

SPORT PASSION REALIZATION IN COLLEGIATE ATHLETES:
“HOW FISH FIND WATER”

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ABSTRACT

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Passion is one of the most desired traits of the human conditions. The extremely high level of motivation displayed in passionate individuals has been the subject of research in a variety of fields. The purpose of this study was to examine the process through which one discovers their “passionate pursuit”, especially in cases where a passion is connected to high levels of performance. An improved understanding of how individuals find the activity they are passionate about can potentially help others discover and experience the benefits of passion. This study used measures established through Vallerand’s dualistic theory of passion to quantitatively identify passionate individuals in a population of 733 NCAA Division I collegiate athletes. Qualitative interviews were then conducted with 10 athletes to examine properties associated with the introduction to the established passionate activity. Results of this study showed that early perception of social benefits from displaying competence in specific sporting domains were very influential in early sport selection. Furthermore, passionate athletes experience a psychological progression through stages of passion as they approach levels of elite competition.

*“ O ME! O life!... of the questions of these recurring;
Of the endless trains of the faithless—of cities fill’d with the foolish;
Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I and who more faithless?)
Of eyes that vainly crave the light—of the objects mean—of the struggle ever renew’d;
Of the poor results of all—of the plodding and sordid crowds I see around me;
Of the empty and useless years of the rest—with the rest me intertwined;
The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid these, O me, O life?
Answer.
That you are here—that life exists, and identity;
That the powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse.
-Walt Whitman: *Leaves of Grass* (1897)*

This paper is dedicated to all those who see the world as a question to be answered.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Purpose

Passion is one of the most desired traits of the human condition. For this reason, contemporary psychologists and sport psychologists alike have begun to examine not only why people live in certain ways, but what factors can make for the most fulfilling life. The unique and powerful motivational force of passion may be able to provide some insight on how to make life most worth living. “Passion can fuel motivation, enhance well-being, and provide meaning in everyday life” (Vallerand, Blanchard, Mageau, Koestner, Ratelle, Léonard, Gagne & Marsolais, 2003). Furthermore, passionate individuals are the heroes and heroines of society, for they are most often the ones who deeply inspire, ingeniously create, and profoundly change the course of human history. The most influential musicians, expressive artists, and intuitive minds can be identified as passionate individuals, for they have brought meaning to their lives through a specific task. For this reason alone it is inspiring to consider a world in which more people are able to realize their true passion.

Determining what one is “supposed to do with their life” can be a noble life-long pursuit from which many will walk away empty-handed. However, despite the emotional and motivational benefits of being passionate towards a task, very little is firmly understood about what causes passion. Whether socio-contextual factors produce the correct environment for passion to develop, or rather if innate forces draw individuals toward their self-realizing purpose, the factors associated with the realization of passion have not been established in the current literature. In fact, the debate on deep motivational forces within humans has been ongoing for thousands of years, dating back to the ancient Greek philosophers. The amount of work

dedicated to the topic of passion throughout history by some of the world's greatest critical thinkers legitimizes an interest in uncovering more about human passion towards activity. Recent scientific advances have increased the field's understanding of human motivation, which now presents the genuine opportunity to discover more about the process through which a person's passion can be realized.

Passion is not the sole property of positive psychologists, whose primary focus is exploring ways to maximize life-fulfillment (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The characteristics of passion such as increased well-being, and providing life meaning are not able to reveal the full nature of passion. Opposite these empirically defined positive traits of passion lie more sinister and destructive aspects that hold equal significance in identifying the condition. While passion in some may be embodied by dedication to a noble cause of self-improvement that benefits all those involved, passion can simultaneously be obsessive, neglectful, and destructive of personal or social well-being. The word passion itself is derived from the Latin word "passio" which means "to suffer" (Vallerand et al., 2003). This is an accurate description of some passionate individuals who cannot quell the pursuit of their passion until it ultimately culminates in their demise. History is filled with these influential figures whose uncontrollable passion towards their craft led to a memorable downfall. There is Napoleon Bonaparte, whose passion for power was ended in his famous defeat at Waterloo. In the sporting world there is Lance Armstrong, who so blindly desired to be a champion of cycling that he was willing to break any rule and then blatantly deny doing so. Despite such negative outcomes, these individuals inarguably had significant impacts on society's current perceptions of the world and its workings (whether those be perceptions of military strategy or bicycle riding, respectively). Justifiably, this dichotomy of outcomes within passion along with its unique motivational principles has

inspired many efforts to conduct research on the topic. However, current research on passion still does not offer a distinction regarding how individuals initially come into contact with their passion, nor does it clearly describe the factors associated with personally identifying a passion. Therefore, this study was designed to achieve three purposes. These included: (1) identifying how individuals come into contact with their passion; (2) uncovering what an individual experiences within their passion; and, (3) discussing factors associated with passion realization.

Significance of the Purpose

When an exceptionally dominant athlete enters the arena, it is common to hear from sports writers and announcers that the athlete's excellence is attributed to the fact that "they were meant to do that sport." Similarly, when a virtuoso sits down at a piano, there is little question that their primary form of expression was meant to be through that instrument. The select few who are able to achieve this optimal fit through their choice of activity embody the characteristics of passion as set forth by the current literature on the topic (and to be discussed further in this paper). The expression that comes to mind is that these individuals are "like a fish in water", signifying that they are completely meant for that environment and able to thrive in that medium. Literature on passion has done an impressive job describing what makes a person passionate once they are introduced to the correct environment (as a fish in water) but currently fails to address the process through which a person finds that ideal medium for personal expression (how the fish finds water). In order to learn about passion realization, research needs to be conducted that not only identifies the proper measurement tools for passion realization, but also investigates the personal accounts of individuals who can recall their early experiences. The importance of understanding how people come into contact with their passion is that this knowledge could potentially help others realize theirs. Given the significant motivational

outcomes associated with a passionate individual, it seems extremely desirable to promote a world in which there is more passion.

Passion does not always lead to positive outcomes, however. This concept is reflected in individuals who become consumed by an activity to the point that it can cause anxiety or even harm. The dualistic theory of passion (Vallerand et al., 2003) referred to these individuals as obsessively passionate because they are not able to exhibit control over the activity to which they have become attached. This can often lead to negative outcomes not only to the individual but also those around them. For example, Slovenian ultra-endurance athlete Jure Robič willingly neglected his family and personal safety in order to train and become one of the world's top ultra-endurance athletes (Coyle, 2006). Ultra-endurance races are known for their intensity and ability to take competitors to their physical and psychological limits. Robič was at the pinnacle of this extreme discipline when he was suddenly killed during a training ride, descending a mountain pass at over 50 miles an hour (Weber, 2010). He was passionate for endurance racing in such a way that many other aspects of his life were neglected, including his natural regard for personal safety and well-being. For these reasons, Robič serves as a powerful example of the sheer motivational force associated with passion, even if that passion is working at the individual's expense. Passion is such a powerful force that it can take priority over even the most basic of human needs, such as personal safety, or family connection. And although this thesis did not address the contrasting outcomes of passion, it is important to be aware of these factors when exploring such a powerful topic. This study aimed to improve current understanding of how people find their passion, which will hopefully provide valuable insight as to why such negative or positive outcomes can occur.

A place where the outcomes of passion are readily visible is sport. Dedicated athletes in the heat of competition provide wonderful displays of passion through the highly visible world of contemporary sport. While these popularized examples make for excellent spectatorship, they also serve as powerful vehicles for studying and understanding passion. Those associated with sport (and sport psychology research) recognize the importance of certain motivational properties as prerequisites for outstanding athletic performance (Lochbaum & Roberts, 1993), and are highly interested in uncovering ways to develop these characteristics in athletes. Because sport can be described as the expression of deeply rooted psychological principles through physical activity, it was the ideal setting to examine concepts of high motivation. Furthermore, many empirical studies involving passion and motivation in high achieving populations have neglected athletes from their samples. The current study addressed this issue by applying validated passion/motivation instruments to a population of high achieving athletes in order to study how the most passionate of these individuals experienced their passionate activity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine a high-achieving athletic population and explore how they came into contact with the sport they are now passionate towards. The need for this research exists because the current literature on passion and motivation predominantly focuses on the characteristics of passion once the activity one is passionate about has already been established. There exists a very limited empirical understanding of why individuals develop passion towards a specific activity, or what quantitative measurements are most valid to use to answer this question. The current study was designed to profile high performance athletes due to the characteristics of passion (time investment, group relatedness, competence, etc.) commonly exemplified in this population (Vallerand et al., 2003). Part 1 of this study offered perspective on

the level of passion that existed in a population of NCAA Division I athletes. The used measurement instrument (“the passion scale”) focused on the internalization of the sport into the athlete’s identity, as well as other aspects of perseverance and commitment to the sport. The data were then used to select individuals who display the highest levels of “passion” (as measured on a subscale coded for “general passion”) for Part 2 of the study.

Part 2 of this study utilized a semi-structured interview format designed to allow a select number of participants the chance to reflect on their experiences within their passionate pursuit. This qualitative process included questions relating to the participant’s experiences leading up to the realization of their passion. Themes outlining the interview included environmental influences (parents/ coaches), perceptions of competence, and perseverance through the many years of participation. Qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with these subjects revealed important themes and provided insight into how the participants came into contact with their passionate pursuit, or as this study fondly refers to it, “how a fish finds water”.

Definition of Terms

Passion: A strong inclination toward an activity that people like, that they find important, and in which they invest time and energy. (Vallerand et al., 2003). Furthermore, passion entails being emotionally charged, or at least affectively inclined toward an object or activity (Vallerand, 2010).

Dualistic Model of Passion: A model set forth by Vallerand in 2003 that is the basis of literature involving passion and activity. The model states that depending on the process of internalization with the activity, an individual will develop either harmonious or obsessive passion.

Characteristic of harmonious passion is a sense of control over engaging in the activity whereas

obsessively passionate individuals have an external locus of control where they are obsessed by their engagement in the activity.

Self-Determination Theory: Influential theory of human motivation and personality, referencing the need for autonomy, relatedness and competence as the basis of human behavior and action (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This literature review addresses the construct of passion as a motivational force towards activity. Specifically, this work will examine the process through which people discover their passion. The sections are divided into, (a) defining passion, (b) philosophical significance of passion, (c) indications of passion, (d) measuring passion, (e) elite talent development, (f) creative expression regarding passion; and, (g) a summary.

Defining Passion

Discussions about passion can be found across many disciplines of empirical research and philosophical text. However, passion is commonly used as a descriptive term without a solid operational definition. Literature on the psychology of love and relationships uses passion as the force of both sexual and emotional motivation including a person's most intense feelings (Acker & Davis, 1992). Research on business and entrepreneurship has adopted passion to describe an intense, positive, and long lasting emotional state that focuses a businessperson to pursue business success (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2005). Philosophers dating back to the Ancient Greeks regard passion as "God's drawing force towards our ultimate purpose" (Tarnas, 1991). These three unique examples of the diverse uses of passion (of which there are many more) make significant indications regarding research on the topic. Firstly, being found across a wide range of scientific and philosophical texts shows that passion plays a central role in how people conceptualize human motivation. Secondly, the richness and depth of discussions on passion throughout history make it worthy of continued investigation.

While there is no consensus on the true definition of passion, the general implication is that humans possess the ability to reach heightened motivational and emotional states based on

the activity they are engaged in. In the sporting world, highly dedicated elite performers, as well as exceptionally persistent individuals, are generically labeled as “passionate”. The positive association of high performance in sport with passion is what has inspired this study to explore its motivational property, specifically, the athlete’s initial contact with an activity that goes on to become their passion.

Passionate people spend a significant amount of time within their passionate pursuit (Vallerand et al., 2003). As previously mentioned, the extreme example of this would be Slovenian ultra-endurance athlete Jure Robič, who regularly trained over 6 hours a day in a variety of disciplines of endurance racing, often completely alone, so that he could remain among the top competitors in the world (Coyle, 2006). However, beyond the pain, hallucinations, and extreme health risks, athletes who desire to be successful in ultra-endurance racing (or any activity for that matter) must sacrifice significant portions of time in order to make meaningful steps towards what they hope to accomplish. Not only is high time and energy investment an indicator of high motivation, it also makes a person more likely to be associated with elite performance (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). Research on elite performance has found that a controlling variable in top performers is that they are inclined to spend larger amounts of time engaged in deliberate practice towards that task. Therefore, in order to reach the highest level of mastery, (a process taking about 10 years) an individual will simultaneously satisfy part of the criteria for passion, by dedicating large amounts of time and energy towards the task. Emmons (1999) goes on to explain that people who are willing to spend large amounts of time and energy towards something are likely to identify closely with that activity. The process of combining activity and identity, also known as internalization, is a marquee characteristic in how passion is further defined.

Another key element associated with passionate individuals is that they find the specific activity they are engaging in very important, reflecting how the task has been internalized into their personality (Vallerand et al., 2003). A large amount of research on the human motivation is based on this process of activity internalization, or the process through which people transform external circumstances into having internal, personal meaning. (See Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). The way in which an activity is internalized proves to have a large impact on the individual's approach and motivation towards that activity. For example, a student presented with a mindless homework assignment from the teacher is very unlikely to feel internally motivated to complete the assignment. The student is more likely to feel external pressure and anxiety to complete the assignment as opposed to feeling personal benefit in doing the work. This type of internalization is known as introjection motivation, and it has shown to be related to negative mental states such as anxiety and inability to cope with failure (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994). In contrast, an assignment that has personal meaning to a student is likely to be integrated into their personal identity. This type of activity internalization is known as integration motivation. The student takes responsibility for the quality of the work, feels a self-determined drive to have it completed, and derives satisfaction from the performance on the task rather than the outcome of completion. Research examining integration motivation shows a correlation with activity enjoyment as well as positive coping skills (Deci et al., 1994).

Self-determination theory, first presented by Deci and Ryan in 1985, was the first theory to differentiate between types of internalization and their effect on motivation towards an activity. Examining social-contextual conditions present between the task and the actor, Deci and Ryan were able to identify variables that influence the integration process of the task. Because integration is highly associated with self-determined behavior and positive psychological

outcomes, it is very desirable to identify environments that promote this process. Self-determination theory also identifies three innate psychological needs as the basis for self-motivation and personality integration: competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Competence refers to a person's knowledge concerning controls over outcomes in the environment and an internalized belief that one can affect those outcomes (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). For example, the more an athlete feels he or she can perform a specific set of sport skills, the more competent he or she feels. Relatedness is the innate human desire to form and maintain lasting, positive, and interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Within self-determination theory, relatedness is the sense of belonging within the social group associated with the activity. The third principle of self-determination theory, autonomy, is a person's innate desire to have control over their own actions (deCharms, 1968) and the level of autonomy that a person reflects is the extent to which participation in an activity is the result of individual choice. The combination of these three principles of the self-determination theory reflects contextual factors that influence the internalization of tasks. Self-determination theory has had an incredible influence on current passion literature because it clarifies the extent to which a person finds an activity important, a major indicator of passion.

The final principle that defines passion in the current literature is that the person must like the task (Vallerand et al., 2003). Developmental theorists postulate that from an early age, humans have a tendency to apply themselves, seek autonomy, and showcase mastery in the environment (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997). This understanding comes from the organismic perspective that claims that humans have purposes that arise from innate needs (Jonas, 1966). The automatic, and spontaneous exploration of the environment in search of autonomy and mastery appears to be an essential part of human cognitive and social development

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). Furthermore, the literature states that this process is the principle source of enjoyment and vitality in one's life. Therefore, according to the current understanding of motivation literature, humans have innate processes that promote exploration and interaction with the environment in order to satisfy specific needs of autonomy and mastery. Tasks that present themselves as challenging and require the application of the person's utmost skill have distinct psychological outcomes labeled as positive for human vitality (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). Narrowed focus, sense of control over outcomes, lost perspective of time, and a feeling of transcendence (being lost in the activity) are all associated with activities capable of satisfying the innate needs of the individual. Thus, the concept of liking a task is definable and measurable by these specific outcomes. Because the characteristics of being "fully involved" in a task are also related to the process of integration (Deci & Ryan, 1991), it is understandable why they would be included in defining human passion.

In summary, through the combination of established principles of motivation, the definition of passion towards activity has been established as something a person likes, finds important, and invests significant time and energy towards (Vallerand et al., 2003). Researchers credit both an innate human drive for novel task exploration, as well as socio-contextual factors as the logic behind the development of passion. The drive for autonomy (and other organismic needs) leads a person towards a task, and then contextual factors determine the internalization process that takes place. Individuals who feel that their involvement in the task reflects autonomy and engages the utmost of their ability will most likely integrate with that task in ways reflected by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). For example, a young boy being introduced to the sport of ice hockey who embraces the challenge of learning the new skills, feels in control of his participation, and finds reliable encouragement from the environment (e.g.,

parents, coaches, and peers) would appear likely to internalize the new activity in a way consistent with the current understanding of passionate individuals.

As an extension of these motivational principles, Vallerand and colleagues (2003) developed the dualistic theory of passion to help explain the different outcomes of passion. The dualistic theory of passion states that the two types of passion, harmonious and obsessive, differ mainly in the process of integration associated with participation in the activity. Having a sense of autonomy and ability to control involvement in the task is correlated with harmonious passion. These individuals are able to find enjoyment in the passionate pursuit without experience of anxiety when away from the activity. Contrastingly, obsessive passion occurs when the locus of control over participation in the task is not perceived to be within the individual. The obsessively passionate engage in the task to relieve external stressors such as social expectations, consequences or other ego related factors. Obsessively passionate individuals, though still considered passionate, is unable to regulate their behavior in a socially acceptable way, and the passion is pursued at the expense of other obligations (such as health or family commitments) (Vallerand et al., 2003). For example, a cyclist identified as obsessively passionate is more likely to continue training on the road even in winter months despite ice, snow, and other adverse weather conditions (Vallerand et al., 2003, study 3). This rigid persistence towards participating in the activity can compromise personal safety, reflecting passion's sometimes maladaptive properties. The work of Vallerand and his colleagues identifies harmonious passion as a more desirable construct because of its ability to operate appropriately within the socio-contextual factors of the passionate person's life. It is through Vallerand's dualistic theory of passion that the majority of the empirical research on the topic is based. However, further examination of

Vallerand's definition of passion is required in order to justify a clear understanding of how people initially come into contact with this powerful motivational construct.

Regardless of how the experience of passion is defined or described in the current literature, there exists no sound understanding of why individuals develop passion towards a specific activity. Theories of innate desires to achieve mastery of the environment only go so far as to explain how an individual knows when they have discovered a passion, yet those desiring to be passionate for an activity are still left searching through the dark. That "eureka" moment of passion realization is still shrouded in mystery and research remains unable to describe it. For this reason, all aspects of passion, including its history, must be taken into account for true understanding to occur.

Philosophical Significance of Passion

Since the dawn of critical thought in Ancient Greece, the essence of human motivation has been at the forefront of philosophical debate. As it is the ancient works of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle that have defined the evolution of "Western thought", it is essential to begin with the Greeks when attempting to conceptualize passion. Throughout history, the understanding of human passion has evolved to fit the philosophical trends of each generation. By following this concept of passion over thousands of years and through the words of the world's most influential thinkers, the essential core of passion begins to emerge. It is very fitting that the often-romanticized concept of passion has intrigued history's greatest thinkers just as it continues to today. Examining past perspectives illuminates many curious ideas concerning the purpose of passion, and how people are able to discover it.

The Ancient Greeks were perhaps the first to see the world as a question to be answered (Tarnas, 1991). Beginning with Aristotle and later Plato, the Greek philosophers viewed human

consciousness as a divine gift with immense significance and mystery. It can be seen through writings of Plato that the Greeks had an early concept for innate forces that drove human motivation towards what they referred to as “self-actualization”. To Plato and his followers, consciousness was a divine principle of the human condition that was striving to understand “universal truths” that existed beyond the experienced reality (p. 58). Aristotle regarded the mind not only as that which is activated by sensory experience, but also as something that is eternally active, and indeed divine and immortal (p. 60). Furthermore, the Greeks believed that within each unique form of consciousness there existed a purpose. Each person sought to fulfill its purpose, to grow and mature, and to achieve its realized form. To reach an understanding of one’s actual purpose was considered a divine pursuit, capable of propelling mere mortals to the status of (the Greek perception of) gods. This humanization of universal truths is reflected in the Greek pantheon gods, who as it is written, often took human form and motivated humans to many a great triumph or even treachery. It can be seen then that the concept of passion and its powerful motivational properties had a significant presence in the context of religion, beginning with the Ancient Greeks and carrying on to modern times.

The dawn of Christianity marked a period of time in which the churches inherited the fundamental understanding of passion and universal truths. Many basic similarities can be found between the Ancient Greeks and the early Christians in relation to perceptions of human consciousness and motivation (Korak, 2012). The conception of Christianity was based on principles of transcendent reality, eternal perfection (manifested by an all-powerful God), divine wisdom in the “cosmos” and the importance of tending to the “soul”, which represented the human essence (Tarnas, 1991). Through Christianity, adhering to and fulfilling one’s “purpose” could achieve enlightenment of the human consciousness. To pursue God’s purpose was a divine

cause, just as it was in the time of the Greeks. The basic principles of human passion, established by the Greeks, can be found carried on by Christianity through to the modern age. It is then through the birth of science and empirical thought that passion begins to embody its modern form.

During the 1600's, an incredible expansion of knowledge took place in Europe that challenged the intellectual authority of organized religion. The works of Isaac Newton and Galileo helped spark a scientific revolution, illuminating universal properties of the physical world that could be measured and studied (McMullin, 2001). No longer were people reliant on Christianity to comprehend the workings of the universe. Similarly, philosophers attempted to understand the complexities of human nature away from the influence of the church. French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes risked religious persecution by publishing works on the topic of human passion in 1650. His work *Passions of the Soul* distinguished the human soul from the body, and described passion as a force working in conjunction with the soul to advance the person towards desirable outcomes (Skirry, 2008). Descartes believed that each person had a distinct purpose, and that passion was the process of the body drawing close to its realization. The stance of Descartes is very consistent with the early works of Plato and other Greek philosophers in that it acknowledged an existence of large unifying principles that human consciousness was attempting to reach. While it has been shown in modern psychology that the mind and body are in fact connected in their functioning (Damasio, 1994), the influence of Descartes' ideas are important to highlight when discussing early understandings of human motivation.

The emergence of empirical thought during the scientific revolution would spark the creation of a philosophical dichotomy that would exist until the twentieth century. The two

camps, the “romantics” and the “scientifics”, though different, held many similarities in their views of the world. For example, both acknowledged humanistic principles that championed man’s potential for individual achievement, and were also attentive to the hidden mysteries of human consciousness (Tarnas, 1991). Differences arose, however. Where the romantics perceived the world as a unitary organism to be experienced and connected with, the scientific perspective saw an atomistic machine to be objectively analyzed and picked apart. The groundbreaking research in the field of psychology by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung emphasizing the role of the human “unconscious” marked the turning point in modern human motivation theory. By exhibiting the ability to make objective analysis of subconscious phenomena, Freud elevated the status of science to be capable of producing answers for motivation’s mysteries. Innate drives existing at the subconscious level, influenced by socio-cultural factors, and manifested in conscious emotion and behavior became an enormously influential force in psychology that continues to this day.

The significance of discussing philosophical perspectives of passion and history’s emergent trends on the topic is that all of these factors have direct and indirect influence on current empirical understanding of passion. The philosophical and scientific work leading up to Freud’s announcement of the unconscious mind influenced his conceptualization of psychology, just as *The Interpretation of Dreams* influenced many psychologists who followed. Freud’s initial theory of two innate drives of sex and aggression was later expanded to include sex, thirst, hunger, and avoidance of pain (Hull, 1943). To account for the issue of normal human development, White’s work (1959) complemented drive theory and established a basis for human motivation with his research on *effectance motivation* (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This theory argued that organisms are innately motivated to be effective in dealing with their environment.

Rewards contingent on effective displays of competence in the environment were enough to sustain (or motivate) behavior independent of drive-based reinforcements. Motivation distinct from the innate drives began to be known as intrinsic motivation, a defining characteristic of the self-determination theory.

This long (yet incredibly brief) journey through the history of how humans think about passion and motivation has now returned to the modern understanding. White's theory on effectance motivation had incredible influence on Deci and Ryan's establishment of self-determination theory. This, in turn, has shaped modern motivational theory including research on the topic of passion. The innate desire for competence, relatedness, and autonomy provides a fulfilling explanation of how humans approach activities and also how they establish unique, personal meaning within that activity. The significance of including philosophical perspectives of passion in this study is to acknowledge highly creative and uniquely inspiring works on the topic of passion from the past, which may offer assistance in answering questions that still exist. The sound empirical findings by Deci, Ryan, Vallerand, and others have presented quality understanding of passion, and yet some details remain unaddressed. While humans possess this innate desire to explore the environment and establish "effectance", it cannot be explained why a specific task for a specific person can inspire incredible levels of motivation. As the field of psychology races forward, it is paramount that we recognize the foundation from which all of this knowledge arose.

Origins of Passion

A number of diverse theories on the origins and influence of passion exist today in modern empirical research. Work branching off the dualistic model of passion indicates that socio-contextual factors play a major role in the establishment of passion. Parent and participant

valuation of the activity was found to have an influence on the amount of time spent on the activity and therefore an influence on passion development (Mageau et al., 2009). These results were found by surveying 196 junior high school students at the initial stage of skill development (See Bloom, 1985) testing for a number of variables including type of passion development, time and energy commitment and parent valuation of their participation in the activity. Results showed that parent perception of the new activity had significant influence on time investment as well as activity valuation. Studies such as this one imply that socio-cultural factors may influence what specific activities later develop into passions of young individuals.

The concept of passion has existed in business and entrepreneurial literature for many years. Despite being strongly referenced in connection to business ventures, and company growth however, entrepreneurial literature has produced very little systematic or empirical research on the topic of passion (Shane, Locke, & Collins, 2003). A comprehensive review by Cardon, Wincent, Singh and Drnovsek (2005) draws from a diverse collection of research on emotional constructs to define entrepreneurial passion as an intense, positive and long lasting emotional state directed toward a venture-related activity. Three studies in the psychology of emotion are cited as having the most influence on Cardon et al.'s conceptualization of passion. The first study analyzed 284 mood surveys from college students and established support for the circumplex model of affect (Tellegen, Watson, & Clark, 1999). This model illustrated the measurement of emotion along scales of intensity (high and low arousal) and valence (positive and negative) and emphasizes the significance of the cognitive interpretation of certain situations. The second study influencing Cardon et al.'s definition of entrepreneurial passion involved mood attribution in college students (Shwarz & Clore, 1983). The study included a series of subject interviews and revealed that thinking of a positive event causes one to have an

increased perception of life satisfaction. The final study used by Cardon et al. is an overview of the importance of self-regulation and its effect on positive outcomes (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). This overview highlights different aspects of self-regulation such as transcendence (being focused beyond immediate stimuli), and the ability to overcome distractions or setbacks that inhibit the idealized outcome. The combination of emotional states, emotional affect, and also situational conditions associated with positive outcomes brought Cardon et al. to establish the definition of entrepreneurial passion as an intense, positive, and long-lasting emotional state directed towards venture-related activities (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek 2009).

Entrepreneurial passion literature also states that complex social patterns of mimicry and modeling can result in the transference of passion from an employer to employees (Cardon, 2008). Cardon's 2008 review of entrepreneurial passion research connects associated variables of passion with social comparison and emotional contagion concepts. For example, an emotional display by an employer will lead to similar emotional displays by employees. Passionate employers are more likely to display more positive and intense feelings, which employees will often mimic (Cardon, 2008). Therefore, passionate employers will increase positive emotional displays in employees and foster entrepreneurial passion development. However, promoting positive emotions is not enough for passion to fully develop. Employees also need to identify with the purpose and the well-being of the company in order to be considered passionate. Cardon (2008) goes on to state that the number and intensity of positive emotional displays by passionate employees reflects upon the tendencies of transformational leaders, or leaders that implement positive changes in employees by inspiring them to align their own goals with those of the company (for more on transformational leadership, see Bass, 1990). Because transformational leaders promote long-term value adjustment, and promote positive social comparison, employees

are more likely to identify with the goals of the company under a transformational leader. According to Cardon (2008), entrepreneurial passion promotes passion development among employees because it spreads positive emotional states and promotes employee identification with the company's goals.

The difficulty with entrepreneurial passion is that business culture holds the term in extremely high regard, yet applies it to a diverse array of contexts. Being used so freely to describe a variety of characteristics, the term passion in relation to business loses a degree of validity. Although effort has been made to eliminate the obscurity surrounding passionate entrepreneurs, more empirical research needs to be conducted. Furthermore, entrepreneurial passion only investigates positive emotional states associated with passion and disregards negative characteristics that can arise in a passionate individual. Future research may examine business owners that display maladaptive principles of passion such as obsessive tendencies, excessive workloads, or even "by any means necessary" corruption. For the purpose of this study, entrepreneurial passion was important to include when considering the influence of emotional state affect on passion development, especially towards an activity.

Furthermore, Vallerand et al. has explored the possibility that passion develops through a progression of stages as a person moves from being inexperienced to highly experienced. However, initial findings do not support this notion (Vallerand, 2010). A cross-sectional analysis by Mageau et al. (2009) measured passion in beginner (4 months involvement) and experienced (10 years involvement) musicians and did not find one type of passion to be more correlated with one group. Instead, experienced individuals scored higher in both types of passion and harmonious passion ranked higher than obsessive in both experience levels. Furthermore, research by Lafrenière, Vallerand, Philippe, Mageau, and Charest (2009) found that in a sample

of musicians that were passionate towards music (36%), 70% retained their initial type of passion (harmonious or obsessive) when older. These findings indicated that passion is relatively stable in individuals across time and that a specific, measurable progression through stages of passion may not be the case. However because the existing research on the stages of passion is cross-sectional instead of longitudinal, the scope of the current findings are limited (Vallerand, 2010). According to Vallerand, “future research using longitudinal designs [are] needed in order to more clearly determine whether stages of passion exist or not.”

Elite Talent Development

Another area of sport psychology literature that offers insight on the origins of passion towards sport is elite talent development. Highly talented athletes such as Olympians exhibit many characteristics that are often associated with passion. High time and energy investment, high levels of motivation, and socio-cultural influences on perceptions of autonomy make elite talent development a valid source to gain understanding about passion. A review by Gould and Cowburn (in press) highlights research conducted on factors positively correlated to elite athlete development and the psychological experiences that go along with such a path. Typically, these studies involve examining individual elite athletes and inquiring about experiences that have influenced their talent development. For example, Gould, Dieffenbach, and Moffet (2002) interviewed 10 Olympic gold medalists along with one parent and one coach for each in order to better understand the psychological development of the elite athlete. What was found was that psychological development takes place over a long period of time and incorporates many different individuals and institutions. For example, parents, coaches, community, and the sporting environment all effect the psychological development of the elite athletes and in different ways. Psychological characteristics identified during the qualitative analysis included

general personality characteristics, motivation, handling of adversity, psychological determination to overcome obstacles, good morals, self-awareness, as well as balance between sport and life. This study further highlighted direct (e.g., teaching) and indirect (e.g., modeling) influences the people and environments in an athlete's life can have on their development into elite performers. Parents and caregivers play a critical role in giving athletes the opportunity to participate in a sport by providing financial, logistical and emotional support for the athlete. Finally, it was noted that while not all these champions were considered “gifted” when they began their primary sport involvement as young athletes, all recalled achieving some degree of success. This success might have contributed to heightened perceived competence, increased motivation, as well as provided a source of significant reinforcement.

A central feature of the elite talent development literature is the role of parents and coaches, levels of support from the environment, and, most importantly, the opportunity for the athlete to participate in a variety of activities. For example, a review by Mageau and Vallerand (2003) provides a list of autonomy supportive behaviors that parents and coaches are recommended to follow in order to promote positive outcomes in young athletes and performers. The paper highlights the importance of developing intrinsic motivation and a sense of autonomy towards a task in young participants. The seven criteria for autonomy supportive coaching and parenting styles are (1) provide as much choice as possible; (2) provide rationale for tasks; (3) inquire about and acknowledge the [athlete's] feelings; (4) allow [the athlete] opportunities to do independent work; (5) provide non-controlling feedback; (6) avoid overt controlling statements or behaviors; and, (7) prevent ego involvement (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003). Allowing children to have an open mind when beginning to participate in sport allows them to explore their potential competence and relatedness to that activity. This type of open-ended discovery process

could very likely be related to a child's early discovery of a sport they are passionate about. Future research relating this aspect of talent development and passion realization is required.

An additional connection between early stages of elite talent development and passion realization is research concerning early sport specialization. The inappropriate application of professional sport models on developing youth, also known as the "professionalization of youth sport" (Gould, 2009), is the cause of concern among researchers and practitioners alike because of the maladaptive principles this structure promotes. Higher emphasis on winning, less positive support, and more pressure to "succeed" at a young age is proving to have negative effects on the youth sport experience and decrease chances that the child will stay involved in that activity. In Tom Farrey's book, *Game on: How the Pressure to Win at all Costs Endangers Youth Sports and What Parents can do About it* (2009), the detriment of early sport specialization is a loss of valuable experience and social structures that can promote continued sport participation through the lifetime. A study involving semi-structured interviews with eight high level American collegiate athletes and their parents highlights supportive, non-specialized, and development-based environments as the best way to introduce sport to children (Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006). This study reflects socio-cultural factors that influence a child's early perception of activities that go on to become major parts of their life. For example, the interviews revealed that during the introductory phase of talent development, genetic predisposition, early influence to participate in sport (from siblings, parents, or peers), and exposure to a number of different activities were essential for talent development. Morgan and Giacobbi also propose that different types of support and influence (emotional, informational, esteem, and tangible) from a variety of sources (family, coaches, and teammates) are critical in a child's early athletic and psychological development. This support should not be directed at one particular type of activity, as the choice

for specialization should come from the child. The psychological skills necessary for the eventual sport specialization, such as self-regulation, coping skills and motivation, typically do not mature until the teenage years (Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006). Because it takes high levels of commitment, investment, and motivation to reach elite status in sport, elite talent development literature potentially provides relevant insight to passion realization. Although this study does not examine why certain sports were selected (beyond environmental factors attributed to early exposure), it is important because it outlines how adaptive psychological characteristics emerge in high-performing individuals. Furthermore, the focus of this study being high-level collegiate athletes, factors influencing initial perceptions of sport are important to take into consideration.

To conceptualize the pathway to elite athletic development, the work of Côté (1999) and Durand-Bush and Salmela (2002) established a four-stage process that also sheds light on passion development in youth towards sport. The first stage is called the sampling stage, when a child is given the opportunity and support to participate in a variety of physical activities that facilitate the learning of new or fundamental motor skills. This is a stage in which enjoyment and development for a love of the activity is the primary concern of both the parents and the child and is perhaps an important factor for passion development. The second stage is the specialization stage, when fewer new sporting opportunities occur and instead a commitment is made to a select few activities in which the child finds higher levels of success and sport-specific coaching. The final two stages of elite talent development are the investment stage and the maintenance stage, which each see increased competition demands and new requirement of support from coaches and family.

Another important tie between the stages of talent development and passion realization comes from MacNamara, Button, and Collins (2010) who conducted semi-structured interviews

with 24 elite athletes and musicians to examine the development of psychological characteristics related to excellence. Results showed that the development of particular psychological skills during distinct stages were important for a performer to reach elite status. Among these 10 psychological factors were commitment to excelling, coping with pressure, belief one can excel, clear vision of what it takes, control over distractions, and realistic performance evaluation. A critical transition occurs between the introductory stage and the later stages of high performance involving these psychological characteristics. Participants in this study highlighted a greater sense of responsibility as well as an increased self-regulation towards their task as the indication that they had progressed to a more advanced stage of development. Whereas early stages of talent development depend heavily on external sources of encouragement, later stage athletes displayed a marked psychological maturation in which they were less dependent on original sources of positive feedback. This further reflects the importance of parents, teachers, and coaches of facilitating a supportive environment for the child to create his/ her own sense of enjoyment in the activity so that the child can eventually develop the psychological skills necessary for elite performance. Because many characteristics of elite performers are consistent with those of passionate individuals (high levels of motivation, competence, and perseverance), the process of talent development gives useful insight into potential sources of individual passion towards an activity. However, talent development literature does little to explain why elite performers select the activity they go on to be great in. Beyond early exposure to opportunities in a variety of activities and a supportive environment, no distinction is offered as to why one sport is selected over another (even among similar sports). The aim of the current study was to address not how talented performers reach elite status, but rather how and why they correctly select the activity that will distinguish them as great.

An important conclusion drawn by reviewers of the topic of elite talent development is that athletic talent consists of a mixture of physical, psychological, and cognitive abilities that interact in unique and complex ways (Gould & Cowburn, in press). Furthermore, "...talent is both genetically, and environmentally determined and influenced both directly, and indirectly by a variety of individuals, institutions, and cultural forces (Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006). The high demands of elite performance culture have made the clarification of variables associated with top performers extremely desirable, just as there is appeal in understanding and promoting the development of passion. However, although elite athletes often exhibit high levels of motivation and competence, it cannot be guaranteed that they are also passionate. In the same regard, people with low levels of talent can be extremely passionate. It is this distinction that separates theory on passion from that of elite talent development. While it is possible that the parts of the structured stages of talent development (especially influencers on sport selection) can be applied to theory about passion, there remain distinctive characteristics of passion that remain unexplained. For example, a person becoming passionate about a sport despite a non-supportive environment, and low ability does not fit well into the model of elite talent development. The development of passion seems to be an independent process from features of early talent development. Individuals with low skill or ability in a sport may never earn the distinction of elite, yet still identify closely, thoroughly enjoy, and spend considerable amounts of time passionately engaging in the activity. Regardless of these differences, it was important to keep in consideration these features of elite athlete development, specifically in regard to the collegiate athlete subject pool selected for this study. While future research is required to strengthen the connection between elite talent and passion, each offers a unique perspective towards understanding the other.

Indications of Passion

To improve the clarity of this literature review (and study), it is important to specify what characteristics are being referred to when discussing passion. Being the topic of so much historical and philosophical debate and discussion, passion has embodied many different forms over time. It continues to evolve today as more empirical analysis is pointed towards this motivational principle. What seems to remain, however, is that passion encompasses deep motivational properties, fundamentally different than established concepts of human motivation on the basis of sheer scale and effect. In a positive light, passion represents an ideal, pursued by everyone in their own unique way with the hope of reaching a feeling that they have found their purpose. Passion also has a more sinister side that while encompassing the same levels of activation can have destructive qualities for individuals or those around them. The focus of this study was individuals who have experienced these high levels of motivation (empirically associated with general passion) through the discovery of a specific task, and followed by sense of confidence in knowing that it is what they were meant to do.

Creative Expression Regarding Passion

“It is obvious that we can no more explain passion to a person who has never experienced it than we can explain light to the blind.” – T.S. Eliot

There is something to be said about the romantic perspective of passion and its mysterious properties. While science has come a long way in identifying the psychological properties of passion, there remains an elusive truth just out of reach. Where science lacks in its ability to categorize the passionate, writers, poets, and philosophers have championed these individuals to embody the heroes and villains of our times. The influence of passion on our

culture is clear to see as the mere concept has inspired some of the world's greatest minds to action.

“On life's great oceans we sail. Reasons the card, but passion's the gale.” –Alexander Pope

Motivation is the process of producing energy towards daily tasks. Countless interactions with the environment are required each day just to survive. Passion, though, occupies a deeper and more significant realm of motivation. To get through the day requires properties of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. To make it through life requires direction and purpose, and this can certainly be amplified by connecting to one's passion. This notion of passion providing our life's direction, as the wind directs a sail, is interesting because it makes two grand implications. First, that we all have a purpose, and second, that our lives are working to fulfill it.

“There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes at a complete forgetfulness that one is alive. This ecstasy, this forgetfulness of living, comes to the artist, caught up and out of himself in a sheet of flame; it comes to the soldier, war-mad in a stricken field and refusing quarter; it came to Buck, leading the pack, sounding the old wolf-cry, straining after the food that was alive and that fled swiftly before him through the moonlight.” – Jack London.

It is easy to become captivated by the power of passion when reading romantic expressions of its significance. Seemingly a culminating expression of life's experiences, passion represents the answer for a lifetime of searching. Searching for connection, searching for purpose, or searching for significance. Attempting to find one's passion is a noble journey just as is looking for its origins. Philosophers and scientists alike have spent centuries trying to define it, some more successfully than others. To empirically examine what is referred to as the peak of

human experience is a daunting task, but necessary. If in any way this study is able to bring people closer to their passion, it will have fulfilled its purpose, as a small piece of a long history of those inspired by the search for passion.

Measuring Passion

The measurement instruments used to study passion towards activity predominantly reflect the work of Robert Vallerand and his colleagues (Vallerand et al., 2003), who have developed and validated scales to assess both motivation and passion in a variety of contexts. Other works related to the measurement of passion examined intimate relationships (see Acker, 1992), or gambling (see Rousseau, Vallerand, Ratelle, & Provencher, 2002) and were not included in this literature review. Reasons for the exclusion of these lines of research are that passion in the relationship setting deals specifically with arousal towards a romantic partner, also passion in gambling primarily examines compulsive or addictive patterns of behavior. These contextual uses of passion do not provide meaningful insight into the present topic of passion realization towards an activity (specifically, sport). For this reason, Vallerand's work on measuring factors of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation as well as passion towards activity reflects a comprehensive understanding of the topic and satisfies the breadth of this study.

The passion scale (Vallerand et al., 2003) included items developed to reflect the definition of passion, as well as subscales to differentiate between harmonious and obsessive passion. This scale asked participants to select and list an activity that they "hold very dear to their heart" and then complete a series of questions regarding that activity. Elements related to the definition of passion are valuation, relatedness, and how much the participant identifies with the activity. Other elements include outcomes, feelings of autonomy, social perceptions, and levels of engagement in the activity. Assessing multiple factors regarding the individual's

relationship with their environment when engaging in the activity adhere to the socio-contextual influences of self-determination theory. The original passion scale contained 34 items that were validated by splitting 539 college students into two groups. The first group derived a preliminary measure of the passion scale through exploratory factor analysis and the second group was later used to confirm the measurement. Of this first sample group, only 16% of participants did not indicate that their listed activity was a passion. Over 150 different activities were listed as “passionate pursuits” and the majority involved physical activity. Data from this original study confirmed the passion scale through confirmatory factor analysis and both subscales were also found to be reliable measures (Vallerand et al., 2003).

Modifications to the original passion scale have been used to better fit certain studies on motivation. For example, a 2008 study by Vallerand, Mageau, Elliot, Dumais, Demers, and Rousseau used 4-item subscales instead of the original 7-item subscales in order to accommodate time constraints with the participants. This study was able to validate the use of the shorter surveys, reflected by high correlation between the two measures (Vallerand, 2008).

To this point, Vallerand’s passion scale remains the only valid measurement tool for assessing a person’s passion towards an activity. No research publications exist that include qualitative methods for identifying or assessing passion towards an activity. While the term “passion” is used loosely as an adjective throughout many areas of research, only Vallerand has applied validated measures of motivation to establish a quantitative instrument for studying passion towards activity.

Furthermore, research using the passion scale has shown that both harmonious and obsessive forms of passion (based on Vallerand’s dualistic model of passion) are effective indicators of high levels of performance due to their relation to deliberate practice principles

(Vallerand, 2008). Deliberate practice (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesh-Romer, 1993) referred to highly structured activity motivated by the explicit aim of improvement, and plays an important role for individuals reaching high levels of performance. Passion represents a major motivational force that leads one to engage in this specific type of practice, leading to high skill acquisition. The significance of this use of the passion scale is that it confirms both of Vallerand's passion constructs as conducive to behaviors leading to high levels of skill, which was a necessary distinction for the present study involving collegiate athletes.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding about how people discover the activity they are passionate about. Identifying passionate individuals within a population of high-performance student-athletes offered an excellent sample for in-depth passion research. Furthermore, this study examined how well Vallerand's work on passion towards activity fits with the concept of passion realization, an area the dualistic theory has yet to be applied. While examining multiple aspects of the athletic experience, this study applied current knowledge of human motivation and passion towards gaining an understanding of how one's passion is realized and experienced. The goal of this research was to attain a better understanding of the nature of passion realization, which can then be applied to future research on the subject. Learning about how individuals become connected to their passionate pursuit can potentially lead to a society in which more people can realize what they are most motivated to do.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Design Overview

The present study applied mixed methods exploratory analysis to gain a better understanding of the realization of passion towards an activity. The main focus of the study was to look at the process of passion realization through the perspective of passionate collegiate student-athletes competing at high levels of their sport. Quantitative surveys using validated measures of general passion were incorporated to identify a quality sample of participants that were later included in a structured interview process. 10 student-athletes, rating highest among the total sample in general passion, agreed to continue participation in the interview portion of the study. A qualitative analysis of participant interviews was used to identify themes and characteristics associated with their experience of passion within sport, ranging from childhood introductions to future perceptions of continued participation. Researcher interpretation of the qualitative process was then used to generate the study's primary findings. The use of these methods yielded perspective on how student-athletes realized their passion towards sport, and how that passion influenced their ability to reach high levels of success.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used in this study and called for the selection of information-rich cases for study. This method of obtaining participants allowed the investigator to collect in-depth information from participants. This was critical in allowing the investigator to learn a great deal about the central purpose of the research (Patton, 1990). Therefore, the sample population of participants for this study were 733 NCAA Division I student-athletes participating at one Midwest University. This group was selected because as student-athletes, they automatically

represented characteristics of high motivation because of the high competence and large time commitments required to reach the highest collegiate level of competition. Surveys were sent via email to 733 current student-athletes participating in 25 different sports at the same large mid-western university. Survey response rate was 13.5%. No specific sport or types of sports (team/individual) were selected so as to obtain a non-discriminatory perspective of passion towards sport. Male and female student-athletes were equally surveyed in the quantitative section, However, the implications of gender distinction in passion were beyond the scope of this study. From the results of the initial survey, 10 participants were selected for a qualitative interview process. Criteria for selection to the interview stage was based on individuals scoring “very high” (5-7) on the “general passion” subscale (Vallerand, 2010), as well as indicating interest in continued participation in the study.

Assessments

Demographic and background measures. All participants were asked a series of demographic questions including their age, gender, “year in school”, and the varsity sport they currently participated in (see appendix A).

Passion scale. Participants were asked to respond to the questions on the survey while considering the collegiate sport they were currently participating in. They then answered a series of questions regarding perceptions and feelings about their sport. The Passion Scale consisted of 16 items (see appendix B), accounting for different elements of passion including the dualistic model of passion and also perceptions of outcomes associated with participating in their “most dear” passionate activity. Important to note is that the measurement used for this study was a revised passion scale, slightly shorter than the original, but validated to be an accurate representation of its predecessor (Vallerand, 2010). Each item was rated on a 7 point Likert scale

ranging from 1 = *not agree at all* to 7 = *very strongly agree*. The high internal consistency of these items was validated through both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (Vallerand et al., 2003) and replicated in a number of other studies (Carbonneau, Vallerand, Fernet, & Guay, 2008; Vallerand et al., 2006, Study 1). The passion scale was comprised of two subscales, 6 items each, and reflected an individual's general level of passion as well as the type of passion he or she most identified with (harmonious or obsessive, according to Vallerand's dualistic passion model). The four items of general passion have been shown to be positively correlated with the measures of both harmonious and obsessive passion, and confirm it as valid operational construct of overall passion (Vallerand, 2003 study 1). The benefit of using the passion scale was that it contained a validated measure of general passion that provided unique information regarding levels of passion within the target population of collegiate athletes.

After survey responses were collected, descriptive statistics were calculated (see RESULTS). Measures of mean, standard deviation and standard error of the mean were listed for "general" passion for the sample population (see Table 2). Results were also compared between the 10 selected participants who were involved in the interview process, and those who were not selected for the interview process.

Interview procedure. The main feature of this research study was a qualitative interview process with 10 participants who had scored very high on the subscale of "general passion". Participants were selected for the interview portion of the study through the quantitative surveys administered to a large and representative population of collegiate athletes. Participants scoring very high (5-7) on the subscale of "general passion" (along with indicating desire to continue participation in the study and listing their email address) were ranked and then contacted via email to set up a time for the interview to take place.

Participants were clearly informed that the interview was completely voluntary and that confidentiality measures were in place. Methods for maintaining confidentiality included coding the transcriptions to remove identifiable information as well as keeping all identifiable files in a locked cabinet at the Institute for the Study of Youth Sport at Michigan State University. Before the interview was conducted, participants read and signed an informed consent form. These forms detailed the purpose and procedures of the interview, as well as listed the rights of the participant. Procedural and participant-rights details from this form included: (1) interviews were digitally recorded for future transcriptions; (2) participants were able to refuse to be interviewed or cancel the interview at any time (none did); (3) participants were allowed to ask questions at any time; (4) no incentives were given to participants; (5) transcribed interviews were sent to participants for their review before analysis; and, (6) approved transcribed interviews were viewed only by the researcher for analysis.

All research methods procedures were submitted and approved by an Institutional Review Board. All foreseeable risks to participants (of which there were few) were considered and minimized by the researchers of this study. All participants were clearly informed of these potential risks, and willingly participated, as indicated by signed informed consent forms (see Appendix D)

Interview guide. All participants were asked a series of matching questions, designed to shed light on the identification of the activity they rated as “highly passionate”. The framing for this interview followed a funnel technique in which questions began as very general regarding the topic of the sporting experience and concluded with questions specifically asking about passion and the participant’s personal experiences with passion (Brod, 2008). The selected questions were open-ended, which allowed participants opportunity to elaborate on their

experiences and also limited researcher bias (see Appendix E for full interview guide). Follow-up questions and probes were used in situations calling for more detail of the student-athlete's experiences (Patton, 2002). Examples of the follow-up questions used in the study are:

- 1) "You mentioned _____; can you elaborate on that for me?"
- 2) "What did you mean when you said _____?"

This use of open-ended questions and the funnel technique for the interviews was successful in producing quality participant responses, free of excessive prompting by the researcher.

Questions were all designed to be neutral, open, and free of any jargon that may have confused the participant (See Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Each interview consisted of 11 core questions (not including follow up questions). Questions took participants from general discussions of their sporting experience to personal and specific accounts of experiences within a passionate pursuit. This was done with minimal prompting. Along with the 11 core questions, the interviewer prepared secondary questions to extract as much detail as possible from the participant. These secondary questions were included to be used at the interviewer's discretion in situations that called for clarification of the core question or in situations that the core question did not directly apply to the interviewee's experiences. The 11 core interview questions (with their secondary questions) were as follows:

- 1) Basic background information* (sport, year, position, etc.).
- 2) How were you introduced to that sport?
 - a. How old were you?
 - b. What were the reasons?
- 3) What is your earliest memory participating in that sport?
 - a. How did it feel?

- b. Do you ever revisit this memory?
- 4) What role did success have on your sporting experience?
 - a. Would you consider yourself successful early on?
- 5) How would you describe your parents during the sporting process?
- 6) Talk about a coach that has had a significant impact on you as an athlete.
 - a. When did you work with this coach?
 - b. What do you remember about your first coach?
- 7) Have you ever questioned why you were in the sport/ considered quitting?
 - a. If yes, what was this like and what kept you going?
 - b. If no, what factors help you maintain your commitment?
- 8) What does it mean to be passionate?
 - a. If someone is considered passionate, describe their characteristics.
- 9) Why do you, or do you not consider yourself passionate towards your sport?
 - a. When in your career would you first consider yourself passionate?
 - b. What made you become passionate?
- 10) What makes your sport different than the other activities that you take part in?
 - a. Do you think you are capable of feeling the same way towards another activity?
 - b. What, in your life, would need to be different for this interview to be about a different activity, and not your sport?
- 11) “Do you have any questions for me at this time about anything we discussed?”

Interviews were participant driven, and allowed for as much or little elaboration as the student-athletes were comfortable giving. This structuring of standardized questions and similar

follow up probes limited researcher bias and also allowed for responses from all participants to be explored in equal complexity and depth. Given that participants had to recall memories of events many years in their past, some participants required more prompting in order to discuss specific events of their sporting experience.

Data Collection Procedures

Eight participant interviews were conducted in person, and two were conducted over the phone. Phone interviews were provided as a secondary option only in situations where multiple schedule conflicts prevented in-person interviews to take place. All interviews began with a reading of the participant's rights, and explanation of the study, and an explanation of the participant consent form. After the consent form was signed (See appendix D), questions began. Data were recorded using two digital recording devices. Interviews typically lasted about 30 minutes, the longest being over 50 minutes. Overall, participants seemed to enjoy the interview process and having the opportunity to talk about valued memories of their sporting past.

Interview transcriptions were created from the recordings and then repeatedly checked over for accuracy. From completed transcriptions, important information (based on the criteria of playing an important role in their overall experience of sport and/or passion) were extracted and organized based on the core question the response was provided for. These coded items were then connected through common themes amongst participants and used for the data analysis of the study (see Communities of Learning Inquiry & Practice, 2007). Next, transcripts including the marked and coded sections (along with descriptions of the codes) were sent back to participants to verify for accuracy (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008; Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). After all participants verified their interview transcriptions, data interpretation continued.

Data collected through the interviews were aimed to providing understanding towards (1) how these student-athletes came into contact with their passion, (2) descriptions of the participant's experiences within their passionate pursuit, and (3) themes associated with the realization of passion in student-athletes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Quantitative Results:

Data collected from 106 of a population of 733 (15%) student-athletes involved with 15 different sports indicated that the population of Division I athletes was highly passionate (see Table 2). Seven surveys were thrown out due to incomplete responses, leaving a total sample population of 99 participants. The 10 participants selected for the interview process reflected higher mean scores of general passion when compared to the sample, making them quality sources of information for the interview portion of this study.

Tables 1(a,b,c) provide descriptive statistics from the sample population of collegiate athletes.

Table 1a

Participant Distribution by Gender

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Male	41	41.4%
Female	58	58.6%

Table 1b

Distribution of Participants by Sport

<u>Sport</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent%</u>
Baseball	3	2.8
Basketball	3	2.8
Cross Country	8	7.5
Field Hockey	4	3.8
Football	2	1.9
Hockey	16	15.1
Golf	5	4.7
Rowing	15	14.2

Table 1b (cont'd)

Soccer	4	3.8
Softball	5	4.7
Swimming & Diving	12	11.3
Tennis	2	1.9
Track and Field	13	12.3
Wrestling	4	3.8
Gymnastics	3	2.8
Total	99	100

Table 1c

Participant Years in Division I Competition

<u>Years in Division I</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1	34	34.3%
2	23	23.2%
3	20	20.2%
4	18	18.2%
5	3	3.0%
6	1	1.0%

Table 2 provides information regarding the measurements of passion in the general population as well as comparisons between the participants selected for interviews and those not selected for the interview process. Analysis is based on data derived from the General Passion subscale of Vallerand's passion scale (2010).

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations on General Passion for Selected, Not Selected, and Total Sample

	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Std. Error</u>
<u>Selected</u>	10	6.63	.475	.150
<u>Not Selected</u>	89	5.85	1.003	.106
<u>Total Sample</u>	99	5.92	.990	.1

Table 3 provides a description of the participants in the study, organized by criteria established in the methods section. To recall, participants scoring very high (5-7) on the subscale of “general passion” (along with indicating desire to continue participation in the study and listing their email address) were ranked and then contacted via email to set up a time for the interview to take place. All participants were (at the time of the interview) actively competing or less than one year removed from competitive NCAA Division I teams.

Table 3					
<i>Description of Interview Participants:</i>					
<u>Code</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Sport</u>	<u>Event*</u>	<u>Year in School</u>	<u>Gen. Passion</u>
G4Z	Female	W. Golf	-	Senior	6.75
TF5Z	Female	Track & Field	Sprint	Senior	7
S3Y	Female	W. Swimming	Sprint	Junior	5.75
IH2A	Male	Ice Hockey	-	Sophomore	6
TF5A	Male	Track & Field	Javelin	Senior	6.5
FH4Y	Female	Field Hockey	-	Senior	6.25
IH1A	Male	Ice Hockey	-	Freshman	7
R2X	Female	Rowing	-	Sophomore	7
IH3B	Male	Ice Hockey	-	Junior	7
S3Z	Female	W. Swimming	Sprint	Junior	7

*Specific type of event described in sports that offer a variety of event experiences.

Qualitative Results

Systematic transcription and review of participant responses yielded 449 meaningful items categorized within 18 codes (see Table 4). Meaningful items represented significant influences on the participant’s athletic experiences, and the subsequent codes were created by combining common factors that were generalizable across all participants. These codes ranged from simple descriptions of how long the participant was involved in the activity they showed

passion for, to personal thoughts and feelings about the subject of passion. Related codes were then combined into more general groups and applied to a linear timeline established to reflect the progression of passion through the athletic experience. For example, factors involving how participants got involved in specific sports generally occurred in younger years than experiences of sacrifice or challenge. Representing the data as progressive phases best displayed the relation of important events in the development of passion. The phases established resemble a timeline including subthemes for each of the important phases of passion realization/development as reflected by the participants' comments.

Table 4		
<i>Coding Factors for Participant Interviews</i>		
<u>Code</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Description</u>
YI	"Years involved"	How long they've been involved.
Table 4 (continued)	"High level"	Competing at a high level or desiring to move higher.
HI	"How I got involved"	Factors influencing initial introduction to passion.
CO	"Competition"	Perceptions of competition/ desire to compete.
CM	"Competence"	Feelings towards being good at an activity.
FA	"Family"	Influences of family or significant life influences.
IN	"Important note"	Unique, personal information relating to passion.
SU	"Success"	External indicators of success, or lack of success.
GO	"Goals/ future"	Past or future ambitions in the activity.
CC	"Coaching"	Influences of different coaches.
MO	"Motivation"	Specific reasons for participation/ driving factors.
PA	"Passion"	Mention of passion, its principles, or application.
TC	"Time commitment"	Perception of time spent in an activity.
TM	"Team factors"	Social influence of teammates.
FT	"Feelings towards"	Unique reflection/ emotional connection to the activity.
DS	"Different sports"	Experiences in different sports.
SA	"Sacrifice"	Having to give something else up for their passion.
CH	"Challenge"	Seeking challenges or experiencing setbacks.

Items relating to the initial exposure and experiences within sports/ the eventual passion were included in the (1) “pre-passion” phase. Next represented were factors associated with initial (2) “passion realization”. The third phase involved passion (3) “maturation/ maintenance” (See Table 5).

Table 5 <i>Outline of Phases and Sub-themes for Passion</i>	
<u>Main Theme of Passion Realization</u>	<u>Sub-themes</u>
“Pre-passion”	Environment Family Different Sports
Table 5 (cont’d) “Realization”	Competence Coach/ Mentor Realization
“Maturation/ Maintenance”	Sacrifice Struggle Re-evaluation

In line with one of the main purposes of the study, data were collected to represent the experiences of individuals within their passionate pursuit. The results are initially presented as a bulleted outline of experiences (see Table 6) to provide a general sense of the most impactful information gathered in each participant interview. Specifically, this table briefly describes the sporting experiences of participants beginning with their introduction to sport all the way through their participation in collegiate athletics. Further descriptions of these significant experiences will be provided in later sections.

Table 6*Outline of Participant Experiences in Sport*

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Descriptions of Events</u>	
F- Golf (G4Z)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was a good golfer early on - Ran track in middle school - Dad served as coach/ mentor - Wanted to play professionally - Very competitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loved being on a golf team - Enjoyed individual aspects - Made many sacrifices to play - Sport holds deep, personal importance
F- Track (TF5Z)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Played multiple sports growing up - Identified as “fast” by gym teacher - Made sacrifices - Tension with one parent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple injuries and recoveries - Significant H.S. coach - Deep, personal connection - Loved team aspects
M- Ice Hockey #2 (IH2A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Played different sports - Not very good until switched to goalie - Significant coach/ mentor - Family made a lot of sacrifices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deep connection to the sport - Success setbacks - Loved team aspects - Saw potential future - Changed definition of success
M-Javelin (TF5A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Played multiple sports - Early competence - Deep connection to sport - Loved competing for teammates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Competitive nature - Injuries and setbacks - Changed sports and came back - Vision of future in sport
FH4Y (Field Hockey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was good right away - Teammates very important - Strong connection between sport and self-worth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wanted to play in college - Setbacks at higher level - Reevaluation of priorities - Large amount of sacrifice
F- Rowing (R2X)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very good gymnast - High sacrifice - Persistent injuries - Significant coach/ mentor - Loves competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wanted to be college gymnast - Identified as strong by new coach - Reevaluated priorities and changed sport to rowing - Values teammates
M- Ice Hockey #3 (IH3B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Played different sports - Siblings played hockey - Significant sacrifice - Personal connection to sport - Related best to hockey players 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High early competence - Lapse in motivation - Vision of future in sport - Competitive, driven to win - Had Significant coach/ mentor
M- Ice Hockey #1 (IH1A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal connection - Competitive - Played on successful team - Valued team aspect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Saw future in sport - Significant motivation setback - Significant coach/ mentor
F- Swimming #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early competence - Tried different sports - Lapse in motivation, but returned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision of future potential - Setbacks/ performance plateau - Enjoyed team aspects

Table 6 (cont'd)

(S3Y)	- Big increase in success	- Valued racing against the clock
F- Swimming #2 (S3Z)	- Felt more comfortable swimming - Significant coach/ mentor - Vision of future potential - Tried different sports	- Performance plateau - Enjoyed team aspects but also identified with individual side

The impact of participant experiences will be further explained through the application of the three phases of passion (see Table 5) and their subthemes. The following section will provide additional detail as well as direct quotes regarding the events participants felt played important roles in their experience of passion.

Environment. Multiple factors listed in Table 6 reflect the type of environment participants were raised in, specifically related to the various amounts of support received during early sport participation. Characteristics of the schools, and communities frequently set the stage for first experiences in sport, as well as the opportunity to participate in specific sports. For example, participant FH4Y's (F- Field hockey) opportunity to become a passionate field hockey player was strongly connected to her community sports program providing coaches, equipment, and playing fields for young athletes interested in trying the sport of field hockey. The introduction to sports for participants was very dependent on the specific sports that were offered and supported by the community, as well as the environment in which participants were raised. In general, these external environmental factors experienced by the participants played an important role in the selection of a sport they would later identify as a passion.

“When I was nine I actually had never heard of field hockey, and a few of my best friends from elementary school, they told me to go out for a team and play with them”... “[The town] had every sport that you wanted to do and [it] was really low cost. People’s parents were the coaches and it was basically, you didn’t make any money off of it. [And] it was in my local area, like a 5 minute car ride.” – (Participant FH4Y)

“I guess through gym class is when I got experienced with running.” – (Participant TF5Z)

Family. Regarding family influences on their introduction to sport, participants described coming from a variety of backgrounds. While none of the participant’s families actively discouraged involvement in the selected sport, the family structures ranged from highly involved parents and siblings, to family structures with low athletic participation. Despite the widely varying family structures, participants were all still able to obtain a level of passion for their sport and go on to compete at the collegiate level. Results of the interviews showed that introductions to sport were heavily influenced (and in most cases dependent) on the participants’ family.

“I originally started swimming because my parents put me in it.” – (Participant S3Y)

“My whole family played golf.” – (Participant G4Z)

“We had a pond in the front yard growing up and in the winters we’d skate. My dad played hockey. My older cousins played hockey. A lot of family [played hockey].” – (Participant IH1A)

“...a lot of parents are like all about it and they get really involved and tell their kid they have to go to practice and tell their kid they have to do this and do that, and my parents were never like that and they were ones who were actually like, “you really wanna go join another team right now? “ – (Participant FH4Y)

Different sports. Within the “pre-passion” phase, the majority of participants were involved in multiple sports. All of participants had the opportunity to take part in various types of physical

activity (in different degrees of intensity and duration) in their early years, and some continued to play multiple sports through high school. Exposure to various sporting experiences seemed especially important to participants who were introduced to their passionate pursuit at a later age. Early experiences within different sports helped shape the participants' eventual selection of a passionate pursuit. For example, one participant stated:

“I played basketball before I even started running. That was third grade to the last year of high school, so I played it all through high school. I danced competitively starting from when I was 5 and did it [until] right before high school. I ice-skated, I did gymnastics, I was just all over the place. I'd play hockey with my brother down the street, I did cheerleading (I don't know why), but yea, I was involved in a lot of other things.” – (Participant TF5Z)

While another said:

“I did play soccer but I wasn't very good at it. Gymnastics also.” – (Participant S3Z)

Competence. A perception of competence in early sport participation was important in both keeping participants engaged in certain activities and steering them away from others. Despite at times lacking vivid examples or reasons for selecting the sport that they would go on to be passionate about, participants consistently cited the sense of “being good at it” as a major driving force in their sport selection. Furthermore, having a low sense of competence towards a specific sport or activity was the main reason participants dropped out of other sports they had been introduced to. The interview process revealed that experiences influencing perceptions of competence were important contributors to the participant's experience of passion. Being involved in multiple sports appeared to be a precursor to clarifying accurate perceptions of

competence and allowing for eventual passion selection/ realization. For example, several participants discussed their feelings of competence and how they related to sport participation:

“When I was younger I stayed in it because I had a lot of friends in swimming, I really liked my coaches, and I was good at it.” - (Participant S3Y)

“I always just liked competition... and I ended up being pretty good at it so that kind of continued it on even more.” – (Participant G4Z)

“I’m not a coordinated person. So, I did play soccer but I wasn’t very good at it. Gymnastics also. But I found with swimming that you don’t really have to be that coordinated and you can do it. – (Participant S3Z)

Significant coach/ mentor. Participants of this study had influential experiences with a coach or mentor within their passionate pursuit. These important figures were quality teachers of their sport and served as necessary guides as the sport became a more significant part of the participant’s lives. Although participant’s experienced many coaches throughout their passionate pursuit, typically one figure stood apart as the most significant mentor and influence on the experience of passion. Time spent with this coach/ mentor was described as valuable, enjoyable, and personal connections were also formed. Responses from the interviews indicated that trusting and meaningful connections formed by participants with a significant coach/ mentor had an impact on their ability to identify with higher levels of the sport and also to attain a sense of passion realization in the future. Characteristics attributed to the significant coach/ mentor include supportive, dedicated to improving the sport, teaching the game “the right way”, and also feeling like an additional family member. For example, these participants discussed the importance of a significant coach in their athletic development:

“He coached me for about, I think 6 or 7 years, pretty much from the time I was 9 to the time I was 16 so, the glory days. Like I said, nothing less than your best. If you weren’t playing [well], even at that age he would sit you out, no mercy. So the best guys played and looking back he did some crazy stuff for how young we were, but I think that [if] you look at most of the people who played for him, they’re really hard working, they have pretty good attitudes, and they’re self-motivated guys. I think that was one of his strengths, being able to draw that out of people.” – (Participant IH3B)

“She just felt like a second mother to me. But having her around helped a lot too because I was always at the gym and having that kind of mother figure there as well really helped me love the sport more and feel more comfortable being at the gym and away from my parents.” – (Participant R2X; reflecting on experience competing in gymnastics)

“My rival high school coach that I trained with was probably my favorite coach. He was somebody that I could really relate to and was passionate about running and I loved that, and loved going to track over there, and loved just everything about it. Loved the people, just loved going. I could spend 6 hours there and wouldn’t even know it.” – (Participant TF5Z)

“He decided to take a chance and took me [on his team]. I don’t know what it was, if it was just an act of God or what. But for the couple years I played with him he was always doing whatever it took. He brought in goalie coaches and whatever [was needed] to get me to the next level and make the team successful.” – (Participant IH2A)

Realization. All participants experienced a period of “realization” in which they started believing they could reach much higher levels of their sport. Participants described this realization as the belief that they could make it to collegiate sports, earn a scholarship, or even play professionally after college. Realizing the potential for reaching higher levels brought distinct changes in approach, feelings towards, and motivations regarding their passionate

pursuit. Participants began making more sacrifices for the activity and aligning more of their life with their aim of reaching a higher level. This change was vital in establishing a new sense of motivation that would carry the participant through the many emotional highs and lows associated with upper levels of competition. For example, these participants described their process of realization:

“What made me more passionate is that I started to realize I was good at it and I started looking at colleges and how I want to be successful. You set high dreams and standards for yourself, and so do the people in your community because they’re proud of you for being able to accomplish that and represent them at the college level, and that’s when I started to really become passionate about it.” – (Participant FH4Y)

“...I could make a career, I could be on the LPGA one day. So that just kind of drove me as far as, well, I could have a future in this and I’m the best at this by far over the other interests. So, it would be really silly to pick something else.” – (Participant G4Z)

“Possibly [getting] to the NCAA’s was really driving me to get better.” – (Participant TF5A)

“Prior to high school I would say it was just an extra-curricular for me to do just after school. I would go to the gym and just roll around on the mats just for fun. But when I actually started getting into high school, I was trying to do gymnastics in college so it really was a big part of my life trying to become that level of a gymnast. So I really started putting more effort, not more effort, I always put really-effort into it, but really focus on getting the goal rather than just doing whatever.” – (Participant R2X; referring to participation in gymnastics prior to college)

Sacrifice. Following the initial realization, participant interviews reflected a noticeable shift in the level of commitment they were making to their sport. Participants joined more competitive teams, traveled farther, and dedicated more of their social lives to one specific

athletic pursuit. Increasing commitment to sport meant that other potential interests had to be dropped, or sacrificed. Dropping out of other sports, missing out on social engagements, and forgoing personal comforts were key features within the description of participants' experiences with passion. Examples of these sacrifices are reflected in the following participant quotes:

“Giving up all those things where you’re spending that time to work on hockey and get yourself better and get yourself to the next level. During the summer, it’s Friday or Saturday night, most people are out at the lake partying or whatever. You’re at the ice rink shooting pucks or working on whatever it is just because it’s all you really want to do, you don’t really care about going out to the lake, [and] boozing with your friends. You just want to play hockey. I’d say that’s when you really know you’re passionate about it is you’re giving up time with other people to pursue your own life.” – (Participant IH2A)

“[Field hockey’s] been a huge impact of my life. And I wanted it to be and I let it be. It helped choose where I went to college, it helped choose throughout high school, like club teams. It helped choose who my friends were and who I was hanging out with the most, and it also helped me choose my degree in kinesiology. It started changing other aspects of my life. I didn’t mind, I got to travel the world with it. – (Participant FH4Y)

Setbacks/ adversity. Periods of performance setbacks and various forms of adversity were important features of the maturation/ maintenance process of passion for all participants. Whether through injury, performance plateaus, or lack of perceived competence, all participants faced moments that made their passionate pursuit more difficult than when they first conceptualized their ambition to reach higher levels of the sport. Setbacks experienced by participants brought important periods of reflection, and shifts in feelings such as adopting a negative outlook towards continued participation in the passionate pursuit. Choosing to persevere through these setbacks required participants to evaluate their commitment to the sport and also

their sources of motivation. Many participants looked to teammates and friends to make it through these tough times, as well as family members who continued to support them on their journey. Setbacks and adversity resulted in valuable personal reflection on participant experience within their passion. Some of the examples of the setbacks/ adversity experienced by the participants are reflected in the following quotes:

“My sophomore year at [conference championships], and all together the whole season, the whole year. I did not have a good meet at [conference championships], and it was just like, “why am I doing this?” It just becomes a challenge to be like, “why am I passionate about it, why am I doing this to myself, like putting in all these hours if I’m not going to get the results I want?” ... “I guess it just all added up and pulled me down...because usually swimming was always the thing that went well. When everything else was shitty, that went well. And finally swimming wasn’t going well, so I was like, “I don’t know what to do.” - (Participant S3Z)

“I was having a pretty bad year as opposed to usual, and my mind was in other places. It was almost like I stopped caring for a bit. I didn’t really notice at the time that my play was really suffering that bad but I just remember having a talk with the coaches where they were like “look you need to figure it out or you’re not going to be playing, we don’t even know if we want you back.” – (Participant IH3B)

“I just felt like I was working so hard and not getting anywhere. I felt like I was improving and working so hard and doing all this stuff but I was...basically losing status and it was really hard.” – (Participant FH4Y)

Re-evaluation. Following the impactful experience of sacrifice and setbacks, participants of this study recalled experiencing a period of active evaluation of the time commitments being made in their lives, specifically the emphasis being placed on the passionate pursuit. This reflection typically took place during college years, when significant shifts in social, academic,

athletic, and family obligations were also occurring. This period of re-evaluation yielded changes in sources of motivation for participants from predominately external indicators of success (from coaches or peers) to internal satisfaction through relative personal achievement. The result of this change was participants having more mature and complete conceptualizations of their passionate pursuits. Participant examples can be seen in the following quotes:

“...in college it’s been more balanced. I wouldn’t say that I’m less passionate but I would say that I’m more well-balanced. Because I’m all about my grades and now I have a family life that I take care of. Then there’s field hockey.” – (Participant FH4Y)

“I think I pretty much live, eat, sleep, breath, track and field. Everything from what time I eat, what I eat, when I go to sleep, what I watch, everything revolves around track and field, and it’s definitely taken over my life, to say the least, but I definitely prioritize things so that I can get 8 hours of sleep at night because I’m passionate about track and field, because I want to do well, because it’s something that I love.” – (Participant TF5Z)

“When I left javelin, well sports, I was trying to find something to replace it. Initially I started off trying to find a job. And I was thinking that if I could get experience, that would be just as beneficial, because at least I was building towards another type of success, a career. And I never really found a job that was going to be really helpful towards my degree, so I did a few other things. [But} they weren’t the same people I was. I could have found something that could have replaced javelin sadly. Like a job, just something that I know is beneficial in a way that I can look back at and be proud of.” – (Participant TF5A)

Passion. Along with discussing topics involving experiences with their sport, participants were also asked directly about their personal views of passion, and how they connect themselves to the term. Participants had very unique responses involving their personal definitions of passion, but many commonalities were present. For example, when asked to describe the

meaning of passion, multiple participants used words such as “love” and “a desire to succeed” as the defining characteristics. Concepts of sacrifice, and significant time commitment towards the activity were also featured as notable descriptors for passion. Though participant experiences influenced each explanation of passion, all managed to identify its deep motivational qualities, and attributed it to having a significant impact on life decisions made to that point. Table 7 outlines the participant’s responses to the topic of passion, and how it relates to their life and experiences.

Table 7 <i>Participant Responses to Questions Regarding Passion</i>		
Participant	“What is Passion?”	“What makes you passionate?”
F- Golfer (G4Z)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A selfless love and desire to do something. - Something that can grow, but can’t be forced. - Working through obstacles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “It is so much a part of my whole entire life.” - Enjoying the challenge. - Playing against self, performance doesn’t depend on others. - “It has given me a lot of opportunities.”
F- Track (TF5Z)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “You really love what you are doing.” - Everything in your life revolves around the passion. - Having exciting plans for the future involving the passion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decided to come back for 5th year. - “It’s taken over my life.” - Wanting to be a track and field coach. - Wanting to succeed so much. - Enjoying the challenge.
F- Swimming #1 (S3Y)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Loving something so much that you are willing to give everything you’ve got for it.” - To love everything about the sport. - Committing large amounts of time to improving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enjoying getting better. - The passion helps them feel better about everything. - Reaching new goals. - Loving the individual aspect, “you’re racing by yourself.” - Being around spectacular competitors. - Enjoying the challenge
M- Javelin (TF5A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “To be religiously motivated to do something with any means possible.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wanting to succeed. - Getting overwhelmed during positive

Table 7 (cont'd)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wanting to succeed or reach a goal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> experiences. - Connecting with the people involved. - Motivated by vision of succeeding in the future.
F- Field Hockey (FH4Y)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “A gut feeling” and no matter what (good or bad) always striving for the same thing. - Loving the sport - Knowing how it makes you feel and not wanting to let that go. - Being for the betterment of the team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “It’s had a huge impact on my life.” - Connecting with people involved. - Wanting to be successful and to continue playing in the future. - Setting high dreams and standards regarding the sport.
M- Ice Hockey #3 (IH3B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a love for the game. - Having a love for being the best you can be. - Wanting to reach your potential. - Everything else falls in line behind it. - Something that takes up your time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hockey is the top priority. - A strong desire to win. - Wanting to be as good as possible. - Setting goals for the future. - Contributing to a storied program and not wanting to let anyone down.
F- Swimming #2 (S3Z)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having the burning urge to do a sport when away from it. - Pushing through struggle to reach improvement. - Loving something even when things aren’t going well. - Having to have challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having the urge to do it when away from the sport. - Planning to continue participation in the future. - Setting high goals and being able to achieve them in a desirable way.
M- Ice Hockey #1 (IH1A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caring to the utmost amount. - Being all into something, fully there. - Caring about the whole. - Being emotionally vested. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loving all aspects of the game. - Getting emotional. - Having strong connections with others involved. - Planning to continue participation in the future.
M- Ice Hockey #2 (IH2A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Having the drive to do something every day to get yourself better and have a deep love for the game.” - “It’s all you can think about, it’s the main aspect of your life, and you’d do anything to not only improve yourself but to improve the game or whatever it is you’re passionate about.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Committing large amounts of time. - Continuing to participate even when things aren’t going well. - Giving up time with other people. - Investing a significant amount of time. - Having future ambitions with the sport. - Knowing the importance of practice time and improving self.
F- Rowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be really enthusiastic about 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crying a lot whether happy or sad (very

Table 7 Cont'd

(R2X)	something. - To love something and know no matter what that it will be there in the end (to fall back on). - Helping to improve every aspect of the activity.	emotional towards it). - Wanting to get better. - It has brought significant change. - Loving to compete and loving the challenge. - Continuing despite injuries.
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Participant descriptions of the concept of passion as well as reasons they considered themselves passionate were consistent with definitions previously discussed in the literature review. Terms used by participants when asked “what does it mean to be passionate?” included “burning urge”, “gut feeling”, and “having the drive to do something every day to get better”. This appears closely related to passion providing “fuel and motivation”, as described by Vallerand et al. (2003). Many participants also included terms such as “love” and “caring” when describing passion, which ties closely to “providing meaning” (Vallerand et al., 2003), and being “emotionally charged towards an object or activity” (Vallerand et al., 2010). Interestingly, there was a noticeable difference in the very altruistic way participants described passion in general, but were much less emotionally descriptive when describing their own passion. Participants frequently cited the desire to be successful and to willingness to sacrifice other aspects of their lives as the reason for considering themselves passionate, as opposed to using the same language they utilized for passion as a whole. Overall, participant responses to the questions show that passion instills very personal and emotional connections between an individual and their activity. It also acts as a source of motivation as they strive for improvement. When describing their own passions, participants were much more explicit about the sacrifices their passion had led them to make, as well as discussing the strong desire to find success within their specific sport. These interview questions regarding passion yielded very unique responses that greatly contributed to improving the overall understanding a student-athlete’s experience within their passion.

Participant experiences. The results of this study showed that certain aspects of the sport experience were linked to the development of passion in student-athletes. Participant experiences have been outlined through three phases of passion realization, which include three subthemes for each phase (See table 5). Table 8 summarizes select participants' experiences within each phase and subtheme as derived from a content analysis of the interviews. Five participant examples were selected to describe each subtheme and provided specific examples as to how these themes may be used to describe the student-athlete experience within a passion. The selections were limited to five participants per subtheme in order to provide detailed responses representative of the collected sample while also maintaining organized clarity of the larger proposed themes. The diverse, yet relatable experiences of the participants provided a rich basis for discussion on passion development in collegiate student-athletes.

Table 8 <i>Examples of the Phases and Sub-themes of Passion</i>			
Phase	Sub-Theme	Participant	How they experienced the theme
Pre-Passion	Environment	TF5Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Middle school offered track and field. - Gym teacher identified participant as a fast runner and encouraged their participation.
		FH4Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community offered affordable youth sport opportunities. - Field hockey was a valued and supported sport in the community.
		IH2A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Played roller hockey but the roller hockey league disbanded and the participant switched to ice hockey. - Local ice rink had leagues for all ages and abilities.
		S3Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant went to the local pool over the summer. - Learned how to swim and later had opportunity to join swim team.

Table 8 (cont'd)

		G4Z	- Access to a family-owned golf course.
Pre-Passion	Family	G4Z	- Participant's whole family golfed, and mother was a teaching professional. - Watched older sibling compete (and played against them often). - Dad served as main golf coach and motivator.
		TF5Z	- Had supportive parents, was more "challenged" by father (sometimes negatively). - Parents provided diverse sporting opportunities but could not join high-level "travel" groups.
		S3Y	- Parents put participant and siblings into swimming. - Parents encouraged participant to stay in swimming to avoid "regretting quitting".
		IH3B	- Two older brothers played hockey. - Dad would build rink in the back yard.
		TF5A	- Athletic older siblings, one competed in track and field at the collegiate level. - One parent not supportive of serious athletic pursuits. Believed it took away from family time.
Pre-Passion	Different Sports	S3Y	- Did gymnastics early on, tried cheer leading in high school. - "Not coordinated" in other sports, so enjoyed swimming the most.
		TF5Z	- Participated in many different sports. - Stopped competitive dance due to costs. - Did not run competitively until middle school (costs).
		IH3B	- Played baseball, soccer, and hockey in early years. - Different importance placed on hockey. - Enjoyed the people associated with hockey more than in other sports.

Table 8 (cont'd)

		R2X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reached level 10 in competitive gymnastics (very high). - Changed sport to rowing to be a collegiate athlete.
		TF5A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Played many sports growing up, multiple events in track. - Switched to football then back to track and field during college.
Realization	Competence	TF5Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant “knew” they were fast; parents and coaches reinforced this. - Successful runner going into high school (state-level). - Not successful in basketball (skill and size were issues). This was a reason for quitting.
		IH1A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Played on a very high level team from a young age that won a lot of big tournaments. - “I was more talented at hockey, you know, naturally talented than at other things.”
		IH2A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Switched from roller to ice hockey and had to play down an age group (wasn’t good enough). - Switched position (to goalie) and quickly found success.
		S3Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being “good at it” was participant’s main reason to stay with swimming. - Successful at the state level at a young age.
		FH4Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not a very athletic youth. Tried field hockey and was immediately successful. - Parents, coaches, and friends openly acknowledged participant’s competence.
Realization		IH3B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worked with the same coach for 6 years. - Coach expected nothing less than the best. Very motivating. - Coach knew how to draw out players’ strengths.
		G4Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant’s dad was most influential coach. - Dad taught a lot of mental skills, was supportive, and motivating.

Table 8 (cont'd)

	Coach/ Mentor	TF5Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant trained with rival high school coach. - Coach was supportive, a quality communicator, and utilized many unique resources to foster improvement.
		S3Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduced to a new coach in 5th grade and completely changed as a swimmer. - Coach was like a second mother, helped S3Z blossom. - Coach knew how to properly motivate, good humor.
		IH2A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant was selected for a travel team by this coach. - Coach “took a chance” on them. - Coach worked very hard to help participant reach a higher level.
Realization	Realization	FH4Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realization occurred in high school, participant started to realize they were good. Set higher dreams/goals to reach the college level. - Participant felt supported by the community, who FH4Y was proud to represent.
		G4Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realization occurred at a young age; watching older sister’s tournaments participant felt they could be as successful, though much younger. - Participant began choosing to spend time on the golf course away from friends at a young age.
		R2X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realization occurred in high school; participant knew they wanted to do gymnastics in college. - Participant wanting to be competitive and push past boundaries.
		S3Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realization occurred freshman year of high school, after participant was surprised with how fast they could swim. - Participant realized they could go far in swimming and “succeed the way they wanted to and still enjoy doing it.”
		S3Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realization occurred during high school, swimming “became a different experience”. - Participant started reaching new goals, competing at a higher level, and felt like part of a team.

Table 8 (cont'd)

Maturation/ Maintenance	Sacrifice	IH2A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant's family had sacrificed significant time and resources to provide the opportunity to play hockey. - Participant gave up a lot of social time in order to pursue goals within the sport of hockey. - Participant moved to Canada to play during high school.
		TF5A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant devoted significant mental and physical resources (in high school) in order to honor the upperclassman in competition. - Participant treated sport like a full time job and shaped everyday life around improving at sport. - Participant came back for an extra collegiate season instead of pursuing other forms of success.
		TF5Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everything in the participant's life revolves around the sport. - Participant forgoes social experiences in order to get enough rest, stay healthy, and become a better runner.
		G4Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant spent a lot of time away from friends to be playing golf. - Participant's summers in college were spent training (mostly alone) instead of relaxing with friends.
		FH4Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Field hockey was the influence behind college and career choices for the participant. - Field hockey made up a significant part of the participant's identity, despite lacking opportunities at the professional level. - Participant dedicated a significant amount of time to reaching high levels of the sport.
Maturation/ Maintenance		IH1A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant was not getting scouted for higher levels (compared to other teammates). - Participant questioned if it was worth it to keep playing. - Participant had to have a significant talk with their dad about the value of continuing.
		FH4Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant's playing opportunities lessened as college progressed. - Participant felt a loss of status and influence on the team. - Participant experienced periods of lost motivation.

Table 8 (cont'd)

Maturation/ Maintenance	Struggle	S3Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant experienced a performance plateau after reaching college. - Teammates and competition were much better. - Participant had lower amounts of success.
		R2X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant experienced many injuries during gymnastics. - Participant questioned if long-term effects of gymnastics injuries would be worth continued participation.
		TF5A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant had a lower amount of success in college. - Participant tried to change sports to football, but this was much more difficult than anticipated. - Participant struggled to find satisfaction in athletic pursuits.
	Re-evaluation	FH4Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant had a very narrow focus on sport in high school. College forced the participant to seek balance between school, family, and sport. - Participant found a renewed source of motivation in pursuing a sport-related career and in teammate support.
		TF5A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant attempted to find more life balance by leaving sport and joining school clubs. - Participant came back to sport and was able to find personal success in improvement and competition. - Participant set new goals for the final stages of their track and field career.
		IH3B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participant achieved a clear understanding regarding their desire to excel in hockey, and academic prioritizations have been set up to reflect this. - Participant conceptualized the difference in feeling between succeeding in business and succeeding in hockey.
		R2X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Found that collegiate opportunities in gymnastics were not possible (injuries), but was able to utilize what brought success in gymnastics (physical build, competitiveness, etc.) into being a successful rower. - Plans to carry competitiveness into career plans.
		S3Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After performance plateaus, participant shifted focus from successful performances to personal improvement and team aspects. - Established new conceptualization of the challenges experienced in swimming (racing against the clock but still playing an important role on a team).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The discussion section will focus on the reasons that these phases and sub-themes were used to conceptualize how student-athletes experienced passion. An improved understanding of the factors at work will provide insight as to how these participants were able to come from such diverse beginnings and achieve the same result of being passionate student-athletes at the Division I level.

Pre-Passion (*Environment, Family, & Different Sports*)

Purpose 1 of this study was to learn how passionate collegiate athletes came into contact with the sport they would go on to be passionate about. The hope was to identify distinctions in the early phases of sport development that could then be applied to future generations of athletes for the promotion of passion. However, analysis of the interviews showed that participants each had very unique experiences in their own world of sport. They were all introduced to different activities at varying times of their lives, yet in all cases this resulted in high levels of passion towards their respective sports. For this reason, rather than focusing on how individuals selected specific sports, it would appear more beneficial to discuss factors attributed to the perceived valuation of sport in the families, communities, and environments that the participants were raised in. Whether by following the example of older siblings, or taking part in the offered community recreation programs, participants of this study were significantly influenced by certain external factors that accounted for first contact with many sports, as well as the formation of initial perceptions towards sport. The common characteristic (relating to the introduction of sport) for all participants of this study was that they learned at an early age the societal value placed on achievement through sport.

“...my dad played hockey growing up and we had a pond in the front yard growing up and in the winters we’d skate, and I don’t know, I kind of loved it right away...[and the biggest influence on why I started to play hockey was]... probably that my dad played hockey. My older cousins played hockey. A lot of family kind of, it tied in with the family, so that was probably the biggest reason.” – (Participant IH1A)

“It was just what we did in the summer, like every day, just went to the pool, it was the fun thing to do.” – (Participant S3Z)

Individuals had very little choice in the activities that they were introduced to early in their lives. For example, some participants were taken to the local pool as small children to pass the time on a summer day, and thus were introduced to the concept of swimming. Similarly, participants went to schools that utilized recess and gym classes as valued parts of their curriculum to promote various forms of physical activity. The results of this study have shown that these staple events of childhood were extremely important to the eventual development of passion towards sport. The sport sampling process the participants went through at an early age helped establish the foundation of physical, personal, and mental skills necessary for eventual specialization in a specific activity (Côté, Lidor, & Hackfort, 2009). However, these events were not necessarily decisive in what sports the participants went on to be passionate about. Rather, the important feature was the internalization of the value and benefit of sport. All participants in this study were raised in families, environments, and cultures that actively promoted involvement in sport, and the benefits that could be achieved if one was able to find success within sport.

Social desirability of being perceived as good at sport reflects a number of human qualities such as the innate tendency to seek relatedness in the environment through mastery of important activities. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) as well as the organismic

perspective (James, 1950) established that humans independently and automatically explore the environment with the intent of establishing mastery, autonomy, and relatedness, and that this is the basis for motivated behavior. However, these theories do not distinguish what makes some activities more desirable to pursue than others. One potential explanation comes from philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who describes a life devoid of social interaction as solitary, brutal, and short (Hobbes, 1651). For this reason, long ago, humans have become a social species that derive measures of self-worth from making contributions to the society and also receiving recognition for those contributions. This explanation relates to both the group-value model (Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1998) and the expectance-value model (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) which describe how individuals, from a very young age, are able to form distinctions between what they are good at and what they are not good at, then conceptualize the meaning/benefit of being good or bad at specific tasks. Both internal and external factors play a large role in the early development of this activity distinction.

Expectancy-value theory sets out to explain people's choice of achievement tasks and also the nature of their persistence towards them (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Highly emphasized in this line of research is the individual's perception of their competence towards a task, as well as their belief that they will continue to display competence in it. For example, children who perceive themselves as competent math students, and value achievement in the subject are likely to show higher performance scores and continue in the subject longer than those who do not self-evaluate as competent (Eccles, 1983). It is predicted that these perceptions of competence come from a variety of conscious and unconscious sources, including the cost of success, affective experiences (positive or negative), as well as the perceived beliefs of significant others (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Furthermore, group-value theory states that individuals form early perceptions

of task enjoyment based on the feedback received from members of authority in a valued in-group (Smith, et al., 1998). This research reflects the importance of social influence by parents and teachers who are typically the main sources of authority for youths. Research in both group-value and expectancy-value theories illustrate the importance of perceived competence and the influence it has toward the selection of specific valued activities, especially during childhood.

The perception of being a highly competent athlete boasts positive characteristics in an individual that are distinct from showings of competence in less valued endeavors. For participants of this study, gaining an understanding of activities that were valuable to put effort and display competence towards appeared to be an important factor in how they identified their current passionate pursuit. The results of this study also showed that research involving parent activity valuation (Mageau et al., 2009), as well as theories of social comparison and emotional contagion (Cardon, 2008), were important features of the sport selection process. Participants were both directly and indirectly influenced by the perceptions of sport held by their parents, teachers, and peers. Responses showed that participants were greatly impacted by the process of internalization towards the concept of sport as well as the perceived benefits achievable through attaining a level of mastery in one specific pursuit. Regarding Purpose 1 of this study, passionate student-athletes were first (and most importantly) introduced to the concept of sport through multiple facets of their early environment. This assisted in the participants' internalization of sport as a purposeful endeavor in the larger social scheme. The valuation of specific sport by family members as well as the communities led to participants having opportunities to experience predetermined physical activities based on social preferences. These social preferences manifested into how community resources were allocated to specific sports (i.e.,

swimming pools, ice rinks, tracks, etc.) as well as what activities were deemed worthwhile pursuits by youth.

Realization (*Competence, Coach/ Mentor, & Realization*)

Early experiences in sport and physical activity were very influential to participants, especially towards the selection of an activity they would go on to display passion for at the collegiate level. The most prominent factor of this process was competence, which participants quickly learned to evaluate and use to make decisions regarding sports they enjoyed. Information regarding competence came from a variety of sources including self-comparison with peers, adult feedback, and subjective measures of success (Wigfield & Eccles, 1992). Due to the competitive structure of sport, competence was most overtly reflected in terms of winning versus losing (on both the team and individual levels), and thus many participants based early measures of competence on their ability to influence the outcome of competitions. For participants who did not indicate that they had early success in the sport they would go on to be passionate about, personal feelings of control and mastery in relation to other sports they had tried were strong enough to keep them involved in the “passionate pursuit”. For example, both participant swimmers in this study recalled feeling uncoordinated when they were younger, however, they felt relatively more comfortable when they were in the water. Similarly, feelings of low competence were cited as reasons for quitting sports in favor of what would eventually go on to be a passion. This process of participating in multiple sports, similar to the concept of sport sampling (Côté, 1999) was important in identifying the specific activities that best aligned with the participants’ abilities, and helped them attain the experience of competence.

The ability of participants of this study to form accurate perceptions of competence from a variety of reliable sources proved to be an important skill in the process of developing passion

towards a specific sport. The many opportunities presented through sport allowed them to satisfy their innate human tendency of seeking autonomy and showcasing mastery in the environment (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997). The participants' motivation for this task exploration was also influenced by an innate desire to engage in challenges that required the utmost of their skills (Csikszentimihayli, 1993). However, due to the hierarchical structure of sports, greater social rewards were reserved only for those who achieved at higher levels. Achieving at higher levels required time to master those skills, and therefore participants had to allocate their limited personal resources efficiently. The development of accurate perceptions of competence using multiple sources of feedback allowed participants of this study to make logical choices regarding what activity was the best investment of their limited resources. As a result, this process singled out socially valued activities that were likely to yield the most positive distinctions for the participants.

After participants of this study made distinctions regarding competence towards a specific activity, they encountered more specialized forms of training and began working with coaches/mentors that would go on to have significant impacts on their passionate pursuit. Similar to the “specialization stage” of elite talent development (Côté, 1999), working with a sport-specific coach had a large impact on the participants' experiences within their passion (Durand, Bush, & Selema, 2002). The results of this study indicated that coaches/mentors were important to the development of passion because they nurtured early signs of talent and helped participants create a specific dream of competing at a high level of their sport. Some participants of this study even endearingly regarded a significant coach/mentor as a parent figure or another sibling. These coaches, by making significant investments of time, energy, and resources towards helping the

participants reach higher levels of sport, were able to play major roles in the realization of passion.

Through the combination of accurate perceptions of competence and proper coaching/mentoring, participants of this study reached a very distinct moment in their experience with passion; the realization phase. As was the case with all participants, there came a time in their sporting experience when their attitude and motivation towards their selected sport took on a noticeable change. Instead of just casually being involved with the sport, participants suddenly began setting higher goals (i.e., reaching the collegiate or professional ranks), and making significant changes in their lives in order to more closely align with the selected sport. Passion realization took place at different times for each participant, but all participant interviews contained remarks involving this distinct shift in motivation. It appeared that during this realization phase, participants crossed a threshold of their perceived competence while also acquiring awareness of a realistic path to higher levels of achievement within their sport (with the help of a coach/mentor). An important feature of this realization process, and of participants setting higher goals, was that participants came to this realization completely independent of direct external influencers (or the conscious perception of them), indicating a strong sense of autonomy and the maturation of crucial psychological skills (see Morgan & Giacobbi, 2006).

The passion realization phase was also characterized by participants not taking into account the harsh realities they would potentially face while pursuing their passion at a higher level. This degree of naivety enabled those in the realization phase to create their dreams uninhibited by the social and physical sacrifices they would eventually have to make in order to achieve at a high level in their sport. Many interviewees regarded this period of their life as the time in which they felt the most passion directly towards their sport. They could clearly envision

the accomplishments without the burden of knowing what it would take to achieve those goals. These increases in motivation and shifts in perception relate closely to literature regarding resonance theory, which states that individuals form a bond with a desired state and are then motivated to actualize the feelings associated with the desired state (Newburg, Kimiecik, Durand-Bush, & Doell, 2002). The strength with which participants of this study were able to personally connect to the initial desired outcome (e.g., playing their sport collegiately or professionally) would prove extremely important in their ability to navigate the challenges that lie beyond the initial passion realization.

Maturation/ Maintenance (*Sacrifice, Setbacks, & Re-evaluation*)

Passion during the realization phase was very exciting and motivating for participants; however, it was also very innocent and naïve compared to the reality that followed. After regular experiences of competence and high levels of support from coaches that sparked the passion realization, participants then had to actualize the amount of sacrifice and difficulty required to reach their lofty goals. In this phase, significant shifts in commitment to the passionate activity occurred and along with this came setbacks and experiences of struggle. These setbacks came from injuries, lack of motivation, or low perceptions of competence. Negative experiences and setbacks, weighed against the amount of resources already sacrificed to the passionate pursuit, brought participants to important periods of reevaluation in which they made decisions about whether or not it was worthwhile to continue towards the original goal. An example from this study is Participant R2X who experienced many injuries as a gymnast in high school and had to reevaluate the mental and physical investment she was making for her goal of competing at the collegiate level. This reevaluation process resulted in channeling the skills she had acquired through high levels of competition towards a new outlet, rowing. Features of this

maturation/maintenance phase of passion were important to participants in forming a holistic view and obtaining the full benefits of their sporting experience.

“Well doing gymnastics for 15 years, like, it’s the kind of sport that takes over your life and I just I’ve always been competitive, and coming to college I knew I wouldn’t be the same if I wasn’t doing that kind of activity in my life, so I just had to find something, and this is working out so far.” – (Participant R2X)

Having the desire to compete at high levels of sport requires a great amount of skill. While participants of this study had already demonstrated high amounts of competence leading up to the selection of their passionate pursuit, the nature of competitive sport is designed in such a way that being good is never good enough. Because development to very high levels of achievement can take years or even decades of cumulative experiences (Ericsson, 2006), participants had to make choices regarding their time commitments in order to achieve a high enough level of skill fast enough to reach the collegiate level. These sacrifices included time with friends, time with family, and opting out of social events in favor of the passionate pursuit. All participants in this study at some point reflected on both personal and social sacrifices that were made for their passion.

“I never worked a job... I was in the weight room every day, sometimes twice a day, eating right, sleeping right, not doing anything too dangerous. So I really dedicated most of my life towards that.” – (Participant TF5A)

The significant sacrifices made by participants towards their sports helped them not only increase their levels of competence, but also establish a clearer perception of the passion itself. Choosing to dedicate large amounts of time to one activity had a compounding effect on the perceived investment being made to achieve the goal. The more participants gave to the sport, the more connected they became to the positive outcomes they hoped to achieve. Sacrifice,

relating to significant amounts of time and energy being committed to the passionate pursuit (Vallerand, 2002), impacted not only the participants' ability to gain necessary skills, but also increased awareness of the personal commitment being made to the passion.

Participants in the initial passion realization phase were strongly connected to the desired outcomes associated with high achievement, but lacked knowledge of the steps to be taken in this pursuit. Participants realizing a passion in sport firmly believed that their dream would be achieved through hard work and mixed with regular intervals of success, just as their previous experiences had indicated. However, all participants at some point encountered setbacks that attempted to push them off their initial path. The incredible demands associated with reaching high levels of sport brought injuries, performance plateaus, and low perceptions of success that managed to shake the foundations of their motivation. Though negative, these experiences served as valuable tests of mettle and became opportunities, rather, to enhance personal feelings of passion towards the activity. For example, participants quickly learned that an over-reliance on external indicators of success or competence were not sustainable forms of motivation. These performance/success plateaus were typically the first encounter participants had with setbacks. To counteract this, participants turned to team dynamics or personal definitions of success (such as the positive feelings associated with completing a difficult practice) to satisfy their desire to continue working towards their initial goal. An example from this study is the female field hockey player (Participant FH4Y), who after contributing a lot during her freshman year, experienced a demotion of responsibility and decreased performance expectations from the coaches. Despite struggling with this setback, Participant FH4Y decided not to quit her passionate pursuit and instead directed her focus towards showing a loving commitment towards her teammates. Similarly, one male ice hockey player (Participant IH2A) reached the collegiate

level to find virtually no opportunity for playing time with his team, but was able to establish a sense of personal success through his work ethic and bonding with teammates. The experience of setbacks or struggles for participants was important in shaping a personal and meaningful connection to the desired outcome that was established when the passion was realized. This process reflects not only the significant time commitment being made to the passion, but also high levels of autonomy in making the decision to carry on. Participants of this study were never coerced into staying with a specific sport, and the decision to continue was always their own. Furthermore, experiences of struggle showcased participants' willingness to persevere despite negative circumstances (as described in Grit theory), which may have contributed to them reaching the desired levels of achievement (Duckworth, 2007).

All participants of this study achieved the distinction of competing at a Division I level; however, this did not mark the end of their experience with passion. The cumulative experience of setbacks and achievements while reaching the collegiate level took a toll on most participants and effectively altered their perception of the passionate pursuit. Though still desiring to compete at high levels of their sport, an understanding was reached that only a select few could be recognized as highly competent performers at the college level. Therefore, as participants matured, the socially desirable distinctions that originally motivated them took on different forms. For many athletes, lessened external reinforcement can have very negative emotional effects and result in very talented individuals suddenly dropping out of the sport. This concept of athletic "burnout" (Coakley, 1992) involves an over-identification of the athlete to their sport as well as an inability to effectively derive feelings of self-worth from anything outside of their sport. A characteristic of individuals for this study, however, was that they were able to avoid burnout by adapting to changing circumstances involving their sport in a way that maintained

their original passion for the activity, as well as promoted their personal well-being. For example, being a quality student, and forming lasting friendships became new meaningful ways to receive social acclaim, just as being viewed as a good athlete was in younger years. The strong motivation to be successful in their sport remained; however, the participants began looking for ways to apply their original passion towards other meaningful endeavors.

Recognition for competence and other overt displays of success are reserved for a select few at the college level. For this reason, it is no surprise that most participants in this study experienced lowered amounts of recognition for their own competence when they reached this stage than they had previously encountered. The result of this process was that the participants went through a stage of reevaluation, contemplating what was pursued at the onset of the passion (public distinction in a socially desirable setting such as athletics), and other aspects of life that could potentially provide the same amount of satisfaction. For example, when some participants recognized that they would likely not continue competing after college, they placed more value on their education so that they could create new dreams in new professions. Although a shift, this reevaluation did not change the participants' perceptions or feelings toward their passionate pursuit. It simply served as a means of continuing with the investment of resources they had already made, only in a new way. Participants who did receive recognition for their athletic competence at the collegiate level went through this same reevaluation process, only instead of changing their focus, they reaffirmed the priority of reaching even higher levels within the sport (i.e., the professional ranks). The maturation/ maintenance phase of passion served as an important period for participants to reflect on what they had already accomplished and to put those experiences towards future ambitions, whatever they may entail.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this study lie in the combination of quality participants and a qualitative interview process that generated insightful, and self-reflective responses. Use of the measure of generalized passion proved to be very effective in identifying highly passionate individuals within this population. Participants that self-selected to be a part of the interview process reflected an eagerness to share about their experiences and therefore made for exceptional interviewees. In addition, the qualitative interview process was essential in gathering unique and insightful information from the participants as they explored their own personal relationship to their passion. Questions were designed in such a way that participants felt comfortable exploring this topic, even if that meant being overcome with emotion (which was the case for some participants). Furthermore, using 10 participants for interviews offered a good mix of perspectives to be compared without producing an overwhelming amount of data.

A number of limitations were present in the current design of this research study. Using electronic surveys (accessed through email) produced a low participant response rate. Having no personal contact with participants may have limited the study's ability to gain accurate representation of the sample population. Furthermore, use of electronic surveys presented the potential limitation of individuals not being able to access the survey, or not checking the email address that it was sent to. For this reason, it may be more desirable in the future to forfeit the convenience factor of electronic surveys and take a hands-on approach in order to encourage a higher response rate.

Distribution of type of sport reflected in the qualitative interview process is another limitation of this study. A disproportionate number of men's ice hockey players were represented in the second part of the study. Although selection for the interviews was predetermined to be the top ten scoring participants on the general passion scale (who also agreed to be a part of the

interview), the researcher's former ties to the sport of ice hockey could have influenced higher return rates from this group. A high percentage of one type of sport may have limited the ability of the study's implications to be generalized to all types of sports. For example men's football, or women's basketball players may have very different experiences with the concept of passion and its development.

Interview transcript and coding verification may also have acted as a limitation for this study. Although coded transcripts were verified by all participants to improve overall trustworthiness (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999), peer review of the data interpretation could have strengthened the transferability and credibility of this study (Shenton, 2004).

Although the interview guide was carefully constructed to cover multiple factors of the athletic experience (specifically related to passion), there is the possibility that important factors were excluded from the interview process. A final limitation of this study was the scope. In order to gain a general understanding of passion, the only discriminate factors used in participant selection were to be collegiate athletes at one university. While this helped in gathering information related to the larger concept of passion and its realization, the design of this study did not take into account the many contextual factors that undoubtedly play a role in the athletic experience (e.g., gender, age, type of sport, socioeconomic background, etc.) Future research focusing on these variables would greatly benefit the field's understanding of this concept of passion.

Future Research Directions

Future research studies aimed to benefit the topic of passion and its realization should look to further clarify the specific factors associated with an athlete's passion realization towards their specific sport. While this study distinguished the great influence of social-contextual factors

on an athlete's sport selection and later passion towards it, much is still unknown about the influence of gender, socio-economic, or cultural distinctions (to name a few), found to be so unique in each participant. For example, white males growing up in colder climates may have specific advantages or disadvantages towards not only the specific activities they are able to develop passion towards, but also the progression of that passion. Future research should look to compare specific populations of athletes to clarify similarities and differences that exist in bringing an athlete to the point of realizing their passion towards one specific sport/ activity.

Future research studies should continue to incorporate a qualitative interview portion. The wealth of knowledge gained through the athlete reflecting on personal experience is invaluable in establishing understanding of what passion means to them, individually. The interview guides created to do this should be edited and improved to ensure that appropriate and relevant questions are being asked that maximize athlete reflection on the topic. For instance, a valuable addition to understanding of this topic could be to include participants who scored low on passion. Comparing and contrasting the difference of experiences with athletes that are rated as either high in passion or low in passion would serve to clarify the field's understanding of the topic. It might also be useful to interview parents and coaches of these athletes to get their perspectives on the athlete's development of passion.

A recommendation for future research using a design similar to this study is to conduct more follow-up with the sample population in order to ensure a higher rate of responses. If electronic surveys are included, more reminder emails should be sent, or an in-person assessment should be conducted to increase participation. These measures would create a more representative sample population and improve the generalization of the findings.

Continuing to examine the specific factors associated with passion realization will help to improve the field's understanding of the heightened motivational states associated with passion and also shed light on how to implement ideal conditions for this process to occur. The world of athletics places significant value on highly motivated individuals, making this an exciting path of inquiry. Beginning to understand what brings a passionate athlete to their "calling" would be very beneficial as it could lead to the development of an increased number of individuals with that "burning desire" to reach high levels of achievement within their sport.

Conclusion

The concept of passion towards a sport is comprised of many emotional experiences and personal connections. Participants of this study used many strong terms to describe passion such as "love", "dedication", "religious motivation" and "burning urges". The process by which participants were able to achieve these high emotional states involved both socio-contextual and innate factors. Being raised in an environment that championed the sporting culture and idolized its highest achievers instilled a sense of value in participants that helped direct their efforts all of the way through the collegiate level of competition. Establishing accurate perceptions of their own competence was also important to point participants toward a worthwhile endeavor. (It is worth noting that the participants of this study also possessed certain levels of innate talent and ability that undoubtedly influenced their aptitude for achievement and early shows of competence). Quality mentors, represented by coaches or parents, showed the participants the path to higher levels of achievement, and helped them truly believe that their dreams were achievable. Connecting to that dream sparked heightened states of motivation and true feelings of "selfless love and desire to do something"(Quote from G4Z's interview) that so many participants felt they had towards their sport.


After reaching high levels of their sport, participants experienced a shift in perception towards their passionate pursuit, but not of the passion itself. While they still loved, valued, and based their lives around the sport, most realized that they would not receive the same amount of social distinction and satisfaction from their sport if they were pretending to be high level performers after their college eligibility had expired. The few participants that did make realistic connections to higher levels of competition (professional ranks) maintained much of the heightened motivational state found in the initial passion realization, though now balanced it through a more mature understanding of what life in professional sports may require. Those who did not see professional sports in their future began applying the same methods of competence evaluation (used in selecting their sport) towards new endeavors. Participants did this, just as before, by looking for professions that were socially valued, and then sought ways to gain distinction through new displays of competence (e.g. coaching, applying for graduate school, business, etc.), directly applying the positive traits they had acquired from their passion for sport. The results of this study indicate that the process of passion towards sport has distinct phases that involve the valuation of sport, realizing where the greatest potential lies, and then making adjustments as experiences and perceptions change. Though there is no predicting where a passion may take a person, there is no question, that once established, the passionate individual will strive for a level of achievement and self-realization unattainable through any other means of motivation. Their life forever changed, for no one reaches higher, or discovers more than the fish who has found water.

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Figure 1 Demographic Information in Online Survey Format


Q6



Sport you currently participate in:

- ☐ Baseball
- ☐ Basketball (M/ W)
- ☐ Cross Country (M/ W)
- ☐ Field Hockey
- ☐ Football
- ☐ Hockey
- ☐ Golf (M/ W)
- ☐ Rowing
- ☐ Soccer (M/ W)
- ☐ Softball
- ☐ Swimming & Diving (M/ W)
- ☐ Tennis (M/ W)
- ☐ Track & Field (M/ W)
- ☐ Wrestling
- ☐ Volleyball
- ☐ Other


Q7



Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Q8



How many years have you been involved in your sport (Collegiately)?

- ☐ 1 year
- ☐ 2 years
- ☐ 3 years
- ☐ 4 years
- ☐ 5 years
- ☐ 6 years

Appendix B: The Passion Scale

Describe an activity that you love, that is important for you, and in which you spend a significant amount of time

My favorite activity is: _____

While thinking of your favorite activity and using the scale below, please indicate your level of agreement with each item

Not agree at all		Very slightly agree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree		Mostly agree	Strongly agree	Very strongly agree		
1		2	3	4		5	6	7		
1.	The activity is in harmony with other activities in my life			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	I have difficulties controlling my urge to do my activity			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	The new things that I discover with this activity allow me to appreciate it even more			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	I have almost an obsessive feeling for this activity			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	This activity reflects the qualities I like about myself			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	This activity allows me to live a variety of experiences			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	This activity is the only thing that really turns me on			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	My activity is well integrated in my life			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	If I could, I would only do my activity			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	My activity is in harmony with other things that are part of me			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	The activity is so exciting that I sometimes lose control over it			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	I have the impression that my activity controls me			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	I spend a lot of time doing this activity			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	I love this activity			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	This activity is important for me			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	The activity is a passion for me			1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Scoring key: *Obsessive Passion*: #2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 12 *Harmonious Passion*: #1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10 *Passion Criteria*: #13-16

Appendix C:

Figure 2 Online Survey Format of the Passion Scale

Please indicate the level to which you agree with the following statement regarding your current sport:

	Not agree at all	Very slightly agree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Mostly agree	Strongly agree	Very strongly agree
The sport is in harmony with other activities in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have difficulties controlling my urge to do my sport.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The new things that I discover with this sport allow me to appreciate it even more.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have almost an obsessive feeling for this sport.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This sport reflects the qualities I like about myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This sport allows me to live a variety of experiences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This sport is the only thing that really turns me on.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My sport is well integrated in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Not agree at all	Very slightly agree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Mostly agree	Strongly agree	Very strongly agree
If I could, I would only do my sport.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My sport is in harmony with other things that are part of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The sport is so exciting that I sometimes lose control over it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have the impression that my sport controls me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I spend a lot of time doing this sport.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I love this sport.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This sport is important for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The sport is a passion for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Not agree at all	Very slightly agree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Mostly agree	Strongly agree	Very strongly agree

Figure 2 (cont'd)

Please indicate the "likeness" to you in each of the following statements regarding your **current sport**:

	Not at all like me	Not much like me	Neutral	Somewhat like me	Very much like me
I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New ideas and new projects often distract me from previous ones.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lose interest.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I finish whenever I begin.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Setbacks don't discourage me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am a hard worker.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am diligent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I am interested in continued participation in this study, consisting of one interview. **(If "YES", please enter your email address).**

☐ Yes

☐ No

Appendix D: Consent Form

Purpose:

This evaluation is part of a research study aimed to develop a better understanding of the realization of passion towards a sport in collegiate athletes. Scored survey responses were used to identify highly passionate individuals to participate in this interview process. Interviews will focus on the individual's reflection on early sport experience and influences. Information gathered through analyzing the interviews will become part of the current research, focused on developing a clearer understanding of how a passion is realized. This research study is part of a Master's thesis research requirement and is under the supervision of Dr. Dan Gould.

Procedure:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in an approximately 40 minute interview about your initial experience in sport.
2. Provide consent that the material discussed is a fair representation of your experiences.
3. Agree to provide future consent of material discussed to ensure the validity of the investigator's interpretation (so that your voice is appropriately represented).

The approximate time requirement for this interview is 40 minutes, but is very open ended. It is possible for the questioning to take less than forty minutes and there is also time allotted for the interview to take more than 40 minutes. There is no incentive to participating in this interview other than helping a former student-athlete complete a requirement for their Master's thesis.

Benefits/ Risks to Participant:

Participants are being asked to reflect on their personal feelings towards the sport they are currently involved in. Risks include any discomfort you may feel through this process in talking about topics such as parents, coaches, and emotions felt during early sport participation.

Voluntary Nature of the Study/ Confidentiality:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to complete the study at any point during the experiment for no penalty. You may also refuse to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable. At any time, you may stop to ask the researcher questions regarding the research at hand.

Your name will never be connected to this interview. Your identity will be kept anonymous and all identifying characteristics will be removed by the investigator during the coding process. Only the lead investigator and supervisor will have the ability to connect data to participant, and appropriate measures have been taken to ensure that no one has access to this information.

Contacts and Questions:

At any time you may ask questions regarding your participation in this study. If you have questions later, you may contact A.J. Sturges at 608-575-0753 or asturge15@gmail.com. Supervisor, Dan Gould, can be reached at drsgould@msu.edu. Questions and concerns regarding institutional approval should be directed to the MSU Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (517-355-2180).

****I have read and reviewed this participant consent form and wish to continue.***

Full Name

Signature

Date

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Introduction (to be read verbatim):

“Thank you for being here today. The purpose of this study is to explore characteristics of passion and motivation. I will be asking a series of questions focusing on your experiences and opinions on topics involved with your personal motivation towards your sport.

As a participant, you have rights to confidentiality. Any information you share today will be analyzed anonymously and no one besides the principle investigator (myself) and my research advisor will have any access to personal information that will connect you to your responses. At no time will your personal information be tied to your responses during the remainder of this research process. If at any time you are uncomfortable answering the questions or would like to end the interview, you have the right to do so. At this time, do you have any questions for me regarding your role as a participant and your confidentiality rights?

This interview should take approximately 40 minutes, but time is allowed in case it goes longer. Our conversation will be recorded on this digital voice recorder so that the interview can be transcribed for analysis. When the interview has concluded, I will give you information regarding how to contact me with any questions about the study. I will also explain the future direction of the study and any information regarding your future involvement. At this time, do you have any questions regarding your participation in this study? Are you okay with proceeding?”

1) First, I would like to establish some background information:

- What year in school are you?
- What sport do you play?
- When did you start playing that sport? (How long have you been playing? How long would you say you have been playing at a high level?)

2) Tell me about how you were introduced to that sport.

- How old were you?
- What are the reasons that you got involved in the sport?

3) Tell me about your earliest memory participating in that sport.

- How did it feel?
 - What are some times that you revisit this memory?

4) Early on, what role did success play on your sporting experience?

- Would you consider yourself successful early on?

5) How would you describe your parents during this process? (Starting at the beginning, all the way to now.)

6) Tell me about a coach that has had a significant impact on you as an athlete.

- What was it about that coach that most influenced you?
 - When did you work with this coach?
 - What do you remember about your first coach?

7) (Sport has its ups and downs, as you know...) Tell me about a specific time that you questioned why you were in the sport.

- **IF YES** What was this experience like?
- What kept you going?

- **IF NO** What factors/ characteristics help you maintain that commitment?
- 8) **(Changing pace a little bit, please give as detailed and personal a response as you can.) ... What does it mean to be passionate?**
 - If someone is considered a passionate athlete in your sport, what specific things might they do? How do they act?
 - 9) **Tell me why you do, or do not consider yourself passionate towards your sport.**
 - In retrospect, at what point in your career do you first consider yourself passionate?
 - What made you passionate/ not passionate?
 - 10) **What makes your sport different than the other activities that you take part in?**
 - Do you think you are capable of feeling the same way towards another activity?
 - What, in your life, would need to be different for this interview to be about a different activity, and not your current sport?
 - 11) **Do you have questions for me at this time about anything we discussed?**

Debrief (read verbatim): “Thank you for participating in this study. You have currently helped me explore the topic of passion realization in collegiate athletes, more specifically the factors that contribute to an individual discovering an activity that they go on to be both successful in and passionate for. You will be provided with a brief explanation (handout) of the research study and also your role as a participant. My contact information will be provided in case you have any questions. Thank you very much for your participation.”

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