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 ($M = 1.99$)  
2) Partners ($M = 1.68$)  
3) Facilities ($M = 1.65$)  
4) Accessibility ($M = 1.62$)  
5) Psychological ($M = 1.61$)  
6) Interest ($M = 1.59$)  
7) Knowledge ($M = 1.56$)
Overall Trends - Participation Type

- Higher Constraints:
  1) No Sports (n = 157)
  2) Intramural Sports (n = 130)
  3) Varsity Sports (n = 118)

- Lower Constraints:
  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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Female (n = 1163)</th>
<th>Male (n = 1169)</th>
<th>$p$ value</th>
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<tr>
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<td>1.56</td>
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<td>Interest</td>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<td>1.91</td>
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## Comparison by SES

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<th>No (n = 1591)</th>
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<td>Interest</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facility</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>1.76</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall Trends - Race

Higher Constraints

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

Lower Constraints
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?
Acknowledgements

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Questions

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