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Matthew Aaron Munich
No Purer Joy: The Developmental,
Social and Motivational Aspects of
Elite College Squash

ABSTRACT

This is a study of the experience of elite level college squash players from three angles: development, social context and motivation. Primary aims included describing an intense human experience in terms of developmental gains, identifying social cues the participants received from their social context, understanding motivations for participation, and exploring cultural differences most pertinent to squash participation. The sample was comprised of 15 American and international players from the Yale University men's and women's squash teams who completed semi-structured interviews. The players represented all academic classes and 7 countries. Findings revealed a number of important developmental gains that were fostered by intense squash participation, most particularly in areas of mastery, competence and increased agency. Parents were of paramount importance as influential socializing agents in shaping their children's experiences. Ways in which parental involvement helped and hindered developmental gains derived from squash participation were also identified. In addition, the overwhelming importance of team participation was explored. The findings call into question a clear distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for athletes at this level and explore the complex set of motivations that so intense a level of commitment and achievement entails. Finally, findings revealed important differences in American and international squash playing experiences in terms of parental support, parental control and autonomy. Although there is need for further research in these areas, it is hoped that this study will be useful for anyone engaged in an intense activity for developmental gains.

**No Purer Joy: The Developmental, Social and Motivational
Aspects of Elite College Squash**

A project based on an independent investigation, submitted in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Social Work.

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2011

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Once again, I find myself amazed at the inexhaustible support of my parents, Richard and Adrienne Munich, through yet another one of my madcap ventures. By no means do I take for granted what a privilege it is to have two people who will quite literally never give up on me and I have taken profound strength from their steadfast belief. Finally, thanks to the miraculously fantastic Dr. Melissa Ming Foynes who clarified my research at several junctures with her wise and insightful intellect and her phenomenal expertise about the prosecution of real research. That I get to spend the rest of my life with so remarkable a collaborator is testament to the propitious star under which I was conceived and to the fact that the universe is an albeit quirky yet wonderful place when you have your heart open to its eccentricities.

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Chapter I

Introduction

This study aims to understand the experience of an elite college squash player from three angles: human development, social context and motivation. In doing so, I hope to examine how such an intense experience fit into the life span of the athlete, how it fostered or hindered their development, what messages about their experience they received from their social context (parents, coaches and peers) and what has and continues to motivate them through the long and arduous path that is involved in being an elite level athlete. In short, this study seeks to understand what this experience means and has meant to the athlete as they reflect back on it.

Several different sources point to the value of this study. The first is the very value of understanding the quality of this intense, volitional commitment to one activity and where it fits within the broader arc of the life span. The second is to understand how the major figures in a person's life shape, direct, encourage, discourage and scaffold an athlete's involvement in sport. As such, the study can be useful not just to coaches and parents of squash players, but might also provide answers for how anyone involved with children in any endeavor might go about providing optimal support while avoiding potentially corrosive impingements. Lastly, in studying motivation, this project can be one more in a host of studies that seek to better understand how the human organism internalizes external goals, the origin of the competitive spirit, and how to generalize motivation across activities. From the point of view of the literature on sports psychology, this study fills a frequently cited need in the literature for studies that focus on college-aged athletes in general, as well as a need for studies that seek to understand the

connection between the seemingly disparate realms of academics and other, more volitional activities, such as playing a musical instrument, hobbies, and athletic engagement.

It is well understood that the three areas of this study have vast literatures, offering an array of theories, all of which could lead this study in many directions. In the area of development, the notion of life cycles will be employed in several senses. The first is that of a college-aged person on the cusp of leaving a protected environment that started with the womb, continued into the nuclear family and the home and into different school settings, all with the comfort of identifiable expectations and goals to meet. For many, this stage is the time at which the person becomes further differentiated from family ties and prepares to create their own life based more on the individual's own aims and values. And while this life stage has different nomenclature with different theorists, Erikson and Piaget and their elucidation of developmental tasks for different ages through the life cycle will be important groundwork for this section. Secondly, while there is the particular phase of the college student, the participant in this study will reflect on squash playing as it pertained to earlier developmental stages to assess how this activity may have collaborated with and fostered developmental gains and milestones. In this regard, the work of developmental psychologists, self-proclaimed neo-Piagetians, who focus on mastery, competence, ability and their relation to selfhood (self-esteem, self-concept, self-confidence) will all be useful.

While it might seem that the constructs of development and motivation are independent variables, observable in isolation, both are intimately connected with the social context in which they occur. Theorists from the psychoanalytic to the developmental, from the behavioral to the cognitive all agree that parental influence is so pervasive in all arenas that to even discuss a person as an individuated self might be a misnomer. Thus, in the arena of sports psychology, it

is not surprising to see an emerging body of research that not only agrees with the primacy of parenting styles and behavioral reinforcement records on the athlete, but that also seeks to quantify the ways in which parental involvement can help or hinder the emerging athlete. Recently, as well, researchers are investigating the importance of the role of coaches and peers to the athletic enterprise. Of particular interest to this study is how a college-aged squash player, on the cusp of this major phase of individuation and well steeped in this vigorously individual sport, comes to recognize that inclusion within a team as the most important aspect of the squash experience. While this move from self to group is consistent with developmental story of maturing young adults, I will rely on the emerging body of research that studies social influencers on athletes to help reconstruct the athlete's dependence on the social milieu at earlier phases.

Early research on motivation sought to delineate internal from external motivation, whether someone does something for socially observable gains or for more internal gratifications. Within this work, there was a strong bias for motivations that are more internal. But, even on quick glance, such a dichotomy dissolves because internal and external gains prove quite difficult to disambiguate. For example, calling athletes externally motivated because they are concerned about where they fit on the team's ladder (an external goal) does not say anything about what it means for them in a host of what we might call 'internal' factors to attain that spot. After examining the literature on internal and external motivation, we will then explore the work, heavily dependent on Piaget, on what it means to master something, what it means to be competent, indeed excellent, at something, and how attaining external goals connect to internal gratifications. Finally, in thinking about athletes and motivation, it will also be important to think about notions of asceticism and what certain intense, highly physical, often pleasure-

denying regimens mean for the spiritual development of the self. In this regard, the concept of “personal training” is not a misnomer.

This particular study also seeks to compare American and international athletes and, as such, has something of a background story particular to squash. In the early 1990s, American college squash began to undergo a shift. Whereas previously, the rosters of college squash teams were filled almost entirely by American athletes, by the mid-1990s more international players began to assume positions on the best college teams. The change is directly attributable to the 1994 decision by the National Intercollegiate Squash Association (NISRA) to switch from the North American version of squash (called “hardball” due to the hardness of the ball) to the more internationally recognized version of the game (called “softball” due to the softness of the ball) (Zug, 2003). The shift represented a major sea change and heavily favored international players who had been exposed to the game from the beginning of their playing careers over American players who were now forced to adjust to the new ball and new court dimensions, an entirely different game. As such, the first team that recruited heavily from international player pools, Trinity College in Hartford, CT, established a dynasty in the collegiate game that has gone unchallenged for the last thirteen years.

In recent years and in response to Trinity’s dominance, schools have realized that if they are to regain the top spot in squash, they must recruit from an international pool of players, creating a dynamic whereby many colleges have rosters that are mixed between international and American players. Through personal communication, several college coaches have reported to me the noticeable difference of working with these two contingents. By report, their American players display a low level of motivation when it comes to effort and focus in practice, lack of perseverance in the competitive arena, display a high degree of anxiety, a need for extraordinary

coaching attention in the form of reassurance and coaxing, and many performance corrosive symptoms, from low affect to eating disorders. On the contrary, they report, their international players practice hard, practice in a self-directed way, require a low level of monitoring, maintenance and reassurance, and do not show performance-corrosive symptoms outside of injuries incurred in the normal fracas of competition and training.

In studying this experience from these three angles with both American and international players, this study hopes to explore both the veracity of this anecdotal difference and any cultural sources behind them. Understanding the experience as a whole has benefits for the human organism, for players, parents and coaches alike, as well as for increasing our understanding of motivated behavior writ large. Understanding contrasting perceptions of the same experience provides the material for the comparison and could point to tremendously useful information for what aspects of this experience parents and coaches can and should highlight for their players. I believe that this study will also have implications in the academic realm, where very similar developmental, social and motivational forces are at play.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Human Development

Erikson, the Stages of Man and Play as Hallucinated Mastery

By now, Erikson's theory of psychosocial stages of development (Erikson, 1950), built upon Freud's theory of psychosexual development, has become largely canonical and is the framework upon which subsequent work on human development has been built. Erikson posited eight stages of development through the life cycle, each with its own task or crisis to negotiate in order to appropriately handle the next stage's crisis, which will come whether or not the previous one was successfully negotiated. As Erikson himself elaborated in a later work, *Youth: Identity and Crisis* (1968), the term "crisis" in each developmental phase does not represent a disaster or catastrophe for the person, but rather a critical juncture, a nodal period, or deciding point, where, in collaboration with the environment, the person can either realize a potential or have that potentiality remain dormant (Erikson, 1968, 92ff.). While it will not be of value to explore all of the stages here, it is important to note that the stages most salient for this study will be Erikson's stages four through six, that period from ages six through the middle twenties when the person's own competence and mastery begin to have an increasing impact on their environment and through viewing that impact, forges an increasingly distinct identity.

The fourth stage, from ages six to 12, whose crisis Erikson names 'industry v. inferiority' is perhaps most important for our study because it will be the time during which most of our

players will have discovered squash and also experienced enormous improvement at the game. Such a discovery and its attendant explosion of competence accords well with Erikson's theory because the psychosexual forces driving earlier stages have gone into latency and become sublimated into the experiences of learning, creating, exploring, as well as an expanding sense of agency (Erikson, 1950). This phase is also so crucial for its ability to pull the organism still further away from the inferiority felt during infancy and young childhood (Erikson, 1968). But Erikson also helps us begin to think about both organized and expressive play by theorizing about its value to the person at still younger stages. He provides his clearest formulation of the function of play in the following passage from *Childhood and Society*:

To grow means to be divided into different parts which move at different rates...play, then, is a function of the ego, an attempt to synchronize the bodily and social processes with the self...[play reflects] the ego's need to master the various areas of life, and especially those in which the individual find his self, his body, and his social role wanting and trailing. To hallucinate ego mastery and yet also practice it in an intermediate reality between phantasy and actuality is the purpose of play. (Erikson, 1950, p. 211)

Here we can see some of Erikson's dependence on Freud's theorizing about his grandson's game of *Fort/Da* as simulating control over his mother's coming and going (Freud, 1920), a kind of control which the one and a half year-old could only fantasize. But Erikson expands the notion of play away from mere symbolic mastery to one of integration. Play no longer becomes just a way to master something over which one has no control, but is also an attempt to unify the internal and external world, to imagine later stages of development when mastery won't be an illusion, and to create a metaphor of the external world where the young child understands the

rules by creating them. While we will be studying players at a much later stage of development playing an arguably more complicated game, there is no reason to think that games and organized sport are not themselves both games for their own sake and also symbolic representations of the external world. In that sense, play at any stage of development will be an effort to hallucinate and practice mastery over forces often well out of our control.

Piaget, Adaptation and The Ludic Activity of the Socialized Being

While Erikson's focus was on the psychosocial, Piaget was more interested in understanding the cognitive changes that were involved in each stage of development and the ways in which cognition was intimately connected to emotion (Singer & Revenson, 1978). He, too, elaborated a theory of stages, from birth to age 16, but his stages don't refer to crises that must be negotiated but rather intellectual competencies that move from the most rudimentary of mental images to the most complex types of problem solving, and that finally endow the person with the complete mental apparatus necessary for the complexities of life (Singer & Revenson, 1978). For Piaget, then, cognition does not only dictate raw learning, but also governs our emotional response to our world, and thus plays a larger role in development than had been recognized by earlier theorists (Evans, 1973). And while this is not the space to fully explicate all of Piaget's theories, it will be important to consider his concept of adaptation and summarize the important role play has in the Piagetian framework since it is so relevant to our topic.

For Piaget, the organism's adaptation to the environment was the paramount aspect of development, and that adaptation was itself the product of two dynamic processes: assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the way new information arrives into the organism and comes into contact with pre-existing information with which it either agrees or conflicts. Accommodation is the process by which old information becomes revised and either altered or

rejected entirely to fit in with this new information presented (Singer & Revenson, 1978). Piaget stressed the dynamism of this process, whereby neither the external world nor the developing organism are static, but rather both alter and transform each other (Evans, 1973). So, whereas Erikson saw the organism fitting itself into external reality, Piaget saw much more communication back and forth, with the self needing to balance internal and external worlds, a process Piaget called 'equilibration' (Singer & Revenson, 1978). Furthermore, whereas Erikson saw play as purely symbolic mastery attempts on a universe available for only minimal control, Piaget envisioned play as a much more central part of development and the organism's crucial attempt to equilibrate itself to the world.

In his monograph dedicated to play, *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* (1962), Piaget makes an argument for the centrality of play in human development and went beyond Erikson in describing different forms of play and their purpose. Whereas for Erikson, play was always a form of internalizing the external world and practicing a mastery yet to arrive, Piaget distinguished between play that is always and only internal ('autotelic') and as such does not need to yield to the dictates of reality, and play that does involve the external world and does seek to incorporate its dictates ('heterotelic') (Piaget, 1962). Within these categories, Piaget distinguishes between the first form of play, 'practice play', then 'symbolic play' and finally, 'games with rules' which begin around the age of seven and continue throughout the life span, constituting what Piaget deems as "the ludic activity of civilized life," (Piaget, 1962, p. 345). But through it all, Piaget makes clear that the developing child is using play as a major force in striving toward greater equilibration, of tuning inner and outer world to come to some sort of truce, some sort of balance from which to interact with the world on an ever more secure platform (Piaget, 1962).

As a major champion of play, Piaget did not, in fact, distinguish it from other forms of thought or interaction and rejected a strong distinction between the world of play and the civilized world. In a very clear statement of the value of play, in the form of games with rules, Piaget remarks:

In games with rules there is a subtle equilibrium between assimilation to the ego—the principle of all play—and social life. There is still sensory-motor or intellectual satisfaction, and there is also the chance of individual victory over others, but these satisfactions are as it were made “legitimate” by the rules of the game, through which competition is controlled by a collective discipline, with a code of honor and fair play. This third and last type of play is therefore not inconsistent with the idea of assimilation of reality to the ego, while at the same time it reconciles this ludic assimilation with the demands of social reciprocity (Piaget, 1962, p. 360).

No longer relegated to the world of “hallucinated mastery,” participating in play is no different from participating in civilized life, and indeed, by playing games with rules, we are training ourselves for a lifetime of playing by agreed upon rules. And while we can see echoes of Erikson in that games involve a symbolic representation of the outside world, Piaget has not made game playing any different from life living. Games are a part of life and life is part of a game. In this regard, Piaget makes clear that early, primitive forms of play are for the organism the precursor to and, indeed, participate in the same ludic spirit that is involved in other, more intellectually rigorous forms of inquiry. Engaging in play involves the same turns of the mind and flights of fancy as solving a math equation. Such a theory will be useful for us as we try

work with our participants, for whom the game of squash is clearly so much more than just a game with rules.

Kegan, Evolutionary Truces and Emergencies of the Self

One of the last developmental theorists whom I will feature, much less known than Erikson or Piaget, is Robert Kegan, whose work is heavily dependent on Piaget and Kohlberg and yet adds some elements that will prove important to my study. Importantly, Kegan takes from Piaget the notion that development is largely a cognitive process, but from Kohlberg the idea that development tends towards a moral development which aims toward a unification of individual values and the values of the larger collective (Kegan, 1982). For Kegan, cognitive development enables the organism to take increasing distance on her own thoughts and feelings, to develop an observing capacity rather than simply inhabiting or acting on thoughts or feelings. This distance enables the individual to become both more the individual self and at the same time join the collective by being able to put that newly recognized individual to the side. That is, the self, in knowing itself better, can more effectively and without a sacrifice of selfhood, join the collective (Kegan, 1982). In a clear articulation of his position, Kegan says:

Wherever one looks among developmental psychologists from Freud at one end of the spectrum to Carl Rogers at the other, one finds a conception of growth as increasing autonomy or distinctness. The yearning for inclusion tends to be demeaned as a kind of dependency or immature attachment. Only a psychology whose root metaphors intrinsically direct an equal respect for both poles (and orient to the relation between them) can hope to transcend this myopia (Kegan, 1982, p. 209).

This emphasis on joining the group will have tremendous significance for the stories of our players, many of whom speak of finding new meaning and motivation in their squash lives in the move from playing for themselves through high school to playing for a team in college.

Like many other theorists, Kegan posits stages of development, from stage zero ('Incorporative') to stage five ('Interindividual'). For Kegan, each stage represents an 'emergency of the self', not in the sense of a catastrophe, but in the sense of a coming-out-of-and-merging-into. Unlike many theorists, Kegan suggests that each stage involves a truce between the evolutionary orientation towards being an independent self and being a self included in a group (Kegan, 1982). Therefore, he views development through life's stages not as linear but as a helix, veering now toward the pole of independence, now toward inclusion, with the move toward inclusion becoming stronger as one moves through stages 3 ('Interpersonal'), stage 4 ('Institutional') and stage 5 ('Interindividual'). For Kegan, these are the years from adolescence to the more mature adult years. As he would theorize, the difference between the adolescent 'interpersonal' phase and the more mature 'interindividual' is that in the adolescent phase the dependence on the other (friends, early intimate relations) is more of a fusion, a linking through affinities, whereas the more mature phase shows a greater mutual recognition of the full range of self and other (Kegan, 1982).

Another salient feature of Kegan's theory and why he has been included here is that he speaks not just of the holding environment of the infant, but of a series of holding environments to which we bring our newly emerging selves. One important developmental transition that Kegan speaks clearly of is the American college freshmen arriving at their new campus. In addressing how this move coheres with the leaving of the 'interpersonal' phase and into the 'institutional', Kegan speaks about how freshmen, by beginning to identify with an institution is

beginning to see their values reflected in the values of her institution and thus, identify self with larger group. But at the same time, this is a fraught time for many in that it offers all the possibilities inherent in a new development stage, but also the forfeiture of a previously safe holding environment (Kegan, 1982). Kegan's theory helps explain the allure of creating smaller holding environments within the institution, in dorms, fraternities, clubs, and clearly, athletic teams, all of which help create the bridge between the interpersonally fused adolescent and the institutionally identified young adult.

Competence, Mastery, Ability and the Neo-Piagetians

Thinking back to Freud's grandson and his *fort/da* game, we can see that even early developmental theorists thought that one's own sense of self was deeply connected to one's ability to have an impact on one's environment, even if that impact was illusory as was case with the *fort/da* game or with Erikson's notion of hallucinated mastery. In the late 1980s and 1990s a group of theorists, self-proclaimed neo-Piagetians, highlighted the concepts of competence, mastery and ability in order to look more deeply into what aspects of the self are fostered by the cognitive gains implied by them. In doing so, they devise a much more complex view of each concept, 'self' and 'mastery', than their earlier intellectual forebears (Harter, 1987, 1990, 1999; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1987; Nichols, 1990; Dweck & Elliot 1983; Ryan & Deci, 2000.). Their theories will have implications for our sections on social context and motivation because they recognized that the concepts of the self and of achievement exist within a web of socially dependent and constructed variables *and* that one act of achievement or mastery motivates the organism to explore others (Kreuger, 1990). That is to say, this group of theorists recognizes that mastery involves competence and ability, both of which reinforce each other and spur the organism on to future areas of conquest. While they view this process as an internal one, they

also stress that these very concepts of competence and ability are deeply embedded within one's social network: a reinforcement history from one's parents, the development of a comparison of abilities with one's peers, and even the comparison of abilities with and against different aspects of the self (Nicholls, 1990; Harter, 1999). We will have more to say about the social aspect of this dimension of the theory in the section on social context.

This group of theorists steps away from monolithic notions of 'ability', 'competence' and 'intelligence' by saying that as one develops, one starts to differentiate between several areas of competence, all of which are separate from one's sense of global self worth or self-concept (Harter, 1987, 1990, 1999; Nicholls, 1990; Norem & Cantor, 1999). Harter (1990, 1999), following William James, speaks of different versions of the self (the observing "I-self" which only I can know; and the Me-self, which is the material, social and spiritual self, known by self and others) and the different functions of the self. The organizational function interprets, organizes and predicts experience; the motivational function pursues goals, makes plans and sets standards; and the protective function seeks to create impressions of one's own attributes and seeks to increase pleasure while reducing pain (Harter, 1999). Thus, for this group, development, that is, the development of a coherent self, involves aggregating a series of increasingly diverse self judgments about one's own competence in a host of arenas, until arriving at a sense of global sense worth, from 'good at x' to 'good'. According to these theorists, the move from individual competencies to overall self worth does not occur until ages eight to twelve (Harter, 1999, 1990; Norem & Cantor, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 1995). Before these ages, evaluations of self competencies tend to be unrealistically high and quite undifferentiated from idealizations of the self.

Harter (1990, 1999) has shown that the first four areas of competence that a child recognizes as self-assessments are: cognitive competence, physical competence, social acceptance, and behavioral conduct and that one's judgments about these domains become reliable between the ages of 4-7. Between ages eight and 12, five more areas become added, including athletic competence (Harter, 1990). While it will not serve us to go through all of the competences and when they are added, it is important to note two elements of Harter's theory that have relevance for our study. The first is that physical competence and athletic competence are two early domains that become identified as areas over which we have early and reliable judgments, suggesting, as one would imagine, that the physical self and its success are quite important to an emerging sense of self. A second salient aspect of this work is that athletic competence, as differentiated from successful overall physical function, arrives at a time when the individual no longer relies on self-assessment to rank one's competencies, but increasingly depends on the external world of peers, parents, teachers and coaches (Harter, 1990, 1999). Thus, one's idea of one's own athletic prowess is drawn from a web of social relations, and from these comparisons emerges a sense of one's ability relative to others. The emergence of a sense of ability, therefore, coming as it does at a time when one is becoming increasingly aware of one's standing within a group, explains why the middle school years are so volatile in terms of participation in sport (Nicholls, 1990). Young athletes are either finding that they have good ability relative to others and such a discovery spurs further participation and mastery, or they find out that they don't measure up to their peers and search for new endeavors in which they may have more ability. This idea of ability as being constructed socially will be explored further in the next section on social context.

Social Context

The story I have been laying out according to this recent batch of theorists is that one's sense of self comes from a host of judgments about the self in a host of competence areas. Competence refers to one's ability to have an impact on one's environment in particular areas and different evaluative realms emerge in concert with an overall evaluation of the self. One can see in this picture its heavy dependence on cognitive capacities. Furthermore, these theories stress the fact that during the middle childhood years as external realities come in contact with and often contrast with internal realities, we begin a life long process of recalibrating (equilibrating, in Piagetian terms) internal senses of self with increasingly accurate observation of self in the world (Harter, 1999; Nicholls, 1984; Dweck & Elliot, 1983, Dweck, 1986; Duda & Nicholls, 1992). In short, a real self emerges out of an ideal self, based on increasingly accurate judgments which themselves are based on important cognitive developments. So, this theory provides a potential schema for how internal representations of the self are revised by contrast with the external world to create a more accurate self that can interact more effectively with the world. But, we still need to ask how those internal self representations came to be formed in the first place. How did the self emerge from fusion with the mother and, more pertinent to our study, how does the self take in the external world and begin to emerge as a separate and identifiable entity? Or rather, is there a theory that will help explain how our elite athletes metabolized their external world in such a way that it fostered their development toward such intense, vigorous participation in their sport?

Mirroring, Attunement and True v. False Self

With the move away from ego psychology and toward object relations and self-psychological schools, theorists have more and more been postulating the emergence of a self

that is always in relation to another self. Attachment theory has emphasized the importance of a caretaker whose empathic attunement to the infant mirrors back the affective states of the infant, helping validate the infant's internal experience, and helping the infant to know that its extreme positive or negative states will not overwhelm the caretaker. Such mirroring back of states and attunement of affect creates for infants a safe holding environment in which they can increasingly know and trust their inner and outer world (Mitchell & Black, 1995). In D. W. Winnicott's picture, the caretaker is not always perfectly attuned, but often misunderstands or momentarily neglects the infant's needs. The resulting sense of panic or rage in the infant creates an impingement, in which the child does not know how to manage the affect or what has become of the caretaker. In optimal care giving situations, such a period will be brief before the caregiver realizes the impingement and repairs it. When the frustration level of the infant has not been excessive, it helps the infant to realize that self and caretaker are different and that overwhelming powerful affect states can be tolerated, and thus, develops a trust in itself and can explore the world as its true self. When, however, the caretaker does not recognize the impingement, the infant becomes both afraid of its own aggressive or destructive emotions and puts these important elements of itself away and creates a false self to fall more in line with the caretaker's needs and wishes rather than the opposite occurring (Mitchell & Black, 1995; Berzoff, Flanagan, & Herz, 2007). As one can see from this quick overview of this important theoretical proposition, the implications of this theory are enormous for one's sense of self in the world, one's ability to tolerate difficult affect, and for developing a self that is increasingly able to depend on its own judgments of the world. These implications themselves have significance for the ways in which the emerging person will be able to make decisions that feel like their own,

manage their aggression, and show the kind of perseverance necessary for success at any endeavor.

Harter (1999), heavily indebted to Winnicott's theory, also speaks of a constructed self that depends on internalized opinions of others and how this is natural and normal up to the point where the child's own experience is mirrored in those opinions. But, as she says:

False self behavior is particularly likely to emerge if caregivers make their approval contingent upon the child's living up to their own realistic standards of behavior, since the child must adopt a socially implanted self; that is, children may come to suppress what they feel are true self-attributes in an attempt to garner the needed approval from caregivers (Harter, 1999, p. 14).

So, not only does the child create a self that does not feel authentic, but also the child may base an entire set of voluntary choices, like participation in sport, on acquiring the approval so desperately sought. Krueger (1990) suggests that this same impinging developmental atmosphere develops what he terms 'success inhibition' wherein success becomes equated with an autonomy that the child perceives will be intolerable to the mother and will fear retaliation. As we can readily see, the original theory, and the additions made to it by these two developmental theorists, have broad implications for volitional sport activity and one's ability to select it to meet one's own needs rather than the needs of the parent.

One of the reasons for exploring these early developmental issues of the real versus the false self is because one of the areas of study for this thesis was the extent to which elite level squash players became involved in the sport due to the influence and continued pressure of their parents and to what extent is parental involvement supportive and when does it shift over into

destructive impingement. Regardless of whether it is possible to tease out a player's own choice from a player's choice based on parental needs, sports psychologists are unanimous in suggesting that the single most important influencer of a child's participation in and motivation for sport is the motivational orientation of the parent and the cues, signals and rewards that the parent transmits to the child regarding performance and success (Barber, Sukhi, White, 1999; Fredericks & Eccles, 2004; Hellstedt, 1987, 1990; Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavalley, 2009; Melnick, Dunkelman, & Mashiach, 1981; Roberts & Treasure, 1995; Sage, 1980; Yperen, 1998.).

In their 2004 article, *Parental influences on youth involvement in sport*, Fredericks and Eccles conducted a literature review of all the research since the late 1970s whose purpose was to assess the effect that parents had on their child athletes. The authors compared two models of motivational beliefs in the parents. The first is the task-value model, which comprises four components (i: intrinsic value, ii: utility value; iii: attainment value; iv: costs [i.e. the perceived negative aspects of engaging in the task]). The second is the expectancy-model, which understands that the abovementioned factors in the task-value model don't make sense outside of the people who have the most influence (or expectation) on the choices of the children. Those influencers are: parents, coaches, peers and teachers (Fredericks & Eccles, 2004). Keegan, Harwood, Spray and Lavalley arrive at a similar model in their 2008 study, calling it an 'achievement goal theory' where participation is gauged based on the participants' ability to achieve goals they set for themselves, even if those goals are simply to have fun. According to Fredericks and Eccles (2004), the influencers—particularly parents—are so important because they both interpret the experience for the participant and they provide the experience for the participant.

In further evidence of the crucial nature of the external influencers in setting the framework for the child, Roberts and Treasure (citing Ames, 1980) suggest that parents, teachers and coaches have the greatest hand in helping to maintain the right kind of atmosphere during the early years of sport participation, claiming that it is the explicit and implicit reward structure that the significant adults construct about sport participation that makes the difference. As children compete, they interpret the views of adults with regard to their goal preference (enjoyment, innate mastery, winning) and mold their behavior to comply with that goal (Roberts & Treasure, 1995). They further emphasize that parents who foster an attitude that values external rewards and stresses the importance of winning, compare their children to others in terms of performance, and thus, see success in sport as a matter of winning and being better than others. Other parents value the overall experience of the sport, getting along with others and the importance of being on a team (Roberts & Treasure, 1995). Two further sets of researchers also imply that sport socialization depends on whether the parent played the sport in question at a high level (Melnick, et al., 1981) and the differences in the ways that fathers socialize their sons and mothers socialize their daughters (Sage, 1980).

Clearly, then, parents influence their child's sport participation in significant ways, from introducing the child to the sport, setting the value and tone of the sport participation and imbuing the child with an orientation toward what will be derived from their participation in sport. Thus, asking about the kind of atmosphere that our players perceived their parents to have set concerning their sport participation will occupy a major aspect of the interview. In terms of the literature on parenting styles and its effects on children, researchers have been applying Baumrind's schema of parenting styles to assess a wide variety of childhood achievement outcomes. In his study from the 1960s, Baumrind categorized parenting styles into three basic

categories: authoritative, permissive and authoritarian (cited in Turner, Chandler & Heffer, 2009). Authoritarian parents were viewed as being highly demanding, used discipline and surveillance and structured the lives of their children into tightly arranged units. Debate and negotiation were not seen as elements of this parenting style (Leung & Kwan, 1998). Authoritative parents also displayed a high level of involvement, engagement and thoughtful planning of their children's lives, but also included behaviors of nurturing, engagement and encouragement of autonomy (Turner, et al., 2009). Finally, permissive parents were seen as allowing the children to dictate the terms of their upbringing, were not involved in their children's activities and were neither consistent nor particularly concerned with discipline (Turner et al., 2009; Leung & Kwan, 1998). Sport psychologists, in studying the effect of parental involvement on youth sport participation, have adapted Baumrind's parenting styles to the sports realm, naming the styles overinvolved, supportive and underinvolved (Hellstedt, 1990; Hellstedt, 1987; Fredericks & Eccles, 2004). In the eyes of these researchers, underinvolved parents produced athletes with an apathetic orientation to their involvement in sport and overinvolved parents producing athletes who show high levels of stress, performance anxiety and burn out (Fredericks & Eccles, 2004). To this rubric, recent theoretical material adds a new category, that of overparenting. Overparenting has been postulated as an approach that micromanages every aspect of the child's life, particularly in the realm of school and extracurricular activities to ensure the child's maintaining and/or securing higher rungs of social status, particularly as a way of guaranteeing the perpetuation of wealth and upper middle class status (Munich & Munich, 2008). Included in this formulation is the postulation of a certain pursuit of perfection and narcissism on the part of the parents (Munich & Munich, 2008). And so, to the extent that overparenting carries extremely high parental expectations, it exerts a force

like perfectionism, a psychological construct understood by sport psychologists as producing deleterious effects on the athlete (Anshel & Eom, 2002). Indeed, those who study perfectionism in sport have found that, in keeping with research on motivational orientations, fear of disappointing a parent featured prominently in the perceptions of athletes struggling with perfectionism (Anshel & Eom, 2002). It is one of the hypotheses of this project that the anecdotal difference between the coachability and motivational levels of American and international players stems from overinvolved parents who set up highly perfectionistic, goal-driven atmospheres for their child athletes, a kind of destructive impingement that resulted in the child playing from a more false self than true self position. The section of the interview dedicated to parents and social context will be especially important.

Motivation

In general, the literature on motivation in the sports realm has been dependent on and has expanded upon research in the academic sphere that takes as its main delineation the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. And while we will query this simplistic dichotomy, it is useful to begin with it. Intrinsic motivation is understood as deriving from a will to master a person's environment, for the pleasure experienced by improvement at a task, and for the amount of autonomy a person perceives to have in pursuing the activity for their own sake rather than someone else's (Turner et al., 2009; Leung & Kwan, 1998). Extrinsic motivation is understood as pursuing something for the external gains it affords the student: success measured over and above other students, approval in the eyes of parents, and the goods one will attain through success (Turner et al., 2009). In the academic context, intrinsic motivation is seen as producing

better students than an extrinsic motivational orientation. Does it make sense to speak in similar terms regarding athletic participation?

While there is general agreement that certain motivational orientations are better than others, sport psychologists have expanded the question of motivation, seeing that intrinsic and extrinsic are neither self-explanatory nor are they comprehensive. They move the question of athletic motivation away from strictly intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, to frameworks and schemata that investigate youth motivation in sport, including variables as enjoyment, mastery, competence, peer and parent influence, and potential goods to be attained through participation. Thus, in the sport literature, there is a shift in the focus of the question, moving from a dichotomous to a multivariate understanding of the reasons for athletic participation. This variation is all the more understandable given the notion that, for the most part, sport is a voluntary experience, whereas school is required (Fredericks & Eccles, 2004). It is this very voluntary nature of sport participation that makes questions of motivation both more salient and more important to gauge. In younger athletes, researchers have frequently found that the main reason that school-aged children play sport is to have fun and to associate with affiliated peers (Keegan, et al., 2009; Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, 2002; Barber, Sukhi, & White, 1999; Brustad, 1992; Hellstedt, 1990), a finding that is borne out both in children who have been coached by their parents as well as those who haven't been (Barber, et al., 1999).

One of the challenges in studying the question of motivation is that motivation does not magically emerge from the inside (intrinsic) nor is it merely grafted on from the outside (extrinsic). Rather, motivation seems to be part of a process of socialization and acculturation, that is, part of human development writ large, as humans go from a completely dependent creature to an increasingly autonomous agent who has internalized external norms and

expectations so as to be able to make choices that feel very much like her own. So, at what point can we say that any motivation toward a goal is truly intrinsic? Subsequent to this question, then, what factors and forces help create the integration of external norms, mores and reward systems so that they become motivating tools that feel as though they emanate from within rather than without the individual?

Researchers interested in the question of motivation who seek to expand the question away from the simplistic opposites of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have derived a host of theories, all of which highlight different aspects of the components of motivation, but arrive at similar pictures of what makes up a good, which is to say, effective motivational orientation. It will be useful to review a few of them.

Competence Motivation Theory. Competence motivation theory shares a great deal with some of the developmental theorists discussed above in postulating that people are naturally inclined toward having an impact on their environment and that they do so in increasing ways based on cognitive development that enables competence and mastery in a host of areas (White, 1959; Harter, 1978; Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, 2002). As competence in certain areas begins to declare itself, the person is increasingly motivated to express that competence. For a time, that competence is reflected back by caregivers, but over time, the person becomes increasingly able to make judgments about competence in a given area and whether or not to pursue and express that competence further (Harter, 1987). According to this theory, intrinsic motivation (called by these theorists a ‘mastery orientation’) is fostered in two ways. First, the caregiver must reward effort, curiosity and enjoyment over results, accomplishment and self-comparison. Reinforced this way, the person increasingly relies on satisfaction with newly expressed competence rather than relying on approval or the estimation of that ability in others’ eyes. Self-referenced criteria

about one's own abilities are a good sign of having achieved a mastery orientation (Eccles, et al., 1998; Phillips & Zimmerman, 1990). Secondly, this schema only works when the person experiences an optimal level of challenge. Relying on competence reports that stem from activities that are too easy will result in the person developing an orientation that is focused on results, maintaining the high estimation of important socializing agents and a high dependence on comparison over others, or an extrinsic motivational orientation (called an 'ego orientation' by these theorists) (Harter, 1987). Furthermore, parents are the vital link in establishing whether a child will develop an ego or a mastery orientation. Parents who exert pressure to perform rather than show support for the endeavor produce children of an ego orientation, whereas parents who support the child in their mastery attempts, in the development of self-referenced criteria for their success, and in enjoyment of improvement tend to produce children with a mastery orientation (Harter, 1987; Brustad, 1988). Finally, Leff and Hoyle (1995) showed that children who were successful at developing a mastery orientation felt less pressure from their parents, experienced greater enjoyment at their chosen activities, higher perceived competence and greater global self-esteem.

Thus, as its name would suggest, this theory places the main locus for developing a mastery orientation on the idea of competence, but a competence in areas in which ideas of success in the target area are self-referenced, the activity is engaged for the sense of mastery the agent derives from its pursuit, and parental involvement is perceived as supportive of the process rather than pressure for a result.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory. This theory, a close cousin to the prior one, also puts its focus on mastery attempts, but adds more areas than just competence. Taking its cue from the field of economics, these researchers cite a body of literature in which Self Determination

Theory (SDT) is used (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Mallet & Hanrahan, 2004). An assumption of SDT is that people are inherently motivated to master their environment, and that such mastery applies to three distinct realms: self-determination, competence and relatedness. Under such a rubric, self-determination is seen as lending autonomy, again, as it relates to the freedom to select an activity in which to explore and cultivate mastery, thus providing a sense of an “internal locus of causality,” (Mallet & Hanrahan, 2004, p. 184). SDT and cognitive evaluation theory relegate those activities that have a perceived external locus of causality to extrinsic motivation, coming as they do from a lack of freedom of choice. Thus, coercion, manipulation and reward systems set up by others, including and especially parents, would all contribute to the perception of an external locus of causality, or extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Weiss & Ferrer-Caja, 2002). These researchers add the existence of “introjected regulated behaviors” as those in which a person participated in an activity because of the guilt associated with not participating, a finding that extended to football players on scholarship who saw their scholarship as a reward manipulating them and removing their sense of agency concerning their participation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci, et al., 1982; Mallet & Hanrahan, 2004). Though there is participation, and though that participation seems willed, its reason and motivation nevertheless emanate from an external source.

This is not to say that external motivators cannot become internalized in a good way. For example, in addition to introjected regulated behaviors, there are “integrated regulated behaviors” in which external regulations (such as training for sport) are internalized because of the mastery they will provide for the athlete (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Such external regulations have been assimilated and brought into alignment with the athletes’ value system. But still within this distinction (intrinsic motivation and integrated external motivation) is the possibility

that the “integrated regulated behavior is still done to attain some separable outcome whereas intrinsically motivated behavior is deemed so because of the inherent enjoyment associated with performance or participation,” (Mallet & Hanrahan, 2004, p. 185). Under this theory, it will be very important to ascertain from our participants the extent to which their participation and path in the sport was perceived as self-willed or forced from above.

Achievement Goal Theory. Yet another theory also invokes a cognitive model by looking at the perceptions of achievement goals of the participants. Roberts and Treasure (1995), working from the classroom based research of Nicholls(1989) veer away from the intrinsic and extrinsic model of motivation and prefer one that is based on the perceived achievement goals of the participant. They point out that whether or not achievement goals are conscious, they are motivating action and they greatly shape how students or athletes respond to feedback on their performance. These researchers reiterate the distinction between ego and mastery orientation, where setting goals whose attainment would show a sense of mastery to the self, revel in improvement, and mastering optimal challenge represents a mastery orientation. Conversely setting goals whose attainment involves competition over others, measurements of performance, and aim at heightened social standing in the eyes of others represents an ego orientation. Roberts and Treasure (1995) cite researchers who show that children with a mastery perspective engage in appropriate levels of difficulty, persevere in the face of challenges and enjoy a higher level of interest in the task. Conversely ego achievement goals reveal children engaging in tasks that are too difficult or too easy so as to avoid challenge, show deteriorating performance and perseverance over time. They first introduce these two concepts in the arena of academics and apply them to sport. In their own research, they found that their goal achievement

model functions as well in the athletic realm as it does in the academic (Roberts & Treasure, 1995).

Sport researchers have adapted the achievement goal model to sport through the use of the Task and Ego Orientation Questionnaire (TEOSQ) which Roberts, Treasure, & Balague (1998) have reduced to the Perception of Success Questionnaire (POSQ), both of which have found direct correlation between the achievement goal model in academics and athletics (Roberts & Treasure, 1995). Findings in the sport realm showed that mastery achievement goals correlated not only to improvement in the target area but to the acquisition of secondary goals such as self-esteem, hard work, cooperation, sportsmanship and social responsibility (Roberts & Treasure, 1995), whereas ego goal achievement was predictive of a view that sport should enhance social status.

Furthermore, these findings were evident in practice as well as competitive situations: athletes with a mastery orientation practiced and competed hard, and sought approval from the coach, whereas athletes with an ego orientation were easily bored, lacked focus and only understood their sport in terms of the increase in social standing that their sport brought them. Such ego oriented athletes were more likely to drop out of their sport (Roberts & Treasure, 1995).

So, while all of these theories have different foci, they all derive similar conclusions, all of which bear importantly on our study. Whether one focuses on the matter of competencies that become increasingly self-referenced, self-determination with an eye towards mastery, or achievement goals whose rewards are internal, there are certain signposts one would want to look for in the motivational landscape of an athlete. That athlete should focus on the idea of improvement over results, should view participation in the sport as providing benefits in a host of

areas that are self referenced, should find optimal challenge rather than tasks that will be too easy or too hard, and be embedded within a social context that stresses these elements of sport participation. Perhaps most importantly, that athlete should feel as though participation is self-determined, coming from an internal versus external locus of control. On the other hand, an athlete with a motivational orientation which will prove corrosive is one whose only frame of reference is results over others, imagines the material and social benefits that will accrue through sport participation, who always chooses an inappropriate level of challenge to avoid receiving accurate feedback about ability level and who has a social context which reinforces these messages.

Finally, overly involved parents and parents who always send messages, implicit or explicit, that foster an ego orientation will create in the athlete a 'false self', one whose true self has been moved to the side due to the narcissistic impingements of the parents. Conversely, parental support that does not highlight, expect, or trumpet ego over mastery goals will create an environment in which the athlete's participation becomes increasingly self-referenced and whose sport participation enables rather than frustrates important developmental gains of autonomy, self-determination, perseverance and an ability to tolerate frustration. Clearly, then, it is in the interest of every sport to help create athletes with a mastery orientation. So, in listening to the stories of the athletes in this study, it will be important to gauge their perception of the kind of motivational landscape they inhabited as they came to the sport and the kind of motivational landscape they currently inhabit. We will want to see if this dichotomy of 'ego' and 'mastery' make sense, if it is true that American athletes come to college with a more ego orientation to their sport, and whether that orientation explains the anecdotal difference between American squash players and their international counterparts. In listening to these athletes' stories about

their motivation, it will also be important to look beyond this dichotomy to see if any of these three theories of motivation seem more salient than others.

Askesis, Personal Transformation and the Sociology of Sporting Bodies

Multivariate attempts to explain human motivation redirect the conversation about motivation away from merely developmental or evolutionary frameworks of understanding human behavior toward more complicated, highly variegated conceptions that lend themselves to the kind quantifiable taxonomy favored by sports psychologists. As theorists move towards identifying, studying and graphing all of the variables that make up an individual action, we may gain more knowledge on some level, but lose sight of important considerations and motivations on another. That is, in attempting to dissect motivated behavior into ever more precise and seemingly observable and measurable units, research psychologists might be, in fact, losing sight of important elements of the sporting experience that gratify athletes on spiritual, existential and—as we have argued above—communal levels. As social workers, imbued with the biopsychosocial perspective, then, we might look at an experience not in its component parts, but rather in a more holistic and comprehensive way, or, as one sport sociologist has argued, to understand the athlete “in the round” (Maguire, 1993). In structuring this particular study as we have, from the angles of development, social context and motivation, we have attempted just such a person-in-environment approach.

While Erikson, Piaget and the other developmental theorists all highlighted the developmental gains that play fosters, they don't mention the spiritual aspect of play, the awe and reverence for one's body and its interaction with the larger world that the impetus for play implies. Stuart Brown (2008) has suggested the link between play and spirituality, stressing that there might be something ineffable, something mysterious yet still entirely spiritually necessary

for the human organism to use its body in the exploratory ways that play and sport entail. Erikson and Piaget come close to making this connection, but the later, more multivariate theorists seem to overlook it.

Similarly, it is important to recognize, that as young athletes move from unstructured play to beginning a new sport all the way through to elite level performance, using the term 'play' or even 'sport' might not really capture the intensity of the experience. What does the regimen of the elite athlete mean, with its painful, repetitive practices, its dietary strictures, and its removal of the athlete from the routines of normal life? How might the history of asceticism and ascetic practice illuminate the kind of training demanded of the elite athlete? Might our athletes, while striving for successful, victorious seasons, also be engaging in some sort of spiritual training, aiming at a kind of spiritual transformation which transcends the physical while at the same time sharpening it? What is the meaning of group forms of asceticism and how does pain endured collectively take the mind away from the self and toward greater unity with the group? In this regard, a team's physically painful regimen strengthens the physical body and at the same time dissolves rigid ego boundaries among the players thus accelerating the process of group identification and codification. What are the sociological implications involved in playing sport, playing sport in college and playing this particular sport, with its roots in colonial Britain and with its strong elitist implications in this country? And what does it mean, from a class perspective, as lower- to middle- class players from around the world come to elite institutions at the richest country in the world and gain access not only to more squash playing experience, but also to a host of professional possibilities in the world of international finance and banking that so many choose to pursue thanks to the connections acquired at their adopted institution? While it will not be possible to take a full scope of the literatures involved in these

questions, a short review will help as we come to present findings of data that might not fit neatly into the three categories that comprise the main subject areas of the interviews.

Askesis

The word asceticism comes into English from the ancient Greek word, *askesis*, which was used to refer to the kind of physical training employed by athletes in a culture which prized physicality, seeing in a beautiful and well-trained body an external perfection that mirrored an inner nobility and general superiority (Leavy, 1999; Flood, 2004; Synott, 1992). Philosophers like Plato made the claim that the most successful athletes were those that included in their training regimes the forgoing of physical pleasures, most particularly sexual pleasures (Leavy, 1999). Thus, an ethical tradition arose that viewed physical training as a way of dominating the body and its urges rather than being at the mercy of them. Heavily indebted to this tradition is the Stoic idea of “self-mastery,” a kind of ascetical practice engaged by philosophers like Seneca, whose own *askesis* involved reviewing each of his interactions at the end of the day to see if he had mastered strong emotions or whether they had gotten the better of him (Dugan, 2001; Synott, 1992). This shift, from training as a physical act to training as an act of spiritual reflection, found great acceptance in Christianity, where the idea of “spiritual athletes” became the springboard for a long tradition of asceticism, including acts of extreme self-denial, mortification of the flesh, and actual martyrdom as a way of mirroring the passion and suffering of Christ (Flood, 2004; Synott, 1992; Glucklich, 1998). While the history of asceticism is long and is reflected in almost every tradition from every culture, some of the significations of these kinds of practices might be relevant to our athletes who may themselves be exercising some sort of spiritual training alongside their physical regimen.

Many writers hone in on the aspect of ascetic practice as some form of personal transformation, claiming that the self, left to its own devices, will not achieve all that it can be and so therefore needs to endure vigorous paces if it intends to actualize itself. In the eyes of these writers, ascetic practice is a form of pilgrimage, a way of becoming more oneself, but particularly by not living according to one's personal inclination. It is a denial of self-sufficiency in getting to a desired goal (Riches, 2003; Daly, 1971; Leavy, 1999). Others speak of the necessity of ascetic practices as a way of transcending the body because it is the very body that impedes spiritual development, that it is a repudiation of the physical that gives access to the spiritual (Daly, 1971; Atkinson, 2006; Glucklich, 1998; Flood, 2004; Synott, 1992; Foucault, 1997). And still others speak of asceticism as a way not just of getting beyond the self, but of knowing the self more fully and deeply through the very acts of self-denial enjoined by ascetic practice (Foucault, 1997; Leavy, 1999; Flood, 2004). Michel Foucault, a theorist interested in notions of discipline and power, situated ascetic practice within various "technologies of the self," all of which aim at states of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection and immortality, but also aim at domination and always serve to set the trained apart from the untrained, the knower from the ignorant, the empowered from the disempowered and the strong from the weak (Foucault, 1997). Foucault himself, in a postmodern twist on ascetic practice, experimented with vigorous regimens of LSD ingestion and homosexual sadomasochistic sexual practice as a kind of mortification of the flesh aimed at dissolving the boundaries of the self (Miller, 1993). In this regard, the use of the body was in the service of transcending it in order to court the thresholds of knowledge and between being and non-being.

As we can see from this brief look at theories of asceticism, many writers struggle with the contradiction implied by asceticism: that it is a deeply physical practice that seeks to

transcend the physical (c.f. particularly, Flood, 2004). And while many writers speak of it as a single-minded, solitary practice, several mention the collective aspect of asceticism and the value of enduring pain in communion with others. Religious historian Ariel Glucklich (1998), studying monastic traditions, has stressed two aspects of the ascetical experience which may have relevance to our squash players whose training often involve moments of intense pain which is mitigated by the communal aspect of the experience. She argues that the purpose of pain endured voluntarily is that it unmakes the material world (much as Foucault had explored in his own experiments with liminality) and that a new knowledge is acquired not available without an engagement with pain. Secondly, she argues against the notion that pain is an entirely subjective experience, but rather that “voluntary pain is an instrument of self-transcendence in a meaningful and communal context [that] lies at the heart of the human ability to empathize and share,” (Glucklich, 1998, p.382). Thus, for her, pain is a primary avenue into our connection to other human beings rather than merely a monastic, solipsistic experience that we have difficulty expressing to others. Pain endured communally serves as a direct link to an essential aspect of our common humanity. Similarly, sociologist Michael Atkinson (2006) has studied the ascetic practices of the Canadian straightedge community to understand the ways in which their withdrawal from the consumerism of modern culture, symbolized by refraining from drugs, sex and ostentatious consumption of any kind, is completely embedded in their commitment to self-control, mind/body holism and their communal interdependence. For these straightedge youth, ascetic practice is about the self in that it renounces primary pleasure, but it is also a social force in that the collective withdrawal serves as both judgment and alternative to prevailing cultural values and mores.

The Sociology of Sporting Bodies

This last strain of the theory of asceticism that considers the communal aspects of ascetic practice, as both antidote and commentary on the larger community, brings us to a group of theorists who have been recently formulating a sociology of the body and, in particular, a sociology of sporting bodies. This group of theorists strives to understand what “embodied acts” mean within a web of cultural and social significations and strives to deconstruct the binary of mind/body and move towards an integrated approach to minds and bodies that create meanings within the contexts in which they occur (Thompson, 1974; Maguire, 1993; Giullianotti, 2004, 2005). The sociology of sport has three major concerns: how sports acts reproduce and reflect the intersection of the biological, psychological and cultural dimensions of people’s lives; the ways in which “embodied acts” serve to reproduce and reinforce inequalities of gender, ethnicity, ability and class; and finally “how hegemonical practices centering on people’s bodies maintain the position of ‘established’ groups while reinforcing the marginal status of outsider groups” (Maguire, 1993, p. 34). As we listen to the stories of our squash players, it will be important to keep an ear open to the ways in which their sport participation embodies these three areas of concern for sport sociology. It would be difficult to imagine that these forces are not at play with college squash players and the sport in general, with its roots in imperial England and its establishment in America as a sport at elite institutions where students are prepared to join the ranks of hegemonic classes. Such a preparation would be in keeping with the history of athleticism and team sports at schools given that such activities at British public schools (i.e. the most elite schools such as Eton and Harrow) were intended to produce a body and mind set intent on financial and imperial dominion (Cole, Giardina, & Andrews, 2004).

Several sociologists of sport have turned to modernist theorists to understand the various significations involved in sport, many of which brush up against what our athletes might be engaged when they step on court. Richard Giullianotti turns to sociologist Norbert Elias to speak of the various power relations that are inevitably engaged upon whenever one enters the sporting arena. For Elias, whenever we encounter another person, we are instantly thrust into a power dynamic, and, as he points out, power is not a material thing but always exists only in and through social relations and interactions. Battle and warfare are the most obvious reifications of this socially constructed reality, and sport is a civilized form of battle. Indeed, for Elias, sport was a socialized outlet for the kind of instinctual aggressive impulses that we need to largely keep in check (Giullianotti, 2004). Alan Ingham (2004), relying on Marx and Freud, speaks of the tension between self and the broader social order that finds a compromise through the institutions of sport. Furthermore, Ingham focuses on the socialization process involved in moving from games to sport and how those who show potential in sport can begin to exchange that potential for certain social benefits (college acceptance, college scholarship, wealth), but in that exchange, the athlete becomes alienated from ownership and inherent pleasure derived from the practice of the sport. In this kind of schema, parents who push their children in sport for material gain, even if for their own children's social advancement, are exploiting their children in much the way Marx viewed the exploitation of workers in the industrial revolution (Ingham, 2004). The relevance for our players is clear here, where the potential payoff of acceptance into a college like Yale may cause athletes to collude with their parents in a process that alienates them from the passion involved in sport exploration and turns over the fruit of their potential for easy exploitation.

Finally, Alan Tomlinson (2004) has relied heavily on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, which is a collection habits and dispositions that a person acquires and enacts by being situated within their social context or milieu. Tomlinson seeks to understand the "system of dispositions" that an athlete acquires through participation in sport and the context in which it occurs. These dispositions become a kind of false consciousness because they shape our perceptions, behaviors and goals without our awareness. That is they are "social structures that go on to structure the person," in that the person molds him or herself to fit into them in a way that feels as though the person is an agent in that decision, but is really just a reflection of the dictates of the social milieu in which that person is embedded (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 169). It is important to note that much of these social theorists, while approaching the human organism from a completely different lens than developmental or psychoanalytic theorists, have posited a similar sort of false self identity that theorists like Winnicott and Harter incorporated into their theories of self. These theories, in keeping with the intellectual implications of theories like Freud and Marx, deprive the socialized human organism of much of the agency, independence and omnipotent rationalism with which he had been enshrined by philosophers and theorists of the Enlightenment. Theories such as this cause us to wonder if we can ever transcend the powerful yet largely invisible forces of the unconscious, family psychology, group psychology, political ideology, and culture and ever engage in an act that we can truly claim as our own. While these theories will not dictate the way we listen to the interviews of our players, they cannot be dismissed. They draw us away from merely intrapersonal understandings of sport participation and towards an understanding of what it means to participate in sporting activities as both a social force and social phenomenon. And though such matters have not been the focus of the

interviews, they cannot be discounted as we seek to understand our players' experience from as many perspectives as possible.

Chapter III

Methodology

This project was designed as a qualitative study to understand the experience of an elite level college squash player from three angles: development, social context and motivation. While these three areas of human interest all have compendious literatures, an effort was made to tailor the literature review in such a way to understand the major trends of those fields but also with an eye to material that might be particularly relevant for our sample. In addition, the study sought to compare and understand sociological differences between American and international squash players and what implications might be understood from these differences. This study answers a need stated in the literature for more studies on athletes of this age. The sociological comparison aspect of the study represents the first such study of its kind of squash players and reflects a recent phenomenon of recruiting from international sources for American collegiate squash programs. In this chapter, I present the methods used to pursue this project as it relates to the sample and its selection, the data collection and the process by which the data were analyzed.

Sample

The sample was limited to people who are members of a squash team at a highly ranked college or university. The purpose of the ranking of the institution's squash program was to ensure that the players would have had long playing careers as juniors at a sufficiently high level to be recruited to their current team. This researcher had close geographical access to Yale University and Trinity College, both of whose men's and women's squash teams are and have

been among the best in the country, particularly in the recent years. It was the design of the researcher to contact both teams and allow any interested player sit for an interview until the desired sample size of 15 was reached. Had more than 15 signed up or displayed interest, they would not have been turned away. The desired sample included both genders, all academic classes and American and international players, all with a fairly even distribution.

A purposive, non-probabililty convenience sampling method was employed. Electronic mail messages were sent to the coaches of Yale University in New Haven, CT and Trinity College in Hartford, CT. Due to geographical convenience, Yale was selected as the first site, with Trinity to be used if the sample did not reach the desired number. A team meeting was established with the Yale players and coaches and the study was presented. Another recruiting email to the players was then sent out, with an attachment that included the informed consent form appended in the Appendix section. Players who wished to sit for the interview responded to the email. Given that the desired sample was obtained from Yale, a team meeting was not requested with the players from Trinity College.

Data Collection

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews that took place in private settings agreed upon by researcher and participant. The procedures by which the data were collected and stored and the participants' rights and privacy were protected were outlined and met with approval by the Human Subject Review Boards at all of the three participating institutions: Smith College, Yale University and Trinity College, whose approvals are appended in the Appendix section. At the beginning of the interview, the participants were again presented with the informed consent form and researcher and interviewer each signed two copies, with the researcher keeping all of them on file and separate from the data as mandated by Federal

guidelines for the storing of research materials. For the further protection of the participants' confidentiality, the interviews were recorded according to number rather than name and then, when the sample was complete, they were selectively transcribed. Any references that the participants made during the interview to a specific name were removed from the transcription and thus, the final report.

A schedule of questions was developed from each of the three areas of interest to the study, with the goal of having the participant reflect on their playing career in a Life History method as explained by Rubin & Babbie (2007). The questions, along with a set of potential prompts, are included in the Appendix section. These questions provided structure for the interview, but also allowed enough room for the participants to reflect on any areas they found particularly relevant. The interviews started with a series of demographic questions and then proceeded through sections on development, social context and motivation. At the end of the interview, participants were invited to add anything about their squash playing career that they felt was relevant but that had not been touched upon in the interview. The researcher often asked for clarification, expansion of answers, either using the prompts or by simply drawing out an unclear or incomplete answer. These questions were asked in individual interviews lasting between 30 and 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded digitally using the Macintosh software Garageband and converted to MP3 files for ease of storage and playback.

Data Analysis

The researcher took note of themes as they were emerging during the interviews and as well, listened to the interviews again when they were all completed to generate a list of themes to code for potential exposition in the report. The researcher then selectively transcribed the interviews and used those transcriptions to finalize the themes that were to be included in the

final report of findings. This step involved rearranging many of the themes into the target areas because often material discussed in one section of the interview belonged more appropriately in a separate section of the report. In this step, some themes were condensed into others as their relationship was realized and confirmed and some themes were deemed ancillary to the three major areas of the study and thus not reported. This method of coding could be described as a descriptive, hierarchical, a priori coding method from a grounded theoretical framework.

Chapter IV

Findings

Demographic Information

The sample included 15 participants, all of them members of the Yale University Squash teams. The nine men and six women represented all academic classes: freshmen (3), sophomores (5), juniors (3) and seniors (4), ages 19-23, with an average age of 20.8, a median age of 21 (STDEV: 1.3020). Eight players were from the United States while seven were international players. The countries represented by the seven international players were: Ireland (1), England (2), Wales (1), India (1), South Africa (1), Singapore (1). While the international sample includes a very broad area representing squash's wide reach in the world, the American players all come from the three metropolitan regions of Philadelphia, New York and Boston. The ages at which players began playing varied from age 5 to 12, with an average age of 9, and a median age of 8 (STDEV: 2.1044). While three players mentioned the thought of turning professional or doing some work in the squash world after graduation, 10 reported that their squash activity would be merely recreational or social, and two said that their graduation reflected the end of their squash playing days.

The sample sought gender parity and came relatively close, with 6 women and 9 men. The academic classes were all well represented in the sample, though each class had their different concerns and differed in their ability to reflect on the college aspect of their career. While one purpose of the study was to have players reflect on their whole squash playing career, it became clear that each academic year came with it different concerns. Freshmen and

sophomores wondered about their place in the team as seniors left and new recruits entered, juniors wondered about team leadership for the following year, and seniors were able to put the whole experience in perspective, given that the interviews came toward the very end of what had clearly been a profound experience for them. The average age of the players (20.8) is in keeping with the fact that the age group of 20 and 21 year-olds is the largest represented age in four-year degree-granting institutions in the United States (*National Center for Education Statistics*, <http://ies.ed.gov/>, retrieved 4/26/11). The average age at which the players took up squash (9) is in accordance with the theories from developmental psychology about the explosion of talents that occurs during latency.

Socioeconomic data was not collected, but the profiles of the players from the United States, the private schools attended, the private lessons employed and the expenses entailed in having a junior squash-playing career put the American group in the wealthiest of American families. While three of the international players' profiles represented lives of wealth, the majority of them were from middle class to lower-middle-class backgrounds and spoke of playing squash in public venues without private lessons or coaches, earning their own money for their squash activities, and being sponsored in their squash activities by the national squash organization. It is notable that the metropolitan areas represented by the American players are Philadelphia, New York and Boston, long the bastions of squash in this country. The overwhelming weight of the sample in this direction suggests that despite the growth of the game in this country in the last few decades, its main source of power has not changed. Such a finding is in keeping with the perception, in this country, of squash as an exclusive sport with a wealthy playing base, whereas it lacks that perception in the rest of the world. These perceptions are

largely based in demographic realities and will be further explored at greater length when the American and international players are compared more directly.

Finally, a full 10 out of 15 mentioned their intention to play socially or recreationally after college. If this were to hold true, it would represent an anomaly in the college squash playing ranks as a two-thirds retention rate is not close to the actual number and the drop out rate of players after college continues to be a source of concern for the governing body of squash in this country. It might very well be the case that this sample, too, has the intention to continue playing but that once the vicissitudes of early adulthood (establishment in career, courtship, marriage and family) take hold, that intention conflicts with those life pressures. It may also relate to the limited availability of squash outlets in this country. A follow-up study in a number of years of those who did state an intention to play would be valuable to see if that intention was realized and, if not, what prevented its realization.

Development

An interesting finding in the development section of the interviews was the difficulty players had speaking about what their participation in squash had done for their sense of self, how it had contributed to their being the kind of person they were. This question will be taken up further in the discussion section, but for now, it may have to do with the fact that, despite the wording of the question, participants understood the researcher to be asking about the development of their squash career rather than what developmental gains they derived from that participation. Asking players to elaborate on any crossover benefits they noticed between squash and other areas of their lives often elicited more response and many of the findings that relate to development needed to be culled from other areas of the interview, particularly in the closely

related areas of social context and motivation. Even at that, many players denied that squash had any crossover benefits to their development, seeing them as two distinct areas. Nevertheless, there are two types of themes that emerged consistently from this section, both of which relate to literature discussed in chapter two. The themes of hard work, discipline, confidence and self-sufficiency all relate to matters of competence and mastery that occupied so much of the developmental literature featured in the literature review. Secondly, in what is one of the more significant findings from the study, there is the overwhelming meaning participants made of their participation on a team and how clearly important it was for them to be members of the team. Such a finding, while perhaps not surprising for players of team sports, is remarkable for such a staunchly individual game and accords well with Kegan's (1982) developmental theory which viewed successful development as being able to be part of a collective, the merger into which is made easier through a coherence between self and group in terms of interests, goals and values.

Hard Work

"The work ethic it teaches is just incredible," one participant remarked, reflecting perhaps the most consistently heard theme of all of the interviews. No less than 11 out of the 15 people interviewed made reference to the tremendous amount of work that squash demands of its players for elite-level success. Squash is certainly not the only sport that requires hard work, but it does stand out in the sense that the fitness demands of high-level squash are among the most stringent among the racquet sports given that it requires an athlete to be exerting at or near their anaerobic capacity for 45 to 90 minutes of continuous play. As a result, most players come to the realization that they are either going to meet these fitness demands or not progress in the game. And while many of the participants did not notice that learning about the value of hard work in squash carried over into other areas of their lives, several did:

I learned that I can push myself really hard and that I can see the benefits of what I put into it. If you put the work in, you do get better and that does go into other areas of your life. Like schoolwork: I'm not one of the smartest people, but I work really hard and squash definitely taught me the value of hard work because I'm not the most talented there either. So, I'm not the brightest person or the best squash player, but if you work hard in both areas, you'll see the benefits.

Or, this participant who, like others, learned that improvement and hard work were intimately connected:

I think it's all about the hard work: investing and putting in the work. I had to do all the work to get better and it did help me a lot, but I still absolutely hated it. I really think you have to push yourself, even though I didn't want to. I never knew what hard work was until I did hill sprints. It made me a stronger athlete mentally.

And finally, this participant draws a similar connection from the gratification of improvement to an internal feeling of self-worth:

I was not initially very talented with the racquet work and so I spent a lot of time solo hitting and working on the aspects of my game that needed to be bettered. So, there was something very self-validating in that it made me content to be able to go from being sort of an average player to a very good player in a short amount of time through that work.

These quotations give support for mastery theories going all the way back to Freud's grandson's game of *fort/da*. The hard work these athletes endured through their squash training gave them a sense that previously mysterious or ungovernable forces could be largely mastered through a particular kind of rigorous, focused engagement. And, as the mastery theorists posited,

gaining mastery in one area made for rapid applicability across realms, as athletes began to feel better about themselves through their efforts, feelings of mastery in other areas quickly followed.

Discipline

Closely connected to the idea of hard work and the kind of mastery over one's environment that such effort provided, many participants spoke of learning discipline through their squash training, a discipline that applied to other areas of their lives. One main area where this discipline was manifest for our participants was the way in which their ability to manage their time emerged out of their intense squash engagement. Two hypotheses about the genesis of this time-management ability suggest themselves. It might be that the time demands that elite level sport training requires necessitates advanced time management skills. And it might also be the case that athletes learned focused discipline from their training and were able to apply that discipline to other areas of their lives, time management being the easiest to identify. The theme of discipline emerged in the following kinds of remarks:

And you know, when you have a sport, you don't fall into those other traps of being a 15 or 16 year-old. You read about these kids who go off the tracks, you know, smoking weed and stuff. When you have a sport, it just keeps you focused because you can't smoke or do any of that shit and play squash well.

Or, this player, who felt a direct crossover between the kind of discipline of his squash training and a similar kind of discipline required for success in school:

I had less time to watch TV and less time to do the other stuff that other kids do. I didn't hang out with my friends as much. I wouldn't go out and play because I would go into the courts and work on my game and so socially that got in the way, but I didn't have as

much time as the other 12 year-olds. But at the same time, it really helped me focus and build discipline. As a kid, I had terrible discipline. Having this constraint on me made me sit down and grow some discipline. And as a result, my academics really improved.

Other players spoke of managing their time so much more efficiently during the squash season than any other time during the year. Some spoke of the gratitude that would come once done with college from no longer needing to heed such a demanding master as squash training, while others, echoing the first player quoted in this section, mentioned feeling as though all aspects of their lives would have suffered had they not been forced to organize their time more efficiently. As with the 'hard work' theme, the discipline theme supports those mastery theories that envision important developmental milestones achieved through the increasing imposition of the will over one's external world rather than simply being shaped and controlled by it.

Confidence

Players spoke of the acquisition of the concepts of hard work and discipline and what these competencies did for them in terms of being able to have increasing impact on their external worlds. And though such competencies clearly reflect an internal shift in attitudes about effort and time, players spoke of those two themes as having been imposed upon them through their squash training. But players also spoke of having gained competencies that had more impact on their internal world, greater feelings of confidence as people and a greater sense of self-sufficiency through their squash endeavors. And again, while these kinds of gains no doubt help the person have a greater impact on their external world, it is the change to their internal experience that these two themes address. As one player says:

I had a lot of self-doubt when I was younger. I learned that when I had that doubt on court, I didn't play well. Whereas if I just went in there and was confident, I played much better. And that made me more confident off court, so I would go up to people and initiate conversations.

Or this player who found great success and adulation early through his squash:

It's much bigger there [my country] than it is here [U.S.]. When you win a tournament, you get your picture and a headline in a paper that's like the equivalent of *The New York Times*. You're getting contracts and sponsors. So, it was very cool as a kid. It boosts your self-esteem, your self-confidence. I don't think I realized it then, but looking back, it really helped me become a more confident person. It seeped on through.

Or, this player, who reported both an increase in confidence through recognition of his squash talents and connected this new-found confidence to helping consolidate a sense of self:

Yeah, I do think it helped my confidence. It gave me an identity. Yeah, definitely.

When my name kept coming up more often in assembly in middle school [announcing squash feats], I felt it. I kept getting my name announced more and more and that really helped my identity.

These are important observations and go a long way to confirming Harter's (1999) conceptualization of the powerful confluence that occurs when perceived internal competencies are validated and confirmed in the outside world. Furthermore, it also supports her idea that athletic competence comes at an age when the person relies increasingly on outside indicators for assessment of ability. It further confirms her claim that this coherence between one's inner sense of competence and external markers of that competence fashion a true internal picture of oneself

as able and competent. The fact that these players speak of these occurrences from their middle school years supports Harter's claims that this harmonization of internal and external assessments occurs during this period.

Self-Sufficiency

Related to the competence of confidence, and yet slightly different, is the competence of self-sufficiency, which also arose in several interviews. Many players spoke about being drawn to squash because of the very fact that they were alone on the court, that they were responsible for the outcome, and that they could neither pass a ball to a teammate nor blame a teammate or referee for a loss. And while many spoke of enjoying this aspect of squash immediately, many spoke of needing to take full stock of this reality if they were going to improve. The following remark is the clearest articulation of an emerging self-reliance that was derived from the solitary aspect of squash:

All of that [improvement] came from taking personal responsibility, the sort of ownership of how I acted on court, how I played, how I constructed points and rallies. And it is very fulfilling and part of the reason I love playing squash: it is only me out there on court.

And though that is at times a burden because you're the only one out there who can control the outcome of a match, there's also a certain joy in it. Because, I know that if I can figure out a way to beat an opponent, there's a sense of self-validation about that because I am taking ownership of that win, of commanding this challenging physical and intellectual process.

Many international players spoke of the self-sufficiency that came from all the travel that they needed to do for their squash playing careers, whether it was traveling on weekends to their

national training center, or traveling to other counties or countries for tournaments. Those who spoke of this aspect of the experience, did so in terms very similar to this:

I can't think of many other sports that are going to take you around the world like squash can. I did all my traveling when I was 16, and I pretty much went almost around the world all by myself. So, I've done all this stuff by myself: getting on a plane, finding a hotel, finding the squash center, all in different languages by myself. If I had stayed at home, I wouldn't have that sense of needing to figure things out by myself.

Being on the court alone and traveling alone emerged frequently in the interviews as aspects of the participants' squash experience that most clearly relate to building the competence of self-sufficiency or self-reliance. But, as with many of the developmental themes, participants were less likely to state explicitly whether (or if) these experiences crossed over to feeling a general sense of self-reliance, though it would be hard to imagine that there was not some generalizing of to feeling self-reliant in other areas. But one player did give a very clear exposition of how all of the competencies I have been discussing in this section on development collaborated to bring him to a new developmental level:

I can't think of anything that's had such an impact on my life. And so much *outside* the squash court: how to deal with people; how to appreciate the moment and not get lost in it. I definitely feel better about myself. You know, it made me a man. Squash made me more of a tougher (sic) person. I was better able to put things into perspective. As in squash, you need to have such control over your thoughts. You know you have an invisible hand on your brain forcing you to focus on this right now. Same thing in the outside world: something happens and your head starts to wander and fill up with all

these possible scenarios. And now, I can just clamp down on all those wandering thoughts. I have this overarching sense that things will work out if you just put the work in. Things will take care of themselves. Good things will happen.

This player's testimony gives strength to many of Harter's (1999) points about a sense of self deriving from a collection of competencies and how, in particular, strengths in one area can generalize to others and how all of those strengths contribute to one's sense of oneself as an effective person able to influence and master one's environment. This quotation also validates Kegan's (1982) point that much of human development involves moving away from a position in which one inhabits one's feelings or thoughts, that becoming a self involves having much more control over one's emotional and cognitive landscape rather than being at the mercy of it. This quotation, the clarity this player has about the benefits his squash participation has garnered as they related to his sense of self may derive from the fact that its author was a senior toward the end of the season, and thus, of his playing career. In the interview, he even acknowledged that much of the revelations referred to in this quotation were arrived at quite recently and also came out of a period of nostalgic reflection on his time in college.

The Team Theme: Development

A full eight out of the 15 participants spoke in one way or another about the enormous importance that being on a team has had for them. The significance of this theme was evident in every section of the interview and will thus be discussed as a finding in all three sections, but the emphasis and enthusiasm that the participants displayed when talking about being on the team was impressive to witness. The preponderance of its appearance in the interviews represents another vindication of the developmental work of Robert Kegan (1982). Recall from the

literature review that Kegan's main point about human development was that the ultimate point of human development was not the production of a fully functioning, independent, autonomous individual, but rather that a fully functioning, autonomous individual is the necessary precondition for joining the larger collective represented by all of the environments inhabited by that individual: family, profession, and community (Kegan, 1982). Far from being a primer for good citizenship, Kegan's point suggests that the competencies of affiliation and sociability are the pinnacle of human development rather than the independent free agents theorized by other developmental psychologists. The frequency with which the team theme emerged speaks to the urgent power of this pull for inclusion within a larger collective, particularly for the developmental level of these players who are looking to see their own values reflected outside of their family, in their choice of college, in their consideration of a partner and a career. As one player put it quite simply, "now, I care much more about the team than I do my own squash." A more fulsome exposition of this theme came from two international players:

There's no purer joy than winning. I should take that back: there's no purer joy than winning for your team. Much as I've enjoyed winning matches back home, I don't think I've ever felt anything as good as winning a match here [at Yale] when it matters. It's been such an honor to be on this team. I'm sorry it's over because I have so much more to give.

Or this player, who compares what it would be like to play professional squash after the kind of experience he has had on a team in college:

I have always wondered how I'd be able to carry that through as a professional all by myself. That's one of the things that's tough about an individual sport. And squash is

very much an individual sport. So that's what's so nice about being here [both in the US and at Yale] because squash suddenly becomes a team sport. You are now leaving everything on court not just for yourself, but for your 14 other team members, your three coaches, your physios [physical therapists] behind you, your personal trainers behind you, all the people who have put all this effort and time into you, and, like, you're giving it back to them by giving it your all on court.

Throughout these quotations we can see the move from a focus on the self to a focus on the collective. And in that, we can see how powerful it is for these players to be unified with others in the pursuit of common aspirations. Individual goals and aims reflect those of the team and thus, the person finds themselves mirrored back by the team in a way that feels both ego-sustaining and ego-denying, both full of self and absent of self. Again, this seeming contradiction strengthens Kegan's point that successful merger with the group requires having already achieved certain developmental milestones and begins to happen most powerfully right at the time most of our participants entered college. But he also recognizes the challenge of this focus away from the self in that the majority of our time is spent in thoughts that are primarily self-centered. Thus, as he posits, we are always oscillating between managing our own needs for independence with our strong urge for affiliation and inclusion in the larger collective (Kegan, 1982).

The importance of the team will not come as a surprise to anyone involved in athletics, particularly given the emphasis placed on team sports in so much of a young person's life. But, the frequency with which this theme emerged in the interviews will come as a surprise for squash players, many of whom, like the second person quoted, view squash as intensely individual, and

therefore individualistic. In part, the enthusiasm with which people spoke of their team participation was due to certain realities of squash in general and this sample in particular. The international players have never played on a team in the way they have at college. While they may have played on a team representing their country, such representation was brief, lasting perhaps a two-week time span with some training sessions before an event. But for the most part, their squash lives entailed largely representing themselves in various individual, single elimination tournaments. And while many of the American players also played for their high school team, they also had to focus on individual tournaments if they intended to earn a national ranking and be recruited for college. Thus, the kind of four-year commitment to a group of players and an institution is a new aspect for these players' squash lives, particularly the international players. The overwhelming importance that the experience had for them is one of the more significant findings of this study and has implications for young players' squash development. These areas will be explored in a later section in which I will compare more directly the American and international experience.

Social Context

In this section of the interview, players were asked to reflect on the social cues that they received from their families, peers and coaches about their squash participation. Some interesting general findings were the variability with which families were involved, the ways in which familial support was perceived, and the amount of control or autonomy the families gave to the player in making decisions about their squash life. As for peer support, many players spoke of their squash life as entirely separate from their peer group due to its relative obscurity as a sport. In this way, squash was definitely not like youth soccer, hockey, rugby, or field

hockey, just a few of the sports that players mentioned needing cease in order to focus on squash. Still others spoke of developing a kind of squash cohort that presaged their later involvement on a team. Players spoke of coaches in so many ways, but primarily as either the person or persons who taught them the value of hard work and/or as a grounding presence in the player's life, able to help keep this whole experience in perspective for them. Themes from this section of the interview that will be explored at greater length will involve the cohort, the coach and the family.

The Team Theme: Social Context ('The Cohort')

The section on development ended with a look at the team theme, reinforcing a developmental trend that increasingly embeds the individual within a larger collective. And though the college years were spoken about as particularly important to that trend, it is a process that begins in the latency years as people begin to emerge from the family and form peer groups. Kegan (1982), citing Henry Stack Sullivan, points out that the hallmarks of this time are competition and compromise, both of which are in high evidence in the youth peer group. For many squash players, given its marginal status in relation to other sports, finding a peer group based on squash was particularly salvific. Many American players spoke of having a group of friends down at the club with whom hours of structured and unstructured squash activity was passed and helped draw them away from the confines of the safety of the home and into the twin fracas of competition and compromise. International players also spoke of having a squash cohort who shared and validated their passion and impulse to play squash. From both contingents, there were players for whom squash was completely consonant with their social group and players for whom a separate squash cohort was formed. For both, the squash cohort played an important role in helping consolidate an identity as a squash player and provide impetus for further participation.

This player gives an example of how important it was to have her peer group understand and even be a part of her squash world:

I've known people from other parts of the country [U.S.] who are embarrassed to tell their friends that they play squash and are good at it because no one knows what it is. I've had no experience with that mentality. Squash is huge in [my town]. My entire family played. All my friends did. In my high school we were one of the best teams in the country and would always win, so we got a lot of praise. All of my closest friends played, which was really fun. Like, in middle school, we would all go after school to my club and just play "King of the Court" or this [squash] game called "Lives" for hours. It was very much fun and very much a part of who I was.

This quotation underscores the consonance of squash in this person's social world, and its importance to this person's identity to have her choice of squash reflected back in her peer group. Indeed, this person speaks almost as though she had grown up in squash heaven, where it would have been odd or eccentric not to play or have friends who play. As she herself points out at the beginning of her comment, such a reality is more of an exception than the rule. An international player echoes this sentiment, though for this cohort, the setting was a public squash court without coaches or clinics or much adult presence at all:

There was a whole group of us who congregated at the club, and I have five or six friends growing up in that cohort of players, and we just brought each other up. We were all motivating each other and competing against each other. Sometimes we'd even skip school and play squash. We'd make fun of each other, slagging each other off and we

didn't know it at the time but we were motivating each other. We were just always playing squash. It all just happened organically.

Still, many players spoke of having something of a dual life when it came to squash—that it gave them a set of squash friends and a set of other friends. Many spoke of some moment, either after winning a competition for their school or some larger individual tournament, as the moment when their non-squash playing friends realized this whole other side to them. This player's experience is not uncommon for this group:

I used to love it because I had two sets of friends. I had my rugby mates. But if the squash tournament was up [in the north country], I had my squash mates. If it was down by me, my squash mates would come to me. If it was over in England, we'd go down to England. I really enjoyed that social aspect of it, but it didn't stop me from competing with them. But all my rugby and other friends started to get the whole squash thing when they'd say, "Hey, what are you doing on the weekend?" And I'd say I'm going to Germany for a tournament. That's when they'd start to get it.

For all of these players, whether squash was consonant with their peer group or not, all of them spoke of having a squash related peer group that helped foster and maintain their interest in squash. Such a group also helped them form their identities by providing an environment outside the house where that separation, combined with the competition and compromise that these activities entail, helped to encourage these players along in important ways for their squash and their development.

The Coach Theme

While the discussion of parents dominated the section on social context, coaches emerged as extremely important figures in the lives of our players. It would be good for coaches to hear the powerful impact they have on their players because, as with teachers and psychotherapists, they often don't see the value of the work they do with players. This occlusion is often because players (as well as students and therapy clients) often aren't aware of the nutrients they are deriving in the moment of the experience. Rather, these benefits emerge more powerfully upon reflection. A very salient aspect of the findings as they relate to coaches was the absence of technical information that players remember receiving from their coaches. Rather, they seemed to remember the relational aspects of the interaction. This vindicates much of the theorizing on what makes a good teacher, coach or therapist, namely, the ability to form a good relationship. This relational skill is the *sine qua non* for someone whose job description involves catalyzing transformational growth. And in that regard, the coaches these players were fortunate enough to interact with had this characteristic in spades. Players spoke of having acquired a life long friend, someone who helped them learn important life lessons and to whom they return when they are in the need of the kind of grounding and perspective that they valued so much in these figures. Rather than quote individual players, I present these findings in list form:

- Taught me to take personal responsibility for my actions.
- Taught me the value of hard work.
- Taught me the importance of being a good citizen.
- Called me out when I was out of line.
- Taught me how to be mentally strong.
- Always reminded me of the bigger picture.

- Helped me get over my fear of losing.
- Instilled a passion for the game.
- Helped me get over my shyness.
- Reminded me that it's only a game and that it should be fun.
- Taught me that you get out of it what you put into it.
- Taught me the importance of sportsmanship.
- Always grounded me and gave me perspective.
- Taught me about life.
- Taught me how to push myself.

This list is by no means meager. Another striking aspect of the reporting on coaches was the absence of many negative interactions with coaches. There was the one international woman who felt as though the coaches in her national coaching system cared more about the development of boys than girls. Or, some players commented on stylistic differences they had with coaches, but even at that, they were able to derive some benefit from a coach with whom there was some tension or mild strife. The overwhelmingly positive manner with which coaches were spoken of is both a testament to the high level of coaching these players received but was no doubt an important factor in these players' ongoing commitment to squash.

The Parent Theme

Consistent with much of the literature on sports socialization, parents occupied an enormous focus of the responses in all sections of the interviews. They appeared in the form of the people who initiated, supported and helped shape the experience for the player. The responses to questions in this area strongly supported Fredericks and Eccles' (2004) conclusion that of all of the 'influencers' of a child's sport participation, parents occupy the top rung of the

ladder. It also supported Hellstedt's (1991) categorization of underinvolved, supportive and overinvolved. Aspects of Munich & Munich's (2008) category of overparenting were also in evidence. And while people did speak of their parents, this theme might well have been called the 'dad theme', as a full 11 out of the 15 participants mentioned being introduced to squash by their fathers, some even coached by their fathers. But whether introduced by the father or not, fathers emerged as the most referred to figure in the interviews. All of the styles of parenting were represented by the sample, from parents who were not very involved at all to those who were very supportive but not involved, to those whose involvement was pervasive and constant, from being present at lessons and matches to coaching their child between games and managing all aspects of the player's squash life. The themes for this section will be: the supportive parent, the overinvolved parent, and the impinging parent.

The Supportive Parent

It should be pointed out that every category of parent was perceived as having been supportive. This category refers to a kind of abiding, non-intrusive support that helps provide the experience for the player but does not seek to dictate the terms nor see anything tangible come from the experience. This kind of parent shows support by giving advice, financial assistance, and allowing the player to make their own choices regarding that experience. A few quotes from players who perceived their parents' support in this way follow:

At 12 or 13 I was, like, 2nd in my age group and my parents had a talk with me and they said, "if you want to pursue this, we will help you." And I said, "yeah, I would like to get better." It was totally up to me. My parents never made me do anything. My parents' philosophy was "at any point, if this stops being fun and you don't want to do it, you don't have to do it." It's always been 'do it if you love it' from them and that's always

been a driving force in my squash. And apart from being on the national team, which I didn't like, I have always played just for the fun of it.

Or this player, whose father set clear parameters for his son with respect to his participation:

The only thing my old man expected of me was to give 100%. Didn't matter if I won or lost, he was always just like: "as long as you go out there and play your best and leave everything on the court, then it doesn't matter about results." That was really nice because I never had any pressure on me to win but he always said, "as soon as you stop enjoying it, then there's no point in playing." My old man loved watching me compete and would say, "as long as you enjoy competing, then I enjoy watching you compete."

Or this player, who was the only player in the sample who spoke of her mother being the primary support to her squash endeavors:

My mom was the more involved parent. She helped me sort out competitions and stuff. I think she was glad I was doing it for the structure it gave me. Her main message was: "as long as you go out there and try your hardest and don't go around wasting money." But once I turned 15, I would go to all my practices and competitions on my own.

Unlike uninvolved parents, these parents do not send the message that anything goes. Rather, their support comes with clear expectations and parameters, but those conditions are perceived as reasonable and even helpful by their children. Furthermore, the final arbiter of the experience is the child in that only the child knows if he or she is still loving it, giving it their all or getting the most out of it. It is significant to note for a later section of this project that the three parents mentioned in these quotes all come from the international sample.

The Overinvolved Parent

The overinvolved parent not only provides material and financial support, but takes a big role in shaping the experience for the player by making important decisions about the experience and is noted for their ubiquity at all aspects of the experience, training as well as competition. Some of the overinvolved parents provide coaching for their children, an intervention that is sometimes welcome and sometimes isn't. This parent is represented in the following way:

My dad wouldn't miss a match for the world. He's seen every one of my high school matches, every one of my college matches, and every tournament that I've played in. Maybe 1,000 matches. He'll fly straight to a match from a business trip. He used to tell me what he thought after matches and when I was younger and I didn't really like it, because it's like your dad trying to tell you what you did wrong and you don't really want to hear it. Now, he's always telling me that I'm a better player and I should be playing higher [on the ladder]. I tell him that it's nice to hear but we have challenge matches and this is where I am on the ladder. But I've actually enjoyed it. It's inspiring. I do think I can do better, but to have another person say it and have it be someone who has seen you play more than anyone, it's very reinforcing. And though my mother doesn't like to see me play because she gets too nervous, she's also very supportive.

Or this player, who noticed a difference between her mother and her father, a difference that showed up just as she was beginning the college search process:

Now that I'm thinking about it. The message [from my parents] was to "just have fun" until a couple of years ago, but when the whole college process started, they ...uhm... my mom is still pretty relaxed about most things, but my dad's competitive side really

came out. Like, he...uhm, I don't know what I'm trying to say...he... uhm...really wants us to play well and would start to come to the lessons that me and my sister had and, like, think he knows what he's talking about and start picking at our games and telling us we need to do this and that and so it kind of takes some of the fun aspect out of it and kind of puts a little more pressure on us, but we don't take it seriously. We don't let it affect us, we just think he's being annoying and that's that.

Both of the fathers represented in the above quotations are perceived as supportive and the players speak of this as a generally positive experience. They learned to temper their overzealous parent and were able to take the supportive element and leave behind the intrusive, controlling aspect of it. The second player quoted might have had some more mixed feelings than she shared as evidenced by her rambling and hesitating reporting style. She seems either reluctant to share some of the more negative feelings she may have experienced with regard to her father and/or she is in the process of forgiving these transgressions as she is reporting them.

The Impinging Parent

Still another level of support veers over into the kind of impingement that we discussed in the literature review. In this dynamic, the needs of the parent take precedent over the needs of the child. The child feels powerless in the face of the overwhelming need of the parent and puts his or her own needs or feelings to the side. While there are certainly hints of this dynamic in the previous two parents represented, the next two reveal an even more aggressive imposition of their own will onto their children.

My father always let us do what we wanted to do, but he always made sure I didn't lose interest. He kept exposing me to tournaments. If I wasn't keen to play, he'd always

drive me to the club to make sure I didn't miss a session. Anything he did, he never forced me. He was always suggesting. He was always making sure I was training properly. But he would never be like pushing me. Knowing that my playing was making him happy kept me playing.

Here, despite the player's perception of support and perception of the absence of force, the father's support did not take into account the son's fluctuation of mood with regard to squash and ultimately, it is the father's happiness in the son's play that continues to motivate the son's participation.

Another participant spoke of his meteoric rise through the squash ranks, a journey that was entirely initiated and accompanied by his father. In this intense experience together, the player spoke of the following impingement and repair:

He didn't know that much about squash, either. I don't know what his incentives were by getting me into this sport. I wish I did. We were both new in the sport and we both did a lot of learning. We were both so excited about the progress I was making and for a brief period of time, he was getting a little bit too into the matches and stuff like this, like any parent would. But he very quickly caught on. And I made him catch on. I don't want him to come off as wrong in this, but in order to maximize my growth as a player, he needed to be very supportive as opposed to being overbearing, something like that. And that's something that every parent faces. There was this episode I remember vividly from 9th grade when I was playing badly and I put the ball into the tin and I was kind of angry and I looked back and saw my dad throw his hands up (in disgust) and I freaked out and

said, “Dad, you can’t do this, blah, blah, blah.” Ever since that point on, he’s been just awesome.

The father’s behavior later in the story belies his son’s characterization of his learning curve:

He went with me to every single tournament and it was fun. There was a time...well, squash wasn’t my first love. I love golf. There were times when I’d be down and say “this is a lot to handle, can’t I just stop?” And he’d say, “just trust me here. I think it’s something you should keep going with.” And everyone in my family said the same thing: “keep with it, keep with it.” But those were difficult conversations because there were a bunch of times when I just didn’t enjoy the sport as much as I did other sports. And I was like, “why am I doing this if I don’t enjoy it.” But I grew to enjoy it and I can say that honestly.

Several similar episodes from other players include a parent who engineered a coaching change against the wishes of the player and a player who could not speak of his relationship with his father due to the acrimony that arose from his tournament play.

It is important to note that the claims about a deterioration of performance and enjoyment of the sport that are predicted by these impinging behaviors were not borne out in this sample. Even these intrusive and controlling behaviors were tolerated by the players and all of them spoke with such pleasure about where their squash play landed them that all of the parental engineering that might have gone into it seemed like a small price to pay. Some of the halting reporting style that some of these players show may reveal more complicated feelings about some of this, and what it would mean to reveal these feelings to a stranger, but that is an interpretation and would need different kinds of questions or a different kind of study to verify.

Motivation

Recall from the literature review that researchers focus on the kind of motivational climate set by the athlete by their social context and how players have absorbed those messages. In the literature, there was an dichotomy established between intrinsic ('mastery') motivation and extrinsic ('ego') motivation. Listening to players' account of their own motivational orientation produced a much more ambiguous picture than one that is easily distilled into understanding motivation from one or the other angle. Those who perceived their motivational orientation to have sprung internally from their character spoke of an intense competitive nature, present for as long as they can remember and manifesting itself across all of their activities. Others, validating the material from the literature review on ascetical practice, spoke of an internal drive to always go beyond their current limits in the pursuit of some new knowledge or experience. Those who placed their motivation externally spoke of the importance of goals as the engines of their efforts. Still other 'externalizers' spoke of the importance of their peers and the team context as vital for pushing them toward achievement. But, perhaps the most salient finding in this section is the fact that very frequently internal and external categories were confounded in their stories, thus vitiating the idea of seeing motivation in terms of the neat categories of "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" that has occupied so much of the educational and sports literature on motivation.

The Competitive Drive

I think I would have been good. I don't know if you would have seen me in 2006 in Germany playing the World Cup, but I think I would have been decent. Any sport that I approach, I try to become one of the best. That's just my nature. (Martin Kaymer,

golfer, on becoming the number 1 ranked golfer in the world. New York Times, April 2, 2011.)

One of the striking features of those who viewed their motivational orientation as deriving from some aspect of their character was the degree to which they felt as though a competitive spirit was a part of them for as long as they can remember, as though it was somehow part of their nature, as professional golfer Martin Kaymer states in the quotation above. These players recognized this character trait as one that appeared in other areas of their lives: their school work, their standing among their siblings and peers, and even in inconsequential matters like board games or wardrobe selection. Many of these players felt that elite level success was inevitable and had it not come in squash, it would have manifested itself in some other arena. Indeed, many who spoke of this character trait had found great success in many other sports and had to winnow down their sports' participation to focus on squash. For this class, winning, excellence and elite level participation emerged naturally from the urgent demand their character had for the thrill of competition. But even with this category, what feels like a totally internal trait can be understood as having been forged by external forces, through messages in one's social context or through an early reinforcement history. One player from our sample reflects on his competitive nature in this way:

I mean I was always a competitive kid. If I was playing cards or board games, whatever it was, I hated losing and was a pretty bad loser. I was always obsessed with being the best. If I was given a compliment by a friend, like, "you're a well-dressed guy," I was only happy if I was *the* best dressed guy in the class. I always like being the best instead

of *one* of the best. And that was evident in my squash. I loved being challenged and playing tournaments. This was one good way for me to be happy.

For this player, his competitive behavior in a host of realms is a manifestation of a character trait that was going to emerge no matter what the venue. Whereas the next player, who gives voice to a very similar impulse, locates this instinct within a social context that produced this way of being:

For some reason, ever since I'm young, I've always felt as though everything is a competition. Even schoolwork has always been a competition. I had to get the best grades otherwise I feel myself down. And I think that has to do with the fact that my old man was always very sporty. Me and my brothers always had a little competition, like a harmless rivalry. Same with my mates as well. They were all the same mind set as me. All of them were really top athletes, some of them sitting on professional contracts right now. All my friends were really competitive. Even board games with them, like Monopoly, would turn into fights and scuffles. So that was a big drive and focus for me. My friends were all so competitive. My dad was so competitive.

While the second player mentions his social context, he also mentions at other times in the interview that despite his father's competitive nature, he never expected any results from his son, only that he give it his all. The first player quoted mentioned having parents who, though pleased with their son's squash playing career, placed absolutely no expectations on his success in this area. And so, it would be difficult to tell how much social context played a role in creating what is perceived to be an innate character trait toward competitiveness. Still others who mentioned this trait felt as though the process of the interview helped them to connect their

competitive drive to a parent's drive for them (usually the father) and still others pointed to their competitive nature as exercising some sense of perfectionism and reported a noticeable deterioration in performance as a result. Still others who report a competitive bent pointed to a defining loss early in their career as a tremendous motivator for their whole squash career. And others discussed their meteoric rise through the squash ranks, impelled not only by their success but the fact that their success was nurtured by, and in turn, nurtured their competitive drive.

Askesis

Considerate la vostra semenza:

fatti non foste a viver come bruti

ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza

(Consider your seed: you were not made to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge. Dante, *Inferno* 26.118-120.)

This tercet from Dante's *Inferno* comes from Ulysses' speech to his men convincing them to sail with him beyond the Pillars of Hercules, beyond the limits of the known world. In doing so, he appeals to a hunger for knowledge that he portrays as part of their genetic code, as part of the urge and burden of being human. So, too, our players often brought up this notion of always pushing themselves beyond their known limits and of always courting that threshold between what they can do and know and what they can't do and can't know. These players were clearly seeking novel ways of being and knowing and felt as though such experiences could only be had through the intense, ascetical training regimen encouraged by squash. But though they see their training as having been prescribed by squash, they also recognized that there was something about the brutally austere way that they approached that challenge that was particular to them. These players saw themselves as doing so much more than following a regimen ordered

by their coaches, but rather as dictated from much deeper within. In their quotes, we can hear traces of Dante's Ulysses:

I think I really like pushing myself to the max. I just don't enjoy being stuck in my comfort zone. I find it boring. I'm always looking for something new to try. I think that's one of my main drivers: I want to push myself. I want to see how far I can actually go. I want to see how far my body will go before it breaks down. I want to see how far I can go mentally before it breaks down. If I keep pushing, how hard can I go? I don't think that's a squash thing or even a sport thing. I think that's very much an individual thing.

Or this player, who makes it even clearer that her squash training involves courting the threshold between what she knows and does not know about her internal world:

In some sort of sadistic way, I really love going through those brutal sessions and pushing through. I enjoy the moment of doubt that you have when you're forced to physically do something that feels impossible in the moment and the mental focus required to push through that doubt and ultimately come out on the other side and having completed whatever drill or game in a successful way. And I think that's something you go through when you're faced with a series of sprints that are really demanding physically and it brings me enjoyment and I like the challenge of thinking at one point that I might not be able to do something and then ultimately being able to do it.

While both of these players speak of the internal hunger that motivated their training, many also spoke of the forgoing of external pleasures that their elite level training demanded of them. Players mentioned sacrificing unstructured social time, time on the couch in front of the

television, and needing the kind of discipline with their time that was mentioned in the development section. But the ethical and moral ascetical practice that we read about in the literature was also reflected in the players' quotes, as they reflected on the kind of pitfalls they avoided by having such a demanding master as their squash training. One player said, "Other kids: I mean, what did they *do* all day?" And still another one said that it was nice not to be like the other kids, "you know, drinking and smoking." And still for others, while they recognized the benefits of training so intensely, there were negative consequences in thinking all the time about training. This worry came in the form of a constant nagging that others were doing more and even, in one case, a kind of perfectionism that spurred a precipitous decline in performance and necessitated a hiatus from the game. Still another spoke of his ascetical practice as a kind of addiction and he wondered what would replace it when he left college squash.

The Team Theme: Motivation

Players perceived that these two prior themes—competitive drive and askesis—came from within them. This perception is irrespective of how that motivation arrived on the inside of them, whether through an early life of behavioral reinforcement for these traits or by identification with significant others. The kinds of motivational forces that people spoke of as being more obviously external were goal setting and the motivation that came from being on a team. Many athletes spoke of having been motivated by setting goals all their life, a finding that is in keeping with 'achievement goal theory' as discussed in the literature review (*vide supra* pp. 27-29). But, players found it even more powerful to be motivated by team goals and spoke about this power in no uncertain terms:

This year our opponents have really motivated me. I think about competing in the finals for a national championship perhaps more than any other sporting event in my life. So,

that's what's really been driving me. Sometimes I go to bed at night, I'll think about having match ball for the national championship—not just on my racquet, but anyone's. It'll just come into my head and it'll jack me up and I won't be able to get to sleep. So, that's really driven me this year. I've trained harder this year than any other at school.

Or this player:

I have gotten a ton of motivation or drive from my teammates in that I want to better myself so that I can win for whatever institution I'm playing for, for them as an individual, and also the pressure that competing and playing with someone on a daily basis give me. And at Yale and in high school what motivated me or had a huge effect on me was my team and wanting to move up my ladder and play in a high spot and secure a win for them, especially at Yale.

Players also spoke of the kind of motivation that came not just of competing for their team, but also about how much of a motivating force their team was even when they were competing against them, either in fitness sessions or in matches in which they compete for spots on the ladder. This player speaks of the help his team gives him when in the middle of a difficult training session:

And probably if I were not doing this [intense training session] with the team, there's a good chance I wouldn't be doing this at all. If I'm doing it with the team, we have a team goal and everyone has to pull their part and this is what's required to achieve something. We all have a goal and we're committed to achieve the goal. This [training] is what's going to help differentiate me in a match. This is what's going to help me win a national championship. This is what is going to help me secure an Ivy championship.

As we can see in this player's move from the focus on the team to himself, in his move from "we" to "me," individual goals have fused with team goals. And in this move, we have not just validated the achievement goal theorists, but the self has joined the collective in such a way that internal and external goals and motivations are indistinguishable. As I have been claiming all along, this motivational orientation is both full of self and full of selflessness. It is not surprising, then, that the team theme emerged as so powerful a force in all three sections of the interview.

Motivation: Intrinsic versus Extrinsic

As I hope I have been portraying all along in this section, one of the major findings of this study is that this distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation does not make sense for players at this level. While I believe that it certainly makes sense to talk about what kind of environment parents and coaches should set with regards to process over product—and the interviews bear this out—I don't think it makes sense to speak of an elite level athlete, of this age, as being motivated internally or externally. Even at a quick glance, these distinctions break down, as what feels like a deeply internal character style, like being competitive *by nature*, can actually emerge from a social context or a reinforcement history established from the earliest interactions with that context. On the other hand, what seems like a purely external goal, like securing a high spot on the ladder, or even, admission to an Ivy League school really gratifies years of hard work, perseverance and innate talent. And so it was extremely common for players to mention what would be called 'ego' or 'extrinsic' motivators ("winning," "being better than the other player,") in the very same paragraph or even sentence along side what would be called 'mastery' or 'intrinsic' motivators ("getting good," "enjoying watching myself improve"). Here

are just some representative quotes that show how both orientations can hold equal sway in elite level motivation:

(Mastery or Intrinsic): The whole point of playing is to reach a point of play that you're happy with. Saying, "I want to play at this level," rather than "I want to be better than him." As long as you are happy with your goal and you've reached it, then that's fine.

(Ego or extrinsic): But once I got my first national title when I was young, I wanted another one. Once I got on the junior national team, I wanted to be on the national men's team. And once I got on that team, I wanted to be in the top 4 so I could travel. And then I wanted to be number 1 on that team. I was always looking up to the next level, the next thing. (Intrinsic): But I never defined myself by my squash. I was just something I enjoyed and happened to be good at, which makes it even better. (Extrinsic): And it makes it more fun when you're winning.

Recall from the literature that one of the primary aspects of having an internal motivation was that one had self-referenced goals and definitions of success. And yet, the literature also said that stating goals in terms of having success *over others* was a reflection of an extrinsic or ego orientation. Clearly, this player gives voice to both orientations. Yet another player confounds internal and external in still different terms:

(Extrinsic): Since September, I've been training two times a day to keep motivated for the season and it was getting to the point where if I didn't get up and train in the morning, I was doing myself an injustice. So, to a certain extent, it's very hard living with this sort of motivation because kind of what's going through the back of your head is, "how are these other players doing?" "If I take a rest, are these other players going to take a rest?"

So, in that sense, this motivation has been quite tough. (Intrinsic): But I really enjoy the rush you get from a tough session. You go in the morning and you lift or you run until you throw up and every time it's absolutely terrible and as soon as that passes you get this endomorphine rush, you get this huge euphoria and it's the best high you're ever going to get. That's another driving factor behind everything I do.

This player feels the burden of comparing himself to others and yet at the same time derives a deeply felt satisfaction from pushing himself to meet that challenge.

Finally, one player put the dilemma between these two poles very clearly, as she struggled to reconcile what were clearly extrinsic goals with internal gratifications:

Part of what did and does motivate me to this day is to gain some sort of recognition or to prove that I can achieve at a high level. But I want to prove it to myself and not get worried about how others perceive me but I'm more worried about my own internal competitive nature and...well, it's an odd balance between flat out wanting to be the best because it gives me a sense of validation and just wanting to continue to push myself to be better so that I can improve as an individual. What's weird is that part of what motivated me to be a top junior and play in a high position here is that I was pursuing a personal challenge. But the other part is just flat out wanting to be the best, wanting that recognition, wanting the glory of being on the top.

As we can see from these observations, what are experienced as internal motivations exist side by side with what are experienced as external motivations to the point where an elite level athlete cannot distinguish between the two, or even feels quite palpably the difference but can't

say which one is stronger. As one player responded when I asked which he felt as the stronger pull put it, “it’s really a combination of both.”

A Comparison of the American and International Experience

Up until this point, the findings have been presented without reference to the comparison aspect of the study. Topics have been discussed using the geographic dispersion of the sample indiscriminately. This uniformity is less true in the social context section where the overinvolved and impinging parents were almost entirely from the American part of the sample, a finding which will be further explored in this section. Some basic observations about the difference should be pointed out from the outset. For the most part, American squash players will have played their squash in private clubs requiring a membership application, yearly dues, and take place in the context of an upper middle to wealthy socioeconomic context. The international players, for the most part, will have played at public clubs that do not seek a particular kind of member and don’t require applications or exorbitant dues. Secondly, while all of the players will have received coaching to get to this exalted station, this experience is also different. The American players will have had multiple private lessons per week, had their private coach attend their competitions and will have expected a great deal of support from that coach. International players often went without private coaching, learned their squash in more group settings and on their own until the time at which they were recognized by their country’s national system, at which time they would have been training with other national team hopefuls, at the expense of the national training system. Finally, the American players all recognized how small squash was in the United States, where the majority of the squash continues to happen in the Northeast, but rarely outside the borders of the country. On the other hand, the international

players seemed to have participated in a sport whose worldwide reach they appreciated and played a part of their experience of the game through their own international travel. In this section, though, I will focus the findings on three aspects of the comparison: parental presence: American ubiquity versus International benevolent absence; control of the experience; and goal direction.

Parental Presence: American Ubiquity versus International Benevolent Absence

One very striking difference between these subgroups in the sample was the difference in parental participation in the experience. American parents were everywhere all the time involved in the experience. This ubiquity was in stark contrast to the international sample whose parents were supportive, but largely stayed away once they recognized that their children were fine on their own. The parents of the American players did not just support the experience for their children but were very much a part of it, attending the competitions and even the lessons of their children. Recall the player quoted in the parenting section whose father had attended every single one of his son's squash matches and continues to do so, no matter the distance or expense (*vide supra*, p. 63). Recall, also, the father whose son speaks of his rise through the squash ranks as something that was entirely conceived of and accompanied by his father (*supra*, p. 65). And these two were by no means outstanding in the American sample, as players at one point or another made it clear that their parents were very much a part of the experience. At some point in their stories, the American players reported not just that their parents supported them, but that that support also came with it a strong parental presence. A good example of this kind of ubiquity comes from the player whose father had seen all of his matches:

And now, for college, he'll come to a match and he'll congratulate me or whatever it is and he'll say goodbye and then I'll call him around 8 and we'll run through all the matches for the whole team and then we'll run through my match.

As we can see, the American experience is very much shared with the parents, whose presence doesn't end even when the competition does.

The international players' experience of their parents stands in almost direct opposition to the American one. These players spoke of supportive parents, but parents who did not show their support through their presence at every moment of the experience. These players did not mention their parents' involvement in their competitions or their coaching and, indeed, often spoke of parental absence as one of the crucial benefits of the experience. This difference was particularly stark in the ways in which the two samples spoke of travel: American parents accompanied their children to all of their competitions which were all pretty much within driving distance of home, whereas the international players all spoke of the thrill of traveling away from home, all over the world, alone or with their peers, starting at about age 15 or 16. International players spoke of going away on weekends to various parts of the world or to the national training center on weekends entirely without their parents. As this one player puts it:

Me and my friend would always come up with little scams to fund our squash activities. Our lives revolved around coming up with the money somehow and going off to these tournaments all over the place without our parents and hang out and compete. It was just great.

We recall the international player (*vide supra*, p. 51) who speaks of traveling the world by himself. Nor was this a gendered experience, as this one international woman put it:

Squash gave me a whole new set of people to interact with and introduced me to people of different backgrounds. And there was a lot of travel, like, I'd go away without my parents to different countries and stuff. When I was like 13 my mom or dad would come with me, but once I hit 15, I'd travel either by myself or with the national squad. I didn't want to travel with my parents, so I just left them at home.

Or:

The minute my mom sensed that I was OK on my own, they just let me be. They didn't hover. And I think it hurts the kid, to always have your parents around. Because, then, you don't get to develop your own sense of thinking.

This difference in experience is not a small one. The international experience seems to involve breaking away from the family unit and beginning to find autonomy, self-sufficiency and learn about fending for oneself. The American experience is of becoming closer with the parents, of sharing every aspect of the experience with them. For many of the American players, it was clear that the parents were having the experience along with their children to the point where it was unclear whose experience it actually was. For the international players, it is clear that it is the players' experience and theirs to manage and negotiate. As the last two players quoted suggest, such a separation between self and parent greatly helped them develop their own sense of self and agency in the world.

Control of the Experience

As one might imagine, the difference in parental presence also corresponds to a difference in who controls the experience. American ubiquity translates directly to a greater sense of control, as American parents seem to have a greater hand in shaping the experience for

their child. American parents seemed to be in charge of the competitive schedule, the coaching decisions, and in particular, in keeping the children focused on the potential benefits of playing squash in terms of acceptance to a better college. The international players said things like, “my father always told me to have fun and that as soon as it stops being fun, that I should just stop.” Whereas we recall the American parent who told his son who was feeling burnt out by the pressure: “just trust me on this, son, and stick with it.” In this regard, we can contrast the experiences of an international player who learned his squash by hanging out at the club and getting on court with whomever he could. As he says:

So, I started playing properly one summer just going to the club every day. There weren't any coaches, so I was never really coached and I just watched my brother or club players or professionals on TV. You can get good that way. Once in a while, a pro would come by to train at the club and we'd just pick their brains about stuff and pick up all we could from them. But it didn't need to lead anywhere, it was just fun driving it.

It is clear from his words that this player considers his whole squash experience to have been helped by a few adults, but not shaped by them. Contrast this American player, whose father engineered a coaching change for her, a change she was very opposed to:

My dad made me play with this new coach who had moved to the area and was getting a lot of new players to work with him. I didn't want to go because I had heard he was really tough. But I also really liked the coaches that I had been with and had been with for a while. And then I did work with this newer coach, but I went to my old coach and said, “I really don't want to do this. I'm just going because my dad is making me do this and I think it's really stupid. You guys are my coaches and I would never leave you.”

It's kind of like the college process. My dad's competitive side really came out. Like with my little sister really wanted to go to Princeton, but my dad got really concerned that she wasn't going to get into Princeton and so he took away the whole college process from her and micromanaged it.

While this story was perhaps the most extreme, it became clear that American parents not only support the experience for their children, but make most of the executive decisions about it and seek to shape its direction and meaning for their children.

Goal Direction

Another major difference between these two samples is that American players seemed to have admission into elite colleges as part of the driving appeals of playing squash whereas that motivation or option was not clear to most of the international players. This difference was also reflected in the international players' perception of the experience of the Americans. Many American players spoke of coming to a realization that their squash could help them gain access to top colleges and of having that realization drive major decisions. It is not the case that international players did not realize that their squash could get them places, but it is the case that they didn't speak of this as a driving force behind their squash aspirations, whereas for Americans it often was:

I was invited to try out for the national team. The kids on that team were applying to college, and I mean, like Yale, Harvard, Penn, Dartmouth. And that's when I realized I wanted to make it my goal, too. That's when it hit me that I could use this as a springboard to get into a good school and that's when I wanted to distinguish myself from, instead of going to a school like Williams/Amherst type school, I think I'm good

enough to get into Yale, Harvard, Princeton. You know, a top school that recruits the best for the best.

Or this female player, who discontinued a long-loved extra-curricular activity when she made a similar realization:

My sophomore year of high school, the captain of my team was recruited to Harvard. That's when I realized that squash could take me somewhere. Squash could get me to where I wanted to go, which is, granted squash has always been a big thing to me, but there was always a conscious decision that this could get me to where I wanted to go, which is a top university. So, I was like, "I need to pay more attention to this. This is clearly important." After that, it just became about convincing other people that I was capable of competing at that higher level.

Several international players spoke of pursuing the sport through their national training system but never really having such long-term or clear goals as what happened to the players just quoted. Indeed, many of players from the international sample spoke of the experience of having goals in such different terms. And many spoke of their perception that for American players, this whole experience aimed at admission to an elite college. Consider these two international players:

Here, in the United States, it has a lot to do with your school and there's a lot of pressure about where you go to college. It never occurred to me that I could use it that way. It just happened, I guess. I knew sometime I'd have to go to university or turn pro, but I didn't have such long-term goals and I didn't want to plan too far ahead.

Or this player, who had an opportunity to reflect on his goals in comparison with American ones:

For me, I wanted to be on the national squad. That was pretty much it. When I was 18, I realized that there was an opportunity to come across and play here and that seemed very interesting. But here it's different. Right now, there's a big middle school tournament at our courts (the middle school national team championships) and I'm helping out. I overhear all these parents talking to each other about getting their kids into college and the kids are all 13 and 14, which is kind of bizarre to me.

These differences are quite significant and suggest that while both parts of the sample were playing the same game at similarly high levels, they actually had radically different experiences. These differences correspond to major cultural differences in raising children, sociological differences in views of separation and individuation and sociocultural differences in the role of sport in the life of a young person. While these are all very deep waters, some general comments can be made.

It seems as though American parents in this sample seek to have a great amount of control of their children's squash playing experience. Such control may stem from the fact that they dispense the considerable financial resources required to marshal a young player through the competitive ranks. This outlay quite literally further invests the parent in certain outcomes and may indeed stem from a very intention to see these outcomes. It might also stem from the fact that the parents, in their very ubiquity and exertion of control, feel as though they themselves are having the experience for themselves. Such a conclusion would support Munich & Munich's (2008) claim of a kind of narcissism on the part of overparenting parents and would indicate that American parents and children view separation and individuation as something that does not happen fully until well after the college years, whereas for this particular international sample,

the target age for that experience is around 15 or 16. Based on this sample and the study as it was conducted, it is difficult to ascertain whether there are any identifiable deleterious effects from this level of control, but the parental impingements, lack of autonomous control and lack of self-referenced definitions of success on the part of American players conflicts with the way that the motivational theorists viewed the establishment of a healthy motivational climate (*vide supra* pp. 20-26). Given the fact that we see just the opposite occurring, we can imagine such lack of autonomous control leading to the kind of anecdotal differences in motivation and coachability that was outlined in the introduction.

Furthermore, if we place any value on children developing a greater sense of an autonomous self, then the international sample seems to have achieved that earlier and more fully than the American one. An interesting element of this claim is that the international players all identified this sense of autonomy as a crucial aspect of the experience whereas the American players did not mention it at all. Indeed, one American who took time off after high school to travel the world did allude to this problem in the American squash playing experience:

Some of the American kids who come to college from prep school don't understand what's going on in the world: that money just doesn't come from daddy's credit card. They're just so ignorant about the world. Laundry, cooking, cleaning. Stuff like that. I mean, I traveled the world at 18 by myself. I remember taking, like, a 3 a.m. flight to Norway from London and I spent the night in Amsterdam airport. Just stuff like that when you're traveling all over the world by yourself and you need to fend for yourself.

While this American player is speaking of the kind of self-sufficiency that I wrote about in the development section, his anomalous experience (for an American) echoes the kind of experience

the international players had in terms broadening horizons and separating from home. But, he is also speaking more broadly about American and international ideas about child rearing, that growing *up* means growing *away from*, and he seems to be recognizing that for American children, such a process happens much later than in other quarters of the world.

Another way in which this difference in parental control manifested itself was through a kind of seriousness and earnestness with which the Americans presented their experience. For many Americans, the experience needed to *mean something* and *amount to something*. The experience needed to lead somewhere, almost as though the parents saw admission to elite college as a payoff on an investment rather than as an added benefit that accrued from an already fulfilling experience. And such a target was reflected in a kind of earnestness in the presentation of the experience during the interview itself. On the other hand, the international players often remarked on how they had no idea or no overarching plan of where this experience was leading and spoke of arriving at Yale as an unforeseen bonus. For them, it seems as though the next interesting experience or possibility was what was on their minds, not a reward that was five or six steps away. This difference, too, was often reflected in the interview setting where many of the international players became swept away by the passion of the experience and though the interview often meandered, the affect of the experience was more evident and prominent in the very telling of it. While we vitiated the disparity of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation in elite level athletes, we might claim that such a distinction is alive and well in the parents, where American parents are much more extrinsically motivated in that they want to *see something* come of the experience, whereas international parents want to see their children have a good experience and grow from it. Such a claim is quite general and would need a different study and will be explored in the upcoming discussion section.

Clearly, these are also sociological observations and relate, as far as this study is concerned, to the literature on the sociology of sport (*vide supra*, pp. 34 ff.). In particular, we recall Alan Tomlinson's (2004) use of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, in which people, while seeming to be operating as independent agents, are really performing the dictates of their social surround as it relates to how and why an activity is enjoined and how the values of that social surround become displayed through the performance of them and without those performers' awareness of their influence. Thus, for the American part of the sample, admission to an elite college, as a way of reflecting and securing class status, was always a motivating factor for most of the decisions in the child's life, with squash participation not only not an exception to this rule, but a worthwhile activity for the very access it provides to those institutions. Some of our American stories were conscious of this as a motivating factor, but many were not.

There is much more to say about this difference in experience, but it will have to await a further study. In the discussion section, I will explore possible direction for future research in this area. For example, it would be interesting to see how the international experience of squash changes as more and more international parents become aware of the tremendously powerful and advantageous experience of playing squash at an elite American college. Such a change may already be happening. For now, though, the differences elucidated in this section affirm the comparison aspect of this study and provide fodder for reflection on some of the rewards and pitfalls of structuring the squash socialization experience in the ways that are currently available to American and international players.

Chapter V

Discussion

It is my hope that the reader arrives at this point already with a sense of the merit of this study, designed the way it has been and addressing the areas highlighted in the findings section. The reader will have noted that the main goal of the project was to get a sense of the quality of the experience of being an elite level college squash player and, as such, took a wide angle to the experience. What the project may have lacked in terms of quantitative findings in matters of development, social context and motivation, it gained in terms of conveying what it felt like to have the kind of experience that these players did. In this regard, the project succeeded in the modest goal of describing important aspects of an intense human experience. Also, in this regard, the participants were excellent reporters of their experience and their good faith participation in the interviews was clearly a *sine qua non* of this project. In the few instances where greater insight or reflection was desired by the researcher from the players, we easily forgive our participants and feel as though interesting additional data might have been gathered had the interviews, or an additional round of interviews, taken place after the experience was over rather than right in its midst. That said, several of the findings of this project stand out as particularly valuable outcomes, all of them alluded to in the findings section.

It was very important to learn of the developmental gains that squash players derived from their intense participation in this activity. The ways that squash encouraged the development of important competencies and mastery attempts was a vindication of the many hours and resources that our participants devoted to this activity. While those who do not engage

in elite level squash also acquire these competencies and squash is not the only means to do so, squash was the particular venue through which our participants developed them. And while many did not explicitly connect their acquisition of these competencies to their squash experience, their interviews made it clear that this had been the case. Finally, though it might be expected that intense sport participation would yield these benefits, and indeed this is one major reason we encourage our young people to do so, it is useful to have a study document the ways in which these benefits are acquired through squash.

Another significant finding was the vitiation of the polarized concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, at least as they apply to elite level athletes. While those constructs seem very important for early participants and perhaps help understand how to better shape learning and parenting environments in sport and educational settings at the outset of an experience, it does not help elucidate the motivation of an elite level athlete. For this level of athlete, there are so many years of participation, so many successes and failures, and such a fusion of identity and activity that it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether an athlete's motivation derives internally or externally. This is not to say that these are not useful constructs or that athletes should not become ever more conscious about why they are doing what they are doing and what they hope to derive from their participation. Such a mindful approach to motivations and goals can only serve to make the experience both more successful and more meaningful, and can only help to put the experience more securely in the hands of the participant rather than its socializing agents. As stated in the introduction, one value of the study is the very absence of studies of this sort for athletes of this age. And as athletes continue their participation away from the well-studied school-aged years, studies of this sort can only help to clarify motivations, pitfalls, and aspects of the experience for players, parents and coaches to highlight.

This study also showed merit in the findings that related to the way parents shape the experience of an elite level athlete. In this area, the study confirmed the paramount importance that parents have in introducing the sport to the child, setting the original motivational orientation for the child and interpreting the experience for the child. But the study also revealed that, for American parents at least, new categories of parenting were emerging. In these categories, parents seek not only to provide the experience for their children, but also to control it, be ever present for it, and even, have that experience for themselves through their very ubiquity and control. The study supported the concept of overparents as theorized by Munich and Munich (2008) for some parents, a group whose own narcissistic involvement in their children's experience creates a porous boundary between child and parent and seems to create a false self for the child who loses their own sense of autonomous agency with regard to their sport participation. Hypotheses that were put forward at the beginning of the thesis about the deleterious effects to sport performance due to this kind of parenting were not borne out, though they were also not ruled out. More study of the insidious nature of this kind of over involvement is warranted.

Additionally, a very significant finding of this study was the overwhelming meaning our participants spoke of the team aspect of their squash life, as though being on a team was the pinnacle of their experience. While this finding comes as no surprise to devotees of team sports, it is quite a remarkable finding for squash players. As I remarked in the findings section, and as our own players clearly remarked, squash is understood as a staunchly individual enterprise. Indeed, for much of a squash player's life, such individualism is true. In this regard, the experience of a four-year commitment to one team is a strictly American phenomenon and a great contribution to a sport that has its roots in colonial Britain, but where this type of long-term

team commitment does not occur. Squash players should be interested in this finding, and the game of squash should capitalize on this finding by strengthening adult league play so that the college experience may be continued into young adulthood, thus continuing participation and the affiliative benefits about which players spoke so passionately. It would be wrong to suggest that US Squash is not currently engaged in the support of adult league play, but armed with this knowledge, there might be new avenues to promote the team experience even after college. Finally, as pointed out in the Findings section, the overwhelming power of the team theme validated Kegan's (1982) developmental theory about successful human development as entailing the successful merger into the collective. Interview after interview reverberated with the importance to the young adult of finding a collective to join, in whose midst values are reflected and talents are united in the pursuit of common goals. Such a felicitous merging into a group serves as a reminder to developmental psychologists and theorists of the self about where successful human development should lead. A well developed self should and does contribute to overall human flourishing and is not a trophy, attained and retained in solipsistic propriety.

Finally, the comparison of the experience of international and American squash players proved to have tremendous merit and could be an area for potential future study. While the differences in the ways international and American parents foster or hinder separation and individuation may come down to purely cultural dimensions, these differences amount to a radically different experience for the youngster and could point to quite different ways to socialize children into sports and maintain their spirited interest. In a word, the international players sounded like they had more fun, felt as though the experience was more theirs than their parents', and spoke about their experience with more passion. The Americans, while clearly relishing the place their squash had taken them, sounded much more earnest and purposeful

about their involvement, spoke about it as having been conducted under the watchful and ever present eyes of their parents and seemed to be under pressure to produce some sort of result from the experience. Whereas the international players made their own way in the sport with benign support from their absent parents, Americans made their way *in tandem with* their parents and were often very seriously controlled by their parents. For the international players, squash was a way to separate from parents, whereas for the Americans, squash kept them enthralled to their parents' orbit and values. Without making value statements about these cultural differences, they are profound, and more research ought to be conducted to determine more precisely how American and international squash players feel about this difference, a difference the international players seemed well aware of, but about which the Americans seemed entirely ignorant. Indeed, the findings in this area are striking enough to warrant a study whose sole focus was this cultural difference and how this difference manifests itself in the cognitive and emotional apparatus of the player.

In general, I would have to say that these participants were excellent conveyors of their experience. As I have alluded to earlier in this discussion, it would be useful to check in with these players several years after they have graduated to see if they have more to say about their involvement with squash. Indeed, it would be interesting to see which of these players become squash parents themselves and how they negotiate that experience for their children. But, in terms of the current study, three alterations come to mind that might have been efficacious in deriving more confirming data for some of my hypotheses. The first is that I would re-word the questions on development that started the interview. Here is what they were, with the prompts that I sometimes employed:

Main questions: How did you get started in squash and how has it changed you? What do you think you have understood about yourself through squash and how has that understanding changed as you continued through the levels of the sport?

Potential prompts: At what point did you realize you were good in this sport and how did that change your self-perception and the way you were treated by others? What other activities (musical instruments, other team sports, family activities) did you have to sacrifice for your involvement in squash and how did those choices change your self-perception?

Either I did not ask these questions in the proper fashion or they were not worded correctly, but the story of their involvement in squash took precedent over the developmental aspects of the questions such as the ways in which squash changed them or the understandings that they gained from squash. It might also be the case that these are difficult questions to answer at any time, but perhaps especially at the particular phase of involvement during which these participants were interviewed. In this regard it would be helpful to interview them at a later time or to have included in the sample alumni and alumnae from college squash programs. Furthermore, more thorough interviewing instruments already in use by developmental psychologists might have been useful to assess developmental gains derived from this experience. It did not occur to this researcher that the questions, phrased as they were, would lead to difficulty getting at the material that was their intent. That said, culling through the entire interview usually yielded a good wealth of developmental gains through squash involvement, and so, perhaps they adequately served their function.

In terms of more precision of data collection, a mixed methods project might also have yielded more solid evidence. For example, if, before sitting for the interview, the players could have been given a quantitative instrument which had five to ten questions on each area, employing Likert scales, there would have been yet another kind of data set to compare with the

verbally proffered data. In the field of motivation, the Perception of Success Questionnaire (POSQ) referred to in the literature review (Roberts, et al., 1998) could have been incorporated to this instrument, an inclusion which might have also more rigorously tested my claim that the bifurcation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation does not have validity for elite level athletes. And, indeed, a more rigorous testing of this claim would need to happen were this aspect of the project to make it into publication.

A final change would have been to find some way to include the parents and coaches of these players into the study. Such a triangulation of perspective would have been enormously useful in testing some of the claims that emerged from the findings and future studies of this sort should strive to include these voices. Coaches could provide very useful information about when things clicked with their charges and what struggles the coaches themselves faced as they tried to convey important information to them about squash participation. Coaches could also provide valuable contributions to the ways they manage parental involvement and how they successfully collaborate with positive parental input and temper parental impingements. Similarly, parents could be an invaluable resource. They could provide more insight into the developmental gains they saw their child acquire through squash and they could discuss the arc of their own experience with their child's squash. Triangulating the experience in this way has the potential of producing more reliable and nuanced results and could confirm, deny or further complicate some of the claims I have tried to make about the developmental, social and motivational aspects of elite level college squash participation. I believe the few claims that I have made in this study have justified it and have also provided fodder for useful further investigation.

Chapter VI

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Appendix A

Human Subjects Review Approval: Smith College



Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950
F (413) 585-7994

December 30, 2010

Matthew Munich

Dear Matthew,

Your revised materials have been reviewed and they are fine. You did not send us a new copy of your questionnaire so we assume you have not changed it. We are happy to approve your study with the understanding that you will not begin recruitment until you have written permission and that you will send us a copy of any permission you obtain.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ann Hartman" followed by a flourish.

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee


CC: Roger Miller, Research Advisor

Appendix B

Human Subjects Review Approval: Yale University

Yale University

*Human Subjects Committee
53-55 College Street
P.O. Box 208010
New Haven, CT 06510-8010
Phone (203) 785-4688
human.subjects@yale.edu*

To: Matthew Munich
 From: Susan Bouregy for the Human Subjects Committee 
 Date: 01/10/2011
 Committee Action: **Expedited Approval**
 IRB Action Date: 01/10/2011
 IRB Protocol #: 1101007839
 Study Title: The Developmental, Social and Motivational Aspects of Elite Squash Participation
 Expiration Date: 01/09/2012

The above-referenced protocol was approved following expedited review by the Human Subjects Committee. The project was found to be of minimal risk and to meet the approval requirements under University IRB policy and 45 CFR 46 as applicable.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without approval by the Institutional Review Board.

Adverse Reactions: Investigators are required to promptly report any unanticipated problems or complaints to the committee. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Human Subjects Committee. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.

Appendix C

Human Subjects Review Approval: Trinity College

Date: January 5, 2011



To: Matthew A. Munich From: James Hughes, Chair

Trinity College Institutional Review Board Re: Approval of Research Proposal # 2011F-34

I have reviewed your request for IRB review and approval of your research on “The Developmental, Social and Motivational Aspects of Elite Squash Participation.” Your proposed research project meets the ethical standards for research involving human participants with respect to obtaining informed consent, assuring confidentiality of participants’ responses, and posing little or no risk to participants. Your project is hereby approved and you may proceed with your research when you wish. If the need arises for any further communication about this proposal, please use the identifier number above.

Please note this approval extends for a period of one year from the date above. Should you continue your research beyond that period a new IRB application is required.

If you change your research methodology in any way, please contact me so that I can verify that your research still meets the appropriate ethical standards.

cc. Thomas Mitzel, IRB Administrator



Appendix D

Recruitment Letters

Recruitment Email to coaches

Dear Dave and Gareth (Yale) and Wendy and Paul (Trinity),

As you may know, since I left high school coaching, I've been working on a master's degree in social work at Smith College School for Social Work. In our final year, we write theses on a topic of our choosing in a related field. I am writing mine on the developmental, social and motivational aspects of playing squash at a very high level. In essence, I will be seeking to understand what players say they have derived from participation in such an intense experience and where it fits in their life's arc.

I am writing you because I would like to interview players on your team for this study. Their commitment would take no more than 30 minutes to an hour in an interview with me. I would schedule it around their time commitments and their participation would, of course, be totally voluntary. I have attached an informed consent form to this email so that you can get a sense of what I am asking of them and the lengths I will go to protect their identity in any written or oral presentation of the findings. You should know that this study has been approved by the Smith College Institutional Review Board, a committee that meets to ensure that social science research meets the highest ethical standards. I can give you their approval letter if you or anyone in your institution is concerned about this study's following correct and standard protocol.

So, I would like to come to a team meeting or practice so that I can present this study to them and seek their participation. You can respond to this email to let me know your thoughts or questions about this project. I will be following up with a phone call to you shortly.

Thanks for your consideration of this request. I believe that this study has potential benefits to your players and to the game of squash. I also believe that the study might indicate future areas for us to consider as we ponder the great attrition rate of squash players after they leave college.

Yours,

Follow up email with interested players

Dear (squash player's name),

Thank you yet again for agreeing to participate in my study. It was great meeting you at practice and I am looking forward to sitting with you for our interview. I'm writing to reiterate what you would be signing up for and what my end of the bargain is. Again, my project is seeking to understand several aspects of a squash player's experience, particularly as it relates to development, social context and motivation.

In doing so, I am asking you to sit for an interview in which I ask some fairly open ended questions that seek to have you reflect on your experience playing squash. I will then transcribe these interviews and write up my findings according to relevant themes that I have garnered from the interviews. You should know that your name will not be used anywhere in the study, nor will it be used in any written or oral presentation of my findings. So, I can guarantee you a very high level of confidentiality for your answers. When I am done with the study and after a three year time period, I will destroy the interviews and any data connected to them. I have attached an informed consent form to this email which you can look over. I will bring two copies of this document that we will both sign it before we start. If you have any questions regarding this study or your participation, I hope you'll feel free to ask me by phone or email. I will be contacting you soon by phone to set up our interview.

Thanks again and I look forward to hearing about your squash experience.

Yours,

Appendix E

Informed Consent Document for Participants

Dear Participant—

My name is Matthew Munich, a student at the Smith College School for Social Work. The study I am asking your consent to participate in asks squash players to consider the developmental, social and motivational aspects of their squash playing activity. It is being done to help understand what people derive through their participation in such an intense activity. The study is being done as part of the requirements for a master's degree in Social Work and answers a stated need in the research literature for the studies of this sort. Results from this study may appear in several contexts. I may present to classmates at my school this summer; if your team would like, I can return and present general findings, but in such a way as protects the answers of individual participants; and I may submit the findings for publication. Finally, I may speak with US Squash about some findings so that they can understand better how to keep college squash players involved in the game after they finish school. If I return to present findings to the team, there is a chance that confidentiality might be compromised, but such a report would seek to minimize this risk by presenting findings in as general a way as possible.

Your participation will involve a brief tape-recorded interview with me in which I will ask questions about aspects of your experience playing squash. All tolled, your time commitment to this study will be approximately 30 minutes to an hour. After our interview, I will selectively transcribe the interviews and code them according to the themes that emerge.

While the interview does not seek to be extensively intrusive, anything that involves a discussion of a life experience might bring with it unexpected emotional content. In the event that such material does arise causing emotional discomfort or distress, I encourage you to discuss such matters at your college counseling center where they may refer you to a qualified professional. Addresses and phone numbers for those centers are on the second page of this document. While there is this risk, I believe that it is miniscule and that the benefits of the research for squash, and for successful personal growth through athletics outweigh the risks. While there is no compensation in participating in this study, there is an opportunity to put your squash experience in perspective, to alert coaches and parents as to what aspects of this experience to highlight for their child/athlete, and to suggest avenues for greater and extended squash participation in those who play at a high level.

You should know that your participation in this research will be entirely confidential and that I will be the only person who will know that your responses are yours. Once the data are transcribed and coded, there are no names attached to it, so that, in the event that I need to share the data with my research advisor, it will be completely absent of names. In addition, all writing connected to this project will not include respondents' names. In accordance with federal guidelines, I will keep the responses to the interviews for three years. During which time, they will be kept in locked files and I will be the only person with access to them. Transcriptions will be kept with a code name, not your name, and will be on digitally encrypted files. If the data are needed for more than three years, the same system of security will be in place until such a time as they are used or destroyed.

You should also know that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that you may refuse to answer any question or even withdraw entirely at any point in time up until March 15, 2011. Should you withdraw, your data will be immediately and entirely destroyed. If you want to withdraw after we have sat for the interview, you can contact me at (203)555-5555. If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me directly or the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413)585-7974.

Thank you very much for considering participation in this important study.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

(Participant)

(Researcher)

College Counseling Information:

Yale University

The Yale University mental health services are open weekdays from 8:30-5:00. It is located at **55 Lock Street, 3rd floor**. Should you need after-hours or weekend care, the acute care phone number is: 203-432-0123. The number to call to set up an appointment during regular hours is: **203-432-0290**.

Trinity College

The Trinity College mental health service is located at **135 Allen Place**, accessible from the Campus Safety parking lot in the gray and white building near the handicapped ramp at the back of the lot. The phone number is **(860) 297-2415**, which should be called between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. If students are in crisis during off hours, they are encouraged to call the campus emergency number to be referred to a dean on call: 860-297-2222.

Appendix F

Interview Questions

Development

Main questions: How did you get started in squash and how has it changed you? What do you think you have understood about yourself through squash and how has that understanding changed as you continued through the levels of the sport?

Potential prompts: At what point did you realize you were good in this sport and how did that change your self-perception and the way you were treated by others? What other activities (musical instruments, other team sports, family activities) did you have to sacrifice for your involvement in squash and how did those choices change your self-perception?

Social Context

Main questions: Who were the most important people for you in this experience? What messages do you remember receiving from them? How did they view your participation?

Potential prompts: How involved were your parents in this activity in terms of pushing you towards lessons, attending your competitions and organizing your squash life? Was there someone who hooked you on the game and how did that person do that? How did your non squash-playing friends respond to your success in this area?

Motivation

Main questions: How important is it for you to do well at squash and has that importance changed over time? As you think about your squash playing life, what have been the most satisfying moments?

Potential prompts: What is the most satisfying aspect of winning for you? When did you realize (if at all) that strenuous training was crucial to your success at squash? Have there been periods in your squash playing life when you thought of quitting, and if so, what kept you going?