

# Perceived Constraints on Middle School Sport Participation

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## Middle School Years

- Participation in youth sport declines significantly among both boys and girls (Casey et al., 2009; Hedstrom & Gould, 2004; President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport, 1997)
- By 16, most adolescents have adopted a pattern of leisure activities and sport participation that will form the foundation for their adult leisure lifestyle (Green et al., 2005; Roberts, 1999).



# Why Study Constraints

Constraints are factors that are **perceived** or **experienced** by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences and/or inhibit participation and enjoyment in leisure.

(Jackson, 2000)

## Key Question?

What are the main constraints perceived by middle school children in relation to sport?



# Why Constraints are Important

- 1) Understanding both positive (e.g., motivations) and negative (e.g., constraints) influences on leisure behavior.
- 2) Provide solutions for practitioners and policy makers.

# Measured Constraints

## Intrapersonal

- Psychological – not confident; not skilled; not fit
- Interest – not interested; played and did not like it

## Interpersonal

- Partners – no one to play with; friends don't like

## Structural

- Time – too busy with school work, friends, etc.
- Knowledge – Don't know where, no one to teach
- Accessibility – transportation, no sports near home
- Facilities – poor quality; crowded

# Research Questions

- Do constraints differ based on sport type?
  - No sports
  - Intramural
  - Interscholastic
  - Community Sport only
  - School Sport and Community Sport Combination
- Do constraints differ based on socio-demographics?
  - Gender
  - Race
  - SES

# Methodology

- Four Public Middle Schools (N = 2465)
- 97.3 % Response Rate
- Web-based survey administered at the schools
- Constraint measure adopted from previous research in sport and recreation (e.g., Alexandris et al., 2002)
  - 25 items
  - 7 constructs
- ANOVA (Tukey post hoc) and *t*-tests
  - $p < .01$

# Results

- Acceptable validity of the constructs (CFA) and invariance of the measurement model across socio-demographic comparisons
- Internal reliability ( $\alpha = .69 - .78$ )

## Overall Means

- |                             |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1) Time (M = 1.99)          | 5) Psychological (M = 1.61) |
| 2) Partners (M = 1.68)      | 6) Interest (M = 1.59)      |
| 3) Facilities (M = 1.65)    | 7) Knowledge (M = 1.56)     |
| 4) Accessibility (M = 1.62) |                             |



# Overall Trends - Participation Type

Higher  
Constraints



Lower  
Constraints

- 1) No Sports (n = 157)
- 2) Intramural Sports (n = 130)
- 3) Varsity Sports (n = 118)
- 4) Community Sports Only (n = 1607)
- 5) Community Sports + Intramural (n = 188)
- 6) Community Sports + Varsity (n = 154)

# Comparing by Participation

## Significant differences:

- No Sport / Intramural/ Varsity > Community / IM + Community / Varsity + Community
  - Accessibility
  - Knowledge
  - Psychological
  - Time
  
- No Sport / Intramural/ Varsity > Community / IM + Community > Varsity + Community
  - Facilities
  - Interest
  - Partners

# Comparison by Gender

| <b>Constraint</b> | <b>Female (n = 1163)</b> | <b>Male (n = 1169)</b> | <b><i>p</i> value</b> |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Accessibility     | 1.67                     | 1.56                   | .002                  |
| Interest          | 1.63                     | 1.54                   | <b>n.s.</b>           |
| Facility          | 1.70                     | 1.61                   | <b>n.s.</b>           |
| Knowledge         | 1.62                     | 1.50                   | .001                  |
| Partners          | 1.73                     | 1.61                   | <.001                 |
| Psychological     | 1.61                     | 1.49                   | <.001                 |
| Time              | 2.06                     | 1.91                   | <.001                 |

# Comparison by SES

| <b>Constraint</b> | <b>Yes (n = 739)</b> | <b>No (n =1591)</b> | <b><i>p</i>-value</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Accessibility     | 1.86                 | 1.50                | <.001                 |
| Interest          | 1.62                 | 1.57                | <b>n.s.</b>           |
| Facility          | 1.76                 | 1.61                | <.001                 |
| Knowledge         | 1.76                 | 1.46                | <.001                 |
| Partners          | 1.76                 | 1.63                | <.001                 |
| Psychological     | 1.68                 | 1.52                | .002                  |
| Time              | 2.01                 | 1.96                | <b>n.s.</b>           |

# Overall Trends - Race

Higher  
Constraints



Lower  
Constraints

- 1) Latino (n=237)
- 2) Multi-Racial (n=184)
- 3) African American (n=737)
- 4) Caucasian (n= 1103)

# Comparison by Race

- No significant differences for:
  - Time
  - Interest
- Significant differences
  - Knowledge
    - Latino > Caucasian and African American
  - Accessibility
    - Latino > Caucasian and African American
  - Partners
    - Latino > Caucasian and African American
  - Facilities
    - Latino > Caucasian
  - Psychological
    - Latino > Caucasian



# Key Findings & Implications

- 1) The importance of community sport
  - Community sport respondents perceived lowest constraints
  - No differences between non-sport school sport-only constraints

## WHY COMMUNITY SPORT?

- Diversity of skill levels reached, unorganized places to play, mixed age, enjoyment, practice skill development
- Parents take more responsibility, rather than schools' responsibility



# Key Findings & Implications

## 2) Girls have equal interest but higher constraints

- Opportunities “may” be equal but perceptions of constraints are not
  - More restrictions household tasks and family responsibility (Thompson, 1999)
  - Lower confidence and self-esteem (Henderson & King, 1998; Shaw, 2002)
  - Social approval (Shaw & Henderson, 2005)



# Key Findings & Implications

- Latino (more glaring differences)
  - No major differences between Caucasian and African American
  - Latino Students
    - Obesity-related diseases are greater in the Latino population. Highest rates of obesity and rates of Type 2 diabetes (Woodward-Lopez, & Flores, 2006)
      - Target Market
        - Announcements/Sign-up “drive”(accessibility)
        - Communication with parents (knowledge)
        - Social opportunities (partners)

# Key Findings & Implications

- Low SES
  - Significantly lower for all variables except Time and Interest
  - Lack of research on constraints and income
  - Structural Constraints
    - Transportation support for either community or school based sports could have a significant impact (i.e., late buses, or coordinated car pooling)
    - Lower quality facilities in neighborhoods
  - Intrapersonal
    - Lower competence – due to less coaching, poor quality programming, etc.
  - Interpersonal
    - What are friends doing?

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# Questions

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