games, and especially weekend / tournament soccer trips. Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) suggest a difference between interacting with one another, and having *mutually* involving activities. With these families, soccer was expressed as a mutually involved activity. It is important for families to keep in mind as their child grows and as

interests change, it is crucial for families to find new sets of activities that will continue to keep the family group involved. Also according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), it is also important for kids to be able to choose the activity and the level and goals of the activity. For example with soccer, if a child enjoys soccer strictly because of the social aspect of it, such as being with friends, and parents are signing their child up for more competitive levels of soccer, such as the Roanoke Stars, then it sets up potential problems. One potential problem is that motivation from the child will probably not be comparatively and adequately high, thus the potential for bringing down the level of play for the whole team. Coaches may sense the lack of motivation and problems may arise with the child's interactions with the coach. Eventually the child may become anxious, not enjoy soccer anymore because of the change in focus to be more competitive, and eventually quit soccer all together. However, if there is open communication which hopefully has been established between the parents and child starting at a young age, then the knowledge of their child's interest would lead to a more appropriate option. The more appropriate option might be signing the child up for a less competitive league, which might be more suitable for the child's interests, thus fostering what the child enjoys about soccer (Wedemeyer, 2003).

One of the strongest points to present is the family dynamic including *siblings*. Siblings appeared to be a new category or themes to consider when looking at family dynamics. The number of siblings, the age of siblings, and whether siblings play a sport, specifically soccer, are all points to consider. An assumption based on this issue, is that adolescents who have older siblings, such as Tracy, may have had parents who worked through some of the challenge and support issues, thus incorporating different family

dynamics with their younger children as they get older. This issue of gender can relate to other areas such as setting goals, communication, interaction, and expectations. This is a perspective not presented in Csikszentmihalyi's & Schneider's (2000) study on adolescents and work. This area warrants further investigation in future studies.

Overall, most adolescents talked about spending time with their family eating dinner, watching TV, or having parents help with homework. Many adolescents mentioned tournament weekends as a point when they spend much of their time as a family. One suggestion to increase this opportunity for the better is suggesting that when you are talking in the car, that the radio is not on, and that the child or adolescent is not listening to a walkman. Many parents mentioned the life cycle stage of adolescents and the decline in family interaction time. Although this may be the case in some situations, soccer seems to be a strong connection for these families, and offers an avenue for time and communication together.

Goals

When interviewing the participants about goals, most of the answers were discussed in general terms. For example, most parents wanted their child to go to college, get a good job, and be successful. As for the adolescents' answers, most of them appeared to be along the same lines. Most of the participants had some vague idea of goals, but not concretely. Most participants mentioned that they have short-term goals, and some talked about long-term goals too. Long-term goals included going to college, getting a good job, and making money. Short-term goals included doing well in school, and working hard in soccer. There was one male adolescent who actually kept a piece of paper up on his mirror to remind him of a soccer goal he is trying to reach. He also had the philosophy

that things he was doing now would influence what happened in the future, displaying a high internal locus of control. Another male adolescent talked about the same idea of what he is doing now will reflect on choices and opportunities in the future. This not only shows future-oriented goal setting, but it helps establish personal responsibility and individuation. If children only set and strive for goals that their parents set for them, then there is the potential for disappointment to follow, and possibly resentment to set in. Females seemed to have less concrete goals. One participant explained that her family tried to write down goals, but that the goal would be forgotten. This same female participant reported that she does not have any goals, and “just take things as they come.” One female participant reported that she never writes goals down, but she has a mind-set of her goals. And most had goals such as doing well in school and working hard in soccer. Some adolescents were not sure what their parents’ goals were for them, but knew that their parents wanted them to “do their best” and “be successful.” The only problem with these type of statements is that what do those mean exactly? Csikszentmihalyi (2002) mentions the importance of children being able to set their own goals too as important for them to reach flow. I do not suggest that children or adolescents be the sole goal makers, but that there be some mutual goal setting, as well as individual goal setting. This is where communication comes into play again, in that there can be universal goals, but that a child needs to feel they have some control over their own goals too. And these need to be communicated between parents and children. For example, having parents and children go to semi-professional and professional soccer games, or watching soccer on TV. This is an opportunity to work with your child or adolescent, depending on their age, on setting goals. So when you and your child are watching the game, it is important to

watch the game with a “critical eye.” This means if you have a 10-year old watching a game, have them stomp their feet when the ball gets close to the goal. Or for an older player, such as an adolescent, have them watch the game and describe what type of defense the teams are playing, e.g zonal or man-to-man defense. This also increases mutual interaction between children and parent(s). In the sport psychology literature (Gould, 1995), as well as family therapy literature, goals setting is important in the process of succeeding. Not only setting goals, including long-term and short-term, but also having an understanding of how one will achieve those goals; what are the steps that need to be taken to achieve them. Feedback is another critical component in goal setting. This is also where informative feedback is important, so goals can be adjusted and readjusted to fit skills and challenges of experiences.

One thing that gets lost when children start playing competitive sports at any level, is the personal comparison against other players. Setting personal goals can be taught at a young age, which are more intrinsic versus extrinsicy oriented. What this allows the child to do is to feel more in control over their actions. When we compare ourselves constantly to outside sources that we do not have control over, then it sets us up to feel powerless, and often less motivated, and makes it easier to become frustrated and quit. It is also takes away the path from creating the opportunity to manipulate the environment to help achieve flow.

Expectations

Expectations seemed to fit closely with goal setting. My impression was that many parents assumed their adolescents knew what was expected of them. Sometimes this was the case that adolescents knew what their parents expected of them, and then in

other cases adolescents didn't know, but guessed what was expected of them. Even parents were not sure of what their child expected of herself/himself. A couple of parents responded to the interview question of "Do you think your expectations are similar or different than the expectations your adolescent has of him or herself?" with "I don't know." One parent even paused and stated, "Good question!"

Expectations, I think, help establish responsibility and accountability. An example in relation to soccer, is the coach expecting the adolescent to polish her/his soccer cleats, and to bring water and shinguards to practice. This sets up for the adolescent to be responsible for these expectations from the coach. If the child does not bring water, then she may be thirsty during practice (Wedemeyer, 2003). If they don't bring shinguards they may not be allowed to participate, and if they do participate they may get injured, which leads to consequences. However, as one coach reported, is that parents often take on these responsibilities on themselves, letting the child or adolescent "off the hook." This only hinders their child or adolescent in learning individual responsibility and accountability. And the longer it is postponed, the harder it will be to teach them (Wedemeyer, 2003).

Family interaction, goals and expectations can all trace back to communication. If there is not positive communication among family members, then family interaction, goals, and expectations will suffer as well. Each concept builds on the other.

As with any research, but sometimes specifically qualitative research, the experiences of the participants are unique. Although assertions can be made, nothing should take away the uniqueness of each one of these adolescents and families. With that said, one conclusion drawn from this study is that it was not easy to determine or make

classifications of the participants. And even when classifications were made and interviews completed, the distinctions were still unclear between the groups. The data presented can be interpreted in alternative ways, which will ultimately be left up to the reader to decide. Sometimes it appeared that a participant would fall into a category, but then reveal information that set him to fit in a different category.

Another area of difficulty stemmed from assessing the challenge and support characteristics of parental involvement. Again, these dynamics have many varying aspects to each of them, with individuals experiencing them each differently as well. Whenever you have a didactic relationship, such as with parent(s) and adolescent(s), it is essential to consider the different personalities interacting with one another. Realizing this, no one model will be able to encompass all these differences. However, understanding that issue, what may help is developing models which consists of ideas based on possible diversified characteristics of individuals and family dynamics.

The determined significance of this study will be decided based on the reader and her /his interpretation. For example, potentially the results could be used to develop a psychoeducational program for parents and children involved in sport. To date, there are few limited educational programs set up for parents who have children involved in sport. One such program, currently offered in larger cities, requires parents to attend a one-time meeting before their child's sport season. Parents must sign a contract of sport-person-like conduct in order for their child to participate. The issue is that this program is neither educational nor in-depth, nor is it continued throughout the child's sport season. Often times, as the season goes on, parents forget the rules of conduct that they signed earlier in the season.

Not only will these findings help in regard to sport, but they will have a significant impact on other areas of adolescence and parenting such as school. This point has been presented earlier in this proposal by Csikszentmihalyi's (2002) research. Other areas of will include family therapy, sport psychology, and other helping professionals who may work with parents and children.

Although this researcher hopes to fill gaps in the literature, there are several limitations to the current study. First, there is the lack of the variability among the participants. Soccer has been mostly a middle- to upper-class sport, which will more than likely rule out lower-income families in this study. There is also the limitation of only interviewing athletes who are playing at a higher level of soccer than recreational league players, thus, looking at athletes who are already invested significantly in the sport of soccer.

Additionally, the scores from the Support /Challenge Questionnaire did not yield the distinct means that Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) used in their study of adolescents in Becoming Adult. Therefore, the scores obtained in this study were modified to the best possible variance across the four family typologies. The descriptive The descriptive analyses from the questionnaires were also taken into consideration in categorizing the participants into the four typologies. For example, whether a participant reported they experienced soccer as play, work, both, or neither. The enjoyment question was also used to help determine into which category they were categorized. Again, more participants may have offered a larger variance across the four family typologies, thus producing more reliable results.

Another shortcoming deals with the time limitation of this study, thus restricting the number of interviews conducted. Ideally, this study would include more participants, look at different sports, different SES, different skill levels, and possibly include longitudinal data and observations.

Conclusion

Ultimately, to sum up in one sentence the best conclusion drawn from this research is the magnitude of parents knowing their own child, which is a continual work in progress that develops at a young age and changes and grows.

Flow is the feeling people get when they are intrinsically involved in an activity. This phenomenon occurs when a person's skill level matches the level of challenge of the particular activity (Gould, 1995). However, it is a prerequisite that both the skills of the person be high, as well as the challenge be high. It has been hypothesized that one can manipulate the environment so that Flow occurs. This can be said about family dynamics, and creating opportunities and an environment for Flow to occur, particularly for adolescent's which was the focus of this research.

I focused on assessing support and challenge characteristics of the family dynamics, and then looking at specific themes including: (a) Family interaction, (b) Communication, (c) Expectations, and (d) Goals. Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) looked at the four family typology of High Challenge / High Support, High Challenge / Low Support, Low Challenge / High Support, Low Challenge / Low Support in order to categorize different family dynamics.

It has been suggested that the most opportune environment for adolescents to have positive experiences, such as Flow, occur in High Challenging and High Support

families. These characteristics include creating opportunities for family members to explore individual interests, but at the same time creating an environment where the individual feels safe enough to take those risks to explore and push oneself past their comfort zone. To establish present and future oriented goals that are challenging and are provided with credible and concrete feedback. (Sagor, 2002, & Cskiskzentmihalyi & Schneider 2000).

Quick Tips for Parents

Parents can start off this positive process by modeling for their children and creating their own “flow” experiences. This includes talking and communicating about your own life and the positive experiences you are having, so that your child sees that being an adult is worthwhile. Start at an early age. What is it that your child finds genuinely enjoyable, and how can you increase those opportunities? Have your child define enjoyment in their own sense. Express to them it is okay to try things, and help challenge them to push past their own safety zone. Talk to them about what support and challenge looks like to them. Discuss expectations and consequences. Discuss challenging, but achievable goals and the steps necessary to accomplish them. Let the goals be clearly defined. Spend time in mutual activities, and as the child grows, change the activities accordingly.

Ideally these initiatives will start at a young age, and develop over time so that their child becomes a happy, successful adult. There is no one set formula to follow unfortunately, which leaves much up to the parents and families finding a balance which includes understanding who their child really is, what makes them happy, and what

makes them motivated to succeed. Ultimately, these family dynamics, through modeling, will be passed down from generation to generation!

Implications

From the information and knowledge gained from this research, several implications appear warranted. The first area includes the sports field. Specifically targeted towards the soccer community, such as parents, children, coaches, and youth organizations. The second area includes implications for the mental health field including marriage and family therapists, sport psychologists, and other helping professions. The third area involves future research.

Soccer Implications

One of the issues that stuck out most for me was the point that parents tended to “be at their worst” when their child was involved with sports around that age of 9-11 years old. Several parents and teens referenced this time period when parents were considered “more obnoxious”, “yelled more”, and “lived and died by each game.” There may be several reasons behind this stage of intensity, one being that that is the age when sports start dividing kids into recreation leagues, and more advanced leagues, like the travelling Star. It may also be that parents “learn” appropriate behavior as the child progresses through sports. Maybe parents feel less in control with their child playing sports at earlier ages, versus when they get older and are probably better skilled and display more control themselves on the athletic field. In some cases, such as suggested in these research findings, children and teens begin to tell their parents what is okay and not okay to do at their games. However, another point to consider is that this seems unusual for parents to display “poor conduct” at games when their child is at such a young age of

9-11 years old instead of when the child is more around the age of High School and College. The reason to bring this up is because when the child is closer to College age, “scholarship” and higher advancement is more in question, thus the idea of “more involvement” and “more hopes” playing key roles with the parents. This is interesting to note, particularly for future sport and parental education.

Practicing at home outside of scheduled practice

Another point to address is the idea that many parents brought up the issue of wanting their child to practice more outside of regular scheduled practices. Almost every parent within this study brought this to attention, as well as the teens recognizing that this is what their parents wanted too. In several cases, the teens felt like they were practicing “enough”, and some teens presented the idea that they felt “pushed” to do so. One parent wondered if her son “loved” soccer so much, then he would want to practice all the time. Again, soccer is a sport that has potential to be year round, depending on the different levels the child /teen makes. One female adolescent expressed at one point two years ago wanting to quit soccer because of the year round commitment. Then her schedule changed and it was not year round anymore, so she reported that she was having “more fun” this year with the less commitment time. Some kids may not practice more because the part they enjoy the most is being with friends, so the idea of practicing by themselves seems unnecessary or uninteresting. If some kids/teens are pushed to practice more on their own time, it may lessen the enjoyment they get out of playing, possibly leading to burnout or defensiveness of parental involvement. Then again, this issue of practicing more may need to be a goal that is set both by the parent(s) and the teen.

Friendships made through soccer

This brings me to the third issue of friendships made through soccer. Surprisingly, every parent mentioned how important and beneficial it was for their teen to meet “different” people through [travel] soccer. This seemed to be a point at the top of the list for both parents and the teens. Some parents discussed that their own best friends were made from their child’s travel soccer. Considering the amount of time parents spend at practices, games, and tournaments, their own friendships develop. The teens also communicated that some of their best friendships had or were made through travel soccer. This gives the sense of developing a community around sport /soccer. This is something that seems to generate throughout the years as far as one of the reasons children and teens participate in sports. This must be kept in the forefront of importance for children and teens- regardless of age- and parents.

Travel time

Communication is probably the second most consistent implication mentioned in this research. Most parents reported that it was the “travel time” for soccer that allowed more breadth and depth of communication with their teen. Every parent and teen stated that the car was where they felt they talked to their teen or parent the “most”. However, it was the “away” games that allowed for hours in the car to “talk”. This implication crosses over into therapy implications as well. Many parents talk about not having “quality time” with their family or children, but sometimes it may be hidden, such as in the fact of using down time, like travelling in a car, to enhance your relationship with your children /child/teen.

Played badly

Two last important points worth mentioning include kids pointing out that the only time they would not like their mom or dad at a soccer game would be if they played “badly”. The second point is that most parents reported that they would make their child do something else if they did not play soccer. Both of these points are worthy of awareness. For one, some parents question whether their child or teen “wants” them at their soccer game /event. But according to this sample of teens, every teen reported that the only time they would not like to have their parent(s) at a game is if they played poorly, which in the teens eyes, may disappoint the parent(s). This points to the idea that children / teens want to please their parents, regardless of the family typology they fall into. The other issue is that some parents see being involved in “something” is important for their teen. Some parents see the idea of “idle teens will find trouble.” This concept is consequential because we need to understand what children and teens enjoy about soccer, and how we can enhance that, particularly through parental involvement, so that they will continue to be involved in sport to help develop competent, healthy, and successful people.

Therapy Implications

Anytime you talk about parents and children, important information can emanate from it. Throughout the interviews it was hard not to feel like I was conducting therapy sessions. Some parents actually listened in on their child’s interview, stating evidence such as, “I was listening to what you were asking her, but I could not hear what she answered.” This is telling in and of itself, displaying a lack of communication, yet a desire to know what their child is thinking or feeling, and a lack of boundaries. Other

parents wanted to know what their child said in her or his interview and would simply ask, “What did she /he say?” in reference to an interview question.

One relevant issue, which stuck out, was the standard answer from parents about the expectations they have for their child. Every parent stated that they, “want their child to do their best.” This issue is also presented in Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2002), in which they also report that most parents expect or want “their child to do their best.” However, the question comes in as to “how do they define their child doing their best?” This point is also reflected in the lack of clarity contributed by the parents in these interviews. Some teens expressed dealing with issues or things when they come up, and having no “goals or plans.” The teens that reported this lack of goal setting or future oriented site, lacked communication with parents as well. Very few parents related to the word “feedback” when discussing goals and expectations. This is an area where family therapists could potentially focus on when working with parents and children / teens.

Communication in the car

As mentioned in the soccer implication section, communication in the car seemed prevalent. However, there may be an uniqueness to the sport of soccer or other sports that travel. Often times in the Star Traveling schedule a team may play one game in Richmond on a Sunday afternoon, which means driving up Sunday morning for three and half hours, and then playing the game, and then driving back from Richmond Sunday night. One parent reported distinctly “looking forward to all day Sunday trips and enjoying the whole experience; the game, the car ride, the stopping for food.” I personally experienced this issue with my parents. I remember my dad talking about missing a function with friends on a Saturday night, which was often the case. His friends

actually asked him why he chooses to go with his kids rather than attend the function(s), and he said I wouldn't miss it for the world. He would often relate that he enjoyed this weekend trips more than anything, but had a hard time explaining to people who could not understand. Which in turn made me feel good about our relationship. It also made me want to work hard and play hard. There were also many times my mom would tell stories to me and my brother as we traveled up the road. My parents also made many friendships with other parents from the soccer team. Personally, getting a hotel room, and being with my friends and having my parents there too seemed neat. There was a ritual or consistency and structure to the trips. I consider myself very close to my family, and I wonder if it would be that way if it had not been for soccer.

Often people question in today's society whether families are doing "too much", and not having "quality time" to spend with one another. I think, in some cases it may be better when they are at least doing something. Teens in this study also related to "talking" more to their parents when they are being taken to and from practice. Therapists may help families recognize "quality time(s)" so as to utilize it to the fullest extent. Therapists may also help families know how to use the times better. What are issues you could talk about? How do you communicate to your child? When and how to challenge, when and how to support, and when and how to do both.

Sport Psychology Implications

Parents also related to the similar idea from Csikszentmihalyi (2000) about idol teens finding something to entertain themselves and sometimes it includes finding "trouble" to entertain themselves. Several parents made references to this idea in that they would make their teen do "something" if not soccer. These parents talked about not

allowing their teen to “just do nothing” after school. There are many positive aspects of having a child involved in an activity such as soccer. One includes expanding the opportunity for Flow to occur. This by Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider(2002) is one of the best gifts you can give your child. It helps offer the environment to being a happy and successful adult. Along with this, soccer can increase mind and body connection. It provides an opportunity to learn mental and physical skills. These skills include mental and physical relaxation, concentration, perseverance, and motivation. It also teaches teamwork, individual work, goal setting, confidence, and competence. Soccer offers an opportunity to push physical limits through exercise, and learn appropriate social skills, such as winning and losing. There are mental and physical pressures too, which relate to real world issues, and learning respect for coach, teammates, and opponents. Learning to fuel your body and mind to perform at a high level, competing against others, yet connecting with friends who may have similar goals, and expanding that network of friends, and increasing opportunities to meet new and different people. Most importantly it is finding a balance within your family system, and then fine tuning that balance to figure out what works for your particular family.

Research Implications

As with any research, you can always go further and dig deeper. The biggest concern stems from the reliability of the accounts and answers from the parents and the teens. My personal assessment is that parents were far more concerned about how they answered my interview questions than the teens. Several parents even commented on their concern of whether they were “giving me good information.” In the world of research there is the term “triangulation” in relation to gathering data. Most of these teen

soccer players had been coached by my brother at one point or another. Therefore, he also knew the parents. With respect to confidentiality, he reported on some of the worst parents he has had to deal with. One set of parents I actually interviewed. They happen to fall in the category of High Challenge and High Support. They appeared to be the “best” example of how parents should be as far as being involved with their children / teen in sports. I found this interesting because it countered my brother’s experience with them from a coaches point of view. I also had parents talk about or make comments about other parents in the interviews. This was interesting because some parents contradicted what other parents stated in the interviews. Some potential directions this could head into include a focus group for the parents possibly to keep each other accountable. And there is also the perspective of the coach that could produce valuable information, which would be another way to triangulate data. Another valuable source of information could be collected from observing games.

Another point of interest stemming from this study included how Moms never, if rarely, had any outside activities, where as the Dads often had more than one if not several outside activities. This is interesting to note, and could be further explored to understand the dynamics and implications of the family system. Along with this idea is that Moms usually knew less about soccer than the fathers, which was recognized by the teens. This may need further exploration for education purposes, such as in a parent psychoeducation group. However, Moms seemed to sit more at games which points to the idea that they are less vocally and physically involved. Dad’s usually described their behavior at soccer games as in the way of standing and, at times, pacing the sideline, offering more “advice” to their teen. These ideas represents some possible gender

differences that may need further probing to understand. Many teens, male and female, also illustrated the idea that they talked more with their mom's about a larger breadth of issues such as school and friends, and for the most part talked in more depth about these issues, and more often than with their Dads. Several teens mentioned that they talked with their dad's more about sports, such as soccer. When asked why the difference in communication, neither teens nor parents could answer the question, which implies a need for further study.

Another area of further study may include the experience, knowledge, and education of the parents about sports/soccer. This could potentially be addressed in a parent psychoeducation group developed specifically for parents who have children involved in sports / soccer. Along with this is the suggestion and further study into siblings of athletes. Most of the families interviewed had siblings involved in sport or even soccer, and this posed specific issues, such as parents having to "split" time between the siblings around travel and practice. All of these points combined are important to consider when looking at the overall picture in creating the most positive environment for children and parents in relation to their family system and soccer. Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider (2000) sum it up in this quote, ". . .the atmosphere parents create in the family can make a positive difference in their children's adult lives, regardless of what disadvantages the family may suffer. . . . it is worthwhile to explore the complexities of family dynamics in greater depth because the way in which children experience interactions at home may have a decisive impact on their future and well-being" (p.139).

References

- Begley, S., & McCormick, J. (1986, June 2). Going with the flow. *Newsweek*, 68-69.
- Briggs, B. (2001, July 2). *Kid athletes stressed out Pushy parents blamed*. *Denver Post*. Retrieved November 14, 2001, from the First Search database, <http://newfirstsearch.oclc.org>
- Brown, C. H. (1998). Basic systems theory for the sport psychologist *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 10(Suppl.), S66.
- Brown, C.H.(2001). Clinical cross-training: Compatibility of sport and family systems psychology. *Journal of Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 32(1), 19-26.
- Brustad, R. (1988). Affective outcomes in competitive youth sport: The influence of intrapersonal and socialization factors. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 10, 307-321.
- Brustad, R. (1992). Integrating socialization influences into the study of children's motivation in sport. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 4, 59-77.
- Brustad, R. (1993). Who Will Go Out and Play? Parental and psychological influences on children's attraction to physical activity. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 5, 210-223.
- Brustad, R., & Weigand, D. (1989). *Relationship of parental attitudes and affective patterns to levels of intrinsic motivation in young male and female athletes*. Paper presented at the meeting of the North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity, Kent, OH.
- Cahill, B., & Pearl, A. (1993). *Intensive participation in children's sports*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Coppel, D.(1995). Relationship issues in sport: A marital therapy model. In S. M. Murphy (Ed.), *Sport psychology interventions* (pp. 193-204).Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1983). Toward a psychology of optimal experience. In L. Wheeler (Ed.), *Review of personality and social psychology*, 3. Beverly Hills, Sage.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M.(1985). Reflections on enjoyment. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 28 (4), 489-497.

- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. New York, Harper & Row.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, I.S.(1988). *Optimal experience: psychological studies of flow in consciousness*. New York, Cambridge University.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Schneider, B. (2000). *Becoming adult: How teenagers prepare for the world of work*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Damon, W. (1995). *Greater expectations: Overcoming the culture of indulgence in America's homes and schools*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Deacon, J., Branswell, B., McClelland, S., & Smart, D. (2001, March 26). Rink rage: Screaming, shouting and hitting – abusive parents are spoiling their kids' sports. *Maclean's*, p20, Retrieved November 14, 2001, from Infotrac database.
- Duda, J. L. (1987). Toward a developmental theory of children's motivation in sport. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 9, 130-145.
- Eccles, J. S., & Harold, R. D. (1991). Gender differences in sport involvement: Applying the Eccles expectancy-value model. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 3, 7-35.
- Faucette, N., & Osinski, A. (1987). Adult spectator verbal behavior during a mustang league world series. *Journal of Applied Research in Coaching and Athletics*, 2(3), 141-152.
- Fish, L. S. (2000). Hierarchical relationship development: Parents and children. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 26(4), 501-510.
- Frick, D. S., Goff, S. J., & Oppliger, R. (1996). Running and its effect of family life. *Archives of Family Medicine*, 5, 385-389.
- Hanlon, T. (1994) *Sport parent*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Harter, S. (1982). The perceived competence scale for children. *Child Development*, 53, 87-97.
- Hays, K. (1998). *Integrating exercise, sports, movement and mind: Therapeutic unity*. New York, Haworth.
- Hellstedt, C.(1987). The coach / parent / athlete Relationship. *The Sport Psychologist*, 1, 151-160.
- Hellstedt, J. C. (1995). Invisible players: A family systems model. In S.M. Murphy (Ed.), *Sport psychology interventions* (pp. 117-147). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

- Humphrey, J.(1993). *Sports for children: A guide for adults*. Charles C. Thomas Publisher.
- Imber-Black, E. (1988). *Families and larger systems: A family therapist's guide through the labyrinth*. New York: Guilford.
- Kamm, R. (1998). A developmental and psychoeducational approach to reducing conflict and abuse in little league and youth sports. *Sport Psychiatry*, 7 (4), 891-918.
- Landers, D.(1976). *Social problems in athletics*. Chicago, University of Illinois.
- Leff, S., & Hoyle, R.(1995). Young athletes' perceptions of parental support and pressure. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 24, 187-201.
- Lewko, J., & Greendorfer, S.(1988). Family influences in sport socialization of children and adolescents. In: *Children in Sport (3rd ed.)*,pp. 287-300. F.L. Smoll, R.A. Magill, & M.J. Ash (Eds.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Libman, S. (1998). Adult participation in youth sports: A developmental perspective. *Sport Psychiatry*, 7(4), 725-744.
- Magill, R., Ash, M., & Smoll, F. (1988). *Children in sport*. Champaign, IL Human Kinetics.
- Martens, R. (1977). *Sport competition anxiety test*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Martens, R.(1978). *Joy and sadness in children's sports*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- McElroy, M., & Kirkendall, D. (1981). Conflict in perceived parent / child sport ability judgments. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 3, 244-247.
- McElroy, M. (1982). Consequences of perceived parental pressure on the self esteem of youth sport participants. *American Correlation Theory Journal*, 36(6), 164-167.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- Murphy, S. (1995). *Sport psychology: Psychological interventions*. Chicago, Human Kinetics.

- Newsweek (2000, July 24). Parents behaving badly: The hockey-dad killing in Massachusetts highlights a problem in kids' sports: out-of-control adults. *Family*, p47. Retrieved November 14, 2001, <http://web2.infotrac.galegroup.com>
- Patriksson, G.(1981). Socialization to sports involvement. *Journal of Sport Science*, 27-32.
- Power, T., & Woogler, C.(1994). Parenting practices and age-group swimming: a correlational study. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 65, 59-66.
- Rathunde, K. (1996). Family context and talented adolescents' optimal experience in school-related activities. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 6(4), 603-626.
- Roberts, G. C. (1992). *Motivation in sport and exercise*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Robinson, T., & Carron, A. (1982). Personal and situational factors associated with dropping out versus maintaining participation in competitive sport. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 4, 364-378.
- Rosenburg, M. (1980). *Conceiving the self*. New York: Basic Books.
- Rossmann, G., & Ralls, S. (1998). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rotella, R., & Bunker, L.(1987). *Parenting your superstar: How to help your child get the most out of sports*. Champaign, IL: Leisure Press.
- Russell, W. (1996). The utility of family therapy in the field of sport psychology. *Family Therapy*, 23(1), 38-42.
- Sagor, R. (1993). *At-risk students: Reaching and teaching them*. Swampscott, MA: Watersun Press.
- Sagor, R. (2002). Lessons from skateboarders: What motivates young people to master the challenges of sports? *Educational Leadership*, 2002, September, 34-38.
- Scanlan, T., & Lewthwaite, R. (1984). Social psychological aspects of competition for male youth sport participants: Predictors of competitive stress. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 6, 208-226.
- Scanlan, T., & Simons, J.(1989). The construct of sport enjoyment. *Journal of Motivation in sport and Exercise*, 199-215.

- Scherer, M. (2002). Do students care about learning? A conversation with Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi. *Educational Leadership*, 2002, September, 12-17.
- Singer, R. (1984). *Sustaining motivation in sport*. Florida: Sport Consultants International, Inc.
- Schindler-Zimmerman, T., Walshe, W., & Protinsky, H. (1990). Strategic intervention in an athletic system. *Journal of Strategic and Systemic Therapies*, 9(2), 1-7.
- Schmidt, G., and Stein, G. (1991). Sport Commitment : A model integrating enjoyment, dropout, and burnout. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 8, 254-265.
- Smith, R., Smoll, F., & Smith, N.(1989). *Parents' complete guide to youth sports*. Costa Mesa, CA: HDL Publishing.
- Smoll, F., & Smith, R.(1978). *Psychological perspectives in youth sports*. Washington, D.C.: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.
- Smoll, F., Smith, N.J., & Smith, R.(1983). *Kidsports: A survival guide for parents*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Robinson, T. T., & Carron, A. V. (1982). Personal and situational factors associated with dropping out versus maintaining participation in competitive sport. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 4, 364-378.
- Robinson, D., & Howe, B. (1989) Appraisal variable / affect relationships in youth sport: A test of weiner's attributional model. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 11, 431-443.
- Russel, W. (1996). The utility of family therapy in the field of sport psychology. *Family Therapy*, 23 (1), 37-42.
- Wankel, L., & Kreisel, P. (1985). Factors underlying enjoyment of youth sports: Sport and age group comparisons. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 7, 51-64.
- Wedemeyer, L. (2003). South Dakota Head Women's Soccer Coach. National Youth Development Staff.
- Weigand, D., & Broadhurst, C. (1998). The relationship among perceived competence, intrinsic motivation, and control perceptions in youth soccer. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 29, 324-338.

- Weiss, M., & Gould, D.(1986). *Sport for children and youths*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Wylleman, J (2000). Interpersonal relationships in sport: Uncharted territory in sport psychology research. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 31, 555-572.
- Wynne, L. (1986). *Systems consultation: A new perspective for family therapy*. New York: Guilford.
- Zimmerman, T.S., & Protinsky, H.O. (1993).Uncommon sports psychology: Consultation using family theory and techniques. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 21, 161-174.

Appendix A

NAME AND PHONE NUMBER _____

General Feelings Toward Soccer Questionnaire

Over the past month has soccer felt . . .

More like work () More like play () Both () Neither ()

	not at all	very much
How well were you concentrating?	0 1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9
Were you living up to expectations of others?	0 1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9
Was it hard to concentrate?	0 1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9
Did you feel self-conscious or embarrassed?	0 1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9
Did you feel good about yourself?	0 1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9
Did you enjoy what you were doing?	0 1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9
Were you living up to your expectations?	0 1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9
Did you feel in control?	0 1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9

Were you playing soccer over the past month because . . .

You wanted to () You had to () You had nothing else to do ()

Describe your mood over the past month in relation to playing soccer:

	Very	Quite	Some	Neither		Very	Quite	Some	Neither
Happy	()	()	()	()	Sad	()	()	()	()
Weak	()	()	()	()	Strong	()	()	()	()
Passive	()	()	()	()	Active	()	()	()	()
Lonely	()	()	()	()	Sociable	()	()	()	()
Ashamed	()	()	()	()	Proud	()	()	()	()
Involved	()	()	()	()	Detached	()	()	()	()
Excited	()	()	()	()	Bored	()	()	()	()
Clear	()	()	()	()	Confused	()	()	()	()
Worried	()	()	()	()	Relaxed	()	()	()	()
Competitive	()	()	()	()	Cooperative	()	()	()	()

Indicate how you felt about soccer over the past month:

	Low								High
Challenges of the activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Your skills in the activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Was this activity important to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
How difficult did you find this activity?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Were you succeeding at what you were doing?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Did you wish you had been doing something else?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Was this activity interesting?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Would you have played soccer over the past month if you had a choice?

Yes () I would have chosen to play soccer

No () I would have chosen to do _____

Has anything happened, or have you done anything which could have affected how you feel about soccer?

Appendix B

Support and Challenge Dynamics Questionnaire

Answer each question on how you generally feel about your family, with stating “agree” or “disagree”.

	Agree	Disagree
1. (+ S) Others notice when I’m feeling down, even if I don’t say anything.	_____	_____
2. (+ C) We enjoy playing competitive games.	_____	_____
3. (- S) It is difficult to relax and be myself.	_____	_____
4. (- C) We have few interests and hobbies outside of the home.	_____	_____
5. (+ S) I feel appreciated for who I am.	_____	_____
6. (+ C) We express our opinions about current events, even when they differ.	_____	_____
7. (- S) The only time I’m noticed is when there is a problem.	_____	_____
8. (+ S) If I have a problem, I get special attention and help.	_____	_____
9. (- C) Others lack ambition and self-discipline.	_____	_____
10. (- C) I don’t care if others think I’m “soft” or lazy.	_____	_____
11. (+ S) I do things I like to do without feeling embarrassed.	_____	_____
12. (- S) Day-to-day life is disorganized and unpredictable.	_____	_____
13. (+ C) We ask each other’s ideas before making important decisions.	_____	_____
14. (- C) It’s hard to find privacy when I need to concentrate and finish some work.	_____	_____
15. (+ C) I’m expected to use my time wisely.	_____	_____
16. (- S) Others can’t be counted on.	_____	_____
17. (+ S) We try not to hurt each other’s feelings.	_____	_____
18. (+ S) I am made to feel special on birthdays and holidays.	_____	_____
19. (- S) There are many fights and arguments.	_____	_____
20. (+ S) No matter what happens, I know I’ll be loved and accepted.	_____	_____
21. (+ C) It’s important to be self-confident and independent to earn respect.	_____	_____
22. (+ S) Our home is full of things that hold special memories.	_____	_____
23. (+ S) We are willing to help each other out when something needs to be done.	_____	_____
24. (+ S) We compromise when our schedules conflict.	_____	_____
25. (+ C) Individual accomplishments are noticed.	_____	_____
26. (+ S) We enjoy having dinner together and talking.	_____	_____
27. (+ C) Others expect to be good at what they do.	_____	_____
28. (+ C) I’m expected to do my best.	_____	_____
29. (+ C) I’m given responsibility for making important decisions affecting my life.	_____	_____
30. (+ C) I try to make other family members proud.	_____	_____
31. (+ C) I’m encouraged to get involved in extracurricular activ.	_____	_____
32. (+ C) I’m respected for being a hard worker.	_____	_____

Appendix C

Parental Involvement in Youth Sports The Athletes Interview Guide

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Pseudonym:

Family Interaction

- 1.) What kinds of things/activities do you do with your family? Does that include your parents being involved with soccer? How much time would you say you spend with your family over the course of a week? How much time would you say you spend alone?
- 2.) How much time would you say you are involved with soccer on average per week? How much time would you say your parents are involved with your soccer on average per week?
- 3.) Do your parents play any sports or participate in any activities?

Communication

- 4.) (Frequency) How much time, on average, do you think you spend talking or communicating with your parents over the course of a week? Are there times you find yourself talking to them more? (i.e at dinner, in the car, etc)
- 5.) (Breadth) What type of things/subjects/issues do you talk about with your parents? Does this include soccer?
- 6.) (Depth) Are there certain things (subjects) that you and your parents talk in more depth about? (Examples)
- 7.) Do you talk with your parents about your soccer? What do you seem to talk about most in relation to your soccer?(e.g. how you are playing, if you are having fun?, etc.). When do you talk about soccer? (e.g. before a game, after a game, in the car, etc.)
- 8.) Describe your parent's behavior when they attend a soccer game.
- 9.) Do you talk openly with you parents about expectations in general and in relation to soccer? If not, why not?

Expectations

- 10.) What do you think your parents expect of you in general? What do you expect of yourself in general? What do you expect of yourself in relation to soccer? What are your parent's expectations of you in relation to soccer? Do you feel these

expectations are the same or different than your parents expectations? Do you feel you have a choice about your involvement in soccer?

11.) Describe your parent's investment/involvement in relation to your soccer.

12.) How do you see soccer as related to your future? How do you think your parents see soccer as related to your future?

Goals

13.) Do you set goals? What kind of goals have you set? What kind of goals do you think your parents have set for you? Have you and your parents established goals about your involvement in soccer? What kind of feedback do you receive about your goals and your parents' goals?

14.)

Do you feel your parents play a part in whether you enjoy soccer or not?
Why or why not?

15.) Do you talk openly with your parents about your expectations? Do you talk openly with your parents about their expectations?

16.) What can parents do or not do to increase or support enjoyment for you in your soccer experiences?

Appendix D

Parental Involvement in Youth Sports The Parents Interview Guide

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Pseudonym:

Family Interaction

- 1.) What kinds of things/activities do you do with your family? Does that include being involved with your adolescents soccer? How much time would you say you spend with your adolescent over the course of a week?
- 2.) How much time would you say you are involved with soccer on average per week?
- 3.) Do you participate in any activities?

Communication

- 4.) (Frequency) How much time do you think you spend talking or communicating with your adolescent over the course of a week, on average? Are there times you find yourself talking to them more? (i.e. at dinner, in the car, etc.)
- 5.) (Breadth) What type of things/subjects/issues do you talk about with your adolescent? Does this include soccer?
- 6.) (Depth) Are there certain things that you and your adolescent talk in more depth about? (Examples)
- 7.) Do you talk with your adolescent about soccer? What do you seem to talk about most in relation to their soccer? (e.g. how they are playing, if they are having fun?, etc.). When do you seem to talk about soccer the most? (e.g. before a game, after a game, in the car, etc.)
- 8.) Describe your behavior when you attend your adolescent's soccer games?
- 9.) Do you talk openly with your adolescent about expectations in general and in relation to soccer? If not, why not?

Expectations

- 10.) What do you expect of your adolescent in general? What are your expectations for your adolescent in relation to soccer? Do you feel that these expectations are the same or different than your adolescents expectations?
- 11.) Describe your investment / involvement in your adolescents' sport?
- 12.) How do you see soccer as related to your adolescent's future?

Clarity

- 13.) Describe your parenting in relation to setting goals for your child?
- 14.) Do you feel you play a part in whether your adolescent enjoys soccer or not?
Why or why not?
- 15.) Do you talk openly with your child about your expectations for them?

Appendix E

Cover letter to parents and / or Guardians

Hello,

My name is Liz Wedemeyer Moon, and I am currently a 3rd year Doctoral Candidate in the marriage and family therapy program at Virginia Tech. I am in the process of writing my dissertation in the area of parental involvement in youth sports.

Purpose of Study:

To learn more about parental involvement and youth sports. I am specifically interested in the experiences of the athletes, and how they describe their parent's involvement. I am also interested in the parent's perceptions of their involvement in relation to their teen's participation in soccer. My hopes are to learn what family dynamics are most conducive to supporting an environment where optimal experience may take place in the sports arena for adolescents.

Your child will be filling out two questionnaires, and will possibly be chosen for a follow-up interview. If you are interested in your child participating, please read the consent form and assent form, fill-out, sign and return, in an envelope, with your child to his or her next soccer event, whether it is a game or practice. Also please read the parent consent form, and provide information if you and your spouse are willing to be chosen for a possible interview.

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to contact me at (540) 265-0265. Thank you for your time and participation!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth W. Moon, MS, MS
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Human Development
Marriage and Family Therapy

Janet Sawyers, PhD
Doctoral Committee Chairperson
Department of Human Development

Appendix E

Parental and Guardian Permission Form

Project Title: Flow: Family Dynamics and Adolescent Participation in Soccer

Principal Investigators: Elizabeth W. Moon Doctoral Candidate in Marriage and Family Therapy at Virginia Tech, and Dr. Janet Sawyers Assistant Professor, Human Development and Family Studies

1. I hereby agree to have my child participate in two questionnaires and an interview in connection with the project known as *Flow: Family Dynamics and Adolescent Participation in Soccer*. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary, and they will be asked about experiences related to questions of their parents involvement in their sport experiences.
2. I understand that my child will be asked to participate in two questionnaires, which will take approximately 10 minutes, as well as possibly at least 1 interview, which will take no longer than 60 minutes.
3. I understand that my child can withdraw from the project and the interview at any time without penalty of any kind. In the event that they withdraw from the interview or project, any tape made of the interview will be destroyed, and no transcript will be made of the interview.
4. I understand that neither myself nor my child will receive any compensation for participation in this project.
5. I understand that there are no known risks to participating in this project, though it may be difficult at times to discuss negative experiences they wish to share. I also understand that the benefits of this project are great, as your child's experiences may help inform other youth sport participants, coaches, parents, sport psychologists, and marriage and family therapists in understanding how we can enhance and support enjoyment of sport for young athletes.
6. I understand the interview will be audiotaped. In the interview, your child will be identified by a pseudonym so that they may remain anonymous in any transcript, tape, and reference to any information contained in the interview.
7. This project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.
8. If I feel my child has not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or that their rights as a participant in the research have been violated during the course of this project, I know I can contact Dr. David Moore, Chair, IRB, Research Division,

Virginia Tech, or Elizabeth W. Moon, or Dr. Janet sawyers, the Principal Investigators, at the phone numbers listed below.

9. I voluntarily agree to have my child participate in this study and agree to questionnaires and interviews according to the terms outlined above. I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for my childs' participation in this project.

* Please indicate permission for your child to be involved in a follow-up interview if contacted by checking YES___ NO___ .

* Please indicate if you and your spouse are willing to be involved in a follow-up interview if contacted YES___ NO___ .

* If you checked YES to either of these, please write your name, child's name and phone number for contact purposes. Thank you so much for your participation!

Name: _____ Spouse / Partners' name: _____

Child's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Should I have any questions about the research project or procedures, I may contact:

Elizabeth W. Moon
Principal Investigator
(540) 265-0265
ewedemey@vt.edu

Dr. Janet Sawyers
Principal Investigator
(540) 231-3194

Dr. David Moore
Chair, IRB
(540) 231-4991

Participants will be given a copy or duplicate original of this consent form.

You may request a summary of the results of the study. If you or your child is interested, you may contact me by phone or e-mail.

Appendix F

RESEARCH STUDY

Family Dynamics and Adolescent Participation in Soccer
Researcher: Elizabeth W. Moon, Ph.D. Candidate
Virginia Polytechnic University

Minor Participant’s Assent Form

I am being asked to read the following material to ensure that I am informed of the nature of this research study and of how I will participate in it, if I assent to do so. Signing this form will indicate that I have been so informed and that I give my assent. Federal regulations require written assent prior to participation in this research study so that I can know the nature and the risks of my participation and can decide to participate or not to participate in a free and informed manner.

Purpose

I am being invited to voluntarily participate in the above-titled research project. My mother/father/guardian is aware of my participation in the study and has given permission for me to participate. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of young athletes and their parental involvement of their sporting experience(s).

Procedure

If I agree to participate, I will be asked to participate in completing two questionnaires and possibly at least one interview, and possibly another follow-up interview. My participation is strictly voluntary, and I may end the participation at any time.

Confidentiality

All tapes and transcripts will be kept strictly confidential. The tapes will be destroyed after the study is completed. I understand that a pseudonym will be substituted for my real name.

I have read and understood the above information. My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this research study.

Child’s Name (please print)

Date

Signature

Parent’s Name (please print)

Date

Parent’s Signature

* Should you have any questions about the research project or procedures, you may contact:
Elizabeth W. Moon Dr. Janet Sawyers Dr. David Moore
Principal Investigator Principal Investigator Chair, IRB
(540) 265-0265 (540) 231-3194 (540) 231-4991
ewedemey@vt.edu

*You may request a summary of the results of the study after completion by contacting me by phone or e-mail.

Curriculum Vita

Elizabeth W. Moon
225 Frontier Road
Roanoke, VA 24012
(540) 265-0265 (H)
ewedemey@vt.edu

Objective

To further my education, my experience and ability to work with families, couples, and individuals through in-depth theory, research and practice.

Education

<i>University of North Carolina at Greensboro</i> Major: Human Development and Family Studies	BS	May, 1996
<i>University of North Carolina at Greensboro</i> Degree in Sport Psychology	MS	July, 1998
<i>East Carolina University</i> Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy	MS	May, 2000
<i>Virginia Tech</i> Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy	Ph.D.	May, 2003

Awards Received

<i>ECU Book Exchange Academic Scholarship</i> Based on grade point average of undergraduate and graduate students in the School of Human Environmental Sciences.	1998-2000
<i>UNCG Academic Scholarship: E. Louise Lowe</i> Student with highest grade point average in the major of Human Development and Family Studies.	1994-1996
<i>UNCG Academic Scholarship: Second Century Scholar</i> Students with high academic achievements who made a positive influence in the school and community. I was a Spartan Hero where I coached underserved youth soccer through the YMCA volunteer program. I was a volunteer coach for a U-12 youth girls soccer team with the emphasis of being a role model.	1992-1994
<i>Nelson E. Bobb Academic and Athletic Scholarship</i> Highest grade point average of all athletes attending UNCG.	1995-1996

- NCAA Academic All-American* 1995-1996
A combination of playing for a nationally ranked Division I soccer program, and academic accomplishments.
- UNCG Coaches Award* 1995-1996
For academic leadership off the soccer field, as well as athletic leadership on the soccer field.
- UNCG Soccer Hall of Fame* 1995-1996
For outstanding athlete and student.
- Phi Beta Omicron* 2000-2003
Inducted into honor society for grade point average and community service.

Professional Experience

- Research Assistant, University of North Carolina at Greensboro* 1996-1997
Collected data and research for Daniel Gould, PhD. Assisted in small group team enhancement training sessions (e.g. UNCG Baseball team)
- Sport Psychologist for UNCG Women's Soccer Team* 1997-1998
Conducted group sessions with team, as well as individual consultations. Worked on skill enhancement. Worked on techniques such as relaxation, breathing, positive self-talk, and imagery.
- Supervisor and Mentor for Project Effort, UNCG* 1997-1998
Worked with Project Effort, which dealt with underserved youth at Elementary school age through Middle School age. Used sport activities to help underserved youth with social skills and personal responsibility. Mentored children at school as well as out of school, and worked with parents and teachers. Worked on setting goals and achieving those goals.
- Supervisor for Junior Teaching Fellows tutoring program, ECU* 1998-1999
Supervised and mentored Junior Teaching Fellows. Students in the Education Department have to apply to the NC Teaching Fellows program. These students have to maintain a certain grade point average, and take part in many extracurricular activities, including tutoring, mentoring, and taking part in teaching seminars and conferences. The program is designed to prepare students to become highly effective teachers.
- Medical Family Therapy Intern* 1999-2000
Conducted psychotherapy sessions for families, couples, individuals, and women's group. Participate in clinical discussions pertaining to current issues in psychiatry and Marriage and Family Therapy, collaborating with other professionals.

Research Assistant, Virginia Polytechnic Institute 2000-2001
Conducted and assisted in research for Anne Prouty, Ph.D. Reviewed literature on breast cancer and relationships. Assisted in survey data in relation to marriage and family therapy graduate program assessments.

Group Leader for Adult Development and Aging Program 2000-2002
Conducted reminiscence therapy groups for older adults. Assisted in conducting and analyzing research.

Administrative Assistant for Department Head 2000-2002
Worked with and assisted Fred Piercy, Ph.D. Departmental Head of Human Development and Family Studies at Virginia Tech.

Co-chaired Conference Quint State 2001-2002
Co-directed and co-facilitated a student-run and student-organized conference for five graduate Universities including: Virginia Tech, UNCGreensboro, University of Tennessee, Auburn University, and University of Georgia.

Family Therapy Intern for Family Services of the Roanoke Valley 2002-2003
Conduct individual, couple, family, and child therapy sessions. Work with alternative school of 5th graders to 12th graders. Conduct and facilitate group sessions in relation to drug and alcohol abuse. Also facilitate and lead Youth Connection groups. Group sessions also include anger management, goal development, problem solving and mediation. Facilitate and lead psychoeducational support group for parents of alternative school students. Conduct play therapy sessions for children at satellite site for Family Services in Buchanan, Virginia. Issues include child sexual abuse, aggressive behavior, school issues, parent-child relationship issues, etc..

Research Experience

Research Assistant
Collected data and conducted research for Olympic studies, i.e. interviewed Women's Olympic Gold medal Soccer Team. Looked at the expectations of different Olympic programs, i.e. why the teams that expected to do well did poorly, and the teams with low expectations did well. Collected interview packets and analyzed data for National level youth swimming program assessing athlete dropout rates.

Research Assistant
Assisting with development of a questionnaire to assess initiate-avoid patterns of couples communication. Helped with a validity study comparing new questionnaire with questionnaires of more established validity. Distributed and collected questionnaire packets, entered data into SPSS PC file, participated in data analysis.

Conducted Pilot Study

Completed a qualitative research study concerning parental involvement in youth sports. Interviewed four female soccer players age ranging from 14-15.

Doctoral Dissertation in Process

Completed dissertation using the Flow model developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Interested in understanding family dynamics in relation to adolescent experiences in sport.

Professional Presentations

Women's Health Issues: Breast Cancer and Relational Factors

Poster presentation in 2000 Annual Conference, North Carolina Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

"The Family Therapist as a Health Care Professional"

Workshop presenter in 2000 Annual Conference American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Presented the biopsychosocial model in relation to working as a health care professional.

John Gottman research presented to Human Development Undergraduate Family Relations Course

Presented research and theory based on marriage and family therapy expert John Gottman.

References available upon request