EXPERIENCES OF TWO FIRST YEAR YOUTH SPORT BASKETBALL COACHES

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ABSTRACT

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Coaching education programs are aimed at the inexperienced, untrained, volunteer coach. These programs are implemented without any knowledge of how the coach perceives or gives meaning to the task of coaching. Researchers and educators implement programs based on theoretical reality without any consideration to the individual reality of the participant within the situation, the coach. Three loosely structured interviews, along with observations of all practices and games, were conducted to understand the behaviors of two first year volunteer youth sport coaches. The descriptive fieldnotes and interview transcriptions were continually analyzed for emerging patterns, common themes, and tentative assertions. The evidence strongly supports the overarching assertion that the coaches' behaviors, perceptions, and meanings are affected by the tension between skill development, the children having fun, and the outcome orientation of competitive sport.

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Introduction and Review of Literature

Coaching is a task that requires knowledge of the sport, the ability to teach, the ability to plan, and the ability to organize and manage groups of children who are at different physical, social, and psychological levels of development. Coaches must be able to teach, guide, and interact effectively with the children while coping with the requirements of the coaching role and the pressures of competition. They must not only understand what the sport experience means to their athletes, but also to parents, administrators, and other people interested in the league.

Coaching education programs have been developed over the last decade out of concern for the potential powerful effect of the volunteer coach on the millions of children who participate in youth sport each year. Estimates of the number of volunteer coaches range from 2-5 million per year in the U.S. alone (Smith, Smith & Smoll, 1983; Lombardo, 1986). These coaches are typically parents of participating children, former athletes themselves, or simply people who like children and have an interest in sport. Most have had little or no training in coaching (Martens & Gould, 1979).

The typical sequence of events in the recruitment and orientation of the volunteer coach begins with the coach, usually a parent, being asked to volunteer to coach at registration or on the registration sheet the child brings home. On these sheets there is usually no explanation as to the time, emotions,

and knowledge needed to fulfill the coaching task. The next step is for the coach to attend a league coaches' meeting where the coach is given a team list, equipment, rules, practice and game schedules along with the brief description about the philosophy of the league and what is expected from the coaches. Armed with equipment, schedules, philosophies, and a team, the coach is sent off to take on the responsibilities of the coaching role.

This is a tall task for a person who often has little or no teaching background, management experience, and concept of the role of the coach and the requirements of the task. The coaching task requires the skills of a management person, a teacher, and a person knowledgeable in child development. Nevertheless, volunteers are often allowed to enter into the coaching role with little or no formal training. How can parents and organizers allow this to happen? Do they really believe that the actual sport experience can be beneficial with or without a knowledgeable person coaching these children?

Increasingly, leagues are becoming aware of the need to train coaches. However, leagues are often low budget operations that are organized around the goal of the more children participants the better. This goal cannot be accomplished without the time donated by volunteer coaches. As such, the issue of whether or not to make attendance at coaching education workshops a prerequisite for the donation of time and energy by volunteers, becomes a dilemma for most leagues.

Organizers realize that potential coaches may refuse to volunteer if they are also asked to put in extra time at coaching workshops (Seefeldt, 1982).

Many of these volunteers are also parents who may feel they do not need special training to work with children. After all, this is fun and games. How difficult could it be to teach kids to play? Such a perspective may stem from not understanding the task requirements for coaching.

The lack of training and knowledge of coaching is very problematic because children in youth sport are often at critical physical, psychological, and emotional levels of development which may make them extremely susceptible to the results of their interactions and the events that take place within the competitive sport context. The experience can either be detrimental or enhancing to the psychological, emotional, and/or social development of both children and coaches.

The extent of the influence of coaches on players has been documented by several researchers. Harris (1983) found that the beliefs of baseball players concerning the importance of winning were partially influenced by what the coach stressed over the season. Those who have examined the reasons children drop out of youth sport found that although "having other things to do" is the main reason given for dropping out, other concerns of the children include an over-emphasis on winning, lack of fun, and negative feelings toward coaches (Chelladurai, 1984; Gould, Feltz, Horn, & Weiss, 1981; Orlick & Botterill, 1975; Seefeldt, 1978). All of the former may often be a result of the quality of the coach.

This concern about the quality of the coach has led researchers and educators to develop various coaching education programs. Three such programs are the Coaches' Achievement Program (CAP), the American

Coaching Effectiveness Program (ACEP), and the Coach Effectiveness Training Program (CET). CAP and ACEP cover principles of pedagogy, management skills, psychology, physiology, liability, sociology, and communication while CET attempts to teach the coaches how to be positive in their attitudes and actions toward the children (Murphy, 1985; Smith, Smoll & Curtis, 1979). The impact of coaching education programs upon coaching behaviors has received attention by various researchers.

Research on Coaching Behaviors and Their Modification

Researchers have attempted to identify the frequency of behaviors that successful coaches use in developing theories on what makes an effective coach (Claxton, 1988; Markland & Martinek, 1988; Tharp & Gallimore, 1976). The behaviors exhibited by successful coaches varied across the studies. In most instances a successful coach was operationalized in terms of win-loss ratio. Because, in the youth sport setting, researchers, educators, and most parents consider a coach successful if the children are satisfied with their sport experience, it would be difficult to draw implications from these studies. Consequently, those studying youth sport coaches need to include an examination the perceptions of athletes and coaches and degree of satisfaction.

To date, most of the work conducted in attempting to identify and understand coaching behaviors and athletes' perceptions has utilized coding systems that systematically place behaviors in classes and categories. The Coaching Behavioral Assessment System (CBAS) seems to be the most widely used interactional analysis tool of this kind (Horn, 1984; Rejeski, Darracott, & Hutslar, 1979; Smith, Smoll, & Curtis 1978; Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1979; Smith,

Smoll, Hunt, Curtis & Coppel, 1978). Smith, Smoll, and Curtis (1978) used CBAS to observe and code the frequencies of behaviors of Little League coaches over a season. The researchers also obtained measures of the childrens' perceptions of the coaches' behavior, the childrens' self-esteem and the coaches' perceptions of their own behavior.

The results of the study showed that the coaches tended to demonstrate more negative than positive coaching behaviors. Interestingly, the children were more accurate in their perceptions of the actual observed behavior of the coaches, than the coaches were themselves. Furthermore, the children were more satisfied with their coaches, with themselves, and with their teammates when they played for coaches who exhibited more positive than negative behaviors.

Smith, Smoll, and Curtis (1979) combined the information of what the coaches did and how the children felt about the experience and themselves from the previous study into an experimental training program. The investigators conducted a study which used this experimental training program to try to modify coaching behaviors of Little League coaches. The 31 coaches who participated in the study were randomly assigned to either the experimental training program or the control group. The experimental group attended a pre-season training program; the control group did not attend a pre-season training program. The goal of this program was to modify the coaches' behavior so that the sport experience was a positive one for the children. During the season, observers tallied and categorized the coaches' behaviors at games and practices.

The coaches in the experimental group demonstrated significantly more behaviors consistent with the behavioral guidelines of the pre-season training program than did coaches in the control group. Additionally, the experimental coaches were evaluated more positively by their players. Furthermore, the players of the coaches in the experimental group expressed more intra-team satisfaction than those on teams of the control group. Finally, players who played for trained coaches had higher self-esteem scores than players who played for un-trained coaches. Thus, Smith, Smoll, and Curtis (1979) concluded that the pre-season training program had successfully modified coaches' behavior for the benefit of the children.

The results of these studies conducted by Smith, Smoll, and Curtis (1978; 1979) clearly indicate that there is a relationship between coaching behaviors and children's satisfaction with the sport experience. Direct causality cannot be inferred, however, because there are many things outside of the sport experience that happen in a child's life which could influence self-esteem and satisfaction during the season.

Until recently, the work of Smith, Smoll, and Curtis (1978, 1979) had been the only research on the effectiveness of coaching education programs in changing the behaviors of coaches in the last 10 years. More recently an effort to assess the effectiveness of ACEP was done by Burton and Tannehill (1988). These researchers used a behavioral assessment system to determine if the American Coaching Effectiveness Program (ACEP) was successful in encouraging coaches to exhibit more of the behaviors targeted by ACEP as necessary for effective coaching. Some of the targeted behaviors that ACEP

coaches exhibited more of than untrained coaches were encouragement and general positive reinforcement. Similar to the findings of Smith et al., Burton and Tannehill found a great discrepancy among observed results. For example, the difference between the perceptions and observed behaviors of the ACEP trained coaches was smaller than that for the non-trained coaches, but the gap was still quite significant. Burton and Tannehill suggested:

> *that the overall inaccuracy of the coaches' and player's perceptions and recall of coaching behaviors suggests that the positive behavioral changes exhibited by the ACEP coaches may not necessarily lead to more positive evaluative reactions by the ACEP coaches and players (p. 17).*

Burton et al. (1988) found that even after the training program, coaches exhibited more negative than positive coaching behaviors. Overall, however, Burton et al. concluded that the training program was valuable in modifying the coaching behaviors in a positive direction. However, the area in the researchers felt more work must be done concerns teaching coaches how to effectively use feedback and learned behaviors in specific situations.

Even though these studies tell us what the coaches are doing and how these behaviors may influence the children, the studies also leave many issues unanswered. First, it is quite possible that a program that aims to modify coaching behaviors may neglect to consider the goals of the coach. Perhaps, one coach is attempting to increase performance, while another is attempting to make sure each child plays. Would both coaches then be exhibiting the same behaviors with the same frequency? Second, another question that needs to be addressed is why there is a difference between the perceptions of the

coaches and the children.

Third, the function of coaches and youth sport needs to be more clearly delineated. Should the programs be designed to teach the coach to become a teacher of not only skills, but of necessary rules and values to enable the child to function in the social structure of youth sport? Fourth, although their behaviors may be modified, coaches are not passive participants within the context of youth sport. How does dealing with athletes, parents and administrators affect their behavior? Fifth, so far studies to date tell us only what behaviors were exhibited by coaches. Judgments of the effectiveness of a coach in these studies were based on frequencies of a behavior and ignored the reasoning behind the behavior. Possibly, the behaviors of a coach have different meanings to an observer and to the coach. The difference may lie in the perceptions of what the coach and researcher believe is appropriate behavior within the context of the situation. As reflected in studies done with behavioral assessment systems within physical education and sport settings, coaches may be unaware of their behaviors towards individual athletes. Researchers (Horn, 1984; Rejeski, Darracott, & Hutslar,1979) found that the behaviors of coaches and teachers were affected by their perceptions of a child's ability level. Specifically, Horn (1984) found that low skilled softball players were given more praise and more general and corrective feedback, while Rejeski et al. (1979) found that high expectancy children received more reinforcement than their low expectancy classmates. These results seem to indicate that coaches' and teachers' perceptions of the childrens' skill level may lead to differential treatment. More importantly, the results indicate that the

coaches reacted differently within situations that were perceived as similar by the researcher. Therefore, we need to understand the coaching experience from the perspective of the participant - the coach. Why do coaches seem to use more negative than positive behaviors? What are the coaches' meanings, perceptions and feelings about their tasks and role? Why is there such a wide range of behaviors in seemingly similar contexts?

These are the types of questions we need to ask to understand the reasons coaches have for behaving the way that they do, how they perceive their task, and how they experience coaching. The literature has identified types of coaching behavior, but as is evident, we need to begin to explain why coaches behave the way they do. We especially need to search for explanations of the behavior of the first year coaches. While experienced coaches can use lessons learned in past seasons to guide their behavior, beginning coaches have little upon which to base decisions. Thus, it is necessary to study how beginning coaches experience their first season.

Research on Beginning Teachers

Teaching is coaching in many ways and thus an examination of the literature concerning beginning teachers may help understand the behaviors of beginning coaches. The teacher enters the classroom with high expectations of directing, guiding, teaching, and helping the children. However, Zeichner & Tabachnick (1983) have shown that getting through the first day can be difficult for the first year teacher. McDonald (1980) has pointed out that all the knowledge gained from academic courses and student teaching does not adequately prepare the teacher for the realities of teaching.

Many first year teachers are often not prepared for the highly interactive social structure of the actual classroom. McDonald (1982), found that beginning teachers go through four phases. The first is that of coping with the anxiety created by entering a "real," not theoretical classroom while trying to learn to teach the students. Second, after gaining control, the teacher must decide what and how to teach. The third phase consists of coping with first experiences of evaluating both the pupils' and one's own performance. The fourth stage entails dealing with the differences of the meaning of the role of "teacher" among all the people involved in the academic environment. Specifically, people who most influence the perceptions of teachers as to their role include students, parents, principals, administrators, and fellow teachers. In addition to delineating these stages which may influence the beginning teachers' construction and reconstruction of their role as a teacher, McDonald and Elias (1983) also called for field research to determine how teachers perceive the experience of teaching.

Case studies of beginning teachers are becoming an important avenue for understanding how teachers perceive the experience of teaching. In one study of two beginning teachers, Williams, Eiserman & Lynch (1985) determined that many of their problems arose from the discrepancy between the teacher's individual reality and that of the classroom experience. This was demonstrated in the types of statements the teachers made when interviewed. The statements inevitably began with "I never realized" and "I thought that." Bullough (1987), in a case study of Kerrie, a first year junior high school teacher, attempted through field research to address the issue of how novice

teachers make sense of their role of teacher. Bullough (1987) found that Kerrie developed many of the skills necessary to cope with the classroom through trial and error. He also found that she went through many of the stages mentioned in the study of induction programs for the beginning teacher (McDonald, 1982).

Kerrie's experience demonstrated the way in which many beginning teachers are thrown into the role of teacher to either "sink or swim." Bullough (1987) suggested that in order for teacher education to be practical, it must be geared toward reconstructing the actual classroom experience from the perspective of the beginning teachers. Teacher education should incorporate results from studies identifying the teachers' classroom experiences with the theoretical world of teaching. As is evident, it is not enough to identify behaviors and problems of beginning teachers without understanding how they perceive those problems and behaviors.

Prior to comparing the experiences of beginning teachers with that of beginning coaches, I would like to acknowledge that there is a major difference between the formal training of a teacher and that of a volunteer coach. However, if we look at the similarities between the role of teacher and coach, we can see that both are put into similar interactive, evaluative and uncertain environments. They are both responsible and evaluated for their own actions as well as for the performance, attitudes and behaviors of the children.

It seems likely that beginning coaches would go through phases similar to those of teachers. Coaches must first learn to manage and organize practices. They then must begin to decide what skills are needed by individuals as well as the team. The coach must evaluate athletes according to skill and

position, and cope with the meanings attached to winning and losing inherent in the youth sport environment. Additionally, while interacting with the children in this manner, the coach must deal with parents, administrators, and other coaches. Developers of coaching education programs must follow the lead of researchers in teacher education and make an effort to understand a coach's individual reality of the experience. Perhaps it is time that sport researchers and educators of coaches consider that the reality of academia may be different than the reality of coaches. Furthermore, the material presented by coaching education programs might be more applicable within the field setting, if educators understood how coaches perceived the task of coaching.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

Coaches are active participants in the sport context. Their perceptions and meanings of "coach" may be constructed and reconstructed as they experience the interactions and situations within each game and practice. In other words, their perceptions of an event depend on their interactions with people, their experiences, and their reactions when faced with a particular situation (Jacob, 1987).

This is the basic premise of the symbolic interactionist perspective. The popular saying "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder" truly expresses the symbolic interactionist's perspective that there is a "truth" or individual reality for each person, as well as a meaning shared through social interaction (Charon, 1979). For example, certain hockey tactics are perceived by many people to be violent and unsportsmanlike. Nevertheless, within the hockey community these tactics may be seen as the beauty of the game.

George Herbert Mead (1927) has pointed out that the perception of the actor is influenced by the person's interpretation of the object or event within a specific social structure of a group. In other words, one's perspective of an object or event is affected by one's social experiences within a reference group. The group could be males, females, mothers, students, teachers, etc.

In addition, meaning is dynamic (Blumer, 1969). We are constantly negotiating and renegotiating our personal meanings and perceptions through social interaction. For instance, hockey players who constantly defend the use of aggressive hockey tactics may accuse an opponent of being violent if they personally become victim of these tactics. As such, a hockey player's perceptions and meanings are dynamic, influenced not only by reference groups but also by his or her interpretation of a specific event.

Similarly, the shared and personal perceptions, meanings and symbols influencing the behavior of coaches are constructed and reconstructed through social interactions within the coaching experience. Thus, in order to explain the behavior of coaches, we must understand their perspective. We must see the coaching experience through their eyes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how coaches experience their first year of coaching. Specifically I will focus on the following questions:

1) What experiences, models, and reference groups does the coach draw upon to develop initial perceptions and meanings of "coach"?
2) How does the coach construct and reconstruct the role of coach as she/he proceeds through the season?

3) What types of things does the coach perceive as shaping his/her perceptions and meanings as she/he learns to coach?

4) How do the coach's perceptions, meanings, and behaviors change over time?

The importance of this study is twofold. First, as was shown earlier, the existing literature has addressed only the issue of what coaches are doing and has ignored the "why." The only way to answer the "why" questions is to understand the perceptions and meanings of the coach. The value of understanding the meanings coaches attribute to their behavior may help to explain why coaches are doing what they do. In order to accomplish this, we must go into the field with the coaches as they experience coaching. Secondly, the coaching education programs may not adequately prepare the coach for the social reality of coaching.

Qualitative Research

Use of quantitative research methodology in the earlier cited coaching literature has profiled the behaviors which coaches exhibit. The questions arising from these studies suggested that in order to explain the behavior we must understand the perspective of the coach.

Qualitative methods are designed to gain an understanding of the process by which participants define their roles, tasks, and experiences within the environment in which they are actors (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Erickson, 1986). Field based methods such as descriptive observations and interviews provide a way of understanding how the participants within a setting perceive and view their world. Use of these methods, therefore, could facilitate the

understanding of the coaches' perceptions and meanings within the coaching experience.

Researcher's Perspective

I realize that one of the main concerns with the methodology of this study will be the fact that I, the researcher, am the research tool. This allows my biases, experiences, and preconceived notions to influence the objectivity of my interviews and observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Dobbert, 1982).

A good portion of the influence of a researcher's subjectivity can be eliminated by the researcher looking for and acknowledging the motivation for the study, biases, and experiences which may affect the objective treatment of the data (Borman, LeCompte & Goetz, 1986; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). For this reason I feel I must address why I am here at Michigan State University and explore the biases I may have developed as an athlete, a parent, and a coach.

My whole motivation for attending graduate school was to obtain the credibility that comes with a Master of Arts degree so that I could develop and implement effective coaching education programs. Because I grew up in the pre-Title IX era, I have had very few structured athletic experiences. The one and only coach I had was a physical education major whose heart was in the right place; she knew the sports, but I thought she lacked the ability to communicate, motivate, and teach.

My first coaching job was serving as an assistant basketball and softball coach to this woman at my old high school. I did everything possible to prove to her and everyone else that a person did not need to be a teacher or physical

education major to be able to coach effectively. I enjoyed giving to the athletes what I, as a female, was never allowed to experience. After this experience, I developed a junior high basketball program and coached both the seventh and eighth grade for eight years. While I was coaching within the school system, I volunteered much of my free time to coach youth sport softball, basketball, and flag football. In my last three years of coaching, I coached crew at the University of California, San Diego. Overall, I had made my way up the coaching ladder without any academic training in either teaching or physical education.

Throughout those 12 years, I developed a philosophy of coaching. In essence, I believe that an effective coach must have the ability to communicate at all levels, to take the perspective of the other, and to have excellent listening skills. I also believe that all the academic training in the world will not make someone a "good" coach if he or she lacks these people-oriented skills. By "good" I mean in the sense that a coach helps the children realize their potential not only as athletes, but as developing people. I believe that sport can be an excellent vehicle to help children learn about their physical, mental, and social selves, if handled properly.

Over the years, I have seen the potential of the youth sport experience wasted, not because coaches did not have good intentions, but primarily because they did not understand what the coaching task entailed. I have seen coaches who failed to realize the impact that competition can have on their original good intentions and who have ignored the fact that children are people too. I have known coaches who were unaware of the role communication plays in making the sport experience a learning and growing process for everyone

involved. As a result of this disillusionment with youth sport, I did not allow my two sons to participate. I will always regret that they never were able to participate with me in the sport world.

My definition of an ideal coach is one who is a combination between a loving parent, a concerned friend, and a skillful teacher. Possibly, my least favorite coaches are the egotistical, arrogant, parents who are coaching for their egos, not the children. Even though I get angry and disgusted with the behaviors of some youth sport coaches, I blame researchers, educators and league administrators for not making them aware of what I think are the skills needed to coach. Like athletes, coaches need help in developing the skills necessary to be good at what they do. I want the current study to aid in the development of education programs which would help coaches do their job for the benefit of not only the children but for the coaches themselves.

Definition of Terms

First year coach: A coach who has not coached a sport at any level.

Volunteer: A person who donates time, emotions, and efforts without any expectations of monetary reward.

Youth Sport: Competitive sport programs designed to teach children the necessary physical, emotional, and social skills to function within the competitive sport setting. These programs are usually community-based, organized for the benefit of as many children as possible. Less ambiguously defined, "organized sport programs were defined as those with

designated coaches, organized practices, and scheduled competitions" (Gould, 1982, p. 204).

Basketball League: Youth sport basketball programs administered through community recreation departments. Although these programs may use local school facilities, they are not organized through the school system. The purpose of these leagues is to teach basketball to children between the ages of 7 and 11. These teams are usually coed. The coaches are all volunteers, typically parents of participating children. The only requirement for being a volunteer coach is the desire to coach the children.

Practice: Any session organized by the coach to work on team or individual skills in preparation for the game situations.

Games: Competitive contests between teams scheduled by the league.

Social Reality: The common understandings and definitions developed through social interactions that construct the social expectations within the competitive sport context. These socially constructed expectations change with factors such as level of competition, orientation of the program, sport, and gender.

Individual Reality: The individual definitions and meanings which develop through past experiences and social interactions within the competitive sport context. There will be differences based upon each coach's ability to adapt to the social reality of the sport context and his or her perceptions of past experiences.

CHAPTER II

Methods

In an effort to understand how first year youth sport volunteer coaches experience coaching, I conducted participant observation research with two first year volunteer basketball coaches, a male and a female. A basketball program was selected because of my familiarity with the sport and the season in which the study took place. The two coaches agreed to be observed and interviewed during the course of their first season coaching third and fourth grade children. I was a participant in the sense that these coaches were minors and to be allowed to coach they needed an adult present at all practices and games. I was that adult. Three formal but loosely structured interviews were conducted to determine if the coaches' perceptions and definitions of coaching had changed as a result of actual coaching experiences. To compliment the interviews, I made descriptive observations of every organized practice and game. Both coaches and their assistants were interviewed and observed.

Negotiation of Access

My initial contacts with the league were through the secretary. She had given me all the pertinent information about the program. When I made direct contact with the head of the recreation association, Dave, I was informed of his apprehension about a study being conducted within his jurisdiction. He was concerned about the inconvenience that might be experienced by the children or the coaches.

I explained the purpose of the study and the methods by which I would collect my data. I assured him that I would not interfere with the children or the league. I explained that I would negotiate with the informant coaches when and how I would fit into their normal coaching routine. Dave gave me the name of the director of the basketball program, Bill. Dave told me that if I could convince Bill, as I had convinced him, I could contact the first year coaches and conduct the study within their association.

I contacted Bill immediately and made arrangements to meet him and explained the proposed study. After discussing the study and the research procedures with Bill, I was given the names of all first year participant coaches. I contacted all of these individuals by phone.

The following week, Bill gave me a list of eight or nine more first year participant coaches. With the exception of one woman, these were all high school age males and females. I contacted the woman first. She was more than willing to participate but she had two years experience as an elementary physical education instructor. Consequently, I decided to make contact with all of the other first year volunteers.

Selection of the Informants

The informants were selected from a pool of first year volunteer coaches in two basketball leagues in the Greater Lansing Area. The leagues conducted organized competitive basketball programs for third through sixth grade boys and girls. There were 46 coaches in the two leagues combined; 10 coaches were in their first year of coaching. Except for one woman, all of the available informants were high school aged males and females. Originally, I had set five

criteria for the selection of an informant. First, the coach must not have had any prior coaching experience. Second, the coach should be a parent of a participating child. I felt this was important because studies have shown that at least 60% of volunteer youth sport coaches are parents (Gould & Martens, 1979; Smith et al., 1983). Third, this coach should not have a physical education degree. A coach with a physical education degree would not be representative of the typical untrained volunteer coach. Fourth, the coach should not have extensive experience in organization and implementation of children's activities such as scouts and teaching. This criterion was needed to help ensure that the coach was not more qualified to deal with the organizational and social aspects of coaching than most volunteer coaches. Fifth, the person should not have played college varsity sport in the last 10 years. I felt that if the coach had recently participated in college sport, he/she would be more aware of training methods than the typical volunteer coach.

The only parent in the two leagues that was a first year coach was a woman who was a former physical education instructor. She was eliminated as a possible informant because she had two years of physical education teaching at the elementary level. The remaining first year coaches, eight females and one male ranging in age from 16 to 18 years of age, fit all other criteria except being a parent coach. Thus other criteria became more important. I contacted these first year coaches by phone and explained the purpose of the study. I inquired about their sport background, refereeing background, grade in school, and willingness to participate.

My original intent was to conduct a case study. However, as the

selection process progressed, I decided to expand the study to both a male and female coach. This was done to accommodate the gender separation within the league. The league had made a concerted effort to recruit women to coach girls and men to coach boys. The inclusion of a coach from each division helped me to find common themes and patterns reflecting the experiences of first year coaches in the entire third and fourth grade division.

Initially, I was worried whether the high school age coaches would be able to articulate themselves well enough in the interviews to give me to "useful" data. My concern stemmed from my background experiences in youth sport. High school men and women rarely coached in the leagues with which I was familiar. Thus, during the selection process, I engaged each coach in conversation in an attempt to determine how well they could express feelings and thoughts. After speaking with each coach, I found that all of the potential coaches were articulate and willing to express their feelings about sport and coaching.

Although the male coach, Dick, was selected because he was the only available first year male, he was very articulate and thoughtful in his initial discussion. Dick played on a varsity basketball team, had played as a youngster in the league under study, and had also refereed for the program. The female coach, Jane, was selected because she closely matched Dick in sport and refereeing experiences. Jane had been a varsity athlete in three sports. Like Dick, she had participated in the league and had worked as a referee. One difference between the two informant coaches was that Dick was coaching his brother. None of the available females were coaching teams with

siblings on them.

My original intention was to select an informant coach without recent college playing experience. The high school playing experience of Dick and Jane could be considered extremely similar. However, if Dick and Jane represented first year volunteer coaches for this league and possibly other rural youth leagues, I felt I must study what is part of the real world sport context and select them for the study.

I contacted Dick and Jane by phone again to ask permission to come and observe their first practice and to arrange my participation as the adult present at their practices and games. Dick agreed to participate during his first practice. He was given the letter explaining the study and the informed consent procedures. In addition, I received verbal permission from his father.

Jane's first practice was cancelled because of inclement weather. She was contacted again by phone. I sent her the coach's letter explaining the study (see Appendix C) and a copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix D). At the time of this phone conversation, I agreed to become the parent of record during her practices and games.

Each coach had an assistant. The assistants were classmates of the coaches. As I began observing practices, I realized the presence and interactions of the assistant coaches were a very important aspect of the social reality of the coaching experience. For this reason, I decided to conduct interviews with the assistants, Jack and Jill, as well. Jack and Jill both had junior varsity or varsity playing experience. In addition, as children they had played in the current youth league program.

Jane was playing a varsity sport at the same time that she was coaching. She had to compete in varsity tournaments on Saturdays. All of the childrens' games were also scheduled on Saturdays, consequently, Jane coached only in the first game. For this reason, Jill was interviewed twice and in much more depth than the male assistant because she coached the children in the rest of the games.

Overview of the Research Site

The Community

The basketball program was under the umbrella of a community recreation association. The site of the actual practices and games was the main elementary school within the community, Progress. At one time, Progress was a typical rural town in the midwest. However, in more recent years, Progress had changed with the increase in density and growth of the surrounding city and suburban areas. Outwardly, Progress appeared to be a rural town on the outskirts of suburbia. However, increases in population in Progress consisted primarily of middle to upper middle class professionals from the surrounding cities who wanted the peace of the country in their personal lives.

Just minutes away from Progress, there were malls, theaters, museums, and parks marking the status of the inhabitants as upper middle class suburbia. Progress seemed to be such a contradiction. The middle to upper class inhabitants were separating their professional markers of status in the city from their personal lives in the country.

The Program

There were 181 children participating in the basketball program. This was the largest number of participants in the history of the program. Registration sheets for the children and coaches were sent to all the local public and private elementary schools in the immediate community. Children from two of the neighboring small towns were also allowed to participate. The program was divided into two distinct portions. The first four Saturdays were designated as skill sessions while the final six weeks consisted of competitive league play.

Skill sessions were organized by the local high school basketball coach. The instructors of the skills sessions were local school coaches, local athletes, former participants, and parents. The volunteer coaches for the league portion of the program were not required to participate in the sessions.

Skills such as shooting, layups, dribbling, passing, and defensive stance were explained and were demonstrated to the children. The children were then asked to attempt the skills while the instructors physically and verbally corrected the children's technique. The children were separated by grade during the skills sessions. Bill, the program director, used observations of the childrens' abilities during skills sessions to aid him in making equal teams in the league portion of the program.

The league portion was divided into two distinct levels of competition, a third and fourth grade level and a fifth/sixth grade level. The levels were broken down further by gender. Thus, there were four separate game schedules within the program. A team consisted of eight children.

Seven of the 24 volunteer coaches were females. Additionally, seven

coaches were also high school students. The youth of the community played an integral role in the development and longevity of the program. Not only did high school youth volunteer to coach teams, they also refereed, conducted the skills sessions, and until this year, supervised the program. Many of the high school students who were now refereeing had participated in the youth basketball program as children.

Each team was allowed only one 45 minute practice a week. The total number of practices for each team was to be seven. Dick and Jane's teams only practiced six times because of holidays and weather. Each team had six scheduled games. However, a major storm cancelled the final game of the program for all the teams.

In summary, the overall duration of the youth basketball program was 10 weeks. The first four Saturdays were designated as skills sessions. The children were separated on the basis of grade. During the skills sessions, Bill observed the abilities of the children in an effort to construct even teams.

The competitive portion was divided further by gender. Both informants coached at the third and fourth grade level. For that reason, further descriptions of the site, the setting, or the league will be limited to the third and fourth grade level.

A discussion of the setting, the informants, and their teams within the setting of the gym will be continued in the background section of Chapter 3. The background section will set the stage for the entire results and discussion of the thesis.

Confidentiality

The children and the coaches were assured of strict confidentiality in my recording and reporting of the data. The children were given nicknames according to something I noticed immediately about them. For example, one boy slid and ripped a hole in the knee of his sweats in the first practice. Even though he never wore those sweats again, he was identified as "Knees."

At the second practice of both coaches, I asked to speak to the children. Dick and Jane introduced me to the children on their teams. I explained to the children that I was going to be conducting a study about their coaches. I told them that in order to do a good job I had to watch not only what the coach was doing but also what they were doing. I explained that sometimes they might be playing around or daydreaming and I might see it and write it down in order to understand how everyone acts in practice. I asked the children if they would mind me watching what they did. I told them they could read my notes anytime they wanted. I also told them that I would give them nicknames so they could not be identified in my notes or in the paper that I was writing. All of the children verbally agreed to my observing them in practice. I also passed out the letter to the parents explaining the study (see Appendix A) and the informed consent procedures (see Appendix B). The vignettes and data for the written report were derived only from children who handed in written consent forms.

The coaches and assistant coaches were identified by initials or letters in my field notes. In my transcriptions of the tapes, I did not use the coaches names in the questions or the answers. There were no identifying names placed on the notebooks or the tapes. I used a different color notebook for each

coach. The signed informed consent forms were placed in a file in California.

There was one problem about strict confidentiality in that the coaches themselves told many of their friends at their high school about the study. I attempted to keep the identities of the coaches from Bill. However, this was almost impossible because of my presence at all of their games and practices.

Data Collection Procedures

Previous studies of coaching behaviors have used interviews, observations, questionnaires, and surveys based on social learning theories, leadership theory, and cognitive-behavioral approaches to determine the actual behavior of coaches (Martens, 1978; Seefeldt, 1978; Smith & Smoll, 1978). Each of these methods has a place in the development of theory to predict coaching behaviors. However, in order to explain and predict coaching behaviors, we must understand those observed behaviors from the perspective of the coach within the sport context.

In order to best accomplish this task, I used the field based research procedures of observation and loosely structured interviews. These procedures helped me to understand the perspective of the participant coaches within the context of their individual reality of coaching. In other words, through a combination of interviews and observations, I attempted to understand the behaviors of the coach within the context of the experience of coaching.

Observations

Learning what to observe was a process that has continued beyond the study. The observations were difficult and I was always plagued with the feeling of uneasiness. Did I observe enough? Did I observe the correct event? At first,

I tried to capture everything. I constantly reminded myself that I was trying to understand the perspective of the coach. I focused on the social interactions within events.

I observed pre-practice interactions between the children. This usually set the tone of the gym during practices. I observed the interactions between the coaches and their assistants. I tried to capture the coaches' reactions to specific events during games. I observed the coaches' behaviors during pre-game talks, time outs, halftime, and after the game. In the practice setting, I observed the interactions within the specific drills, from drill to drill, and between different individuals. I tried to capture the experiences of the coaches. I observed all interactions that I thought would help me to understand Dick and Jane's perspective of coaching.

If meanings and perceptions are constructed and reconstructed through social interaction, then these observations should reflect how modifications in the coach's knowledge of their role, their athletes, and the sport context itself influence the coach's actions over the season. I observed both practices and games because the requirements for the situations are different. Practices are usually seen as the process by which the team becomes prepared to play a game. Games are the arena in which the children and the coach display their skill and team development with the added pressure of competition. There is also an interactive component between behaviors exhibited in games and practices.

I had hoped to be as close to the action as possible for the purpose of my observations in practice and game situations. Because my informant coaches

were minors, they needed an adult at their practices in order to coach. Consequently I arranged to be the "parent" of record for both coaches. This allowed me to interact very naturally with the children, the parents, and the coaches. I was also allowed to be on the team bench during the games and I was given free reign to follow the coaches around during time-outs, quarter breaks and half-time. Many times during a game, the boys or girls would sit beside me or look over my shoulder and read my field notes. One boy even played his harmonica for me after a practice and told me a family secret. This was the ideal participant observer role for my purpose. My accepted and functional role helped to reduce the prospect of my behaviors or verbalizations affecting the coaches learning to coach.

I arrived at practices and games at least 10 minutes early. I did this so I could observe the coach's interactions with the children, parents, or assistants prior to the practice or game. I also was able then to informally discuss the previous game or plans for the practice. I attempted to write down as much descriptive detail about every situation that arose during a practice or game. I tried to capture descriptions of the children's behaviors and the coach's reactions. I also tried to jot down as many direct quotes as possible during demonstrations, organization of drills, and basic discussions.

The field notes taken during the practices and games were in the form of sentences, quotes, and brief contextual descriptions. These raw field notes were then expanded into complete sentences and paragraphs. The expanded notes contained some methodological notes, observer comments, and reflections about the practice or game.

I attempted to be as objective as possible. The first few times I observed and expanded my field notes, I was so worried about personal bias and interpretation that I didn't write down what I felt was happening. I thought if I did not evaluate the situation at all, and only described what I saw, my data would be more representative of the participants' views.

However, I realized that if I interjected my comments on the side margins, these comments helped me to develop conversation with Dick and Jane to clarify points that I did not understand. Many times I found that my prior coaching and parenting experiences created interest in why the informant was behaving in a way that seemed foreign from my perspective. An awareness of this interpretation helped me to make a greater attempt to understand what was happening from the informant's perspective. This experience coincided with Earls,s (1986) argument that although the researcher's interpretation/inferences and evaluations can hinder objective observations, they can also be useful in the "formation of the insider-outsider perspective that is more informative than either perspective alone" (p. 70).

One example of this type of insider-outsider perspective was the clarification of what "good job" meant to each coach. From my observations I could not ascertain whether the coaches were more interested in the children making the basket than technique or effort. But upon questioning the coaches, I found that they had an awareness of their inconsistent use of reinforcement. This could be expected in that these coaches are learning to coach on the job. If I had not jotted down my personal evaluation on the way "good job" was being used, I may not have made such an effort to understand the coach's perspective

on reinforcement.

Interviews

Interviewing was a way to discover how the coaches perceived the title "coach." We are each influenced by our past experiences, our reference groups, and how important something is to us (Charon, 1979). Being a coach may represent power to one, teacher to another, and friend to another. We are active participants in the construction of the world around us. As such, we react and act according to our past social experiences, our interpretation of the meaning in each situation, and how our actions will affect us as individuals and within our reference groups (Blumer, 1969).

In order to explain behavior, researchers must go beyond the world of observer and enter into the world of the participant. Mead (1927) defined this "as the distinction between the world of things on the one hand and the consciousness we have of the world on the other hand." (p. 135). For this reason, I felt that it was very important to structure the three formal interviews as loosely as possible so that the coaches' perceptions of the coaching experience were reflected in the interviews. The coaches may have had a shared meaning of coach, but their perceptions were influenced by their different perspectives. I wanted to know these initial perceptions so that I could attempt to determine how the role of "coach" was constructed and reconstructed as the coach went through the season.

I expected that the coaches' meanings and perceptions of "coach" would be modified and changed through their interactions within the social structure of the sport world (Snyder, 1986). At any given practice or game, the coach may

see the role very differently. The individual reality of the coaching experience may lie in the perceptions, meanings and symbols socially constructed by the coaches during the season. In order to get at their "reality," my perspective had to be absent from the interviews as much as possible. I tried to accomplish this by loosely structuring the interviews with most of the questions coming from the interview itself. I attempted to clarify points the coach made and focus on what the coach found important about the experience and not just what I was interested in pursuing. Each coach consented to have their interviews tape recorded.

The first interview was intended to acquaint myself with the coach and to determine the coach's initial perceptions of the coaching task. My original intention was to conduct the first interview prior to the coaches' conducting any practice or being involved in a game situation. However, both coaches were students as well as athletes during the early part of the study. This created problems in getting extra time for interviews. I could not arrange a time with Dick until after his second practice. I interviewed him at the elementary school an hour prior to the first game. I interviewed Jane after the first game at her home. Thus, both coaches had been exposed to the children prior to the first interview.

At the time of the first interview, Dick had conducted two organized practices and Jane had conducted one practice and coached in one game. The interview focused on their background in sport, their perceptions of how they were going to accomplish the task of coaching, and what they planned to focus on during the season. Both coaches brought up the point that the experience of

coaching was not what they had expected. The contents of these interviews were used as baseline data for the rest of the study.

The second interview evolved out of the analysis of the descriptive field notes of practices and games, the contents of the first interview, and informal discussions. Prior to the interview, I jotted down notes on areas I wanted to clarify and touch upon. I focused on patterns of behavior that had changed or that I needed to understand from the perspective of the coach. I never wrote down any specific questions so that the interview could be guided by the perceptions and feelings of the coach. Dick was interviewed at a restaurant just prior to his fourth game. Jane was interviewed at her home just after her fourth practice. Both interviews lasted approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

The third interview of the coaches was conducted about 2 weeks after the season. This interview was guided by analysis of all of the data from formal and informal interviews and expanded field notes. The interviews focused on tentative assertions about common themes and patterns found in the continuous analysis. In the interviews, I also attempted to ascertain the perceptions, meanings and feelings of the coaches about their experiences from the beginning to the end. I engaged the coaches in discussions about specific events which might have modified or helped to change their individual reality of their role of coach. This interview basically tied up any loose ends and allowed the coaches to discuss what they found troublesome, what they would do differently, and how closely they saw themselves accomplishing their initial goals.

I also interviewed the female assistant, Jill, because Jane only coached

in the first game. The rest of the games were coached by Jill, who was also a high school athlete. I interviewed Jill after the fourth game at her home. I had tried to interview her sooner, but she had a part-time job after school.

Jill's interview was guided by the analysis of my field notes pertaining to her coaching in the games and at practices. I wanted to learn about her sport background and her meanings, perceptions, and feelings about the role of coach. This interview lasted about 1 hour and a half. Jill was very candid in her discussion of the difference between what she thought coaching would be like and how she experienced it. She also discussed how she had changed her behavior in reaction to the actuality of situations. I interviewed Jill one final time 2 weeks after the season ended. This interview evolved out of the analysis of all of the data collected.

I also interviewed the male assistant, Jack. Jack attended all but one practice. He did not play as active a role as Jill; however, I wanted to understand how the interactions within the practices and games may have changed all of the coaches' and assistants' perceptions, meanings and feelings. I felt that it was important to determine if certain aspects of the social structure of the league, team, practice, or game affected all of the coaches.

Jack's interview occurred 2 weeks after the season ended. The interview was guided by analysis of all of the data collected. I wanted to determine Jack's initial perceptions of coaching and the way he perceived the task after the season. Jack was very articulate. He was more than willing to discuss his perceptions about his experience as assistant coach. The interview was conducted in a local restaurant and lasted 1 hour and a half.

The head coaches were given sweatshirts while the assistants were given tee shirts as a token of appreciation for their time and cooperation. The coaches were also told they would be given a copy of the results section of the thesis.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the field notes, the interview transcriptions, and all other data collected was a continuous process. I had planned on transcribing the interviews immediately after each interview. This became impossible because of the time involved in expanding the field notes as soon as possible for the daily and weekly analysis of the data. The complete transcription of each interview was delayed until I analyzed the data for the next interview. All of the transcriptions and field notes were expanded and transcribed prior to the final interview with each coach. I listened to each tape at least three times during the course of the study and once during the writing of the thesis.

The first interview was analyzed to ascertain how the coach initially perceived the coaching experience and on what those perceptions of coaching were based. The analysis of the first tape and the field notes of the first half of the season generated further research questions on emerging patterns, common themes and tentative assertions. This process of reading and categorizing the data to develop further questions about the emerging patterns, common themes and tentative assertions continued throughout the season and into the final stages of analysis.

The data were analyzed for both confirming, and disconfirming evidence. This was an important step in helping to develop strong valid assertions that

had enough evidence to help explain discrepant cases (Borman et al., 1986; Erickson, 1986). As I began to develop assertions, I searched the data for evidence in the form of descriptive vignettes and quotes from both the fieldnotes and interviews. The discrepant cases were also written up in vignettes in an attempt to determine if the assertions had enough evidence to withstand any disconfirming evidence.

I continually searched for evidence to support my assertions. Diagrams were drawn in an effort to see the common themes visually. I asked myself questions such as: What did they do? What did they say? Who cares? Am I seeing what they see or what I want? All of these questions guided the search for the evidence needed to substantiate the assertions made in this thesis. Many times I felt I had a valid assertion. As I began the process of finding quotes, vignette material, and explanations for discrepant cases, I would come up with a totally different assertion. Frustration loomed very large at times.

However, I was motivated by the desire for this study to contribute to the body of knowledge in the coaching education field. I wanted my thesis to be both a good product, and a process.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations addressed in this study were the issues of confidentiality, the observation of practices harmful to the children, and the hiding of my coaching background. The issue of confidentiality has been addressed previously.

I did not expect to observe the coaches physically or psychologically abuse the children, but the possibility of this happening did exist. I kept an open

mind and decided that I would handle the situation if it arose. I also considered the problem of judging whether the coaches were doing a good job and how I wanted to intervene for the benefit of the children. Occasionally, I did feel the urge to help the coaches out of a bind or help them in their quest for making the coaching and playing experience pleasant and productive for the children and themselves. However, if I was to understand how first year volunteer coaches experience coaching, I had to bite my tongue. Surprisingly, I sensed more the lack of enjoyment and control the coaches experienced rather than the results the children experienced from the neophyte coaches.

I had decided not to inform the coaches of my coaching background. However, my policy of withholding this information created trouble in some situations. On the one hand, I felt that I was not being fair to the coaches. I was expecting openness from them without reciprocating the favor. On the other hand, I felt that the coaches' knowledge of my coaching background might result in their placing me in an evaluative or teaching role. Fortunately, this type of research lends itself to changes in plans as the situation or informants dictate.

In her first interview with Jane, she implied that I knew more about coaching and sport than just a student or athlete. At this point, I felt compelled to tell her about my coaching and teaching background. Dick was informed of my background to establish my credibility because he seemed rather vague about his immediate feelings about a practice or a game. After receiving this information, he was much more open and asked many questions pertaining to drills and knowledge he could use in his own athletic endeavors. Many times, Dick and Jane stated that it would be nice if I could give them some coaching

tips. I then explained my dilemma and I promised that they could ask questions and discuss what I saw at the final interview. At the end of the final interview, both coaches took advantage of my promise to discuss coaching tips.

The results and discussion chapter follows. The results and discussion chapter demonstrates that three phases of coaching behaviors emerged from Dick and Jane encountering the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome.

CHAPTER III

Results and Discussion

This chapter is divided into five sections labeled background information, initial perceptions, Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3. Each section sets the stage for the next. The background section leads to the development of the coaches' initial perceptions concerning the task of coaching. The initial perceptions section establishes what the coaches' initial perceptions were. Using the initial perceptions as a baseline, Phases 1, 2, and 3 provide evidence for the assertion that the coaches' perceptions, meanings, and behaviors are constructed and reconstructed while dealing with the tension between skill development, fun, and outcome.

This assertion is substantiated by presenting evidence in the form of vignettes derived from field notes and quotes from interviews. Through analysis of the data, the evidence supports the assertion that three distinct, but not separate, phases of changes in the coaches' perceptions and behaviors emerged during the season. These changes were best exemplified during practices. For that reason, descriptions of the coaches' perceptions, meanings, and behaviors during practices are divided into three sections, Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3.

Each phase is developed at two levels. On one hand, the descriptions allow the reader to make a comparison between the coaches. On the other hand, the phases are presented so the reader can ascertain the relationship

between skill development, fun, and outcome and the coaches' transition to the next phase.

During Phase 1, the initial perceptions of Dick and Jane seemed to guide the structure and focus of their practice behaviors. The second phase evolved from the coaches weighing their initial perceptions against the influence of actually coaching in the first game. The third phase developed from the coaches' assessment of what they had accomplished based on the outcome of the previous four games. This assessment of accomplishment was based on the realizations of the tension between their initial perceptions of what could be accomplished and the actual experience of coaching.

The evidence within the chapter supports the assertion that the coaches constructed and reconstructed their practice behaviors as they encountered the social reality of coaching. Hence, a description of a typical practice was impossible. However, the gym seemed to capture the tone or personality of each team during practices. The tone in the gym seemed to emerge from the social interactions that occurred in the setting. The gym seemed to actually take on the personality of the teams.

The following background information gives a brief overview of the experiences that influenced Dick and Jane's initial perceptions. This section also sets the stage for the typical team personality/tone captured by the gym. A description of the tone in the gym for each team should be useful in understanding the social interactions within the organized practice setting and the initial perceptions of the coaches.

Background Information

Informants

Dick. Dick was a high school varsity athlete. Not only did Dick participate in the youth basketball program as a child, he also refereed in the league the previous year. Dick had a part-time job during the school year. His motivation for volunteering was to coach his little brother, Matt, in his first year of participation in the program. Dick participated as a varsity athlete during the first half of the youth basketball program. Dick was coaching third and fourth grade boys.

Jack. Dick recruited Jack as his assistant coach while the two played on the varsity basketball team together. Like Dick, Jack had participated in the program as a child. In addition to volunteering for the competitive part of the program, Dick and Jack gave their assistance in the skills sessions. Jack had also refereed in the program the year before.

Jane. Jane played in three varsity sports at the local high school. As a child, she had participated in the youth basketball program for one year. Her youth basketball coach was her mother. Jane had also refereed for the program. Her motivation for coaching was to show the children the benefits of sport participation. She was considering coaching as a career. Jane was coaching third and fourth grade girls. Jane's high school team was competing in weekend tournaments throughout the youth basketball season. For this reason, Jane only attended one game. Jill, the assistant coach did all the game coaching while Jane did all the practice coaching.

Jill. Jill had participated in high school athletics at the junior varsity level. Jill had been a participant in the youth basketball program. Although Jill did not have the extensive basketball experience of the other informants, she had participated in youth sport and school programs until an injury prevented further sport participation.

Summary. Dick and Jane were the focus of this study on first year coaches. Both coaches were high school varsity athletes. Dick and Jane had participated in the program as children and refereed the year prior to the study. Dick, Jane, Jack and Jill not only handled the roles of student, athlete, and coach, but they also had part time jobs.

Jill was interviewed twice because of her increased duties during games. Jack was interviewed at the end of the season. All of the informants were coaches within the third and fourth grade portion of the program. The following description of the setting is specific to the gym in which the third and fourth grade teams practiced and competed.

Setting: The Little "Crackerbox"

General description. After observing two practices and one game per week, I realized that the small elementary school gym came alive with each practice or game. During the course of the study I experienced the gym in four different situations. Each time, the aura or tone of the gym corresponded to the human interactions within the setting. It was as though the gym took on the personality of the team or event within its misshapened walls. Therefore, it seemed that the gym took on the following four distinct personalities during the course of the season.

Empty. Empty and waiting for the entrance of the eager child athletes, the gym seemed misshapened and out of place. The width of the gym was almost the same as the length. The ceiling was so low that if someone shot from half court, the ball would hit the ceiling. The boundaries of the court left very little room on the sidelines. The endlines were so close to the walls that there were mats on the wall to protect the children. There were no bleachers, chairs, or tables within the confines of the gym's misproportioned walls, except on game days. However, just outside the double doors was a cart containing folding metal chairs. On practice days, I would select a chair and place it along the sideline for the purposes of observing the coaches.

There were three entrances to the gym: One set of double doors on the west side of the building, a door on the south side and a door directly opposite on the north end. The set of double doors was the main entrance for the children, the coaches, the parents, and all other significant people. These doors also led out to the water fountain, the place where many of the young boys and girls escaped the drudgery of practice. During games, the water fountain was the spot where teammates and opponents disappeared at halftime while the coaches pondered the inconsistencies of their third and fourth grade "athletes." Empty, the gym seemed so small, misproportioned and inadequate for the task of staging a league.

For that very reason, there were rule changes to accommodate the size of the gym. The court was so small that the team for a game consisted of four people instead of the usual five. Also, if a child rebounded a ball and landed on the line, there was no violation. This had to do with the close proximity of the

endline to the wall. Because of the lack of physical space on the sidelines, opposing players had to be a least a foot away on the inbound plays. Even with the rule changes, I asked myself, "how were two teams of eight child "athletes," spectators, coaches, and officials going to fit?"

Game Days. The empty, inanimate, quietness of the gym changed dramatically on game days. People were two and three deep within the framework of the double doors. Coaches and teams were waiting in the hallway to take their turn inside the "crackerbox" arena. There was always as much action outside the double doors as inside the confines of the gym. Coaches were giving last minute instructions to their teams prior to engaging in competition. The child "athletes" were dribbling balls, chasing each other, giggling, laughing, and occasionally peeking through double doors to gauge when it was their turn to "play basketball."

Inside the double doors were the sights and sounds of the gym on game day. There were about 20 metal folding chairs along the left sideline. These chairs were filled with parents, siblings, and fans of the children. The competing teams were situated on the opposite sideline. The child "athletes" were sitting on the floor and standing along the small area between the sideline and the wall.

During the course of the games, the coaches assumed a number of different positions along the sideline. The most familiar positions consisted of squatting down with the children, standing tall yelling instructions, and slouching against the wall.

There was a scorer's table situated in between the two teams. On the

table, facing the spectators, was a flip card tally of the score. From my position on the team floor, I could not see the score. However, with a stretch of the neck or a quick run onto the court the young "athletes" were able to give a running commentary on their competitive status.

Even though the smallness and misproportioned features of the gym were magnified on game days, the gym was functional. The sounds of the children "athletes," their family and friends, made the gym seem so alive. The sounds of back and forth dribbling, missed shots, referees' whistles, spectators, teammates, and coaches were enjoyed by everyone within the confines of the "crackerbox" arena.

This was the place for the child "athlete" to try out the skills learned in the instructional sessions and practices. The gym was full of enthusiasm for the "athletes" attempts at playing basketball. The sounds of the fans clapping and cheering for each child's effort echoed much more loudly than the immediate cheer for a basket. On game days, the gym became the vehicle for the program to showcase the results of the opportunities of participation, while on practice days, for forty-five minutes each week, the gym reflected the distinctive sights and sounds of the individual teams.

Practices. The gym seemed so different during practices. I was usually the only other person in the gym besides the coaches and the children. I sat in the center of the gym along the left sideline in a folding chair. On practice days the gym seemed large. Large in the sense that when a small girl or boy was asked to dribble full court the task seemed impossible. That was a long way for such a small "athlete" to control the ball. As the children attempted outside

shots and layups, the distance between the childrens' arm reach and the basket seemed like miles.

My perceptions of the size and adequacy of the gym changed with my observations of the social interactions of the different events within the gym. My original perceptions of the inadequacy of the gym were based on my experiences with normal size gyms used for adult size athletes. Therefore, my perceptions of the setting were constructed and reconstructed dependent on the event and the social interactions that took place at any given time.

The biggest contrast between practices and games was the manner in which the game and practice noises echoed in the gym. Game noises seemed necessary, functional, and easy to receive. Practice noise was much different. I perceived the practice noise as much more painful, distracting, and agitating. There was also a distinct difference in the personality of the gym during Dick and Jane's practices.

Dick's Practices

Dick had eight boys on the team. The practices were held on a week night. Dick's younger brother, Matt, was on the team. One of Dick's practices was cancelled because of a school holiday. During the first half of the season, Dick and Jack were still actively competing at the local high school.

The practices usually began at least seven or eight minutes late. This was due to the slowness of the boys showing up for practice. Normally, Dick and Matt were the first to arrive. They would shoot baskets while waiting for Jack and the other boys. The interaction between Dick, his brother and any other boys would change upon Jack's arrival. At that time, Dick and Jack would

stake out a basket to shoot, dunk, and play at until there was enough boys to begin practice. Some nights the boys knew not to interrupt the interaction between the coaches. Other nights, Dick and Jack were more than willing to allow the boys at "their basket." Many times I would observe Dick and Jack playing one on one with the boys. When Dick decided that there were enough boys to begin, everyone was lined up for layups.

The individual child's attention span for a particular drill seemed to be two times through a drill. Then the boys would begin to giggle, laugh loudly, tease, run out of line, and tackle each other. The team attention span for the entire practice was about 20 minutes. After that time, the only thing that seemed to keep their attention was playing. This "playing" consisted of chasing each other, giggling, and talking while they attempted each and every new drill introduced. As a bystander and former coach, I found the typical tone in the gym to be distracting.

The misproportioned walls did not absorb the noise of the boys' yelling, screaming, laughing, jumping, and tackling. The noise bounced from wall to wall. There were times when I wondered if the boys were going to start bouncing off the walls.

The practices always began with layups. Dick would lean against the wall under the basket and correct the boys in the formation of the drill or their technique. The boys seemed to get a bit of the pre-practice energy under control during the layups. The typical order of events, after the layups, was to work on certain basic skills, offensive or defensive schemes and end in a scrimmage situation.

During Dick's practices, the tone in the gym fluctuated from the boys' eager anticipation of learning "basketball" to the antsy, noisy behavior of young children unable to focus their attention on the tasks that Dick felt were important. There were many times that from the standpoint of a former coach, I wondered if the boys were paying attention to the drills. Other times, as a mother, I realized that there may be a contradiction between dedicated athletes and third and fourth grade boys. As a researcher, I wished that the noise and activity levels weren't so distracting and conducive to a general feeling of agitation.

Jane's Practices

Jane had eight girls on her team. Jane's practices were in the afternoons, right after school. Jane's assistant, Jill, was an acquaintance from school. Usually, Jill and Jane arrived about the same time. Generally, some of the girls would arrive before either of the coaches. Up until the last practice, Jane was still participating in a varsity sport at the high school. Therefore, Jane only coached in the first game. She was prepared to coach the final game, but the game was cancelled.

Jane organized and directed all of the practice sessions. Jill conducted drills within practices based on directions from Jane. In game situations, Jill was on her own. When the girls were split up at opposite baskets, each end of the gym took on a different tone, dependent on the coach and the group of girls. The overall attention span of the team seemed to border on the same 20 minute limit of Dick's team. However, individually, the girls seemed to pay attention to the drills for longer periods of time. There were certain individuals who would talk and giggle with each other while in line. Typically, with the exception of one

practice, the girls did not giggle, laugh, yell, and scream throughout the drills and scrimmages.

The noises, created by Dick's team's lack of attention, seemed like a group decision to see how loud and rowdy the gym could become. Comparatively, the noises of Jane's team seemed like individual or dyadic decisions to decrease the boredom of watching others do the drills.

The tone of the setting was important in that it laid the groundwork for understanding some of the different interactions within the practices. Hopefully, I have drawn a picture depicting the team personality tones with the gym setting. These tones helped to set the stage for understanding the coaches' experiences. The tones in the gym were used to describe the teams because of the dynamic nature of practice behaviors and structure. The personality that the gym took on during each teams' practice was basically stable throughout the 7 weeks.

The information in the previous background biographies will be useful to the reader in understanding the development of the coaches' initial perceptions. The entire structure of the results section is built on and held together by the development and understanding of the persistence of the initial perceptions.

Dick and Jane had very similar sport participation experiences. Nevertheless, many of those experiences were perceived differently by each of the coaches. The different perceptions for seemingly similar experiences provide evidence for George Herbert Mead's (1927) assertion that one's perception of an object or event is affected by one's social experiences within a particular reference group. Dick and Jane's initial perceptions, meanings, and

goals were constructed through the social experiences briefly discussed in this section.

The first interview of each coach was conducted within the first 2 weeks of practices. At that time, Dick and Jane discussed their initial perceptions, meanings, and goals concerning the task of coaching. The next section establishes the relationship between the background information of the coaches and their initial perceptions about coaching.

Initial Perceptions

This section of the chapter summarizes Dick and Jane's initial perceptions and meanings concerning the task of coaching. As the evidence from the first interview demonstrates, these perceptions and meanings were directly influenced by the past sport experiences of the coaches, outlined in the previous background section. In the same way that the background section laid the groundwork for understanding the basis of the initial perceptions, this section helps to develop the foundation of the actual practice structure and behaviors during Phase 1. Not only do the initial perceptions of the coaches create Phase 1, they also play an important role in the construction and reconstruction of Phases 2 and 3. Dick and Jane had similar overt experiences within the sport context. However, as this section illustrates, those seemingly similar experiences were often interpreted much differently.

Dick and Jane entered into the individual reality of coaching with beliefs about the task of coaching. These beliefs were based on perceptions and meanings developed through past sport experiences. Both coaches were varsity athletes, had played in the youth league, and had refereed the previous

year. The following evidence supports the assertion that these past sport experiences directly influenced the initial perceptions of the coaches.

As shown by the statement below, Dick's perceptions of what it would be like to specifically coach third and fourth graders was based on his past experience as a referee.

> *I knew what it would be like from reffing, you know, the gym is gonna be packed with parents. And I knew they'd go all over and there wouldn't be any organization. So I was pretty much looking forward, ya know, not looking forward, but I knew what I was going into coaching third and fourth graders.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Refereeing third and fourth graders led Dick to the perception that there might be a lack of organization when working with the children. In addition to a lack of organization, Dick recognized that the boys might not learn much. Not only was this perception based on his exposure to third and fourth grade athletes during refereeing, but also his experiences in the same youth sport program. The only youth sport coach Dick perceived as having made any impression on him was a young man who was a varsity athlete at the time.

> *.....that year they were 24-1. So that was great and I ended up going to see them play in the regional. And that was fun, but he didn't really make an impact on teaching me things. I don't remember anything.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

The coach clearly made an impression on Dick. However, Dick could not remember learning any skills from this coach. He remembered one coach, a varsity athlete, like himself, who he believed had basketball skill and knowledge. However, he could not remember learning anything from this

coach.

This experience may have influenced Dick's perceptions that even though he had the knowledge, the children might not understand or care about what he planned to teach.

> *Ah, I knew I could teach it personally, I didn't know whether they would understand to where they'd care. Or whether I'd teach them and they'd do it in practice and leave practice and forget about it.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Based on his past experiences refereeing third and fourth graders, Dick thought that he had the ability and an idea about what it would be like to coach children of this age.

Dick also believed that he had the knowledge base which would enable him to determine what to teach the children. This assertion is supported by Dick's process of selecting drills during practice sessions. The high school coach had given the program coaches a list of skills and drills that he felt would be useful in developing the childrens' basketball progress. Dick used drills from the list. However, he believed that some of the drills were too advanced and that the 45 minute practice did not allow for efficient use of the drills on the list. Dick's decision to pick and choose from the list was based on his own athletic participation.

> *The list has a lot of things I've been doing. But I pretty much know from going through and playing basketball what they should learn and what people taught me.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

The decision concerning what the children should learn was based on Dick's perceptions developed through sport participation. He exposed the

children to skills on the list; however, the selection process was based on his perceptions of what the children should learn.

Dick's initial perceptions of coaching youth sport made him question the willingness and capability of the children to learn. He believed that he had the ability and knowledge to coach the children. He wanted the children to learn. Yet, there was a tinge of doubt as to whether anything would be learned.

> *.....I just want to teach them something. Most of all not...I think it'll just end up just being they'll remember me as their coach. Maybe because I was on the varsity team. Or because, I don't think they'll remember much that I taught them.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Dick perceived that the boys would remember him, even if they did not remember what he taught them. These perceptions seem to be based on Dick's past experience with the only youth sport coach that he could remember, a high school varsity athlete, like himself. When asked if he wanted them to get more out of the youth sport experience than he did, Dick's response reflected the desire but without much hope.

> *I do, but I don't think they will. Cause ah, even 7th & 8th grade they expected us to know some stuff, but it was pretty much starting over in 7th grade.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

The transition from youth sport level to junior high level basketball did not seem to have been smooth for Dick. His concern of whether the boys would learn more than he did seemed to be influenced by his recollections of what it took to be prepared for the 7th grade level. This experience may have influenced his reason for volunteering.

Dick was coaching to fulfill a promise to his younger brother, Matt. Dick had promised to coach Matt during his first year of participation. Dick was not considering coaching beyond this year. Jane, on the other hand, was considering coaching as a possible career.

Jane entered into the task of coaching with many of the same general experiences as Dick within the sport context. However, her initial perceptions of what it would be like to coach third and fourth graders was much different.

One reason Jane volunteered was because she was considering the possibility of a coaching career. The decision to volunteer was also influenced by Jane's perceptions of the task of coaching while in her role as a referee.

> *Um, last year when I reffed, I thought it (coaching) looked like fun. And a couple of friends of mine coached and they just looked like they were having a lot of fun.....*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Jane volunteered based on the perception of coaching that she developed while refereeing. Coaching looked like it would be fun. Jane clarified what would be fun about coaching by explaining what she felt she had to offer to the children.

> *..... know this will probably be my last year to play basketball, unless, I get Ohio State. I thought if I could take some of what I've learned and some of my.... how much fun I've had and show them how much fun they can have, I could take my experiences and kind of start them off on their way.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Jane perceived that the fun part of coaching would be making the girls' initial sport experience enjoyable and worthwhile. Jane wanted to give the girls a good sport foundation.

Unlike Dick, Jane felt that she could accomplish quite a bit during the course of the season.

> *I had a vision that I could get a lot done. And that I could, I could get a lot done by the end of the season. They would know a lot of knowledge. (Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Jane expected to get a lot accomplished. She had refereed third and fourth grade children and thought coaching would be fun and rewarding. She planned on giving the children a solid and enjoyable foundation from her knowledge based on her past athletic participation. Jane, like Dick, had the same recollection of not remembering what, if anything, she learned as a youth sport participant. This is evidenced by Jane's recollection of what skills her youth sport coach focused on.

> *....And I have no idea what she focused on. I really don't remember at all. (Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Jane could not remember any skills that she had learned from her youth sport coach. Even though Jane, like Dick, could not remember anything she learned at the youth sport level, her perceptions of what she could accomplish were much different from those of Dick's. Jane expected that the children would learn something from the experience. Dick wanted the children to learn, but seemed to expect that they would not.

They had both played in the program as youngsters, refereed the year before, and were playing high school varsity sports. Although their perceptions of what they could accomplish coaching third and fourth graders were very different, their views on what they wanted to accomplish and teach the children

were very similar.

In their first interviews both coaches expressed their desire to teach the children the basics. Dick's initial perceptions of what he should teach focused not only on the basics, but shooting and defense.

> *Well, I thought there was a lot of stuff you had to teach them; to shoot layups, and do the basics. You know, shoot a ....what I call a set shot for them. Teach them some defense.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

The basics, layups, and defense were key skills Dick perceived should be taught to the children. Dick continued by explaining what he, as a coach, planned to accomplish.

> *What I hope to accomplish? I hope to, ah, when they leave....when I'm done coaching, that they know the basics. I don't think you can really teach these young kids anymore than that where they are really paying attention. I just hope they remember how to play defense and defensive stance, shooting techniques and...*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Dick wanted to teach the children the basics and defense. Yet, he still had reservations about their ability to learn what he introduced to them. However, if they were to remember anything, defense was an important factor to Dick.

Another factor that Dick perceived as being an important aspect of participation for the children was teamwork.

> *Um, teamwork, you know, working with the team. This is pretty much the first time they have really done that, other than if they've played peg ball. Teamwork is probably the most important.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Teamwork for Dick was especially important because this league may be the boys' first experience with a team. The boys should learn how to function within the framework of a team.

Many youth sport coaches are criticized because people feel that the coaches place too much of emphasis on winning. Dick's response to how he would handle wins and losses was expressed in his desire for the children to have fun.

> *I think the most important for me is that they have fun. Especially at this age level. And even at fifth/sixth grade level.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Fun, along with teamwork, were very important aspects of participation for Dick, and that seemed to stem from the boys' young age.

Dick's initial goals were to teach the boys basic skills, defense, teamwork, and make sure they had fun. These goals closely paralleled the initial goals of Jane. However, Jane voiced the desire for a much stronger emphasis on the basics in an informal discussion after her first practice.

> *Offense and defense are of no use, if the girls can't pass, dribble, or shoot.*
> *(Field notes 2/9/89)*

Jane felt that the foundation of basketball was the ability to be competent in passing, dribbling, and shooting. The fundamentals or basics to Jane consisted of not only basketball skills but the ability of the girls to have some grasp about the game of basketball.

> *Basics, let me see! Ah, just like dribbling, defense, basics, I don't know just the basics of the game. Gosh, that's hard. Just to have them understand the game, like say they're*

> *watching T.V. They could say, hey, they're on defense now.....*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Jane perceived a need to develop the girls' overall knowledge of the game of basketball. She wanted them to have an understanding of the game. Jane seemed to have clear objectives for the girls.

> *Probably that they've learned the basics; how to play the game; what to do in certain situations. Like, that they had fun. That they like me as a coach and that they learned from me. And not that I was just a playmate.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Jane wanted to be remembered for what she taught the girls. Jane also felt that the girls having fun was very important. The girls would hopefully learn skills and develop a general basketball knowledge base.

Throughout their interviews both coaches expressed an interest in the children having fun and learning the basics. What constituted the basics varied, but only slightly.

Jane's statement of wanting the children to remember her as "coach" versus playmate seemed to best reflect the feelings of both her and Dick. While defining what "coach" meant to them, they both expressed more respect for and confidence in coaches who were disciplinarians, not "nice guys." Dick's description of a previous coach exemplifies this point.

> *Mr. Jones, he's, I don't look up to him. He's a teacher at the high school also. He's really a nice guy. You know, funny, but.....*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Mr. Jones was a nice guy. He was funny. However, Dick did not consider Mr. Jones a good coach. Dick continued by explaining why he did not

think Mr. Jones was a good coach.

> *....He knows a lot, but he doesn't enforce it.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Dick explained that enforcing meant that the coach was strict enough that people did what the coach wanted, "or else." The same rationale was used by Jane to explain why she believed that a previous coach did not deserve his job.

A "good coach" maintained the attention and respect of their athletes. Both Dick and Jane had played at the youth sport, junior high, and high school level. Through their experiences of being coached, they developed the perception that a good coach was someone who not only had the knowledge, but could also make the athletes do what she/he wanted.

Another important and similar goal of the coaches was to make sure that all of the children played equally during games. This was a league program policy, but both had very strong feelings about this coaching task. Dick's analogy of third and fourth grade basketball probably best expressed the feelings of both coaches.

> *Ya know from reffing, I know how they play. Nobody sets picks at their age. So, I'm just gonna keep them in there, keep them fresh. And make sure everybody plays the same amount.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Dick did not seem to expect much from the boys in game situations. These perceptions were based on Dick's observations of the skill level of third and fourth graders while he refereed. Thus, he felt it important to play them equally.

In summary, Dick and Jane continually voiced opinions about coaching

which were based on their past experiences within the sport context. They had different initial perceptions about what it would be like to coach third and fourth graders. However, the two most important things they wanted to accomplish were to teach the children the basics and make sure the children had fun. Subsidiary goals focused on playing the children equally, teamwork, general basketball knowledge, and that somehow they would be remembered as a "coach."

The initial perceptions outlined in this section establish how the coaches perceived the coaching task and what they planned to accomplish. The evidence supports the assertion that these initial perceptions were based on Dick and Jane's experiences as athletes and referees.

Dick and Jane's first practices were very similar in structure and focus. But, as they travelled through the actual experience of coaching, the content of the practices shifted. Different skills seemed important. Not only was the difference in structure and focus noticeable between coaches, but also, from practice to practice for each coach.

In both cases, there were three distinct phases of change. As shown by the following timeline below, the first phase for both coaches consisted of practices prior to the first game. The transition from the second to third phase for each coach began with the fifth practice.

Time Line

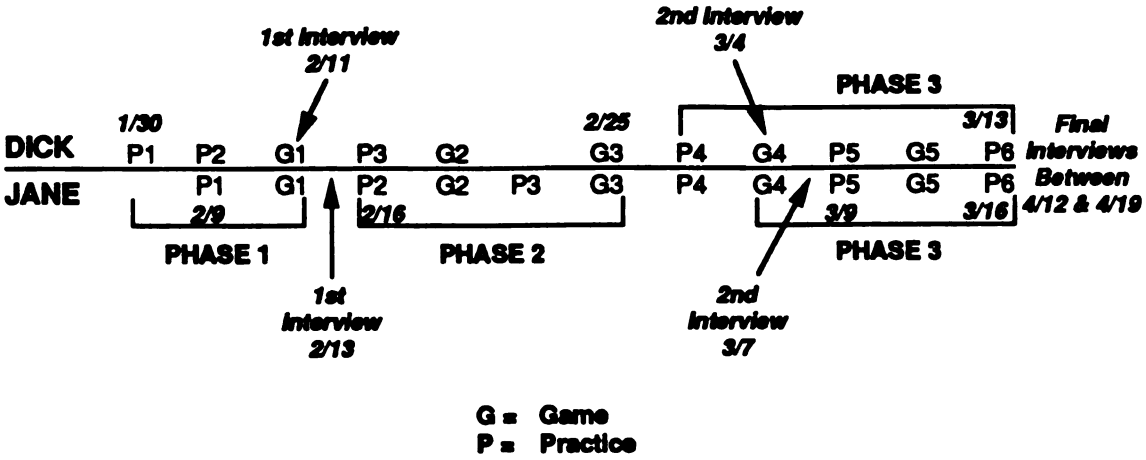

Figure 1

The first phase reflected Dick and Jane's initial perceptions of the task of coaching. The transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2 began as the coaches experienced coaching in game situations. In the second phase both coaches seemed to focus on offense without any concern for the basics or defense. The third phase seemed to transcend from the coaches' perceptions of their success or failure within the coaching role. These evaluations seemed to be based on their initial perceptions of the coaching task and the effects of the focus of practices on the outcome of games. The focus of Dick's last two practices was to keep the boys busy. Jane, on the other hand, fell back on her initial goal of teaching the girls the basics.

The next section describes how those initial perceptions about the task of

coaching were actually carried out by the coaches in Phase 1. Phase 1 consisted of practices prior to the coaches experiencing the influences of the outcome orientation of competitive games.

Analysis of the data from observations of all the practices and games, combined with the interviews, support the assertion that the changes between phases were influenced by the tension between skill development, fun, and the outcome orientation of games.

In order to substantiate this claim, I have structured the descriptions of the phases on two levels. First, I describe the phases through a comparison of the practice behaviors and structures between coaches. Second, I address the issues of skill development, fun, and outcome by comparing and contrasting the issues as they were experienced by each coach.

The evidence presented in the following section will substantiate the assertion that Phase 1 was the portion of the season when the coaches' initial perceptions of the task of coaching directly influenced the focus of practices. Dick and Jane believed that they had the knowledge and the ability to accomplish their goals. In Phase 1, Dick and Jane acted on their initial perceptions and focused their practices on basic skills, defense, and general basketball knowledge. The first practice of each coach reflected what the coaches themselves had expressed as important skills, drills, and areas of emphasis in the task of coaching.

Phase 1

Prior to encountering the task of coaching in a game situation, Dick had two practices, Jane only one. As shown earlier, Dick wanted the children to

learn the basics and defensive techniques. The focus of his first two practices substantiate the importance Dick placed on these areas. Most of the 45 minutes of each practice were spent on basic skills such as passing, shooting, dribbling, and rebounding.

Explanations of how to execute a skill were detailed and complemented by Dick or Jack demonstrating the proper technique. An example of the emphasis placed on the execution of basic skills was in Dick's instructions during a passing drill in the first practice. The following is an excerpt from the field notes describing Dick's use of verbal instructions with visual models to teach the bounce pass.

> Demo Vignette. The boys were doing layups when Dick called them all together at half court. As they gathered around Dick, he explained that they were going to learn to pass. According to Dick they needed to learn to pass, "because it's an important part of the game." He then told the boys to line up. As the boys lined up opposite each other lengthwise along the court, Dick and Jack positioned themselves in the same manner at half court.
>
> As Dick started talking about the bounce pass, the boys became quiet and seemed to be tuned into Dick's explanation. "The bounce pass is thrown to bounce 3/4 of the way to the person, so it bounces up waist high." He continued by instructing the boys on how to release the ball. "The pass comes from the chest and you have your thumbs down." While Dick verbally explained how to execute the bounce pass, he carefully held the ball at his chest trying to make sure the boys could see the correct hand positioning. He then threw a bounce pass to Jack, verbally emphasizing the correct technique. "Thumbs down, wrists out, and 3/4 of the way."
> (Field notes 1/30/89)

During Phase 1, Dick was diligent in integrating physical demonstrations with verbal explanations of how a skill or drill was to be executed. The vignette clearly demonstrates Dick's interest in teaching the boys basic skills. In

addition, Dick attempted to give the boys a reason for learning the pass. After each boy attempted the bounce pass, Dick introduced the chest and overhead passes in the same manner.

Other skills introduced in Dick's first two practices were the defensive stance, dribbling, shuffling, free throws, rebounding, and jump ball situations. These skills were emphasized in the first two practices because Dick perceived them to be important in getting the boys prepared for their first game. This was reflected in Dick's discussion of what drills he selected based on the limited time had during practices.

> *....So I pretty much skimmed it and picked out a few things I thought were important for the first game. So we knew what we were doing.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

What Dick skimmed was the suggested list of drills drawn up by the high school varsity coach. Dick perceived that he had the knowledge, through past athletic experience, to select the skills that would best prepare the boys for their first game. Similarly, Jane based her selections of appropriate drills on her past athletic experiences. In an informal discussion after her first practice, I asked Jane why she had selected the dribble/pivot drill. She explained that she had designed the drill in the summer to develop her own skills in an effort to become a varsity starter.

The framework of Dick's first two practices focused on layups, basic skills, and the pick. The last 5 or 10 minutes were for scrimmaging. During Phase 1, most of Dick's practice time was spent on basic skills and defensive drills.

A small portion of time in the first practice was spent introducing the

offensive concept of the pick. The pick, as Dick explained to the boys, consisted of an offensive player blocking the path of the defensive player who was guarding the ballhandler. The ballhandler then dribbles around the blocked defensive person and goes to the basket. The key points Dick emphasized for proper execution of the pick were that the ballhandler go in the direction of the pick and that the pick be stationary. The point of the pick was to free the ballhandler up for an easy layup.

Dick demonstrated the pick maneuver with Jack over and over in the first two practices. Not only did the coaches verbally explain correct execution of the drill, but they demonstrated it, physically positioned the boys, and walked the boys through drills. To remind the boys to use the pick, Dick would yell out statements in the games and scrimmages such as, "ball side pick," "use the pick," "ball-pick."

Repeated observations of these attempts to teach the boys the pick suggested that it was a difficult maneuver for the boys to comprehend and execute. The following vignette provides evidence to support this assertion.

> Too Advanced Vignette. Dick had reminded the boys that it was crucial for the ballhandler to dribble in the direction the pick is set. The boys were set up in a four on four, half court situation to work on setting picks. Prior to giving the boys the ball, Dick reminded the boys how to set the pick and to dribble on the side where the pick was set.
>
> The first time the boys attempted to run the drill there was a state of chaos. All of the offensive players were chasing the defensive people. They were all trying to block the path of the defensive players without anyone noticing where the ballhandler was on the court. Dick stopped the drill and demonstrated the correct way to set a pick. He handed the ball to the ballhandler and mayhem broke out. The boys were chasing each other, laughing, yelling, and seemingly not interested in the concept of basketball, let alone the pick. Dick tried to get them to stop, but the

> boys were still running wild. All of a sudden he said, "when I say stop, you should stop right there!" Dick's voice was firm. The boys stopped running and chasing, but they continued to talk and laugh amongst themselves. As the boys talked, Dick reminded them to only set a pick on the person guarding the ballhandler. He emphasized that the point of the drill was to get the ballhandler open to make it easier to score.
> (Field notes 2/6/89)

This vignette describes a situation where the pick was never set. However, when a proper pick was set, the ball handler would inevitably dribble in the wrong direction, shoot, or pass. The main focus of the pick was to free the ballhandler up for an easy basket. Dick's intent was not just to score, but to score with a layup. Dick attempted to impress upon the boys the importance of the pick. The following statement, along with the "too advanced" vignette, support the assertion that Dick was not focusing only on the points, but the process of scoring with a close, easy shot, the layup. Dick constantly prefaced his insistence on setting picks with an explanation of "why."

> *The object is to get around the man and go to the basket for a layup. (Field notes 1/30/89, 2/6/89)*

During pick drills and scrimmages, Dick almost always prefaced his corrective feedback with the intent of the pick, the layup. Dick felt that the layup was the easiest and highest percentage shot for the boys to attempt. He continually reminded them that, even if they made a basket with a longer shot, that they should have used the pick to get open for the layup. The importance of the layup was exemplified in Dick's explanation of what the boys would work on during their third practice.

> *I know for sure they will be doing their layups and stuff. That's important to me. Layups, the easiest shot in the game. And it seems to me they should get more layups than anything.*

(Field notes 2/18/89)

Dick expressed his belief that more scoring should come from layups than other shots. Dick acted on his perceptions of the importance of the layup. Half court right and left hand layups were the first drill the boys did at every practice.

The boys were continually reprimanded for taking longer shots and not using the pick for a closer shot. Getting open to score was the point of the offense. However, Dick consistently focused on a particular way to score, the layup.

The pick was to be the team's offense, as evidenced by the following vignette of the team discussion at the end of the second practice.

> Offense Vignette. Dick called the boys to the center, "Up to middle." The boys noisily gathered around Dick in the center of the court. He told them they were doing a good job. He then explained that the reason that he had introduced the pick was to give the boys an offense for the game. The boys were told to meet on Saturday at 1:00 for their first game. (Field notes 2/6/89)

The message was clear. The pick was introduced with competition in mind. The first game was in four days. Even though most of the practice focused on drills, the pick was the only skill mentioned in conjunction with the upcoming game. As Dick was setting the stage for phase two, Jane was just about to have her first and only practice prior to the first game.

Jane's first practice focused even more on correct technique of basic skills. Jane, like Dick, combined verbal explanations of proper execution with a physical demonstration of the desired skill. However, she monitored the childrens' execution of the skill much more closely than Dick. The following

diagram and vignette provide an example of Jane's awareness of the girls' execution attempts during the dribble/pivot drill.

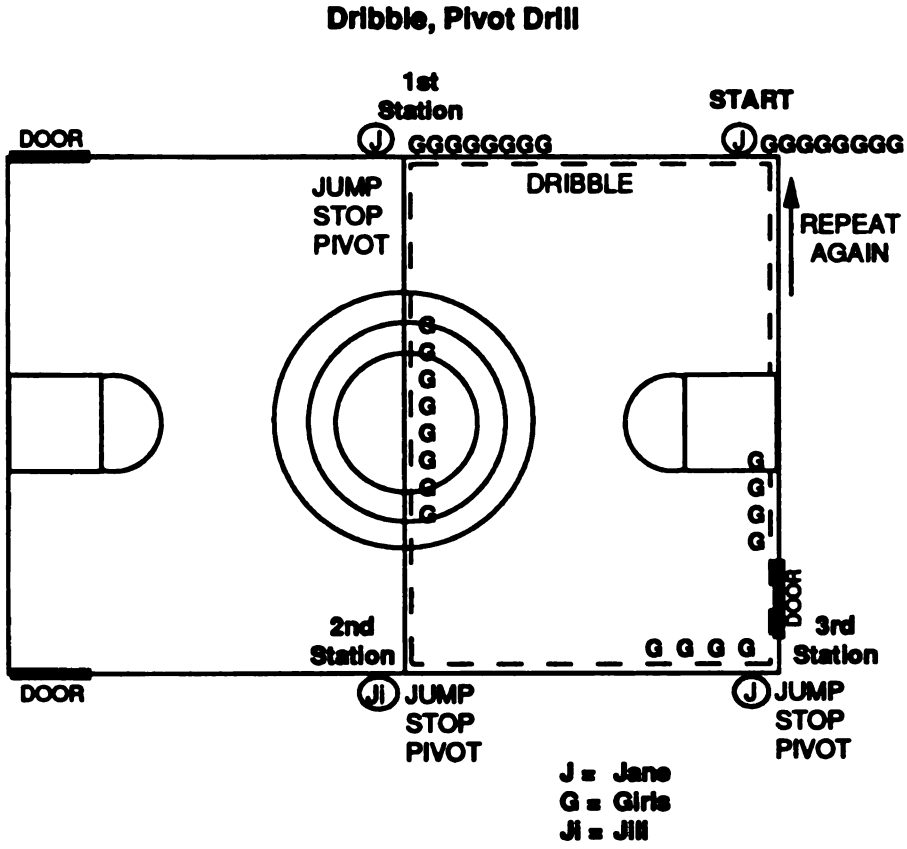

Figure 2

Monitor Vignette. Jane directed each girl to pick up a ball. As the girls gathered around, Jane said, "What I want you to do now is get in a line behind me. Follow what I do. Do you remember the jump shot and pivot?" One or two girls called out "yes!" The rest of the girls were silent. After the girls scrambled in line behind Jane, she turned and said, "watch me."

As the diagram above shows, Jane stood halfway between the endline and halfcourt. The girls were lined behind her. She began dribbling toward halfcourt. As she reached halfcourt, she executed a jump stop

> and pivoted in the direction of the opposite sideline. Jane's head turned toward the girls and she reminded them, "keep your dribble!" Jane continued the drill until she was back where she started.
>
> Jane went to the front of the line and began with the girls following. As she got to halfcourt, she realized the girls were not doing the drill properly. Jane observed each girl at the first pivot station. If the girl did not execute properly, Jane would combine a physical demonstration with a verbal explanation of the pivot. The girl would be asked to try it again. If she was unable to execute, Jane would place the girl's body back into the start position and pivot her.
>
> Jane went through the same procedure with every girl at every station. At the final station, one girl attempted to sneak by after an unsuccessful jump shot and pivot. Jane yelled, "hey, hey, get back here." Jane explained to all of the girls that they had to pivot off their left foot. She then positioned the girl and she successfully completed the pivot. Each girl ran through the whole drill three times.
> (Field notes 2/9/89)

Jane monitored the progress of each girl in the jump, stop/ pivot drill. She went to great lengths to explain the drill at an individual and group level.

Jane had already expressed her initial perception that the execution of the basics was the foundation of offense and defense. Jane's actions reflected her belief in the importance of the basic skills. The following vignette supports this assertion.

> Do It Right Vignette. Jane called the girls together at center court. One girl came to the gathering with the ball in her hand. Jane asked for the ball. The girl threw the ball to Jane with one hand and it landed at Jane's feet. Very firmly and directed at the girl, Jane asked, "What kind of pass was that?" Then she looked at the whole group and continued in a firm tone, "Every time you throw the ball, I want correct form on the pass!" Then she grasped the ball and held it in both hands at her chest. At the same time she reminded the girls of the proper techniques, "thumbs down, palms out, and then throw from the chest." Jane then demonstrated the correct hand position and threw the ball across the court to Jill.
> (Field notes 2/9/89)

Jane expected the girls to use the proper technique whenever they were in the gym. The significance of basic skills for both coaches was established in the section concerning initial perceptions. The previous two vignettes support the contention that Jane's behaviors in this phase reflected her initial perception about the basics being the foundation of basketball.

Jane introduced the girls to dribbling, passing, the shuffle, and defensive drills. Her explanations and demonstrations were all very detailed. She observed and corrected the technique of every girl, in every drill. Even though the girls were attentive and receptive to the drills, they kept asking when they could "play." Finally, in the last 5 minutes of practice, Jane told them they could scrimmage. As evidenced by the next vignette, there was a slight problem. The girls did not know the difference between offense and defense. They did not know how to "play" basketball.

> How Do We Play? Vignette. Jill pointed to four girls and said, "you four, over there and you four over there." Jill and Jane yelled, "let's play." The girls just stand there. Jane and Jill looked at each other and laughed. Jane asked, "How many know what offense and defense are?" Only two or three girls raised their hands. Jane explained, "offense is when your team has the ball." Jill continued with, "defense is when you guard someone from the other team."
>
> Jane pointed to a basket and told one group of four, "they will score here." One girl chimes in, "you try and keep the other team from scoring points." Jane and Jill organized the girls so that each girl was across from the person she was guarding. They explained to each girl whether she was on offense or defense. Jane handed the ball to an offensive player and told everyone to try it again. Now all the girls chased, giggled, and grabbed at the girl with the ball.
> (Field notes 2/9/89)

First, the girls did not understand the concept of scrimmage. Then, after

repeated explanations of offense and defense, the girls still did not understand which team they were on and when they were on offense and defense. The rest of the time was spent on starting and stopping the scrimmage attempts. Each time play was stopped, Jane or Jill would ask each girl whether she was on offense or defense. They also spent a good deal of time trying to control the girls' chasing, giggling, and talking while they were attempting to "play." Their first game was two days away. During those last 5 minutes, Jane and Jill repeatedly looked at each other, shook their heads, and laughed. What else could they do? The first game was only two days away.

With two days until the first game, Dick and Jane were still organizing practices based on their initial perceptions of the coaching task. Both coaches introduced drills for shooting, dribbling, passing, and defensive skills. The evidence presented through interviews and vignettes, thus far, supports the assertion that the coaches' initial perceptions of the coaching task directly influenced the focus of practices.

Embedded within the evidence is the emergence of the tension between fun and skill development. Jane and Jill laughed at the fact that the girls did not know basketball. During those last 5 minutes, the girls playfulness seemed to interfere with Jane's plans to work on offensive and defensive skills. As the behavior of the girls deviated from the focus of the scrimmage, Jane would stop the action and settle the girls down. Much like the boys, the noise and activity would only subside long enough to regain energy.

A good example of the emergent tension between fun and skill development was the "too advanced vignette." While Dick was focusing on

correct execution of the pick, the boys were laughing, yelling, chasing each other and being verbally and physically active. This type of behavior occurred during most drills. The boys seemed to enjoy playing around. Many times the activity level of the boys became very distracting for me. From my perspective, the boys were being rowdy, rambunctious, noisy, and inattentive to the drills and they seemed to be having fun.

These periods of playfulness seemed consistent with the general tone of the gym established in the background section. However, the increased activity levels seemed to conflict with what the coaches were trying to accomplish. Dick and Jack constantly attempted to slow the boys down, but the noise and activity level would calm just enough to regain strength and then explode as evidenced in the "too advanced" vignette. The tension between the coaches' drills and boys' thrills continued until the last two practices, when Dick and Jack virtually eliminated drills.

I was surprised that the coaches allowed the attention of the boys and girls to deviate so much from the focus of the drill or activity. My surprise was based on my recollection of both coaches' initial perceptions of discipline within the task of coaching. Both coaches had expressed surprise and disappointment in previous coaches' inability to control their athletes' behaviors. The following statement describing Jane's dismay at a former coach's inability to communicate and maintain control demonstrates both coaches' initial perceptions on the importance of discipline.

> *Yea, he probably knows the sport, but he doesn't know how to pass on the sport. And pass on what you're*

> *suppose to do. And pass on techniques and plays to do. He was just really loose and just let us, let people get away with murder. No discipline, he just, in my mind, it makes me wonder how he ever got the job.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Both coaches felt that a good coach made the "athletes" do what the coach wanted. Jane believed that her former coach had the knowledge, but he was too loose. He was not fit for the job.

Dick's assessment of his discipline responsibilities was representative of both coaches' initial perceptions concerning discipline.

> *Personally, I mean, I want to discipline them on the whole court. I feel that you know that any time, even in the warmups. When they are shooting around and stuff.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Dick expressed his desire and plan to maintain control from the time the boys entered the gym until they left. Jane had also expressed the same desire.

They both wanted the children to learn the basics and have fun. And yet, the childrens' fun seemed to interfere with the coaches' basic drills. Dick, Jane, Jill, and Jack expressed an inability to comprehend the childrens' lack of seriousness. Dick's statement best typified the coaches' surprise at the childrens' behavior.

> *Honestly, you know, I thought they'd pay attention more. They didn't. You know it. Kinda, their dad probably told them, your gonna be shootin' and havin' fun.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Dick expected the boys to be more attentive. He guessed that they may have been more concerned with fun. Jane had also commented on the fact that the children were not as serious as she expected. Dick and Jane's perceptions

of a difference in goals between them and the children may have been created by Dick and Jane's recollections of their youth sport experience. Both were convinced that they had been much more serious and attentive when they played youth sport.

They wanted the children to have fun, but they also wanted to develop the childrens' skills. However, as evidenced by the following statements from Dick and Jane's first interview, the coaches realized that some tensions existed between fun and keeping the childrens' attention during skill development drills.

Jane found it difficult to find things that seemed like disciplinary measures to the girls.

> *...what do you do? you can't...I mean, what do they dislike? They've got so much energy and stuff. And the only thing I can do is keep them out of a game. Which you really can't do. They're kids. This is, they pay for this. And I'm their coach and you can't do that.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Jane was frustrated by her inability to find something that would punish the girls for their messing around behaviors. How could she control their attention during practice if they enjoyed things that she considered punishment?

Dick's explanation concerning the problem that he was having in controlling the attention of the children summarizes the major stumbling block for both coaches in Phase 1.

> *If they are goofing off, I'll, you know, goofing off for third and fourth graders might be having fun for them. So I kind of have to make the separation from them having fun and goofing off.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Dick wanted them to have fun. He wanted them to pay attention during the drills. However, Dick believed that he must be careful in maintaining control. There seemed to be a fine line where maintaining the children's attention might eliminate fun. What was fun to the children seemed to get in the way of drills. Jane was wondering if there were any measures the girls disliked enough to maintain control. Dick tried to separate goofing off from fun before trying to control the boys' attentions.

On the one hand, the coaches expressed the belief that they must maintain control in order to accomplish their goal of teaching the basics. On the other hand, the coaches were having a difficult time determining if discipline would eliminate the childrens' fun or which disciplinary measures would actually control the goofing off behavior of the children. The evidence in the section on initial perceptions showed that both coaches placed a great deal of importance on the children learning skills and having fun. Even without competitive game situations, there existed a tension between fun and skill development.

In Phase 1, the coaches never seemed concerned about the competitive aspect of the coaching task. Dick and Jane seemed to base their expectations on the age and earliness of the season. Neither coach expected much from the children in their first game. Jane wanted them to learn the basics. Her assessment of the situation after the first practice was best expressed by the question Jill asked me.

Can you give us any help? I think we need it.
(Field notes 2/9/89)

Jill asked the question just after Jane and Jill realized the girls did not know the difference between offense and defense. I explained that I was unable to offer any assistance because of the effect it would have on the study. Then, Jane and Jill began laughing as they remembered the last 5 minutes of the girls attempting to scrimmage.

Dick's explanation of what he expected from the boys in the first game lends support to the assertion that neither coach expected much from the children in their first game.

I'm sure not looking for pretty games, today. Nobody sets picks at their age. So, I'm just gonna keep them in there. Keep them fresh and make sure everybody plays the same amount.
(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)

Dick did not expect much from the boys. He acknowledged that the pick might be a little advanced for them to use effectively. He seemed to be content making sure they all played equally. Dick also felt that it was easier for third and fourth grade age children to have fun even when they lose.

Everyone can, but at a younger age level it is easier. You know, if they lose I don't really think it is important to them.
(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)

Dick believed that everyone could lose and still have fun. However, the younger one was the easier it would be. The boys were at the youngest age level in the competitive program.

The ages of the boys seemed to affect what Dick expected out of their execution of skills, their seriousness, and their ability to have fun if they lost.

During a discussion about how Dick would handle winning and losing games, Dick expressed that the most important aspect of the games for this age level was that the boys have fun.

> *If we lose and they don't play well, I probably won't tell them you didn't play well, but I'll help them in the things that they didn't do well, for instance, offense and you know if we win that would be great. I'd tell them they did a good job. And if we lost and played well, I'd tell them, ya know, you guys played well. I think most important for me is that they have fun. Especially at this age level.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

No matter whether the boys won or lost, the most important aspect of the game was that the boys have fun. The age of the boys seemed to influence the perceptions Dick had about the relationship between winning and fun.

Similarly, Jane wanted the girls to enjoy their early experiences in sports since she had enjoyed her sport experiences. She felt it would be fun to coach and expose the girls to the fun aspect of sports.

> *.....How much fun I've had and show them how much fun they can have and what they can do with it. Then, I'd, they, that would be great. I could take my experiences and kind of start them off on their way.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

In essence, Jane was not only going to focus on basics, she was also going to teach the girls what a fun and valuable experience being part of a team could be. Jane, like Dick, never discussed her expectations on the basis of winning or losing. She seemed to be solely interested in the girls' experience being well-rounded and enjoyable.

However, after the first game she did express surprise at her lack of interest in the score of the game. The following quote is Jane's description of

her behavior during the first game.

> *Then, like Milly or one of the other girls would say "oh we're losing." And, I like, I was surprised. I was really surprised that I didn't even really pay attention to it, really. (Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Jane was so interested in the play of the girls that she was oblivious to the score. Jane continued by explaining that she was busy trying to discern what the girls needed to be better prepared for the next game. Neither coach brought up the topics of games, score, or starters. Even though both coaches discussed the upcoming game, their concern was that the children not feel self-conscious about their performance in front of their friends and family. The evidence provided demonstrates the lack of emphasis Dick and Jane placed on the upcoming competition. During the first game, both coaches arbitrarily put children together as a starting team. I expected to observe similar practices emphasizing basic skills that the children were unable to execute in the game. Dribbling, shooting, and passing were the skills which the children seemed to be weakest.

As established in the initial perceptions section, Dick and Jane's goals were to teach the basics, defense, and provide the opportunity for children to have fun. During Phase 1, the coaches' initial perceptions of the task of coaching were turned into "reality." Both coaches focused on what they perceived as basic skills. Dick and Jane were both detailed in their explanations of drills and complimented them with demonstrations. Neither coach mentioned the outcome aspect of the league. During Phase 1, the children seemed to decide when, where, and how they were going to have fun.

The coaches were trying to cope with the problem of determining how to maintain and control the childrens' playfulness during drills.

In Phase 1, there already seemed to be a tension between the development of skills and the childrens' playful behaviors. Dick and Jane's perception of a good coach was a person who could control his/her athletes. However, both were having trouble deciding when and how to maintain control.

The next section constitutes the phase in which the focus of Dick and Jane's practices was offense. For Dick, Phase 2 focused on the pick. In the third, and fourth games, Dick would become so involved in score that he would yell "shoot," forgetting the focus of the practiced offense, the layup. Practices in Phase 2 for Jane focused on the give-go. The evidence will support the assertion that Phase 2 was a result of the outcome of games. The coaches' perceptions and meanings within the social reality of coaching were changed due to increased tension between skill development, fun, and outcome.

Phase 2

Practice Organization/Transition From Basic Skills to Scoring

The girls performance in the first game seemed to live up to the expectations of Jane and Jill. The opposing team scored at will. Many times, Jane's girls were playing offense when they were supposed to be on defense. Very rarely did a dribbler on Jane's team get the ball beyond half court. Throughout the whole game, Jane seemed frustrated, but patiently reinforced the girls for their valiant efforts. When it was all over, the girls had lost by 20 points.

In Jane's first interview after the first game, she expressed her realization

that the girls would not be ready for any offensive plays until much later in the season. So, I expected the next practice to be much like the first. What a surprise. The following vignette supports the assertion that the focus of Jane's practices changed drastically after the first game.

> Are You Serious? Vignette. The second practice began with Jane calling the girls to the center. Jane told the girls that they did a good job on Saturday at the game. Encouragingly, she told them that "their shots did not fall, but they eventually would." She reviewed what the concepts of offense and defense meant and then told them to line up for full court, right handed layups.
>
> At the end of the layup drill, Jane called Jill over to the center of the court. Jane looked at Jill and said, "Jill, give/go, pick and roll."
>
> In what seemed to be disbelief, Jill questioningly replied, "You want them to learn this?" Jane's body language suggested that she was aggravated at Jill's statement. The group was split up in half with Jane and Jill each working with four girls at opposite ends of the court. Jill walked over to her group and said, "I don't think you should be learning this." Jane heard this comment and approached Jill.
>
> The two coaches had a discussion on the sideline. Jill felt that the give/go drill was too difficult for children that age. Jane strongly disagreed. As Jill walked back to her group of girls, she shook her head and said, "we're going to learn the pick and roll. I do not think you should learn it." The remaining 20 minutes was spent trying to set up the give/go drill.
> (Field notes 2/17/89)

This was a drastic change from the organization of the first practice. Earlier Jane had expressed her belief that the basics were the backbone of offense and defense. The first practice focused solely on skills such as dribbling, passing, pivoting, and defense. However, the only basic skill introduced in the second practice was the layup. The rest of the time was spent on an offensive manuever, the give/go. Correct execution requires the ballhandler to pass the ball to a teammate and then "pick" the defender of the

new ballhandler. The person with the ball can either give it back to the original ballhandler or go to the basket.

Jane may have won the disagreement concerning the introduction of the give/go, but the following vignette supports Jill's assessment of the difficulty factor.

> How to Give n' Go Vignette. Prior to the discussion about the appropriateness of the give/go, the girls had been separated into groups of four at each end of the court. After Jill and Jane had discussed the drill, they returned to their groups and began the task of teaching the give/go by designating two girls on offense and two on defense. Jane started her explanation of the drill by passing the ball to one girl and emphasizing the relationship between the pass and "give." Jill had discontinued her explanation of the give/go so that she and her group could observe Jane's demonstration. Jane continually asked the girls if they understood each new aspect of the drill introduced. The explanation and demonstration became much more detailed with the inclusion of the pick n' roll concept. All of a sudden, Jill called over to Jane, "I'll have you teach this, OK? As Jane corrected the position of one of the girls, she replied, "OK!"
>
> Jill told her girls she wanted them to work on "guarding" while they waited for Jane. The girls began to chase, yell, scream, and giggle. This was quite a contrast from the other end of the gym where Jane was continually correcting the girls attempts at the give/go. The girls very rarely executed the first pass, let alone the pick n' roll. Eventually, the attention of Jane's group wandered. A few of the girls were doing cartwheels, and not focusing on the give/go. Rolling her eyes, Jane walked toward Jill's group. Jill called out, "you teach them what you're doing." As Jane came face to face with Jill, she replied, "O.K., all I taught them was the give/go and they are not doing well." In an "I told you sort of way" Jill said, "Well, maybe it is too complicated." After another opinionated discussion, Jill and Jane swapped groups and the process of "how to give n' go" was repeated.
> (Field notes 2/17/89)

Most of the time the girls could execute the first pass correctly. Only two girls seemed to understand that if you were designated as offense, your team had the ball. Otherwise, you were on defense. The execution of the drill

seemed to be inhibited by the girls inability to understand and execute basic basketball techniques. And yet, Jane focused on the specific drill and neglected what she had expressed as the backbone of basketball, basic skills.

After exposing both groups to the give/go, Jane tried to integrate the drill into a scrimmage situation. Needless to say, the give/go was never executed and the girls' playful, inattentive behaviors were heightened by their attempts at setting picks on each other. In those last 20 minutes there seemed to be a conflict between Jane's goal of practicing the give/go in a scrimmage situation and the girls' playfulness as they attempted to execute the give/go.

The third practice deviated from the give/go emphasis of the second practice. As practice began, Jane explained to the girls that they were going to practice the give/go, after their layups. With that announcement I expected to observe a practice similar to the second one. However, after the give/go offense, there was a shooting drill, a rebounding drill, and a scrambling drill. One explanation for why the focus of the third practice reverted back to the basics was Jill's objection the week before to the introduction of the give/go.

Jill came to the third practice with a list of skills she felt the girls needed to work on based on their performance in the second game. Even though Jane spent a good deal of time on the give/go, she could not justify ignoring the skills Jill felt the girls needed to be prepared for the next game. After all, Jill was the game coach. Jane had to rely on Jill's assessment of what the girls needed. During her second interview, Jane alluded to her feeling of being left out, and not being prepared for what the girls might need in game situations.

> *I think a little bit. But I think it is because I'm not at the games. So, I don't know actually, what they're doing right and what they're doing wrong.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/7/89)*

She felt out of touch and unprepared to deal with situations arising from game play. This was the first time that Jill had given Jane any report or assessment of the girls' game performances. She had disagreed with the introduction of the give/go in the second practice. In many ways, Jane did not have a choice. She had to incorporate what Jill indicated as necessary preparation for the fourth game. They were now 0-3.

The fourth practice was almost a carbon copy of the second one. Jane was the only coach, Jill was taking the Scholastic Achievement Test. No one was there to question the appropriateness of focusing on the give/go offense.

Since the first game, Jane's emphasis had changed drastically. The organizational focus of the practices had changed from basics to offense. Goofing off behaviors were becoming more and more frequent and loud. Jane's organizational focus seemed to be influenced by the outcome of each game. As the girls kept losing, the basics and defense were abandoned for the give/go offense, scoring.

After engaging in the social reality of coaching, Jane was beginning to evaluate the effectiveness of the content of the practices. The outcomes of the previous games seemed to have quite an impact on the organization of practices. The following statement supports the assertion that Phase 2 evolved from Jane's encounter with the individual reality of competition.

> *I think like games, when we get beat and stuff. It makes me think about offense, because our scoring average is maybe been three points a game. So, I think about offense. Why we aren't scoring and stuff. But, I've got defense. Because that's what at that level, I think defense is important.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/7/89)*

Jane continued by telling me that defense was much more important, but that each game created pressure to score. Even though she believed that defense was more important, the organization of practices in Phase 2 revolved around the give/go offense. The outcome of previous games seemed to change Jane's perceptions of which drills were important for the girls. Initially, Jane had stated that without basic skills, the offense was useless. And yet, the quest for more points overshadowed the fact that the girls could not execute the basic skills needed to run the give/go. For Jane, the reconstruction of practice behaviors and meanings was abrupt and focused on scoring.

The transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2 in the season was much more subtle in Dick's case. It began with his statement at the end of the second practice that the pick was "the offense." Offense was never mentioned in Dick or Jane's first interview as an important aspect.

As the following statement from the first interview demonstrates, Dick wanted the boys to be exposed to different types of drills. He would not send them to play in a game without an overall knowledge of skills. As the evidence in Phase 1 demonstrated, up until now, Dick acted on this belief.

> *Like I wouldn't just teach them offense. And they'd go into their first game and they wouldn't know what to do on defense.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/11/89)*

Dick specifically stated that he would not just teach the boys offense. In his first two practices, the boys were exposed to a well rounded group of basic basketball skills. The time spent on the pick was minimal compared to time spent on the basics and defense.

The boys won their first game. They beat the other team by 15 points. For the first three quarters, Dick was consistent in yelling, "use the pick, ball side pick." He was constantly directing the boys on where to stand, so they could set picks. Dick constantly emphasized the importance of getting open for the layup. He wanted the boys to attempt the "easiest shot" in basketball, the layup.

Even though Dick emphasized "the offense," the boys were not executing the pick. The boys attempted to set picks, but their execution was exactly as they practiced, offensive boys chasing defensive boys irregardless of who had the ball. The end result was that the boys won without "the pick." According to Dick, the third practice focused on executing the pick in a scrimmage situation because only one boy set a pick in the game.

> Boys' Agenda Vignette. The third practice began with the boys gathered around Dick at the center of the court. Dick and Jack proceeded to discuss the points of the game. They explained to the boys that they needed work on the offense. The boys were reminded that the point of the pick was to get people open for a layup. The boys were then directed to setup for half court layups.
>
> There were only five boys at practice. They seemed to have their own agenda. After the layups, Dick introduced an inbounds play. Only four boys could participate at a time. Dick did not notice, but during the rest of the practice his brother and a friend decided who substituted in and out of the drill. Very rarely did they sit out. Approximately 10 minutes later, Dick incorporated the inbounds play into an offensive scrimmage situation. The reason Dick gave for spending so much time on the offense was, "Saturday we ran the offense only once. Joe was the only

one who set a pick."
(Field notes 2/13/89)

The rest of the practice focused on the pick drill. The organization of practices in Phase 2 focused on scoring, but with a specific offense. Dick's assessment that more time should be spent focusing on the pick seemed to be influenced by the boys inability to execute it in the game. They definitely had enough points. They had won.

The rest of the practice was spent trying to impress upon the boys the importance of setting picks. While correcting the boys efforts, Dick emphasized that the object of the pick was to get someone open for a layup. They were to focus on shooting layups and eliminate the long shot attempts. All of Dick and Jack's corrective feedback was prefaced with the purpose of the pick, to get open for the "layup."

The boys' second game seemed to be an imitation of the girls' first game. Each time a boy dribbled to the half court line, the ball was stolen and the other team scored. When a pick was executed correctly, the ballhandler could not control the ball. Like the girls, the boys' ability to execute the pick seemed inhibited by their lack of basic skills.

Not only did the outcome of games influence Dick's practice behaviors, but also his game behaviors. The following vignette supports this assertion. In the first three practices and the first game, Dick emphasized using the pick for the layup. Now, overtly it seemed that all he wanted was points.

> Shoot Vignette. Dick's pre-game instructions were to set picks. More specifically, "when you get the ball under the basket, shoot." Halfway through the second quarter, the score was 20-6. Dick's team was getting

> slaughtered. At this point Dick was still yelling to the boys to focus on the practiced offense. He would yell, "pick" and the boys responded with good execution of the pick, but they could not get open for the layup.
>
> Two times one of the boys set a pick. In both instances, the same ballhandler was called for double dribbles. The other team got the ball on the violation and immediately scored. Dick's behavior and offensive emphasis changed drastically. Three times, just prior to halftime, Dick yelled "shoot," as the ballhandler crossed the half court line.
>
> Normally, the instructions were to "set the pick," or "go to the basket." The last time he yelled, "shoot" to a boy at half court, the gym got quiet. There were two boys guarding Dick's player. When Dick yelled out for the boy to shoot, the boy turned and looked at Dick on the sideline. One of the boys guarding him stole the ball and scored. Dick's behavior was such a flagrant deviation from what Dick had been emphasizing that from across the gym a woman firmly called "Richard." It was his mother.
> (Field notes 2/18/89)

The change in Dick's behavior was very obvious to Dick's mother and me. I had observed Dick for weeks and he had never encouraged the boys to "shoot" from half court. He had always reprimanded the boys for long shots. But the score of the game seemed to influence his perceptions as to what was important. As Dick experienced the individual reality of losing, scoring, not the pick, became more meaningful.

In an informal interview after the game, Dick could not remember the incident described in the "shoot vignette." He never heard his mother. However, he was aware that he had begun to direct the boys to shoot from long distances.

> *My frustrations at losing, may have influenced my decisions on shooting.*
> *(Fieldnotes 2/18/89)*

He continued by saying he may have been grabbing at straws. Dick was also cognizant of the fact that the boys used the offense and lost. Dick expressed his frustration over his dilemma by telling me what the next practice

should focus on.

> *If we were to have practice Tuesday (holiday), there would be no shooting, only dribbling and offense. This would be a type of punishment in a way.*
> *(Fieldnotes 2/18/89)*

Dick realized that the boys were unable to get the ball down the floor. Whenever they did get the ball down the court, they were unable to shoot accurately. In his initial interview, Dick had stated that the set shot was one of the things he wanted the boys to learn. Dick, like Jane, was abandoning some of those goals, for scoring. The outcome of the games seemed to have more of an impact on the coaches' behavior than their expressed beliefs concerning the task of coaching.

> Do As I Say, Not As I Said Vignette. The boys were losing their third game. Dick attempted to be patient and consistent. He constantly reprimanded the boys when they shot long. Except once when Jake made a lucky long shot. Jake brought the ball down the court. Dick yelled, "layup." Jake just heaved the ball toward the basket from the sideline. As Jake released the ball, Dick firmly called out, "Jake!" The ball swished through the net. Dick clapped and told Jake, "good job." They were losing. They needed the score.
>
> Throughout the rest of the game, Dick tried to get the boys to set the pick, do the inbounds play, and go for the layup. He became verbally and overtly insistent on the boys going for the layup. The boys, on the other hand, seemed to think just shooting from anywhere was better than waiting for the layup.
> (Field notes 2/25/89)

During the first loss, the boys seemed to be unable to just "shoot." They had been taught to execute the pick and score a layup. However, as the score became more lopsided, the boys adopted the "just shoot" philosophy that Dick had verbally reinforced in the second game. Now, Dick was attempting to get the boys to redirect their attention to the practiced plays. Dick assumed that the

boys had abandoned the offense, because of his previous game behavior. He acknowledged this fact in his second interview, discussing what he would do differently if he were to start over.

> *.....Even if they were losing, I made a mistake. Because now they are just shooting from anywhere. ..If they were losing, a good coach would just keep them doing what they were doing. ..I just told them to start shooting because I wanted, ya know, points.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/4/89)*

Dick acknowledged that he had changed his perceptions as to what the boys should do in a game, and abandoned his original goals. This was best demonstrated by his statement about what he had wanted to accomplish.

> *To teach them to have fun and work as a team and play basketball.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/4/89)*

Dick continued by describing the part of coaching that was the most difficult for him.

> *The part I really wanted to team them, skills.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/4/89)*

Dick wanted the boys to learn basic skills, defense, and teamwork. He also wanted them to have fun. But practices in Phase 2 had been organized to focus almost entirely on offense. He admitted the offensive emphasis in the third and fourth practices constituted about 75% of the time. Additionally, he was aware that defense had been neglected. The following is Dick's explanation of how defense was neglected.

> *Maybe because everyone likes to play offense and no-one likes to play defense when you're at that age. I'm not blaming the kids at all. But I think I have kind of slacked away from that...Boy, I haven't been teaching that at all.*

> *But I didn't do anything about it Tuesday in practice. I just, it must have slipped my mind.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/4/89)*

Dick continually expressed how important defense was to him. And yet, teaching defense to the boys had slipped his mind. Dick suggested that playing offense is more desirable to the boys. However, he did not seem to accept that explanation. In an informal discussion after the third game, Dick told me that the fourth practice would focus more on defense. And yet, it slipped his mind. Instead, the fourth practice focused on offense.

I was about 5 minutes late. I could hear the boys from outside the closed double doors. Their rowdy behavior had been consuming more and more of the practice time, but the noise level had already broken the sound barrier. I wondered if the coaches were going to get anything done. As the following vignette shows, the tempo of the practice seemed to be set by the boys' early practice behavior.

> Bouncing Off The Walls Vignette. As I entered, I saw bodies wandering away from the drill together in fun-filled chase. I saw boys hook-sliding to their place in line. The boys seemed to be enjoying themselves. They were not paying too much attention to the layup drill. Both Dick and Jack attempted to quite them down. The attempts fell on ears full of other boys' sounds. One of the boys, Jamie, was hit in the head by a ball thrown in playfulness by Tom. There was no effort to reprimand the boy who tossed the ball. Dick asked Jamie if he was alright. Then Dick and Jack got into line and did layups with the boys. At first this calmed the noise level, the reprieve did not last long.
> (Field notes 2/27/89)

My fieldnotes for this practice were labeled "hyper." I could see and feel the coaches being influenced by the uncontrollable behavior of the boys. Dick and Jack had never participated in a drill before this practice. Now, they were in

line doing layups as one of the gang. Another event which occurred during this practice was the introduction of "killers." Killers is a repetitive running drill considered by most athletes to be a form of punishment or conditioning. The following vignettes demonstrate the changes in practice emphasis which eventually led to the development of Phase 3.

> Killers Vignette. After the layup drill, Jack called all the boys to the center of the gym. Noisily, the boys gathered around Dick and Jack. Without getting their complete and undivided attention, Dick told the boys, "four of you down there and four down there." There was not much movement from the boys, except their mouths. All of a sudden, Dick pointed to the endline and said, "all eight of you down at this end." As the group congregated on the endline, the boys seemed to become attentive to Dick's words and actions. The boys were told that they were going to run killers. As Dick and Jack stood at center court and explained how to run killers, they told the boys that there are fifteen killers planned. However, if the boys were good, they could work off some of the killers.
>
> The first killer started with a loud "OK" from Dick. Some boys were running, some jogging. At the finish, the boys were huffing and puffing. Two boys attempted to sit and Dick commanded them to "stand up, stand up! Put your hands over your head and do not bend over." Just as the heavy breathing began to die down, Dick called out, "OK, Jack is going to shoot, if he misses you'll run 1 more, if he makes it, you'll run two more." There was a collective groan from the boys. Jack missed the first shot and the boys cheered. However, Dick had Jack try it again. Jack sunk this shot. The boys barely got the groan out when Dick started them on their next killer. At the finish, some boys pretended they were hyperventilating. Everyone was sent out to get a drink.
> (Field notes 2/27/89)

I perceived that killers were introduced as a result of the excessive rowdy behavior of the boys. However, in an informal interview after practice, I was reassured by Dick that the introduction of killers had been pre-planned. However, Dick and Jack both concurred that the boys behavior might have been a good enough reason for implementing killers.

After everyone returned from the drinking fountain, they were told that if

they did not settle down, they would do killers the remaining 30 minutes. Much of the extreme rowdiness seemed to be alleviated after the introduction of killers. Even so, as demonstrated by the following vignette, the boys were still laughing, giggling, and chasing as they began working on setting picks in a four on four scrimmage.

> Can't Beat Em', Join Em' Vignette. For the first ten minutes of the scrimmage, Dick and Jack emphasized going for the layup. At one point, Jack demonstrated the proper technique for a right handed layup. Intermixed between the instructional messages were statements such as "listen up," "everyone stop" and "when I'm talking to you, don't talk." Finally, Dick and Jack joined in on the scrimmage. By the end of the practice the tone of the gym could be labeled "hyper."
> (Field notes 2/27/89)

Twice in the fourth practice, Dick and Jack participated with the boys. The coaches seemed to try and control the tempo of the practice. However, the boys could only be quieted for a few moments at a time. Dick and Jack's participation could have been a result of the collective behavior of the group overpowering the coaches' ability to control the practice. While killers were introduced for conditioning purposes, they may have been appropriate as a method of controlling the boys' hyper behavior.

For Dick, like Jane, the organization of practices in Phase 2 revolved around offense. Although Dick had introduced the pick in Phase 1, greater emphasis was placed on his initial goal of teaching them a blend of necessary skills. Now, in Phase 2, Dick's practices were organized with offense in mind, neglecting the all-important defense, and the basics skills needed to execute the pick. Evidence provided from the fourth practice indicated that Dick and Jack still wanted to teach the boys proper execution of the pick and how to

shoot layups correctly. However, the boys' goofing off behavior seemed to control the tempo of the practice.

Fun vs. Skill Development

The chasing, tackling, and roaring of the boys became distracting to watch. As a former coach, I was distracted and frustrated by what seemed to be the boys' lack of attention to the specified drills. In the second interview, Dick assessed the boys' fourth practice behavior as goofing off. This was the first time that he had acknowledged the boys' inattention to his drills might be negative.

> *Maybe goofing off to me, may be having fun for them but like last practice, I think they were goofing off.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/4/89)*

He continued by explaining how he reached the conclusion that the boys were goofing off.

> *They didn't listen. They didn't listen to what I was saying. They were "goofing off." You know, laughing, and which might be fun to them. But I consider that as coach goofing off.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/4/89)*

Dick had distinguished in his mind that in the fourth practice the boys were goofing off. But he also suggested that he was having a difficult time deciding when to discipline. Again, Dick was coping with the perceived dichotomy between fun and skill development. Could these two factors be balanced?

Jane experienced this same kind of dilemma when she discussed the girls' definition of fun.

> *...because two girls asked me, Thursday, if they could do killers. They go, "can I do killers, can I do killers?" and now for us, that was a disciplinary.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Jane had been discussing the problem of administering discipline when she felt the girls were goofing off. She was frustrated because while the girls were goofing off, they seemed to be having fun. The girls goofing off behavior had been increasing over the season. And yet, killers, which were dreaded by varsity athletes, seemed to signify fun for the girls.

Both coaches had stated initially that underlying everything, they wanted the children to have fun. They seemed to think the children were having fun, but they wanted them to pay attention and learn the basketball concepts they were teaching.

The evidence suggests that Dick and Jane saw a dichotomy between having fun and learning the basics. This might best be typified by Dick's response to my question as to why he did not correct the boys' skill execution in scrimmage situations.

> *I'd come right back and say, well, I just wanted them to have fun.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 4/11/89)*

Through Phase 1, Dick and Jane perceived that there was a dichotomy between skill development and the children having fun. Until the first game, the organization of practices was focused on skill development. Now, in Phase 2, offensive scrimmaging was the focus of practices. As the organization of practices focused on scoring, the dichotomy between fun and skill development evolved into a tension between fun, skill development, and outcome.

During the second phase of the season, the coaches' perceptions and behaviors seemed to be greatly influenced by the outcome orientation of the game. Both coaches verbalized that knowing the basics, defense, and that the children were having fun were still very important. However, they had almost completely abandoned those goals in their quest for offense.

Initially, both coaches had expressed that they believed that the children learning something was more important than winning. However, in Phase Two, the win-loss record of the team seemed to be tied to the coaches' self-presentation. Jane's account of why she took losing so personally best typifies this assertion.

> *Well, hey my name is on the team. So (nervously laughing) if it was Jill's then it would be OK!*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/7/89)*

Jane felt the pressure even though she was not the game coach. This reflects the pressures many coaches may feel when they realize that most people do not evaluate them based on the childrens' improvement or experience. Few people ask what the children learned in a game. More times than not, the first question coaches are asked pertains to their win-loss record or a specific game score.

Overarching tensions

In the first phase of the season, Dick and Jane focused their practices on skills and drills that they initially perceived as important for the children. After engaging in coaching in a game situation, Dick and Jane's meanings, perceptions, and behaviors were reconstructed to adapt to the social reality of

competition. They both still felt very strongly about the importance of the basics, defense and fun. Seemingly, the outcome of games had a greater impact on behavior than their initial perceptions, and scoring became all important.

During the second phase of the season, the tension between skill development and fun seemed to increase. As the coaches focused more on offensive drills, the goofing off behavior of the children increased. On one hand, the coaches were having a difficult time determining when and how to maintain the childrens' attention without eliminating the fun aspect. On the other hand, the increase in the childrens' goofing off behaviors, along with the coaches' decision to focus on offense led to little, if any, directed skill development. How can there be more scoring if the children cannot shoot, dribble, or pass during games?

Much of this tension was created by the coaches constant negotiation of meanings, behaviors, and goals while experiencing the social reality of competition. Scoring became influential in "reality," while perceptually the skill development and enjoyment of the children was essential to accomplishing the coaches' goals. Jack brought out this theme very clearly as he tried to justify not disciplining the boys, even though he felt their goofing off might have hindered skill learning.

> *.....Because, are they having fun? Are they goofing around? Should we discipline them for this? Well, if we discipline them now, then we'll have to discipline them later....But they might be winning.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 4/19/89)*

As long as the boys' goofing off did not hinder the game outcome, then

the boys' inattention to skills drills would be tolerated. The evidence presented thus far, in Phase 2, supports the assertion that there was a tension between skill development, fun, and outcome. However, up until the second interview, the coaches only acknowledged the tension between skill development and fun.

Dick and Jane treated the tension between fun and skill development like a dichotomy. Consequently through Phases 1 and 2, the coaches were constantly making choices between skill development and their dilemma of defining fun. After experiencing the social reality of competition, game outcome seemed to have more of an impact on the coaches meanings, perceptions, and behaviors. During Phase 2, the negotiated "realities" and initial perceptions of each coach were engulfed by the social reality of the competitive sport context. While reflecting back on the first two-thirds of the season, Dick and Jane began to identify the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome.

In their second interview, Dick and Jane expressed their desire to correct problems created by their offensive emphasis in the second phase of the season. Jane's assessment of the situation best demonstrated this desire.

> *I don't think I would ever put in the give/go. I don't think I would ever...offense. I think I would just kinda forget about that and totally work on defense and fundamentals. (Transcription of taped interview 3/7/89)*

Jane finished by listing basic drills like dribbling, that she would be emphasizing in the next two practices. If Jane acted on her words, her last two practices should resemble Phase 1. Dick identified two major areas that he would change if he could start over. The following description of what Dick

would do differently focuses on discipline and defense without mention of fun or offense.

> *Uh, stress defense more. Because that's real important to me. I'd run them more. So, I maybe, like just running and disciplining them. I feel running kind of makes you in charge. It makes, what's the word, you seem like the boss...Maybe they would have, a you know, listened a little harder.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/4/89)*

Throughout Phase 1 and 2, Dick and Jane verbalized that their original perceptions of what the children should learn were more important than offense. While reflecting on the season up until then, they both decided that if they could start over, they would focus on control, basics, and defense. As established earlier, somehow the outcome of previous games had influenced the reconstruction of perceptions, meanings, and behaviors in relationship to the value of offense.

Through this point in the season, both coaches had experienced similar paths in Phase 1 and 2. The coaches' organization of practices, in Phase 1, focused on skill development. During Phase 2, both coaches' behaviors suggested that the need for points became more important than the coaches' expressed beliefs.

In Phase 3, the coaches traveled much different experiential paths. Dick balanced the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome by focusing on fun and self-preservation. Jane, on the other hand, fell back on her initial perceptions and returned to the basics. Additionally, she integrated the knowledge she had gained from her experiences in Phases 1 and 2 to face the

tension between fun, skill development, and outcome.

Phase 3

Phase 3 consisted of the fifth and sixth practices of each coach. However, in Dick's case, the transition to Phase 3 began in the fourth practice. At that time, Dick introduced the concept of running "killers," a repetitive running drill. In addition, the scrimmage situation became a free-for-all with Dick and Jack participating.

The fifth practice deviated from the scrimmage emphasis of the fourth practice. Organizationally, it followed the basic format of the previous practice; layups, killers, and then a free-for-all scrimmage. However, the elusive defense was incorporated into the scrimmage as evidenced by the Defense and Inbounds Play Vignettes.

> Defense Vignette. As the boys gathered around Dick to set up in teams, he said, "We haven't played very good defense the last three games." He continued by reminding them about the importance of defense. This was unusual in that the only comments typically made about defense were statements such as, "guard your man" or "stay with your man." While Dick continued to discuss defense, the boys had divided up into teams and were running around and chasing each other. Dick yelled out, "listen up, set up the offense. Get it to one of the guards. O.K.?" The scrimmage began with a jump ball.
> (Field notes 3/6/89)

In the fourth practice, there was never any mention of the importance of defense. Now, defense was being stressed over offense. Furthermore, during the course of the scrimmage, Dick was as explicit in his corrective feedback as he had been in Phase 1. This was evidenced by the contrast between Dick's impatience last week with the boys' inability to execute the inbounds play versus his patient explanation of the same situation this practice.

Inbounds Play Vignette. The boys set up for the inbounds pass. Everyone was covered. The ball could not be passed onto the court. Dick yelled, "Stop!" Last week he either yelled at the guard to take the correct spot or ignored the mistake. This practice he explained the where and why of the position. "In this situation, you should go past half court. The defense can't go past half court, so you should go there." Dick then pointed to the exact spot he wanted the boy to stand. This type of patient, corrective feedback was demonstrated by Dick throughout the scrimmage.

The scrimmage continued with Dick and Jack interjecting comments about the boys' effort and correct positioning. They also kept score, calling it out frequently. From out of nowhere, Dick encouragingly said, "next basket wins." The boys all got into position for the skins' inbounds play attempt. The skins turned the ball over to the shirts, who immediately scored. The boys on the shirts team began whooping and hollering with excitement.

Their enthusiasm was short lived. Dick sauntered to the center of the court and announced, "We're gonna work on defense." There was a collective moan from the boys. Normally, once the scrimmage began, it continued until the end of practice. The change in format and emphasis was probably as much a surprise to the boys as to me.
(Field notes 3/6/89)

Not only was Dick patient and diligent in his explanations of the inbounds play, but the defensive drill was implemented with a heavy focus on correct technique. The practice ended with an intrasquad shooting competition with the losers running killers. The boys seemed to really enjoy this part of the practice. They were cheering on their teammates, paying attention, and actually seemed to have fun.

This practice had variety. The organization seemed to focus on the basics and defense within a scrimmage situation. The practice ended with a control statement, killers. The intrateam competition served a notice, if you do not shoot well, you will run. Additionally, the intrateam competition seemed to create a fun, energizing environment. The fifth practice placed some of the

basic skills emphasis of Phase 1 within the context of scrimmaging.

The focus on basics and defense might be explained by the awareness brought about by the second interview. Dick had stated that if he could do the first part of the season over he would teach more defense and skills. The fifth practice seemed to integrate Dick's desire to increase his emphasis on the basics and defense with his free-for-all scrimmage. The "killers" were used to keep the boys' attention, a punishment for the losing group, a future threat to the winning group, control.

This type of reflexive awareness was also evident in the fourth game which was just an hour after the second interview. In the pre-game talk, Dick looked directly at me and told the boys, "I'm really going to be watching your defense." I was worried that there had been a reactive effect from the interview in Dick's coaching. However, once the game began Dick forgot defense and focused on "the pick."

The sixth practice combined the free-for-all scrimmage of the fourth practice and the intrasquad competitions of the fifth. The basics and defense were not addressed at all in the final practice of the season. The fifth practice seemed to be Dick's last attempt at trying to balance the tensions between fun, skill development, and outcome. In his experimentation with what drills kept the boys busy and alleviated the pressure from the coaches, Dick instituted intrateam competitions and free-for-all scrimmages which became representative of a typical practice in the third phase of the season. Jack probably expressed the sentiments of both coaches best when he explained to me why the emphasis had changed to less-organized scrimmages and killers.

> *To get them to settle down, work on things, so I figured it was time. We decided to scrimmage a lot more. That way they were real loud. That way it wasn't as hard. We didn't have to control them as much.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 4/19/89)*

If the boys were scrimmaging, there was not as much need for control. In Jack's mind, running killers helped to settle the boys down so that they could work on skills. Dick also pointed out that they were having a hard time controlling the boys. The team's record was 1-3. Dick had perceived that at this point nothing could be done to correct the problem created by focusing on the "pick" in Phase 2.

"Nothing was working," so the organization of practices was changed to make it easier on the coaches and more fun for the boys Control, intrateam competitions, killers, and free-for-all scrimmage evolved as the focus of Dick's third phase of the season. As Dick was attempting to ease the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome, Jane integrated her initial perceptions with the experience gained from engaging in the social reality of coaching.

In the third phase, Jane took a different approach to dealing with the individual reality of the first two-thirds of the season. After four straight losses, Jane summed up the frustration she felt because "nothing was working."

> *Because, I don't think that there's anything that's working right now. I don't think anything is going to help them. So why not go back to the basics and kind of start over for two weeks. Even though it won't help them. What we've been doing isn't going to help them either, so why not. Don't have anything to lose anymore (laughing).*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/7/89)*

The inference seemed to be that because the girls had lost all of their

games, "nothing was working." Jane's plan of action in the third phase was to change her emphasis to the basics because she believed "nothing was working." The organization of the fifth practice closely resembled Phase 1. Jane combined explicit verbal instructions and physical demonstrations to work on a defensive dribbling drill, a teamwork drill, shuffling, passing, and a new layup drill. The last 10 minutes were spent on the give/go. Additionally, Jane had reverted back to closely monitoring the performance of each girl as demonstrated by her insistence on correct dribbling technique in the following vignette.

> Back to Basics Vignette. Jane announced, "we are going to work on dribbling today." A collective "yea" sounded throughout the gym. Jane continued, "OK, get a partner. You only need one ball." Two girls ran in front of my chair and smiled. Similarly, another girl proceeded to tackle her partner. Loudly, Jane called the girls to the endline, "I want everyone down here." As the girls grouped on the endline, Jane directed that, "the one with the ball, get into the basketball position. I want you to dribble in place!" Four girls stood on the endline dribbling in place while listening for the next command. Jane's voice rose above the dribbling as she asked, "Do you know what killers are?" The group answered "yea"! Jane explained to the girls how killers were usually done and how to adapt the drill to dribbling.
>
> The first four girls dribbled down the floor and back. When the next group came to the baseline, Jane called out, "basketball position." As Jane demonstrated the proper position, she gave a step by step explanation of the proper form and technique, "hands out, knees bent." As she finished demonstrating the skill, Jane placed Betty into the proper position. As the drill continued, Jane's monitoring of the girls sounded like this, "Switch to the right hand, right now, come back here, go back with the left hand," and "Ginger, that is the best I've seen." Throughout the practice, Jane asked the girls, "Do you understand?" If anyone answered no, she demonstrated the proper technique and then physically placed the girl in proper position.
> (Field notes 3/9/89)

Jane had gone back to focusing on the basics. The organization of

practices revolved around introducing the girls to dribbling, layups, passing, and shooting with an emphasis on correct technique. Throughout the season Jane had combined demonstrations with verbal descriptions of the desired concept. However, during Phase 2, Jane had focused on the execution of the give/go without much emphasis on the basic skills needed to execute the give/go. Now, in Phase 3, Jane's practice behaviors seemed to be influenced by her initial perceptions. While Dick was attempting to keep the boys attention with less controlled practices, Jane had decided to take back some control.

The evidence presented thus far supports the assertion that the coaches' behaviors in Phase 3 were influenced by their evaluations of the effectiveness of practices based on game outcome.

The reasons given for the changes in both coaches' behavior was the perception that nothing else was working. "Working" apparently was linked to the win-loss record of the team. Jane felt that she had nothing to lose anymore. So, without the pressure of the outcome of the next game, why not go back to what she perceived as important? No one expected the team to win, so the tension created by outcome was eliminated. Similarly, Dick seemed to eliminate the tension created by outcome through his focus on keeping the boys busy without exerting much effort. Free-for-all scrimmages and intrateam competitions had replaced "the pick."

Dick realized that the boys' goofing off had interfered with getting things accomplished. Initially, he had stated a strong desire for the boys to have fun. Now was his chance to eliminate the tension between skill development, fun, and the outcome of the game by just focusing on fun. Dick organized practices

to keep the boys active. And yet, the tension still existed. Trying to juggle skill development, the children having fun, and the pressure from the outcome of previous games had driven Dick to deal with only one aspect at a time, except in the fifth practice.

At that practice, Dick attempted to integrate drills into the boys' favorite setting, the scrimmage. Taking the intrateam competitions of the fifth practice and the free-for-all scrimmage of the fourth practice, Dick chose to finish the season focusing on the boys having fun. After all, one of his initial goals was for the boys to have fun. He had accomplished that goal. Similarly, Jane's goal was for the girls to have fun.

In the first two phases of the season, Jane seemed to juggle the tensions between the three aspects in similar ways as Dick. However, her last two practices patterned the rigor, variety, and focus on technique of her first practice. And yet, in her final practice, Jane acknowledged the dichotomy between fun and skill development in her handling of the girls' goofing off during a drill.

Although she treated the situation as if one hindered the other, she also demonstrated that she was developing the ability to balance the tension created by skill development and fun. As she evaluated the situation, Jane was finding that there was a time and place for both.

> Lisa Vignette. The girls were split up evenly at the baskets. They were supposed to be working on a teamwork drill. About halfway through the drill, the girls began to tackle each other, giggle, and generally just mess around. This had happened before, but Jane usually stopped anything before it got out of hand. From my perspective, on one hand, the girls were having fun for the last practice. On the other hand, nothing much was getting accomplished in the drill. Jane dribbled toward me along the sideline. With a smile on her face, excitedly she said, "Lisa is laughing."

(Field notes 3/11/89)

Jane felt that Lisa's having fun was worth the girls' inattention to the drills. Her description of the incident in her final interview supports this assertion.

> *Anyhow, because Lisa never had fun until then. So I thought, well, it wouldn't hurt you know. And the rest of them were having fun. It wouldn't hurt for like five or ten minutes to let them goof off.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 4/15/89)*

Jane seemed to want to work out the tension between the outcome orientation of games, skill development, and fun. This was also evidenced by her eagerness to coach in the sixth game. She wanted to see how the girls would play after two practices focusing on basic skills. Jane was very disappointed that the final game was cancelled. Because of Jane's varsity commitments, she coached only in the first game. Jane wanted the opportunity to coach in another game.

The girls had been improving. In the fifth game, the girls exhibited the exact arm position of the dribbling drill at the fifth practice. Not only that, but they were within six points of the other team in the third quarter. In her first interview, Jane stated that the basics were the backbone of offense and defense. If she could coach the last game without any pressure, maybe, just maybe, the basics would pull through. Jane did not have anything to lose. If they lost, well, that was to be expected. If they won, then she would look like a good coach. Dick, on the other hand, began with the pressure to continue winning.

Dick was in a different situation, but the focus was the same for both

coaches in Phase 1 and 2. Like Jane, Dick focused on a wide variety of skills in Phase 1, prior to games. However, the influence of outcome created a change in practice emphasis. Score became the name of the game. As losses increased, Dick's perceptions of what was important changed. Keeping the boys active during Phase 3 was the key to his surviving until the last game.

After all, Phase 3 evolved from the coaches' assessments that "nothing was working." I would argue that if the coaches could have stood back from the pressure of outcome evaluation, they would have seen that things did work. As a former coach and having knowledge of the girls' from the beginning to end, I would say that every girl improved dramatically. Each and every girl ended the season understanding the concepts of offense and defense. As a team unit, the improvement was unbelievable. From my perspective, Jane accomplished many of her initial goals.

The accomplishments in the boys' skills and team play were much different. The boys were able to randomly execute the same inbounds play Dick's varsity team used. Furthermore, each and every boy could set a pick. They were consistent in their layup and passing skills. Even though the boys probably spent more time messing around than seriously doing drills, it seemed to me that Dick had accomplished a number of his goals.

However, Dick and Jane were frustrated. Dick's response, in the final interview, about not understanding the children, reflects the confusion of both coaches. Even though winning was never stated as important, both coaches were amazed that losing did not seem to upset the children more.

> *But, I didn't know. I was kind of getting bored with practices and games. And the kids didn't seem to care. You know what I mean. Their attitudes, they didn't seem to care about winning. I shouldn't say winning, didn't care anymore. Because they were losing, so....*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 4/11/89)*

The lack of perceived seriousness on the part of the children had bothered Dick and Jane since their first interview. Both coaches could not believe that the children were so inattentive. Dick and Jane's perceptions that the children were not serious were influenced by their recollections of their behavior during their youth sport days. Not only that, but both coaches were varsity athletes. In most instances, the goal of high school sport programs is to win. The background of the coaches may have had an impact on their definition of serious. At the third grade level, all of Dick and Jane's children may have considered themselves serious athletes. The coaches' perceptions about the childrens' lack of seriousness and concern for winning also seemed to influence the coaches' behaviors.

Even though neither coach expressed a desire to win, observations of Phase 2 practice and game behaviors would suggest a win orientation. During the season, the coaches' behaviors were very inconsistent with this assertion. On one hand, the coaches organized the practices in Phase 2 around scoring. If I had only observed those practices and games, I may have concluded that the coaches were win oriented. However, if that were truly the case, why did Dick, Jane, and Jill play the children equally without concern for who played with whom?

Only once did the idea to put certain players together seem to cross the

mind of any of the coaches. The one time I observed someone attempt this was at the girls' fifth game. In the third quarter, Jill had an opportunity to manipulate who played with whom. The girls were only six points down. This was the closest they had ever been to another team in the third quarter. Half way through the third quarter, Jill discussed with me her plan to play the better girls together. In her interview, Jill explained why she considered changing her substitution policy.

> *I think I more or less needed to win. I think for the team, because I remembered that they were getting really down before the game. I didn't want them to get down, because I didn't want them to hate basketball. I wanted to feel better about my coaching. I wanted to win.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 3/15/89)*

Jill thought the girls' needed to win to enjoy the experience. Furthermore, she needed a win to feel good about her coaching. This adds support to the assertion that the win-loss record of the team was somehow tied to the coaches' egos. The coaches exhibited inconsistent behaviors concerning their emphasis on winning.

On the other hand, Jane admitted, in her first interview, that she surprised herself by not caring about the score.

> *What really surprised me. It's during the game. I didn't even look at the scoreboard but maybe once. I was surprised.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Without saying it, Jane inferred that she expected to care about the score. Jane continued by explaining what she was paying attention to instead of the scoreboard.

> *In the girls and what they were doing. And you know trying to get them to do what they should be doing. And thinking about what I could teach them.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 2/13/89)*

Winning was not foremost in the minds of these coaches. During the game, Jane was too busy trying to coach to think about the score. Dick had expressed the same type of thoughts during games. Jill would get so wrapped up in directing the girls in the games that I would have to remind her to make substitutions. And yet, observations of Phase 2 behaviors would suggest otherwise. As they were exposed to the social reality of coaching, their perceptions and behaviors seemed to change through exposure to the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome.

In their final interviews, all four of the coaches discussed what they would do differently. The consensus was that they would have implemented more disciplinary measures and would have emphasized basic basketball skills. The coaches seemed to believe that there was a dichotomy between fun and skill development.

Throughout the study, goofing off seemed to interfere with the childrens' attention to drills. From the coaches' standpoint, how did the childrens' inattention to drills effect the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome? First, the coaches continually treated the tension between fun and skill development as a dichotomy. They never seemed to work out a balance between the two factors. Second, the focus on offense diverted the coaches' attention away from the importance that skill development plays in the execution of the "pick" or the give/go. How can the children win without basketball skills?

Offense, scoring, is necessary to win. Furthermore, Dick and Jane believed the children would have more fun if they won. And yet, the coaches perceived that the children were having fun when they goofed off. This is best exemplified by Jane's explanation of how fun got in the way.

> *Maybe a little bit, actually a lot. Yea, because that was one of my main objectives. So, like in the last practice when Lisa was having fun, I let her. But then I also at the time, I thought winning was fun too! So, I thought I didn't know if they were having enough fun not winning. But, yea, I think it made a difference.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 4/15/89)*

Fun was one of her main objectives. But how do you allow goofing off and still win? If occasional goofing off in drills was more fun than winning, then Jane had to balance the tension between skill development and fun. That is exactly what she had done in the sixth practice.

Jack expressed the same point of view. He had already stated that teams and people will have more fun if they win. When asked if fun, skill development, and winning work together, he summed up the tension between the three.

> *Not all the time, maybe you have to sacrifice the having fun part and work hard at the fundamentals to get the win.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 4/19/89)*

All of the coaches seemed to believe that winning would be fun for the children. Additionally, they perceived that goofing off was fun for the children. Jack believed that they had to eliminate fun to work on drills. Furthermore, they would have a better chance to win if they focused on fundamentals. The first and second phases reflected the coaches' perceptions that they could not

balance fun, skill development, and outcome.

Before the outcome of the games was a factor, the coaches allowed goofing off and tried to focus on drills. As they began to play in games, the focus became scoring more points. Losing seemed to accentuate the focus on offense. Defense and the skills necessary to execute offense were trivialized. The coaches' personal evaluations of the effectiveness of the first two thirds of the season and a need to deal with the tension between skill development, fun, and outcome of games led to Phase 3.

Dick and Jane agreed that game situations created the perception that learning to run the offense was important for the children. Both coaches stated that they would go back to the basics, defense, and establishing more control, if they coached again.

However, I wonder. The tension between skill development, fun, and outcome of games is built into the sport context. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, the coaches' perceptions, meanings, and behaviors were influenced by the social reality of competition and many times Dick and Jane were unaware of the discrepancies between their beliefs and their behaviors. The following are examples of the influence that the constraints within the sport contest exerted on the coaches. Dick did not realize he was yelling, "shoot" to the boys at half court. Dick felt defense was one of the most important aspects of the game, but it slipped his mind. Jane could not figure out what to use as disciplinary measures. Jill, who always played the girls equally without concern for game status, played the better girls longer and together in a "close" game. Jack discussed how competition influenced his perceptions and behaviors

while in the situation. This is evidenced by his telling what he would do differently.

> *I guess I wouldn't . Just at the time, it was great. Let's have them play. It worked the first time. So, we thought it was great, you know....A couple of years ago I wondered why did the dads (coaches) have these kids run plays at this age? And then, when I got there myself, it was like...let's put a play in.*
> *(Transcription of taped interview 4/19/89)*

While looking from the outside in, Jack thought teaching plays was a bit much. Yet, Dick and Jack focused on the "pick," even though they truly knew the concepts and execution were too difficult. Jack alluded to the fact that while in the situation it seemed correct, he never considered doing it before he coached and would not do it again.

All of the coaches stated they would do things differently. Yet, they never imagined themselves doing what they did. The third phase seemed to evolve out of the coaches ability or inability to cope with the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome and their perception that "nothing was working."

Dick made the choice to wait the season out. Let the boys have fun and keep them busy. Each practice and game was one step closer to the end. Jane made the choice to teach the girls the basics and deal with the tension. She was excited that she was going to coach in the sixth game. However, on the morning of the sixth game there was a major ice storm. All of the games were cancelled and the season was over.

Conclusions

Dick and Jane, like most youth sport coaches, entered into the social reality of coaching without any formal training. They were eager to make the experience fun and beneficial for the children. Both coaches had years of competitive basketball experience. Dick and Jane were not strangers to how coaches do what they do. After all, they had been coached for years. So, why did they have such a difficult time engaging in the task of "coaching?"

Their perceptions about how and what they were going to do were based on experiences as athletes. Obviously, the social reality of coaching was different from the perspective of a coach than an athlete. Furthermore, the individual reality the coaches experienced was influenced by the interactions within their separate team units. Thus, Jane's individual reality was not Dick's "reality."

The social construction of reality is a dynamic process which changes to adapt to social interactions that seem problematic to one's everyday reality (Berger & Luckman, 1967). In other words, Dick and Jane could ignore the tension between skill development and fun as long as game outcome was not a factor. In Phase 2, Dick and Jane's "realities" were reconstructed to adapt to the outcome orientation of the competitive sport context. Finally, in Phase 3, due to the incongruence between the social reality of coaching and their initial perceptions, the coaches renegotiated their own "realities" to deal with the tensions between fun, skill development, and outcome. At the macro level, there were realities within the social reality of coaching.

At the micro level, the "reality" of each coach was dependent on the

social interactions within their specific situation. Each coach was continually negotiating his or her meanings and perceptions throughout the season (Blumer, 1969). The differences in realities between coaches can be explained by Mead's (1927) assertion that the perception's of the participant are influenced by the person's specific social interactions. Similarities in perceptions and meanings that existed within phases were more than likely created by the coaches adapting to the social reality of the coaching task.

Evidence of the coaches constantly negotiating and renegotiating their meanings, perceptions, and behaviors to adapt to constraints within the sport context parallel the research on beginning teachers. McDonald (1982) conducted case studies of beginning teachers and found that the teachers went through four stages based on their negotiation of their role as a teacher. These teachers, like Dick and Jane, were constructing and reconstructing their meanings and perceptions to deal with the constraints within the social reality of teaching.

The hidden constraints which Dick and Jane encountered were the tensions between fun, skill development, and outcome. These factors had a major impact on Dick and Jane's constant negotiation and renegotiation of their meanings, perceptions, and behaviors. The tension between those factors is the essence of youth sport programs.

These programs downplay the competitive aspect by making rules for equal playing time. Coaches are asked to stress skills, fun, and the social aspects of participation. On one hand, programs downplay the outcome orientation of the games. On the other hand, they publicly keep a running tally

of who is winning and who is losing. The tension between fun, skill development, and outcome seem to be built into the socially understood philosophy of youth sport programs. From the perspective of a former athlete, parent, or a sport enthusiast, coaching youth sport may look and sound easy.

The evidence presented in this thesis suggests otherwise. Dick and Jane perceived they had the knowledge and ability to coach third and fourth grade children. How hard could it be to teach them skills and make sure they were having fun? The outcome of games was secondary to the process of participation in game situations. Both coaches perceived that assessing when goofing off interfered with skill development and an overemphasis on scoring hindered them in accomplishing their initial goals. I would argue that the coaches accomplished many of their initial goals, however, their win-loss record overshadowed these accomplishments.

From my observations, all of the children learned some basketball skills, concepts, and rules. If goofing off is having fun, as the coaches believed, the children had a great time. Why did Dick and Jane have the perception that "nothing was working"? I would argue that they perceived that society defines a "good coach" as one who wins. This assertion is supported by the body of literature which studies the practice or game behaviors of coaches. Most times, comparisons are made between winning and losing coaches in an effort to determine "what works" (Claxton, 1988; Hendry, 1969; Markland & Martinek, 1988).

Dick and Jane believed that "good coaches" were able to control their athletes' behaviors. However, because the children's having fun was one of

their goals, they could not determine how, when, or if they should use disciplinary measures. This dilemma seemed to hinder skill development. In turn, the lack of skills may have influenced the outcome of games. In Phase 1, Dick and Jane seemed to treat the tension between fun and skill development as a dichotomy.

After experiencing the social reality of game outcome, both coaches focused on offense. With the addition of outcome, the coaches made the decision to treat the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome as if it could not be balanced to make the experience more enjoyable and beneficial for all. In the final phase, Dick decided to eliminate the tensions by focusing solely on fun without concern for further skill development or more points. Jane, on the other hand, decided to return to the basics and deal with the social reality of coaching.

Dick and Jane constructed similar realities in Phase 1 and 2. However, in Phase 3, their interpretations of the incongruence between their initial perceptions and "the Reality" of coaching were very different. Dick, more or less, was waiting for the season to end. Jane was eager to coach in the sixth game. Why such a drastic difference in Phase 3?

Possibly, their reasons for volunteering created differences in how they handled the discrepancies between their realities of coaching and the social reality of the sport context. Jane was considering coaching as a career, while Dick was making good on a promise to his younger brother. Also, Jane exerted more discipline in the beginning, eliminating the uncontrollable behaviors that Dick continued to face.

Another possible explanation could be a difference in how Dick and Jane were coached. However, from all indications, both athletes had coaches who focused on technique. One final issue that I have not addressed, which might account for differences in meanings, perceptions, and behaviors, is gender. However, I do not believe that there is enough information within my data to make any assertions concerning the impact of gender on differences in coaching between Dick and Jane. Consequently, I suggest that Dick and Jane's perceptions were influenced by the social interactions within their particular reference groups.

Dick and Jane's interpretation of goofing off as having fun, was probably based on their expectations as athletes. As a person moves up the competitive ladder, dedication, hard work, and giving 100% effort are highly valued. Not paying attention, talking, or goofing off are seen as detrimental to the "team." However, as a former coach, I know that it is difficult to maintain the athletes' attention throughout the season without a few bouts of goofing off. Drills may be fun for a while, but the hours of repetition lead athletes to making their own fun.

Consequently, Dick and Jane's treatment of fun and skill development as dichotomous may have been influenced by their interpretation of fun as athletes or possibly the age difference between the children and the coaches. It is possible that the children may have been having fun while doing drills and observing demonstrations. While I believe that within the sport context there can be fun without disruption to the agenda of the coach and team, I depicted fun and skill development as a dichotomy to accurately describe the experiences of the coaches.

The purpose of the study was to understand how coaches experience the task of coaching. With these results, I hoped to bridge gaps that might exist between theory, the social social reality of coaching, and the coaches' individual "realities." I believe that the evidence presented answers my original thesis questions and supports the overarching theme that three phases evolved from the coaches renegotiating their realities to deal with the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome. Furthermore, I believe that the results have implications for coaches, youth sport program administrators, and researchers designing coaching education programs.

Implications

The philosophy of this youth program, like many others, was focused on the children having fun and developing skills through participation in practice and game situations. Measures were taken to equalize the skill level of the teams. Additionally, guidelines were established to insure equal playing time and equal practice time. Coaches were presented with these guidelines and the "Athletes Bill of Rights" (Appendix D). The message seemed clear. The structured games were just one mode used to develop the childrens' skills and enjoyment of basketball. Games were to be viewed as part of the youth sport process. The actual outcome/score was to be incidental to the participation and learning experiences of the children.

In their first interviews, Dick and Jane professed the same philosophy. Prior to experiencing coaching in scheduled games, Dick and Jane's practice behaviors seemed to indicate that the outcome of the upcoming games would be incidental to the childrens' efforts at learning to play basketball. After my first

observations and interviews, I expected that both coaches would continue to focus on the childrens' fun and skill development.

However, as the results and discussion section demonstrated, each coach experienced three distinct, but not separate, phases of practice behaviors. These phases emerged as the coaches attempted to cope with the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome. During Phase 2, the coaches' overt behaviors suggested that they were win oriented. I believe this change in perceptions and behaviors from Phase 1 resulted from the tension embedded in the structure of the program. The explicit philosophy and structure of the basketball program in the town of Progress seems typical of most youth sport programs.

The explicit philosophy of both the program and the coaches was to ensure that the children enjoyed participating in games and practices while learning basic skills. In the practices before scheduled games, Dick and Jane acknowledged a tension between the childrens' "goofing off" behaviors and skill development. Both coaches realized their children were not ready to be athletes, so they labeled "goofing off" as the fun aspect of participation. Jane and Jill actually laughed when considering the sight of their girls playing in a game. The coaches seemed to understand the limitations of their children. After all, they viewed games as a forum that allowed the children to participate and practice their skills as a team. The outcome/score was incidental to the childrens' enjoyment of playing on a team and developing basketball skills.

In this youth sport program, like many others, there is a contradiction between the explicit philosophy of the program and actual program practices. I

believe that it is very difficult for parents, and administrators to downplay outcome/score when the score is displayed as an indication of who is winning and who is losing. Very rarely did Dick or Jane look to the scorers' table. However, their children continually peeked at the score, the parents reacted to each basket, and the administrators allowed coaches to look over the score sheets for individual statistics. It is little wonder that Dick and Jane became focused on offense. Once they evaluated the game coaching experience, Dick and Jane perceived that scoring was important within the social reality of competition. Before Dick and Jane were exposed to the reaction of fans, the children, peers, and the practices of administrators regarding game situations, outcome/score was not important. After the first game, Dick and Jane's behaviors and definitions changed based on their perceptions of acceptable behavior within the social reality of competition constructed through interactions with fans, parents, and administrators.

Youth sport programs are not entities within themselves. These programs exist within a society that stresses competition, upward mobility, and being number one. It is little wonder that score becomes important. Adult games are used societally to determine who is the better person or team based on final outcome. Even though this concept is incongruent with youth sport, competitive league schedules for games are incorporated within the structure of the program. The evidence presented suggests that once the coaches experienced a game situation they changed their behaviors to coincide with the pressures of competition inherent in the adult world and passed along to this youth sport program.

Throughout the study Dick and Jane verbalized the importance they placed on the childrens' fun and skill development. Dick and Jane assessed that they had deviated from what they wanted to accomplish by focusing on outcome. They based this change of their perceptions on the experiences of coaching in scheduled games.

I would suggest that youth sport programs need to evaluate the role that structure plays in the stereotypical win at all costs behavior of the coaches. Perhaps it is counterproductive to structure formal teams for competition when the stated goals of youth sport programs call for the children to enjoy participating in these programs.

Many times between scheduled games, I witnessed boys and girls from different teams playing basketball without keeping track of the score. These children introduced themselves and began playing basketball. The games were noisy, unconstrained by adult rules, and continually adapted to accommodate those who wanted to participate. The children were dribbling, shooting, passing, and defending. Additionally, the games were full of action and included everyone who wanted to enjoy the childrens' informal game of basketball. The children were practicing their skills and having fun without a competitive game structure.

The tension between fun, skill development, and outcome could be reduced through a restructuring of youth sport programs. In determining how to restructure, administrators might begin by asking the children what they enjoyed and learned during the program. Administrators might take that one step further and ask the children what they did not like about the program.

Other possible ways to reduce the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome, would be to structure the programs so that terms such as league, season, and competition were not attached to the childrens' version of basketball. These terms suggest that the emphasis of the program is on outcome versus process and that the children are miniature adult athletes. Some of the measures that might be taken to eliminate reliance on such terms would be to have play days instead of game days. On Saturdays the children would be given a specific time to participate in a semi-organized game. The children would play with different children each week. This would increase the socializing portion of the program. Also, it would be very difficult to use terms such as schedule, competitive game, and season without a structure.

In this program the teams were not evenly matched, so when the score of the games was displayed, it was obvious which team was better. If program administrators believe that organized teams are a necessity, they should reorganize the teams periodically to maintain equity. To minimize the ultimate winner aspect of competitive games, the score could be started over each quarter, then each team would have four chances at a win.

The philosophy of this program, like many others, is to ensure that the children have fun and develop skills through participation. As demonstrated earlier, the children seemed to enjoy their informal games between and after scheduled games. Those children did not keep score and they still focused on utilizing the skills developed in the program. More importantly the children were having fun without concern about score, mistakes, or adult rules and regulations. The game was adapted and modified for children by children.

Unlike the present structure of most youth sport programs, where the games are designed by adults.

Adults involved in these programs need to structure programs so that the fun, skill development, and participation aspects of the games are modified to accommodate the emotional and physical levels of the children. Their cheers should be directed at attempted rebounds, youthful attempts at dribbling, and childlike imitations of adult teamwork. The structure should be modified to eliminate the social reality of competition that creates the overt win oriented behavior of coaches.

The evidence presented in this theses suggests the need for youth sport programs to evaluate the influence that contextual factors may have on the behaviors of coaches. Even though Dick and Jane were untrained coaches, the results may also have something to offer to the developers of coaching education programs. Dick and Jane were first year coaches. Dick and Jane perceived a tension between fun and skill development. One might presume that attending a coaching education program would help first year coaches identify when and how to manage practices. Such knowledge would help to alleviate the tension between fun and skill development.

However, as evidenced by the results, the tension between fun and skill development is embedded in the structure of the program. Many coaching education programs educate coaches in management, skill development, and participation practices, but may not address the relationship between these coaching tasks and the social reality created through interaction with parents, administrators, the athletes, and the program structure.

I would suggest that the next step in this line of research is to study two first year trained coaches to determine how they experience the tension between fun, skill development, and outcome. How do their experiences differ from Dick and Jane's? Does coaching education prepare youth sport coaches for the philosophical dilemmas that they are bound to face in a structure embedded in adult style competition?

The developers of coaching education programs should consider using a research methodology such as field research, to better understand the influence of structure on the perceptions of coaches, administrators, children, and other people associated with youth sport. Coaching education programs evolved from the perceptions that untrained volunteer coaches were more interested in winning than in the children. These perceptions were based on repeated observations of the overt behavior of untrained volunteer coaches, like Dick and Jane. The results of this study strongly suggest that the stereotypical win oriented behavior of such coaches may result from the structure of youth sport programs.

Youth sport coaches may not necessarily be win-oriented individuals. Many, like Dick and Jane, may have the best interests of the children they coach in mind. However, they are trying to down-play competition within a competitive league structure.

Consequently, the structure of youth sport programs must be examined and restructured to best meet the needs of the children. In order to do this, research should be conducted that focuses on the relationship between the perceptions of the participants (coaches, children, parents, and administrators)

and the structure of youth sport programs.

This study focused on the perceptions of 2 volunteer untrained coaches. In order to better understand additional perspectives, future research should focus on coaches who have participated in coaching education programs, the children who participate, their parents, and program administrators.

Coaching education programs may play a vital role in helping program administrators restructure youth sport to better meet the needs of children. Therefore it is critical that future research and recommendations include such programs as we seek to improve youth sport experiences for all children.

APPENDIX A

Letter to Coach

Dear Coach:

I would like to ask you to help me in a project I am conducting to understand how volunteer coaches experience the task of coaching. Why you, a volunteer coach?

I believe that you are the key to children having a rewarding, fun, and stimulating experience in youth sport. You give of your emotions, experiences, and time. You are very essential to youth sport and yet we know very little about you and how you see your task. More time and effort has been put into researching the more prestigious areas of high school and college coaches, but even these studies have been done from only one perspective, that of the researcher. We have not attempted to find out what it is like to be a youth sport coach. All in all, I feel that it is time we came to you, the coach, and ask how you feel, think, and experience coaching. If we can understand how you experience the joys, dilemmas, and specific situations of coaching, we may begin to develop coaching education programs that come from the proper perspective, yours. Coaching education programs should be based on the perspective of the participant, not the observer.

If you agree to participate, I would like to observe you at as many practices as possible during the course of the season. During this observation process, I would like to be as close to the action as possible without disrupting your regime. I would like to be able to talk to you after these observations to get your perspective of the observed practice or game. I would also like to formally talk with you about your experiences at the beginning, the middle and the end of the season. These interviews could last up to ninety minutes. I would like to

use a tape recorder during the interviews, but this decision would be up to you. I realize that I am asking you to volunteer several more hours of your precious time for the interviews and the discussions. I assure you that your effort will not only be appreciated by me but hopefully the coaches of tomorrow.

Because I feel that the perspective of the coach is needed in developing effective coaching education programs, this project is being conducted in an effort to add to the coaching literature used as a basis for these programs. This project is being conducted in partial fulfillment of my masters degree program at Michigan State University. If you decide to participate, you will have the right to drop out of the study at any time.

To assure you confidentiality, I will use a code name to designate you in all of my recordings and observational notes. I will also be the only person working with the original data collected, so that I will be the only person aware of your identity and the league identity. I will do everything possible in the publication of the findings to disguise any physical or personal attributes and demographics which could identify you.

I admire the efforts of people like you who care so much about our children. I realize that I am asking quite a bit of your time, emotions, and thought processes. I feel it is time that volunteer coaches had the opportunity to let parents, researchers, and athletes know what it feels like to coach from the front seat, not the back seat. If you have any questions, feel free to call me at 353-6925.

Linda D. Lyman
M.A. Student

Dr. Annelies Knoppers
Associate Professor

APPENDIX B

Coach's Consent Form

1. I have been informed of the reasons behind the study. I understand the focus is how I perceive and experience my task as a first year coach.
2. I understand that Linda Lyman will observe most of my practices and games.
3. I understand that she and I may have informal discussions after some of the practices and games. Such discussions will be at my convenience and with my permission.
4. I understand I will be formally interviewed three times during the season. I also understand these interviews could last up to ninety minutes and they will be at my convenience.
5. I understand that if I agree, the interviews may be tape recorded and that the tapes will be destroyed within seven days after the transcriptions.
6. I understand that I have the right to refuse to participate at any time during the course of the project.
7. I understand that a fictitious name will be used in the recording of data from interviews and observations.
8. I understand that the information gained from this project will be reported in a manner which will make it impossible for anyone to ascertain my identity through links with the league, personal attributes or actions.
9. I understand that I have the right any time during the study to clarify issues about the project which concern my participation.
10. I understand that at the end of the project I have the right to any information gained from this project that will help me in my future coaching.

I have read and understand the above statements. I have decided to participate

in the project with the understanding that I am free to withdraw my consent without prejudice at any time.

Coach's Signature

Parent's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Letter to Parent

Dear Parent:

My name is Linda Lyman. I am conducting a study on how first year coaches coach and have obtained permission from your child's coach MR/MS Blank to observe him or her during the season. I will be conducting the project in partial fulfillment of my masters degree at Michigan State University. I am interested in understanding how a coach handles his or her first year of coaching.

In order to understand the coach's perceptions of the coaching experience, I must observe him or her throughout the season. The task of coaching requires that the coach organize, teach and guide the children through each practice and game. So, although the children are not the focus of the project, the coach's behaviors will be influenced by the children. Consequently, I cannot truly understand how the coach experiences his or her first year of coaching without observing the whole physical and social structure of each practice and game. Therefore, I need your permission to use any data collected in my research during observations which may involve your child. I assure you that your child's identity will be kept confidential. I cannot see any reason to use the names of the children. In any event, each child will be given a fictitious name. Nowhere in the fieldnotes or written report will names or distinguishing characteristics of the coach or children be used. You or your child are free to decline to participate in this project at any time without penalty.

I hope you will allow your child to participate in this project. I am conducting this study in hopes of learning about the coaching experience so that we can develop more effective coaching education programs. If you decide

not to give consent, I will not use your child or his or her behaviors in my research. The possibility may exist at a later date that I may find I need to talk to some of the children to get a better understanding of the situation. If this becomes the case, I would first contact you to receive permission for this purpose. If you have any questions about this project, feel free to contact me at 353-6925.

Please sign the attached consent form and send it with your child to the first practice.

Sincerely,

Linda D. Lyman
M.A. Student

Dr. Annelies Knoppers
Associate Professor

APPENDIX D

Parent Consent Form

The purpose of the study has been explained to me. I understand that the main focus of the study is my child's coach, Mr/Mrs _____, but that the data collected during normal practice and game routines may involve my child.

By giving my permission for any data collected specifically involving my child to be used, I understand the following:

1. I consent to having my child's interactions which may be pertinent to the study to be recorded and used for Ms. Lyman's thesis.
2. All data collected for this study will be confidential, and the only person who will be aware of my child's identity in the fieldnotes and written reports will be Ms. Lyman.
3. I have the right to withdraw my permission for the use of data which specifically involves my child at any time.

Please sign and return to the first practice.

I agree to allow the data collected involving my child to be used in Linda Lyman's research project concerning the experiences of first year coaches.

Child's Name

Signature of parent or guardian

Date

APPENDIX E

Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

I Right to participate in sports

II Right to participate at a level commensurate with each child's maturity and ability

III Right to have qualified adult leadership

IV Right to play as a child and not as an adult

V Right of children to share in the leadership and decision-making of their sport participation

VI Right to participate in safe and healthy environments

VII Right to proper preparation for participation in sports

VIII Right to an equal opportunity to strive for success

IX Right to be treated with dignity

X Right to have fun in sports ©

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APPENDIX F

UCRIHS Approval

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH INVOLVING
HUMAN SUBJECTS (UCRIHS)
206 BERKEY HALL
(517) 353-9738

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1111

December 27, 1988

IRB# 88-544

Linda D. Lyman
E139 Owen Hall
Campus

Dear Ms. Lyman:

Subject: "THE EXPERIENCES OF A FIRST YEAR VOLUNTEER YOUTH SPORT COACH IRB# 88-544"

The above project is exempt from full UCRIHS review. The proposed research protocol has been reviewed by another committee member. The rights and welfare of human subjects appear to be protected and you have approval to conduct the research.

You are reminded that UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year. If you plan to continue this project beyond one year, please make provisions for obtaining appropriate UCRIHS approval one month prior to December 27, 1989.

Any changes in procedures involving human subjects must be reviewed by UCRIHS prior to initiation of the change. UCRIHS must also be notified promptly of any problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects during the course of the work.

Thank you for bringing this project to my attention. If I can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

John K. Hudzik, Ph.D.
Chair, UCRIHS

JKH/sar

cc: A. Knoppers

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