THE STRESSORS EXPERIENCED AND COPING STRATEGIES
USED BY THE PARENTS OF YOUTH SWIMMERS

By

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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

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The sight of a parent at a youth sporting event taking the game much too seriously is becoming all too familiar. However, despite the fact some parents may not be engaging in the most positive behaviors or those that are the most beneficial, the behavior originates from a place of wanting the best for their child. Despite a wealth of research looking at how parents influence children in sport, relatively little has looked at outcomes for parents. The current study examines the stressors experienced and coping strategies used by parents with children in swimming. Interviews were conducted with 10 couples (20 parents overall) about the benefits and challenges of being a sport parent, and then what strategies they use to cope with those challenges. Numerous benefits (e.g., development of their child and friendships with other parents), stressors (e.g., logistics of getting to practice, time demands, and competitive outcomes), and coping strategies (e.g., prioritization of resources, communication with others, and planning) were mentioned during parent interviews. All parents experienced multiple stressors and used multiple coping strategies at any one time, additionally, one coping strategy could be used for several stressors (e.g., use of prioritization to cope with time and logistical demands). Importantly, while there were common stressors and coping strategies, how these were experienced was often different for each parent, making it difficult to associate coping strategies with specific stressors. Additionally, what was a stressor for one parent may have been a coping strategy for another, (e.g., other parents were a source of support for some parents and a source of stress for others). Recommendations for parents, coaches, and clubs with regard to improving the parent experience in swimming are forwarded.

ABSTRACT

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Parents are major agents in the youth sport experience, and yet we understand little regarding the sport parenting experience, particularly the benefits and stressors experienced, and the coping strategies used by sports parents. The purposes of this study were threefold: (1) determine the benefits and stressors experienced by youth sport parents; (2) determine the coping strategies used by swimming parents; and (3) conduct sport parent stress research that included both parents to better understand individual and family functioning. The purposes of the study were addressed by interviewing 10 parent-dyads regarding their experiences in youth sport. Nomothetic and case study analyses revealed that parents experienced a number of benefits (e.g., parent friendships or child life-skill development) and stressors (e.g., planning and logistics stressors), and engaged in numerous coping strategies (e.g., communication) due to swimming involvement. Parents perceived multiple stressors at any one time and engaged in multiple coping strategies to cope with the stressors experienced. Links between specific stressors, and coping strategies were difficult to draw because of the complex and idiosyncratic nature of the stress and coping appraisal process. Case study analyses further explained the idiosyncratic nature of the stress and coping relationship by demonstrating that parent-dyads experienced similar stressors in different ways due to family demographics and specific family narratives. Additionally, parent-dyads worked together to divide stressors between the two parents (e.g., one parent would be the taxi driver for practice while the other made dinner) as a way of reducing stress and increasing coping strategy efficiency. Overall parent coping appeared to be successful and adaptive with regard to the stressors faced

This dissertation is dedicated to the clubs, coaches, and parents that were involved in the study, and in a broader way to all youth sport parents. I was incredibly fortunate to meet coaches and parents that were as passionate about swimming and the role of parents in youth sport as I am. You reaffirmed my belief in the importance of studying youth sport and parents. I hope the results of this dissertation serve as some validation of your commitment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Case for Youth Sport as a Developmental Context

Organized sport is one of the most popular youth activities in North America, with estimates of 30-47 million youth participating each year (Brenner, 2007; Ewing & Seefeldt, 2002). Recent estimates from ESPN suggest approximately 29 million youth between the ages of six and 17 participate each year in the United States (Kelley & Carchia, 2013). While children participate in sport for a variety of reasons, such as to have fun or be part of a team (Seefeldt, Ewing, & Walk, 1992), developmentally focused research suggests that sport can be important in the development of behavioral, inter- and intra-personal, and cognitive and motor skills and competencies (Carson, 2009; Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004; Haywood & Getchell, 2014; Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006). In comparison to other developmental contexts, Larson et al. suggest youth sport is good at providing opportunities to develop teamwork and social skills, initiative, and emotional regulation.

It would be inappropriate to assume that sport is always a positive developmental experience. Indeed, Coakley (2011) would warn against the assumption that participation is a proxy for actual development, and is critical of 'sport evangelists' who believe sport is good without critical debate or research. It is important to recognize that sport is not the only developmental context for youth, with Larson et al. (2006) demonstrating positive outcomes for youth in other contexts such as performing arts (e.g., music), academic clubs (e.g., student government), community organizations (e.g., scouts), service based groups (e.g., volunteering) and faith based groups. Additionally, Larson et al. demonstrated that sport may not be the best context for the development of positive relationships, particularly with the opposite gender (due to a gender

split that exists in many sport), and found that sport is more likely to generate stress than other contexts. Finally, as summarized by Gould & Carson (2008), in order for sport to be effective as a youth development context, life skills it must be deliberately taught. There is no 'car-wash' effect whereby simple immersion in the youth sport experience will consistently result in positive youth development, or similar development between individuals (Coakley, 2011; Gould & Carson, 2008).

One of the contributing factors to differences between a more effective versus less effective developmental climate in youth sports are the actions and beliefs of significant others: coaches, parents, administrators, and peers (Coakley, 2011). These significant others can have a positive or negative influence on developmental outcomes (e.g., Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010a; 2010b; Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007). For example, the Mastery Approach to Coaching intervention was shown to be effective with coaches as social agents to help them provide a mastery-involving motivational climate, which subsequently reduced youth athlete trait anxiety across an athletic season (Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007).

The Case for Studying Sport Parents

There are a number of reasons why the current study will focus on parents as opposed to other social agents. The primary reason being that there is a need to go beyond coaches as the primary social agent influencing the youth sport experience. There are a number of intervention studies aimed at coaches and the environment they create, e.g., the Mastery Approach to Coaching and the Promoting Adolescent Physical Activity Project (Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007; Project PAPA, http://www.projectpapa.org/). The coach and the climate they create are important, however they are only one piece of the puzzle, especially when considering the smaller percentage of time athletes spend in practice with their coaches compared to with their parents. Despite a

recent increase in the number of studies examining sport parents there has not been a reciprocal increase in the number of interventions or parent education programs, which is reflective of the current state of understanding of sport parents (Gould, Cowburn, & Pierce, *in preparation*). Thus, research directed at lesser understood areas of parent involvement in youth sport is necessary so interventions and education aimed at parents to improve and enhance the youth sport experience and talent development can be developed. The remainder of this section will detail what is known about parents in youth sport and where additional study is required.

There has been a recent proliferation of research dedicated to the influence of parents on their children in youth sport, again emphasizing the importance of parents as an important social agent in youth sport (Gould et al. *in preparation*). The behaviors, actions, and styles required of parents to successfully foster the development a child within sport have been examined. Through research on both perceived and actual sport parent behaviors, it is known that children want the help and support of their parents, that parents need to remain positive, provide logistical and emotional support, avoid acting outside of their roles (e.g., coaching from the sidelines), and be positive in their comments and interactions with the children the majority of the time (Gould Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi 2006; 2008; Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, & Wall, 2008; Kidman, McKenzie, & McKenzie, 1999; Knight, Boden, & Holt, 2010; Knight, Neeley, & Holt, 2011). Additionally, parents that use more autonomy supportive parenting styles are better able to communicate with their children, read the mood of their children, and provide a supportive structure that allows for their children to take some control in the decision making process (Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, & Fox, 2009). Overall, Fredericks and Eccles (2004) ascribed three key roles for parents when supporting their child in youth sport: namely as role models, as providers of the sport experience, and as interpreters of the sport experience.

While research suggests that nearly two thirds of parents are viewed as having a positive influence on their child's behavior and demonstrating appropriate behaviors (Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2006; 2008), parents have come under greater focus in recent times due to a number of high profile incidents of poor parent behavior. In February, 2014, for example, a fight broke out between parents and coaches at a youth hockey game in North Dakota after parents entered an opposing team dressing room ("Winnipeg parents toss punches," 2014), and in May, 2013 John Tomic (father to ATP tennis player Bernard Tomic) assaulted one of his son's practice partners, resulting in a suspended prison sentence and a 12-month ban from the ATP tour (Schlink, 2013). Of course, it is not always violent behavior from sport parents that is noticed, with overbearing actions, emotional blackmail, and bullying toward children also highlighted in the recent HBO show Trophy Kids (Berg, 2013).

The extreme examples of parent behavior perhaps indicate that we need to look more closely at how having a child in youth sport can influence parents, and despite the recent increase in research related to parents relatively fewer studies have examined the outcomes for parents. This is particularly concerning considering a parent is someone concerned with the development of a young child in all areas, (e.g., nourishment, protection, and guidance), and parenting is a process that consists of a series of actions and interactions with the goal of developing the child (Brooks, 2010). The important phrase here is *'reciprocal process between parent and child'* that also allows for the parent to also be influenced by being a parent. Parenting is influenced by three core components: (1) parents, their developmental background and subsequent personality and psychological well-being; (2) children and their developmental background and subsequent personality and psychological well-being; and (3) contextual sources of stress and support (Belsky, 1984). A "sport parent" then, could be defined as a parent with a child in organized sport that is

concerned with the development of that child (and his/her self), where the context of sport is used for development.

Sport parent research has begun to look at the outcomes for parents, including: socialization outcomes, experiential outcomes, and stress outcomes. Initially, studies examined whether parenting in sport was indeed a reciprocal process, finding that parent experiences changed to their behaviors, cognitions, affect, and relationships due to youth sport involvement (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009; Weiss & Hayashi, 1995). Experientially, parents generally have positive experiences in youth sport (e.g., seeing their child develop physical and social skills), although some negatives, such as having to deal with the financial costs of youth sport, do exist (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). Finally, Harwood and colleagues, found that parents perceive a number of stressors with youth sport involvement in three broad categories: organizations, competitions, child development (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b).

The Case for Stress and Coping

The current study aims to extend the research examining parent outcomes, specifically stress and coping. Referring briefly back to the definition of parenting, the third core component of the process is contextual sources of stress and support. It is the contention of this paper that youth sport is one of those contextual sources of stress and support, and that parenting in youth sport has the propensity to be an inherently stressful experience. Stress outcomes are particularly worthy of further study because of their apparent influence on parent behaviors and actions. The extreme parent behaviors given in the previous examples (e.g., physical violence) suggest that some parents must be under incredible stress. Therefore potential exists for an understanding of stressors and coping strategies to be used as a way ameliorate or alter the sport parent experience and subsequently the experience of a child.

A small number of studies have examined youth sport parent stress in both high level tennis and soccer academies in the United Kingdom (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). The conclusion of these studies was that parents do experience a number of stressors due to youth sport involvement, and that these stressors can be organized into (1) developmental stressors relating to the development of their child both within and outside sport, e.g., child education; (2) organizational stressors associated with the sporting organizations within which their child is currently placed, e.g., time commitment, finances, organizational bodies; and (3) competitive stressors regarding competition and competitive performance, e.g., other parents, match outcomes (Harwood et al. 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b). The sport parent stressor studies conducted to date have been crucial in establishing sport parent stressors; however, there are some limitations. These include (1) the small number of studies; (2) the limited number of sports examined (tennis and soccer) in a limited number of contexts (e.g., elite academy soccer); and (3) the lack of inclusion of both parents across all levels of each sport assessed (Harwood et al. 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b).

While the contention of the current study is that youth sport involvement is inherently stressful, it is not to say that the parent experienced is unbearable or unpleasant. To that end, Wiersma & Fifer (2008) found that parents perceive many benefits to involvement, such as child enjoyment, child life-skill development, and getting to spend time with their child. Parents in the Wiersma and Fifer study also suggested that the ends (parent and child outcomes) probably justify the means (parent stress), but the means were not necessarily easy. If stress is a potential contributor to poor parent behavior then understanding how parents cope might help provide direction for parents to control stress and engage in more positive behaviors.

While sport parents have been found to experience stress, how they cope with that stress has not been examined. Coping has been defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p.141) "as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". Coping then represents cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage appraisals of external stressors and internal emotional responses to stressors, and encompasses actions used to change or avoid a situation or one's emotions (Hoar, Kowalski, Gaudreau, & Crocker, 2006; Lazarus, 2001). Unlike sport parent stress, there are no examples in the literature that have examined sport parent coping exclusively. This is perhaps logical as research on what causes stress in sport parents is in its infancy, but surprising nonetheless because of the potential for enhanced coping to reduce stress and improve both the sport parent and youth sport participant experiences. Therefore a need exists to study parent coping more directly.

The current gaps and limitations in research on sport parent stressors and coping are summarized below:

1. Lack of inclusion of both parents of a child: In both of the Harwood and Knight (2009a; 2009b) studies, only four parent-dyads or eight parents were identified as having completed surveys or were interviewed together. While more parent-dyads may have been involved, it was a not a direct aim of prior studies to examine the parent-dyad relationship with regard to stress. Not including both parents potentially limits the interpretation of stressors and subsequent coping within a family.

2. Limited number of sport contexts examined: Parental stress has been only been studied in two sports and limited sport contexts by Harwood and Colleagues (2009a; 2009b; 2010). More specifically, tennis and soccer have been examined, representing an

individual sport known for its high financial and travel requirements, and a team sport in that used a youth academy for talent development. Also, each of these studies is conducted inside the United Kingdom, which is known for a club sport system, which is known to be different from the school-based system within the United States.

3. Lack of study of parent coping: While some studies have examined parent stressors, none have directly addressed the coping strategies parents use to deal with stressors elicited through youth sport involvement. Outside of Knight and Holt (2013), parent coping is almost completely unstudied for the purposes of understanding the parent perspective and represents a large gap in the research.

Theoretical Frames for Studying Stress and Coping in the Parents of Youth Swimmers

Stress and coping have been widely researched and consequently have been defined in different ways, thus the theoretical frames for understanding the two must be discussed (Lazarus, 1999, Hanton, Fletcher, & Coughlan, 2005). The study will use the cognitive-motivational-relational theoretical model of stress, appraisal, and coping to understand parent stressors because of its prevalence in both mainstream psychology and sport and exercise psychology (Hanton et al, 2005; Lazarus, 1999). Additionally, two ways on conceptualizing coping attempts, namely the 12 families of coping (Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003) and the problem- and emotion-focused coping Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Lazarus, 1999; 2001) frameworks, will be used to categorize and understand parent coping. The operational definitions and theoretical perspectives of stress and coping will be discussed below.

McGrath (1970) defined stress as "a substantial imbalance between (environmental) demand and response capability under conditions where failure to meet the demand has important consequences" (p.20). Stress is the continual process of an individual cognitively evaluating both

the situation and personal resources to determine coping capabilities, composed of two appraisals (Lazarus, 1999). Primary appraisal is the individual's evaluation as to whether the environmental demand is relevant to his or her beliefs, values, goal commitments, and situational intentions (Lazarus, 1999). If an individual believes that a particular situation puts something at stake (i.e., goal commitments or situational intentions) or that core values are engaged in the situation (i.e., beliefs and values), then there is potential for stress (Lazarus, 1999). Secondary appraisal is a cognitive-evaluative process that is focused on what can be done about a stressful situation, or the coping options for a stressful individual-environment transaction (Lazarus, 1999; 2001). The comparison between primary appraisals and available personal resources (secondary appraisal) gives rise to certain emotions and coping responses.

Coping is defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p.141) "as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". Coping then represents cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage appraisals of external stressors and internal emotional responses to stressors, and encompasses actions used to change or avoid a situation or one's emotions (Hoar, Kowalski, Gaudreau, & Crocker, 2006; Lazarus, 2001). The 12 families of coping hierarchy is an empirically based taxonomy for identifying general categories of coping strategies, linking families of coping strategies (higher-order coping groups) to the coping function they serve, in other words, how they help individuals to adapt to a stressor (Skinner et al., 2003). As an example, information seeking is a family of coping where the adaptive process is to find additional contingencies for a particular stressor. The problem- and emotion-focused conceptualization of coping is a more simplistic, but similar approach to coping. It suggests that if individuals engage in problem-focused coping, they look to directly manage a stressful situation so as to remove or alter it to no longer be stress, and

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this is successful when the situation can be managed (e.g., a student who has time keeping issues using an electronic calendar function). Emotion-focused coping on the other hand is where an individual regulates their emotions in relation to stressful situation, and this is successful when the situation cannot be changed (e.g., seeking emotional support from a partner after being made redundant). Both

The Purposes of the Current Study

This introduction has demonstrated a need to further study sport parent stress sources and the coping strategies they employ to deal with stress. Based on the limitations of the sport parent stress studies (Harwood et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b) and the lack of sport parent coping research, this is the overall purpose of the present study. Specifically, this study has three purposes:

1. To determine the benefits and stressors experienced by parents with a child participating in club-based competitive youth swimming.

2. To determine the coping strategies used by the parents of youth swimmers to deal with the stressors elicited in the study;

3. To conduct sport parent research that includes both parents of a child.

It is expected, based on current literature (Harwood et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b), that parents will experience developmental, organizational stressors, and competitive stressors (originating from experiences at competitive meets). Additionally, to deal with those stressors parents will engage in a variety of coping strategies (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003), including those that directly address a stressor (problem-focused coping, e.g., co-ordination of efforts between parents) and those that help reappraise interpretations of a stressor (emotion-focused coping, e.g., emotional support from

spouse). Finally, it is expected that parent-dyads will co-ordinate as a way of reducing perceived stress and increase the efficiency of coping strategies used.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

An estimated 35-47 million children and adolescents are involved in youth sport in the United States of America (Brenner, 2007; Ewing & Seefeldt, 2002). While children participate in sport for a variety of reasons, such as to have fun or be part of a team (Seefeldt, Ewing, & Walk, 1992), developmentally focused research suggests that sport can be important in the development of behavioral, inter- and intra-personal, and cognitive and motor skills and competencies (Carson, 2009; Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004; Haywood & Getchell, 2014; Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006). Considering the numbers of youth involved in sport, and its potential for positive development of youth, it is important that those organizing, coaching, and assisting with youth sport work to maximize the positive and minimize the negative outcomes.

Many of the outcomes for young people are dependent on the significant others running organized youth sport, including coaches and parents (e.g., Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010a; 2010b; Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Smith, Smoll, & Cumming, 2007). While research suggests that nearly two thirds of parents are viewed as having a positive influence on their child's behavior and demonstrating appropriate behaviors (Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi, 2006; 2008), one third are perceived as having done something that interferes with the child's development. In particular, parents have come under greater focus in recent times due to a number of high profile incidents of poor parent behavior. In February 2014 a fight broke out between parents and coaches at a youth hockey game in North Dakota after parents entered an opposing team's dressing room ("Winnipeg parents toss punches," 2014), and in May 2013 John Tomic (father to ATP tennis player Bernard Tomic) assaulted one of his sons practice partners, resulting in a suspended prison

sentence and 12-month ban from the ATP tour (Schlink, 2013). Of course, it is not always violent behavior from sport parents that is noticed, with overbearing actions, emotional blackmail, and bullying toward children also highlighted in the recent HBO show Trophy Kids (Berg, 2013). It is fair to say that many of these parents would probably not have behaved this way without being under some considerable stress. Despite the apparent stress experience by youth sport parents and the importance of parent behaviors on youth development and enjoyment outcomes in sport, relatively less research has been conducted to look at the outcomes of youth sport involvement for parents (Gould, Cowburn, & Pierce, *in preparation*). The following review presents pertinent literature on definitions and roles of sports parents, discusses current research on youth sport parents, and identifies potential gaps in the research regarding sport parent stress and coping. The review will conclude by presenting a detailed rationale for the current study.

Parenting

Definitions

The definition of a parent or parenting, similar to that of "family", can be difficult to pinpoint, especially where the issues of biology, surrogacy, and legal guardianship are concerned. In broad terms, Brooks (2010) suggested a parent is someone concerned with the development of a young child in all areas, e.g., nourishment, protection, and guidance. Additionally, parenting is a process which consists of a series actions and interactions with the goal of developing the child (Brooks, 2010). Importantly, parenting is a reciprocal process between parent and child that also allows for cultural and sociological influences. Belsky (1984) broke the parenting process down into three main influences:

1. The parent: the developmental history of the parent shapes his/her personality and psychological well-being, which in turn can influence parental functioning.

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2. The child: similar to the parent above, the developmental history of the child, his/her temperament, and personality have an influence on the parent and subsequent parenting.

3. Contextual sources of stress and support: this influence on the parenting process provides the ecological perspective for the process, and includes sources of stress and support that affect the parenting process.

A "sport parent" then, could be defined as any parent with a child that is involved in the context of organized sport. More specifically, a sport parent is an adult who is concerned with the reciprocal process of development of a child(ren) and his/her self, where the context of sport is used for that development. Providing a similar model to Belsky (1984), Horn and Horn (2007) suggested a process of sport parenting that also contains the parent, the child, and the context. The proposed four stage process includes:

- Parent values and beliefs: What beliefs the parents have regarding physical activity and sport, such as what value they hold for sport based on their own experiences. These values and beliefs are influenced by the unique backgrounds of the parents and their child or children. For example, parents may have beliefs regarding ethics and gender stereotypes in sport, and perceptions regarding their child's sport competence. A parent that was a successful high school athlete is likely to value sport generally and their sport(s) in particular, and may have beliefs regarding its potential for life-skill development. Conversely, a non-sporting parent may value other development contexts, such as the performing arts, as more beneficial.

- Parent behaviors and actions: The direct behaviors parents undertake with regard to sport, such as their own participation (e.g., being physically active) or their support for their child's participation (e.g., parent emotional or logistical support), including

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parenting styles. Parent actions, such as providing logistical support for getting to and from practice, are influenced by their beliefs and values. If a parent values sport they are more likely to provide logistical support than if they perceive little or no value.

- Child beliefs and values: The beliefs and values that children develop with regard to sport and physical activity, including performance expectations, confidence, and gender-role stereotypes. These beliefs and values are influenced by parent beliefs and values (i.e., if a parent perceives sport to be of value, it is likely their child will also), and operated through parent behaviors both directly and indirectly. As an example, if a parent has certain beliefs regarding gender stereotypes in sport (e.g., girls not participating in contact sports) it is likely that their child will also develop similar beliefs. This is due to direct parent behaviors like not enrolling a daughter in a soccer program, and indirect parent behaviors like comments regarding women's soccer on the television.

- Child behaviors and performance: Based on the interactions with and observations of parents, a child will make decisions regarding involvement in physical activity and sport, display differing levels of achievement motivation, and vary on affective reactions to involvement. Again, high value for sport and/or physical activity by the child will result in decisions regarding participation, persistence, and effort in sport and/or physical activity.

Thus the process of sport parenting is defined in the same ways as general parenting, where youth sport is the context specific source of stress, support, and information which forms the third part of the Belsky (1984) definition of parenting. . Both definitions involve a reciprocal, influential, relationship between parent and child beliefs, values, and behaviors (based on life experience,

etc.), but for sport parenting you have a specific focus on beliefs, values, and behaviors as they relate specifically to sport, e.g., a parent belief that sport serves as an ideal value for the development of life-skills because of their own prior involvement in youth sport. The ways in which both the process of parenting and sport parenting specifically are manifested, in terms of the expected and typical parent roles will be discussed in the following section. The importance of reviewing both general and sport specific roles is to generate an understanding of the conflict that often arises between the two. In short, parents are responsible for helping their child to develop athletically, but must also balance this with a need to help their child develop more holistically (e.g., education). While the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, these roles can conflict and be a source of stress for parents, which will be discussed further in this review.

Parent Roles

  General parenting roles. As parenting is a process, it follows that as children develop and change with age, the role of parents will also change. The roles required during infancy are different from those in childhood and adolescence, as children develop both physically and psychologically, moving from protection and nurturing to a less hands-on guided support (Côté, 1999; Hammer & Turner, 1990). During late childhood and through adolescence, children are in the midst of developing their own identity (Erikson, 1968), becoming agents of their own social and emotional development (Larson 2011; Larson & Brown, 2007), learning to differentiate effort and ability (Dweck, 1999; Nicholls, 1978), reaching the end of the development of fundamental motor skills and beginning to develop more complex motor skills (Clarke & Metcalfe, 2002), and going through a period of maturation and increased growth rate until reaching their final adult stature (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, 2004). Therefore, during late childhood and adolescence, there are rapid cognitive, social, and physical changes.

The relative importance of significant others also moves from parents during early childhood, toward peers and other adults during late childhood and into adolescence, representing a move toward being more independent (Hammer & Turner, 1990; Harter, 1978). Harter's model of perceived competence describes how sources of competence information change from parents in childhood, toward peers and self-feedback in adolescence (Harter, 1978). During adolescence, the need to conform to peer expectations and the development of identity, will lead to behaviors and actions that may be contrary to prior behaviors, and parent expectations and beliefs. Attempts to develop identity, understand the roles and expectations of adult life, and the need to conform closer to peer ideals than parent ideals, makes this time particularly challenging for both the child and the parent (Hammer & Turner, 1990). The parent role changes from encouragement in infancy and childhood, to providing the child/adolescent space to develop as an individual. However, parents also need to provide a stable family base, to give the child the reassurance and confidence to step out and develop independently (Hammer & Turner, 1990). Parents must also act as a counselor, to help their offspring understand hormonal changes and identity striving attempts during adolescence (Hamner & Turner, 1990).

Sport specific parent roles. As Belsky (1984) and Horn and Horn (2007) suggested, parenting is a process, and therefore it can be expected that the roles of parents will change as their child(ren) age, mature physically, and develop their sport specific skills and talents. There is a plethora of research on youth sport parenting, covering the antecedents to sport parent behavior, the perceived and actual behaviors, consequences of sport parenting, and the outcomes of sport parenting for parents (Gould, Cowburn, & Pierce, *in preparation*). While the main focus of this literature review are some of the outcomes of youth sport parenting for parents, an overview of research pertaining to the importance of parent actions and styles, and how they relate to ideal

parent roles will be presented. This provides a rationale as to why it is important to better understand how youth sport participation effects parents, as they can influence the youth sport experience in both positive and negative ways. Only the most pertinent literature will be presented here as it is beyond the scope and direction of this study to review all the sport parenting literature (see Gould, Cowburn, & Pierce for a full review).

   Perceived sport parent behaviors. Perceived parent behaviors are those that focus on how the behaviors of parents are perceived by another person, whether that is their child or their child's coach. Knight, Boden, and Holt (2010) sampled 42 male and female adolescent tennis players to determine their perceptions of desirable parent behaviors. The first desired behavior that children held for their parents was that parents respect the etiquette of tennis and not make a spectacle of themselves or their children. Secondly, it was felt that parents should only provide practical advice on things that they are qualified to speak about, such as diet and preparation, but not become involved in coaching. Therefore, parents need to avoid giving technical or coaching advice unless the child perceives their parent to be suitably qualified to offer technical advice. Third, parents should refrain from providing technical advice, restrict comments to those regarding effort and attitude, and ensure that any non-verbal communications match any positive verbal comments.

   Using a similar study design, Knight, Neeley, and Holt (2011) interviewed 36 team sport female adolescents to determine preferred parent behaviors. Results were similar to the Knight et al. (2010) study, but were grouped on temporal characteristics: before, during, or after competition. Before competition the important parent behaviors were helping athletes prepare physically and mentally, i.e., check that they had the right equipment, were there on time, and acting appropriately to keep their child calm. During the competition the important behaviors were encouraging the whole team, focusing on effort and not outcome, staying positive throughout the game, not drawing

undue attention to themselves or athletes, and maintaining control of emotions. Finally, after competition, providing positive and realistic game feedback was the most important parent behavior, with positive feedback given in the team situation, and more constructive feedback given one on one.

Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, and Pennisi, (2006; 2008) conducted a pair of studies that examined coach perceptions of tennis player parent behaviors. Using a sample of 24 experienced coaches from junior tennis, Gould et al. (2008) investigated what coaches saw as appropriate and inappropriate behaviors from parents. Coaches perceived many positive behaviors from parents, including taking an appropriate perspective on tennis matches, providing financial, emotional, and logistical support, and having good emotional control at matches. The negative behaviors seen by coaches included being focused on outcome and winning, controlling player experiences, being overbearing and pushy, being negative and critical, and letting non-tennis matters interfere with on-court action. Gould et al. (2006) followed this initial study by conducting a national survey of 132 junior tennis coaches in the U.S. to determine the extent to which the issues found in the previous study are prevalent. Some 59% of coaches described parents as having a positive influence on their child's involvement in tennis, with only 36% of parents being described as having a negative impact.

In summary, several important conclusions regarding perceived parent behaviors can be derived from this research. The first is that sport parents play a vital role in the experiences of youth athletes and that youth athletes want the help and support of their parents. Second, several behaviors are seen as positive for sport parents, including: providing unconditional love and logistical support, staying positive, and focusing on effort rather than outcome. Finally, the negative behaviors to avoid include being negative or pushy, having unrealistic expectations,

acting outside their roles (e.g., coaching from the sidelines), and bringing unnecessary attention to themselves or their child. Not surprisingly, these findings are not diametrically opposite from findings in general parenting, which suggest that parenting the pre-adolescent and adolescent is trying to find a balance that supports the child, but allows affiliation with peers and other adults as well as the development of some independence (Hammer & Turner, 1990).

Actual sport parent behaviors. In addition to assessing athletes' and coaches' perceptions of positive and negative sport parent behaviors, other investigators have observed actual behaviors in which parents engage. Holt, Tamminen, Black, Sehn, and Wall (2008), for example, conducted a study to investigate the interactions of parents with their 10-14 year old children in the sport of soccer. Children kept an audio diary of interactions with their parents during practice and competitions, and researchers made observations of parents at games and interviewed all the children and parents within a family. The study elicited several verbal responses of parents and some specific events or regulations that drove behaviors. Verbal responses were placed on a continuum from "more supportive" to "more controlling". The first of these verbal responses was praise and encouragement (35% of comments), followed by performance-contingent feedback (5%), instruction (35%), striking a balance between positive and negative feedback (10%), negative comments (10%), and derogatory comments (5%). Events and regulations driving parent behavior and influencing verbal comments included league policies that were in place to keep parents from misbehaving, parent empathy, emotional intensity, experience, and knowledge. More specifically, having empathy for one's child when the child did or did not do well influenced verbal responses (e.g., poor performance resulting in more controlling behaviors and non-positive comments), as did the intensity of emotions during competitions resulting from game

circumstances and other parent's actions. Finally, those parents with a greater level of knowledge and/or experience gave more performance-contingent feedback.

In another study, Kidman, McKenzie, and McKenzie (1999) developed the Parent Observation Instrument for Sports Events (POISE) to examine the verbal comments made during competitive sport events. Observing 250 parents in seven sports, it was found that 47% of all comments made were positive, including reinforcing and hustle. Some 35% of all comments were negative, including correcting behaviors, witticism (a comment containing irony, ridicule, or sarcasm), and contradicting. The remaining 18% of comments were neutral, for example, direct/indirect/rhetorical questioning, and social.

The extent of the literature in actual parent behaviors is relatively small compared to perceived or desired behaviors, and focuses on verbal comments made by parents. Even though there is limited research on actual parent behaviors, it is becoming clear that comments are generally positive, but there is a significant percentage that could be considered negative. Future research needs to continue examination of the motivations behind the comments made, and consider how parents can be educated to reduce the number of negative comments. Additionally, while efforts have been made by Holt and colleagues (2008) to observe parents, actions and non-verbal communications appear not to have been researched in depth to this point. This lack of non-verbal communication research is something that needs to be examined in more detail, as Knight et al. (2009) showed that a mismatch between verbal and non-verbal communications (e.g., giving praise whilst shaking the head) has an impact on youth athletes.

Sport parenting styles. Another key area of parenting research is parenting styles, defined by Darling and Steinberg (1993) as "a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the

parent's behaviors are expressed" (p.488). Parenting styles create an emotional climate that reflects a general approach for parenting across contexts (Holt et al., 2009). Parent goals for socialization influence both parenting styles and practices, and parenting styles can directly and indirectly influence adolescent outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 2003). Parenting practices are different from parenting styles as they are domain-specific actions that direct the behaviors expected of their child, whereas parenting styles are non-domain-specific beliefs that guide what parenting practices should be used (Darling & Steinberg, 2003; Holt et al. 2009).

In developing a theory of parenting styles, Baumrind (1991) used two dimensions; responsiveness and demandingness to create four overall parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and rejecting-neglecting. Responsiveness refers to the amount of autonomy support provided by parents, and how reactive they are to the needs of their children. The demandingness dimension includes behaviors that represent control and supervision of a child, and the level of confrontation. Authoritative parents are high on both dimensions, authoritarian parents are high in demandingness and low in responsiveness, passive parents are low in demandingness and high in responsiveness, and rejecting-neglecting parents are low on both dimensions. This brief description of parenting styles does not cover all the parenting styles that have been posited in the empirical literature but it does represent an easy typology of one of the more popular approaches that have been used to understand parenting styles.

Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, and Fox (2009) used a qualitative methodology that involved a year-long observation of 56 youth sport parents, and interviews with each of these parents and 36 of their children to examine parenting styles in sport. Holt et al. (2009) reached five conclusions from the study, the first was that autonomy supportive parents were better able to bi-directionally communicate with their children, read the mood of their children, and provide a

supportive structure that also allowed some autonomy in decision making. The second conclusion reflects the opposite for controlling parents; they provided less input on decisions, had high structure, and were less able to communicate and read their children. Third, the behavior of the child was a factor in parenting style, such that when youth satisfactorily demonstrated responsible behaviors then the parents adjusted their style to be more autonomy supportive. Fourth, some parent-dyads demonstrated differing parenting styles and this highlights a need to study both parents where applicable. This is especially important because most of the sport parent research conducted to date has only examined one parent. Finally, the styles and practices of parents varied somewhat across contexts, so sport parenting is a multifaceted phenomenon.

Sapieja, Dunn, and Holt (2011) used quantitative survey measures of child perfectionism (Sport Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale-2; Gotwals & Dunn, 2009) and perceived paternal and maternal parenting styles (Parenting Style Inventory-2; Darling & Toyokawa, 1997) with 194 male youth soccer players. Healthy perfectionists and non-perfectionists had significantly higher perceptions of authoritative parenting than unhealthy perfectionists. Therefore authoritative parenting may be crucial in developing healthy perfectionist tendencies or in avoiding unhealthy perfectionism. These findings also show that parenting styles can have important outcomes on child behaviors and cognitions.

The difference between the Sapieja, Dunn, and Holt (2011) study and the Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, and Fox (2009) study were the examination of perceived versus actual parent styles, and while they do not represent the entirety of the research in youth sport parenting styles, they indicate that further research is warranted. These two sport parenting styles studies reflect similar results to parenting styles literature for general parenting that demonstrates that parents can

have differing styles than their partner (Winsler, Madigan, & Aquilino, 2005), and parenting styles can influence child behaviors (Brand, Hatzinger, Beck, & Holsboer-Trachsler, 2009).

Parent influence on psychological characteristics of developing excellence. A topic of considerable interest to researchers has been how sport parenting is related to the psychological characteristics for developing excellence in young athletes, and how parents can best help their child develop the correct physical and psychological skills needed for elite performance, see Gould and Cowburn (*in press)* for a detailed review of performance psychology. The changing nature of the parenting process is reflected in the research on parental involvement in talent development (Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002), such that as a child matures and progresses through stages of talent development, the role of the parents must also change. Based on the original research of Bloom (1985) into the development of excellence, Côté (1999) and Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) suggest four stages of athletic talent development, and these are described below along with what experts have contended are parent specific roles within each stage:

- Sampling stage (Côté, 1999): The sampling stage represents the beginning of sport development for children, where the emphasis is on getting involved, and having fun and excitement in sport. It occurs between the ages of 6 and 13 approximately and is the stage in which a child is experimenting with a number of sports and building a range of motor skills (Clarke & Metcalfe, 2002). The parent roles are to provide opportunities for children to become involved in and enjoy sport, without the pressure of intense training. Parents should help all children within a family participate in a range of extracurricular activities. There is also evidence that parents can recognize skill and thus encourage certain activities over others.

- Specializing stage (Côté, 1999): The second stage, specialization, is where a child athlete decides to pursue a smaller number of sports and thus develop skills that will help them excel in a particular sport. Children are usually aged between 13-15 years and critical incidents cause children to pursue one or two sports over others from the sampling stage. The role of parents include emphasizing both sporting and academic achievement, making financial and time commitments to their children, especially with regard to investing in more structured training practices. Finally, parents tend to develop a burgeoning interest in their child-athletes' sport such that they can provide support.
- Investment stage (Côté, 1999): This third stage of development is where a child makes the decision to try be an elite athlete in one particular sport and puts forth extraordinary effort in pursing the skills necessary to be successful. In the investment years child-athletes make an increasing commitment to pursuing excellent and elite status in one sport, usually after 15 years of age. Parents in this stage take a deep interest in the child-athletes sport, help their child-athlete fight back from setbacks that prevent progression (e.g., injury), with emotional support being particularly important. Due to limited time and financial resources, parents exhibit different behaviors to each of their children with more support and attention going toward a talented sibling over a less talented sibling to maximize potential.
- Maintenance stage (Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002): This final stage refers to athletes that have achieved elite status and are attempting to maintain competitiveness over an extended period of time. Parents in this stage provided emotional support, with a much reduced direct involvement level due to the age of their now adult-athlete and more support coming directly from coaches.

Essentially then, parents are responsible for providing continued logistical, emotional, and financial support through all four stages, particularly as the child-athlete faces adversity. As the child-athlete becomes more committed and expert at sport through the specialization, investment, and maintenance years, the direct roles of parents as providers and interpreters of the sporting experience is reduced as autonomous and self-determined regulation on the part of the athlete becomes more prevalent (Côté, 1999; Durand-Bush & Salmela, 2002; MacNamara, Button, & Collins, 2010a; 2010b). Similar findings are reflected by Gould et al. (2010a; 2010b), who found several positive parent behaviors that facilitated development of elite tennis players, including a focus on holistic psychosocial development, various forms of support, and emotionally intelligent conversations. Whereas negative behaviors that hindered development include a focus on winning over development, controlling behaviors, and being overly critical. Importantly, although all athletes interviewed in the Gould et al. (2010b) study made it to the elite level, parent-athlete interactions were not the same for all athletes. Gould et al. (2010) were able to identify three pathways (smooth, difficult, and turbulent) that represented the quality of the parent-athlete relationship across the first three stages of athletic talent (Bloom, 1985). Turbulent pathway athletes were characterized by increasing negative parent behaviors across their involvement, particularly parental pressure. Smooth pathway parents also pushed their children, indicating parents need to find the right balance between pushing their child and promoting a balanced lifestyle. Parent child-athlete relationships identified as difficult fell between these two extremes.

Conclusions on parent roles in sport. Based on the literature, it is clear that there are some general behaviors, styles, and actions in which sport parents should engage, e.g., unconditional emotional and logistical support. However, there is a limited literature on how to integrate all of the sport parent research in a way that helps parents make sense of a complicated system. Two

examples of theoretical models that attempt to integrate this literature will be presented, each gives

parents more general guidelines for directing their behaviors in sport. In the first example,

Fredricks and Eccles (2004) reviewed sport parent literature and ascribed three key roles for sport

parents:

1. *Role models:* Role models are significant others that model or execute behaviors necessary
   to be successful in a particular context, in this case physical activity and sport. Parents
   should act as role models by being active themselves and modeling athletic participation
   to increase the likelihood of having children that participate in sport. Parent modeling is
   particularly important for girls as they have relatively fewer sport role models from media.
   Parents also need to demonstrate and reinforce pro-social behaviors.

2. *Interpreters of the sport experience:* Children are not always mature enough to recognize
   or understand all aspects of the sport environment (e.g., gender stereotypes) and
   consequently significant others explain either these aspects, and their values regarding
   them, consciously or unconsciously through their words and actions. Parent values and
   beliefs are related to child perceptions of competency, interest, and participation.
   Additionally, parental pressure is linked to child outcomes, including outcomes such as
   stress, anxiety, burnout, and enjoyment. In general, parents hold gender stereotyped beliefs
   for sport, associating more value for males than females due to perceptions of more athletic
   talent. Finally, child perceptions of parent beliefs are more highly related to child self-
   perceptions than actual parent beliefs.

3. *Providers of the sport experience:* Due to the nature of organized sport (e.g., specialized
   venues, required equipment), children require provision from significant others in order to
   take part. Parents support and encourage athletic involvement in a number of ways,

including logistic and emotional support. Parent encouragement is positively related to child sport involvement, but over-involved parents can reduce enjoyment and lead to athlete burnout.

In the second example, Knight and Holt (2014) conducted a study where they interviewed youth tennis players, retired tennis players, tennis parents, and tennis coaches to develop a grounded theory of optimal parent involvement in tennis. The model developed by Knight and Holt has three components of parent involvement, with examples and strategies for each component. The first is that parents and athletes need to share and communicate their goals for sport involvement so that they are in agreement and effort level or motivation on one side is not greater than the other. Naturally, these goals will be influenced by demographic variables, such as age or playing standard, and tennis experiences and transitions. Secondly, parents need to develop an understanding motivational climate where they are perceived as understanding or attempting to understand child experiences, e.g., the challenges of competition. Finally, parents should engage in parenting practices at competitions that will enhance the youth athlete experience and chances of success, e.g., parents managing their own emotions. This category was deemed more flexible as the needs of each child will be different, so this component requires parents to be reflexive.

The Knight and Holt (2014) model is an important first step in understanding parent involvement in youth sport, and certainly suggests a workable model for tennis parents, but it does have a few limitations. Firstly, it is primarily a tennis model, limiting the usefulness to parents in other sports. Secondly, the participants cover a wide range of ages (12-24 years) and while this made for a general model of parenting, there is a risk that some detail was lost in determining parent behaviors which are important at specific age groups. Using the Côté (1999) stages of athletic talent development, parent roles change depending on the current stage of athlete

development (e.g., sampling vs. specializing) and as such there are different parent behaviors required. Knight and Holt give the example of the differences between under-10 players and players transitioning into University tennis having differing levels of optimum parent involvement. This level of detail was not determinable from the sample and subsequent analysis, and may be an important avenue for further investigation. Finally, the study was methodologically rigorous by including players, their coaches, and their parents in individual interviews, and subsequently utilizing focus groups to confirm findings. However, parents were not included for every player, thus information from some players and coaches was not triangulated with parents, reducing the trustworthiness of some of the data. Acknowledging that parenting is a reciprocal process between parent(s) and child, this grounded theory model of optimal parent involvement provides a good rationale for how improving the parent experience in youth sport can have a positive influence on the youth athlete experience. For example, if parents have reduced levels of stress then they are more likely to be able to control their emotions and thus enhance the youth athlete experience. It is important then to understand the consequences of youth sport involvement for parents, and this literature will be reviewed next.

Consequences of Sport Parenting and Sport Involvement on Sport Parents

Relatively less research has looked at the consequences of youth sport involvement on the parents themselves. This relative lack of research is interesting considering that parenting is considered a reciprocal process between the parent and the child (Belsky, 1984). Conducting research on reciprocal parent outcomes is important due to the influence parents can have on outcomes for youth athletes, as previously discussed, and the high level of logistical, financial, time, and emotional support parents must provide. Additionally, if one of the purposes of understanding sport parenting is to improve the youth sport experience by minimizing negative

outcomes for youth, then the same must be true for their parents. The better understood the youth sport experience for parents, the more positive it can be made through parent education and sport policy. Of the research that has been completed looking at outcomes for parents involved in youth sport, there are three main categories: experiential outcomes (e.g., positive experiences such as seeing their child develop, or getting to interact with other parents), socialization outcomes (e.g., increased understanding of their child's sport), and stress outcomes (e.g., increased stress caused by parents needing to select appropriate coaches for their child). All parent consequences from youth sport involvement are important and have the potential to alter the youth sport experience. However, one of the components of the definition of the parenting process was contextual sources of stress and support. Parent stress is potentially the easiest of the parent consequence components to alter with regard to improving athlete and parent experiences. As such, literature regarding experiential and socialization outcomes will be reviewed in brief, but a greater focus will be put into sport parent stress outcomes, followed by research on coping.

Parent Experiential Outcomes

A few studies have examined general sport parent experiences, reporting on the costs and benefits associated with being a sport parent. Wiersma and Fifer (2008) used a focus group methodology with 55 youth sport parents to investigate the joys and challenges of being a youth sport parent. Wiersma and Fifer also identified factors that explained parental misconduct and emphasized some of the responsibilities adults felt they needed to fulfil due to their involvement in youth sport. Positive experiences included parental satisfaction (e.g., being able to observe their child's development and success), the opportunity to interact with other people (e.g., their child and other parents), as well as perceived benefits for their child, such as life skill development, affiliation associated with being on a team, enhanced self-concept, and avoiding computer games.

Negative or challenging experiences included providing instrumental support (e.g., finances, time cost), providing emotional support (e.g., post-game talks, balancing fun and competition), and seeing pressures being exerted on their child both in general (e.g., school-sport balance) and specifically in sport (e.g., negative coaches). Parents also identified several characteristics of youth sport that were stressful (e.g., nature of sport, age of child, quality of league and officials) and situational triggers (e.g., inequality, self-regulated behavior, unintended competitive reactions) as factors that explain parent misconduct. Finally, parents expressed beliefs about the importance of modeling appropriate behaviors to young people, which included adult influences over behavior (e.g., coaches needing to model appropriate behaviors) and the need to put sport into a broader perspective relative to life and development so they could act in appropriate ways (e.g., emphasizing effort over outcome).

As part of a study that looked at the experiences of parent-coaches, Weiss and Fretwell (2005) found a number of benefits and detriments for parent-coach youth sport involvement. A parent-coach was defined as a youth sport parent who is also the coach of a team and participants in the study were six youth soccer players from six under-12 soccer teams, their fathers who were also their coaches, and two teammates. The purposes of the study included assessing the young athletes' perceptions of their parent-coaches, the parent-coaches, and the teammates of the child-athlete. However, for brevity and considering the purpose of the present study, only the results of the parent-coaches will be reported here. The positive aspects of being a parent-coach included taking pride in seeing the son's achievements, providing motivation for coaching, positive social interactions with one's son and his teammates, opportunities to impart skills and values, enjoying coaching one's son, and spending quality time with one's son. The negative aspects of parent-coaching included difficulty in separating coach and parent roles, dealing with rebellious behavior

from one's son, time constraints, and talking to other parents about their behavior. Other issues regarded differential treatment toward their sons were discussed, and included, the inability to separate the parent-son from the coach-player role, having insider information about their son and his team (e.g., practice feedback from son), and holding higher expectations, placing more pressure on, paying more attention to, and giving more or less reinforcement and recognition to their sons versus his teammates.

Literature on parent experiential outcomes showed the general sport parent experience contains both positive or rewarding and negative or challenging accounts (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). Specifically, positive aspects of the experience included parents getting to spend time interacting with their child, the opportunity to provide encouragement and seeing their child be successful in an achievement context, and seeing positive development of sports skills and life skills (e.g., teamwork). While negative aspects involved the time demands required in youth sport and the conflicts those demands create relative to other parent roles, communication with their child, especially when behavior does not meet expectations, and balancing parent push between their expectations and child abilities. A number of unique challenges are also associated when one takes on the role of a parent coach for their child.

Parent Socialization Outcomes

Research on young athlete socialization suggests that it is a reciprocal process, in that, parents influence the youth sport experiences of their children and the involvement in youth sport with their child alters parental experiences. Some studies in this area examine both the influence of parent on child while others study the influence of the child on the parent. Given the purpose of this review and need for brevity, however, only the results pertaining to influences on parents will be discussed here.

Snyder and Purdy (1982) interviewed 15 youth sport parents, whose children were enrolled in organized youth sport, to examine the direction of socialization effects for sport involvement. Results demonstrated the existence of socialization, reverse socialization, and reciprocal socialization. Reverse socialization was particularly strong for mothers, but evidence also suggested reciprocal effects whereby a parent may have socialized a child into sport (due to their own previous experiences with a sport) but also experienced greater interest in sports and attended his/her child's sporting events as a result of his/her child's sport involvement. Overall, socialization effects included parents developing a greater interest in their child's sport: attending sporting events, reading articles about the sport, and watching it on television either by themselves or as a family. Parents also talked about things they had learned through their child's sporting involvement, including rules, game strategies, the emotions experienced, and personality traits revealed through their child's involvement in sport. Interestingly, while some parents, particularly fathers, learned relatively less due to previous sport involvement, others reported learning about an entirely new sport, such as gymnastics.

Weiss and Hayashi (1995) conducted a study to examine socialization effects in youth gymnastics. They administered a questionnaire to 24 youth gymnasts and interviewed 39 of their parents to examine reciprocal socialization effects on the parents due to youth sport involvement. Results for child-parent socialization were classified into four categories: time commitment, financial commitment, impact on parent's sport-related interests, and benefits derived from child's sport involvement. With regard to time commitment, most parents felt that their home life (70%) and personal lives (72%) revolved around gymnastics, spending on average 6 hours a week for mothers and 4 hours a week for fathers on gymnastics. Despite this large commitment to time, 72% of parents suggested they would spend an equal amount of time on their child regardless of

activity. Financial commitments related to gymnastics were on average $3000 a year, representing approximately 5% of the family income, which was rated as "some" to a "little" financial burden by 86% of parents. Parents indicated that their sport-related interests changed due to their children's gymnastics involvement, with 89.7% reporting an increase in their attendance at gymnastics meets, 79.5% indicated an increase in sport-related reading, 59% watched more sport on television, 43.6% subscribed to sport magazines, and 38.5% increased their own physical activity behaviors. Finally, benefits derived from gymnastics involvement included, but were not limited to, pride in their child (36%), easier parenting due to child goal-focus and discipline (25%), pleasure (23%), feeling good about child achievements (21%), better relationship with their child (18%), and personal growth (15%).

Dorsch, Smith, and McDonough (2009) also examined parents' perceptions of child-parent socialization, conducting five semi-structured focus groups with 26 parents of youth athletes enrolled in summer team sport leagues (baseball, basketball, softball, and soccer). In contrast to the previous studies by Snyder and Purdy (1985) and Weiss and Hayashi (1995), Dorsch et al. interviewed parents not only regarding changes in their behaviors, but also their cognitions, affect, and relationships. Reported parent behavior changes related to participation (e.g., becoming involved as a coach or increasing own participation) and support and sacrifice (e.g., financial investment) were very similar to the result of previous studies (Snyder & Purdy, 1982; Weiss & Hayashi, 1995). However, important information on parent cognitions was revealed and classified into three subthemes: (1) awareness (e.g., regarding child ability level and learning appropriate parent behaviors at competitions), (2) goals (e.g., adapting own goals to their child's and increased competitiveness), and (3) knowledge (e.g., appreciation for the difficulty of the sport and consideration of scholarship options). Parent affect also was reported to have altered through youth

sport involvement, specifically emotional connection with sport (e.g., anxiety for outcomes), emotional management (e.g., coping with disappointment), and reactive emotional experiences (e.g., anger/frustration with child, family, or context). Finally, parent relationships were changed in terms of communication (e.g., adapting parent-child communication styles, tempering spouse expectations of child), parent-child relationship (e.g., enhanced child-parent relationship, child-parent friction), and relationships with parents of peers (e.g., impression management, peer social networking). Additional to these socializing factors, parents discussed three potential moderators of socialization that were targeted in the focus groups: (1) child age – as children age and become more involved in sport, the requirements are greater and thus socialization effects increase; (2) past sport experience of parents – those parents with no prior sport participation underwent greater socialization change than those with some prior sport involvement; (3) and parent and child gender – parents were aware that their own gender and that of their child influenced relationships and sport setting behaviors. Three other moderators were also elicited via the focus groups: child temperament, the level of sport focus within the local community, and individual versus team sports.

The literature regarding child and parent socialization then reflects a reciprocal process between parent and child (Snyder & Purdy, 1982). For parents this results in a number of outcomes, including: greater logistical involvement in their child's sport, changes to participation in sport and/or activities related to child's sport, increased knowledge of their child's sport, other cognition changes such as increased awareness of behaviors, changes in affect relating to increased emotional investment, and changes to relationships between parent and child, between a parent and the parents of another child, and between parents of the same child (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009; Snyder & Purdy, 1982; Weiss & Hayashi, 1995).

Parent Stress Outcomes

Before reviewing the research that has examined parent stress outcomes in sport, it is important to review definitions of stress and appraisal, as these concepts are central to the current study. A brief review of concepts will be followed by research on general stressors that also may be pertinent to sport parents, and then research on sport parent stress outcomes. Coping, another central theme in the current study, will be reviewed in a later section.

Stress and the appraisal process. Stress, appraisal, and coping are concepts and constructs that have long been discussed both in the general psychology (Lazarus, 1999; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and sport psychology literatures (e.g., Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993; Scanlan, Stein, & Ravizza, 1991; Woodman & Hardy, 2001). There have been a number of different conceptualizations and definitions of stress, with stress being viewed as a stimulus, a response to an event or action, and the relational transaction between the individual, environment, and appraisal of the current situation (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001; Fletcher, Hanton, and Mellalieu, 2006). The current literature review will focus on the transactional conceptualization of stress and particularly the cognitive-motivational-relational theoretical model of stress, appraisal, and coping (CMRT; Lazarus, 1999) due to its prevalence in the sport psychology literature (Hanton, Fletcher, & Coughlan, 2005).

Stress and appraisal. McGrath (1970) defined stress as "a substantial imbalance between (environmental) demand and response capability under conditions where failure to meet the demand has important consequences" (p.20). The McGrath definition introduced some key concepts, namely the environment, the individual, and the relational transaction between the two that requires cognitive evaluation of both. The CMRT suggests that stress does not exist within an individual or within the environment but the transaction between the two, and as such is a

continuous process (Lazarus, 1999). On that basis, the definition of a stress within the CMRT is the appraisal of the environment by the individual. Additionally, a stressor is an environmental demand on an individual, and strain is a negative psychological, physical, or behavioral response to a stressor (Cooper et al., 2001; Fletcher et al., 2006). Lazarus (1999) advocated for the use of the term appraisal to represent the cognitive evaluation of stress. Appraisals by the individual of self and the environment give the two relational meaning, and allow for the transactional nature of the stress process (Dewe, O'Driscoll, & Cooper, 2012; Lazarus, 1999). There are two forms of appraisal in the Lazarus stress model (1966; 1999): primary and secondary. Both primary and secondary appraisals occur simultaneously and as part of the same ongoing process, but they are described separately below for ease of understanding (Lazarus, 1999).

Primary appraisal is the individual's evaluation as to whether the environmental demand is relevant to his or her beliefs, values, goal commitments, and situational intentions (Lazarus, 1999). If an individual believes that a particular situation puts something at stake (i.e., goal commitments or situational intentions) or that core values are engaged in the situation (i.e., beliefs and values) then there is potential for stress, with goal commitments having a potentially greater influence than values, as people are not always inclined to act on values (Lazarus, 1999). Lazarus (1999) posits three potential transactional outcomes: *harm/loss* – damage that has already occurred, *threat* – the possibility of damage, and *challenge* – where individuals put forth effort and engage with the demand. Additionally, Lazarus (2001) suggested a fourth appraisal, whereby the transaction between individual and environment can actually facilitate goal acquisition, referred to as *benefit* (Dewe et al., 2012). A benefit appraisal occurs when appraisal of potential outcomes are positive, e.g., personal resources exceed the perceived demand. Alternatively, if an individual perceives no values at stake or core values engaged, then there will be no stress response (Lazarus, 1999).

Secondary appraisal is a cognitive-evaluative process that is focused on what can be done about a stressful situation, or the coping options for a stressful individual-environment transaction (Lazarus, 1999; 2001). All four of the primary appraisals (harm/loss, threat, challenge, and benefit) can have future-oriented implications that have concurrent secondary appraisals. However, primary and secondary appraisals are not mutually exclusive and often occur simultaneously or as a function of one another (Lazarus, 1999; 2001). Threat and challenge are the most future-oriented appraisals as their outcomes are uncertain, one usually predominates in a demanding situation, dependent on how confident we are that we have the personal resources to respond to the situation (Lazarus, 1999; 2001). The comparison between primary appraisals and available personal resources is the secondary appraisal and leads to *evaluation of blame/credit* – not just an attribution, but evaluation as to who and what, *coping potential* – an evaluation of how well an individual can act to ameliorate or eliminate harm or threat to bring about challenge or benefit, and *future expectations* – an evaluation of how things will change in the future (Lazarus, 1999; 2001)

Combinations of primary and secondary appraisals form the evaluation of the person-environment transaction and give rise to certain emotions and coping resources. Lazarus (1999) closely ties emotions to the psychological stress process, such that primary appraisals of a situation will result in specific emotional outcomes. Broadly, appraisals of harm/loss and threat will result in more negative emotions, and appraisals of challenge and benefit will result in more positive emotions (Dewe et al., 2012; Lazarus, 1999; 2001). In this way, anxiety is a negative emotion associated with uncertain existential threats derived from primary appraisals of stressors and coping resources (Lazarus, 1999; 2001).

Stress has been widely studied in sport, particularly the links between stress, cognitive and somatic anxiety, and performance (Hanin, 1980; 1986; Hardy, 1990; Hardy & Fazey, 1986; Jones,

1995). More recent research also has begun to look at sources of stress, with two major groups of stressors identified in sport: organizational stressors and competitive stressors (Fletcher & Hanton, 2003; Fletcher, Hanton, & Mellalieu, 2006). Although stress has been examined in many ways for sport, the focus of the current study is sources of stress and coping by sport parents, and therefore research pertaining to those areas will be presented.

Organizational stress. Organizational stress has been defined by Shirom (1982) as "work-related social psychological stress" (p. 21) and conceptualized as the interaction between an employee and the work environment to which they are exposed. Much of the research on organizational stress has been conducted in business and professional domains, including but not limited to correctional officers (Finney, Stergiopoulos, Hensel, Bonato, & Dewa, 2013), pharmacists (Jacobs, Hassell, Ashcroft, Johnson, & O'Connor, 2014), oncology nursing (Florio, Donnelly, & Zevo, 1998), and teaching (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998). Examples of organizational stressors include role conflict, co-worker conflict, salary, work overload, resources, and organizational structure (Finney et al., 2013; Florio et al., 1998; Jacobs et al., 2014).

Woodman and Hardy (2001) defined organizational stress in sport as being "an interaction between the individual and the sport organization within which the individual is operating" (p. 208), with Fletcher, Mellauai, and Hanton (2006), further breaking this down into five dimensions based on the work of Cooper et al. (2001). Specifically, Hanton and Fletcher (2005) identified example stressors which included (1) factors intrinsic to the sport e.g., training and competition environment, loads, hours, travel arrangements, and nutrition; (2) roles in the sport organization, e.g., role ambiguity (lack of information needed to perform role), role conflict, and role overload (being both a captain and performer); (3) sport relationships and interpersonal demands, e.g., personality type, leadership style, and lack of support; (4) athletic career and performance

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development issues, e.g., position insecurity, income and funding, and career advancement; and (5) organizational structure and climate of the sport, e.g., coaching and/or management style, inadequate communication channels, and no sense of belonging.

Competitive stress. Competitive stress is defined by Mellalieu, Hanton, and Fletcher (2006) as "an ongoing transaction between an individual and the environmental demands associated primarily and directly with competitive performance" (p.3; adapted from Fletcher et al., 2006). Competitive stressors include preparation or lack thereof physically, mentally, and technically; the risk of injury, including aggravating old injuries and playing while injured; pressure of performing and the knowledge that selection is based on performance; competing against more talented and/or intimidating opponents; self-presentation and appearance; event stressors like the beginning of a game, competition, and closing out a game; and finally superstitions such as not being able to play in "lucky" socks or shirt or playing in a particular venue (Hanton et al., 2005).

Sport parent stress outcome research. There have been a number of studies that examine sport-specific parent stress. A series of studies by Harwood and Knight (2009a; 2009b) and Harwood, Drew, and Knight (2010) have systematically examined stress in several different contexts (e.g., soccer academy) within tennis and soccer in the United Kingdom. Specifically, Harwood and Knight (2009a) surveyed 123 tennis parents whose children participated between club and international level tennis to determine a list of stressors for tennis parents, based on the stage of talent development of their children. Using an open-ended survey allowed expression of novel and unique stressors by parents, and a quantitative measure of stressor prevalence. Analyses resulted in seven core areas of parental stressors: the process of competition (e.g., post-match skills in helping their child deal with a difficult loss – 70% of respondents); the behaviors and skills of coaches (e.g., match attendance and support or lack thereof – 27% of respondents); financial

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implications of involvement (e.g., coaching fees – 33% of respondents); the time commitment required (e.g., restricted personal, parental, and family time – 31% of respondents); inequality of resources to siblings (e.g., unequal time, money, and attention to tennis sibling – 28% of respondents), tennis organization-related (e.g., perceived favoritism from local club and county associations – 20% of respondents), and developmental stressors (e.g., educational conflicts and issues – 43% of respondents).

Harwood and Knight (2009b) also conducted focus group interviews with 22 tennis parents, including four parent-dyads, again examining the sources of stress for sport parents. Questions for the interviews were developed using the stressors elicited from their previous study (Harwood & Knight, 2009a). Additionally, the parents were recruited based on the stage of development of their athlete(s) as being in one of the sampling, specializing, or investment stages of athletic talent development. Stressors were grouped into three general dimensions: organizational stressors, competitive stressors, and developmental stressors. These groupings came from the previously mentioned literature on stressors in sport, but importantly the third group (developmental stressors) relates to development outside of the sporting organization, for example, educational development. Within organizational stressors, six higher order themes emerged from the data, including time, finances, organizational bodies, tournaments, training and coaching, and injury. Regardless of the developmental stage of their child, most or all parents cited time, training and coaching, tournaments, and organizing body stressors. As athletes progressed to the specialization and investment stages parents reported more stressors with regard to finances and injury, although there is some sub-theme variation between stages. Competitive stressors made up eight higher order themes: namely, watching matches, other tennis parents, child's behaviors and attitudes, child's opponents, preparation for matches, child's performance, outcome of the match,

and child's psychological readiness. Harwood and Knight noted that competition stressors were uniformly reported across all developmental stages; however, relatively more were reported by sampling stage parents, and that in general, stressors decreased with advancing developmental stage. The higher prevalence of sampling stage competition stressors was linked to the age of the competitors, many experiencing competition for the first time and thus the novelty of the situation increased feelings of stress. Finally, developmental stressor higher order themes were child's education, child's future, making appropriate decisions regarding tennis, and impact on other hobbies. Developmental stressors were much less reported by sampling stage parents, in part it was speculated, due to the fact that commitment to the sport is lower and subsequently impacts other areas of development (e.g., education) less frequently. In particular parents reported stress regarding decisions on balancing education and tennis, and conflicts with schools regarding participation leading to even greater stress.

Harwood, Drew, and Knight (2010) conducted focus group interviews with 41 parents (25 fathers and 16 mothers) of children enrolled in English elite soccer academies and deemed to be in either the earlier (participants of either under 9 or under 12 teams) or later (the under 13 or under 15 teams) specialization stage of athlete talent development. Focus groups were created based on whether parents' children were in the earlier or later stages of specialization, partially in an effort to examine the differences in parental stressors across what is otherwise a very wide age-range based stage. From the data, four general parenting stressor dimensions were created, each with sub-themes that were either specific to early or late specialization stage parents, or to all parents. The first was academy processes and quality of communication, which revolved around how academies were run (cited by early specialization parents), sensitivity regarding release (identified by later specialization parents), and the clarity and consistency of communication from the

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academies and coaches to parents (cited by both groups of parents). Second were match-related stressors which referred to the performance of their son and subsequent emotional reactions for parents (later specialization parents), resisting the urge to sideline coach and frustration surrounding player rotations (early specialization parents), and the approaches to development used by coaches, other parents, and injuries (all parents). Third were sport family role conflict stressors, including management of resources (e.g., finances, time) and other family obligations (e.g., siblings, holiday). Family role conflict stressors were reported by both groups of parents. Finally, stressors related to school support and education issues, which were reported by later specialization parents only, revolved around how to help their son balance school and football, and how to manage the conflicts and apparent lack of support from schools.

Harwood and colleagues (2009a; 2009b; 2010) suggested that while the sport parent stressors may appear exclusive to the sport parent population, (due to unique descriptions of stressors from parents and the distinct nature of the sport context), the stressors can be interpreted within existing literature on competitive and organizational stress athletes report. Using both inductive and deductive analyses, Harwood and colleagues were able to organize some sport parent stressors under higher-order themes of competitive and organizational stressors, as guided by prior stress research in sport. However, inductive analyses highlighted that some stressors did not fit within organizational or competitive stressors categories and so a third dimension of developmental stressors was created. Developmental stressors include such things as parents trying to find a balance between athletic and academic development of their child, and are closely aligned with the organizational stress dimension of athletic career and development issues, but have the additional focus on development of the child outside of the sporting organization, e.g., school.

Competitive stressors are those that relate directly to competition and competition performance (Mellalieu et al., 2006, adapted from Fletcher et al. 2006). Across all three studies, parents reported stress resulting from having to watch their child practice and compete, and help them deal emotionally with performances, especially where they were unable to directly intervene (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). Indeed, it appears that stressors were similar even if manifested differently, between tennis and football, although clear sport-specific differences existed also. For example, having to anticipate and deal with their child's reactions to match outcomes, particularly losses, appeared in both tennis and soccer. However, stress related to the use of squad rotation systems in football academies is unique to a team-based sport. All of these stressors are from the higher-order category of competitive stressors and could also be considered match-related stressors. There also was a progression across developmental stages from sampling to investment toward an overall reduction in competitive stressors for parents. That is, as parents had acquired more accurate performance expectations, and a better understanding of how to handle stressful situations and interact with their children (Harwood & Knight, 2009b) they experienced less stress. However, there were some indications that incidents that potentially block child progress, such as poor line calls from other players (Harwood & Knight, 2009b), injury, or loss of place in an academy based on performance (Harwood et al., 2010) became greater stressors across development.

All five dimensions of organizational stressors (Fletcher et al., 2006; Hanton & Fletcher, 2005) appeared across the three studies. First, factors intrinsically related to the sport, included finance, time, travel, training, and injury stressors. These stressors were particularly evident for parents of youth athletes in the specialization stage as parents were required to spend a greater amount of time transporting their children to a greater number of practices and competitions.

Second, roles in the sport organization stressors were identified and included role ambiguity, expectations, and managing role conflicts. More specifically, parents discussed the difficulties of managing the dual roles of trying to be a helpful sport-parent, but manage other family tasks such as giving attention to other siblings and helping those siblings pursue their interests. Additionally, many parents question the respect they are given by sporting organizations, particularly the role parents play in athlete development. Thirdly, sport relationships and interpersonal demands, such as communicating with other parents, coaches, and teachers were stressors for parents. These relationship stressors were particularly prevalent when it came to interacting with other parents or their own child with regard to negative behaviors or match outcomes. Fourthly, parents discussed the organizational structure and climate of the sport as stressors, particularly in the specialization and investment stages, citing selection policies, autonomy in decision making, and match schedules as stressors. Some of the most noted stress sources included transparency between organizations and parents regarding athlete funding, poor quality of communication from the organization and coaches, favoritism, and poor sport infrastructure.

Finally, developmental stressors are those concerning the overall development of a child (Harwoord et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b). Developmental stressors can originate from a sporting organization and therefore be organizational stressors, but these stressors are primarily focused on development of athletic performance within a specific sport organization. Developmental stressors from outside a sporting organization are more generally concerned with holistic child development (e.g., sport vs. education balance), although this may include some sport aspects external to an organization, such as picking an appropriate coach or organization in the first instance. It is perhaps difficult to separate general developmental stressors from organization developmental stressors, as the development of a young athlete will necessarily include both, and

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they will influence each other. Organization developmental stressors included concerns with security of position, issues regarding child retention at a club or academy, and funding (Harwoord et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b). General developmental stressors contained issues regarding support from schools and teachers, or lack thereof, and the influence this would have on overall academic outcomes. In particular, parents felt compelled to take *either* a more academic route or more sport performance route, feeling that a compromise between the two was not a viable option (Harwood & Knight, 2009b). Additionally, general developmental stressors parents experienced included picking the correct coach or organization to enhance progress, and concerns promoting one sport over other developmental activities (e.g., another sport or music; Harwoord et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b). Clearly then, developmental stressors are some of the most stressful for parents because they present the 'what if' question, where parents are being asked to choose between options with unknown or unclear consequences. Choosing one action may inhibit development and potentially rule out the opportunity to go back and choose another option, e.g., choosing to specialize in a sport and perhaps put less emphasis on academics, while at the same time not knowing if their child will achieve sporting success and have missed out on educational opportunities. These dilemmas potentially elicit the "threat" or "challenge" appraisals suggested by Lazarus (1999) due to their potential influence on child outcomes. In practical application, perhaps more so than with competitive and organizational stressors, parent education can provide parents a greater evidence base from which they can make decisions on developmental issues, potentially reducing stress.

These initial studies were important first steps in examining parent stressors in sport, however, there were some limitations. The first is that none of the reviewed studies examined the entire stress process including a stressor, appraisal, and subsequent coping attempts (Harwood,

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Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). This is a general limitation with stress and coping research (Lazarus, 1999) due to the need for multiple time-point assessment of all stages of the stress, appraisal, and coping process. There is a need for longitudinal research on sport parent stress and coping to determine how appraisals of stressors and coping attempts change over a period of time e.g., a competitive season. It may then be possible to assess which stressors are perceived as being more positive (challenge) and which ones as more negative (threat; Lazarus, 1999). Fletcher and Sarkar (2013) recently reviewed resilience literature, and presented the example of an athlete winning a competition which increases pressure to win in the future. The event is positive and the stressor could be appraised as a threat or a challenge, but ultimately will increase stress for some athletes. An example for sport parents might be a child being successful and chosen to represent a travel team that requires increased time and financial support. Again, a positive event occurs (being selected for a higher team), but the stressors of time and financial commitment coming from this opportunity could be considered a threat or a challenge. A second limitation is that in both of the Harwood and Knight (2009a; 2009b) studies, only four parent-dyads or eight parents completed a survey or were interviewed together. While accepting and understanding that families are composed in different ways, including one and two parent families, blended families, or divorced parents, not including both parents to understand stress (and coping) limits the interpretation of stressors within a family. To fully understand stress and subsequent coping, it is important to understand how stressors are interpreted by each individual and also as a parent-dyad, as this is likely to be key to understanding coping strategies within a family (Boss, 1992; Kazak, 1992). The criticism of only including one parent is common in the sport parent literature in general and needs to be addressed in future studies (Gould & Cowburn, *in press*). Thirdly, only two sports have been examined, and they only assess certain sport contexts. More

specifically, tennis and soccer have been reviewed, representing an individual sport known for its high financial and travel requirements and a team sport in the academy context. Also, each of these studies is conducted inside the United Kingdom which is known for club rather than school sport. Therefore, outside of tennis and elite youth soccer (due to the sampling at soccer academies) more research needs to be conducted to see if stressors are similar in other sports and at different skill levels, i.e., below the elite level. This is particularly important as the majority of parents will have children in the non-elite category. Additionally, are sport parent stressors the same for sports that are school-based in the United States? While the previous studies cannot be criticized for examining specific populations, it is important to remember that these studies are qualitative and results may not be generalized to other populations, and therefore research into other sport contexts is required.

Coping

Definition

Coping is defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p.141) "as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person". Coping then represents cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage appraisals of external stressors and internal emotional responses to stressors, and encompasses actions used to change or avoid a situation or one's emotions (Hoar, Kowalski, Gaudreau, & Crocker, 2006; Lazarus, 2001). A number of different types of coping and ways of organizing the types of coping have been identified in the literature, here the more traditional problem- and emotion-focused coping, and a more recent twelve families model of coping are reviewed (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Hoar et al., 2006; Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003).

Typologies of Coping

Twelve families' hierarchy of coping. After extensively reviewing the coping assessment literature Skinner and her colleagues (2003) derived a hierarchical framework of coping in an attempt to help facilitate thinking about coping assessment and functioning. The 12 families hierarchical model of coping include five levels: instances, strategies, families, functions, and adaptive processes. Each of these levels is depicted as a column in Table. 1 that depicts the 12 families hierarchy of coping. Starting on the left of the model "coping instances" are real-time responses individuals use to cope with stressful transactions (e.g., a swimming mom sitting in what she considers to be her "lucky" seat at a meet).

At the next level, coping "strategies" are categorizations of coping instances into conceptually clear, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive groupings. For example, a swimming dad, worried about how his son will perform in a state-qualifying meet, talks to another parent about his concerns and conducts some research about the state-qualifying meet to better understand the competition and his son's competitors. Both of the actions the swimming dad takes are coping instances, however, they would be classified as different coping strategies, i.e., contact seeking and reading respectively. Skinner and his colleagues identified over 400 specific coping instances and strategies that are usually captured by self-report or observational methods.

Due to the large number of specific coping strategies that have been identified 12 more general categories or "families" of coping were identified by Skinner et al. (2003). These families include: problem-solving (adjust actions to be effective), information seeking (find additional contingencies), helplessness (find limits of actions), escape (escape non-contingent environment), self-reliance (protect available social resources), support seeking (use available social resources), delegation (find limits of resources), isolation (withdraw from unsupportive context),

accommodation (flexibly adjust preferences to options), negotiation (find new options), submission (give up preferences), and opposition (remove constraints). These families of coping are considered mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Thus going back to our swimming dad, his coping strategies of contact seeking and reading would fit into support seeking and information seeking coping families respectively.

Table 1. The 12 families' hierarchy of coping.

	Coping Strategies	Family of Coping	Family Function in Adaptive Process	General Adaptive Process
Coping Instances	Strategizing	Problem Solving	Adjust actions to be effective	Coordinate actions and contingencies in the environment
	Instrumental Action			
	Reading	Information Seeking	Find additional contingencies	
	Observation			
	Confusion	Helplessness	Find limits of actions	
	Cognitive interference			
	Cognitive avoidance	Escape	Escape non-contingent environment	
	Behavioral avoidance			
	Emotional regulation	Self-Reliance	Protect available social resources	Coordinate reliance and social resources available
	Behavioral regulation			
	Contact seeking	Support Seeking	Use available social resources	
	Comfort seeking			
	Maladaptive help-seeking	Delegation	Find limits of resources	
	Complaining			
	Social withdrawal	Isolation	Withdraw from unsupportive context	
	Concealment			
	Distraction	Accommodation	Flexibly adjust preferences to options	Coordinate preferences and available options
	Cognitive restructuring			
	Bargaining	Negotiation	Find new options	
	Persuasion			
	Rumination	Submission	Give up preferences	
	Intrusive thoughts			
	Other-blame	Opposition	Remove constraints	
	Aggression			

The Skinner et al. (2003) model does not stop at the identification of families of coping strategies. The higher order families of coping are organized based on their specific "adaptive family functions" (e.g., problem solving strategies are used to adjust actions to be effective while information seeking strategies are used to identify additional contingencies). Further inspection of Table 1. shows that these range from the just mentioned adjusting actions to be effective and finding additional contingencies functions, to giving up preferences and removing constraints.

Finally, the adaptive processes linked to family functions are further categorized into one of three general "adaptive processes". These processes include coordinating actions and contingencies in the environment, coordinating reliance and social resources, and coordinating preferences and available options. At this, the highest level of the hierarchy, these three adaptive processes "intervene between stress and its psychological, social, and physiological outcomes" (Skinner et al., 2003, p. 217). It is also thought that at this level coping serves evolutionary functions regarding information of the surrounding environment and escaping from dangerous transactions.

In summary, the 12 families' hierarchical model of coping provides an empirically based taxonomy for identifying more general categories of coping strategies. It also has the advantage of linking specific families of coping strategies to specific functions that they serve. However, the model is very complicated, difficult to understand, and massive in scope, making a complete test of it highly difficult. Specific predications also are not forwarded. Finally, few studies have been conducted to test its predictions. At the same time, the general family taxonomy and knowledge of ways coping functions could help inform this dissertation.

Problem and emotion focused coping. A more simplistic and more widely recognized conceptualization of coping are problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping (Folkman

& Moskowitz, 2004; Lazarus, 1999; 2001; Skinner et al., 2003). Problem-focused coping is where a person attempts to directly manage situational demands such that the stressor that is causing distress is removed or altered (e.g., a college student talking directly to a professor about how to improve his/her grade in a class) (Hoar et al., 2006; Lazarus, 1999). Emotion-focused coping is an attempt to regulate emotions elicited from a stressor (e.g., seeking emotional support or deep breathing to lower one's stress level) (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Lazarus, 1999; 2001). Emotion focused coping is achieved via reappraisal of the transaction between situation and personal resources in an attempt to reduce the severity of the stressor (Lazarus, 1999).

Despite the prevalence of the problem- and emotion-focused coping in the field of sport psychology (Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996), there is considerable debate about their suitability to explain coping. Skinner et al. (2003) argued that when emotion- and problem-focused coping are applied at a strategy level, neither meet the requirements of mutual exclusivity, exhaustiveness, or conceptual clarity. Additionally, when applied at the families' level of the hierarchy, it is unclear what strategies are used for each. To give a more detailed example, Billings and Moos (1981) proposed the inclusion of 'avoidance strategies' within the problem- and emotion-focused coping conceptualization as a type of emotion-focused coping, a view supported by Lazarus (1999). However, others classify avoidance coping (withdrawal of effort to ameliorate stressor or achieve goals) as equal to emotion- and problem-focused coping in the hierarchy (Endler & Parker, 1994).

In summary, the problem- and emotion-focused conceptualization of coping is a more simplistic way of examining coping. Due to the more simplistic nature it is much easier to test empirically (see "coping effectiveness - goodness of fit hypothesis" below), and useful for practitioners because it is easily explained to lay populations. However, as suggested previously, there is the possibility the conceptualization is overly simplistic and ignores important details

regarding coping attempts, such as those described in the twelves families' of coping hierarchy (Skinner et al., 2003).

Measurement of Coping

Coping in sport has been measured using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, although quantitative methodologies make up the majority of coping studies (Hoar et al., 2006; Crocker, Kowalski, & Graham, 1998). Many quantitative measures have been derived from the Ways of Coping questionnaire (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985) and include the ways of coping checklist for sport (Madden, Kirkby, & McDonald, 1989; Madden Summers, & Brown, 1990), modified ways of coping checklist (Crocker, 1992), and the higher order ways of coping (Haney & Long, 1995). Each of the measures derived from the ways of coping questionnaire has issues with validity and reliability and has subsequently been suggested as not suitable use for sport (Hoar et al., 2006). Additional quantitative measures include the modified COPE (MCOPE; Crocker & Graham, 1995), the athletic coping skills inventory-28 (ACSI-28; Smith, Schutz, Smoll, & Ptachek, 1995), coping function questionnaire (CFQ; Kowalski & Crocker, 2001), and the coping inventory for competitive sport (CICS; Gaudraeu & Blondin, 2002). These subsequent measures of coping have better validity and reliability, with the MCOPE one of the most popular coping measures in sport, especially as it assesses at the strategies level (Hoar et al., 2006). However, each of the above measures is best used for specific tasks: the ACSI-28 is best used for measurement of psychological skills used in sport for coping or more trait-like coping skills, the CFQ is designed for use with adolescents to measure coping function, and the CICS has a strong theoretical basis and covers several stages of a competitive event (Hoar et al., 2006).

There also have been a few studies using qualitative methodologies, which examined coping strategies used by Olympic wrestlers (Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1993) and elite figure

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skaters (Gould, Finch, & Jackson, 1993). Qualitative studies in coping have several strengths, including inductive creation of coping theory, examination of current coping theory in more detail by connecting stressors and coping strategies (in a way that is not possible from questionnaires), and an in-depth examination of the person and situation characteristics involved with coping, such that it is possible to understand specific coping instances based on situational factors (Crocker et al., 1998). Both qualitative studies found similar coping strategies, with Gould, Finch, and Jackson (1993) identifying several coping strategies used by athletes, including: rational thinking and self-talk, positive focus and orientation, social support, time management and prioritization, precompetitive mental preparation and anxiety management, training hard and smart, isolation and deflection, ignoring, reactive behaviors, striving for positive working relationships with partner, changing to healthy eating attitudes and behaviors, miscellaneous uncategorized coping, and a lack of coping strategies. Meanwhile Gould, Eklund, and Jackson, (1993) found thought control strategies (blocking distractions, perspective taking, positive thinking, coping thoughts, and prayer), task focus strategies (narrow, more immediate focus, and concentrate on goals), emotional control strategies (arousal control, visualization), and behavioral strategies (change/control environment, and follow routines). Both of these studies, while finding slightly different results (based on the questions asked and specificity of the situational characteristics), supported the notion that coping is a dynamic process (Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1993; Gould, Finch, & Jackson, 1993).

What has been learned about Coping?

Coping is a well-researched area in sport because of the potential to improve both the sport experience and sport performance by reducing stressors and overall stress levels of individuals. Along those lines, much of the research had focused on trying to identify consistent and

characteristic coping responses to stressors to allow for prediction of athlete behavior and the design of intervention programs to assist athletes in their coping attempts (Hoar et al., 2006). A brief review of coping styles, antecedents to coping, and coping outcomes will be presented in an effort to summarize what has been learned about coping in sport.

Coping styles. Coping styles focus on the idea that individuals' coping efforts are consistent across time. In other words, coping is trait-like, rather than state-like. This means that coping actions across time are stable and consistent across different stressful situations (Hoar et al. 2006). The trait-like approach to coping is conceptually different to what has been presented thus far, which suggests that coping is a dynamic process (Lazarus, 1999; Gould, Jackson, & Finch, 1993). There is a growing body of literature on the temporal stability and situational consistency of coping, but results have been mixed, with moderate variability found in coping strategies (Crocker & Isaak, 1997; Gaudreau, Lapierre, & Blondin, 2001; Hoar et al. 2006). Lazarus (1999) advocates that consistency in coping behaviors is due to consistent appraisals on similar stressors, resulting in preferred coping strategies. These preferred coping strategies are not described as trait-like due to the continuous transactional process that occurs during stress, appraisal, and coping, resulting in a fluid choice of coping strategies (Lazarus, 1999). Hoar et al. (2006) suggested that there are measurement and design limitations in the literature that prevent true measurement of trait-like coping strategies, such as low sample size and thus statistical power. Therefore, the evidence on whether coping styles exist is mixed, and additional research is required to examine coping and determine how trait-like versus state-like it is.

Coping effectiveness – the goodness of fit hypothesis. According to the goodness of fit hypothesis, effective coping requires a match between the context and the coping strategies used (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). If a stressful situation, like choosing what club or coach to swim

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for is deemed to be "controllable" (e.g., families can choose what club and/or coach they select for their youth swimmer), then it requires greater usage of active, problem-focused forms of coping (e.g., gaining information about each club or coach), whereas a "lack of control" over stressors such as what other swimmers enter the child's district championship meet would require a more emotion-focused passive form of coping (e.g., using controlled breathing to ease the stress associated with good swimmers entering a child's race) because little can be done to change these stress sources. The fit between appraisal of control and coping strategies is known as goodness of fit (Folkman, 1984), and it is suggested that the better the goodness of fit, the more effective coping outcomes will be (Folkman & Moskowitz). However, research assessing goodness of fit has demonstrated mixed results. Christensen, Benotch, Wiebe, and Lawton (1995) found that matching planful problem solving with controllable stressors and emotional self-control with less controllable stressors related to better adherence in hemodialysis patients. Macrodimitris and Endler (2001), however, only found support for matching low perceived control and emotion-focused coping and not between high-perceived control and instrumental coping strategies for patients with type-2 diabetes. The goodness of fit hypothesis makes rational sense and has received some support in the literature, but not unanimous support, indicating that more research is required (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

  Antecedents to coping. Through the extensive research in coping a number of antecedents have been identified as influencing coping strategies, although whether these antecedents influence coping as mediators or moderators of the stress-coping relationship is heavily debated in the literature (Hoar et al., 2006). The identified antecedents include social and environmental antecedents, personality antecedents, and developmental antecedents (e.g., social roles, goal orientations, and sport expertise respectively) (Hoar et al., 2006). Overall, Hoar et al. (2006)

summarized the research by suggesting that those with a task-orientation, internal and unstable attributions, low competitive trait anxiety, high self-esteem, and high trait confidence and dispositional optimism tend to use problem-focused coping strategies in sport. Whereas those who have the converse are more likely to use emotion-focused or avoidance coping strategies. Hoar et al. (2006) suggested caution in interpreting the results from coping antecedent studies due to methodological issues and the fact that very few studies actually look at the transactional nature of coping (Lazarus, 1999).

Coping outcomes. There are a number of outcomes of coping, and they can be grouped in terms of functional outcomes, emotional outcomes, and psychosomatic outcomes (Hoar et al., 2006). Functional outcomes include athletic performance, goal attainment and discrepancy indices, and longevity and desire to continue in sport (Hoar et al. 2006). Research on functional outcomes has suggested a weak relationship between coping and performance (Haney & Long, 1995), that task-oriented coping strategies (e.g., increased effort, planning) are positively related to goal attainment (Gaudreau & Blondin, 2002; Gaudreau, Blondin, & Lapierre, 2002) and desire to continue in sport (Kim & Duda, 2003), and the converse is true, such that withdrawal and disengagement coping strategies (e.g., behavioral disengagement) were negatively related to goal attainment and desire to continue. Emotional outcomes from coping efforts in sport are competitive state anxiety and affective states (Hoar et al., 2006). Much of the limited research on competitive state anxiety and coping has utilized cross-sectional designs, making it difficult to ascertain if anxiety or coping attempts occurred first. Despite that, there is a link between disengagement coping strategies and increased levels of somatic and cognitive state anxiety, with Ntoumanis and Biddle (2000) finding task-oriented coping strategies were related to facilitative anxiety, whereas disengagement coping strategies were related to debilitative anxiety. Similarly, task-oriented

coping strategies are associated with positive affect and disengagement strategies with negative affect (Gaudreau & Blondin, 2002), although this relationship may be mediated by goal attainment (Amiot, Gaudreau, & Blanchard, 2004). Finally, psychosomatic outcomes included athletic injuries and burnout (Hoar et al., 2006). Udry (1997) found that coping strategies used by athletes recovering from knee surgery explained between 15% (pre-surgery) and 44% (post-surgery) of behavioral adherence to a rehabilitation program, and that instrumental coping was particularly effective. Finally, Gould, Udry, Tuffey, and Loehr (1996) found that burned out athletes were less likely to use instrumental coping strategies than non-burned out peers.

Overall conclusions. It is clear from the above research that there are adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies available to athletes. In general, instrumental coping strategies are adaptive and disengagement strategies are maladaptive. However, there are a number of different strategies under instrumental coping, and these may include both problem- and emotion-focused coping (e.g., planning, positive reappraisal, increased effort, and suppression of competing activities) (Hoar et al., 2006). The variety of available coping strategies indicated that no one coping strategy works for every individual, and athletes should have a range of adaptive coping strategies available to them as different strategies will be needed for different stressors (Gould, Finch, & Jackson, 1993; Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996). Additionally, just like coping antecedents, outcomes of coping efforts have some theoretical limitations, including a lack of longitudinal research to better understand the continuous nature of stress, appraisal, and coping (Hoar et al., 2006). Finally, despite the breadth of research on sports parents and on coping in general, there have been no studies to date that examine the coping strategies employed by sport parents, leaving an important gap in the literature that warrants further investigation.

The Rationale for the Current Study

This literature review has summarized key literature, both within and outside of the sporting context, pertaining to stress and coping as it is likely to apply to sport parents,. It also has reviewed key research on the importance of parents in the youth sport experience, particularly their actions and behaviors, but also highlighted the limited amount of research on the consequence of youth sport involvement for parents. Again, this lack of research is important considering the reciprocal process of parenting, and the influence parents have on their children through their actions and behaviors. Of the limited amount of research that has been conducted on sport parent stressors, there are some limitations, and as yet there is no research on sport parent coping strategies. The limitations and gaps in the sport parent literature are described below:

- Lack of inclusion of both parents: Previous research on outcomes for parents involved in youth sport has not included both parents of an athlete. In both of the Harwood and Knight (2009a; 2009b) studies, only four parent-dyads or eight parents completed the survey or were interviewed together. Not including both parents in studying stress (and coping) potentially limits the interpretation of stressors within a family. To fully understand stress and subsequent coping, it is important to understand how stressors are interpreted by each individual and also as a parent-dyad, as this is likely to be key to understanding coping strategies within a family (Boss, 1992; Kazak, 1992).

- Limited number of sport contexts: Prior research on parental stress has been conducted in only two sports (soccer and tennis), therefore a need exists to study additional sports (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). More specifically, tennis and soccer have been reviewed, representing an individual sport known for its high financial and travel requirements and a team sport in the academy context. Also, each of

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these studies was conducted inside the United Kingdom that is known for club rather than school sport. Therefore, outside of tennis and elite youth soccer (due to the sampling at soccer academies) more research needs to be conducted to see if stressors are similar in other sports and at different skill levels, i.e., below the elite level. This is particularly important as the majority of parents will have children in the non-elite category. Additionally, are sport parent stressors the same for sports that are school-based in the United States?

- A lack of studies examining parent coping strategies: While some studies have examined parent stressors, none have directly addressed coping strategies parents use to deal with stressors elicited through youth sport involvement. Knight and Holt (2013) investigated strategies parents used to facilitate their child's participation in tennis. While this study was not an examination of coping strategies it did highlight strategies parents currently used to enhance tennis involvement (e.g., spouses working together) and areas parents feel they require greater support. Naturally, there is overlap between the stressors elicited from the parent stress studies and areas parents feel like they need more support, as it is likely parents perceive the transaction between themselves and the situation as being one which presents threat, harm/loss, challenge, or perhaps benefit and thus result in increased stress levels. Outside of Knight and Holt (2013), parent coping is almost completely unstudied for the purposes of understanding the parent perspective and represents a large gap in the research that needs addressing.

Based on the limitations and gaps in the current literature regarding stress and coping in youth sport parents, there are three purposes to the current study:

1. To determine the benefits and the challenges (stressors) that parents with a child involved in youth swimming experience. More specifically, this study will investigate the competitive, organizational, developmental, and personal stressors experienced by youth sport parents in the sport of swimming. Swimming has been chosen as it represents a sport where a portion of each competitive year is spent in the school system, adding a new context to the literature. Additionally, swimming is a sport that has associated costs and requires travel for competition, which should generate stressors for parents.

2. To explore and examine the coping strategies identified and used by sport parents to deal with the stressors experienced through their child's youth sport involvement. There is a specific need to understand the individual coping strategies as they are directly related to specific stressors, and/or categories of stressors. The potential to link coping strategies to stressors is particularly important for informing and educating other parents of youth swimmers.

3. To conduct sport parent research examining stressors and coping strategies that includes both parents to gain a better understanding of both individual and family functioning.

It is expected, based on current literature (Harwood et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b; Skinner et al., 2003), that parents will experience developmental stressors (those regarding the development of their child both as an athlete and non-athlete), organizational stressors (related to the club in which their child swims), and competitive stressors (originating from experiences at competitive meets). Additionally, to deal with those stressors parents will engage in a variety of coping strategies (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Skinner et al., 2003), including those that directly address a stressor (problem-focused coping, e.g., co-ordination of efforts between parents) and those that help reappraise interpretations of a stressor (emotion-focused coping, e.g., emotional

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support from spouse). Finally, it is expected that parent-dyads will co-ordinate as a way of reducing perceived stress and increase the efficiency of coping strategies used. This co-ordination of effort is anticipated to always be positive with regard to stress management and coping.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

The sample for the study was comprised of 10 parent-dyads (10 mothers and 10 fathers) who are parents to current youth swimmers in North America. The participants had a range of sporting backgrounds, from college-level swimming experience through current recreational sport involvement to no previous sporting involvement. They were well-educated, with all participants having at least an undergraduate degree, and half of participants possessing a graduate degree. Participant's ages ranged from 32 to 51 years. Parent-dyad is the term used in this study to describe both parents of a child. In addition to having out-of-school club opportunities, swimming represents a sport where a portion of each competitive year is spent in the school system, adding a new sporting context to the literature. Additionally, swimming is a sport that has associated costs for pool time and equipment (e.g., swimsuits, pull-buoys, kick-boards), and it requires travel for competition. These constraints and requirements were likely to generate stressors for parents. In line with best practice, the number of dyads (10) was not predetermined but instead chosen as saturation of themes had been reached, and there was little to no new theme generation at that time (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Additionally, dyads were chosen to allow for additional levels of analysis, i.e., understanding individualized perspectives and also the shared experience of the pair that reflects family processes (Boss, 1992; Kazak, 1992). Inclusion and exclusion criteria were chosen in an effort to ensure that parent-dyads met the purposes of the study and to ensure information-rich responses from which appropriate analyses could be conducted. The inclusion criteria included: (a) a two parent intact family with at least one child participating in swimming; (b) the child participating in swimming must be in the specialization or investment years of

swimming involvement as determined by year-round involvement in swimming. The child may participate in other sports seasonally, but must be involved in swimming as their primary sport year round; and (c) coach and/or other swimming parent judged high-involvement of at least one of the parents in the youth swimming experience (explained in more detail below). Where parent, child, and family are defined as follows: (1) Parent - a primary care-giver, that is, a responsible adult who provides daily care for a child regardless of biological or legal guardianship; (2) Child - a child or adolescent who is aged below 18 years of age and dependent upon one or more parents; and (3) Family – a social group consisting of two parents and one or more children. Exclusion criteria are, one-parent families and children in the sampling or maintenance years of involvement.

Procedure

Participants and Recruitment

Institutional review board approval was obtained from Michigan State University. A sample of 10 parent-dyads was recruited via a purposive-snowball method (Babbie, 2011; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). While saturation is a term most commonly associated with grounded theory, the purpose is to conduct enough interviews that new themes no longer emerge through further interviews (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Upon approval of the study, a snowball sampling technique (Babbie, 2011) was used, starting with the coaches of swimming clubs in North America, and then proceeding with recommendations from study participants.

Initial recruitment involved swimming clubs with year round training squads in the Mid-Michigan area, but soon expanded to clubs in other states within the United States using the methods listed below. The lead researcher contacted appropriate clubs (as determined by Michigan Swimming, a state governing body affiliate of USA Swimming), explained the purposes of the study, and then recruited participants using coach referral, mental-skills coach referral, and swim

meet attendance, all of which are explained below. Initial participant recruitment was driven by coaches because they typically have a good knowledge of the level and degree of parent involvement, as demonstrated by Gould et al. (2008), providing an evidence based sampling strategy (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). From initial referral, participant recruitment followed the snowball sampling strategy described below.

1. *Coach Referral:* The head coach was contacted, and having had the purposes of the study explained, was asked to identify the most involved parents of swimmers of the appropriate stage of talent development are in their squads. Coaches were then asked to forward the recruitment flyer (Appendix A) to those parents. The flyer contained information about the study and contact information for the lead researcher if parents were interested in participation.

2. *Mental-Skills Coach Referral:* A mental-skills coach that works closely with swimming athletes and clubs in a South Eastern State was contacted, and having had the purposes of the study explained was asked to identify the most involved parents of swimmers of the appropriate stage of talent development were in the club in which she worked. The mental-skills coach was then asked to forward the recruitment flyer (Appendix A) to those parents. The flyer contained information about the study and contact information for the lead researcher if parents were interested in participation.

3. *Swim Meet Attendance:* Permission was requested from the host swimming club to attend an invitational swim meet (Appendix D.). The lead researcher had an information table at the swim meet, where the recruitment flyer was used to draw attention and the lead researcher was available to promote and explain the study and answer potential participant questions. During these conversations the lead researcher asked questions pertaining to inclusion and exclusion criteria, and interested parents added their name, number of children, child ages, and contact

information to a sign-up sheet. Importantly, it was explained to parents that although they registered their interest to participate in the study at this stage, they may not be selected for the study, and those selected would be contacted directly. From a list of parents, the lead researcher determined that a small number had children that were most likely too young to be in the specialization and investment years, and then contacted the remaining parents, of which three parents still had interest in participating and where both parents were available to schedule interviews.

4. *Snowball sampling strategy:* Coach and mental-skills coach referral, and meet attendance recruitment elicited most of the parent-dyad participants for the study. These participants were asked, as the final part of their interview, to consider other parents they knew that were highly involved in the swimming activities of their children. Similar to coaches, parents knew of other parents who were highly involved in their child's sport, due to relationships built through being a swimming parent. Participants were asked to forward the recruitment flyer (Appendix A) to those parents identified and ask them to contact the lead researcher (contact details on flyer) if they were interested in participating.

5. *Consent of second parent:* Naturally, the recruitment methods for the study meant that the interest and consent of only one parent in a dyad was obtained first. Therefore interest and consent were sought from the second parent before proceeding with data collection (Appendix B).

6. *Incentive:* As an incentive to participate, all parent-dyads participating in the interview stage of data collection were offered a $15 gift card for either Amazon.com or Meijer (a local supermarket).

Data Collection

Data were collected via semi-structured interviews, moving from broad to more specific questions based on previous research on parent benefits (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008), stressors experienced by youth sport parents (Knight, Drew, & Holt, 2010; Knight & Holt 2009a; 2009b), as well as instances and strategies parents use to cope with the stressors faced (similar to Gould, Finch, & Jackson, 1993; see Appendix C for interview guides). Interviews were conducted at a mutually beneficial time and location for the parents (e.g., during a practice or at parents' home), and due to the remote location of some participants, some interviews were conducted via phone. Parents were interviewed separately, but using the same interview guide (Appendix C). Parents were interviewed separately for a number of reasons, including: allowing parents to be more open and honest with opinions, especially those relating to the other parent and where disagreements may have existed; getting both individual perspectives and comparison of stressors and coping strategies between parents; and triangulation of stressors, coping strategies, and other facts between parents (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Probes and questioning specifically targeted areas where there may have been differences in opinion between parents to better understand how stressors and coping were perceived individually, as well as between parents.

Demographic questionnaire. Before each interview, a short demographic questionnaire was administered (see Appendix B) to ensure that participants met the inclusion and exclusion criteria and ascertain additional detail regarding parent and child backgrounds that might influence stressors and coping strategies. Demographic information included: parent name, age, sex, education level, occupation, income level, and previous and/or current parent sport experience. Additionally, the number of children in a family, the age and sex of the children, whether each child was currently involved in swimming, to what level, and how long each may have participated

in swimming, plus a list of other sports and extracurricular activities (e.g., debate club or band) that each child may be involved in, with the length and level of involvement in those sports and activities. The demographic questionnaire had three purposes: (1) it provided important demographic information which was used to compare parent-dyads (e.g., family income and parent occupations); (2) it obtained information relevant to parent-dyad stress and thus directed question probes in interviews (e.g., number of children and the number of activities children participate in, cost of swimming); and (3) it acted as a screening tool for inclusion criteria for the study (e.g., level of swimming involvement).

Interview process. Initially, the lead investigator asked questions about what it is like to be a sport parent, before moving on to more specific questions of what challenges and benefits there are to being a swimming parent. Specific examples of challenges and benefits as they related specifically to parenting within swimming and to life outside of sport (e.g., partner relationships, etc.) were probed to get as detailed information on each as possible. The interviewer focused more on the challenges elicited to determine what is stressful about the challenges for parents.

As the participant discussed stressors, the lead researcher turned questioning toward coping strategies for each of the stressors. Parents discussed how they manage stress, or cope with each stressor elicited, with probes ensuring that all coping strategies had been mentioned. Additionally, probes asked parents to describe how the strategies they use helped them to manage stress. The goal of these probes was to understand not only what coping strategies were used, but the mechanism by which coping strategies worked. As with stressors, as the participant was interviewed he or she was asked to discuss how the other parent had similar or dissimilar ways of coping with the stressor in question and if that helped or hindered the current participant in his or her coping attempts. For example, Knight and Holt (2013) found parent-dyads distributed their

combined resources to most effectively manage their child's tennis career. So when a couple is presented with two simultaneous stressors, Parent A may feel like he or she has the personal resources to cope with the first of the stressors, but a lack of personal resources to deal with the second. However, Parent B may have a different set of personal resources that allows him or her to cope with the second stressor but not the first. Between the two parents they can distribute their resources so that each parent deals with the stressor where they have the greatest strength. As a practical example, one parent may enjoy booking hotels for travel and feel he/she has a strength for finding good deals, while the second parent may dislike this task, find it stressful, and thus focus on another potential stressor such as actually transporting the child (Knight & Holt, 2013). Thus coping strategies for a stressor may be different for each parent, but allocation of resources and social support from a partner represents a more general coping strategy as a parent-dyad.

The questioning regarding stressors and coping strategies was intended to be a somewhat iterative process, such that coping strategies for a specific stressor were discussed immediately after the stressor was discussed. The interview continued until all stressors and coping strategies for the parent had been exhausted. Participants were then asked to give recommendations for other sport parents to deal with the challenges involved with having a child in swimming. Specifically, how would they recommend personally managing the stress, helping a partner to deal with the stress, and maintaining a good family life and marriage while being a swimming parent?

During the final part of the interview, the list of emerging stressors (challenges) was presented to participants, and they were asked to examine the list to see if it accurately represented their stressors. Where participants felt the list was incomplete they were asked to add to the list, and further probes regarding the additional items were asked. Parents were then asked to rate the level of stress they experience with each of the stressors on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 was no

stress and 10 was maximum stress. Finally, to assist in the snowball sampling technique, parents were asked if they knew of any other swimming parents with a child or children of a similar age and swimming standard to their own son/daughter who are highly involved in their child's sporting activities and might be interested in participating. If the answer was yes, parents were given a recruitment flyer (paper copy and/or electronic) and asked to pass it along to their contact(s).

Data Analysis

Interviews were audio-recorded and data from the interviews was transcribed verbatim, resulting in 536 pages and 19446 lines of single spaced text. Transcripts were read and re-read by the lead investigator to ensure immersion in the data. Hierarchical thematic content analysis was then conducted using both inductive and deductive elements (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Previous studies examining youth sport parent stressors (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b) and benefits ('joys'; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008) have been conducted and formed reference points for initial analysis of parent stressors in the current context by acting as 'sensitizing concepts' (Blumer, 1954) that gave the lead investigator examples of stressors and benefits, and provide initial guidance for coding. Inductive analysis was used to create initial raw data themes and hierarchical structure, and deductive analysis was restricted to placing higher order themes into general dimensions. Inductive analysis only was used to determine parent coping strategies. The use of both inductive and deductive analyses was similar to the process of abductive analysis outlined by Patton (2014) and was deemed appropriate for stressors and benefits due to consistency across previous studies on parent stressors. Abductive analysis also allows for understanding the change of context for the current study i.e., sport, competition level, and inclusion of both parents in the interview process from previous literature (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). Inductive analysis was particularly important

for coping strategies as the investigator looked to understand the experiences of youth sport parents, and was enhanced by the fact that no research to date had examined parent coping strategies in youth sport in general and swimming in particular. Stressors and coping strategies were initially analyzed separately to generate a hierarchical structure of each, before links between specific stressors and coping strategies were assessed. There are both nomothetic and case study analyses of the data, with nomothetic analysis following the steps below (Côté, Salmela, Baria, & Russell, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994):

1. Node creation: Transcripts were read line by line with meaningful comments and quotes from the raw data that relate to benefits, stressors, or coping strategies coded as individual meaning units, or nodes. Additionally, interesting quotes that were meaningful to the narrative of the individual that did not fall within benefits, stressors, or coping strategies were coded as general experiences and used for case study construction. These general experience codes were not analyzed using thematic analysis.

2. Creation of raw data themes: Nodes allow for aggregation of similar quotes and comments of parents into raw data themes. In the case of parent benefits and stressors, some known benefits and stressors from previous studies allowed for some deductive reasoning in grouping nodes both in creating raw themes. However, the lead investigator made a deliberate effort to look for alternative ways of interpreting and aggregating themes for stressors. This involved cross-theme analysis to determine if themes had similar properties, if they could be combined, or if indeed they would be best represented by different raw data themes, known as constant comparison (Patton, 2014).

3. Higher order themes creation: Raw data themes were clustered together around common, underlying higher-order categories.

4. Hierarchical categorization: Further organization of higher order themes into a hierarchical structure was conducted until it accurately represented the data, again using constant comparison (Patton, 2014). General dimensions of benefits, stressors, and coping strategies were developed via this method. The general dimensions for benefits and coping strategies were developed deductively using prior research (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008)

5. Selective coding: Similar to selective coding suggested by Straus and Corbin (1990), propositions that link general stressors and coping strategies were sought, in an effort to determine if specific coping strategies could be linked to specific stressors across participants.

6. Simultaneous creation of case study profiles (see below) allowed for further immersion in the raw data, understanding of parent-dyad perspectives, and thus more appropriate creation of themes, hierarchical structure, and selective coding. Therefore, although listed as a separate and final step, this is a continuous and simultaneous process of profile creation, alteration, and comparison to help inform inductive analyses. This constant comparison allowed for a more detailed understanding of both the nomothetic and case study analyses by each type of analysis to inform the other.

Additional to the nomothetic analysis across all participants, case study profiles were created. The case study profiles represent a detailed explanation of the stressors and associated coping strategies of each parent-dyad. In particular the individual experiences of each parent in the dyad, as well as similarities and differences between the parents have been reported. While nomothetic aggregation of themes is important for a general understanding of swimming parents, a case study profile allows for greater understanding of the unique narrative of stressors and coping

strategies of each parent and parent-dyad. They also have the advantage of providing a holistic account of the parents' experiences, for which qualitative research is particularly well suited. Assuming sport parent education is the end goal of sport parent research, the case study profiles then give practitioners clear examples of different parent-dyads. Each case study profile also contains a reflexive statement from the lead investigator in reference to the specific parent-dyad, detailing any assumptions or biases such that the investigator was cognizant of and tried to bracket out as he conducted the analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Secondly, the profiles detail the demographic information. Thirdly, the main content of the profile is an in-depth description of each parent and the parent-dyad, their perceived benefits of being a youth sports parent, their stressors and rating of those stressors, specific coping strategies used for each of the stressors, and advice for other parents. Data for the case study come from the hierarchical themes from the nomothetic analysis, plus observations and notes made by the primary investigator during interviews. Data from case-studies also informed nomothetic analysis, as described above. Finally, profiles were concluded with a summarizing statement for each parent-dyad case study.

Methodological Rigor

Several methods were used to enhance the methodological rigor of the study, including use of trained investigators, a detailed audit trail, peer debriefing, and investigator reflexivity statements.

Investigator training

The lead investigator has undergone graduate level training in qualitative research methodologies and was responsible for conducting interviews, being the primary analyst and interpreter of data, and for adherence to the following procedures for methodological rigor. The first analysis assistant is an undergraduate research assistant that has completed coursework in

research methods and has experience as a high school swimmer. The first analysis assistant was trained by the lead investigator in coding interview transcripts, and consequently was primarily responsible for coding transcribed interviews. The hierarchical thematic analysis was then assessed on two occasions by peer debriefers. The peer debriefers were instructed to review, critically probe, and challenge decisions made by the lead investigator, including the emergent framework (Creswell & Miller, 2000). On the first occasion, the emergent themes and hierarchical framework were presented to a secondary analysis assistant who has training in graduate level qualitative research, has previously conducted qualitative research, and importantly is a youth sport parent (including school swimming). On the second occasion, the emergent themes and hierarchical frameworks were presented to a group of seven graduate level researchers in the field of sport and exercise psychology. Additionally, two of the graduate researchers had experience in conducting research with sports parents. Four of these researchers has graduate level training in qualitative methodologies and prior experience conducting qualitative research. Further details on how researcher triangulation and peer debriefing was used to enhance methodological rigor can be found below.

Researcher triangulation and peer debriefing

Triangulation is the process of establishing credibility by attempting to find convergence among multiple sources of information, in this case, the analysis of the primary investigator and analysis assistants (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The primary investigator and first analysis assistant were responsible for the creation of nodes and themes from inductive analysis. Both independently coded the transcripts of one participating parent-dyad before coming together to discuss meaning units and reach consensus. Both then independently coded the transcripts for a second parent-dyad before meeting to discuss meaning units and reach consensus. The primary investigator then

continued and coded the remaining participant transcripts, and then used inductive analyses to enter raw meaning units into the hierarchical framework. The secondary analysis assistant and graduate research group were used as peer debriefers to review, critically probe and challenge decisions made by the lead investigator and the resulting emergent framework. The secondary analysis assistant was asked to specifically focus on the quality of interpretation and analysis as it relates to parenting (Creswell & Miller, 2000). It was the responsibility of the peer debriefers to look for disconfirming evidence, a counter narrative to the one proposed by the lead investigator (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Interpretations of the data and the subsequent construction of the emergent framework required consensus between the primary investigator and peer debriefers, and feedback from peer debriefers was used to alter and enhance the emergent framework.

Audit trail

An audit trail is a narrative account of all the research decisions and activities for the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). It is a process of journaling and memoing, such that not only is there a chronological record of data collection and analysis actions, there are reflective statements pertaining to the thought processes and decisions made during data collection, analysis, and write-up (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The use of an audit trail is particularly important in the research process of a qualitative study as intended methods may need to change or may prove inadequate for the purpose once data collection and analyses have begun. If the audit trail is kept appropriately, it should allow external reviews of the study to judge the credibility of the procedures, inferences made, and overall results (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Member checking

Member checking is the process of allowing the research participants to become part of the validation of research results, by allowing them to view either the data or the interpretations or

both, and provide feedback (Creswell & Miller, 2000). As part of the interview process, parent-dyads were given the opportunity to provide "in interview" feedback on emerging results regarding stressors and to comment and/or add to those stressors. The lead investigator asked parent participants to review a list of emergent stressors based on notes taken by the lead researcher. At this point parents could add, remove, or modify any stressor listed. Parents were then asked to rate stressors elicited during the interview on a scale from 1 to 10, where one is low stress, in order to better understand the level of stress felt with each stressor. This type of information is critical, as some stressors were regularly reported by parents, but were actually considered to be low in stress for most parents. Thus, allowing participants to provide feedback in this way enhanced the understanding of collected data.

Reflexivity statements

The primary investigator completed regular reflexivity statements as part of the audit trail to ensure ongoing reflection upon assumptions and biases throughout the data collection and analysis procedure. Additionally, a final reflexive statement for each parent-dyad was written prior to construction of case study profiles so as to highlight potential biases and assumptions of the participants, and the statement is included in the case study profile. The purpose of the reflexive statements was to create awareness of assumptions and biases, especially social, cultural, and historical biases, and how these might shape inquiry, such that they can be suspended during analysis and write-up (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Example of bracketing. The initial reflexivity statement for this study can be found below.

Lead Researcher Reflexivity Statements

Epistemological Beliefs and Approach to Research

The investigator believes both in the importance of individual experiences, but also in the occurrence of patterns in groups of people. I liken this to theories of dynamic systems (Thelen & Smith, 1994). There are sometimes almost infinite degrees of freedom for a human being regarding behavior, but behaviors trend toward certain states of being due to 'rate limiters' or systems (e.g., life experience or emotion) that push people to behave in a certain way. These behaviors are described by control parameters, the key identifiers for behaviors, such as language used. In other words, there are certain experiences, family compositions, etc. that will mean that typical types of behavior are displayed by individuals. This is what dynamic systems theories call the view from above – ways of describing all human behavior in simple terms. However, it is also important that we understand the experiences of individuals and how they construct their reality are just as important, because describing people by control parameters or typical behaviors is very limiting to the human experience. In dynamic systems, this is the view from below, the individual differences. What I believe to be important then, is, (1) an understanding of what the rate limiters and control parameters of human behavior regarding certain phenomena; and (2) an understanding of what is unique about individual cases. This orientation guides my research in general and this study in particular

Understanding how parents construct their own reality and using this as a way of understanding the youth sport experience matches well with my overall philosophy. In the current study one-on-one interviews have been deemed acceptable as a way to ascertain information and I have tried to uncover both patterns across parents and to describe the unique experiences of each parent.

Given the interview method selected, it is also important to reflect on whether or not interviews can actually achieve the purposes of the study. First, whether the stress-coping relationship is always a conscious process needs to be questioned – how self-aware are parents? If the stress-coping is conscious parents should be able to comment in depth about their stressors and coping strategies. However, if it is not then parents may struggle to elucidate exactly what stressors they experience and how they cope with those stressors. I believe the answer is actually both. Some stressors and coping strategies will be of a sufficient level that they will be able to describe them in detail, and some will not, they will be things that they 'just do' without thinking about them. Additionally, some parents will be more self-aware and able to discuss their thoughts in detail, while others will naturally be less self-aware. Importantly, the overall purpose of this research, in the long term, is to help create educational materials for clubs, coaches, and parents regarding working with parents and reducing their stress. It is unlikely that any stressors experienced or coping strategies used that parents cannot explain will be sufficiently simple enough to include as part of education delivered by lay populations.

Regarding the Current Study

I had a career in swimming as an athlete from a very young age until, right through high school before I became a waterpolo player at University. My entire family became involved in swimming because of my participation in the sport. My younger brothers and I were all very successful; I competed in district, regional, and national level competition, as did elder of my two brothers. My youngest brother was even more successful, becoming an age-group national champion, being selected for the British Swimming offshore training group, and competing in two Olympic trials. Each of us has subsequently used our time in swimming to pursue careers related to sport, such as studying sport and exercise science and teaching physical education. I therefore

hold the sport of swimming in high regard and consequently approve of a committed pursuit of the sport to a high level. I will have to be aware of this, especially when interviewing and analysing transcripts from parents who may have a contradictory view

As the eldest child I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to watch my parents deliberate about what was best for the family in general and my brother in particular (with regard to swimming). Which club should the family be at and if that matches with the club the youngest brother needed to be at, what coach would be best, how and why we were or were not improving, trying to find metrics that demonstrated improvement over maturational gains, etc. Naturally I care very much for my own parents and believe that although they may not have always made perfect choices, they genuinely had everyone's best interests at heart. In fact, it is a desire to put my own parents experiences into the perspective of other parents that led me to want to study swimming parents, a quest to answer a typical question of children – are my parents normal?

Therefore, due to my personal experiences, and those I have gleaned from reading relevant research, I have several preconceived ideas regarding swimming parents. The first is that parents will be highly invested in their child's swimming involvement, perhaps not in terms of winning, but in terms of athletic and life-skill development of their children. The second is that all parents are trying their best at all times and that they are inherently good people. The third is that parents are bought into swimming as a whole, and therefore have taken time to understand the sport such that they can support the needs of their children. The fourth is that, all parent will want, and enjoy, working with their partner in providing the youth sport experience, thus making the study of parent dyads relevant and important. Finally, all parents want the best for their children, but in sport (swimming specifically) it is (1) not always possible to determine what is the best course of action; (2) what they believe is best might not be possible or accessible to them; and (3) what they believe

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to be best actually might not be correct. Remembering there are no control groups in real life, parents are faced with the guilt and stress of perhaps not doing the "best" for their children because of an inability to compare outcomes with unknown alternative routes. Again, I must be mindful of these beliefs, especially when interviewing and analyzing transcripts of parents who perhaps run contrary to this belief system, as it may present me with opportunities for additional insight into the parent experience.

One aspect that also must be considered is that I am not a parent myself. This has potential to be positive or negative when it comes to the current study, particularly in data collection and analysis. On the one hand not being a parent means I do not have as many preconceived notions about what being a parent, or sport parent, are. I am more likely to ask questions about topics that a parent might consider to be tacit knowledge and thus not in need of asking. However, on the other hand, this lack of tacit knowledge may inhibit my ability to accurately understand parent experiences or assume I understand when I do not. Therefore it will be crucial to ask parents to explain their experiences and truly capture their lived experience, and to use peer reviewers to review subsequent analysis to ensure I am capturing the participants' experiences accurately.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Analysis of the interviews led to creation of four areas of results: benefits, parent stressors, parent coping strategies, and general experiences. Benefits, parent stressors, and parent coping strategies (see Tables 2, 3, and 4) will be presented and discussed in further detail in this results section. General experiences was used as a code for important information that might be pertinent to case study analyses (e.g., a narrative from the father of family one regarding a pre-meet ritual in which he and his daughter participate) and as such will not be presented in the results section outside of details that exist in the case-studies. The results section is further subdivided into nomothetic analyses across all parents and case study analyses that examine each of the parent-dyad narratives in more detail. In the nomothetic analyses, general dimensions, higher order, and lower-order themes will be presented. Due to the large number of themes only those where more than half of participants (≥ 10), or where the author determines themes are notable / novel, will be discussed in detail with sub-themes and raw-data quotes used to illustrate meaning. Family and parent sex also will be noted e.g., family 1 male (F1M) or family 1 female (F1F). The case study analyses section will present important details from several illustrative parent-dyad case studies. It will also highlight any particularly interesting themes not included in the nomothetic analysis.

Participants

The participants for this study were 10 parent dyads, (10 males, 10 females) aged between 32 and 51 years of age, with a mean age of 44.25 years. This was an overwhelming well educated group with 11 of the parents having completed a graduate level degree and the remaining nine all having a college undergraduate degree, with occupations including stay at home parents, professional positions (e.g., teachers, human resources managers), and one business owner. The

estimated cost of swimming ranged between $1000 and $9000, with a mean cost of ~$4150. Of

the participants, 16 had previously played competitive sport with three of the parents having been

competitive swimmers in either high school or college. Just under half of the parents (9) were still

participating regularly in sport at the time of the study, all at the recreational or club levels. Eight

of the 10 families had two children, with the remaining two families having three children. A

summary of this information, along with a unique family narrative can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Participant family demographics

Family Number	Family Members	Age	Primary Sport Involvement (P = Previous)	Unique Narrative
1	Mother	48	Running	Mother is a stay at home parent and father works out of the home
	Father	48	Golf	
	Daughter	14	Swimming	
	Son	7	Tumbling	
2	Mother	47	Marathoning	Unexpected low performances from senior year son and sibling balance stressors between son and younger daughter
	Father	49	Hockey (P)	
	Son	18	Swimming	
	Daughter	12	Swimming	
3	Mother	32	None	Younger parents. Stay at home father.
	Father	34	Soccer	
	Daughter	14	Swimming	
	Son	8	Soccer	
4	Mother	48	Field Hockey (P)	Family coming toward the end of its swimming involvement
	Father	48	Swimming (P)	
	Daughter	20	Swimming (P)	
	Daughter	17	Swimming	
5	Mother	51	Running	Twin daughters have both experienced recent injuries
	Father	48	Football (P)	
	Daughter	16	Swimming	
	Daughter	16	Swimming	
7	Mother	44	None	The mother is less invested in sport as the *only* activity worth pursuing
	Father	44	Softball	
	Daughter	14	Swimming	
	Son	12	Swimming	
	Daughter	12	None	
8	Mother	43	None	Father struggled to identify his role within the swimming environment
	Father	46	Tennis (P)	
	Daughter	13	Swimming	
	Daughter	11	Soccer	

Table 2 (cont'd)

Family Number	Family Members	Age	Primary Sport Involvement (P = Previous)	Unique Narrative
9	Mother	43	None	Family is close to the beginning of their swimming involvement
	Father	43	Softball	
	Daughter	13	Swimming	
	Son	11	Soccer	
10	Mother	45	Skiing (P)	Father is a parent-coach in swimming
	Father	45	Swimming (P)	
	Son	18	Swimming	
	Daughter	15	Swimming	
	Daughter	13	Diving	
11	Mother	39	Triathlon	The mother is currently training for an Ironman triathlon
	Father	39	Running	
	Daughter	12	Swimming	
	Son	8	Swimming	

Nomothetic Analyses

Nomothetic, by definition, is supposed to represent themes that generalize across participants in a sample, in this case across the parent-dyads of youth swimmers participating in the current study. Constant-case comparison means that while individual stressors and coping stressors can be disaggregated as individual constructs, the experience of a stressor and subsequent coping strategy cannot, and they are highly individualized. As such, a number of highly idiosyncratic themes emerged, which will be represented in frequency tables in nomothetic analyses, and some of these idiosyncratic themes will be addressed in more detail in case study profiles. However, the threshold for the minimum number of parents (or raw data references) a theme needs for it to be presented is not well defined in the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, the lead investigator feels that items represented by a single parent may still be important qualitative experiences. Therefore in the following descriptions of benefit, stressor, and coping strategy themes (and associated tables 3, 4, and 5), items with few to one citation have been included because, as Patton (2014) suggests, singular anecdotes viewed in the context within which

they are given may serve as important references for future hypotheses and inquiry. That is not to say these nodes are treated with the same importance as others, but serve as a basis for discussion. As an example, one parent also was a swimming coach and thus had a number of potentially important themes that were not discussed by other non-coaching parents.

Benefits

Parents discussed a number of positive outcomes from having their child involved in swimming, and these were coded as benefits. Analysis of benefits identified four general dimensions: parent benefits, child benefits, benefits associated with swimming, and family benefits (see Table. 3). The four general dimensions contain ten higher-order themes, 27 subthemes, and 272 raw data citations from all 20 participants.

General dimension one: child benefits. Child benefits represent the positive outcomes parents perceive directly for child or children because they are involved in swimming. Child benefits can be broken into three higher order themes: child well-being, child holistic development, and affiliations.

Table 3. Parent Perceived Benefits of Involvement in Swimming

General Dimensions	Higher Order Themes	Lower Order Themes
Child Benefits (19-159)	Child Well-Being (19-56)	Child Success (13-24)
		Child Health, Safety, and Fitness (11-20)
		Child Happiness (8-12)
	Child Holistic Development (18-80)	Child Life-Skill Development (17-56)
		General Child Development (12-24)
	Affiliations (11-23)	Child friendships (10-15)
		Positive Relationships with other Adults (3-3)
		Team Involvement (3-5)
Parent Benefits (19-73)	Parent Experiences (17-35)	Rewarding and Enjoyable Experience (9-17)
		Being a Spectator (6-9)
		Travel opportunities(5-6)
		Pride in child (2-2)
		'Big' Meet Attendance (1-1)

Table 3. (cont'd)

General Dimensions	Higher Order Themes	Lower Order Themes
Parent Benefits Cont'd (19-73)	Affiliations (15-29)	Developing friendships (13-26)
		Involvement and Volunteering (3-3)
	Active Parent Roles (5-9)	Parent Involvement in child development (2-4)
		Learning about the sport (2-3)
		Coach sport children are involved in (1-2)
Swimming Benefits (10-14)	Environment (10-14)	Supportive and Competitive Environment (6-6)
		Sport for life (3-4)
		Good Coaches (2-4)
Family Benefits (7-26)	Family Function (7-26)	Father Involvement in Family Activities (5-15)
		Family Relationships (2-3)
		Provides Family Conversation (1-2)
		Family Structure (2-5)
		Family Identity (1-1)

Child well-being. The higher order theme of child well-being reflects parents' beliefs that involvement in swimming results in well-being for their child, both physically and psychologically, and is represented by three sub-themes: child success, child health, safety, and fitness, and child happiness. Child success was the most often reported benefit within child well-being and represents success not just as winning or outcome, but also mastery of swimming and progressing as an athlete. For example, the father from Family 7 said:

"… the first time they did a 500, which of course nowadays 500 would be nothing to her. But I imagine she was probably 9 and towards the end of the season our coach put her in the 500 which she was scared to death. But you know she, she did that, and felt really proud of herself and felt really accomplished by that" (F7M).

Parents felt that swimming had been a good sport for their children in terms of helping them learn about health, fitness, and safety. Safety was one of the main reasons why parents enrolled their child in swimming lessons and/or swim teams in the first place, so they would be capable of looking after themselves should they get into difficulty in water. Additional to that

original motivator, swimming was cited as providing an excellent setting for their children to both learn about and practice health and fitness behaviors. Many parents also appreciated that swimming is a life-skill, something that would keep their children safe across their lifetime and would serve as a way to remain fit and healthy beyond school or college, one parent stated "… this is a life skill, our kids will be good enough to swim … and I told [son] when he was very little, you can stop swimming when I know you can get me to shore" (F2M). Although less than half of the total number of parents, some recognized that swimming made their child happy, and that was an important factor for parents. As will become apparent when examining parent stressors and coping strategies, child happiness is a key component in parent stress levels, thus the child having fun and getting enjoyment from swimming is important to parents as illustrated by the following quote, "… her confidence level is just great to be around, you know, it kind of *exudes* her happiness and makes her happy" (F4F).

    Child holistic development. The higher-order theme of child development contains the subthemes of child life-skill development and general child development. A large proportion of parents interviewed discussed how swimming has been an excellent vehicle for their children to learn life-skills. In particular, parents mentioned skills such as time management, emotional regulation, discipline, goal-setting, dedication, and motivation, as demonstrated here by the father of family five "… but y'know discipline, time management, commitment, y'know focus and determination, y'know competitive edge". General child development contains other developmental attributes parents have attributed to swimming that are not life skills, including development of identity, coaching skills, self-esteem, and positive body image. One father stated, "I do think it's helped her confidence, but she has kind of an identity like "I'm a swimmer" and that was very helpful in middle school" (F7F). Some other parents chose swimming because its

self-comparative nature meant that their children felt more comfortable participating, or that their children would engage in less selfish behaviors in competition

> "In swimming because each kid is just swimming for them [sic] self…and soccer if you don't get to score a goal someone else gets to score the goal, you have to try and hog the ball otherwise, in swimming if someone else wins their event it doesn't detract at all from how you did in your event…" (F2F).

Affiliations. Finally, the higher-order theme of Affiliations is made up of three subthemes, the first of which is child friendships. These parents felt that swimming provided children with ready access to other children of similar ages, motivations, and what was considered a generally positive developmental environment. As the mother of Family 8 suggested, "It's a cool peer group. Right? So it's a nice group of kids she's with who are similarly minded outside of just a regular school group" (F8F). In some instances parents deliberately enrolled their child in sports for this reason, and swimming was the sport they chose.

> "I hear about some other sports where the kids might be a little rougher, they're not as focused on academics in those sports … with the swimming crowd everyone seems to be very good students, good families, good values and it's a really good peer group, made a lot of friends, and keeps you in really good shape" (F2F).

The second category, mentioned by three parents, was positive relationships with adults. Parents talked about how they felt it important that their children had the opportunity to form relationships with other adults, in each case the coach was mentioned in particular, e.g., "…the relationship with the coach I think it's positive as well, for her to have another adult in her life who knows her well and has high expectations for her and with whom she can process things" (F8F).

Considering the number of times coaches were mentioned as a stressor for parents (see the stressors section), it is important that they are also perceived as serving an important role for athletes.

Finally, there is team involvement, and much like child friendships, this theme represents parents' perception that being involved in a team environment is good for their child. One father stated, "… her times are phenomenal, for high school, so obviously people just attracted to her, so now she'll be a captain for that team, so it boosted her confidence a lot more with [high school]" (F3M). Also suggesting that involvement in a team was perceived as having benefits beyond the sport of swimming for some parents.

General dimension two: parent benefits. Parent benefits were broken down in to three higher order themes: parent experiences, affiliations, and active parent roles. Parent benefits are the positive aspects of swimming that directly affect the parents themselves.

Parent experiences. Parent experiences are opportunities parents have to experience things because their child is involved in swimming that they might not otherwise had the opportunity to enjoy. Overall, many parents described swimming as a rewarding and enjoyable experience, mainly because of the benefits of involvement. Parents discussed perceived benefits including being a spectator, travel opportunities, pride in their child, and 'big meet' attendance. Parents suggested that they enjoyed opportunity to go and watch their child compete, felt pride in their child's achievements, and enjoyed travelling to new places. One father summarized, "… as the parent, it's enjoyable and I enjoy going to the swim meets. …y'know I enjoy going to different pools, I enjoy the travelling, things like that" (F10M).

Affiliations. Affiliations represented groups to which parents belonged because their child is in swimming. The first such theme was parent friendships. Many parents suggested one of the best outcomes from having their child in sport was developing friendships with other parents that

understand their situation and have similar goals for their children. This is particularly important because parents often have a restricted amount of time for themselves, each other, their families, and socializing (see the stressors section of results). However, swimming also was felt to provide a ready set of people with whom they can make friendships and enjoy spending time. This is particularly important when they have to spend long days and weekends at competitions, as demonstrated here by the mother from Family 10.

> "… I get to have adult interaction with people who have children that are doing the same thing. … when you watch a swim meet you watch her a minute and a half and then you have a big long break in between events sometimes and it's good to have an adult sitting with you that you can have a conversation with" (F10F).

Parents also talked about being able to volunteer with the swimming clubs. This allowed parents not only to spend time with their child as they develop, but also to develop their own networks as the parents of youth swimmers. One mother shared, "I think it allowed us an opportunity to, to be involved and be part of her activity, through volunteerism" (F5M).

Active parent roles. Active parent roles was a much less frequently cited higher order theme and refers to swimming providing ways for parents to become involved in the sporting experience of their child. Lower order themes included parent involvement in child development, learning about the sport, and coaching the sport their child is involved in. While less frequently reported, this higher order theme still represents considerable importance to some parents and has the potential to be important for a good number of parents beyond the study. One parent highlighted that in most achievement contexts such as school, parents do not get observe their child develop and learn; they only see the outcome. But in swimming there is the opportunity to see the whole development process and play a part in it. One father stated,

"All this stuff, you get a chance to see the development and growth in a way that I don't think you always get to see at school, and to some extent you don't even get to see within the life of your household because so much of it's, is normalized; it just seems kind of like unconscious. So it's just like, I feel like it's just like a big window into her development that I don't think I necessarily get in other parts of, of her life" (F8M).

General dimension three: benefits of swimming. The third general dimension was benefits of swimming, and this represented the benefits parents perceived that came directly from the sport of swimming, that perhaps would not come from other sports or development contexts. This general dimension was referenced less than the previous two dimensions, with only half of the parents discussing the subthemes. However, despite the lower number of mentions, there were some qualitatively important subthemes discussed, including: the supportive and competitive environment, the fact that swimming is a lifetime sport, and good coaches and clubs.

Swimming environment. This general dimension represents the idea that swimming as a sport comes with some benefits that parents enjoy, some of which are highly specific to swimming. For example, swimming provides a supportive and competitive environment that parents enjoy themselves and perceive as beneficial to their children. The mother of Family 1 spoke about how much she enjoyed the competitive environment of swimming, which benefitted her:

"I think just the sport, because I'm athletic and I just enjoy watching, I'm very competitive, with myself so I love the competition and I've always enjoyed swimming, you know, I even watch it in like the Olympics or on TV, I like, it's kind of like track, you know, that kind of thing, it's a time thing and I'm a very competitive person time wise, so I enjoy that part of that" (F1F).

While the mother of Family 2 suggested that swimming as a sport appears to have good values and allow greater focus on academics than other sports, providing a supportive environment that benefitted her child:

"I hear about some other sports where the kids might be a little rougher, they're not as focused on academics in those sports. It's all very athletic and more big and tough and rough, and those kids sometimes get in trouble and with the swimming crowd everyone seems to be very, you know good, good students, good families, good values and it's a really good peer group, made a lot of friends, and you know keeps you in really good shape" (F2F).

Perhaps the clearest articulation of swimming specific benefits comes from the subtheme of sport for life, which is the idea that parents were teaching their children a life-skill and sport that would extend beyond the traditional high school / college boundaries for participation such that their children could continue to swim throughout their lives

"… like I think about with [Second Daughter] with soccer, you know, injuries, or even sort of a, a ceiling - is there a point at which she can't compete or can't compete at the level she wants to? And that might be hard to help her transition into something else. But I don't, swimming just feels like something you can do forever" (F8F).

Finally, two parents discussed that swimming provided their child with good coaches who were supportive of their children and caused the parents little stress. Parents felt that coaches conducted themselves appropriately, demonstrating proper communication skills, and managing high numbers of athletes well. Although one parent described that his perspective was not always the same as that of his daughters, "my daughter didn't think her high school [coach] liked her, but he had some very good things to say about her at the end of the year banquet, I'm like oh he doesn't

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like you huh?" (F1M). This is potentially important because the father of Family 1 is able to separate child perspectives and coaching practices / behaviors, which did not appear to be common for all parents (see coach stressors).

General dimension four: family benefits. The fourth and final general dimension is family benefits. These are the positive outcomes parents perceived for their families because of involvement in swimming. This general dimension contains one higher-order theme, family function.

Family Function. The most important subtheme that emerged from this dimension was father involvement in family activities, and while this did appear in families where the swimmer was a son, it occurred more frequently in families where the athlete was a daughter. Here, both mothers and fathers felt that swimming gave the father an opportunity to develop a close relationship with his children and thus become more integrated with the family, particularly where the child was female and perhaps would not have been as involved had she been participating in a more stereotypically female activity:

> "I think in our life he would have just would've been the dad that came home on the weekend and said "hi" and I was running everything and doing everything 'cause that's just kind of how I, the way I am and because I needed help. You know, he stepped up, you know, something that he enjoys. I'm not sure if she was a beauty pageant kid, and I said to him you know, you've got to help put on make-up and spray tan, I'm not sure he would've necessarily wanted to do that. But this was something he enjoyed and he was very knowledgeable" (F4F).

The remaining subthemes were discussed by low numbers of parents, but all revolve around the idea that swimming added some structure to family relationships, created family

conversation and structure, and providing identity as a "swimming family". Again, these subthemes were relatively less reported individually, but taken together, parents perceived swimming as being beneficial to family functioning. For example, the father from Family 5 talked about swimming providing structure and enhancing relationships,

"I think it's been a real good for our family in a lot of ways, from a structure stand point, it's brought us closer … in some ways its brought her closer, that we're all involved, that we're all supporting. We go to swim meets together many times, locally, and there's no big sister, little sister animosity. So it's been a good experience for us" (F5M).   Additionally, the father from Family 5 goes on to talk about how their daughter being successful in swimming allowed them to gain notoriety as a swimming family. It was clear that the father enjoyed this success and that he felt the family had gained the identity of a 'swimming family' because of it, "Other people just say the [Family Name] 'they swim', but I think with that there is a bit of notoriety, our daughter, [Name], has been extremely successful, people recognize that".

Parent Stressors

Parents cited a multitude of stressors, many of which are congruent with prior research on sport parent stressors, and some of which are novel to the literature. Analysis of these stressors resulted in four general dimensions: organizational stressors, competitive stressors, developmental stressors, and general stressors (see Table 4.). The four general dimensions contain 15 higher-order themes and 44 lower-order themes, with 1135 raw data citations from all 20 parents.

Organizational stressors general dimension. The general dimension of organizational stressors refers to stressors that are caused because of parents being involved or embedded within a particular organization, in this case a particular swimming club. This is the most cited general dimension by parents, with over 800 raw data citations from all 20 parents. There are eight higher-

order themes within this dimension: planning and organization, time, organizations (e.g., clubs), child stressors, social stressors, family stressors, and personal stressors.

Table 4. Parent Perceived Stressors of Involvement in Swimming

General Dimensions	Higher Order Themes	Lower Order Themes	Sub-Themes
Organizational Stressors (20-825)	Planning and Organization (20-218)		Family management and logistics (19-110)
			Finances (12-46)
			Work-life balance (13-27)
			Feelings of lack of control (7-13)
			College recruitment (2-8)
			Unexpected events (3-4)
			Swimming-Life balance (2-4)
			Prioritizing (2-3)
			Unknowns (1-2)
			Continued challenges (1-1)
	Time (20-215)		Time with family(18-56)
			Time commitment (17-80)
			Time management (17-41)
			Time with spouse (12-16)
			Time for a social life (10-16)
			Lack of personal time (3-6)
	Organizations (18-132)	Coaches (17-94)	Coach Behaviors (16-81)
			School vs. club coaches (3-6)
			Coaching styles (3-5)
			Coach Communications (2-2)
		Clubs (12-38)	Facilities (5-10)
			Volunteering (4-9)
			Club structure and organization (5-9)
			Switching clubs (4-7)
			Club Communications (1-2)
	Child Stressors (20-99)	Child Athletic Development (20-87)	Athletic Development of child (17-59)
			Injuries (12-23)
			Parent teaching vs. child self-learning (2-5)
		Child Interactions (6-12)	Child communications (2-5)
			Parent-child conflict (2-2)
			Protecting child from sensitive information (1-2)
			Child vs. parent priority conflicts (1-1)
			Child respect and understanding (1-1)

Table 4. (Cont'd)

General Dimensions	Higher Order Themes	Lower Order Themes
Organizational Stressors Cont'd (20-825)	Family Stressors (19-76)	Sibling balance (12-19)
		Family demographics (11-23)
		Multiple parent roles (6-19)
		Spousal disagreement and conflict (5-7)
		Extended family understanding of swimming (3-5)
		Stress from the other parent in the dyad (1-1)
		Family communication (1-1)
		Lack of spousal support (1-1)
	Social Stressors (19-70)	Other swimming parents (16-48)
		Other swimmers (for child) (5-7)
		Lack of extended family support (4-4)
		Child social networks (3-11)
	Personal Stressors (10-15)	Lack of energy (5-6)
		Guilt (3-5)
		Moving house (1-2)
		Parents own sport training (1-1)
		Communication skills (1-1)
Competitive Stressors (20-205)	Expectations and outcomes at competitions (20-99)	Child expectations and outcomes (18-53)
		Parent expectations and outcomes (16-41)
		Sibling rivalry (4-5)
	Watching meets (16-45)	Competitive situations (14-26)
		Other swimming parents (7-15)
		Lack of control at meets (3-4)
	Lack of swimming knowledge and needing to learn the sport (13-41)	
	Preparation for meets (9-20)	Travel for meets (8-17)
		Getting ready before a meet (2-3)
Developmental Stressors (18-101)	Child well-being (13-64)	Child happiness and motivation (8-34)
		Child health and safety (10-30)
	School related development (12-33)	Child-student development (11-23)
		School transitions (7-10)
	Lack of general development (3-4)	Lack of life-skill development (1-2)
		Lack of other skill development (2-2)
General Stressors (4-4)	Child Technology Use (4-4)	

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Planning and organization. The planning and organization higher-order theme represents the stress parents perceived is associated with a need to be organized in order for the swimming experience to work. Lower-order themes within planning and organization include family management and logistics, finances, work-life balance, feelings of lack of control, college recruitment, unexpected events, swimming-life balance, prioritizing, unknowns, and continued challenges. Family management and logistics was the largest lower-order theme, with over half of all raw-data citations from all 20 parents. This lower-order theme relates to parents managing the logistical challenge swimming brings. The logistical challenge was particularly relevant with regard to getting members of the family to their required locations at the right time. This challenge relates equally to practices and meets, but the day-to-day regularity of swimming practices is what makes this stressor so common across parents. The following quote from the mother of Family 4 demonstrates how challenging and complex the logistics are for her family,

> "We would literally plan out our week; 'can you do morning practice? Can you do this, can you do that?' And that's how we got from point A to point B… we just planned and planned and planned. And paid people … like this last year before she had a license, I paid somebody to take her from her school to a meeting spot at Chik-Fil-A and then she met a group of girls who I then paid for her to get to practice…" (F4F).

Importantly, while this logistical stressor is mentioned by all parents, the actual level of stress caused by this stressor ranged depending on the family circumstances. Some parents had a well-worked routine, or had a child that was now old enough to drive, and these reduced the influence of the stressor. More details regarding this stressor will be discussed in the coping strategies and case study analyses.

Finances were a particular stressor for some parents. Swimming as a sport is more expensive than most people anticipate, with monthly/seasonal pool fees, competition registration costs, expensive equipment, and transportation costs. Despite the fact that swimming contained some financial stressors for parents, very few parents were able to give what they considered an accurate estimate of swimming expenses for each year. The apparent lack of direct knowledge may again be an indication that while finances are a concern, they are not the most pressing stressor. This also may be an indication that parents were relatively well-off and did not need to worry about money. Importantly, no parents directly referred to wanting a performance outcome as a return on investment, although several did hint at wanting to see improvement and learning as a way of justifying money spent. Here, the mother from Family 10 discusses how finances are an on-going juggling act for her family

> "Um, we stress, y'know it's always stressful to think about finances, because sometimes meets get expensive and we end up going to state and then we go to zones and we stay in hotels so we have to kind of budget our money so we cut back on spending somewhere else in order to make up for what we need to pay for the extra things… we kind of make up for that by not buying as many school-type clothes, if they want to buy sweatshirts and t-shirts (at swim meets) then they're going to wear those to school. So financially are always kind of a juggling thing" (F10F).

Finally, trying to find a work-life balance was a challenge for most parents, especially as the logistics of getting their children to practice can be so difficult. One parent in particular, who worked from home, discussed the challenge of not having the extra time of a drive home to disconnect from work, along with having to be available for clients on the west-coast late into the evening as being difficult for finding life-balance

"… as I mentioned I work out of the house (from home) and I also manage the west coast while living in the eastern time zone. With a three hour time difference I usually start my day somewhere between 7:30 and 8 am while a lot of things on the west coast are still going on up to 9 pm at night. So a lot of people are still reaching out to me, so I'm trying to attend meetings, still get my daughter to practice, so trying to be in two places at once and there just doesn't seem to be a clean cut down time, so I mean that's really the biggest stressor" (F1M).

Time. The second most referenced higher order theme within organizational stressors was time. The lower-order themes all relate to stressors parents experienced with a lack of time brought around by their child's swimming; whether that was a general lack of time, lack of time with their spouse, family and friends, or a lack of personal time. The lower order themes are time with family, time commitment, time management, time with spouse, time for a social life, and lack of personal time.

Many parents talked about how the required time commitment (discussed in more detail in the next paragraph) from swimming means that they have a reduced amount of time with their family (as well as their spouse, with friends, and by themselves). A reduction in family time was the most frequently mentioned time stressor by parents, and the loss of family dinner together was a very common problem cited. A practice that appeared to be valued by most families was no longer possible with the time commitment and logistical challenge of practice in the evenings, particularly where there were siblings that had additional sport practices or were younger so need to eat at a specific time. This quote demonstrates how the father from Family 8 feels about the reduction in family dinner:

"… there is a kind of regular meal schedule, like when [Daughter] gets home from school she gets a meal before she goes to practice, so there is a little bit of regularity there, but in terms of all four of us, the entire family, being able to sit down for dinner on a regular basis, which I value, which I think is a good thing, uhh that's messed up" (F8M).

Most parents recognized that swimming is a major commitment for them as parents, as evidenced by the logistical challenge. Practices occur at least once a day for much of the year, with additional morning practices for some of the more elite performers. Add that to the fact that most competitions occur on weekends, start Friday evening and extend to Sunday afternoon, meant that the competitive season demands a great deal of time, as reflected here by the father of Family 3, "Dedicated, very busy, she swims usually Monday through Saturday, two hours a day, and the swim meets are on the weekends, so they take up quite a bit of time, y'know your whole Friday, Saturday, Sunday" (F3M). While the interview did not really question if parents found the time commitment worthwhile, continued involvement would indicate that on some level parents must recognize the time commitment as being valuable, with the father of Family 9 clearly stating this when discussing benefits of swimming.

"I think if in the one sense, and I know I share this with a lot of people I talk to but I mean when I tell people, 'Yeah my daughter swims at this age level' they're like, 'Well gosh, ya you got [sic] to a four hour swim meet to watch her swim for a total of five minutes'. Yeah, that can be, I mean, when you think about that but still in the end it's, to me, it's well worth it. It's well worth it, all the time and all the time you spend there for such a little time to watch her compete" (F9M).

Alongside reduced family time and time commitment there was the stressor of time management. Due to the time commitment and logistics required, parents had to be very good at

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managing their time in order to make sure all activities happen as scheduled, often talking about all the activities they had to juggle, "… you're trying to squeeze so much into an evening between meals and, you know, school activities and then you put (in) the swimming" (F9M). However, time management did not always just refer to day to day management of time, but also long-term planning of things like vacations, as stated by the father of Family 7,

> "I think it affects my work schedule in terms of when I take my days off … it probably affects are time together as a family, as to when we take vacation because we have to plan the somewhat carefully around meets … you don't want to take two weeks of vacation right before she's going to be in the biggest meet of the year" (F7M).

Time with spouse was another lower-order stressor that parents discussed frequently, with 12 parents discussing it as a stressor. In line with parents suggesting they did not get as much time with their families as they would like, this means that many parents also did not get to spend as much quality time with their spouse as they would like because of the time commitment required for swimming. Importantly, while most parents could identify that swimming reduced the time they spent with their spouse, a smaller number discussed that this might be due only to swimming, or that if they didn't do swimming other activities would have a similar influence. Here the mother of Family 8 discusses the influence swimming has on time with her spouse,

> "No, of course not. I don't know if that's swim [sic] or just the life of working parents … that January to March time there isn't really 'oh, let's go out for a Saturday dinner' because one or the other of us is at a swim meet until, like I said, 6 o'clock, and then coming home, crashing and burning … then like in the summer, like so we were saying, 'let's just go away for the weekend just the two of us this summer'…there isn't one. I mean, so, unless we leave [Daughter] with the grandparents for the weekend and say 'hey, can you drive

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her to Michigan State for the weekend while we're out of town'. So yeah, for sure that impacts (time with my spouse)" (F8F).

Again, the next lower order theme of time for a social life reflects a similar pattern. Parents spend so much of their time providing logistical support to their children, and using the remaining time for family, that there is, in some cases, almost a complete lack of time for a social life. For some parents this was not a stressor as they were content with their family routine and considered swimming to have provided them with friends and a social life. However, half of the parents did suggest a lack of time for a social life was an issue, although as with spending time with their spouse, parents were sometimes unable to split this from regular family life. Additionally, many parents talked about having to turn down invitations or struggling to find weekends with friends who were also busy as parents. Consequently, time for a social life was not the most pressing stressor for parents. The mother from Family 3 describes that exact scenario "There's been times where we've maybe had an opportunity to … meet with maybe a friend who I haven't seen in a while and that's their only weekend that they would have available … we've already committed to their events for that date or weekend" (F3F).

Organizations. The next higher-order theme in organizational stressors was organizations. This higher order theme contains lower-order themes of clubs and coaches. These lower order themes relate to stressors caused by coaches and their behaviors, and clubs and how they are run.

Coaches. Coaches, both their child's own coach and coaches from other teams, presented a number of challenges for parents. Sub-themes for coaches include coach behaviors, school vs. club coaches, coaching styles, and coach communications. However, the majority of coach stressors came from coach behaviors. Examples include not providing enough technique instruction, being too focused on certain strokes or distances, poor squad management, or trying

to poach swimmers for their own clubs. Sometimes coach behaviors were so discordant with parent and child goals that families felt that they needed to move clubs in order to get the kind of coaching they desired. Here the father of Family 5 describes the process of switching swimming clubs (N.B., also a stressor in the clubs lower-order theme) because his family felt the coach was not positive for his children:

"… that was stressful … if you get a job opportunity or you're not happy in your current job, and your changing, the stress of 'oh my god am I making the right decision' … We loved the current age group coach, that we had, and he was actually the one who suggested 'you gotta go'. I was on the board so I'm telling the board that I'm leaving for these reasons. Being we don't believe that the head coach that you have here is the right coach for us, quite frankly the right coach for anybody, but, so that was quite, so yeah, that was stressful" (F5M).

Sometimes parents did not think that coaches were sufficiently skilled to improve the quality of their child's swimming, as evidenced here by the father of family three, soon after they joined their current club after moving from out-of-state:

"They, all the coaches there, swam all their lives, we had three from Turkey, who came to college and then ended up staying, and then all of the coaches still swam competitively. So I think they, they pushed them a lot more there, um, yeah, they definitely pushed them a lot more there and they swam three, about three hours a day" (F3M).

Another subtheme for coaches was the conflict perceived between school and club coaches. Although mentioned by only three parents, this conflict is deemed worthy of discussing in further detail because of its novelty in the literature. As suggested in the literature review prior studies have been conducted mainly in the United Kingdom, where there are not separate school and club

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seasons (Harwoord et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b). The school and club coach conflict was not directly conflict between the coaches themselves, but more the differences in their approach to coaching their children and the potentially adverse outcomes of this. As one parent suggested, coaches are out to win in any way that they can and subsequently an athlete may be put in different events by each coach or used in a different way for the team. This can make the two contexts very different for the athlete, primarily causing athlete stress if they feel they are not getting to participate in their favored events. The mother of Family 8 also points out that the split between school and club may also influence development over time,

"I'm worried about somebody seeing the whole of [Daughter]. Right, so, the club coach is going to want, like he's going to have his trajectory, right? His workout, his needs, his vision. And then the high school coach will have his workouts and his needs and his vision for where she should be as an athlete. So I don't' know what kind of collaboration or oversight there is so that they're not partitioning her or pulling her in opposite directions" (F8F).

Clubs. Organizational bodies also were perceived to have presented challenges for parents, and included the subthemes: facilities, club structure and organization, switching clubs, and communication. A small number of parents came from the same swimming club within a state and were faced with a club being forced to leave a facility (due to facility owners and management). That left the parents with a decision of whether to stay with their current club at a worse facility (outdoors) or join a new club being formed at the previous facility, with most choosing to stay with the nicer facility. Again, the father from Family 3 was able to compare two swimming clubs from different states due to their recent move. Their previous club operated out of a new facility in a much warmer climate, whereas their new club had smaller indoor venues in a much colder

climate. He was disappointed with the comparison between the two, especially with how facility size influenced club structure (spread over many pools) "… it's a little divided because some kids practice here, some kids practice there, and then you all come together. So they don't really know everybody, whereas in [Southern State], everybody practiced at one pool" (F3M) and swim meet organization (parents not allowed on deck), "… compared to swimming in a smaller high school pool, there's differences there, for sure … we're not down there with her … In [Southern State], since the pools were so big, we were able to be down on the deck even on the meets" (F3M).

A small but important number of parents also discussed stressors with involvement and volunteering, particularly those that had served on club boards. They felt that while volunteering was an important task, it was also thankless, and presented additional stressors in terms of time commitment and complaints from other parents "It's a thankless job and we don't get paid for it, but were trying do it to better my daughter or son [sic] experience and you get people that will complain about the most ridiculous thing" (F5M). The following quote is a demonstration of one parents' experiences with volunteering on a parent board and the subsequent burn out felt:

> "… when you find out how sausage is made you don't really want to eat the sausage anymore, y'know, it's kind of like when you become a part of that parent board and you see how things are *really run*, everything you have to do, it really burnt me out" (F4M).

Child stressors. Child stressors also were cited as important for parents. What became apparent during interviews is that parent stress and happiness is very closely tied to that of their child. If their child is happy, progressing, and relatively stress free, then parents appeared to be too. Within the child stressors higher-order theme there are two lower-order themes: child athletic development and child interactions. The importance of each will be discussed below, but the

important concept to keep in mind is that parents want their child to be happy, and in situations where they are not, parent stress also will increase.

Child athletic development. All parents in the study expressed concerns with child athletic development, that is, the progress of their child in terms of their athletic abilities. Subthemes included athletic development of child, injuries, and parent teaching vs. child self-learning. The largest sub-theme was parent concerns with athletic development of their child, and it contains a number of concerns parents had that all relate to potential road-blocks or unknowns in the development of their child. Decisions to change clubs and coaches serve as typical examples of stressors regarding athletic development concerns. For example, many parents that either chose, or were forced, into moving clubs expressed concerns with ensuring that they picked the right coach or club for their child. Other parents talked about how the outcome of competitive meets was also stressful, not so much in that performance was poor, but the influence poor performance had on the enjoyment and motivation of their child. In an extreme example, one mother (Family 2) discussed how multiple setbacks (including many outside of swimming) occurred in the span of one week for her son. These setbacks presented a challenging situation for both her and her son, to the point where she struggled to focus at work,

> "… it consumed me a lot for a couple of weeks when he was really having a tough time … like it sometimes I couldn't focus at work because I'm like ahhhhh I'm so worried about [Son], he's so depressed because he, it, like everything hit that week. Not getting in the Naval Academy, not getting the scholarship, and then bombing on his times and all the events, he was so depressed, so it was very all consuming…" (F2F).

As another example, the father of Family 4 discusses how having moved to a new club, it did not match up with the values they thought it would, leading them to consider moving again to find a club philosophy more in keeping with their own:

"So we moved clubs … and it hasn't been the same. Um so we're actually looking at possibly moving to a different club. Um that's up in the air yet. So we're—and that's something that we're trying to let the girls decide if that's really what they want to do. This uh, the other club that we're looking at joining is a YMCA club, which is, their philosophy is a little different; more Christian values put into it" (F4M).

Again, this desire for development makes intuitive sense in that parents need to justify the other stressors they face with some benefit, which would be child improvement. Importantly, while this sub-theme contains many stressors regarding progress, not all are pure performance gains, but include mastery and other intangibles like club values (e.g., the Christian values mentioned by the father of Family 4 above).

Injuries are a special case of athletic development stressors in that they present a road block to athletic progress over which parents have very little control. If a parent / child does not like a coach or club he/she can move to a different one, but injuries are not as controllable in the same way. This lack of control is what made injuries particularly stressful for parents. The mother from Family 5 describes her personal stress as she watched her daughter struggle with injury:

"… it pains me to see my child hurt and I don't just mean physically but emotionally and psychologically. She is the second in the state for breaststroke, earlier in her career and she's just to different levels because of her pain and that's hard to watch. … it just makes my heart hurt. And that's the hard part, ya know? Just seeing how much she wants it and working her heart…" (F5F).

Unlike prior research that suggested that parents have worries regarding injuries almost constantly, which is probably driven by the specific sports studied (tennis and soccer in academy settings), in the present study parents only tended to worry about injuries when they were happening. The type and frequency of injuries in swimming (assuming good coaching) may be much more based around repetitive movements (shoulder, elbow, knee) than ballistic and collision injuries in soccer, and the weight bearing injuries that can occur in tennis. Consequently, injuries were not an immediate concern for parents and were more surprising when they happened. The element of surprise also has the potential to make injuries more stressful because they are less expected.

Child interactions. Additionally, some parents discussed issues surrounding interactions with their child. These were much less frequently reported, which may point toward generally harmonious relationships with their child in relation to swimming and in general. Subthemes include child communications, parent-child conflict, protecting child from sensitive information, child vs. parent priority conflicts, and child respect and understanding.

Some parents also talked about how they had difficulty in talking to their child, either through perceptions of not being a good communicator or in meeting the specific individual needs of their child. For example, the father of Family 4 talked about needing to work on opening up his communication skills in order to connect with his daughters, "It's really challenging for me, personally, to be more, you know, to be able to open up my communication skills for them" (F4M). Difficulty in talking to their children is important, as communication is potentially the most important coping strategy parents used (see coping strategies section), particularly with their child. Barriers in this process then, may increase parent stress by compromising overall coping.

Parents have other disagreements with their child and differences in priorities. It was difficult to determine how much of these disagreements were part of normal adolescent development and how much was directly swimming related. For example, the mother of Family 3 suggested that parent and child goals for involvement may not always be in agreement, "… sometimes the goals between what the child and parent want may not be on the same page all the time" (F3F). However, in neither of the raw data examples do parents elaborate on the disagreement, so it is not clear how and why the goals differed in Family 3. It is not unreasonable to suggest that there are many conflicts and disagreements between parents and their children during adolescence, and for only a few parents was disagreement with regard to swimming enough to mention as part of their interviews.

A potentially important subtheme was protecting child from sensitive information. This subtheme was unique as a stressor to one parent, although it was used by more as a coping strategy. It relates to the idea that as a parent you do not share all the information on a sensitive subject or stress that you have with your child in order to shield them from some stress or upset. Again, as with parent-child conflict, this is probably not unique to swimming or sport, but it is interesting to note that is also translates to the sporting context. Interestingly, for most parents this was a coping strategy, however, the father of Family 9 articulated that shielding his daughter from his stress meant he and his wife has to shoulder that burden.

"… we don't want her to feel the effects of the, maybe the stressors that we have. You know, we want her to just enjoy it. We want her to not have to worry about participating or any of that. We try and take on that burden ourselves, I guess. So we just want to make sure it doesn't, it doesn't really affect her … it's just every once in a while you get something where, okay, you feel like okay swims in — not swim's in the way, but it's

swim—ya know, when we again have this and because we're so, because our family is so, ya know, kind of involved with her it's uh, ya know, [stuttering] never in a million years, ya know, would I resent any of it but I mean, you're just like, Oh my gosh, that's right, we've got swimming. Oh my gosh, we got to do that again tonight" (F9M).

Family stressors. Family stressors are those that come directly from within a family, both immediate and extended. Lower order themes for family stressors were sibling balance, family demographics, multiple parent roles, spousal disagreement and conflict, extended family understanding of swimming, stress from the other parent in the dyad, family communication, and a lack of spousal support. The lower-order theme with the greatest number of parents reporting the stressor was sibling balance. This stressor represented when parents had to provide a balance between two or more siblings with things such as time, money, and the kinds of opportunities and experiences they are exposed to. Parents were aware that swimming being such a time intensive sport meant that if another sibling was not taking part, they had to be mindful of the time and energy they were devoting to swimming in order to ensure they did not favor one child over another. Here the father of Family 7 discusses how he and his wife felt a constant tension in ensuring they were equal and fair with all of their children,

"… there's always that tension, because you know we love all three of them equally and we want to make sure all three of them have opportunities and that all three of them have chances to participate in things that they care about whether they have aspirations to do it for a long (time) or whether it's just something that they think is fun … So yeah, that tension I'd say is always there to some degree" (F7M).

The lower-order family stressor with the highest number of raw data references was family demographics. Parents indicated that the number, age, and gender of their family members,

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particularly children, increased the level of complexity in dealing with other stressors, such as logistics. For example, some parents felt that having children that were relatively close in age resulted in a greater logistical challenge because they both had different sport commitments they needed to get to. Others found that having children that were farther apart in age also caused issues because they were not involved in swimming or another sport / activity and were at risk from being dragged around in support of their older sibling. One mother stated, "My son, y'know, sometimes he'll get a little bored here and there because there is a lot of wait time at swim meets" (F3M). The stressor of family demographics is inextricably linked to the stressor of sibling balance. The greater the number of siblings, and the more challenging the age gap (which appears to be parent dependent), the more difficult the sibling balance appears to be. As one mother stated, "… the other child… that is difficult, I mean it's hard on her, you know … I think she doesn't feel she gets me 100% of the time like let's say her sister did at her age" (F1M).

Another potentially important subtheme of family stressors were multiple parent roles. This is where a parent had more than one role (e.g., parent and coach), and conflict between the roles occurred, presenting a challenging situation for the parent. This naturally has a lower number of parents reporting as a stressors because there are fewer coach / administrative roles for parents to fill, however, it receives the same number of raw data references as sibling balance, suggesting it is less common, but important. In one example, a parent was a volunteer for her son's school swim team and was responsible for the post-senior night meal for the team. During that senior night meet her son did not perform the way he wanted, missed breaking pool records, and subsequently was very upset and did not want to join the team for the post meet meal. This left the mother with the internal struggle between the role of host and provider of food, and mother. It would not be right

to leave the meal, but also incorrect to not go and console her son, leaving her to make a decision in which at least one role will not be properly fulfilled,

"…I am the parent coordinator so I plan these meals for 80 swimmers, got to get all the food together early, set everything up, every home meet, and plan all that, and do the finances, like I do you know all this stuff to coordinate. So I had to be down in the cafeteria setting up food, and I keep looking, where's [Son], I said [Husband], 'go and see what's taking him so long', as he, everyone else was there, he's all alone at the pool … I think he was crying and you can't see someone crying underwater, and he was very sad … He just wanted to go straight home, and I said [Husband] 'don't let him drive home alone, you go home with him. [Daughter] and I will stay and clean up the dinner', and I knew he just wanted to be alone … it was really hard for me to see him beating himself up and being depressed and not enjoying and celebrating his achievements when everyone else thinks he's doing great, so that's really hard" (F2F).

Similar conflicts occurred for other parents, but all occurred when parents had an additional role within a swimming club (coach, board member, volunteer) that meant responsibilities and professionalism resulted in making situations and communications with others difficult. This dual-role stressor was not reported in previous studies (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b), and reflects the fact that academy sports tend to hire elite coaches and have employed backroom staff, whereas many clubs rely on parents volunteering. The father of Family 10 adds further to this pointed when he described his dual roles of coach and parent,

"…challenge would be are if I thought something wasn't quite right or if the kids come home saying something. (I'm a) little apprehensive to approach the coaches, because, only 'cause I work with them and you know I try, trying to separate that working with somebody

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and the parent, and y'know either being the parent (or) being the coach, I find that difficult"

(F10M).

Some parents talked about spousal disagreements, which were mainly focused on child training loads or meet attendance. Using meet attendance as an example, some parent-dyads had differing viewpoints regarding whether their child should attend a swim meet, from both developmental and financial perspectives. More specifically, one parent would believe that attending a particular meet would be beneficial for development and as a reward for qualification, whereas the other parent would be concerned about the number of meets being attended and the financial implications of having to pay for a large number of events. The mother of Family 10 explains that exact scenario, "I'm a little more hesitant to let them go to those huge meets when they're optional. He's like …of course we're going to go, they made it, they're qualified, and I'm like well …it's going to cost this much money and how important is this meet?" (F10F). Compromise or prioritization were used to find potential solutions, but the disagreement and potential for further conflict existed. It is perhaps surprising that spousal disagreement was not more regularly referenced, but this may reflect either good relationships or social desirability in answers.

Similarly, other parents also described a feeling of lack of understanding from extended family members. Questions were raised by extended family members about why swimming received such a priority, or if so much exercise was beneficial for their child. While these questions are legitimate, it is clear that parents were making difficult decisions regarding their child's involvement. It is particularly stressful to have family members question these decisions, especially when they may already have some guilt in choosing swimming over certain family functions. The mother of family 1 succinctly summarizes the challenges, "when you jump in with

two feet I don't think people (family) realize what you are jumping into and how much you're taking with you on this journey, to be honest. I just don't think people realize that at all… so that is kind of stressful on other relationships". Neither of these subthemes of spousal or family conflict appeared to be catastrophic for relationships or the most significant stressor parents faced. Both subthemes represented a relatively small number of parents, but there is potential for them to apply to a much wider population outside of the study.

Social stressors. Social stressors referred to challenges caused by members of parents social networks and the social networks of their children, and includes the lower order themes of other swimming parents, other swimmers (for child), lack of extended family support, and child social networks. The most often reported social stressor were other swimming parents. In previous studies other parents have been classified as a competitive stressor. However, while some of the raw data references are placed within a competitive context, most of the issues with other parents came from parents within the same club and come from day-to-day attendance at practices. Therefore, other parents have been described as organizational stressors. A number of stressors about other parents came from the day-to-day club operations and other parents being overly negative with regard to coaches or clubs, causing a poor atmosphere for parents, as demonstrated by the mother of Family 9,

> "… (some parents) are going to have issues um with the coaching, um and how it's done, and, and, it could be done better, different, longer, shorter, whatever and so, um, y'know they're, they're a particular set of parents that are very vocal about that and wanting um, y'know the club to change drastically, as far as coaching style and philosophy" (F9M).

It is not surprising that some parents are perceived as negative and complaining when so many of the participants in this study have stressors regarding coaches and clubs, and (as is

reported in the coping strategies section of the results) parents use communication with each other as a way of coping. This tension between needing to talk and needing to find the right person with whom to talk appeared to be a challenge many parents and swimming clubs face.

The lower order theme of other swimmers (for child) refers to where a child is having a difficult relationship with another swimmer in their swimming club, which in turn causes stress for their parent. This stress revolves around the fact that because there is an inherent power differential between adults and children, the parent cannot directly intervene, they can only try help their child understand how to deal with other swimmers. Additionally, most of the issues could be deemed trivial in nature or considered to be part of learning how to interact with other people, such that they do not demand a discussion between the two parents. Here the father of Family 11 explains one such situation,

> "A couple of years ago there was definitely competitiveness … just kind of kids being kids, and being competitive, and maybe saying some things to teammates that maybe weren't, you know, that weren't very teammate like. And so she would get upset. And so, as a 10 year old, you're like, this is supposed to be fun and you're not having fun because you're not getting along with kids on the team … that would be the only time I would say a swimmer has caused stress, but not directly to me" (F11M).

The next subtheme is child social networks, which focuses on stress caused by those in their child's social network. This subtheme is very similar to the subtheme of other swimmers (for child), but is different in that it related to people parents inferred were friends of their children, and as such could contain both positive and negative interactions. For example, it might be that having really good friendships makes squad transitions harder for children and subsequently their parents. This positive interaction is different from the predominantly negative behaviors

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experienced in the 'other swimmers' subtheme. Additionally, these stressors could act more directly on the parent as they tried to help their children strike a balance between friends and other life demands, such as extended family or making the right choices for continued swimming development. For example, the father of Family 4 shows that that conflict between extended family and teammates "… they like to see their grandparents but they also know that that's a social time with their teammates that they sometimes get torn with wanting to stay with grandparents and spending time with their friends at a swim meet" (F4M). Additionally, he discusses conflict his daughters had with regard to choosing which practice squad they should be training with,

"… they've met really great girls at this other level (after moving down a group due to injury). So now they're almost apprehensive about moving back up because they really like them. But they (girls in lower squad) don't train as hard as the other girls do (in higher level squad) and they're not as committed to it. So they like them as people but they know that if they want to get better and be faster, they need to go back to the other group. It's kind of a Catch-22 there for them…" (F4M).

Personal stressors. Finally, the higher-order theme of personal stressors contained a number of lower-order themes that related to personal stress exacerbated by having a child involved in swimming, including a lack of energy, guilt, decisions regarding moving house, own sports training, and communication skills. These themes were reported by half of all participants, but individual sub-themes had a much lower number of parent citations, thus indicating that personal stressors are highly idiosyncratic (note: some of these will be detailed in case study analyses). Lack of energy was reported by the largest number of parents, and related to how the logistical challenge, alongside work commitments meant parents felt they expended a lot of energy on swimming. The following quote from the mother of Family 1 describes how the nightly family

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schedule leads to a lack of time and energy, which in turn influences the amount and quality of communication between her and her husband "…I mean by the time we finish with practices and running around, and get kids fed, (and) in bed, we crawl into bed and we have 10 minutes to talk and ok we're beat, we're asleep…" (F1F). While not spending enough time with her husband is a stressor, the root causes are a lack of time and energy.

Competitive stressors general dimension. Parents often found competitions and the competitive environment challenging, and this general dimension contains themes that refer to that competitive environment. The higher order themes within competitive stressors are expectations and outcomes at competitions, watching meets, lack of swimming knowledge and needing to learn the sport, and preparation for meets.

Expectations and outcomes at competitions. This higher-order theme refers to the expectations parents and children have, and then the perception of and reaction to, competition outcomes (including sibling rivalry). Child expectations and outcomes was the most frequently reported lower-order theme and was where parents perceived stress based on the expectations children had for themselves, particularly where children had set lofty goals and consequently the potential not to make them. This was stressful for parents because of the potential child reaction to the outcomes: disappointment, upset, silence, and difficult car rides home in which they have to try and judge the emotional reaction of their child and respond appropriately. As this quote demonstrates, parents had apprehensions heading into meets in case goals were not met and then the stress associated with reactions if failure results. As one father said,

> "… she was again, 5/100ths of a second (away from a junior national cut), her expectations now is different than the summer before, right?, 'oh my goodness dropped a bunch of time, just missed it, disappointed, but next year I'm getting it'. So now we up to this year, so that

summer 'oh my god what if she doesn't make it', right? You're so close. So there is a stress … prelims comes, erm she does not have a quality swim, so the stress of coping with that in-between and her being y'know frustrated, y'know crying, disappointed, trying to pull herself up, try you're saying 'hey, you got tonight, you can do this tonight', erm kind of thing. That's the stress because your, your, your like your heart is broken, because your kid has put a thousand percent into this and her goal hasn't been met, y'know' (F5M).

Parent expectations and outcomes stressors were situations where parents held expectations for meets and then when their child failed to perform up to expectations, had to deal with their own disappointment. As an example, the mother of Family 2 described how she and her husband had similar hopes for their son as he did for himself,

"… you know I had secret dreams like ohh you know if my son wins the state title I mean how proud are you if that happens? And he really we believed he had a chance. So you have, you don't ever really want to tell people like you're hoping for this because then if it doesn't happen you have to go like oh I failed or whatever, so it's like your secret little hope or whatever, and so we had the same kind of hopes and dreams for him so we were disappointed too" (F2F).

The hopes and dreams of parents seeing their children be successful is important, as one of the benefits that was elicited through interviews was child success (either via outcome or mastery) and as such most parents have these expectations. One of the things that makes these expectations potentially more difficult is that they are almost silent hopes within a parent-dyad, and there is a need for an external presentation strategy. The following quote is a continuation of the quote from the father of Family 5 discussing his expectations for his daughter at a big meet and the outcomes of parent stress. The emphasis here is that he refers to the event as *our* Olympic trials.

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"I know there's different heart breaks for everybody in different events, y'know, finishing

third at the Olympic trials an all that kinda stuff, but this is our, y'know, this our Olympic

trials, in, in this moment today, and, so y'know, obviously she's with the team, we were

with parents, erm, but, I will tell you it was a stressful afternoon" (F5M).

The subthemes of child expectations and outcomes, and parent expectations and outcomes

are individual sources of stress, but are also linked. There is an additive effect when a mismatch

in perceptions of performance outcomes between parent and child exists, for example, if a child

perceived a negative outcome and the parent perceived a positive outcome. Additionally, in the

circumstance that both parent and child perceive a negative performance outcome, stress is also

increased. When a child perceives a negative event and the parent does not, then the parent must

provide emotional support to the child, which is often not easy. Similarly, if an event has gone

badly and parents also feel disappointment about an outcome, they try to hide their own personal

disappointment (in general) in order to provide the right support to their child, but this is easier

said than done.

Watching meets. The second higher-order theme within the competitive stressors general

dimension was watching meets unfold. Parents reported experiencing a number of stressors while

being observers at meets, and these were represented by the lower-order stressor themes of

competitive situations, other swimming parents, and lack of control at meets. Competitive

situations stressors represented the stress some parents felt when watching their child swim

(particularly as it relates to expectations and outcomes). It is important to note however, that this

is not always a negative stress, and in fact many parents enjoy the competitive experience because

of the associated excitement. That said, many parents refused to describe it as a 'stressor' because

of the strong belief that stress is always negative, and if they did have some anxiety they played

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down its intensity. There was clearly a perception that nervous parents at meets are a bad thing, and this may well be linked to parents trying to keep their own expectations in check so they do not unduly influence their child. Additionally, many parents suggested that the stress level they feel is much greater at the end of the season, when there is more riding on the outcome of an event, than the beginning of the season. In this instance those parents talked about increased heart rate or behaviors that indicate anxiety (such as pacing) have been included in the results. The mother from Family 9 sums up these divergent feelings regarding watching meets perfectly.

"… Um, um, sometimes I do get very nervous, and y'know I do say "oh I can't watch!", but I enjoy it and for the most part it's very, very fun so, y'know, but there are a couple of meets there at the end of the season where I do get pretty nervous" (F9F).

Some of the parents also perceived a lack of control over events at swim meets. Swim meets, unlike some sports, generally have a much greater separation distance between the parent and athlete, which makes communication difficult. For example, parents at a youth soccer match are right there on the sideline and can audibly be heard by their child. At swim meets parents are often stuck in the bleachers, in a loud environment, out of contact with their child. The lack of contact presents a challenge, especially when parents feel that their child is not doing what they are supposed to or that someone else might be interfering with their child's event preparation,

"… you worry about you know who's talking to them or what they're doing are they prepared are they watching the times you know? … are they paying attention? You know, is someone else talking to them that might psych them out? You know, are they warming up, are they stretching? (Laughs)" (F3F).

Lack of swimming knowledge and needing to learn the sport. Having a lack of knowledge about swimming and needing to learn about the sport was one of the strongest stressors for parents.

It represents how parents did not know the sport of swimming when their child started, for example: understanding how meets worked or how equipment needed to be maintained. Yet in order for their child to be successful and benefit from involvement, parents needed to learn the ropes quickly. For most parents it was a historical stressor that was relevant when they first got into the sport, but has subsequently become more manageable. A reason why this lack of knowledge may have been elicited as a stressor, compared to previous studies (Harwood et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b), is a difference in the sports studied. The previously studied sports of tennis and soccer have a much wider global audience such that people understand the rules and structure of competition more clearly than perhaps swimming, which comes to the fore once every four years for the Olympics (Harwood et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). That is not to say there is not a learning curve for those sports, but it is perhaps less steep. The mother from Family 1 talked about how she had washed swimsuits on one occasion and put them on hooks to dry on another, both of which damage the suits and reduce their useful life. These mistakes prove costly in the long run and also incurred the derision of her daughter, "I did wash her swimsuits, and she's like 'mom don't wash my swimsuits'!" (F1F). Here the father from Family 2 describes some of the challenges he and his wife had learning about meets and the speed with which he had to learn,

> "The first probably five years we had no idea what was going on … when [Son] first showed up and he did the tryout and they said there's a dual meet, I'm like 'what's a dual meet?' I had no idea and then they said he's going to do fly, it's like 'is that butterfly?' You know I just had no idea, umm 'what's a 25?' Didn't know, you know, umm and then the whole concept of warm up time versus meet time, I had no idea what they were talking

about, and so I'd show up, we'd show up at the pool like an hour earlier than warm up time, they're like 'what are you doing here so early?' I don't know!" (F2M).

Preparation for meets. After expectations have been set, but before meets begin, there is the preparation for a meet, another area in which parents perceive stress, represented by the lower order themes: travel for meets and getting ready before a meet. Travel for meets encompasses a number of subthemes that may be associated with travel in most circumstances, such as packing, logistics, finding accommodations, and the distance of travel required. Considering the relatively low number of parents discussing this theme, the consensus on what about travel was stressful was quite diverse, but the mother of Family 1 shows in the following quote that travel often involves multiple stressors. "… you have to be there at the pool at 7am … it's honestly the packing and the rushing in the morning is just really hard, and when you have another one (child) … just remembering everything in the hotel room" (F1F). Additionally, the father from Family 2 discussed how the distances of travel are surprising to him "… where I grew up the travel team traveled 15 minutes. There were 27 hockey rinks in a fifteen mile radius from my house … It's different here, so much distance to cover" (F2M).

Developmental stressors general dimension. The third general dimension of stressors was developmental stressors. These are stressors parents perceived regarding the development of their child outside of the swimming context, but influenced by the child involvement in swimming. There are three higher order themes: child well-being, school related development, and lack of general development.

Child well-being. The first lower-order theme was child well-being, and this refers to the health and happiness of offspring as influenced by swimming and contains the subthemes child happiness and motivation, and child health and safety. Child happiness and motivation was where

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parents reported being concerned that the demands of swimming, both physical and psychological, influence happiness and motivation outside of swimming. For example, parents talked about swimming being a large part of their children's lives because they choose to dedicate so much time to it. Consequently when their child's perception of performance or progress in swimming are not up to standard, then there can be changes in motivation and happiness outside of swimming. The mother of Family 5 discusses how she felt happy when one of her daughters withdrew from an event at a swim meet because of the influence it could have had on her emotional well-being,

> "…like the last meet she swam in, she hasn't swam in a meet in quite some time just because she's not been able to, the last meet she swam in she swam two events and then scratched the rest because she was like, 'I'm done, this is not…' And I was glad she did that actually. Because it was just defeating her over and over and over again and it was not productive um in terms of her emotional well-being" (F5F).

Similarly, parents were concerned that swimming activities also can influence the health and safety of their child and that this would have negative effects on their overall development. Some of the most simple and common concerns were child lack of sleep, child diet, "I've noticed as they've gotten older is that I really need to watch their diet, because they burn up so many calories that I worry about their nutrition" (F10F). Parent concerns about the possibility of an accident when their children drove themselves (and siblings) to practices when they were old enough to drive were also raised. On one hand child driving reduces the logistical challenge for parents, but it also increased stress because they had concerns with safety. This is not be unique to swimming with regard to parent concerns with adolescent safety while driving. However, the requirements to drive early morning perhaps are. The father from Family 2 reflects on the compromise his family made in allowing his son to drive,

"… we don't really like to make him drive her either … you know safety and things like that, it's a big responsibility, and he's been driving for a few years so we feel more comfortable with it, but we had a rule at first that he just wasn't allowed to drive his sister 'cause he was a new driver and you know something could happen and we didn't want that to be on his shoulder, his conscious for the rest of his life" (F2F).

Some health concerns were more complex and revolved around individual child health issues that are exacerbated by swimming. The father of Family 1 described some of the difficulties they have dealt with regarding their daughter when he said,

"she's got some very severe allergies … very highly allergic to rage weed, dust mites … she was sick a lot during high school season last week, or last year, where she was having trouble breathing and everything. Had to pull her out of the pool a couple times at practices, just so even the coaches were concerned" (F1M).

School related development. The lower order themes in school related development included child-student development and school transitions. Similar to previous research, over half the parents suggested they had concerns and experienced stress regarding their child's education being influenced by swimming, otherwise known as the 'school-pool balance'. As already established, swimming was a huge time commitment for parents and the athlete. While parents have had a number of years practicing how to deal with such time commitments, it is a new endeavor for the youth athlete. Therefore, many parents had concerns that swimming was taking up so much time that it had an adverse effect on school. While most parents talked about school being the number one priority, swimming also was a priority, and trying to find that balance was difficult, especially if the child was highly motivated to swim. The following excerpt from the

interview with the father of Family 5 reveals how that balance between school and pool can be a concern for parents.

"... quite frankly it wasn't us, it was our daughter saying 'I'm not missing practice'. So I don't know, I can 100% tell you that we have told our daughter, 'you are, are exhausted, you have an exam, stay, why don't you not to go to morning practice?' and the answer was 'I'm not doing that' .... we almost had to talk her off the ledge saying, 'stop, its ok catch your breath'. Particularly in high school when academic rigor increased" (F5M).

As eluded to in the previous quote, transitions between elementary and middle school, middle and high school or high school and college, came with increases in academic rigor and potential changes in sport involvement. These transitions also often presented challenges for parents because they could no longer stay with established routines and habits, along with some unknowns about how the process (e.g., of changing school) worked. For some parents there were concerns prior to these changes, although they appeared to be relatively low level stressors. The mother from Family 8 discussed some of her thoughts regarding the transition to high school, and while it is clear she has some unanswered questions, she also does not seem too concerned, "I'm not sure what the transition to high school (will be like) and how you negotiate club sports and high school sports. You know, I have some questions about that, but I know that will sort itself out" (F8F). For others that were in the midst of a transition, the stress level was higher, as illustrated in the following quote from father of Family 9.

"Yes. Huge. [laughs]. I think really that this past year was the first year that was a big stressor ... when she moved from elementary school to middle school, and just the quantity and quality of the, of the school work that was expected of her, then yeah, those, and then

being a middle school aged swimmer her practices were longer and so yes, we were balancing, some late nights trying to get schoolwork done…" (F9M).

Lack of general development. Finally, a small number of parents talked about concerns they had regarding lack of life-skill development and lack of other skill development (e.g., skills relating to other interests) as stress sources. Similar to concerns with school related development, parents believed that swimming may actually be hampering the development of the other skill sets. For example, the mother of Family 7 described how she would like there to be more time for her daughter to develop other passions in life:

"I would just say that probably she had the potential [in] other areas of her life that she can't develop because of time. You know so other interests I think it's limiting her in terms of you know, learning to play other sports, she is interesting in baking. You know developing that skill to a higher level. Sometimes socially having more friends outside of swimming, so I think it has limited her, which makes me sad" (F7F).

However, the small number of parents mentioning this stressor, along with the fact that they continue to have their child involved in sport suggests that while this stressor may resonate with some parents, it is not the most pressing stressor experienced.

General stressors general dimension. These stressors are not specifically related to athletics or swimming, but they do influence other stressors, such as lack of sleep or communication. The only higher-order theme in the general dimension was child technology use. It refers to how parents perceived use of technology, particularly smart phones, as being potentially problematic; either through overuse and not getting enough sleep, or using text as a main method of communication instead of calling. Here the mother from Family 5 discusses how she believes electronics are hurting sleeping patterns for her children, "They don't get as much sleep as I'd like

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to see them get. That's probably the thing that bothers me. Um, and that is a result of that [sic] stupid electronics sometimes [laughs]". Each parent discussed child technology use manifesting as a stressor in a different way, and included taking focus away from homework and reducing quality of communication within the family. This theme is novel to the literature of youth sport parent stressors (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b), but with regard to parenting in general, electronic device use is already a concern for parents (Pew Research Center, 2011). The Pew Research Center found some 64 % of a sample of 799 parents were either very- or somewhat concerned about their child's internet and cell phone usage taking time away from face-to-face interactions with friends and family (2011). Additionally, over time it could be expected that with the proliferation of personal electronic devices that this technology use theme will grow over time.

Parent Coping Strategies

Parents discussed the use of multiple coping strategies, and analysis of the coping strategies discussed during participant interviews allowed the researcher to identify nine general coping strategy dimensions: justification for swimming involvement, communication, support, child focused coping, parent actions, planning and organization, passive coping, psychological skills, and short-term strategies (see Table 5). The nine coping strategy general dimensions contain 38 higher-order themes, 48 lower-order themes, and 1804 raw data citations from all 20 parents.

Justification for swimming involvement general dimension. The general dimension of justification for swimming involvement contains two higher order themes: holding an active philosophy for participation in swimming and goals for swimming involvement. Overall it represented the reasons why parents had their child involved in swimming, what their philosophy was for that involvement, and some of the goals they hoped their child would achieve through their

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involvement. The overarching reason for this as a set of coping strategies was that if parents had reasons for their child to be involved in swimming, they were better able to place their stress in the context of it helping the develop their child or give them some valuable experience – in other words, the ends justify the means.

Holding an active philosophy for participation in swimming. Holding an active philosophy includes the subthemes prioritization of resources, perspective taking, role following, trusting coaches' knowledge, previous experience, boundary setting, and keeping a child-centered focus. An active philosophy works as a coping strategy, as it allows for parents to place stress experienced in the context of what they want out of the swimming experience. Considering perspective taking and prioritization in particular, parents were able to take a step back from a situation and remind themselves why their child is in swimming, and subsequently prioritize where to put time, effort, money, and family resources.

The mother of Family 1 summarizes the idea that having a way of taking a greater perspective, here the developmental opportunity for her daughter, can help reduce stress, "I just think that we kind of look at it as its priceless, life is short and it's only for a certain period of time … it's a priceless learning experience" (F1F). Another example from the father of Family 5 showed that he prioritized swimming even though it can be time consuming and stressful because it is something that the family has internalized as part of their identity,

> "… you either accept it and its part of your fabric as a family, and I wouldn't trade. I would [sic] say, 'oh my god it's been the worse years of our life'... y'know, has it been like 'oh my god I'm exhausted?' Yes, sure you get those moments you get home late, you got finals on Sunday night, and you get home 'cause you're driving from [City], which is a two and

half hour drive, and your arriving at ten o'clock in the morning … (if you want to) complain about, then don't do it" (F5M).

Table 5. Parent Perceived Coping Strategies for Involvement in Swimming

General Dimensions	Higher Order Themes	Lower Order Themes
Justification for swimming involvement (20-568)	Holding an active philosophy for participation in swimming (20-509)	Prioritization of resources (20-161)
		Perspective taking (19-171)
		Role following (18-63)
		Trusting coaches knowledge (15-31)
		Previous experience (14-26)
		Boundary setting (11-49)
		Keeping a child-centered focus (4-8)
	Goals for swimming involvement (15-59)	Mastery focus (11-24)
		Enjoyment (5-10)
		Successful outcomes (3-16)
		Parent setting expectation limitations (3-6)
		Encouraging child to diversify skills (2-3)
Communication (20-333)	Within family communication (20-209)	Child communication (20-130)
		Spousal communication (17-62)
		Family communication (10-17)
	Outside of family communication (20-116)	Other swimming parent communications (19-53)
		Coach communications (19-49)
		Club communications (7-11)
		Apologizing to others (1-2)
		Ignoring social boundaries (1-1)
	Limit knowledge transfer to other people (6-8)	
Support (20-254)	Support internal to social networks (20-170)	Friends and extended family (19-89)
		Parents sharing responsibilities (18-79)
		Nuclear family (2-2)
	Support external to social networks (19-84)	Seeking professional help (11-25)
		Flexible work schedules (11-17)
		Use of technology (10-18)
		Prayer and faith (6-18)
		Paying non-professionals for help (3-6)
Child focused coping (20-166)	Parent led coping (19-96)	Using emotional intelligence (16-59)
		Modelling behavior and mentoring (8-16)
		Protecting child from sensitive information (6-14)
		Spending time with daughter (2-3)
		Closing the subject (2-3)
		Note taking of facts important to daughter (1-1)

Table 5. (Cont'd)

General Dimensions	Higher Order Themes	Lower Order Themes
	Child led coping (18-70)	Following child knowledge and leadership (15-37)
		Promoting child accountability and responsibility (13-31)
		Mature child emotional responses (1-2)
Parent Actions (20-163)	Actions that could apply across contexts (19-96)	Being opportunistic (10-18)
		Distraction techniques (10-16)
		Researching (8-20)
		Physical activity (8-17)
		Multi-tasking (8-15)
		Logical problem solving (5-10)
	Actions that apply directly to swimming (17-67)	Involvement and volunteering (10-22)
		Learning the spot and gaining experience (8-20)
		Change clubs/coaches/squads (8-20)
		Coach other coaches (1-4)
		Being comfortable at meets (1-1)
Planning and Organization (20-143)	Making short- and long-term plans to be organized (19-104)	
	Management of family members (13-20)	
	Developing routine (13-17)	
	Finding a way to make things happen (2-2)	
Passive Coping (20-124)	Disengagement (13-25)	
	Avoidance (9-26)	
	Frustration and anger (9-17)	
	Deliberate lack of knowledge (8-15)	
	Inoculation (8-15)	
	Compromise (4-16)	
	Acceptance (5-6)	
	Denial (2-2)	
	Guilt (1-1)	
	Hope (1-1)	
Psychological Skills (17-40)	Positive thinking (8-13)	
	Self-talk (4-8)	
	Mindfulness (4-4)	
	Goal-setting (4-4)	
	Self-control (3-5)	
	'Right now' thinking (3-4)	
	Having awareness of potential injuries (2-2)	
Short-term Strategies (5-13)	Humour (3-7)	
	Emotional response (2-2)	
	Spending on credit card (1-2)	
	Lack of sleep (1-1)	
	Alcohol (1-1)	

The following quotes from the mother of Family 8 demonstrates that because swimming is a priority it influences where money is spent in the family, "… it's just priorities, right? So…that's you know, if my estimate is decent and it's about 10 grand, then, okay, well that's a vacation or new furniture, or something like those sorts of things that don't happen so that swim and soccer can happen" (F8F). However, when it comes to swimming vs. school, the priority still lies with school, demonstrating a hierarchy of priorities for this family, "… there are times where we just say, 'you need to think about what you're prioritizing'. And as important as swim is, I think in our family collective, it still falls secondary to academic work" (F8F). The concepts of perspective taking and prioritization are heavily linked, as this quote shows,

"…and watching what they achieve to me makes it worthwhile money wise, because yeah, we could easily drop back I mean and get more money because of that or just have her do a different club and not even USA let's say, you know what I mean? I mean not even have her do like every season, I mean like she wants, because that's what she wants to do, when she wants to swim every 12 months out of the year (laughing) you know so we could cut that back if we really wanted to. But it's a choice we made and we just have to become comfortable with that and remind ourselves why we're doing it, and it's really an investment in her future for her" (F1F) .

Role following was the third most referenced lower-order theme. This is where parents engaged in behaviors that follow norms ascribed to specific roles. This was done to enhance participation in swimming, either by fulfilling necessary duties or interacting with their child in a way that was more positive. Sometimes these roles were in co-ordination with their spouse and sometimes separate. Additionally, the roles are sometimes situation specific, such as the way they approach the post-meet discussion. It appeared playing a role, with pre-determined ways of acting,

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was useful as a coping strategy because it allowed parents to rely on behaviors which had been successful previously and not have to determine how to behave on an ad hoc basis. However, it should be noted that these roles are sometimes not the desired role for a parent, but one they assume through necessity. In the excerpt below, the father of Family 9, discusses how his role as a parent at swimming meets involved not cheering because he is a coach at the club, thus he has to moderate how he behaves for the benefit of his children.

"I try not to cheer. My kids don't like it when I cheer, they only want to hear my voice if they're not doing something right, you know? So if they don't hear my voice then they think they're doing everything they're supposed to be doing. Their splits are where they're supposed to be or they're on pace for a best time or something like that. They react to that just from listening to me for so many years" (F9M).

In the following quote the mother of Family 4 describes how she acts to balance out the intensity of her husband with regard to swimming.

"Well, I feel like that's [Husband]'s job, I mean [Husband] shakes when she swims. [Husband] knows every time, he could probably tell you her times from when she was eleven … I just I try to stay away from that as that just makes you too nervous. I think it's interesting because you know it's one parent is over focused, I'm not saying [Husband] is, one parent is focused on it you as the other half doesn't have to be focused on that...I don't think"

Trusting coaches was another important subtheme of coping for parents. Parents discussed that one of the best ways to control stress, particularly that related to the development of their child(ren) as athletes, was to have faith in the coach and trust that he or she has extensive experience and/or training for the position. Many of the parents understood the difference between

the roles of parent and coach, but sometimes had to be mindful of when they needed to let the coach do their job and trust them with it. This trust related to decisions regarding training, competitions, coaching behaviors, and injuries. The mother and father of Family 7 both discussed having faith in their daughter's coaches for different reasons. The father explained how his own lack of knowledge in the sport meant he had to trust coach judgement, reducing his own stress, while the mother trusted the coaches with their approach regarding coaching behaviors, even when they were strict or pushed athletes.

"…trusting the coaches has probably helped us too … I was not a swimmer as I said earlier so I don't feel like I have a lot of expertise in that sport. And I know that they have way more than I do so having a certain amount of trust in their training plan and schedule in what they're planning has probably helped reduce that stress" (F7M).

"… it's nice if they're nice, but it doesn't impact me too much and she's pretty tough … we've always said that they're coach, that's their job, they're coach. They have to accept that (is what) we are paying them for, we want them to be hard, that's what they are there for … I would much rather have a coach that's working well for her, with results, than have a buddy" (F7F).

Many parents talked about how being able to rely on previous experience was an important coping strategy. This referred to previous experience with an exact scenario (e.g., injury), experience that was only somewhat related (e.g., car breakdowns, dealing with travel), or learning from continued involvement in swimming (e.g., when to push their child and when to walk away). Either way, previous experience gave parents an added perspective and confidence that they could deal with a situation that presented itself. Importantly, this coping strategy, perhaps over all others, demonstrates that coping is a process, and one that adapts over time. Learning is a big part of this

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strategy, but it applies equally well to other coping strategies presented, as none of the parents claimed to have arrived at the perfect coping strategies immediately. Here the mother of Family 1 talks about how she has little stress concerning injuries to her daughter in swimming "… it's part of sport. I mean you're going to strain something here and there, I know that personally, you just do, and actually it's been helpful because my daughter has seen me injure myself, I've torn a hamstring, she's seen what it is like, yeah it's a setback, but its how you work through it" (F1F). On a slightly different note, the father of Family 7 discusses how he has learned to interact more effectively with his daughter over time.

> "I think probably is something that you just learn through experience. I tend to want to be more competitive so when she was younger my tendency was always to want to kind of push more but I think as the years have gone by I have learnt that is not necessarily what she needs to be successful, so it's a little bit, trial and error. She doesn't necessary always respond to that type, she tends to do better with encouragement, rather than me placing the stress on her to do well" (F7M).

Finally we have boundary setting, which is where parents consciously put limitations on what they were willing to do and not do in order to pursue swimming. In the same way that a professor might boundaries on when he or she is willing to reply to student emails to ensure they do encroach on other aspects of their work-life balance, parents engage in similar behaviors. Boundary setting could be considered similar to prioritization, but the difference is that prioritization is a hierarchy of priority of several activities, whereas boundary setting is the protection of one event or activity over all others.

Sometimes these boundaries are physical, such as creating a divide between work (the basement office at home) and home (the rest of the house) life, and some were more abstract (not

doing double practices in the summer). As a more detailed example, one boundary that was mentioned by multiple parents was the idea of missing a practice session in order to rest, spend time together as a family, or complete homework. This was not necessarily a regular occurrence, but parents were able to 'get a read' on when these days were required for their child or the family as a whole. Below are two examples from the mother of Family 8 and the father of Family 5.

"I think probably every, like once every two weeks or three weeks, there's a day where we all look at each other and go 'no, nope, nobody's going anywhere this evening, we're going to stay home and veg as a family'. Umm…so I don't know if that's a time out, or what, how you'd name that coping strategy, but I would say every couple of weeks there is a bit of a reset day" (F8F).

"Sundays was no swim day, no practice. So that's (the day) my daughter caught up on her homework on Sundays or got ahead on Sundays. We didn't have any stress for that unless there was a swim meet. Her swim meets are generally once a month, so you kind of plan around that so it didn't all consume you" (F5M).

Goals for swimming involvement. Alongside the philosophy parents had for why their child was involved, they also had goals for their involvement, represented by the subthemes mastery focus, enjoyment, successful outcomes, parent setting expectation limitations, and encouraging child to diversify skills. Here, based on the philosophy parents had developed for involvement in swimming, they set goals for that involvement, most of which come out as putting forth effort and improving, or in short, a mastery focus. Understanding the need for a mastery focus was relatively easy for most of the parents who discussed it, to identify. However, a big part of their use of a mastery focus as a coping strategy was helping their child understand the need for a mastery focus and thus keep competitive outcomes and expectations in check. The need to focus

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on oneself for practice and competition, and on self-referenced improvement is described here by the father of Family 4

> "I think it was also learning that with swimming you're always competing against yourself and not trying to compare them to how others are doing. That's hard, that's hard as a swimmer not to do when you see some people are dropping times and you're not. Or I'm training just as hard as them or I work harder in practice but they're still dropping time, why can't I? So you're competing against yourself every time, you're competing against the clock, you know, for time. And getting to understand that versus what I grew up with, (where) you were always competing against someone else" (F4M).

Parents, unsurprisingly given the benefits of swimming cited in the study, want the experience to be enjoyable. This might mean making swimming fun for their child, but for some parents it also meant making the experience fun for themselves by not becoming overly invested. When asked for advice for other swimming parents, the mother of Family 9 highlighted the importance of enjoying the experience, "you do end up spending a *lot* of time with, with the same people, year round, and so you do have very strong bonds that are formed and the kids form strong bonds and parents form strong bonds with each other and with other kids, and so, to enjoy that" (F9F). The following exert from the mother of Family 8 highlights the need for the experience to be fun for both parent and (especially) child, otherwise the point of participation may be being missed.

> "…as much as I've said that time draw is a challenge, I find that, and I've said to parents, that it's just such a great experience for the kids. And they have a blast, and I think they get a lot out of that moment of competition. So I've kind of encouraging people to walk into the wrath rather than negotiate it. … And my advice would be very, you do it as long

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as it's mostly fun, right? And when you've crossed that line something needs to pull back"

(F8F).

It is apparent in talking to individual parents that much of their philosophy and goals for involvement were shared with their partner, as parents discussed having very similar thoughts regarding this general dimension. As will be discussed further during case study analysis results, parents often come to these philosophies and goals together as ideal coping will exist where both parents have similar outcomes in mind. A mismatch in philosophy and goals would make things such as perspective taking, prioritizing, or boundary setting more challenging and overall coping less effective. The way in which parents shared their values is through communication, which is the next general dimension.

Communication general dimension. The communication general coping dimension was the second most referenced and perhaps the best articulated group of coping strategies. Communication appeared to be one of the most important coping strategies used by parents, as it formed the basis for all other forms of coping, in that if parents do not communicate with others it is very difficult to coordinate other coping strategies, such as planning and organization It contained three higher order themes: within family, outside of family, and limiting knowledge transfer to other people. All three of these higher-order themes contained both verbal and non-verbal communications, such as email or text, with people important to family and swimming contexts.

Within family communication. Communication within the family unit included communications between parent and child (child communication), between parents (spousal communication), and with all members of the family (family communication). Beginning with child communication, what became clear in analyzing the results regarding stressors is that the

stress of the parent and child were highly interwoven. Therefore, much of the coping was child-related in a way that if the child stress is removed, parent stress also is reduced. This is why child communication as a coping strategy was so important to parents; it provided them with an opportunity to discuss and reduce stressors. Parents discussed talking with the child about outcomes of races, reasons for prioritization, and coaches, among others. In doing so they better helped their child understand a situation and reduced their own stress in the process. In the following quote the mother of Family 1 discusses how she talked with her eldest daughter a decision she and her husband had taken to not take her to a swim meet because they needed to attend the first communion of their other daughter and provide sibling balance.

"A good example of that would have been this weekend, she [Youngest Daughter] had a recital and she had first communion, [Eldest Daughter] had a swim meet this weekend … well too bad…. It's her first communion, it's her recital, so she didn't, [Eldest Daughter] couldn't do any of it. You know, so you have to just I think talk to the athlete and say this is life, there's things, it's not all swimming it's just not. There's other things we have to do, I mean we have to participate in her life because life is too short and we need to do this So that's how I deal with it is talking to [Eldest Daughter] and telling her, and talking, really a lot of talk." (F1F).

Parents also communicated regularly with their spouse. Important in helping co-ordinate efforts for logistical issues, working through emotions, and solving problems logically and ensuring they stayed with their intended philosophy and goals. The father of Family 8 summarized the use of communication with his wife as a general coping strategy in the following quote, "… then my wife and I will also debrief. It's kind of fleeting sometimes, just like, well alright, well what's going on? Where are our values here? What do we, how do we think [Daughter] is doing?"

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(F8M). Other parents talked more about how they used communication as a coping strategy, with the father of Family 11 describing in the following excerpt that he and his wife work together to send emails because as a couple they perceive that he words his emails in a more positive manner.

"There have been times, because my wife is, my wife has a swimming background, so she notices those things a lot more than I do. Like I just see kids swimming back and forth, and she actually understands the strokes and all that business. So, she will comm-, communicate it to me and then I send emails [to coaches], you know, in the past, in the past, like, 'hey, how do you, how do you think [Daughter] and my son is doing in this regard?' You know, 'could he, you know use a little help in this area?' Yeah, so maybe with like a, sort of a, an email that refers to that".

Finally, communication within the whole family occurred when it was apparent or probable that all family members were involved, particularly multiple children, as it is not often clear when both parents are involved in discussions from the data collected. Again, similar to child and spouse communication, this is all members of a family discussing an issue and coming to consensus, or at least knowing reasons for courses of action. One father stated, "I sent an email to the head coach just saying we would like to meet, as a family, we would like to meet with you to talk about your team philosophy and expectations…" (F4M).

Outside of family communication. Additional to communication within the family unit, communication with people outside of the family was also an important set of coping strategies. The lower order themes included other swimming parent communications, coach communications, club communications, apologizing to others, and ignoring social boundaries. Other parents were considered to be some of the largest benefits and stressors for parents both in and out of competitions. Therefore it is not surprising that communicating with other parents was mentioned

by 19 of the participants as being a coping strategy. Communicating with other parents was helpful because it allowed them to directly address issues with certain parents, discuss issues with someone in a similar position who would therefore be understanding, get information from someone more knowledgeable, and to build friendships. Below the mother of Family 1 and the father of Family 9 discuss how communicating with other parents was a way to vent to people who have similar experiences, and an opportunity to learn about the sport from people who have been around longer, respectively.

> "I mean actually that's kind of nice because they're going through the same thing you are (laughing) you know, I mean so that's very helpful to talk to them about you know when you're driving far away or staying overnight, and you left this kid here, or they had something else going on here, or this weekend had, we had 20 things this weekend. At a swim meet (laughing) it's like, so I mean it just helps to get that off your chest, kind of thing" (F1F).

> "I mean, I, for me I'll just flat out ask them, 'What are you talking about? I mean, I don't get it' so that I can better understand it. I think I'll be like, 'Okay, now you were just talking about how there was something about their streamline when they were jumping in and what was that again? Can you, can you…' So I mean, I may very well ask the question. I mean, I never pretend that I know what they're talking about if I don't understand" (F9M).

Coach communications were also an important non-family communication coping strategy for parents. Again, this is perhaps unsurprising considering that parents rated coaches as a stressors and the amount of control coaches have over training, progress, and potentially happiness of their child. As with communications with other parents, sometimes this coping strategy was about addressing a particular issue parents had with a coach and sometimes it was about using the coach

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as an important resource for information. This was particularly important for parents when they wanted to clarify the goals a coach had for their child or a style of coaching they were using. As an example, when asked about advice for future parents, the mother of Family 1 suggested asking for more help from people, including the coach. She indicated, "don't hesitate to talk about it … I think that's one thing we didn't do enough is asked for help (laughing) to be honest, so I think that would be a key thing to tell people, help, ask for help more" (F1F). As the following excerpt shows the father of Family 5 was particularly grateful to have a conversation with the coach after a poor meet performance, as it helped explain the performance, and place it in the context of physical training and tapering.

> "I think looking back on, we determined, we met with the coach, post that meet, kind of debriefed and evaluated and he took ownership, which I think was huge, for the swimmer, that he own, that the coach took some ownership and (said) 'hey I tapered wrong, I tapered you wrong, it was too long you were basically out of shape, were going to change things going forward for a training perspective and the taper'" (F5M).

Limiting knowledge transfer. The final higher order theme for communication was limiting knowledge transfer, which contained no lower order themes. Limiting knowledge transfer was mentioned by just over a quarter of the participants and related to not sharing all the information a parent had with someone else. By not sharing information, particularly with people who were perceived as not having enough knowledge to understand, parents avoided the need to have longer conversations explaining the information or justifying decisions made. Additionally, not sharing all the information with their child was one way in which they could protect their child from information that they were not ready to process. To illustrate, the following quote demonstrates how one parent avoided giving friends and extended family more than the necessary

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details regarding her daughters swimming because they would not understand what they were being told. This withholding of information perhaps puts an emphasis on why communicating with other swimming parents was so important for coping.

> "I try to stay to myself about it, or just within my husband kind of thing, you almost have to like not offer any information … you can kind of tell that they have no understanding of level of swimming or anything. Nothing. People just have no concept unless they are in the swimming world, and like I said I was one of them, but even friends of mine it's not something you can just talk freely (laughing) about … You really have to stay within the realm of swimming parents in that I think" (F1F).

Support general dimension. The third general dimension was support, and it contained two higher-order themes of support internal to social networks and support external to social networks. Support differs from communication in that this was support provided through action, rather than via communication. For example, parents discussed sharing responsibility for logistics and other chores with their spouse, taking the 'divide and conquer' approach. Parents would divide work to be done or responsibility of a potentially stressful situation in order to meet the demands. While this necessarily involves communication, it is the actions that are important in this general dimension.

Support internal to social networks. As with communication, social networks, including other swimming parents, were an important source of support for parents and formed a lower order theme. Social networks included anyone that parents knew and used as a source of support. These supporting took many forms, such as providing accommodation at travel meets, helping with rides to practice, helping with childcare at meets, or helping to provide a positive atmosphere at practice and competition. Childcare at meets was a surprising finding, but apparently very useful where

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parents had several children and was important in helping parents cope with sibling balance that was identified as a stressor for parents.

"… if it's in an out of town pool, we're looking at spending the weekend somewhere, he (their other child) usually will come with us, and then because then the swim families will also have younger siblings that he can play with or we can kind of tag-team or have swimmers that are swimming in different sessions, then he can stay behind at a hotel with siblings, while his sister swims" (F9F).

Several parents talked about being able to stay with friends or family when travelling for competitions and reducing stress by significantly reducing financial cost. Importantly, parents also talked about the activity of talking to other parents while at meets as a way to fill time as reflected in the following quote:

"I just try to talk to some of the other parents around me right up until the race and just, I like to see how their kids are doing, I like to mark off everybody from our club, see how they're swimming. I mean plus it gives me something to do when you're sitting there for three hours for your child to swim for 2 minutes (laughing)" (F1M).

The second lower theme is parent shared responsibility, previously described as the 'divide and conquer' approach for parents whereby they divided responsibilities in order to meet time and logistical demands. For instance, many parents talked about needing to divide the family at weekends to accommodate more than one child, as suggested by this excerpt "... [Husband] goes to the meets, [Husband] volunteers at the meets, he loves it, he wants to do it and I am more the one that's sensitive about the impact to [Daughter] and [Son]… I'll stay with [Daughter] and [Son] (at home)" (F7F). Parents also divided up tasks in such a way that they played to the strengths of each parent, as demonstrated by the father from Family 8: "[Wife], is in charge of our family

finances. So she is much more acutely aware of the impact of club sports on our family's budget, and she carries that anxiety, umm, it really falls to her" (F8M).

Support external to social networks. The higher-order coping theme of support external to social networks covers the subthemes seeking professional help, flexible work schedules, use of technology, prayer and faith, and paying non-professionals for help. In this higher order theme, support comes from outside social networks, either from people or practices that help provide support for the parent. These were sources to which parents reached out for support, both physical and emotional, to deal with stressors.

Many parents sought help from qualified professionals for help with specific issues like tutors for school work, coaches for additional technique training for swimming, mental skills from a psychological skills consultant, or physical therapists in rehabilitation from injury. Additionally, a small number of parents talked about sometimes paying non-professionals to help (e.g., with transportation), particularly with regard to logistics. Professional help was important for areas where parents did not have specialist knowledge, particularly injuries or psychological skills. As the mother of Family 11 describes, professional help is often a chain of expertise that help to solve an issue, in this case, an injury.

> My daughter, a year and a half and ago, had a shoulder injury. So, we had her, I can't
> remember if we took her to a medical doctor, we must have because we had the referral to
> the PT. The PT worked with her and basically just determined the amount of yardage she
> was doing, she needed more muscles to support it. Then we actually had her work with a
> trainer at the gym, just a half hour a week, to not do any heavy weights, just some light
> dumbbell stuff just to build the supporting muscles" (F9F).

Work flexibility was also important for parents. Parents described having flexibility in their work schedules such that they were able to work around practices and/or competitions. Here the mother of Family 5 describes that exact situation.

"I have a lot of latitude just because they know, I mean I've been in the system for close to 25 years, almost 25 years. So I've made a reputation for myself as someone that works hard gets my job done so if I choose to leave on a Friday when the swim meet is to go watch some events I can, nobody says anything, it's no big deal. So I'm very fortunate that I can, that I have the job, that I can get off in that sense" (F5F).

As technology becomes more advanced and pervasive in society, parents said that they were able to use technology in order to prevent or reduce stress. For example, parents used technology for communication with other people, scheduling, Google Maps to find competition locations, and specific swimming meet applications. They talked about the use of Meet Mobile, a smartphone application that allows parents to track the progress of a swim meet and know the times of every swimmer in a race. The functionality of this application allows parents to know when their child is about to swim, know which lane they will be in, and track their child's performance ahead of results sheets being printed. The father of Family3 found this particularly useful, "… now we use an app, meet mobile, at the meets, where they'll actually say her event and her heat and her lane and her old time compared to her new time, so it's easy to follow like that" (F3M).

Of the lower-order within external support, prayer and faith is perhaps one of the most interesting. While not all families practiced a religion or mentioned this as a theme, for those that did, faith and prayer were huge components of their personal and parent-dyad coping. Some used prayer as a way of keeping themselves calm, and many put belief in the fact that God has a plan

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and that faith that God would see their child and themselves right in the end. This belief related to performance in the pool, recovery from injury, and overall success. In this way, prayer and faith were calming for parents in a similar way to perspective taking, as it allowed them to view swimming within a greater purpose.

> "…right, and it's a path, I feel like this is her path, this is her way, and like I said, I'm very spiritual anyway and I believe in that firmly [emphasis] and I pray about that a lot, there's a lot prayer in my life for what's going on, for every aspect of the swimming thing" (F1F).

Child focused coping general dimension. As highlighted in the stressors section of the results, one of the most important stressors for parents was their children's emotional states. If their child was happy, relatively stress free, and progressing as an athlete, then parents also appeared to have less stress. Thus parents were attuned to the stress their child feels, and situations that may cause child stress. Along those lines, the child-focused coping general dimension contained two higher order themes of parent led coping and child led coping that parents used to reduce the stress associated directly with their child.

Parent led coping. The parent led higher order theme was where the parent engaged in behaviors to reduce the stress for their child and contained the lower order themes using emotional intelligence, modelling behavior and mentoring, protecting child from sensitive information, spending time with daughter, closing the subject, and note taking of facts important to daughter. The most frequently cited coping strategy lower-order theme was emotional intelligence. This is where parents read the emotional state of their child before making a decision about how to progress with the interaction. The practice of emotional intelligence seemed to be most relevant in the post-meet period, especially where an event had not gone as well as hoped (for child and/or parent). Here the father of Family 3 discussed how he and his wife have learned to read their

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daughter and the level of communication she prefers after meets where performance has been below expectations.

"There's that, those times, where we both know and even when [wife] knows that she could have done a lot better. There's been some silent rides home definitely, where you could tell 'oh, she doesn't want to talk about it', but she also doesn't want to hear anything from us, but yeah, she likes to be quiet, kind of be silent" (F3M).

Parents also cited the use of modelling of correct behaviors to their children and mentoring as a way of reducing stress by fostering behaviors they want to see as an immediate and preventive strategy. Here the mother of Family 9 explains the process she went through with her daughter to explain how to keep a schedule so her daughter could start taking personal responsibility for her own time management:

"We started off with modelling for her, this is what a schedule looks like, you need to make a schedule for yourself, this is what it looks like and then, we equipped her with the tools that she needed to do that, so we bought a small book, page calendar, and then I would show her, we'd go through all of her lessons and what was due and required and write them all down and so, the process of me doing it and showing her this is what it should look like" (F9F).

Finally, a small number of parents talked about the lower-order theme of protecting their child from sensitive information, which is where parents made efforts to protect their children from potential stressors. Examples included parents withholding information from their children in order to prevent them having to deal with complex issues, or parents behaving in a particular way to try and balance the behaviors of the other parent. In one particular example, the mother from Family 8 did not share the reasons for the dismissal of her daughter's coach from the swimming

club, but still arranged a way for her to say goodbye to her coach, "I did not go into the reasons for the dismissal or any of that, because that's not kid stuff and she shouldn't have to wrestle with that, especially when she esteemed her coach" (F8F).

Child led coping. The second higher-order theme was child-led coping strategies with the lower-order themes following child knowledge and leadership, promoting child accountability and responsibility, and mature child emotional responses. Here, the actions of the child are important in stress reduction for the parents, either by allowing them to make the decisions, by their child demonstrating appropriate self-leadership behaviors, or by holding their child accountable for decisions made.

Following child knowledge and leadership was particularly useful for parents as it meant they were able to involve their child in important decision making and not making decisions on their behalf. Being able to involve the actual agent in the decision making process appeared to help parents cope with the stress of making big decisions, and in the following quote a mother (Family 5) described her pride in the leadership role her daughters took in helping to decide whether to move to a new swimming club or not "Yeah... the thing that I'm proud of is that my girls want to have the conversation with the coach. I mean, we'll have some questions too but they really have some questions and I think that's great" (F5F). While it is not possible to say, based on the methodology used if this changed over time, at least one parent suggested that as her daughter aged she no longer had to make all the decisions for her, as she was now old enough to make her own decisions, indicating it is a coping strategy that develops over time:

> "... I was trying to balance does she even know if she wants to do this, or does she think
> that we want her to do this, or because she does it, she has to do this. You know, out
> thinking things for a fourth grader, way differently than for a fourteen year old girl, who

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can say 'yes I know I want to do this'. So you know it's morphed into I know that [Swimming Daughter] is driving this ship, that she wants to do this" (F7F).

Alongside child leadership and knowledge, parents then held their children responsible and accountable for the decisions they made in order to reinforce desired behaviors. In doing so, children were more likely to display positive behaviors and subsequently reduce parent stress, as reflected in the following quote

"… let the children know too that hey, this is not to be a burden on them, but if you want to make this commitment it's not just your commitment but it's our commitment too… so we always re-evaluate before we re-start a new season… You know and then agree upon a number of like minimum practices that they have to go to make sure that they're you know going to maintain their skill level, and then also make it worth the financial commitment" (F3F).

Parent actions general dimension. The fifth general dimension was parent actions, and it represents active coping strategies characterized by deliberate action in order to reduce stress. There were two higher-order themes within this general dimension: actions that could apply across contexts and actions that apply directly to swimming. Those that are directly related to swimming are parent actions that were specific to the sport of swimming (e.g., changing swimming clubs, coaches, or squads). Whereas parent actions that apply across contexts are those actions that are carried out to relieve stressors from the sport of swimming, but could be utilized in a number of contexts.

Actions that could apply across contexts. The higher-order theme of across context actions contained the lower-order themes being opportunistic, distraction techniques, researching, physical activity, and logical problem solving. As the results demonstrate, each coping strategy

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was utilized in an effort to reduce stressors brought around by swimming. However, these actions also apply to other stressor contexts.

The lower order theme of being opportunistic describes how parents would make the most of small opportunities to take part in non-regularly-scheduled activities that would reduce certain stressors. Many of the examples related to parents taking opportunities during (expected or unexpected) breaks in the swimming schedule to take part in non-swimming related social events, or spend time with their partner. As the father from Family 3 suggested, he rarely got time when there was no swimming and so he made the most of the break in swimming season by taking a trip to see friends.

"I have the first free weekend in a long time, so I'm taking the Amtrak to [Midwestern City] on Friday to Sunday, and my best friend from [another Midwestern State] is driving there. So you do get little spurts here and there, and where we do like to take advantage of it. And she'll go off, she'll go on girls trips, [wife] will, you know if we get breaks but, we know year round and mostly evenings we're tied up with swimming" (F3M).

Distraction techniques is where parents had learned to engage in activities that would distract them from the present moment. In distracting themselves, parents were less likely to be anxious about a particular situation. This most often manifested during swimming competitions, where parents would distract themselves while their child was competing, or to avoid conversations with other parents, in order to manage arousal levels. Some of most frequently mentioned distraction techniques were taping races and bringing work to meets. The father of Family 11 describes his approach to controlling some of his nervousness at meets in the excerpt below.

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"I wouldn't say I get overly nervous, so I don't find that I need a really big coping mechanism. I do probably a little bit, because of boredom and a little, maybe a little bit just to help with that nervousness, of trying to always bring something to read. So, between events, you know, or whatever I'll read a book, that kind of makes the time go by a little bit" (F11M).

As another example, researching was where parents actively engaged in information seeking behaviors to find out more about a stressor and/or solution to a stressor. The most common example was families who already had or were currently thinking about moving coaches, squads, or clubs and conducting research on potential options, as reflected in the following passage.

"… so I found a couple teams and so before we moved or before we joined the team, we actually got in touch with the coaches and asked if we could come watch the teams practice, and so that's what we did. We watched the team practice for a little bit and talked with the coach, what's their coaching style, gave them her age and times of her last events or her best events and asked, what level according to this information would she be?" (F3F).

Actions that apply directly to swimming. The higher-order coping strategy theme of actions that apply directly to swimming included the lower-order themes involvement and volunteering, learning the sport and gaining experience, change clubs/coaches/squads, coach other coaches, and being comfortable at meets. These actions are specific to the sport of swimming, but are none-the-less important actions for parents to engage in for coping.

Involvement and volunteering were important components in the learning process for parents, but also allowed them to feel that they had an active role in the development of their children. Of course, volunteering had the additional benefit of getting them out of static observer roles in the stands, which could also be a stressor for parents. Although it only occurred for a few

parents in specific clubs, some clubs rewarded volunteer time with reductions in monthly swimming fees, and this had the potential to reduce some financial stress for parents, considering they would be at meets anyway. Volunteering was also a regular recommendation from the parents interviewed, as it provided all the benefits mentioned, and, as reflected here by the mother of Family 9 it allowed her to learn about the sport of swimming, too.

> "… be involved, it's a lot of fun, you will get to meet a lot of the swimmers from different clubs and recognize them and are able to relate with them when you're down there on deck, and that's really cool, to hear swimming from their perspective" (F9F).

Parents also discussed that learning the sport and gaining experience as an important coping strategy. More specifically, learning the sport helped to remove unknowns and enabled parents to hold knowledgeable discussions with their child. This was seen as particularly beneficial as it allowed parents to enjoy the sport more often, negotiate their role within the culture of the sport, and reduced the amount of deliberate energy they had to put into attending meets – they could now be on 'auto-pilot', "… right now we're kind of on auto-pilot, it's like okay, we got this, we know how this thing works" (F8F). When parents didn't know the sport they had to spend a larger amount of their time trying to understand what was going on, and less time enjoying the meet or observing their child. The father of Family 8 discussed how it took him a while to learn that he didn't have to engage in the same behaviors as all the other parents at meets, he could approach it in his own way, and in doing so enjoyed meets more.

> "… I used to do this thing where like all the other parents, not all the other parents, but you know, I used to get the heat sheets and everything, and I was writing down all the times and I was studying the heat sheets and everything, and I was watching a lot of races that my daughter wasn't in because I thought I should be or something. And then when I figured

out, 'oh, I can just grade papers, and I can look up when she's racing or when one of her teammates is racing, then I can go back to grading papers'. Like as soon as I figured that out, my life got a lot better" (F8M).

Finally, changing swimming clubs, coaches or squads is one of the best examples of parent actions that apply directly to swimming. This lower-order theme represented an action taken by parents, with or without research in decision making process, to enhance the swimming experience of their child. Sometimes this occurred as a result of coach/club stressors or performance concerns, at other times it was forced upon parents as a result of a club closure, and at least one parent-dyad talked about moving because they wanted a club that was closer to their own personal values. Here, the father from Family 7 describes why potential future performance of a team and its training location factored into why his family chose to switch teams. Specifically, he stated that.

"… once the transition happened a lot of the coaches on the former team left, and we felt better about the potential success of the new team compared to the old team. The old team still exist, but we kind of felt that it might not even make it through the transition. So we had a combination of futuristic success of the team and future location I would say" (F7M).

Planning and organization general dimension. The sixth general coping dimension is planning and organization, and refers to parent attempts to organize themselves and their families in order to maximize resources and reduce stress. The higher-order themes within this dimension included, making short- and long-term plans to be organized, management of family members, developing routine, and finding a way to make things happen.

Planning as a higher order theme was relatively simple, and refers to parents being organized through making plans to manage time or resources. In doing so, parents reduced or managed the stressors of time management and logistics. The following quote from the father of

Family 7 shows how his family and the parents of other families in his social network used planning and car-pooling to reduce logistical stress. Additionally the quote demonstrates how multiple coping strategies were often used, discussing here use of technology, spousal communication, and support from social network.

"The other thing is making a schedule about who's driving when, so even when it does fall on the just the two of us. You know, I have a little iPhone schedule, and we, we put in there who is driving which time so that we I mean it's the way we use to communicate that with our car pool. We have had different parents who co-ordinate that car pool and written, you know sent out a weekly e-mail with the schedule for that week about who is driving when. So in one sense if you are doing the schedule it can add to the stress. But having the car pool decreases the stress greatly I would say" (F7M).

Management of family members coping strategies referred to the demographics of a family (e.g., number and age of children) and the ways in which parents managed the family members in order to reduce stress. In the following quote, the mother of Family 5 talked about one way in which she and her husband have coped with logistic stress (as well as intending other benefits) was to have the father (a teacher) move to each of the schools his children were at so his schedule was similar to theirs

"Well my [Husband] for one has had the better brunt over the years. My job doesn't allow me to, to car pool them from practice. Um and so he has, part of the commitment for us, this is before they even started swimming but just so that he was available, um that he went to the same school they went to for elementary, middle, and high school" (F5F).

Some parents talked about how having one child that was older and could drive significantly helped the logistical stressors of swimming, as they essentially had three potential

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adults that could drive. The father from Family 5 discussed how he was able to change his schedule and gym membership because an older sibling was doing the driving

"… when my daughter drove August of last year she'll be driving a year coming up, y'know, going forward, and I have another daughter in college, and we have a car, a third car, it was like okay, I don't have to worry about it. In fact I changed my gym membership because I didn't have to go to the YMCA at 5 in the morning, 'cause she's driving herself" (F5M).

Finally, the routine lower-order theme is where parents talked about having developed a routine over a period of time that assisted with time management and logistical stressors by everyone knowing what had to be done and when. Sometimes this was overtly discussed as routine by participants, and on others it was obvious in analysis that parents had developed routines that aided logistical stressors. This routine made it easier, as it required less day-to-day and week-to-week planning, but came with similar benefits. Importantly, routines were not just about individuals, but about parent-dyad or whole family routines. As demonstrated by the following quote, the mother from Family 3 suggested that having the family get into a rhythm during the season that reduces the amount of planning needed

"Well now we're in a rhythm or have a schedule, so we know what days you know who's going where and doing what. And so one of us actually is a stay at home parent so we're able to help coordinate and, you know, get them where they need to be and then prep food most of the time" (F3F).

Passive coping general dimension. Passive coping was the seventh general dimension of coping discussed by parents. This dimension contained coping efforts that involves parents taking no direct action or involving deliberate inaction. Higher order themes within this dimension

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included: disengagement, avoidance, frustration and anger, deliberate lack of knowledge, inoculation, compromise, acceptance, denial, guilt, and hope.

Disengagement was the highest reported passive coping strategy, and it represents situations when parents deliberately disengaged from a stressor. For example, parents talked about leaving swim meets to alleviate boredom, removing themselves from conversations or positions of authority within organizations, or even from work stress. A deliberate decision is made to leave the current stressor and engage in another activity in order to reduce stress, or in this case, also boredom. The father of Family 3 described how he would often get frustrated at meets when his daughter did not perform to the level he knew she could, and this often led to a little tension between he and his wife, so he would disengage by taking a break, "… sometimes I'll just take a break outside, leave the bleachers for a little while, because we tend to butt heads a lot because we're two different people, her mum and I. Kind of totally opposite, but [sigh], I just know her potential, you know, I do, I just know her potential" (F3M).

Avoidance was a very similar coping strategy to disengagement, but is different in that parents avoided becoming involved in an activity they knew would be stressful. With disengagement, parents had to be doing an activity (not always be choice) before deciding to withdraw. The father of Family 8 describes how he avoids getting involved in discussions with other parents at meets, because he did not enjoy them.

"… in general I find that being around other parents on teams a stressful experience. One, I don't really like to talk that much at meets, I don't like to converse. I get bored with talk about swimming, and who's coaching where, and who's doing what, and all that business; I don't find that particularly interesting … What I do now is I take my little folding chair,

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I put it on the back wall of the natatorium, I turn on my computer … And just like, that

totally gets me off the hook of having to sit with other parents at meets" (F8M).

Perhaps one of the most interesting coping strategies found in the study is lack of

knowledge. This also could be called 'ignorance is bliss', and is where a parent would deliberately

not learn about the sport or specifics of their child's involvement to avoid gaining additional

stressors. This quote from the mother of Family 1 shows that she already has a number of stressors,

she did not want to deal with any additional ones.

"I don't know that part of it, I almost feel like I want to ignore, you know what I mean? I

don't want to wrap my brain around some of it. Like the practicing, what they do in practice

and stuff when she tries to tell me it, she just kinda looks at me and goes ughh really? Cause

I just am like, ok I'm just, that's a part I don't even, I don't care about, I don't want know.

Kind of thing sometimes you just kind of back away and go, ok I'm dealing with enough,

I don't need to deal with that (laughing)" (F1F).

Psychological skills general dimension. The eighth coping strategies general dimension

was psychological skills and refers to parent use of psychological skills in order to reduce stress.

There are only higher-order themes in this dimension, including: positive thinking, self-talk,

mindfulness, goal-setting, self-control, 'right now' thinking, and having awareness of potential

injuries. Importantly, while 17 of the parents mentioned using what have been termed

psychological skills, the number that practiced each skill is relatively low, indicating that use of

psychological skills is highly idiosyncratic or something they think only they do.

The most often reported psychological skill was positive thinking, including reframing

negative thoughts. As has been discussed repeatedly, parents make efforts to reduce the stress of

their children in order to reduce their own stress. Here, parents used positive thinking as a way of

motivating or reducing the stress of their child, often via communicating with them about how to put their performances into greater context. Positive thinking was occasionally used as a way to reduce personal stress as well. The father from Family 5 provided a good example of providing context for performance in the following statement:

"…and that's what I've been very good about, my daughter [Swimming Daughter] just came back from Florida trip… and I'm the biggest cheer leader you'll find and I'm going 'hey that was a great swim. I know it wasn't your best time, but you beat your (time) from last month' or 'you beat your time', 'you're making really good progress'…" (F5M).

Short-term strategies general dimension. The final coping strategy general dimension was labeled short-term coping strategies. As with psychological skills, there are only higher-order themes, including: humor, emotional responses, spending on credit card, lack of sleep, and alcohol. These short-term strategies were defined by coping strategies that only had short term benefits, and some could potentially be described as being maladaptive. An interesting aspect of this general dimension is just how few parents reported using short-term strategies (five), which is perhaps a reflection of social desirability or that parents are engaging effective coping attempts that prevent the need to turn to short term strategies. As an example, the mother of Family 4 discussed how she uses humor as a way to defuse difficult post-meet car rides with her daughter.

"… I'm a laugher so if I'm in the car I try to turn it around and make her laugh and usually we can find something funny in the whole situation. I tend, I'm kind of that silly person, and we usually can end up turn it around, it might take twenty minutes but we can usually get it turned around" (F4M).

Links between stressors and coping strategies. Parent use of coping strategies was highly idiosyncratic, as demonstrated by the fact that not all parents reported using all the coping

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strategies elicited in the study. Additionally, not all parents used identical coping strategies for each individual stressor. For example, some parents used passive coping attempts such as disengagement during swim meets to cope with the competitive stressor of watching swim meets, where other parents sought support from their social networks for the same stressor. Additionally, parents discussed that multiple stressors could be occurring at any one time, and that they used multiple coping strategies for each stressor they experienced. Therefore, because of the idiosyncratic nature of stressors and coping strategy usage, alongside multiply occurring stressors and coping strategies, it was difficult to draw links between individual stressors and coping strategies.

Also, it became apparent that just linking stressors and coping strategies may be too simplistic. The benefits discussed by parents also may be included in the stress-coping process. More specifically, developing an active philosophy for involvement was a coping strategy used by parents. In order for this coping strategy to work, parents must have perceived some benefits to involvement that are more worthwhile than the current stressor experienced. Therefore, adding benefits into the process would be ideal, however, as parents were not asked to suggest links between benefits, and stressors and coping strategies it is not possible to draw those links under the current methodology.

Stressors and coping strategies. Broad links between some stressors and coping strategies themes were established. Some coping general dimensions map quite well on to some or all general dimensions of stressors. First, communication, while not displayed in the results as being a superordinate (category containing all other themes) coping theme, it was an important coping strategy in and of itself, as well as a component of many others. It also was discussed as being employed for almost all stressors, including the majority of organizational, competitive,

developmental, and general stressors. The few stressors for which it was not mentioned, e.g., child other skill development under developmental stressors, it is likely that communication was used in some way but not reported. Secondly, the general dimension of justification for swimming involvement also was used by parents for most of the stressors across all stressor general dimensions. Finally, the general dimension coping theme of planning and organization links directly to the planning and organization higher-order stressor theme. Logistical planning and organization is a stressor that requires a certain set of skills to deal with the associated challenge, such as making plans, managing family members, and developing routines. It is thought that the communication and justification for swimming involvement general dimensions were particularly useful across all stressors because (1) they applied across all contexts, allowing parents to potentially use the same coping strategy for a number of concurrent stressors; and (2) they provided both problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies allowing parents to match the coping strategy to the stressor as per the goodness of fit hypotheses (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

Additionally, some higher-order or lower-order coping strategies were directly applicable to certain stressors reported by parents as they assisted with a highly specific stressor. The coping strategies of trusting coaches' knowledge, coach communications, and club communications had direct links to coach, club, and child athletic development stressors. Here the stressors are very context-specific to either a person, an organization, or the development of a child-athlete. Therefore coping strategies were developed that also were context specific. Another example is parents setting expectation limitations is directly applicable to child expectations and outcomes as a way of helping their child hold realistic expectations for meets, thus reducing the likelihood of severe disappointment and subsequent parent stress. Other examples include learning the sport and gaining experience being linked to a lack of knowledge, seeking professional help and injuries,

and flexible work schedules and planning and organization stressors. In sum, parents developed specific coping strategies for context-specific stressors.

These suggested links between stressors and coping strategies suggest that parents may employ general (e.g., perspective taking) and specific (e.g., trusting coaches) coping strategies for their stressors. These general and specific coping strategies may be employed separately or concurrently depending on the stressor, but again, the current methodology makes it difficult to establish the exact nature of these relationships. The remainder of the coping strategies were not linked with specific stressors regularly enough for definitive relationships to be concluded. Indeed, the results presented above concerning links between stressors and coping strategies must be interpreted with caution too, as the links suggested are not used by all parents all of the time. As suggested at the beginning of this section, coping strategies are used for different reasons and at different times for each parent, indicating highly idiosyncratic use of coping strategies, which is support by prior literature (Gould et al. 1993; Hardy et al. 1996).

Conclusions. Parents reported many benefits to swimming involvement, stressors due to swimming involvement, and coping strategies employed to deal with stressors. Benefits included benefits to the parents themselves, their families, and their children. Additionally, the sport of swimming has some specific benefits for parents that may not be present with other sports. The stressors parents perceived as being due to swimming involvement included organizational stressors, (e.g., planning and organization, and time), competitive stressors, (e.g., expectations and outcomes for meets or watching meets), developmental stressors, (e.g., child well-being), or general stressors, (e.g., child technology use). Finally, parents employed a number of different coping strategies for the stressors caused by youth swimming involvement, including justification

for swimming involvement, communication, support, child-focused coping, parent actions, planning and organization, passive coping, psychological skills, and short-term strategies.

No one stressor or coping strategy occurs in isolation, and parents use multiple coping strategies to cope with each stressor. Links between benefits, stressors, and coping strategies are difficult to determine as each are multiple and concurrently occurring. However, some broad and more specific links have been drawn between a small number of stressors and coping strategies. Links between benefits, and stressors and coping strategies should be investigated going forward as interviews suggested that perceived benefits may be part of the appraisal of stressors and subsequent coping. Finally, it appears that parents may use general and specific coping strategies to cope with stressors. How and when parents use general coping strategies, specific coping strategies, or general and specific coping strategies concurrently requires further investigation.

Case study Analyses

The nomothetic analyses allow us to view how themes aggregate across a larger sample. However, as previously stated, quantification of qualitative data using hierarchical thematic analysis can sometimes misrepresent themes as being more important qualitatively than they actually are. This data analytic approach also has the downside of sorting themes into very distinct categories, where sometimes there is overlap between categories, or relationships that exist between them. In order to address some of these shortcomings and to understand the individual differences between parent-dyads, to examine how stressors and coping strategies occur simultaneously, and to look more at the narrative experience of the stressor and coping strategies, case study profiles were developed. It is beyond the scope of this results section to present all parent dyads in detail. Therefore summary experiences of four couples will be given.

It is remarkable, considering the differences in family demographics, physical location, swimmers skill levels, and clubs-affiliated that there is such similarity in the benefits, stressors, and coping strategies of these families. However, *how* they experience the benefits, stressors and coping strategies can be quite different, and thus each family has its own unique narrative. Table 2 details the demographics of each family, and the narrative that the lead investigator considers as being unique to the family.

How parent-dyads used coping strategies can be divided into two categories. All parent-dyads developed roles for each parent in the dyad to best cope with the stressors faced. For example, a dyad may have one parent that took care of getting the children to and from practice, and the other would be responsible for preparing food for when the rest of the family returned (logistical stressors). From here dyads either, communicated and shared responsibility for all stressors, or they focused only on their own responsibilities and left their partner to focus on theirs. This was determined by the fact that some dyads more common stressors and rated stress lower across all stressors. Other dyads had fewer common stressors with more variance in stress ratings. Both types of spreading responsibility and coping appeared to be effective.

The four parent-dyads chosen for the results are from Families 4, 7, 9, and 10 and represented both important narratives and examples of both types of dyad coping. Families 4 and 9 have been chosen as they represented families coming toward the end and close to the beginning of the "incredible journey" (F4F) that is swimming involvement. Family 7 was an interesting case study to include because it featured one parent that bought much less into the nature of competitive sport and thus had some different goals for involvement. Finally, Family 10 represented a unique parent involvement as the father is a current swimming coach for the club in which his daughters participate.

Family 9 – the beginning. Family nine was comprised of a mother and father and two children, one daughter and one son. The mother is a 43 year old teacher who has no prior sporting history, and the father is a 43 year old credit manager with a sporting history in high school baseball, and currently participates in recreational ice hockey and softball. The daughter, 13, is the swimmer in the family, having been involved in swimming for approximately five and a half years. She currently also participates in cross-country and waterpolo. Additional to sport, the daughter also participates in church youth group. The son, 11, is not a swimmer, but currently participates in soccer, baseball, and running for travel club teams. Due to the fact the daughter is aged 13, she is closer to the beginning of the specialization stage of athletic talent development. Together with her younger brother, this family is closer to the beginning of high level involvement in the sport.

The advent of swimming. The overall goal of the parents had been to introduce their daughter to extracurricular activities in order to help her become less introverted. It was thought that sport would be a good way for her to meet new people and subsequently branch out on her own. The parents facilitated their daughter's involvement in a number of activities, including non-sports (Sunday school, Scouts, t-ball, basketball, tennis, and gymnastics), before they found swimming. The mother actually got the idea from a student at the Sunday school for which she volunteered. A child at Sunday school caught the mother's eye because she had numbers written on her hands. The mother found out that the numbers were from a swim meet, and enquired more about the sport from the student. This led to the decision to encourage their daughter to try swimming. Her daughter enjoyed swimming, as it allowed her to be by herself in the water, perform for herself without the attention and pressure of a team performance or letting others down, while still having team mates. Her interest and performance grew to the point where the

parents felt the need to find better coaching, and so they eventually transferred to a USA swimming affiliated club.

The parent dyad.

Benefits. The mother and father both discussed a number of benefits for their daughter's involvement, falling into parent, child, and swimming categories. Personally, both the mother and the father discussed the friendships and social circles they have developed, with the mother describing friendships as 'strong', and the father being grateful for the opportunity swimming has given him to meet new people. Additionally, the father spoke to how much he enjoyed watching his daughter swim, having fun, and being successful in meeting the goals she set for herself. With regard to benefits to their daughter, the mother described the biggest benefit was the 'wonderful' friendships she has developed, along with perceived emotional development. This development has allowed her daughter to overcome her shyness and be less introverted, with the mother describing her as emotionally stable as a 13 year old can be. The father's belief that his daughter was having fun was important to him, also.

Stressors and coping strategies. Both parents have their own personal stressors, but many of those mentioned were shared between the two, including: logistics, sibling balance, time with family and each other. First, both parents talked about the difficulties they have in getting their daughter to practices. Logistics are particularly difficult given that both parents work, and that the schedule changes from semester to semester and during the summer, making it difficult to establish a long-term routine. Both parents are quick to say that this challenge was much higher when their son was also playing ice hockey, and this reduction in commitments has made logistics more manageable. In conjunction with logistics, the time commitment required by swimming and getting their son and daughter around means that neither the family unit, nor they as a couple, get

to spend as much time together as they would like. This was especially true when their son was playing hockey. The father in particular suggested that any free time from swimming during the semester must then be spent on getting homework finished, thus reducing family time further.

The parent-dyad used a number of coping strategies to combat the logistical challenge, and the time commitment of swimming. The first was planning and organization by the mother. Her role in the logistical challenge was to be the one doing all the driving, and as the driver she was responsible for the planning. Not only did she make a weekly schedule for the whole family, which was posted on the wall so everyone knows what they need to do each day, but she kept a long-term diary that contained the dates of upcoming meets and miscellaneous items that prevented the family from over-committing to any one weekend. Interestingly, the father perceived this planning as more week to week, rather than comprehensive long-term planning. The father helped the mother execute this plan as effectively as possible, and while during the week he did less driving than the mother, he helped more extensively for meets. Previously he and his wife took separate roles for each of their children, dad to hockey with their son and the mother with their daughter to swimming. Additionally they sought help from a parent car-pool if they were both tied up at work, and the father talked about trying to develop routines as a way of making sure homework is done on school nights. This routine also helped with a school-pool balance stressor discussed below. The father talked about making a priority out of spending time together, the father suggesting that their children now being old enough to be at home alone for short periods of time has made it easier for them to take opportunistic 'date nights' for food. The mother was very focused on planning as a coping strategy and remarked on how excellent communication from their swimming club about dates and locations for swim meets allowed them to plan more effectively as a family. For instance, if the family would be split at two different sporting events on the same weekend

(e.g., son playing hockey and daughter at swimming), the advanced notice from the swimming club allowed them to plan where they could stay together as a family, and potentially meet up during the day to see some of each child compete. Finally, the father suggested that understanding what roles each parent played and being accommodating of that is important.

The pool-school balance was a particular stressor for the mother, given the fact that so much time outside of swimming had to be spent on school work. She wanted her daughter to do well in school but also have successful swimming involvement. However, sometimes the demands between the two were difficult. As an example, the mother talked about the difficult transition between elementary and middle school the previous year. This was thought to be particularly challenging because of other changes associated with the transition, along with a lack of personal organization and adolescence in general

> "… it was tough, and there were a lot of, new experiences happening all at the same time where as she was moving buildings from elementary school to middle school, she was also moving districts as well, so she was not in the same, city of school where she went to elementary school as, as when she was joining middle school, she had a whole new set of friends and rules and teachers and um, and then being, being a teenager and having those y'know teenage stresses of socially fitting in and um, emotional and then um, y'know adding on longer practices and then homework and um, y'know and, and un-unlike me she's not very organized [laughs]" (F9F).

The mother did not think they had a perfected coping strategy for the school-pool balance. Instead she felt that it was a work in progress because the stressors were always changing. That said, she and her husband have been trying to help their daughter to develop organizational skills and responsibility, alongside a 'school comes first' attitude. Importantly, the mother felt just telling

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a child to be organized without demonstrating and modeling the behavior is not effective, so she invested in a schedule book, helped her fill it out for a short period of time before letting her daughter start making her own schedule. In doing so, the mother allowed her daughter to fail on a few deadlines to learn the consequences of her actions. This 'failure' was difficult for the mother to do, especially in deciding the activities in which she could let her daughter experience consequences.

Spending so much time driving their daughter around for practices and meets also left the parents with some challenges regarding balancing the two siblings. The younger brother previously played hockey, but currently is not interested in participating in sport. Thus, during meets they have a conundrum as to what to do with the son. Do they have him stay with his grandparents, arrange play dates, or have him sit in the stands? They want to ensure their son does not feel that everything is about the daughter and about swimming. The mother articulates this concern more completely, and suggests that his lack of interest in swimming may stem from being bored sitting in the bleachers watching meets.

Coping with this stressor is less well defined, as it became about finding a place for him to be that is not the pool that also does not seem like they are leaving him somewhere, usually his friends or grandparents. The father in particular, has been trying to get his son interested in other winter sports. Hockey was born out of this, and the fact that dad played hockey in his youth, but his interest in the sport faded rather quickly, and he prefers non-competitive environments. Again, this is an imperfect coping strategy that will continue to develop as their son's interests develop.

The father talked more than the mother about competitive stressors, particularly watching races. He is unable to sit to watch races and needs to stand because of the anxiety he feels watching his child swim, anxiety because he wanted his daughter to perform up to her own expectations.

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Meanwhile, the father reported that the mother preferred to sit and yell support during races, and that his inability to sit and watch races with her was initially a source of low-level disagreement between the two. Over a period of time the fathers' behaviors have become normalized and are no longer a source of disagreement.

Clearly then, the father liked to be somewhere that he can stand or move about, as a physical way of dissipating the anxiety he feels when his daughter swims. However, he talked about perceiving this as a positive stress rather than a negative one, an excitement to watch his daughter achieve her potential. Thus positive thinking and reframing are potential mechanisms that help the father cope.

Conclusions. Overall it appears that this parent-dyad had good ways of coping with the stressors they faced because of their daughter's involvement in swimming. While different stressors were mentioned between the parents (see Table 6.), many of the stressors, particularly those with higher ratings, were similar between the two. This perhaps shows a level of communication between the two that they perceive similar things as being stressful. They also had clearly defined roles within the dyad; mom takes care of planning and logistics most days of the week, and dad helps out some nights and for meets. When their son was in hockey there was a clear divide that dad took care of the son and mom took care of the daughter. Both of these parents also mentioned not having all the answers for how to cope with all the challenges they face, and perhaps this comfort with not having the perfect answer is also an important coping strategy. It is also appropriate to suggest that both parents being flexible makes this easier than if one or other parent needed a more comprehensive coping strategy for everything. The parents made recommendations for other parents in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Family 9 recommendations for other parents

The Mother	The Father
Be involved in the swimming experience. It is a fun experience and you will develop your own friendships and social networks.	You need to come up with a good system for making the logistics work. Be prepared for the practice schedules because they will influence daily life.
Take the time to learn the sport and form a good relationship with your child's coach.	Don't forget about the other child, don't let it consume all family time.
Enjoy it, because you will be busy!	Support your spouse as much as possible and be prepared for unexpected challenges.

Family 4 – the end?

The family and the advent of swimming. The family consists of two parents and two daughters. The parents are a mother, 48, who is a kindergarten teacher, and a father, 47, who is a business development manager. Both are previous college athletes, with the mother competing in field hockey and lacrosse, and the father in swimming. The father also currently competes in triathlons at the recreational level and was previously involved in baseball, cross-country, tennis, and track at high school. The eldest daughter is 20 years of age, and while she was a swimmer at the high school level, her focus was soccer, at which she competed nine years in both travel club and high school. The younger daughter, 17, is the swimmer in the family, having been involved for approximately 10 years. She also was previously involved in dance and soccer at the recreational level.

The parents wanted their daughters to learn water safety, so the parents enrolled them into summer swim leagues from a young age. The summer league not only served as a way for their daughters to improve swimming skills, but due to the community involvement in the summer league, to make friends. The mother then described how much the family enjoyed this activity, in particular, her youngest daughter enjoyed swimming, which resulted in them making the transition to club swimming. Both the mother and father talk about swimming as now being a family activity

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and having a pretty highly developed family identity for swimming. Importantly, their youngest daughter has intentions of swimming in college with recruiting trips planned for the coming fall. Both parents realize that this may be their final season in which they would be involved in their daughter's swimming from a hands-on role perspective.

The parent dyad.

Benefits. The mother and father in Family 4 spoke of a number of benefits to being enrolled in swimming. Both parents were volunteers for their daughter's club at one time. The father in particular felt this was a benefit, as it provided a way for him to get involved and not spend hours in the bleachers. Swimming is a huge part of the family identity, and the mother talked about it being an 'incredible journey' – one they realized may be over soon. For example, a long-term involvement in swimming provided the elder daughter with a detailed knowledge of swimming training and technique, which has subsequently afforded her opportunities for coaching swimming. Additionally, the youngest daughter has been recruited by colleges that as a family they otherwise, may not have been able to send her to. Both mother and father talk about the enjoyment they get from seeing their daughter succeed and develop, with the father placing emphasis on life-skills such as time management, discipline, commitment, focus, determination, and competitive edge. The mother focused on the confidence and the self-reliance that swimming has brought for her daughter. Importantly, the mother also felt that swimming allowed her husband to become more involved with the family than he otherwise might have been due to the large amount of travel associated with his job.

Stressors and coping strategies. Logistics, again, was a big stressor for this family, particularly the mother, who felt it was 'like a full-time job' to get her daughter from point A to point B. When the mother went back into employment, she worked very hard on finding a way to

get her daughter to practice, including have a friend drop her daughter at a drive-through from which another friend picked her up and took her to practice. Naturally this generated some worries for the mother regarding the safety of her daughter, too. The father also mentioned that the time commitment required for swimming was so large because when your child commits so much to the sport, you have to commit an equal amount as a parent. He also discussed the pressure of the multiple roles parents are required to play, including the examples of masseuse, psychologist, and transport manager. Again, as with Family 9, the father had concerns about making sure they balance the time between their two daughters', especially when the elder one is home from college.

The way these two parents cope with the logistical challenge was to go for Sunday afternoon walks along local trails to talk in order to plan for the coming week, as well as regular communication via e-mail and text. This Sunday ritual encompasses communication between spouses, but also physical activity. Both talked about how much easier life was when the elder daughter lived at home and had passed her driving test, as that increased the number of responsible adults that could help with logistics, and then again when their younger daughter could also drive. Additionally, in order to ensure their daughter got to practice, they paid for help from other swimmers / school students to drop their daughter off at the right places (e.g., drive-through).

Both parents talked of the difficulty in watching their daughter struggle with balancing school and swimming. The mother described how there would often be tears at the amount of work that needed to be done and influence it had on sleeping patterns. Despite this, the pay-off is obviously large, with potential college recruitment and being a high-school and USA Swimming academic All-American. The mother talked about becoming desensitized to these emotions over time and accepting that they are part and parcel of the road her daughter decided to pursue. Both

parents try help their daughter as much as possible, either by packing lunches and swim bags, or by talking to her about how to cope and the silver linings of working so hard.

The daughter was being actively recruited to colleges for swimming, and the father had taken a highly active role in this process. He helped his daughter by drafting e-mails to coaches, which she then reads and edits before sending. However, both mother and father talk about stressors they have regarding the recruitment. The father finds the process of recruitment stressful because of the work that it adds and the mixed level of knowledge out there from which to get advice. However, the mother is more concerned about how far away the daughter will be from home. The father, because of his active role in the recruitment process then is much more concerned about how recruiting works and wanting his daughter to have choices. The mother, with her more peripheral role, is concerned with the outcome and her lack of control over it, although this would be considered a normative stressor in family research (Boss, 1980).

Going back to the roles each parent plays in the recruiting process, also defines how they cope. The mother copes by enjoying her daughter's company while she still has the opportunity. She also mentioned drinking wine as a joke, but the potential for maladaptive coping may exist, especially when so much of the family and thus parent identity is wrapped up in swimming. The father, of course, coped by trying to help his daughter with the process as much as possible, by learning, advising, and letting his daughter make the difficult decisions regarding which coaches whom to reply and which schools to choose.

Both parents also mentioned swim meets as stressors, but again for different reasons. The mother dislikes meets because of the other parents asking questions and nagging for information, while the father felt a more acute anxiety regarding his daughters' performances, particularly when he knows that if she does not meet her own expectations there will be a strong negative reaction.

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Again, coping strategies match the stressor, with the mother engaging in distraction techniques like reading, or not attending at all and getting updates from her husband, a tactic she believes helps her play a less intense parent role to balance out the focus of the father. Dad on the other hand copes by saying a few prayers, being proud regardless of the outcome, and trying to keep in perspective that no-one can improve 100% of the time. It was also helpful that her new coach (see below) took some responsibility for the poor performance due to an inappropriate taper. Clearly though, both parents believed confidence to have been undermined, as they had their daughter work with a mental skills coach to work on confidence and build a positive relationship with her new coach.

Finally, the daughter moved swimming clubs and therefore coaches after an unsuccessful meet one year. The father described his daughter having reached her potential with her old coach and needing something new, whereas the mother also talked about how the relationship with her old coach had deteriorated and was undermining her confidence. The mother was therefore worried about her daughter developing confidence with her new coach, while the father had concerns regarding the unknowns of moving; were they making the right decisions? The dad, along with the daughter researched new clubs and coaches, and he let his daughter drive the decision making process. This shared responsibility between him and his daughter, plus the extensive research acted as coping strategies for the father.

Conclusions. While there was overlap in the stressors felt by each parent, there was less overlap between stressors in this couple than there was in the previous example of Family 9 when it comes to the stressors that are most acutely felt. Whether these parents were more articulate about how a stressor was challenging for them or the division of roles between the parents was more obvious; each also experienced stress differently for the same stressor. However, this does

not indicate that they are any less successful in coping attempts, but it perhaps points more to the fact that each parent had a more defined role where they are concerned solely with certain things such as college recruitment or meet behaviors. As with Family 9, each parent had specific roles in this family. The father was much more hands on with the process of swimming, while the mother took care of logistics. The mother was deliberately less pushy with regard to swimming in order to balance out the focus of the father. Overall it seems like the parents enjoy their experience, and as such it is possible to say they coped well with stressors faced. Moving forward however, it would be interesting to see how this parent-dyad copes when their daughter is finished with high school and likely moves on to college swimming. Will they keep being involved to keep their identity as a swimming family, or will they struggle with the normative family stressor of their daughter leaving home (Boss, 1980)? Again, the parents of family four gave some advice for other sports parents, listed in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Family 4 recommendations for other parents

The Mother	The Father
Swimming is a slippery slope. It will start off nice and simple, but soon it will be a lot more difficult to make it work. Be aware of this slope	Let the coach be the coach.
Put limitations on swimming. I did not and ended up paying the price (but also receiving reward)	Let your child develop on their own
Know how to work together as a family	Don't bad talk coaches, those messages will get heard by your child and undermine their confidence in their coaches.
Enjoy what you are doing	It's a sport, and your child is doing the best they can.
It's not about you, it's about your child.	

Family 7 – the discordant mother.

The family and the advent of swimming. The family consists of a mother, 44; a father, also 44; a 14 year old daughter, and 12 year old twins, one boy and one girl. The father is a

pediatrician who currently plays in recreational softball and was previously a high school basketball and baseball athlete. The mother is a stay-at-home parent, who has not participated in sport either in the past or currently. The eldest daughter is the swimmer in the family, previously a soccer and gymnastics athlete at the recreational level. She is also participating in flute lessons, the national charity league, a junior honor society, and church activities. The younger daughter is also currently involved in swimming, but at a recreational level (only three or so months of the year), as well as jazz dancing, clarinet, the national charity league and church activities. Finally, the son is also involved in swimming, again at a lower level, swimming approximately three months a year. He also currently plays baseball and lacrosse at the recreational level, and also practices guitar, trumpet, French horn, and attends church activities.

The eldest daughter swam from the age of five in the local summer swim league having been taught to swim at the local pool by friends of the family. A few seasons later, one of the recreational coaches mentioned that she might be good at year round swimming. The parents attended an interest meeting, and from there the eldest daughter started swimming year round.

The parent dyad.

Benefits. The benefits of swimming involvement of this parent-dyad were, again, numerous. The mother felt that her daughter's development of a 'swimmer' identity was particularly useful during the middle school years. Both parents discussed the health benefits, this being one of the reasons they got her involved in the first place. Mom explained that her daughter is much more health conscious, and developed several other life-skills like self-discipline, time management, organization, and responsibility. Dad is a goal-oriented person by his own description and likes the goal oriented nature of swimming for his daughter. The mother also feels that being able to go to 'big meets' is an honor, and it makes all the sacrifice worth it, with everyone

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being able to feel proud of her achievements. Dad talked about particular experiences of seeing his daughter perform at state championships the first time and completed her first open water two kilometer swim as particularly proud moments of achievement, because she overcame nervousness and met her goals.

Stressors and coping strategies. As with the other families that have been presented here, both parents mentioned logistics as a stressor. The father had a busy schedule because of his job as a physician, and this puts a lot of pressure on his wife to do the driving and get people from A to B. The mother talked more in depth on how the logistical pressure is a challenge. Even though she is a stay at home mother, the two-a-day practices of summer swimming mean that her day is split up into uneven chunks that made it difficult to get things done. Additionally, the mother did not like to have her twin sons take the journeys as well and insists that they are home and doing something productive prior to taking the daughter to practice.

The logistical stressors were dealt with in a number of ways, one of which was to create a carpool of local parents that also needed transportation for their children. This required constant e-mails between all the parents involved. Other methods had been tried, such as a shared electronic calendar, but this function did not work because parents in the carpool used different calendar platforms. Additionally, the parent-dyad used a shared iCalendar as a central system to know their responsibilities and commitments. As the main driver of the carpool, the mother used the travel time as an opportunity to have quality interactions with her daughter and build their relationship, essentially using cognitive reframing to turn driving from a negative to a positive. The mother sounded like she enjoyed the opportunity to play counsellor for her daughter and her daughter's friends in the carpool

The narrative that makes this family interesting is how open and honest the mother is regarding the stressors of increased practice times during the holidays, which are normally times for rest and recuperation. It is difficult to know if this participant is more honest, or if her views are discordant to other participants. It is important to note that the mother was in the midst of summer two-a-day practices at the time of the interview. Given what the nomothetic results show regarding time commitment and logistics as a stressor, this summer schedule may be a direct reason for her candor regarding summer practices. In either case, the following quotes demonstrate that the mother had many stressors regarding the fact that swimming had become such a big part of family life and felt that it was disturbing a natural life balance.

"You know, where he's gone for eight hours on Saturday … like one time they had a meet on mother's day, and I mean I was miserable. I was furious and miserable. So like holidays and stuff if there's a meet, you know, we might do, we've learned that doesn't go well with me"

"… Christmas infuriates me, the doubles that Christmas pushes me over the edge, I will tell you that. I cannot handle that and the summer as well … And I just said I'm done, we're not doing doubles and of course that gets [husband], and I, he's more strict about practice, her going to practice".

Interestingly, the mother also discussed avoiding the swimming world in general, particularly the social circles. She does not feel like she enjoys or understands the hyper-competitive side and does not attend meets or practices for that reason.

As further examples of life-balance being a priority for the mother, she refused to let her twin sons sit at weekend long meets watching their sister swim, as she does not feel this was an appropriate use of their time. Instead she stayed home with her sons to provide them with

developmental time. All of these actions are also examples of the coping strategy this dyad uses, particularly the mother, and that is boundary setting. Boundary setting is part of the active philosophy the dyad has about swimming not being the only activity in their lives. They are able to take a step back, put the sport in perspective and prioritize other things, such as the mother spending time with her sons away from meets.

Finally, both parents also discussed stressors regarding life balance for the whole family, but particularly their daughter. The father expressed concerns that swimming uses so much time that it prevents his daughter from doing other activities and developing other skills. This concern was articulated more deeply by the mother, who gave the example of her daughters' enjoyment of baking / cooking that she does not have the time to develop. Both parents talked about reading the emotional state of their daughter and the general level of stress within the family to know when to pull back or take a day or so off from swimming. Again, the mother gave very specific examples of pulling back during summer swimming and not doing two-a-days in the summer between middle and high school in order to give her daughter time off from swimming and be ready for the following semester. Additionally, mom was aware that many adolescents drop out of sport around her daughter's age and wanted her daughter to continue in swimming, so she gave her the break in order to avoid burnout.

Conclusions. This parent-dyad was particularly interesting because both parents had clearly articulated views that are not necessarily convergent with other parents, especially the mother. Other participants talked about life-balance and swimming not being the only activity, but this dyad more actively demonstrated that they were willing to pull back from swimming to provide that life balance. The consistency in this message between the parents, even though the mother hints at some disagreement between her and her husband about missing regular training,

suggests that this is a well-thought through philosophy shared between the two regarding their family involvement in swimming. The quotes presented above also show that this philosophy developed over time as acceptable boundaries were identified by situations exceeding what the dyad, particularly the mother felt to be appropriate. As with other dyads, the parents from Family 7 have clear roles that enable the family to function, with the mother taking charge of driving their daughter to swimming and taking care of the twins during swim meets, and the father is responsible for swim meet attendance. It is perhaps the balance between the mother pushing for more family time and the father pushing for practice attendance that creates appropriate balance.

Table 8. Family 7 recommendations for other parents

The Mother	The Father
Use car-pools to manage logistical stress	Get to know someone that has been involved longer than you
Be in tune with your child, know when to pull back, and don't get bullied by coaches into overcommitting	Don't do too much too soon, slowly build up your involvement – go slow.
Important to do other things as well, don't sell your soul to swimming.	Make sure to have swimming / life balance. You need to have other interests alongside swimming.

Family 10 – the parent coach.

The family and the advent of swimming. The family consisted of two parents, a mother and father, and three children (one boy, two girls). The mother, 45, is a special education teacher who previously competed in skiing and tennis during high-school. The father, 46, is also a teacher, but additionally was a high-school and college swimmer in his youth, and is currently a swimming coach for the club in which his daughter swims. During the course of each of his children's swimming careers he has acted as their coach, but he no longer coaches his own children, and serves as a youth development coach. The son is the eldest child at 18, and he has been a swimmer for approximately seven years. Despite the long involvement, his sport is water polo and soon after

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the parent interviews were conducted he was moving off to college to play water polo. He also played football at the high school level, and previously took part in choir and orchestra. The second oldest child, a daughter, is 15, and is the main swimmer in the family, with approximately seven years' experience. She also currently plays water polo at the club level and previously played softball in elementary school. Finally, the youngest child is a 13 year old daughter. She is also a swimmer, but much less committed, swimming some three or so months out of the year for middle school. She is however a competitive diver at middle school, active in theatre, and previously took part in softball and track for the club and middle school teams respectively. Like her siblings, she also participates in orchestra and choir, and all three of the children currently participate in local church activities.

The family became involved in swimming because of the father's lifetime involvement in the sport. The father was a collegiate swimmer, but also coached while he was in high school, college, and beyond, including when he met his wife, and he coached for approximately 20 years. Therefore he was coaching when his son was born and during his early life, and because he spent a lot of time at the pool with his father, they put him in the swim team at five, and he progressed from there. The elder daughter then saw her brother swimming and followed him into the sport where she is currently excelling as an athlete. The mother highlights that the children were given opportunities at other sports like t-ball and soccer, but swimming is the one they enjoyed most, which is hardly surprising given the socializing agent father within the family.

The parent dyad.

Benefits. Both parents talked about making friends with other parents as being a benefit of swimming involvement. This was the main benefit for the mother, as she is generally less active at meets (dad coaches). She was delighted for the chance to interact with other parents, especially

those who have children doing the same thing as her children. These interactions were important at meets to help the time pass when she waits for several hours to see her children swim for only a few minutes. Both parents also believed watching their children swim is fun and enjoyable. The father in particular emphasized how much he enjoyed seeing improvement and his children meet their goals, particularly challenges like qualifying for a big meet. The dad enjoyed being at swim meets, perhaps more than the mother, because of his involvement as a coach. He also appreciated that his children get to make good friends and stay active and healthy.

Stressors and coping strategies. The biggest stressor discussed by both parents is finances. The family is described by the father as being a 'one and a bit' income household because the mother did not have a permanent teaching position at the time of interview. Combining this income with three relatively successful children in swimming, and the costs started to add up. Each of these meets required travel, hotels, apparel, and food. This was particularly true when the middle daughter is qualifying for states, zones, regionals, etc. The financial stressor also was connected to the father's role of coach, meaning they used to attend every meet for which they qualified, regardless of whether the meet was a sensible developmental or financial choice.

The couple juggles finances on an ongoing basis, but has developed a number of coping strategies. First, both parents, but particularly the mother, talked about the level of communication between the pair regarding meet prioritization. It is no longer acceptable to go to a meet just because they qualified, there must be an additional reason. Previously, Dad just signed people up immediately, but now they discuss and reach a conclusion. Many meets are not as important later in the teenage years as they were when the children were younger. Qualifying for the state meet now is not the same as it was when the children were younger. Alongside this, the mother talked about sharing their plans for prioritizing decisions based on finances with her children; for

example, her children are given the choice of whether or not to purchase a meet shirt to celebrate the achievement of being there. If they do purchase the shirt, then the money spent at meets is deducted from budgets on clothes, meaning any shirts bought may have to be worn at school. The father also admitted that swimming was putting them into some debt, but he still continued to put expenses on a credit card because he knew the opportunity to be part of his children's lives, and swimming was short lived. His plan was to pay down the debt once his children were in college.

The roles that parents were required to play also were mentioned by the dyad as stressors and coping strategies. For the mother, her roles fell within the family, whereas the fathers also fell outside the family. Role following, (where a parent behaves according to the norms for a particular role), helped the mother as a coping strategy for difficult post-meet discussions, or when the middle daughter was talking about swimming in general. As a non-swimmer and non-athlete, the mother found it difficult to understand the ups and downs of sporting competition, "… unfortunately my reaction when they're happy about a swim is, I'm like "you know what, you improved your time, get over it" … not a great way to handle it, but that's why I send them to my husband". The mother also tried to write lots of things down and listened to what is important about swimming for her children so she could have conversations with them and demonstrate that she cares. The mother ends up acting as organizer and financial planner, and lets the father deal with most of the swimming related matters. The father, as a coach, better understood swimming and had developed good communication strategies with his children for those types of situations. For the father, role playing was a stressor on the basis that he must play several roles: teacher, parent, coach. He sometimes struggled to find the division between these roles and not bring work to the pool, the pool home, or any combination of the above. In particular, being both a parent and a coach could be challenging when he had to talk to his child's coaches, who were also his colleagues, about

potential issues with his children. The father had worked on not letting stressors from one role cross over into others, e.g., leaving school work at school, and coaching at the pool, so he could just be 'dad' at home. He also adopted a role perspective prior to having difficult conversations as a coping strategy, which was especially useful for difficult topics. The father communicated from which role he was speaking prior to talking as a way of helping both himself and the other person in the conversation understand the perspectives from which he would speak. The specific example given was to tell other coaches that he was talking to them as a parent, not a coach, before approaching topics regarding his daughter's swimming.

Roles within the family were a big theme for this dyad for managing stressors. For example, everyone's schedules were posted on a big whiteboard at home; everyone knew where they needed to be. Mom was the person who put this weekly plan together, alongside having a separate planner in which she kept a master plan, as well as a meal and financial plan. Dad, being the coach, took care of much of the swimming side, particularly as he was usually right on the spot when issues arose. The father also helped with the dishes and other odd jobs. The children cleaned the house when possible, as they had other roles to fulfil as well. These roles changed slightly when mom did long-term substitute teaching, as generally less housework got done and the family went out to eat more.

Consequently, the mother also had stressors regarding diet for her children. Due to the amount of calories they burned, it could be very difficult to provide them with enough calories of the right sort, especially with regard to the time it takes to prepare food. Trying to find nutritional information for youth athletes was quite challenging. The mother dealt with this by talking to other swimming parents, particularly one parent who went to see a nutritionist about what to feed her swimmer. Discussions at swim meets about what other parents packed for their children, along

with being planned with regard to meals at home so they do not end up resorting to fast food, were coping strategies for this nutritional stressor.

Conclusions. The family was very heavily invested in swimming, which is not surprising considering that the father was a swimming coach. The mother told a nice anecdote that she always knew what she was getting in to. When she first started dating her husband, she had to qualify as an official so she could spend time with him because he was coaching so frequently. Therefore swimming has always been a constant priority in their relationship. Due to the fact that swimming has always been this superordinate presence, the couple has, over time, had to learn to communicate better about what things are automatic and what needs to be discussed.

Table 9. Family 10 recommendations for other parents

The Mother	The Father
Check the club website and other resources regularly. Look ahead and plan otherwise you will miss opportunities	Get your kids to practice every day. Kids will develop routine, positive habits, better skills, and more comprehensive relationships.
Planning ahead in terms of food and diet. Described as a 'mom thing'. Having better plans for eating will also help control budgets	Do not dwell on times. They are one performances that are not the ball and end all. It's a snapshot in time, don't attach too much to it.
Try to stay involved, volunteer, and be helpful. Being on deck as a volunteer and being positive when on deck will help everyone.	Open communication with coaches, or at least as best as you can do. Lines of communication go in both directions between parents and coaches. However, communication is easier if coaches have a relationship to work from or with.
Do not coach your own children – unless you are qualified	

Again, as with prior families, each parent had his/her role within the family. The mother is responsible for planning, some logistics, finances, and food. While the father is responsible for swimming, some household tasks, and swimming related communication with their children. They share some common stressors, such as finances. However, they also have diverging stressors unique to their own roles in the family. Therefore the parents perceive stress related to their roles

within the family, and very little in the roles taken by their partner, thus sharing the stress and responsibility across the two parents. The one stressor that both parents talked about in the same way is finances; perhaps this stressor is too much for one parent to handle, and requires a coordinated effort from them both. Therefore, the fact that other stressors are so clearly linked to parent roles suggests that stressors are approached and coped with appropriately.

Conclusions. In conclusion, the case studies demonstrated that parent-dyads work together in coping with stressors that arise from swimming involvement. Importantly, dyads worked together to create roles for each parent in the dyad in order to best facilitate coping attempts. The division of these roles fell on a spectrum from more shared stressors between parents in a dyad resulting in more shared coping strategies to more individualized stressors and coping strategies as parents were solely responsible for a stressor. While all dyads shared similar stressors, e.g., logistical stress, the way in which it manifested as a stressor for each dyad was dependent on dyad-specific demographics and narratives. For example, finances was a stressor for multiple families, some because they only had one income for the household, another because one of their children had suffered an injury during the year, and yet others had no financial issues. This individualized narrative of stressors helps to explain the idiosyncratic perceptions of stressors and employment of coping strategies. Importantly, although individual narratives meant that some different stressors were reported by each dyad, and some different coping strategies were used, all parent-dyads appeared to use effective coping strategies for the stressors faced.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The current study was conducted in order to determine the stressors reported by parents who have children enrolled in youth swimming, as well as to examine coping strategies for their stressors. The findings resulting from the content analyses of the ten parent-dyad interviews (20 parent interviews total) will now be discussed relative to current sport parent research literature and theorizing, study strengths and limitations outlined, future research directions identified, and practical implications for sport parents. First, the benefits the parents experience as a result of child's swimming will be discussed, followed by a discussion of the stressors identified and the coping strategies used to cope with these stressors. Second, the relationship between benefits, stressor and coping strategies will be discussed, followed by key sport parent issues identified in this study. Finally, the implications of this study will be addressed, study limitations specified and future research directions outlined.

Benefits

The results demonstrated that parents perceive multiple benefits from being the parent of a youth swimmer, including those directly related to swimming, as well as benefits to themselves, their children, and their families. Many of the parent and child benefits such as parent friendships and child life-skill development that were reported in this study agree with those found in prior studies (e.g., Weiss & Fretwell, 2005; Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). However, there also were extensions to the benefits reported in the extant literature in the form of family benefits and benefits that are specific to swimming. It is not surprising that benefits relating to the family, and those specific to swimming, have been found in the current study. Parents were asked directly about the benefits because of their family's involvement in swimming. Importantly then, the participants

were primed as part of the informed consent, interview script, and questions regarding benefits that were directly related to swimming and family. Additionally, prior research used parent samples that were parent coaches (Weiss & Fretwell, 2005), or had parents across multiple youth sport contexts (baseball, softball, and soccer), and a much wider age range (4-18) that would indicate differing levels of involvement to the specialization or investment stage than was the focus in the current study (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008). Consequently parents discussed more diverse benefits from involvement outside of those directly to themselves or their child.

Over half of all raw data themes relating to benefits were child benefits. Therefore parents saw their children as the primary beneficiaries of swimming involvement. Roughly one third of these references were in relation to life-skill development, from 17 of 20 participants. In particular parents mentioned (among others) time management and discipline as skills they see developing in their child as a result of their swimming involvement. Again, this is not surprising, considering the number of hours a week required of swimmers for practice, alongside training year round. Discipline and time management are important, and parents talked about their child being disciplined in regard to both school and swimming so they can do both.

Child success also was mentioned as a benefit by over half of the participants in the study, and although this was not the most popular sub-theme, the way in which parents defined success is important. Child success definitions varied from typical outcome goals of winning to developmental goals such as achieving goals, overcoming adversity, and learning from mistakes. In fact, the majority of parents defined success as mastery and improvement. Recently published research by Dorsch, Smith, Wilson, and McDonough (2014a) demonstrated that parents have a number of instrumental goals when first involving their children in sport (and subsequently), including goals for developing as an athlete and growth as an individual. Therefore, the fact that

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swimming is perceived as meeting these needs may be one reason why parents keep their child in swimming and serves as a big endorsement of the clubs involved and the sport, although it is not unreasonable to suggest that other sports may have similar outcomes.

Additionally, benefits given specifically to swimming were elicited, extending previous literature (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008; Weiss & Fretwell 2005). In particular, parents felt that learning to swim was in and of itself an important skill for life, and that it was a sport that could continue beyond high school and college. Parents also liked that swimming is a self-comparative sport where the focus is on time more than winning or outcome. This information is potentially important as selection criteria for parents when deciding what sports to enroll their children in. Many other sports do not present opportunities for life-time involvement, and depending on parent goals, some sports focus more on direct social comparison (e.g., football or volleyball) because score is only kept relative to the overall outcome of a competition. However, in swimming individual times are tracked in addition to overall outcomes. Therefore, parents need to consider their own goals and their child's goals for involvement in sports, look at the potential benefits of specific sports, and find the best match. This may not only be the best for the child athlete, but also may reduce potential stressors for parents.

Family benefits also were a new category of benefits elicited in the current study. Perhaps the most interesting family benefit mentioned by parents was father involvement in family activities. While this was reported for families with sons and/or daughters, it was more frequently mentioned when the swimmer was a daughter. It may be that the co-educational nature of swimming, along with the fact that it is a relatively unknown sport, allows fathers to be involved as there are fewer gender stereotypes regarding parents. For example, one mother in particular suggests that the father may not have been as involved had her daughter been interested in beauty

pageants. This may also be true if children were involved in sports that are stereotypically referred to as being more feminine. Finally, this suggests sports involvement may play an important role in facilitating family relations. However, this potential certainly requires further study.

In summary, parents reported multiple benefits due to swimming involvement. The present study corroborated the findings of previous studies with regard to parent and child benefits (Wiersma & Fifer, 2008; Weiss & Fretwell 2005). Additionally, the current study extended the literature by eliciting family benefits and benefits specific to the sport of swimming.

<center>**Stressors**</center>

Stressors, like time, organization, and watching competitions, experienced by parents in the current study corroborate those found in previous studies (Hanton & Fletcher, 2005; Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b), but with extensions to organizational stressors category and contextual differences to competitive stressors category. The data for the present study fit the current understanding of organizational, competitive, and developmental stressors for parents well (Hanton & Fletcher, 2005; Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b), except for the theme of child technology use, which was put into its own general dimension. Additionally, the use of an abductive analysis process meant that the data for organizational stressors did not fit directly into the five categories of organizational stressors suggested by Hanton and Fletcher (2005), but each of these five categories was represented by the stressors elicited in the current study. Many of the differences between the prior literature and the current study have been discussed in detail in the results section, however, general differences and some reasoning for differences are discussed below.

In general, parents in the current study mentioned a greater number of organizational stressors versus less competitive stressors. This may be because of methodological differences in

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how parents were questioned about stressors (e.g., prompts in the current study may have been more directed at family, social, and personal stressors), or it may be a true difference between organizational and competitive stressors due to the nature of the sports and settings (academy vs. club) that were examined (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). With regard to increases in organizational stressors, the current study was deliberately aimed at determining stressors that exist within a parent-dyad, and so questions and probes were geared more toward the organizational stressors than the competitive stressors. Additionally parents talked less about having stress during competitions than in previous studies.

The lower number of competitive stressors reported in the current study versus previous studies (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b) is likely due to differences in the sporting contexts studied. Prior research has taken place in mainly academy settings (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). The experience of club sport parents may be different to that of parents with children in an academy. Firstly, there is less competition for places on a club sport team, as most competitions are independent entries or open meets. Competitions for the team, even in school tend to involve every swimmer, even if it is on a relay or on the B-team. Additionally, the place in the team is not dependent on performance, and as such the performance outcomes of the child are more about the expectations and goals set by the child, rather than the potentially extrinsic environment set by an academy. The club system may allow parents in the current study to have, or to adhere to, a broader perspective on development. As their child has not been placed in an academy, or, to some extent been told that they have potential for professional sport involvement, they may have different expectations and goals for involvement. As the environment is less competitive for positions and funding, it may allow parents to look at other aspects of development and develop their own criteria for success,

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as demonstrated in the benefits section of the paper. In other words, parents in the current study may appraise competitive stressors more as challenge stressors than harm/loss or threat stressors, which thus results in more positive perceptions of competition (Dewe et al., 2012; Lazarus, 1999; 2001).

The typical organizational stressors from previous studies, including time, finances (under planning and organization), organizational bodies and coaching, and injuries (under child athletic development) also were found in the current study (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). However, other higher order themes and novel stressors also were determined in this study, including personal, child, social and family stressors associated with swimming. Social stressors, such as other sports parents, have previously been categorized as competitive stressors, i.e., a stressor during competitions due to undesirable behaviors (Harwood et al. 2010; Harwood & Knight 2009a; 2009b). However, the results of the current study suggested that other sport parents are a source of stress outside of competition, especially with regard to other parents' perceptions and potential negativity toward coaches and clubs. The fact that parents in the current study perceive other parents as negative is not surprising considering a large number of them volunteer for general or board-specific roles within swimming clubs and feel unappreciated for their efforts by other parents. Additionally, swimming clubs contain numerous squads with large numbers of athletes. This means it is difficult for every parent to be satisfied with the quality and/or type of coaching.

Learning the sport is a stressor that was not reported in previous studies (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). This is most likely because swimming, although an Olympic sport, is less in the public consciousness than the professional sports of soccer and tennis, which appear more often in the main stream media, particularly in the U.K. context of

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previous research. While swimming may raise to high levels of public awareness once every four years for the Olympics because of the success of athletes such as Michael Phelps and Missy Franklin, it does not get the same airtime during the remainder of the Olympic cycle. It is much less likely to be a sport in which one of the parents participated, outside of recreational swimming, which of course is much different than soccer and tennis, which were the primary sports represented in previous sport parent stress studies (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). Therefore, parents are less aware of the strokes and competition rules when their child enters the sport, which is additionally complicated because competition formats and rules used at lower levels are not the same as at televised competitions. For this reason, there is much for parents to learn about the sport, which can be stressful when they are trying their best to guide their sons and/or daughters through the sport so that they can achieve developmental goals. As an example, swimsuits were mentioned by one parent as being particularly stressful. Swimsuits are an expensive piece of equipment parents may not have had to purchase before, that also have some very strict guidelines for usage. Failing to care for them properly may ultimately turn into an expensive mistake.

Previous research highlighted stressors parents had with regard to balancing school and sport, particularly where parents felt they were not getting requisite support from schools (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). While school balance was still a stressor for parents in the current study, the change to the context of the United States changed the way in which this stressor was manifested and resulted in additional stressors for parents. More specifically, in the U.K. there is only one school transition, between primary (elementary) and secondary (high-school), due to a lack of middle-school. This transition also usually occurs before the specialization or investment stages of sporting involvement. In the

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United States however, there are two transitions, with the middle-school to high school transition occurring during specialization or investment. Additionally school sport is much more highly valued in the U.S. than in the U.K., where there are few to no school swimming teams that actually compete in a regular basis or have dedicated coaches. The result of this difference in sporting structure in schools is that parents did not mention a lack of support from schools in trying to provide balance for their children, it was mainly a time management and logistics stressor. The stressors here were about the transition between schools and how an increase in academic rigor and work load would influence swimming involvement, and how a change to high school swimming would influence their child. In particular, some parents were also concerned that having two different coaches (club and school), who may have differing coaching styles and goals for their child, would be detrimental to their development.

Interestingly, a source of stress that began to emerge from interviews with parents was other children within a club. For instance, a few of the parents discussed that their child had experienced disagreements with other swimmers, which were stressful for their child but also the parent. Naturally this stressor was not direct to the parent, but manifested through his/her child's interactions with other children. It was one of the more challenging stressors for parents to cope with because it did not directly affect them, and given the age and power difference in the relationship, it would be inappropriate to intervene directly. However, parents were able to use disagreements between their child and other children as a teachable moment and discuss the kinds of behaviors they would like to see and how people should act.

One raw data theme that arose as a stressor for some parents but as a coping strategy for others was coach communication. Some parents felt that they were able to communicate effectively with their child's coach and in doing so were able to alleviate a stressor they were

experiencing. Others found coach communication to be a stressor, particularly where communication was not effective or forthcoming at all. What this finding serves to demonstrate is that stress and coping are highly idiosyncratic to the parent(s) and the context. Some of these parents may have shared the same coaches and yet had different perceptions about the communication between the coach and themselves. Therefore, consistent with previous theorizing (Lazarus, 1999; 2001) stressors must be viewed as a complex process, such that they do not manifest in exactly the same way for everyone. One parent's stressor may be another parent's coping strategy.

Another novel stressor for parents was volunteering, particularly those parents who had volunteered on club boards. Most board positions are volunteer positions, but require parents to adapt roles for which there would usually be qualifications and remuneration. However, there is typically little volunteer training, especially for unwritten skills like managing roles (e.g., parent vs. official), and they are asked to fulfil these positions on top of their regular employment. The positions are often unappreciated by other parents and open to criticism, causing parent stress. As will be highlighted in the implications section of the discussion, it may be pertinent for parent-led clubs to start offering training to parents for the roles they fulfil, including how to manage multiple roles.

The study of stressors can be challenging when discussing with a lay audience. Parents perceived the word stress as highly negative, and only negative. On several occasions parents talked about enjoying swimming meets, but having elevated heart rate or anxiety during races. However, they did not want to refer to this physiological arousal as stress because they did not think it was negative. This makes it difficult to determine if parents were aroused but not stressed or did not feel comfortable reporting being stressed. Hence, the use of the term challenge was seen

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as more positive by parents, and allowed more discussion of what potential stressors may have been. Future stress and coping investigators should keep this point in mind when conducting additional studies in this area, especially when attempting to determine 'benefit' stressor appraisal as suggested by Lazarus (2001; Dewe et al., 2012).

The discussion of historical stressors (stressors that are no longer present in parents' lives, or have reduced in magnitude) was inevitable because questioning was open ended regarding all stressful experiences within swimming. These historical stressors were taken into account, and they allowed the investigator to have a glimpse of how stressors change over time, e.g., changes to the logistical challenge when children transition between middle and high school, or when they learn to drive. These responses also allowed a better understanding of the process of stress and coping, how the magnitude of the logistical stressor changed over time and the various coping strategies parents utilized over a period of time. While an in-depth understanding of how cognitions (and thus stress appraisals) changed over time was not possible using the current methodology, the present findings demonstrated that they are not static concepts. This conclusion is supported by Lazarus (1999), and a need to better understand the primary (and secondary) appraisals of stressors by parents is required. The evolution of stressors over time certainly emphasizes the need for longitudinal studies if researchers are to further understand the stress and coping appraisal process in sport parents.

The level of stress associated with some stressors, such as the time management and logistical stressors was much less than anticipated considering the frequency with which they were mentioned. Additionally, some of the less frequently mentioned stressors were particularly stressful for some parents, such as injuries. This indicated that parents have found effective coping strategies for many every day stressors. As the case study analyses found, parents often developed

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multiple, complex coping strategies for logistical stressors. Along with this, some stressors may have been normalized over a period of time (Boss, 1980), or parents are experiencing effects similar to stress inoculation due to repeated exposure (Meichenbaum, 1996). This is why the lesser reported stressors may have been perceived as more stressful by some parents, they were novel and required new coping strategies to be formed. Again, within the Lazarus (1999; 2001) framework, novel stressors will be appraised as having higher levels of threat or hurt because they are unknown and secondary appraisal (appraisals of coping potential) will be lower, thus increasing stress.

In summary, parents experienced a wide range of organizational, competitive, developmental, and general stressors. Many of these stressors, especially within organizational, competitive, and developmental categories, are corroborated by previous research (Harwood, Drew, & Knight, 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b). Other stressors, such as the general stressors dimension, learning the sport, and other swimmers are novel stressors to the literature. Additionally, a number of stressors, such as other sports parents, have been found previously, but are manifested in different ways in the current study. Therefore the sport, the context for sport (club vs. academy), and the country (U.S.A. vs. U.K.) may all play a role in stressor appraisal by sports parents. Finally, the frequency or normalcy of a stressor may play a role in its perceived magnitude, with unexpected stressors being perceived as more stressful.

Coping Strategies

The results of coping strategies analyses in the current study are novel because of the context being studied. Previous studies in sport coping have focused primarily on the athlete (Gould et al., 1993a; 1993b). The number of coping strategies reported by parents suggests that parents do not just use one coping strategy for any one stressor, as there are more coping strategies

than there are stressors. This supports previous stress and coping research in athletic populations (Gould et al., 1993a; 1993b). The two most important coping strategies for parents included having an active philosophy for involvement and communication. The active philosophy for involvement allowed parents to put their experiences into perspective and make decisions about how they wanted to progress, or react to, stressors. Faced with a multitude of stressors, such as logistical, time, financial, and child athletic development, parents are required to make decisions about where to put their limited resources of time, energy, and money. Having a philosophy, however fluctuating it may be, assists parents in making quick decisions and providing a rationale for making that decision, that might otherwise take much longer, and be more stressful. This coping strategy is similar to sport psychology coaching research which suggests that having a coaching philosophy is critical for effectively working with athletes (Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007). Interestingly in this study, having a philosophy was an effective coping mechanism for sport parents.

Relative to having a parenting philosophy, it is reasonable to suggest that the process of making difficult decisions factors in to philosophy generation over time, and there is a constant learning curve associated with developing one's philosophy. Again, it is having a rationale for decisions that provides parents with some comfort regarding outcomes. Spending on a credit card may put a family into debt; however, if the philosophy of the family is to get the most out of the swimming experience while they can, then this allows a parent to make a decision that may involve spending money (within a certain limit) and thus reduce perceptions of stress regarding finances. The appraisal of the financial stressor is likely to be one of threat due to its future-oriented nature, i.e., the need to pay the credit card bill at the end of the month as opposed to right now. Having an active philosophy may allow the appraisal of this financial stressor as a threat to be reduced and

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be appraised more as a benefit because it facilitates goal acquisition (Lazarus, 1999; 2001). Alternatively (or additionally) a well-defined philosophy for involvement may fit within the CMRT as an emotional-focused coping strategy, a way of reappraising the transaction between the situation and personal resources in order to reduce the severity of a stressor (Lazarus, 1999; 2001). Further investigation of the appraisal process is required to get a full understanding.

How parents put together their philosophy over time and the priorities / sacrifices they are willing to make should be monitored over time. Several parents in the study talked about how they got sucked in to swimming as a sport and perhaps did not set enough boundaries on their time. Missing family reunions or holidays in preference of swimming were sometimes regretted after the fact. Therefore, parents need to regularly reflect and communicate with their partner, and significant others, to determine if their philosophy is still rational and reasonable to them and their families.

Communication, although not a superordinate (general category into which all other coping strategies would fit) coping strategy, is useful in almost every other coping strategy, as well as being a coping strategy in and of itself. Reaching out to others for support (emotional and physical), and planning and organization in particular require communication with other people in order to make the coping strategies work. The importance of communication was highlighted by the parent-dyad case studies as multiple dyads often reported similar stressors and coping strategies between the two parents interviewed, demonstrating that these stressors were shared between parents, and coping strategies, such as defined parent roles were developed as a response. Communication serves as the basis for many other coping strategies; therefore, it is important to develop communication skills, especially with those people that can offer the most support: partners, children, family, friends, and coaches.

One set of coping strategies that was elicited because of the parent-dyad case study design was the use of 'divide and conquer' (parents sharing responsibility) by parents to meet the demands of stressors, such as logistical challenges. While parents mentioned the idea of shared responsibilities in nomothetic analyses, the narratives allowed insight in to how parents subdivided responsibilities and used the coping strategy of role following (although this was sometimes also a stressor) to ensure that all needs are met. For example, some parents were the taxi driver to and from practice, some were responsible for food preparation, some went to meets while others did not, some took a back seat in the swimming experience to balance out the high level of involvement from the other parent. The pattern of how parents split responsibilities could be subdivided into two main methods. Either parents truly shared all stressors, such that they both assisted with most stressors and had moderate stress ratings across the board, or each had highly defined roles such that their stress was much higher for certain stressors than others (these were often oppositional to those of their partner). It was not clear from the methods used how parents came to adopt their roles or how they split stressors between them, but both methods appeared to be successful in helping parent-dyads to cope with a multitude of stressors. Finally, these two methods of assigning and coping with stressors appeared to be the two ends of a spectrum, as opposed to a true dichotomy. Therefore parents in the current study fell on the spectrum between these two extremes.

Importantly, within the group of current participants there appeared to be less reliance on traditional gender role stereotypes and how tasks were divided. For example, the father of Family 3 was a stay at home father to allow his wife to pursue her career while still providing what they believe to be the correct balance of other activities for their children. Many couples spoke of the father being responsible for food preparation or housework, with the mother taking care of finances. It appeared that the division of labor was based more strongly around playing to the

strengths of each individual and who was actually available to do each task. This is not to suggest that gender stereotyping did not exist in the sample and the finding must be interpreted with caution as: (1) this was not a primary question of the current study and as such the finding is based on investigator interpretation; and (2) the data may not reflect actual beliefs or behaviors separate from those discussed.

While the existing families of coping framework (Skinner et al., 2003; see Table. 1) that involved general coping dimensions (families) such as problem-solving, accommodation, and self-reliance did not fit the current data set, all of the coping strategies presented could fit within one or more of the coping families. The fact that coping strategies elicited in the current study could fit within multiple families of coping was the reason that the current data were deemed inappropriate. In hierarchical thematic analysis items are supposed to exist in mutually exclusive categories (i.e., avoid multiple coding). As an example, parents used communication with each other, their children, and friends for multiple reasons, including support and information seeking (both of which are families of coping within existing frameworks). Within the families of coping typology, these types of communication would be represented separately, but were often engaged in concurrently. That said, the current coping strategies can be viewed within the families of coping typology in that almost all of the coping families were represented by strategies in the current study, which means that all coping functions and adaptive processes also were used by parents.

Using the 12 families of coping framework (Skinner et al., 2003), the majority of parent coping strategies elicited in the current study were adaptive, with few examples of maladaptive coping such as submission or opposition. As an example, the coping families framework included a general dimension called 'adaptive process of coordinating actions and contingencies in the environment', which includes the coping families of problem-solving, information seeking,

helplessness, and escape (Skinner et al., 2003). Planning and organization, as a general dimension of coping in the current study is highly representative of the example strategies of strategizing, planning, and instrumental action. Thus, as the families of coping framework suggests, parents that use planning and organization were adjusting their actions to be effective in the face of stressors. Similarly, information seeking through research, discussing with other parents, and meeting with coaches suggests parents were finding additional contingencies for stressors.

Additionally, the coping strategies presented in the current study can be examined using the emotion- and problem-focused coping typology (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Lazarus, 1999; 2001). Overall, this typology was considered too simplistic to represent the vast number of strategies described by parents. However, the usefulness of the coping strategies can be examined within that dichotomy. Many of the coping strategies were problem-focused rather than emotion-focused, and this represents the fact that most of the stressors were changeable, e.g., changing swimming clubs. The coping strategies general dimensions of justification for swimming involvement, communication, and support contain some problem-focused coping strategies, such as talking to a coach about a specific problem, but also emotion-focused coping strategies where parents attempt to cope with difficult situations that are unchangeable, or they do not wish to change. For example, many parents probably did not feel it is within their purview to scale back their child's involvement in swimming. While this might mean missing summer vacations, parents were making a choice to take vacations around swimming because they do not want to change the situation. Therefore, they must engage in emotion-focused coping because they chose not to engage in problem-focused coping.

Overall it would appear that coping strategies used by parents were successful. Although there was no objective measure of stress across parents, no parents suggested they were so stressed

they did not know how to cope, or were having difficulty functioning. Thus, either through stressors being of a low level or the adoption of successful coping attempts, these parent dyads were able to cope with challenges faced in youth swimming.

In conclusion, parents reported using multiple coping strategies for the stressors they experienced. All coping strategies were useful for parents, and the vast majority were adaptive. Seemingly the most important coping strategies for parents were having justifications for swimming involvement and communication. The coping strategies elicited were either consistent with or could be viewed within the framework's prior literature (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Skinner et al., 2003). However, the application of these coping strategies to the context of sport parenting within the sport of swimming is novel. Finally, interviewing both parents and the use of case study analyses allowed understanding of how parents co-ordinate efforts in order to reduce the influence of stressors and enhance coping strategies.

Relationships between Benefits, Stressors, and Coping Strategies

Thus far the discussion has focused on the categories of benefits, stressors, and coping strategies that were elicited through interview and analyses. They have been discussed in isolation, however there are some clear links between some benefits, stressors, and coping strategies. It is these links between that are important if one is to understand how parents perceive stress and cope with stressors that occur.

The relationships between these benefits, stressors, and coping strategies can be simple and/or complex. For example, a relatively simple relationship exists between logistical and time management stressors and the coping strategies of parent communication, and planning and organization. Although these examples do not fully explain how parents experience and deal with many logistical stressors, it demonstrates the relatively linear relationship between stressor and

coping strategy. On the more complex end, the benefits of having a child involved in swimming (e.g., life-skill development and child success) may drive parent priorities and alter their active philosophy for involvement (e.g., perspective taking and mastery focus), which helps them cope with stressors experienced (e.g., parent competitive expectations and the outcomes of competitive events). Thus, benefits, stressors, and coping strategies would be best understood if examined concurrently.

Additionally, no one parent acted in isolation. The case study analyses demonstrated that parents within a dyad communicate with each other about the benefits, stressors, and coping strategies they experience and use. Additionally, parents interact with their child, extended family, friends, coaches, and other swimming parents. Each of these social agents influences how a stressor is experience and the effectiveness of any coping strategy used. Hence, sport parenting operates in an ecological system (Brofenbrenner, 2005) that involved each parent, parent-to-parent interaction, and interactions with family, other swimmers and their parents, clubs, coaches, and administrators. It therefore may be naïve to look at only one parent or parent-dyad in the system.

Consequently the interrelations between benefits, stressors, and coping strategies, and the fact that parents do act in isolation make the study of the stress and coping process challenging. The links between stressors and coping strategies suggested that there are some more general coping strategies and some more specific coping strategies used by parents. In more general coping, general dimensions of coping strategies map well on to general dimensions of stressors. The two general dimensions of planning and organization (as both a stressor and a coping strategy) served as a good example. In more specific coping, higher- or lower-order coping themes matched directly with higher- or lower-order stressors, such as trusting the coaches' knowledge as a coping strategy for coaches as stressors.

The use of general and specific coping strategies may by the most effective for parents. More general coping dimensions allow for coping across multiple stressors such that the coping strategy may be used for more than one stressor at a time, e.g., use of perspective taking as a way of coping with both stressful financial decisions and the logistical challenges of swimming. Additionally, these more general coping dimensions may contain both emotion-focused (e.g., perspective taking) and problem-focused (e.g., prioritization) coping strategies such that parents can choose which one best suits the situation, as suggested by the goodness of fit hypothesis (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). More specific coping strategies are designed for context-specific stressors and may be more effective in reducing parent stress because they are directly related to a stressor. For example, one of the best ways to reduce the stressor of having a lack of knowledge of the sport is to put forth effort to learn the sport (a coping strategy elicited in the study). Overall, parents having both general and specific coping strategies available to them allows them to select the best available coping strategy at the time and match the stressor to the appropriate type of coping, emotion- or problem-focused.

In conclusion, the potential complexity and idiosyncratic use of coping strategies means that it was sometimes easy to link stress and coping strategies as being regularly used across a number of parent-dyads, but others were much less predictable. More general and more specific coping strategies were employed by parents depending on the context-specificity of the stressor experienced and to match problem- or emotion-focused coping to the stressor as per the goodness of fit hypothesis. Therefore, providing parents with a range of coping strategies and suggestions for how they might be used may be helpful to parents, but they should be encouraged to develop their own ways of using specific coping strategies that work best for themselves.

Sport Parenting Issues

Despite many anecdotal reports from participants in the current study, as well as from mainstream media, about parent-child conflicts, especially after meets, very few parents in the current study discussed engaging in these behaviors themselves. That raises several questions about potential social-desirability effects or selective sampling (e.g., only intact families who effectively work together volunteered for the study and parents who experienced considerable conflicts did not). How much of that is disproportionate reporting of high stress parents that are not representative of the current sample? Do children and their parents over-report these occurrences and blow things out of proportion? A recent study by Dorsch et al. (2014a) demonstrates that parents sometimes engage in behaviors that are discordant with their goals for child sport involvement, and it would not be unreasonable to believe that this may the case in the current sample, but it is not perceived or noticed as being negative in the way an external observer would categorize the behavior. The result is parents need to be aware of their behaviors, especially in light of the numerous stressors faced, as they may not reflect their beliefs. Additionally, they should work toward coping strategies (e.g., an active philosophy for involvement and communication with their child) to reduce their stress and avoid engaging in negative behaviors.

Additionally, it is clear that parents are devoting a great deal of time to their children in the pursuit of swimming excellence. Some parents are making direct sacrifices in the short term in the knowledge that the 'journey' will be over soon. Additionally, many of the swimming experiences are very similar, suggesting that parents do not have much choice in dedicating time to the current youth swimming experience. How does this level of effort reflect back on the parents and their children once they move on to the next stage of life? Does it make normative life stressors (such as a child moving out of the house) (Boss, 1980) more stressful for sport parents? Does intense

involvement in one's child's sporting experience influence family life both in the here and now, as well as years to come? The current study cannot determine the answers to those questions, however, it may be important to examine further. For example, there may be a need to develop ways for swimming clubs and sport psychology practitioners to provide parents with additional choices about how to navigate the youth sport experience, particularly in swimming.

Applied Implications

The results and discussion of this study have a number of implications for parents, coaches, and clubs. Many of these implications for each population are based upon the same principles, but are reported separately in order to maximize understanding.

Parents

1. Develop a clear and developing philosophy for involvement. This should include the parents' goals for their child's involvement, the child's goals, and family values and priorities. As the most commonly used coping strategy, and perhaps the one that most relates to emotion-focused coping, parents need to develop an active philosophy for their child's involvement in swimming. It is important to note that this will change over time, as demonstrated by Dorsch et al. (2014a), but knowing if parents are aware of their priorities for involvement it will help them set goals with their child for involvement in the sport and keep difficult outcomes in perspective. For example, if priority for involvement is the development of life- and swimming-skills, then goals will be more participation and mastery focused than a parent who prioritizes winning.

2. Alongside the first recommendation is for parents to acknowledge the commitment the family (both the children and themselves) is making by enrolling in swimming for the purposes of reaching the top level. While many parents state benefits to involvement in

swimming, there are some necessary stressors, particularly those relating to logistics and time management that come from specialization or investment in swimming. Parents must align child and parent goals for involvement with their active philosophy. For example, if swimming demands that you compete on weekends, including those during major holidays, are parents willing to make that a priority? Knowledge of how parents will approach these decisions even if they do not have answers currently will assist in reducing parent stress.

3. Communication is key to coping. While communication was not represented at the top of the coping hierarchy because it was difficult to ascertain that it was super-ordinate to all coping strategies, it formed the basis for a number of coping strategies, such as information seeking, support seeking, and role following. Additionally, parents will not, or perhaps do not, have to experience their stressors and develop coping strategies in isolation from other people, including their children, family, coaches, and friends. Communicating with other people will be primary in developing and utilizing effective coping strategies.

4. Stressors will be multiple. Just as with other aspects of life, stressors due to sport involvement will be multiple and co-occurring. Many of these will be small day-to-day stressors that are manageable, some will be more stressful but foreseen, and others will be unforeseen and perhaps present the biggest challenges to parents. Understanding that stressors will occur and having a process for dealing with them is essential. Contingency plans will certainly assist in coping with stressors when they occur.

5. Enjoy the journey. The parents whose children were entering or leaving their final years of high school highlighted that their direct involvement in the swimming careers of their children was coming to an end, and that it was a short period of time. Their advice was to enjoy the ups and downs of the journey.

6. Be self-aware and reflective. Parents need to be aware that just as other parents can be stressors, and important sources of support and information for coping, they themselves can be that source of stress or support for others. The timing, context, and content of parent communications are important details that may change interpretation of the message and change another parent from someone who may act as a confidant to a source of stress. Therefore parents need to be self-aware in their communications to ensure they are not causing stress for other parents, and perhaps find a trusted source with whom they can discuss difficulties. Parents also need to reflect on their parenting practices from time to time to recognize what works and what is less effective.

Coaches and Clubs

1. Perhaps the most important implication for coaches and clubs in reducing parent stress is to understand that they only have control over certain stressors, and they do not have control over the majority of parent stressors. For example, coach and club communication is a stressor over which they have control, whereas a lack of time with family members may be beyond their control. As such, the role which coaches and clubs can play is somewhat limited:

   a. Reducing stress in those situations over which they have control. Examples include club and coach communication, club actions, coaching styles, and volunteering (see below). Communication needs to be clear and regular with parents. Additionally, clear and frequent communication on club actions, and /or coaching styles or philosophies up front can remove uncertainty and promote transparency to parents. While this can be difficult as coaches also have busy and stressful lives, and club boards are usually comprised of volunteers, it may prevent unwanted and

unnecessary parent stress further down the line. Perhaps educating parents on the rules, procedures, and unwritten knowledge (e.g., buying and maintaining swimsuits) right from the start would be helpful since many parents perceive stressors regarding learning the basics of the sport.

b. Being understanding of the stressors over which they do not have control. This point will be illustrated with an example: coaches, particularly those in high performance squads, need to set and hold athletes to high standards regarding behavior, especially arriving on time for practices. However, in most case where the child is under 16 years of age, they do not have ultimate control over when they arrive at practice, and their parents may have significant logistical issues. Therefore, criticizing the child or complaining to the parents before first understanding the family context will increase parent stress. The author of the current study is not suggesting that a coach (or club) hold different standards for different individuals, but an effort from coaches and clubs to communicate and understand parent perspectives has the potential to reduce parent stress.

2. Additionally, coaches and clubs can help by focusing on helping parents develop appropriate coping strategies, some of which are discussed below. Importantly, communication from clubs and coaches is again paramount to ensure that the right information is being disseminated to parents and this is, particularly important if clubs are going to promote social networks.

a. Helping parents learn the sport, including coaching practices. One coping strategy that was important to parents, and probably reduces several stressors, is learning the sport of swimming. By educating parents about the sport, a number of what-if's

and unknowns are removed about the sport and about coaches. Additionally, educated parents will ask educated questions, which will allow for more expedient problem solving.

b. Helping parents to develop an appropriate active philosophy for involvement. As mentioned in parent implications, having an active philosophy for involvement helps reduce parent stress, as they are more easily able to engage in emotion-focused coping, such as perspective taking. Clubs and coaches, as part of their education and learning the sport can disseminate accurate information regarding youth sport involvement, can discuss with parents the appropriate levels of involvement, and can encourage parents to develop their philosophy.

c. Parent social network development. Communication with other parents also was an important coping strategy for parents. They used other parents for support, for information seeking, and for friendship (a major parent benefit). If clubs help to connect parents, they begin to provide a social network to which parents can go for a number of coping strategies. Putting parents in contact could take the form of informal introductions or more formal programs intended to develop connections.

3. Finally, one of the stressors mentioned by some parents was volunteering for a club, at both a general and board level. As previously discussed, the level of support and training for these individuals is potentially quite low, particularly board positions. Therefore providing board members with training relevant to their role, including logistical management and personal role conflict would be important. An example might be the development of best practice guidelines on managing multiple roles, such as communicating to the coaches as a parent and/or as a board member. Parents do not expect payment when they take volunteer

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positions, but they often feel the position is thankless, so providing thanks to volunteers also may prove useful.

Limitations and Future Directions

Limitations

The methods used in the current study make it difficult to draw definitive relationships between all benefits, stressors, and coping strategies because parents were asked about coping strategies in relation to a single stressor. Links between certain stressors and coping strategies have been determined, but also highlighted that benefits are also linked to the perception of stressors and use of coping strategies. Therefore future studies should look at having parents try to explain the relationships between all three.

The cross-sectional nature of the study did not allow an understanding of the stress and coping appraisal 'process' that unfolds over time as defined by Lazarus (1999; 2001). This was defined as a gap in the literature at the beginning of the study, and it remains so. Longitudinal studies with parents would allow better determination of how stress develops and coping strategies are developed over time. Additionally, longitudinal designs may assist with being able to determine not only what relationships exist between benefits, stressors, and coping strategies, but also how those relationships change over time. Recent studies, by Dorsch et al. (2014a; 2014b) demonstrated that prolonged engagement with participants allow a better understanding of process and the development of parent goals, behaviors, and socialization over time.

One of the keys to understanding and interpreting qualitative data is contextual information regarding the sample, which for this study was relatively homogenous. They were mainly well educated, similar in age, and either were employed or had made the choice not to be employed. The demographic questionnaire did not allow determination of ethnicity, although one

family did self-identify their child as biracial. This omission from the demographic questionnaire was an oversight, as it does not allow any conclusions to be drawn as to differences in parent experience based on ethnicity. The USA Swimming membership demographics report (USA Swimming, 2013) suggests that the vast proportion of swimmers (39.2% of 51.3%) who are members of USA swimming are white. Thus, based on five face-to-face interviews and USA swimming data, it is likely that the majority of the sample was white, although this interpretation of the sample is suggested with supreme caution. Additionally many participants were volunteers for their clubs either at a general or board level, with one parent coach. It is perhaps this final point regarding regularity of volunteering that suggests the sample represents parents that are likely to want to assist in helping out. This self-selection based on the desire to volunteer might mean that the parents that perceive the most stress or have the least effective coping strategies did not participate in the study. Additionally, as volunteers and having good educational backgrounds, parents are potentially more likely to have developmental goals for their child's involvement.

This leads to the final limitation, the non-participation of the father from family six and the subsequent exclusion of the data collected from the mother. This is an important finding in and of itself. The reason given by the mother for potential non-participation (prior to solicitation of the father) was a lack of time due to a busy work schedule. However, is it possible that there was another reason? Are the parents in this dyad different from the sample in some way, such as not managing stressors as well? Were the parents as effective at communication, deemed one of the most important coping strategies, if one parent did not take part? The non-participation raises a number of questions, and along with the relative homogeneity of the sample leads to a need to study more diverse populations in subsequent studies.

Future Directions

First, there is a need for additional studies where parents are asked to determine how benefits, stressors, and coping strategies are related to each other to ascertain a better understanding of those relationships. The use of concept or eco maps (Hodge, 2000), based on the results of the current study and previous literature (Harwood et al., 2010; Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b) to help parents draw the links between themes may prove useful.

Additionally, as previously mentioned, the use of longitudinal methodologies to understand stress and coping as a process over time are a necessary part of future studies. How do perceptions of stressors and coping attempts change over time? It would be interesting to understand if and how coping attempts change based on fluctuations in the severity and type of a stressor. Additionally, given the recent growth in resilience research in sport (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013), the continued interest in mental toughness development (Jones, Hanton, & Connaughton, 2002), and the field of family resilience (Nichols, 2013), it may be pertinent to understand parent stress and coping in relation to 'critical incidents' to the development of family and parent resilience. How do parents' stress and coping attempts fluctuate with large stressors, that are both normative (e.g., school transitions) and non-normative life stressors (sporting injury and/or achievement). The use of researcher observations, parent reflective journaling, and interviews have proved useful methods of data collection for longitudinal studies previously and should be investigated as potential means for the stress and coping context (Dorsch et al., 2014a; 2014b).

Finally, the inclusion of children in the research process as a source of novel information and parent triangulation may also be useful. Parents in the current study discussed using child communication and practicing emotional intelligence as coping strategies for themselves, and in the hope of reducing child stress. Do their children perceive these practices as occurring, do they

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believe them to be as helpful as parents see them, and are there any strategies that are actually reducing the enjoyment for their children? This information would be important as it would let parents know that they need to find alternative coping strategies for stressors.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

Volunteers Needed for Research Study

Do you and/or your partner experience stress from being a swimming parent?

We need participants for a research study "The Stressors Experienced and Coping Strategies Used by Swimming Parents" that looks to understand more about the *experiences*, *challenges*, and *coping strategies* used by parents of youth swimmers. More specifically:

- We are looking to interview both parents of a child (interviewed separately) about their experiences as a swimming parent, stress they may have encountered, and how they cope with that stress.
- Have both parents complete a short questionnaire about their sporting history and that of the family.

To Participate:

- Must have a child who is currently participating in club swimming and is highly committed (practicing and competing regularly)
- Have both parents willing to take part in a short 45-60 minute interview and complete a short questionnaire about their sporting history
- Participants will each receive a $15 gift card (Meijer or Amazon.com)

To **find out more** and **get involved,** please contact study investigator Ian Cowburn at 517-897-6024 or cowburni@msu.edu.

This research is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Dan Gould (drgould@msu.edu), Kinesiology Department, and has been reviewed and approved by the Michigan State University Institutional Review Board.

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of the experiences of swimming parents. The responses you provide to the questions below will allow us to understand more about you and your family. Please complete the questions as accurately and as honestly as you can.

Parent

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Sex: ___ Male ____ Female

Highest Level of Education Achieved:

    ___ High School Diploma   ___ Community College

    ___ Undergraduate Degree   ___ Graduate Degree

What is your Occupation? _____

Estimated Yearly Spend on Swimming (for your child/ren): _____

Estimated Yearly Spend on Other Sports and Activities (for your child/ren):_____

Did you or do you currently participate in sport? ___ Yes ___ No

If Yes, in what sports did you or do you currently participate?

List all sports and indicate the highest level of participation:

    Sport 1 _____   Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

    Sport 2 _____   Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

    Sport 3 _____   Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

    Sport 4 _____   Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

Family Information

Number of Children: _____

Child 1

Age: _____   Sex: ___ Male _____ Female

Is this child currently involved in swimming? ___ Yes ___ No

Was this child previously involved in swimming? ___ Yes ___ No

To what level? ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate

Approximately how many months of the year does this child participate in swimming? ___ /12

If your child does / or has participating in swimming, please indicate the number of years and months involved they have been / or were involved swimming: ___ Years _____ Months

Is or has this child been involved in other sport(s)? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes to the above question, please provide details about those sport(s):

Sport 1 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

   Level: ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

Sport 2 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

   Level: ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

Sport 3 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

   Level: ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

Is or has this child been involved in any non-sport activities (e.g., music)? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes to the above question, please provide details about those activities, including indicating your child's level of ability compared to others that participate in the activity.

Activity 1 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

                    Level: ___ Top 25% ___ Middle 50% ___ Lower 25%

Activity 2 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

                    Level: ___ Top 25% ___ Middle 50% ___ Lower 25%

Activity 3 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

                    Level: ___ Top 25% ___ Middle 50% ___ Lower 25%

(Additional Pages as needed)

Child 2

Age: _____   Sex: ___ Male ____ Female

Is this child currently involved in swimming? ___ Yes ___ No

Was this child previously involved in swimming? ___ Yes ___ No

To what level? ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate

Approximately how many months of the year does this child participate in swimming? ___ /12

If your child does / or has participating in swimming, please indicate the number of years and months involved they have been / or were involved swimming: ___ Years ____ Months

Is or has this child been involved in other sport(s)? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes to the above question, please provide details about those sport(s):

  Sport 1 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

   Level: ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

  Sport 2 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

   Level: ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

  Sport 3 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

   Level: ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

Is or has this child been involved in any non-sport activities (e.g., music)? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes to the above question, please provide details about those activities, including indicating your child's level of ability compared to others that participate in the activity.

  Activity 1 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

                  Level: ___ Top 25% ___ Middle 50% ___ Lower 25%

  Activity 2 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

                  Level: ___ Top 25% ___ Middle 50% ___ Lower 25%

  Activity 3 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

                  Level: ___ Top 25% ___ Middle 50% ___ Lower 25%

Child 3

Age: _____   Sex: ____ Male _____ Female

Is this child currently involved in swimming? ____ Yes ____ No

Was this child previously involved in swimming? ____ Yes ____ No

To what level? ____ Recreational ____Travel/Club ____ High School ____ Collegiate

Approximately how many months of the year does this child participate in swimming? ____ /12

If your child does / or has participating in swimming, please indicate the number of years and months involved they have been / or were involved swimming: ____ Years _____ Months

Is or has this child been involved in other sport(s)? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes to the above question, please provide details about those sport(s):

  Sport 1 _____ Years of Participation ____ Currently Participating ____ Yes ____ No

   Level: ____ Recreational ____Travel/Club ____ High School ____ Collegiate ____ Professional

  Sport 2 _____ Years of Participation ____ Currently Participating ____ Yes ____ No

   Level: ____ Recreational ____Travel/Club ____ High School ____ Collegiate ____ Professional

  Sport 3 _____ Years of Participation ____ Currently Participating ____ Yes ____ No

   Level: ____ Recreational ____Travel/Club ____ High School ____ Collegiate ____ Professional

Is or has this child been involved in any non-sport activities (e.g., music)? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes to the above question, please provide details about those activities, including indicating your child's level of ability compared to others that participate in the activity.

  Activity 1 _____ Years of Participation ____ Currently Participating ____ Yes ____ No

                    Level: ____ Top 25% ____ Middle 50% ____ Lower 25%

  Activity 2 _____ Years of Participation ____ Currently Participating ____ Yes ____ No

                    Level: ____ Top 25% ____ Middle 50% ____ Lower 25%

  Activity 3 _____ Years of Participation ____ Currently Participating ____ Yes ____ No

                    Level: ____ Top 25% ____ Middle 50% ____ Lower 25%

Child 4

Age: _____   Sex: ___ Male _____ Female

Is this child currently involved in swimming? ___ Yes ___ No

Was this child previously involved in swimming? ___ Yes ___ No

To what level? ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate

Approximately how many months of the year does this child participate in swimming? ___ /12

If your child does / or has participating in swimming, please indicate the number of years and months involved they have been / or were involved swimming: ___ Years _____ Months

Is or has this child been involved in other sport(s)? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes to the above question, please provide details about those sport(s):

Sport 1 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

   Level: ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

Sport 2 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

   Level: ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

Sport 3 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

   Level: ___ Recreational ___Travel/Club ___ High School ___ Collegiate ___ Professional

Is or has this child been involved in any non-sport activities (e.g., music)? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes to the above question, please provide details about those activities, including indicating your child's level of ability compared to others that participate in the activity.

Activity 1 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

                    Level: ___ Top 25% ___ Middle 50% ___ Lower 25%

Activity 2 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

                    Level: ___ Top 25% ___ Middle 50% ___ Lower 25%

Activity 3 _____ Years of Participation ___ Currently Participating ___ Yes ___ No

                    Level: ___ Top 25% ___ Middle 50% ___ Lower 25%

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

Good morning/afternoon/evening. I know we met during the recruiting process, but I'd like to re-introduce myself, I'm Ian Cowburn, a final year doctoral student at Michigan State University. I am here today to talk to you about what it is like to be a swimming parent, your general experiences, the challenges and benefits you have encountered, and how you deal with some of the challenges you face. I have some questions that I would like find out the answers to, so I will be making notes and may ask you the same thing a couple of times in different ways to make sure I have understood all that I can about your experiences. The purpose as I said is to accurately capture your experiences, so please make your answers are as honest and detailed as possible, as this will help me in understanding your experience. Of course, you retain the right to not answer questions if you wish and to terminate the interview at any time, and your answers will be kept confidential, including from your partner. Finally, you can ask questions of me at any time, especially if you are not sure what I am asking.

(Demographic questionnaire should have been completed, have this available).

1. Can you tell me what it is like to be a swimming parent?

2. What are some benefits to being a swimming parent?

   - How did you become involved as a swimming parent?

   - What do you enjoy?

   - What has been the best thing about your involvement with swimming?

   - Why are those benefits?

3. Has being a swimming parent influence your family life (e.g., meal times, parenting, your relationship with your spouse)?

4. What are some challenges about being a swimming parent?

- What is it about that challenge that is particularly challenging and/or stressful for you?

- Specifically with regard to swimming – probe as appropriate: How about challenges related to *insert category from below*?

    i. Child development

    ii. Coaches

    iii. Other sport parents

    iv. Organization (club)

    v. Competition, and competitive success and failure

    vi. Injuries

- Outside of swimming, but influenced by involvement – probe as appropriate: How about challenges such as *insert category from below*??

    i. Time

    ii. Work

    iii. Finances

    iv. Home relationships

    v. Social life

5. Interviewer note: The following question relating to coping strategies is to follow each of the mentioned challenges parents list. Ideally the question follows directly after a challenge is mentioned, however, in the course of an interview and parents are in the flow of describing challenges this may not be possible. However, the interviewer should endeavor to discuss coping strategies used for each stressors as close to the description of the parent challenge as possible and ensure all challenges are covered.

6. How do you manage the stress associated with [insert challenge/stressor here]?

- "A coping strategy is any method you use to seal with a stressor to lessen its negative impact. There are many different ways to cope, such as seeking support from your partner, deliberate relaxation, or self-talk" (to be given to all parents so they understand what coping strategies are, adapt from Gould, Finch, & Jackson, 1993).

- I need to fully understand what it was about [strategy] that helped you cope with the [challenge/stressor]. Can you please elaborate as to what it is that makes [insert strategy] a coping strategy for you (adapted from Gould, Finch, & Jackson, 1993, p. 455)?

- Does your partner help you manage the stress of this [insert challenge/stressor]?

    a. How does your partner help? (If needed)

- Are there any other coping strategies that you use that have not been discussed so far that you use and would like to discuss?

- Alternative wording for variety or to clarify: What strategies do you use to manage the stress associated with [insert challenge/stressor here]?

7. What recommendations would you have for other swimming parents about dealing with challenges that arise from having your child involved?

- For managing the stress within yourself.

- For helping your spouse.

- For maintaining a good family life and marriage, while being a swimming parent

8. During the interview I have written a list of all challenges you have mentioned. Can you take a look at the list and let me know if you agree with all the challenges listed? If there are any that you think are missing, please write them in.

- If the parent feels stressors need to be added, these will be discussed and coping strategies discussed.

9. Now, can you please give each a score out of 10 for how stressful they currently are for you, where 1 is not stressful at all and 10 is a very high level of stress?

10. Thank you for agreeing to this interview. As I move forward with the study I will be looking for additional participants for the study. Can you think of any other swimming parents that have a child who is similarly aged and as involved as your son/daughter that you think might be helpful for my study?

- If yes. Then the lead researcher will give the recruitment flyer to the current parent participant and ask them to contact the lead researcher if they are interested in participating.

As part of your participation in the study you will receive a $15 gift card to either Meijer or Amazon.com, which of the two would you prefer? (Interviewer to retrieve contact details to forward the gift card). Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study of swimming parents. I thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and your contributions are will be very helpful to the study.

APPENDIX D

SWIMMING CLUB PERMISSION LETTER

Swimming Club Permission Letter

Date: <mark>DATE</mark>

To: Dan Gould, Ph.D.
Ian Cowburn B.Sc.

Michigan State University

From: <mark>NAME AND ORGANISATION NAME</mark>

By signing below, I indicate that the above researchers may attend our facility / practice sessions to recruit parent participants for the research project "stressors experienced and coping strategies used by swimming parents".

Sincerely,

<mark>SIGNATURE</mark>

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Participant Consent Form
Michigan State University
Department of Kinesiology

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The researcher is required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researcher any questions you may have.

You are being asked to participate in a study being conducted by Ian Cowburn, under the supervision of Dr. Dan Gould, both from Michigan State University. Ian Cowburn is conducting this study as part of his doctoral dissertation research and is performing this study as an independent researcher with no preconceived expectation of obtaining certain patterns of results.

The purpose of the project is to learn more about the experiences of youth sport parents, specifically those in swimming. In particular, the project wants to understand the challenges swimming parent's face, the coping strategies they potentially use to deal with those challenges, and how parents use their partners to deal with challenges. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you and your partner have a child who is highly involved in competitive youth swimming in the mid-Michigan area. The research will be conducted to gain insights into what challenges swimming parents face in having a child involved in competitive youth swimming, how they potentially cope with those challenges, and how their partner helps them with those challenges. Your participation in this study will involve participation in an interview related to this research purpose.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete a short demographic survey about you and your family, and participate in a 45 to 60 minute interview. The survey will ask questions pertaining to your sport participation history and the sport/non-sport participation of your child(ren). The interview will be conducted in person, in a private and mutually convenient location. I will ask you a few questions about your experiences as a swimming parent, what challenges you face, how you cope with those challenges, and how your partner helps you with those challenges. Additionally, your partner will take part in the same interview, at a different time separate from yourself, in order to understand what challenges you experience and coping strategies you use as a couple.

The data for this project will be kept confidential. The interview will be audio-recorded for accuracy of recall, and then transcribed verbatim. The only access to the audio-recorded interviews, transcripts, and subsequent analysis will be the research staff involved in the study and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Michigan State University. The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings. However, the identities of all research participants will remain <u>confidential</u>.

Benefits and Risks of Participating
Your participation in this research study may contribute valuable information regarding the stresses of being a youth sport parent, how parents cope, and contribute to the development of future sport parent education programs. While the questions in this interview focus on your

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experience as a youth sport parent, there is a small potential that discussing your experiences may create some discomfort for you. Additionally, you will be asked to discuss some of your opinions regarding your partner, however, the content of your interview will remain confidential. These are the only foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

Compensation
For completing this interview, you will receive a $15 Amazon.com e-Gift Card or a $15 Meijer Gift Card (at your discretion) to compensate you for your time, delivered either by post (Meijer) or e-mail (Amazon.com), within one week of completing your interview.

Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty from the investigators. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to say no to participating in the study. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. If you have any questions concerning your participation in this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Dan Gould (Phone: 517-432-0175; e-Mail: drgould@msu.edu), or lead researcher, Ian Cowburn (Phone: 517-897-6024; e-Mail: cowburni@msu.edu).

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu, or regular mail at 408 W. Circle Drive, Room 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____ _____
Signature   Date

You agree to be audiotaped for this research project.   _____YES   ____NO

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

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